

Human Free Will and God's Grace in the Early Church Fathers

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Introduction: Who Was Right?

'Moreover although the Greek Fathers, above others, and especially Chrysostom, have exceeded due bounds in extolling the powers of the human will, yet all ancient theologians, with the exception of Augustine, are so confused, vacillating, and contradictory on this subject, that no certainty can be obtained from their writings.'

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 2, chapter 2, section 4

Below are a few of the many passages from the early theologians that demonstrate that Calvin was mistaken. They were not 'confused, vacillating, and contradictory.' In fact, on this subject, they were very clear, and there is a consensus among them about human free will. Two prominent church historians, Philip Schaff and J.N.D Kelly, write respectively:

'The Greek, and particularly the Alexandrian fathers, in opposition to the dualism and fatalism of the Gnostic systems, which made evil a necessity of nature, laid great stress upon human freedom, and upon the indispensable cooperation of this freedom with divine grace; while the Latin fathers, especially Tertullian and Cyprian, Hilary and Ambrose, guided rather by their practical experience than by speculative principles, emphasized the hereditary sin and hereditary guilt of man, and the sovereignty of God's grace, without, however, denying freedom and individual accountability. The Greek church adhered to her undeveloped synergism, which coordinates the human will and divine grace as factors in the work of conversion; the Latin church, under the influence of Augustine, advanced to the system of a divine monergism, which gives God all the glory, and makes freedom itself a result of grace; while Pelagianism, on the contrary, represented the principle of a human monergism, which ascribes the chief merit of conversion to man, and reduces grace to a mere external auxiliary. After Augustine's death, however the intermediate system of Semi-Pelagianism, akin to the Greek synergism, became prevalent in the West.'¹

'A point on which they (the Eastern Fathers) were all agreed was that man's will remains free; we are responsible for our acts. This was a vital article in their anti-Manichaean propaganda, but it raised the question of man's need of divine grace. This issue is usually posed in the terms which the later Augustinian discussion is made familiar, and so viewed their position was that grace and free will co-operate. Our salvation comes, stated Gregory Nazianzen, both from ourselves and from God. If God's help is necessary for doing good and if the good will itself comes from Him, it is equally true that the initiative rests with man's free will... Although we have only cited these two (Ambrose and Ambrosiaster), there is little doubt that their views were representative (of the Western Fathers). On the related question of grace, the parallel truths of man's free will and his need of God's help were maintained, although we can discern increasing emphasis being laid on the latter. 'We must be and directed', wrote Hilary, 'by His grace'; but he makes it plain the initial move in God's direction lies at our own disposition. God's mercy, he points out elsewhere, does not exclude man's desert, and a man's own will must take the lead in lifting him from sin. 'It is for God to call', remarks Jerome, 'and for us to believe'. The part of grace, it would seem, is to perfect that which the will has freely determined; yet our will is only ours by God's mercy.'²

As one can see, Calvin's conclusion about the literary evidence is incorrect. Furthermore, Calvin is suggesting something which is historically implausible: That the earliest theologians, including those who reportedly knew the apostles personally, and including those who were one or two generations removed, completely fell away from them on this very central issue. Either the apostles themselves were so muddled in their communication, or the early church theologians were so dull of hearing, that this central truth was lost in quick order, and it took Augustine, who lived four hundred years after the fact, to 'rediscover' the truth about God's sole, overpowering, omnicausal will in

¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol.III (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1867), ch.9, sec.146

² J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York, NY: Harper One, 1978), p.352, 356

what is now called ‘monergism’ (one will in the universe – that of God). And even that is subject to vigorous debate, because Augustine himself said contradictory things about human free will. Contrary to Calvin’s assessment, Augustine was perhaps the most ‘confused, vacillating, and contradictory’ of the early fathers.

This early church consensus stands against the Augustinian-Reformed monergist interpretation of (say) predestination in Romans 9 – 11. Humanity’s free will was a central component of orthodox theology. Before Augustine’s debates with the Pelagians, and arguably in Augustine himself (he did write *The Freedom of the Will*) there is no evidence that anyone interpreted Romans 9 – 11 to support a ‘double predestination’ or a ‘sovereignty of God’ view that is logically mutually exclusive with human free will. Even more damaging to the Augustinian monergist tradition is the fact that Augustine did not understand Greek well enough to translate Romans into Latin. American Eastern Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart attributes Augustine’s mistake about Paul’s definition of ‘predestination’ to his unfamiliarity with Greek, which had a more flexible sense of the word than Latin. Greg Boyd notes, ‘This in part explains why Calvin cannot cite ante-Nicene fathers against his libertarian opponents (e.g. Pighuis). Hence, when Calvin debates Pighuis on the freedom of the will, he cites Augustine abundantly, but no early church fathers are cited.’

This early church consensus laid the groundwork for St. John Cassian in the fifth century to disagree with the later Augustine, in debating Pelagius, on the question of monergism for not making sufficient space for human free will, and to claim that Augustine was defining ‘predestination’ and ‘God’s sovereignty’ in ways that, until that point, had not been defined thus. Augustine, then, was known to have broken with the theological consensus of church tradition. This consensus also laid the foundation for the Eastern Orthodox to articulate the doctrine called synergism, in contrast to Augustine’s monergism.

Clement of Rome (died c. 99 AD)

Tradition has identified him with the Clement mentioned in Philippians 4:3, who would have thus known Peter and Paul personally, and remembers him as the third or fourth bishop of Rome.

Epistle to the Corinthians

‘For it is better that a man should acknowledge his transgressions than that he should harden his heart, as the hearts of those were hardened who stirred up sedition against Moses the servant of God, and whose condemnation was made manifest [unto all]. For they went down alive into Hades, and death swallowed them up. Pharaoh with his army and all the princes of Egypt, and the chariots with their riders, were sunk in the depths of the Red Sea, and perished, for no other reason than that their foolish hearts were hardened, after so many signs and wonders had been wrought in the land of Egypt by Moses the servant of God.’ (Clement of Rome, *Epistle to the Corinthians* 51)

This passage is significant because Clement interprets ‘hardening of the heart’ as self-imposed and self-inflicted, not God-imposed or God-inflicted.

The Epistle of ‘Mathetes’ to Diognetus (1st – 2nd century)

The true author is unknown, as ‘Mathetes’ was not a proper name but means ‘a disciple.’ Possibly he was a disciple of the apostles, because of this comment: ‘I do not speak of things strange to me, nor do I aim at anything inconsistent with right reason; but having been a disciple of the Apostles, I am become a teacher of the Gentiles’ - chapter 11, verse 1). The letter has been attributed to Justin Martyr.

