

Book Review of RFPA Book: *Gottschalk: Servant of God*

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Book Review

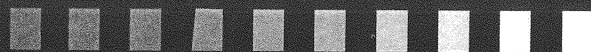
Taylor Vink

Gottschalk Servant of God

Gottschalk Servant of God by Connie L. Meyer. Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2015. Hardcover, 147 pages.

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Gottschalk, Servant of God, is the story of one monk living in the Dark Ages and his stand for the truth no matter the cost. Gottschalk's study of predestination produced an opposing view on election



and reprobation compared to the Catholic Church of the day. The book explains these beliefs and how they threatened the very structure of the way the Catholic Church functioned. It gives us insight into the man Gottschalk and his place in church history.

AUTHOR'S THEME

Gottschalk had courage, faith, and love for the truth, even if it meant dying for his beliefs. This is seen throughout his life and should encourage us as Christians to fight for the truth as he did. The church in Gottschalk's day believed in works righteousness. This was contrary to Gottschalk's belief and teachings of double predestination. This caused great controversy in the church and state, which were closely knit together in the 800s. The life of Gottschalk shows that God, in his purpose at times in history, uses the voice of a single man to further the cause of his church in a very dark spiritual time. In chapter 15 page 67 we read, "Gottschalk was convinced that the doctrines of predestination and sovereign grace that he held to were good and right and according to the word of God." Clearly it was the love of the truth that drove Gottschalk to defend his beliefs so strongly. We read again in chapter 22 page 90, "Gottschalk was prepared to read and state his views to defend his doctrine, proving from scripture and from the church fathers that what he taught about double predestination and particular grace were true.... He spoke at Quierzy with no less conviction and no less courage." Faith, courage, and love of the truth continually describe the life of Gottschalk as he studied, spoke, and defended his belief in double predestination in opposition to the Catholic Church's view of works righteousness.

HISTORICITY

The author gives good detail about the time that Gottschalk lived. It was the early Middle Ages, the Dark Ages—a spiritually dark time. It was a time when church and state were intertwined. Much of world history and church history was preserved by monks copying manuscripts by hand. This was the main activity of monks, and we cannot even understand the time it took them. Some details of history were hard to know and many details were lost over time, but the author does a good job of describing the events surrounding Gottschalk's life. She explains what society was like, the rulers of church and state, life in monasteries, and the difficulties they faced in that time period. The circumstances of Gottschalk's

life and of that period in history were very important in this book.

STYLE

This book was written for young people and is easy to read. Meyer makes the story of Gottschalk interesting without being too difficult to understand. She gives good information and detail without being overwhelmingly theological. She clearly describes the Roman Catholic Church, the monasteries and the life of monks, the rulers of the day and the difficulties Gottschalk faced. The story and character evokes emotion. You want to cheer Gottschalk on to be faithful to the end. You feel badly for how he was treated and angry at those who persecuted him. You want to keep reading to find out how it will end. The truth seems so obvious to us, but it was a different time then.

CONTENT

Throughout the book Gottschalk shows courage, faith, and love. He loved God above all else and was willing to die for the truth. He took a stand for the truth of sovereign grace and predestination even though it meant being beaten, exiled, and put in prison. He spent years studying the Bible and the writings of church fathers, devoting his life to the church and God. He was not afraid to stand before the rulers at synod and proclaim the truth. He would not deny his beliefs and continued to write from prison even after being beaten twice. Even on his death bed he would not recant his beliefs. Hincmar tried several times to get Gottschalk to sign the *schedula*, a document denying his beliefs about predestination. Hincmar offered Gottschalk church membership, a Christian burial, and the bread and wine in exchange for signing the document. "Imprisoned, sick, and lonely he feared denying the truth more than he feared anything else" (120). Gottschalk refused; he would not deny his Lord or the truth. He knew God had chosen him as an elect child merely based on God's grace.

QUOTATION

We see God's providence in Gottschalk. Although other men were teaching the same things, he was singled out. God chose him to speak out. "He did not consider the consequences. Only the truth mattered to him. Zeal for the truth is one thing. To maintain zeal for the truth in the face of opposition is another. Gottschalk was given both" (51). Predes-

tinuation was not a welcomed doctrine in the Middle Ages, but God preserved the church and the truth through Gottschalk. He gave him the courage to withstand persecution.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

This book gives a good account of the life of Gottschalk and how it relates to our Reformed heritage. We see the beginnings of the Reformation in Gottschalk years before Martin Luther and John Calvin. The stories of Gottschalk are often forgotten or overlooked, but God was using him to protect his

church and preserve the truth at a time when the Roman Catholic Church was already focusing on works righteousness. This monk from Orbais, Gottschalk, shared our Reformed view of predestination and salvation by grace alone. This is a good book for any Christian young person to read. It helps us grow in knowledge regarding the history of our Reformed churches. It also gives us courage to be faithful to the truth, just as Gottschalk was. ㄨ

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