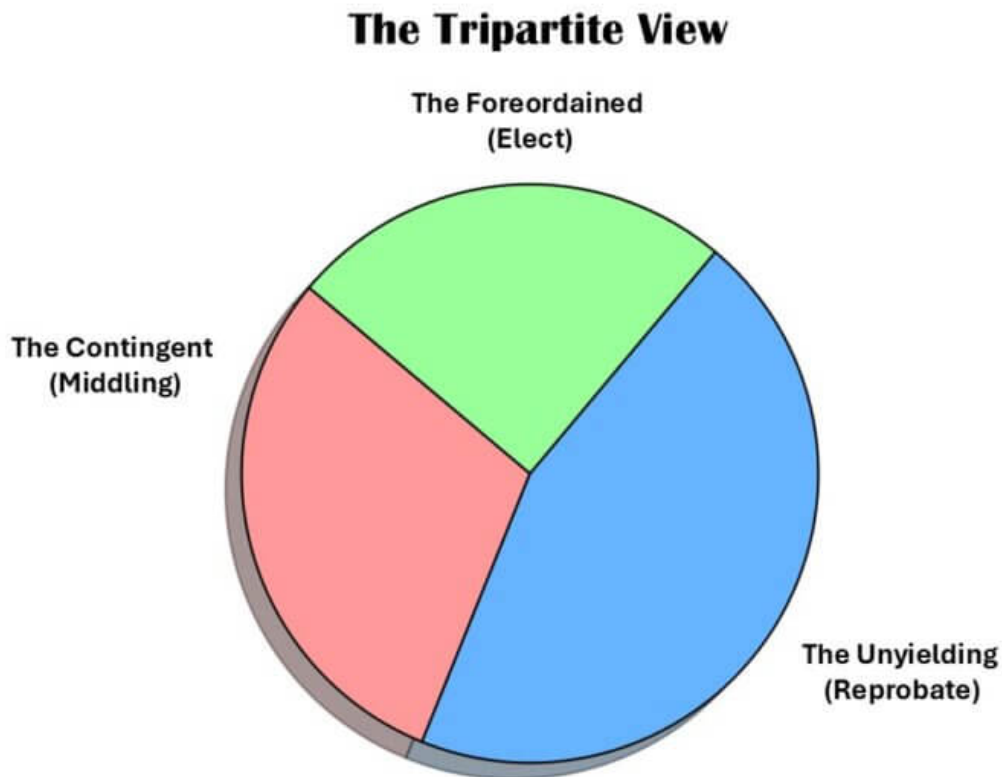


Argument Against “Double Predestination” and Support for the Tripartite View

written by Alfred Persson | November 11, 2024



Clarified and Strengthened Argument Against “Double Predestination” and Support for the Tripartite View

Many theologians reject the **Calvinist doctrine of “Double Predestination,”** which asserts that God has predestined some individuals to salvation (the Elect) and others to condemnation (the Reprobate). These theologians emphasize that **scripture affirms God’s desire for all people to be saved** (1 Timothy 2:3-4) and for “everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9), suggesting that salvation is not limited to a preselected group. Despite these clear passages, committed Calvinists often interpret them in a way that aligns with their doctrine of limited atonement and unconditional election, asserting that these texts do not conflict with double predestination.

Centuries of theological debate have failed to definitively challenge the entrenched doctrine of double predestination. However, this doctrine rests on an **“unsound inference”**: the idea that humanity is divided solely into two groups—the Elect and the Reprobate. This inference is not an explicit biblical statement. A closer look at scripture, supported by early Jewish teachings, suggests a more nuanced **Tripartite View** that divides humanity into three distinct categories:

1. **The Foreordained (Elect)** – Those predestined for salvation (Romans 8:29-30).
2. **The Contingent (Middling)** – Those whose final status depends on their response to God’s grace (Titus 2:11; Romans 2:6-7).

3. **The Unyielding (Reprobate)** – Those who persist in rejection and disobedience (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Romans 1:21-24).

Historical and Scriptural Roots of the Tripartite View

The Tripartite View has strong support not only in Christian scripture but also in early Jewish teachings, specifically from the **School of Hillel**, which influenced the Apostle Paul (Acts 22:3; 23:6). This school taught a view of humanity divided into the **Righteous, Middling, and Wicked**, as documented in the **Babylonian Talmud**:

Rabbinic Teaching (Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 16b-17a):

- **Three books are opened by God on the New Year:** one for the thoroughly righteous, one for the thoroughly wicked, and one for the middling.
- The **righteous** are immediately inscribed for life.
- The **wicked** are immediately inscribed for death.
- The **middling** are left in suspense from New Year until the Day of Atonement, when their fate is determined based on their deeds.

Rabbi Abin supports this view using **Psalm 69:28**: “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living. Let them not be inscribed among the righteous.” His reasoning:

- The **thoroughly righteous** are inscribed in the Book of Life.
- The **middling** have their status determined based on their merit.
- Those who are not inscribed among the righteous are consigned to the Book of the Wicked.

Scriptural Support for the Tripartite View

1. The Fulness Obtain Salvation after the Elect

- **Romans 11:7, 12, 25-26** show the Jewish and Gentile “Fulness” obtain salvation after the Elect and together all these add up to the full number of those saved, “All Israel”.

2. The Existence of Names that can be blotted out of the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5)

- **Revelation 3:5** reveals he who overcomes will not have his name blotted out of the Book of Life. As the Names of the Elect can never be blotted out this implies the existence of People whose fate is not predetermined and can change according to their works, the Righteous and the Unrighteous.

3. The Existence of Books for Different Groups (Revelation 20:11-15)

- **Revelation 20:12-15** describes the final judgment where multiple books are opened, and the dead are judged by their deeds. The Book of Life, containing the names of the elect, is contrasted with other records. Those not found in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire, implying the existence of a record for those whose names are blotted out or excluded due to unrepentance.

4. The Foreordained (Romans 8:29-30)

- “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...”
- This supports the idea of a group that is chosen and predestined for salvation from the foundation of the world.

5. The Contingent (Titus 2:11; Romans 2:6-7)

- **Titus 2:11**: “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.”
- **Romans 2:6-7**: “God ‘will repay each person according to what they have done.’ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life.”
- These verses support the notion that individuals can move toward salvation based on their response to God’s grace, highlighting the potential of the Middling to become righteous.

6. The Unyielding (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Romans 1:21-24)

- **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12**: “They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved...so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”
- **Romans 1:21-24**: Describes those who, although aware of God, chose not to honor Him, leading God to “give them up” to their desires.
- These passages depict the Unyielding as those who resist and reject divine truth persistently, sealing their fate.

Scriptural and Historical Proofs of the Middling Group

Malachi 3:16-18 affirms a group that stands between the thoroughly righteous and the wicked:

- “Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD...”
- This “book of remembrance” suggests a group whose fate depends on their deeds and devotion.

Conclusion

The **Tripartite View** of humanity is rooted in scripture and early Jewish teachings, revealing that:

- **The Foreordained (Elect)** are those chosen for salvation from the beginning.
- **The Contingent (Middling)** are those whose ultimate destiny depends on their response to God's grace and their actions.
- **The Unyielding (Wicked)** are those who persistently reject God's truth and face condemnation.

This view disproves the binary construct of double predestination making reprobation the corollary of predestination. The Tripartite construct taught in scripture reveals a more nuanced understanding, one where God's desire for all to come to repentance (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9) can be actualized and the potential for change in the Middling according to their own Free Will choice is acknowledged. It maintains the integrity of scripture while providing a deeper, more comprehensive approach to divine judgment and human freedom.