‘As a king sends his son, who is also a king, so sent He Him; as God He sent Him; as to men He sent Him; as a Saviour He sent Him, and as seeking to persuade, not to compel us; for violence has no place in the character of God. As calling us He sent Him, not as vengefully pursuing us; as loving us He sent Him, not as judging us.’ (*Epistle to Diognetus*, chapter 7, verse 4)

‘And do not wonder that a man may become an imitator of God. He can, if he is willing.’ (*Epistle to Diognetus*, chapter 10)

The author describes the positive side of spiritual growth and choices of faithfulness to God and with God: Growth in virtue. ‘When you have read and carefully listened to these things, you shall know what God bestows on such as rightly love Him, being made [as you are] a paradise of delight, presenting in yourselves a tree bearing all kinds of produce and flourishing well, being adorned with various fruits. For in this place the tree of knowledge and the tree of life have been planted; but it is not the tree of knowledge that destroys — it is disobedience that proves destructive. Nor truly are those words without significance which are written, how God from the beginning planted the tree of life in the midst of paradise, revealing through knowledge the way to life, and when those who were first formed did not use this [knowledge] properly, they were, through the fraud of the Serpent, stripped naked. For neither can life exist without knowledge, nor is knowledge secure without life. Wherefore both were planted close together. The Apostle, perceiving the force [of this conjunction], and blaming that knowledge which, without true doctrine, is admitted to influence life, declares, Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. For he who thinks he knows anything without true knowledge, and such as is witnessed to by life, knows nothing, but is deceived by the Serpent, as not loving life. But he who combines knowledge with fear, and seeks after life, plants in hope, looking for fruit. Let your heart be your wisdom; and let your life be true knowledge inwardly received. Bearing this tree and displaying its fruit, you shall always gather in those things which are desired by God, which the Serpent cannot reach, and to which deception does not approach; nor is Eve then corrupted, but is trusted as a virgin; and salvation is manifested, and the Apostles are filled with understanding, and the Passover of the Lord advances, and the choirs are gathered together, and are arranged in proper order, and the Word rejoices in teaching the saints — by whom the Father is glorified: to whom be glory forever. Amen.’ (*Epistle to Diognetus*, chapter 12)

Ignatius of Antioch (30 – 107 AD)

Ignatius is traditionally held to be a disciple of the apostles John and Peter. The Antioch from which he comes is the Antioch in Roman Syria. It is the same Antioch named in Acts 11.

Epistle to the Magnesians

Ignatius describes us by using an analogy of the coin becoming stamped and minted, by our free choice. We are human beings and human *becomings*: ‘Seeing, then, all things have an end, and there is set before us life upon our observance [of God’s precepts], but death as the result of disobedience, and every one, according to the choice he makes, shall go to his own place, let us flee from death, and make choice of life. For I remark, that two different characters are found among men--the one true coin, the other spurious. The truly devout man is the right kind of coin, stamped by God Himself. The ungodly man, again, is false coin, unlawful, spurious, counterfeit, wrought not by God, but by the devil. I do not mean to say that there are two different human natures, but that there is one humanity, sometimes belonging to God, and sometimes to the devil. If any one is truly religious, he is a man of God; but if he is irreligious, he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice. The unbelieving bear the image of the prince of wickedness. The believing possess the image of their Prince, God the Father, and Jesus Christ, through whom, if we are not in readiness to die for the truth into His passion, His life is not in us.’ (Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians* 5, longer version)

Hermas of Rome (c. 100 AD)

The Muratorian Fragment (contents dated to 170 AD), the Liberian Catalog (a list of the bishops of Rome from Peter to Liberius, who died 366 AD), and a poem of pseudo-Tertullian against Marcion (3rd or 4th century) ascribe *The Shepherd of Hermas* with some uncertainty to a Roman freeman who was the brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, during the mid-2nd century.

The Shepherd of Hermas

‘Hear now, said he, in regard to faith. There are two angels with a man — one of righteousness, and the other of iniquity. And I said to him, How, sir, am I to know the powers of these, for both angels dwell with me? Hear, said he, and understand them. The angel of righteousness is gentle and modest, meek and peaceful. When, therefore, he ascends into your heart, immediately he talks to you of righteousness, purity, chastity, contentment, and of every righteous deed and glorious virtue. When all these ascend into your heart, know that the angel of righteousness is with you. These are the deeds of the angel of righteousness. Trust him, then, and his works. Look now at the works of the angel of iniquity. First, he is wrathful, and bitter, and foolish, and his works are evil, and ruin the servants of God. When, then, he ascends into your heart, know him by his works. And I said to him, How, sir, I shall perceive him, I do not know. Hear and understand said he. When anger comes upon you, or harshness, know that he is in you; and you will know this to be the case also, when you are attacked by a longing after many transactions, and the richest delicacies, and drunken revels, and various luxuries, and things improper, and by a hankering after women, and by overreaching, and pride, and blustering, and by whatever is like to these. When these ascend into your heart, know that the angel of iniquity is in you. Now that you know his works, depart from him, and in no respect trust him, because his deeds are evil, and unprofitable to the servants of God. These, then, are the actions of both angels. Understand them, and trust the angel of righteousness; but depart from the angel of iniquity, because his instruction is bad in every deed. For though a man be most faithful, and the thought of this angel ascend into his heart, that man or woman must sin. On the other hand, be a man or woman ever so bad, yet, if the works of the angel of righteousness ascend into his or her heart, he or she must do something good. You see, therefore, that it is good to follow the angel of righteousness, but to bid farewell to the angel of iniquity.’ (*The Shepherd of Hermas*, 2.6.2)

The later writer John Cassian (360 – 435 AD), writes: ‘For it was not given only to David to think what is good of himself, nor is it denied to us naturally to think or imagine anything that is good. It cannot then be doubted that there are by nature some seeds of goodness in every soul implanted by the kindness of the Creator: but unless these are quickened by the assistance of God, they will not be able to attain to an increase of perfection, for, as the blessed Apostle says: ‘Neither is he that planteth anything nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.’ *But that freedom of the will is to some degree in a man’s own power is very clearly taught in the book termed the Pastor [i. e., the Shepherd of Hermas], where two angels are said to be attached to each one of us, i. e., a good and a bad one, while it lies at a man’s own option to choose which to follow.* And therefore the will always remains free in man, and can either neglect or delight in the grace of God. For the Apostle would not have commanded saying: ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,’ had he not known that it could be advanced or neglected by us. But that men might not fancy that they had no need of Divine aid for the work of Salvation, he subjoins: ‘For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure.’ And therefore he warns Timothy and says: ‘Neglect not the grace of God which is in thee;’ and again: ‘For which cause I exhort thee to stir up the grace of God which is in thee...’ (John Cassian, *Conferences*, 13.12, italics mine)

Justin Martyr of Rome (c. 100 – 165 AD)

First Apology

‘But lest some suppose, from what has been said by us, that we say that whatever happens, happens by a fatal necessity, because it is foretold as known beforehand, this too we explain. We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, and chastisements, and good rewards, are rendered according to the merit of each man’s actions. Since if it be not so, but all things happen by fate, neither is anything at all in our own power. For if it be fated that this man, e.g., be good, and this other evil, neither is the former meritorious nor the latter to be blamed. And again, unless the human race have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions, of whatever kind they be. But that it is by free choice they both walk uprightly and stumble, we thus demonstrate. We see the same man making a transition to opposite things. Now, if it had been fated that he were to be either good or bad, he could never have been capable of both the opposites, nor of so many transitions. But not even would some be good and others bad, since we thus make fate the cause of evil, and exhibit her as acting in opposition to herself; or that which has been already stated would seem to be true, that neither virtue nor vice is anything, but that things are only reckoned good or evil by opinion; which, as the true word shows, is the greatest impiety and wickedness. But this we assert is inevitable fate, that they who choose the good have worthy rewards, and they who choose the opposite have their merited awards. For not like other things, as trees and quadrupeds, which cannot act by choice, did God make man: for neither would he be worthy of reward or praise did he not of himself choose the good, but were created for this end; nor, if he were evil, would he be worthy of

punishment, not being evil of himself, but being able to be nothing else than what he was made.’ (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chapter 43)

‘So that what we say about future events being foretold, we do not say it as if they came about by a fatal necessity; but God foreknowing all that shall be done by all men, and it being His decree that the future actions of men shall all be recompensed according to their several value, He foretells by the Spirit of prophecy that He will bestow meet rewards according to the merit of the actions done, always urging the human race to effort and recollection, showing that He cares and provides for men. But by the agency of the devils death has been decreed against those who read the books of Hystaspes, or of the Sibyl, or of the prophets, that through fear they may prevent men who read them from receiving the knowledge of the good, and may retain them in slavery to themselves; which, however, they could not always effect. For not only do we fearlessly read them, but, as you see, bring them for your inspection, knowing that their contents will be pleasing to all. And if we persuade even a few, our gain will be very great; for, as good husbandmen, we shall receive the reward from the Master.’ (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chapter 44) In other words, God’s foreknowledge is simple, not active, and is based on people’s choices.

Second Apology

‘But neither do we affirm that it is by fate that men do what they do, or suffer what they suffer, but that each man by free choice acts rightly or sins; and that it is by the influence of the wicked demons that earnest men, such as Socrates and the like, suffer persecution and are in bonds, while Sardanapalus, Epicurus, and the like, seem to be blessed in abundance and glory. The Stoics, not observing this, maintained that all things take place according to the necessity of fate. But since God in the beginning made the race of angels and men with free-will, they will justly suffer in eternal fire the punishment of whatever sins they have committed. And this is the nature of all that is made, to be capable of vice and virtue. For neither would any of them be praiseworthy unless there were power to turn to both [virtue and vice]. And this also is shown by those men everywhere who have made laws and philosophized according to right reason, by their prescribing to do some things and refrain from others.’ (Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*, chapter 7)

‘And we therefore pray you to publish this little book, appending what you think right, that our opinions may be known to others, and that these persons may have a fair chalice of being freed from erroneous notions and ignorance of good, who by their own fault are become subject to punishment; that so these things may be published to men, because it is in the nature of man to know good and evil; and by their condemning us, whom they do not understand, for actions which they say are wicked, and by delighting in the gods who did such things, and even now require similar actions from men, and by inflicting on us death or bonds or some other such punishment, as if we were guilty of these things, they condemn themselves, so that there is no need of other judges.’ (Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*, chapter 14)

Dialogue with Trypho

‘For God, wishing both angels and men, who were endowed with free-will, and at their own disposal, to do whatever He had strengthened each to do, made them so, that if they chose the things acceptable to Himself, He would keep them free from death and from punishment; but that if they did evil, He would punish each as He sees fit.’ (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 88)

‘But yet, since He knew that it would be good, He created both angels and men free to do that which is righteous, and He appointed periods of time during which He knew it would be good for them to have the exercise of free-will; and because He likewise knew it would be good, He made general and particular judgments; each one’s freedom of will, however, being guarded.’ (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 102)

‘I said briefly by anticipation, that God, wishing men and angels to follow His will, resolved to create them free to do righteousness; possessing reason, that they may know by whom they are created, and through whom they, not existing formerly, do now exist; and with a law that they should be judged by Him, if they do anything contrary to right reason: and of ourselves we, men and angels, shall be convicted of having acted sinfully, unless we repent beforehand. But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall be certainly punished, it did so because it foreknew that they would be unchangeably [wicked], but not because God had created them so. So that if they repent, all who wish for it can obtain mercy from God’ (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 141)

Tatian the Assyrian (110 – 172 AD)

Address to the Greeks

‘For the heavenly Logos, a spirit emanating from the Father and a Logos from the Logos-power, in imitation of the Father who begot Him made man an image of immortality, so that, as incorruption is with God, in like manner, man, sharing in a part of God, might have the immortal principle also. The Logos, too, before the creation of men, was the Framer of angels. And each of these two orders of creatures was made free to act as it pleased, not having the nature of good, which again is with God alone, but is brought to perfection in men through their freedom of choice, in order that the bad man may be justly punished, having become depraved through his own fault, but the just man be deservedly praised for his virtuous deeds, since in the exercise of his free choice he refrained from transgressing the will of God. Such is the constitution of things in reference to angels and men. And the power of the Logos, having in itself a faculty to foresee future events, not as fated, but as taking place by the choice of free agents, foretold from time to time the issues of things to come; it also became a forbiddener of wickedness by means of prohibitions, and the encomiast of those who remained good. And, when men attached themselves to one who was more subtle than the rest, having regard to his being the first-born, and declared him to be God, though he was resisting the law of God, then the power of the Logos excluded the beginner of the folly and his adherents from all fellowship with Himself. And so he who was made in the likeness of God, since the more powerful spirit is separated from him, becomes mortal; but that first-begotten one through his transgression and ignorance becomes a demon; and they who imitated him, that is his illusions, have become a host of demons, and through their freedom of choice have been given up to their own infatuation.’ (Tatian the Assyrian, *Address to the Greeks* 7)

‘Die to the world, repudiating the madness that is in it. Live to God, and by apprehending Him lay aside your old nature. We were not created to die, but we die by our own fault. Our free-will has destroyed us; we who were free have become slaves; we have been sold through sin. Nothing evil has been created by God; we ourselves have manifested wickedness; but we, who have manifested it, are able again to reject it.’ (Tatian the Assyrian, *Address to the Greeks* 11)

‘But further, it becomes us now to seek for what we once had, but have lost, to unite the soul with the Holy Spirit, and to strive after union with God. The human soul consists of many parts, and is not simple; it is composite, so as to manifest itself through the body; for neither could it ever appear by itself without the body, nor does the flesh rise again without the soul. Man is not, as the croaking philosophers say, merely a rational animal, capable of understanding and knowledge; for, according to them, even irrational creatures appear possessed of understanding and knowledge. But man alone is the image and likeness of God; and I mean by man, not one who performs actions similar to those of animals, but one who has advanced far beyond mere humanity — to God Himself. This question we have discussed more minutely in the treatise concerning animals. But the principal point to be spoken of now is, what is intended by the image and likeness of God. That which cannot be compared is no other than abstract being; but that which is compared is no other than that which is like. The perfect God is without flesh; but man is flesh. The bond of the flesh is the soul; that which encloses the soul is the flesh. Such is the nature of man's constitution; and, if it be like a temple, God is pleased to dwell in it by the spirit, His representative; but, if it be not such a habitation, man excels the wild beasts in articulate language only — in other respects his manner of life is like theirs, as one who is not a likeness of God. But none of the demons possess flesh; their structure is spiritual, like that of fire or air. And only by those whom the Spirit of God dwells in and fortifies are the bodies of the demons easily seen, not at all by others — I mean those who possess only soul; for the inferior has not the ability to apprehend the superior. *On this account the nature of the demons has no place for repentance; for they are the reflection of matter and of wickedness. But matter desired to exercise lordship over the soul; and according to their free-will these gave laws of death to men; but men, after the loss of immortality, have conquered death by submitting to death in faith; and by repentance a call has been given to them, according to the word which says, Since they were made a little lower than the angels. And, for every one who has been conquered, it is possible again to conquer, if he rejects the condition which brings death.* And what that is, may be easily seen by men who long for immortality.’ (Tatian the Assyrian, *Address to the Greeks* 15, italics mine)

Athenagoras of Athens (c.133 – c.190 AD)

A Plea for the Christians

This letter was written to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. It is fixed by internal evidence to late 176 or 177 AD.

Each one of us who sins, with his own free will chooses punishment. So the blame lies with him who chooses. God is without blame. (Athenagoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians* 8)

‘Just as with men, who have freedom of choice as to both virtue and vice, so it is among the angels...Some free agents, you will observe, such as they were created by God, continued in those things for which God had made and over which he had ordained them; but some outraged both the constitution of their nature and the government entrusted to them.’ (Athenagoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians* 24)

Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130 – 202 AD)

Against Heresies

‘For He who makes the chaff and He who makes the wheat are not different persons, but one and the same, who judges them, that is, separates them. But the wheat and the chaff, being inanimate and irrational, have been made such by nature. But man, being endowed with reason, and in this respect like to God, having been made free in his will, and with power over himself, is himself the cause to himself, that sometimes he becomes wheat, and sometimes chaff. Wherefore also he shall be justly condemned because, having been created a rational being, he lost the true rationality, and living irrationally, opposed the righteousness of God, serving all lusts; as says the prophet, ‘Man, being in honor, did not understand: he was assimilated to senseless beasts, and made like to them.’ (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 4, paragraph 3)

‘1. But, say they, God hardened the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants. Exodus 9:35 Those, then, who allege such difficulties, do not read in the Gospel that passage where the Lord replied to the disciples, when they asked Him, Why do You speak unto them in parables?— Because it is given unto you to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven; but to them I speak in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not hear, understanding they may not understand; in order that the prophecy of Isaiah regarding them may be fulfilled, saying, Make the heart of this people gross and make their ears dull, and blind their eyes. But blessed are your eyes, which see the things that you see; and your ears, which hear what you hear. Matthew 13:11-16; Isaiah 6:10 For one and the same God [that blesses others] inflicts blindness upon those who do not believe, but who set Him at naught; just as the sun, which is a creature of His, [acts with regard] to those who, by reason of any weakness of the eyes cannot behold his light; but to those who believe in Him and follow Him, He grants a fuller and greater illumination of mind. In accordance with this word, therefore, does the apostle say, in the Second [Epistle] to the Corinthians: In whom the this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine [unto them]. 2 Corinthians 4:4 And again, in that to the Romans: And as they did not think fit to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient. Romans 1:28 Speaking of antichrist, too, he says clearly in the Second to the Thessalonians: And for this cause God shall send them the working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but consented to iniquity. 2 Thessalonians 2:11

2. If, therefore, in the present time also, God, knowing the number of those who will not believe, since He foreknows all things, has given them over to unbelief, and turned away His face from men of this stamp, leaving them in the darkness which they have themselves chosen for themselves, what is there wonderful if He did also at that time give over to their unbelief, Pharaoh, who never would have believed, along with those who were with him? As the Word spoke to Moses from the bush: And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, unless by a mighty hand. Exodus 3:19 And for the reason that the Lord spoke in parables, and brought blindness upon Israel, that seeing they might not see, since He knew the [spirit of] unbelief in them, for the same reason did He harden Pharaoh's heart; in order that, while seeing that it was the finger of God which led forth the people, he might not

believe, but be precipitated into a sea of unbelief, resting in the notion that the exit of these [Israelites] was accomplished by magical power, and that it was not by the operation of God that the Red Sea afforded a passage to the people, but that this occurred by merely natural causes (*sed naturaliter sic se habere*).’ (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* book 4, chapter 29, paragraphs 1 – 2)

‘1. This expression [of our Lord], ‘How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldest not,’ set forth the ancient law of human liberty, because *God made man a free [agent] from the beginning, possessing his own power, even as he does his own soul, to obey the behests (ad utendum sententia) of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion of God. For there is no coercion with God, but a good will [towards us] is present with Him continually.* And therefore does He give good counsel to all. And in man, as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice (for angels are rational beings), so that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God, but preserved by themselves. On the other hand, they who have not obeyed shall, with justice, be not found in possession of the good, and shall receive condign punishment: for God did kindly bestow on them what was good; but they themselves did not diligently keep it, nor deem it something precious, but poured contempt upon His super-eminent goodness. Rejecting therefore the good, and as it were spewing it out, they shall all deservedly incur the just judgment of God, which also the Apostle Paul testifies in his Epistle to the Romans, where he says, ‘But dost thou despise the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering, being ignorant that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.’ ‘But glory and honour,’ he says, ‘to every one that doeth good.’ *God therefore has given that which is good, as the apostle tells us in this Epistle, and they who work it shall receive glory and honour, because they have done that which is good when they had it in their power not to do it; but those who do it not shall receive the just judgment of God, because they did not work good when they had it in their power so to do.*

‘2. *But if some had been made by nature bad, and others good, these latter would not be deserving of praise for being good, for such were they created; nor would the former be reprehensible, for thus they were made [originally]. But since all men are of the same nature, able both to hold fast and to do what is good; and, on the other hand, having also the power to cast it from them and not to do it,--some do justly receive praise even among men who are under the control of good laws (and much more from God), and obtain deserved testimony of their choice of good in general, and of persevering therein; but the others are blamed, and receive a just condemnation, because of their rejection of what is fair and good. And therefore the prophets used to exhort men to what was good, to act justly and to work righteousness, as I have so largely demonstrated, because it is in our power so to do, and because by excessive negligence we might become forgetful, and thus stand in need of that good counsel which the good God has given us to know by means of the prophets.*

‘3. For this reason the Lord also said, ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.’ And, ‘Take heed to yourselves, lest perchance your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and worldly cares.’ And, ‘Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He returns from the wedding, that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.’ And again, ‘The servant who knows his Lord’s will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.’ And, ‘Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’ And again, ‘But if the servant say in his heart, The Lord delayeth, and begin to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat, and drink, and to be drunken, his Lord will come in a day on which he does not expect Him, and shall cut him in sunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites.’ *All such passages demonstrate the independent will of man, and at the same time the counsel which God conveys to him, by which He exhorts us to submit ourselves to Him, and seeks to turn us away from [the sin of] unbelief against Him, without, however, in any way coercing us.*

‘4. No doubt, if any one is unwilling to follow the Gospel itself, it is in his power [to reject it], but it is not expedient. For *it is in man’s power to disobey God, and to forfeit what is good*; but [such conduct] brings no small amount of injury and mischief. And on this account Paul says, ‘All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient;’ referring both to the liberty of man, in which respect ‘all things are lawful,’ God exercising no compulsion in regard to him; and [by the expression] ‘not expedient’ pointing out that we ‘should not use our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness,’ for this is not expedient. And again he says, ‘Speak ye every man truth with his neighbour.’ And, ‘Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor scurrility, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.’ [4406] And, ‘For ye were sometimes darkness,

but now are ye light in the Lord; walk honestly as children of the light, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in anger and jealousy. And such were some of you; but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified in the name of our Lord.’ *If then it were not in our power to do or not to do these things, what reason had the apostle, and much more the Lord Himself, to give us counsel to do some things, and to abstain from others? But because man is possessed of free will from the beginning, and God is possessed of free will, in whose likeness man was created, advice is always given to him to keep fast the good, which thing is done by means of obedience to God.*

‘5. And not merely in works, but also in faith, has God preserved the will of man free and under his own control, saying, ‘According to thy faith be it unto thee;’ thus showing that there is a faith specially belonging to man, since he has an opinion specially his own. And again, ‘All things are possible to him that believeth;’ and, ‘Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.’ Now all such expressions demonstrate that man is in his own power with respect to faith. And for this reason, ‘he that believeth in Him has eternal life while he who believeth not the Son hath not eternal life, but the wrath of God shall remain upon him.’ In the same manner therefore the Lord, both showing His own goodness, and *indicating that man is in his own free will and his own power*, said to Jerusalem, ‘How often have I wished to gather thy children together, as a hen [gathereth] her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Wherefore your house shall be left unto you desolate.’

‘6. Those, again, who maintain the opposite to these [conclusions], do themselves present the Lord as destitute of power, as if, forsooth, He were unable to accomplish what He willed; or, on the other hand, as being ignorant that they were by nature ‘material,’ as these men express it, and such as cannot receive His immortality. ‘But He should not,’ say they, ‘have created angels of such a nature that they were capable of transgression, nor men who immediately proved ungrateful towards Him; for they were made rational beings, endowed with the power of examining and judging, and were not [formed] as things irrational or of a [merely] animal nature, which can do nothing of their own will, but are drawn by necessity and compulsion to what is good, in which things there is one mind and one usage, working mechanically in one groove (inflexibiles et sine judicio), who are incapable of being anything else except just what they had been created.’ *But upon this supposition, neither would what is good be grateful to them, nor communion with God be precious, nor would the good be very much to be sought after, which would present itself without their own proper endeavour, care, or study, but would be implanted of its own accord and without their concern. Thus it would come to pass, that their being good would be of no consequence, because they were so by nature rather than by will, and are possessors of good spontaneously, not by choice; and for this reason they would not understand this fact, that good is a comely thing, nor would they take pleasure in it. For how can those who are ignorant of good enjoy it? Or what credit is it to those who have not aimed at it? And what crown is it to those who have not followed in pursuit of it, like those victorious in the contest?’*

‘7. On this account, too, did the Lord assert that the kingdom of heaven was the portion of ‘the violent;’ and He says, ‘The violent take it by force;’ that is, those who by strength and earnest striving are on the watch to snatch it away on the moment. On this account also Paul the Apostle says to the Corinthians, ‘Know ye not, that they who run in a racecourse, do all indeed run, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. Every one also who engages in the contest is temperate in all things: now these men [do it] that they may obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. But I so run, not as uncertainty; I fight, not as one beating the air; but I make my body livid, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when preaching to others, I may myself be rendered a castaway.’ This able wrestler, therefore, exhorts us to the struggle for immortality, that we may be crowned, and may deem the crown precious, namely, that which is acquired by our struggle, but which does not encircle us of its own accord (sed non ultro coalitam). And the harder we strive, so much is it the more valuable; while so much the more valuable it is, so much the more should we esteem it. And indeed those things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care. Since, then, this power has been conferred upon us, both the Lord has taught and the apostle has enjoined us the more to love God, that we may reach this [prize] for ourselves by striving after it. For otherwise, no doubt, this our good would be [virtually] irrational, because not the result of trial. Moreover, the faculty of seeing would not appear to be so desirable, unless we had known what a loss it were to be devoid of sight; and health, too, is rendered all the more estimable by an acquaintance with disease; light, also, by contrasting it with darkness; and life with death. Just in the same way is the heavenly kingdom honourable to those who have known the earthly one. But in proportion as it is more honourable, so much the more do we prize it; and if we have prized it more, we shall be the more glorious in the presence of God. The Lord has therefore endured all these things on our behalf, in order that we, having been instructed by means of them all, may be in all respects circumspect for the time to come, and that, having been rationally taught to love God, we may

continue in His perfect love: for God has displayed long-suffering in the case of man's apostasy; while man has been instructed by means of it, as also the prophet says, 'Thine own apostasy shall heal thee;' God thus determining all things beforehand for the bringing of man to perfection, for his edification, and for the revelation of His dispensations, that goodness may both be made apparent, and righteousness perfected, and that the Church may be fashioned after the image of His Son, and that man may finally be brought to maturity at some future time, becoming ripe through such privileges to see and comprehend God.' (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 37, paragraphs 1 – 7)

'And since the apostasy tyrannized over us unjustly, and, though we were by nature the property of the omnipotent God, alienated us contrary to nature, rendering us its own disciples, the Word of God, powerful in all things, and not defective with regard to His own justice, did righteously turn against that apostasy, and redeem from it His own property, not by violent means, as the [apostasy] had obtained dominion over us at the beginning, when it insatiably snatched away what was not its own, *but by means of persuasion, as became a God of counsel, who does not use violent means to obtain what He desires*; so that neither should justice be infringed upon, nor the ancient handiwork of God go to destruction.' (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 1)

'In the previous books I have set forth the causes for which God permitted these things to be made, and have pointed out that all such have been created for the benefit of that human nature which is saved, ripening for immortality that which is [possessed] of its own free will and its own power, and preparing and rendering it more adapted for eternal subjection to God.' (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 29)

Tertullian of Carthage (160 – 220 AD)

Against Marcion

'Now then, ye dogs, whom the apostle puts outside, and who yelp at the God of truth, let us come to your various questions. These are the bones of contention, which you are perpetually gnawing! If God is good, and prescient of the future, and able to avert evil, why did He permit man, the very image and likeness of Himself, and, by the origin of his soul, His own substance too, to be deceived by the devil, and fall from obedience of the law into death? For if He had been good, and so unwilling that such a catastrophe should happen, and prescient, so as not to be ignorant of what was to come to pass, and powerful enough to hinder its occurrence, that issue would never have come about, which should be impossible under these three conditions of the divine greatness. Since, however, it has occurred, the contrary proposition is most certainly true, that God must be deemed neither good, nor prescient, nor powerful. For as no such issue could have happened had God been such as He is reputed—good, and prescient, and mighty—so has this issue actually happened, because He is not such a God. In reply, we must first vindicate those attributes in the Creator which are called in question—namely, His goodness and foreknowledge, and power. But I shall not linger long over this point for Christ's own definition comes to our aid at once. From works must proofs be obtained. The Creator's works testify at once to His goodness, since they are good, as we have shown, and to His power, since they are mighty, and spring indeed out of nothing. And even if they were made out of some (previous) matter, as some will have it, they are even thus out of nothing, because they were not what they are. In short, both they are great because they are good; and God is likewise mighty, because all things are His own, whence He is almighty. But what shall I say of His prescience, which has for its witnesses as many prophets as it inspired? After all, what title to prescience do we look for in the Author of the universe, since it was by this very attribute that He foreknew all things when He appointed them their places, and appointed them their places when He foreknew them? There is sin itself. If He had not foreknown this, He would not have proclaimed a caution against it under the penalty of death. Now if there were in God such attributes as must have rendered it both impossible and improper for any evil to have happened to man, and yet evil did occur, let us consider man's condition also—whether it were not, in fact, rather the cause why that came to pass which could not have happened through God. I find, then, that man was by God constituted free, master of his own will and power; indicating the presence of God's image and likeness in him by nothing so well as by this constitution of his nature. For it was not by his face, and by the lineaments of his body, though they were so varied in his human nature, that he expressed his likeness to the form of God; but he showed his stamp in that essence which he derived from God Himself (that is, the spiritual, which answered to the form of God), and in the freedom and power of his will. This his state was confirmed even by the very law which God then imposed upon him. For a law would not be imposed upon one who had it not in his power to render that obedience which is due to law; nor again, would the penalty of death be threatened against sin, if a contempt of the law were

impossible to man in the liberty of his will. So in the Creator's subsequent laws also you will find, when He sets before man good and evil, life and death, that the entire course of discipline is arranged in precepts by God's calling men from sin, and threatening and exhorting them; and this on no other ground than that man is free, with a will either for obedience or resistance.' (Tertullian of Carthage, *Against Marcion* 2.5)

'One may call a breeze the image of the spirit. In the same manner, man is the image of God, that is, of spirit; for God is spirit. Afflatus is therefore the image of the spirit. Now the image is not in any case equal to the very thing. It is one thing to be like the reality, and another thing to be the reality itself. So, although the afflatus is the image of the spirit, it is yet not possible to compare the image of God in such a way, that, because the reality — that is, the spirit, or in other words, the Divine Being — is faultless, therefore the afflatus also, that is to say, the image, ought not by any possibility to have done wrong. In this respect will the image be less than the reality, and the afflatus inferior to the spirit, in that, while it possesses beyond doubt the true lineaments of divinity, such as an immortal soul, freedom and its own mastery over itself, foreknowledge in a great degree, reasonableness, capacity of understanding and knowledge, it is even in these respects an image still, and never amounts to the actual power of Deity, nor to absolute exemption from fault — a property which is only conceded to God, that is, to the reality, and which is simply incompatible with an image. An image, although it may express all the lineaments of the reality, is yet wanting in its intrinsic power; it is destitute of motion. In like manner, the soul, the image of the spirit, is unable to express the simple power thereof, that is to say, its happy exemption from sinning.' (Tertullian of Carthage, *Against Marcion* 2.9)

"Woe, says He, to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Luke 22:22 Now it is certain that in this woe must be understood the imprecation and threat of an angry and incensed Master, unless Judas was to escape with impunity after so vast a sin. If he were meant to escape with impunity, the woe was an idle word; if not, he was of course to be punished by Him against whom he had committed the sin of treachery. Now, if He knowingly permitted the man, whom He deliberately elected to be one of His companions, to plunge into so great a crime, you must no longer use an argument against the Creator in Adam's case, which may now recoil on your own God: either that he was ignorant, and had no foresight to hinder the future sinner; or that he was unable to hinder him, even if he was ignorant; or else that he was unwilling, even if he had the foreknowledge and the ability; and so deserved the stigma of maliciousness, in having permitted the man of his own choice to perish in his sin. I advise you therefore (willingly) to acknowledge the Creator in that god of yours, rather than against your will to be assimilating your excellent god to Him. For in the case of Peter, too, he gives you proof that he is a jealous God, when he destined the apostle, after his presumptuous protestations of zeal, to a flat denial of him, rather than prevent his fall. The Christ of the prophets was destined, moreover, to be betrayed with a kiss, Luke 22:47-49 for He was the Son indeed of Him who was honoured with the lips by the people. Isaiah 29:13 When led before the council, He is asked whether He is the Christ. Luke 22:66-67 Of what Christ could the Jews have inquired but their own? Why, therefore, did He not, even at that moment, declare to them the rival (Christ)? You reply, In order that He might be able to suffer. In other words, that this most excellent god might plunge men into crime, whom he was still keeping in ignorance. But even if he had told them, he would yet have to suffer. For he said, If I tell you, you will not believe. Luke 22:67 And refusing to believe, they would have continued to insist on his death. And would he not even more probably still have had to suffer, if had announced himself as sent by the rival god, and as being, therefore, the enemy of the Creator? It was not, then, in order that He might suffer, that He at that critical moment refrained from proclaiming Himself the other Christ, but because they wanted to extort a confession from His mouth, which they did not mean to believe even if He had given it to them, whereas it was their bounden duty to have acknowledged Him in consequence of His works, which were fulfilling their Scriptures. It was thus plainly His course to keep Himself at that moment unrevealed, because a spontaneous recognition was due to Him." (Tertullian of Carthage, *Against Marcion* 4.41)

Comments on Tertullian:

"Now, if He knowingly permitted the man, [Judas] whom He deliberately elected to be one of His companions, to plunge into so great a crime, you must no longer use an argument against the Creator in Adam's case, which may now recoil on your own God: [Open Theism's view of foreknowledge - though there are varying Open views]

"either that he was ignorant, and had no foresight to hinder the future sinner;" [Heretical]

“or that he was unable to hinder him, even if he was ignorant;” [determinism or compatibilism - Augustine would later say precisely what Tertullian rejects here using the exact phrase “God is unwilling” to save them]

“or else that he was unwilling, even if he had the foreknowledge and the ability;” [the logical conclusion of determinism or compatibilism - which is resolved by them by holding to an acknowledged paradox instead]

“and so deserved the stigma of maliciousness, in having permitted the man of his own choice to perish in his sin.” [Tertullian's view]

“I advise you therefore (willingly) to acknowledge the Creator in that god of yours, rather than against your will to be assimilating your excellent god to Him. For in the case of Peter, too, he gives you proof that he is a jealous God, when he destined the apostle, after his presumptuous protestations of zeal, to a flat denial of him, rather than prevent his fall. The Christ of the prophets was destined, moreover, to be betrayed with a kiss, [Luke 22:47-49] for He was the Son indeed of Him who was honoured with the lips by the people. [Isaiah 29:13] When led before the council, He is asked whether He is the Christ. [Luke 22:66-67] Of what Christ could the Jews have inquired but their own?

Why, therefore, did He not, even at that moment, declare to them the rival (Christ)? [the Marcionite theory of a rival Christ] You reply, In order that He might be able to suffer. In other words, that this most excellent god might plunge men into crime, whom he was still keeping in ignorance.” - [see also Calvinism where ignorant men are guilty when God deliberately keeps them ignorant. Marcion taught the same thing].

“But even if he had told them, he would yet have to suffer. For he said, If I tell you, you will not believe.” [Luke 22:67 - divine revelation of a counterfactual]

“And refusing to believe, they would have continued to insist on his death. And would he not even more probably still have had to suffer, if he had announced himself as sent by the rival god, and as being, therefore, the enemy of the Creator?

It was not, then, in order that He might suffer, that He at that critical moment refrained from proclaiming Himself the other Christ, but because they wanted to extort a confession from His mouth, which they did not mean to believe even if He had given it to them, whereas it was their bound duty to have acknowledged Him in consequence of His works, which were fulfilling their Scriptures. It was thus plainly His course to keep Himself at that moment unrevealed, because a spontaneous recognition was due to Him.” [God permitting the exercise of free will, while also being totally sovereign over the events and the people and with full foreknowledge of the factual and counterfactuals of the event].

Exhortation on Chastity

‘...it is not the part of good and solid faith to refer all things to the will of God...as to make us fail to understand that there is something within our power.’ (Tertullian of Carthage, *Exhortation on Chastity*, 2)

On the Soul

‘If, again, the evil of sin was developed in him, this must not be accounted as a natural disposition: it was rather produced by the instigation of the (old) serpent as far from being incidental to his nature as it was from being material in him, for we have already excluded belief in Matter. Now, if neither the spiritual element, nor what the heretics call the material element, was properly inherent in him (since, if he had been created out of matter, the germ of evil must have been an integral part of his constitution), it remains that the one only original element of his nature was what is called the animal (the principle of vitality, the soul), which we maintain to be simple and uniform in its condition. Concerning this, it remains for us to inquire whether, as being called natural, it ought to be deemed subject to change. (The heretics whom we have referred to) deny that nature is susceptible of any change, in order that they may be able to establish and settle their threefold theory, or trinity, in all its characteristics as to the several natures, because a good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit; and nobody gathers figs of

thorns, nor grapes of brambles. Luke 6:43-44 If so, then God will not be able any longer to raise up from the stones children unto Abraham; nor to make a generation of vipers bring forth fruits of repentance. Matthew 3:7-9 And if so, the apostle too was in error when he said in his epistle, You were at one time darkness, (but now are you light in the Lord:) Ephesians 5:8 and, We also were by nature children of wrath; Ephesians 2:3 and, Such were some of you, but you are washed. 1 Corinthians 6:11 The statements, however, of holy Scripture will never be discordant with truth. A corrupt tree will never yield good fruit, unless the better nature be grafted into it; nor will a good tree produce evil fruit, except by the same process of cultivation. Stones also will become children of Abraham, if educated in Abraham's faith; and a generation of vipers will bring forth the fruits of penitence, if they reject the poison of their malignant nature. This will be the power of the grace of God, more potent indeed than nature, exercising its sway over the faculty that underlies itself within us — even the freedom of our will, which is described as αὐτεξούσιος (of independent authority); and inasmuch as this faculty is itself also natural and mutable, in whatsoever direction it turns, it inclines of its own nature. Now, that there does exist within us naturally this independent authority (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον), we have already shown in opposition both to Marcion and to Hermogenes. If, then, the natural condition has to be submitted to a definition, it must be determined to be twofold — there being the category of the born and the unborn, the made and not-made. Now that which has received its constitution by being made or by being born, is by nature capable of being changed, for it can be both born again and re-made; whereas that which is not-made and unborn will remain for ever immovable. Since, however, this state is suited to God alone, as the only Being who is unborn and not-made (and therefore immortal and unchangeable), it is absolutely certain that the nature of all other existences which are born and created is subject to modification and change; so that if the threefold state is to be ascribed to the soul, it must be supposed to arise from the mutability of its accidental circumstances, and not from the appointment of nature.' (Tertullian of Carthage, *On the Soul* 21)

'We define the soul as born of the breath of God; immortal, corporeal, having shape, simple in substance, susceptible of the functions proper to it, developing in various ways, having freedom of choice, affected by external events, mutable in its faculties, rational, dominant, capable of presentiment' (Tertullian of Carthage, *On the Soul* 22.2)

Clement of Alexandria (153 – 217 AD)

The Instructor

"It is not incomplete size of stature, nor a definite measure of time, nor additional secret teachings in things that are manly and more perfect, that the apostle, who himself professes to be a preacher of childishness, alludes to when he sends it, as it were, into banishment; but he applies the name "children" to those who are under the law, who are terrified by fear as children are by bugbears; and "men" to us who are obedient to the Word and masters of ourselves, who have believed, and are saved by voluntary choice, and are rationally, not irrationally, frightened by terror." (Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 1.6)

"For He shows both things: both His divinity in His foreknowledge of what would take place, and His love in affording an opportunity for repentance to the self-determination of the soul." (Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 1.9)

Stromata

'Now the devil, being possessed of free-will, was able both to repent and to steal; and it was he who was the author of the theft, not the Lord, who did not prevent him. But neither was the gift hurtful, so as to require that prevention should intervene. But if strict accuracy must be employed in dealing with them, let them know, that that which does not prevent what we assert to have taken place in the theft, is not a cause at all; but that what prevents is involved in the accusation of being a cause. For he that protects with a shield is the cause of him whom he protects not being wounded; preventing him, as he does, from being wounded. For the demon of Socrates was a cause, not by not preventing, but by exhorting, even if (strictly speaking) he did not exhort. And neither praises nor censures, neither rewards nor punishments, are right, when the soul has not the power of inclination and disinclination, but evil is involuntary. Whence he who prevents is a cause; while he who prevents not judges justly the soul's choice. So in no respect is God the author of evil. But since free choice and inclination originate sins, and a mistaken judgment sometimes prevails, from which, since it is ignorance and stupidity, we do not take pains to recede, punishments are

rightly inflicted. For to take fever is involuntary; but when one takes fever through his own fault, from excess, we blame him. Inasmuch, then, as evil is involuntary — for no one prefers evil as evil; but induced by the pleasure that is in it, and imagining it good, considers it desirable — such being the case, to free ourselves from ignorance, and from evil and voluptuous choice, and above all, to withhold our assent from those delusive phantasies, depends on ourselves.’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.17)

‘Further, the counsels and activities of those who have rebelled, being partial, proceed from a bad disposition, as bodily diseases from a bad constitution, but are guided by universal Providence to a salutary issue, even though the cause be productive of disease. It is accordingly the greatest achievement of divine Providence, not to allow the evil, which has sprung from voluntary apostasy, to remain useless, and for no good, and not to become in all respects injurious. For it is the work of the divine wisdom, and excellence, and power, not alone to do good (for this is, so to speak, the nature of God, as it is of fire to warm and of light to illumine), but especially to ensure that what happens through the evils hatched by any, may come to a good and useful issue, and to use to advantage those things which appear to be evils, as also the testimony which accrues from temptation.’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1:17)

“We have heard from the Scriptures that self-determining choice and refusal have been given by the Lord to men. Therefore, we rest in the infallible criterion of faith, manifesting a willing spirit, since we have chosen life.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 2.4)

“To obey or not to obey is in our own power, provided we do not have the excuse of ignorance.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 2.6)

“Appetite is then the movement of the mind to or from something. Passion is an excessive appetite exceeding the measures of reason, or appetite unbridled and disobedient to the word. Passions, then, are a perturbation of the soul contrary to nature, in disobedience to reason. But revolt and distraction and disobedience are in our own power, as obedience is in our power. Wherefore voluntary actions are judged.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 2.13)

“Mistake is a sin contrary to calculation; and voluntary sin is crime; and crime is voluntary wickedness. Sin, then, is on my part voluntary.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 2.15)

“The Lord clearly shows sins and transgressions to be in our own power, by prescribing modes of cure corresponding to the maladies.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 2.15)

“Assuredly sin is an activity, not an existence: and therefore it is not a work of God. Now sinners are called enemies of God—enemies, that is, of the commands which they do not obey, as those who obey become friends, the one named so from their fellowship, the others from their estrangement, which is the result of free choice; for there is neither enmity nor sin without the enemy and the sinner.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 4.13)

‘Above all, this ought to be known, that by nature we are adapted for virtue; not so as to be possessed of it from our birth, but so as to be adapted for acquiring it. By which consideration is solved the question propounded to us by the heretics, Whether Adam was created perfect or imperfect? Well, if imperfect, how could the work of a perfect God — above all, that work being man — be imperfect? And if perfect, how did he transgress the commandments? For they shall hear from us that he was not perfect in his creation, but adapted to the reception of virtue. For it is of great importance in regard to virtue to be made fit for its attainment. And it is intended that we should be saved by ourselves. This, then, is the nature of the soul, to move of itself.’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6:11 – 12)

‘This was the law from the first, that virtue should be the object of voluntary choice.’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7:2)

“For the son gratifies a good father, by showing himself good and like his father; and in like manner the subject, the governor. For believing and obeying are in our own power.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 7.3)

“But those who have not seen the self-determination of the human soul, and its incapability of being treated as a slave in what respects the choice of life, being disgusted at what is done through rude injustice, do not think that there is a God. On a par with these in opinion, are they who, falling into licentiousness in pleasures, and grievous pains, and unlooked-for accidents, and bidding defiance to events, say that there is no God, or that, though existing,

He does not oversee all things. And others there are, who are persuaded that those they reckon gods are capable of being prevailed upon by sacrifices and gifts, favouring, so to speak, their profligacies; and will not believe that He is the only true God, who exists in the invariableness of righteous goodness.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7:3)

“Nor will he who is saved be saved against his will, for he is not inanimate. But above all, he will speed to salvation voluntarily and of free choice.” (Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 7.7)

Salvation of the Rich Man

“If thou wilt be perfect.” Consequently he was not yet perfect. For nothing is more perfect than what is perfect. And divinely the expression “if thou wilt” showed the self-determination of the soul holding converse with Him. For choice depended on the man as being free; but the gift on God as the Lord. And He gives to those who are willing and are exceedingly earnest, and ask, that so their salvation may become their own. For God compels not (for compulsion is repugnant to God), but supplies to those who seek, and bestows on those who ask, and opens to those who knock. If thou wilt, then, if thou really willest, and art not deceiving thyself, acquire what thou lackest.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Salvation of the Rich Man* 10)

“And this is the mind and judgment of man, which has freedom in itself and self-determination in the treatment of what is assigned to it.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Salvation of the Rich Man* 14)

‘A man by himself working and toiling at freedom from sinful desires achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows himself to be very eager and earnest about this, he attains it by the addition of the power of God. God works together with willing souls. But if the person abandons his eagerness, the spirit from God is also restrained. To save the unwilling is the act of one using compulsion; but to save the willing, that of one showing grace.’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Salvation of the Rich Man* 21)

Elucidations

‘But if any occasion of converse with God becomes prayer, no opportunity of access to God ought to be omitted. Without doubt, the holiness of the Gnostic, in union with [God's] blessed Providence, exhibits in voluntary confession the perfect beneficence of God. For the holiness of the Gnostic, and the reciprocal benevolence of the friend of God, are a kind of corresponding movement of providence. For neither is God involuntarily good, as the fire is warming; but in Him the imparting of good things is voluntary, even if He receive the request previously. Nor shall he who is saved be saved against his will, for he is not inanimate; but he will above all voluntarily and of free choice speed to salvation. Wherefore also man received the commandments in order that he might be self-impelled, to whatever he wished of things to be chosen and to be avoided. Wherefore God does not do good by necessity, but from His free choice benefits those who spontaneously turn. For the Providence which extends to us from God is not ministerial, as that service which proceeds from inferiors to superiors. But in pity for our weakness, the continual dispensations of Providence work, as the care of shepherds towards the sheep, and of a king towards his subjects; we ourselves also conducting ourselves obediently towards our superiors, who take the management of us, as appointed, in accordance with the commission from God with which they are invested. Consequently those who render the most free and kingly service, which is the result of a pious mind and of knowledge, are servants and attendants of the Divinity. Each place, then, and time, in which we entertain the idea of God, is in reality sacred.’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Elucidations* 7)

Origen of Alexandria (185 – 255 AD)

Against Celsus

“Let us see how he continues after this: These events, he says, he predicted as being a God, and the prediction must by all means come to pass. God, therefore, who above all others ought to do good to men, and especially to those of his own household, led on his own disciples and prophets, with whom he was in the habit of eating and drinking, to such a degree of wickedness, that they became impious and unholy men. Now, of a truth, he who shared a man's table would not be guilty of conspiring against him; but after banqueting with God, he became a conspirator. And, what is still more absurd, God himself plotted against the members of his own table, by converting them into traitors

and villains! Now, since you wish me to answer even those charges of Celsus which seem to me frivolous, the following is our reply to such statements. Celsus imagines that an event, predicted through foreknowledge, comes to pass because it was predicted; but we do not grant this, maintaining that he who foretold it was not the cause of its happening, because he foretold it would happen; but the future event itself, which would have taken place though not predicted, afforded the occasion to him, who was endowed with foreknowledge, of foretelling its occurrence. Now, certainly this result is present to the foreknowledge of him who predicts an event, when it is possible that it may or may not happen, viz., that one or other of these things will take place. For we do not assert that he who foreknows an event, by secretly taking away the possibility of its happening or not, makes any such declaration as this: This shall infallibly happen, and it is impossible that it can be otherwise. And this remark applies to all the foreknowledge of events dependent upon ourselves, whether contained in the sacred Scriptures or in the histories of the Greeks. Now, what is called by logicians an idle argument, which is a sophism, will be no sophism as far as Celsus can help, but according to sound reasoning it is a sophism. And that this may be seen, I shall take from the Scriptures the predictions regarding Judas, or the foreknowledge of our Saviour regarding him as the traitor; and from the Greek histories the oracle that was given to Laius, conceding for the present its truth, since it does not affect the argument. Now, in Ps. cviii., Judas is spoken of by the mouth of the Saviour, in words beginning thus: Hold not Your peace, O God of my praise; for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me. Now, if you carefully observe the contents of the psalm, you will find that, as it was foreknown that he would betray the Saviour, so also was he considered to be himself the cause of the betrayal, and deserving, on account of his wickedness, of the imprecations contained in the prophecy. For let him suffer these things, because, says the psalmist, he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man. Wherefore it was possible for him to show mercy, and not to persecute him whom he did persecute. But although he might have done these things, he did not do them, but carried out the act of treason, so as to merit the curses pronounced against him in the prophecy.' (Origen of Alexandria, *Against Celsus* 2.20)

In response to a claim (much like the Calvinist doctrine of God's exhaustive sovereignty) that 'whatever happens in the universe, whether it be the work of God, of angels [or] of other demons...is regulated by the law of the Most High God,' Origen says, 'This is...incorrect; for we cannot say that transgressors follow the law of God when they transgress; and Scripture declares that it is not only wicked men who are transgressors, but also wicked demons and wicked angels...When we say that 'the providence of God regulates all things,' we utter a great truth if we attribute to that providence nothing but what is just and right. But if we ascribe to the providence of God all things whatsoever, however unjust they may be, then it is no longer true that the providence of God regulates all things.' (Origen of Alexandria, *Against Celsus* 7:68)

'He makes Himself known to those who, after doing all that their powers will allow, confess that they need help from Him.' (Origen of Alexandria, *Against Celsus* 7:42)

De Principiis (On First Principles)

'Let us begin, then, with those words which were spoken to Pharaoh, who is said to have been hardened by God, in order that he might not let the people go; and, along with his case, the language of the apostle also will be considered, where he says, 'Therefore He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens.' For it is on these passages chiefly that the heretics rely, asserting that salvation is not in our own power, but that souls are of such a nature as must by all means be either lost or saved; and that in no way can a soul which is of an evil nature become good, or one which is of a virtuous nature be made bad.' (Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis* 3.1.8)

'This is also clearly defined in the teaching of the church, that every rational soul has free will and volition....we are not forced by any necessity to act either rightly or wrongly.' (Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis* 4.240)

'It seems a plausible thing that rational natures, from whom the faculty of free will is never taken away, may be again subjected to movements of some kind.' (Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis* 4.272)

'Since those rational creatures themselves... were endowed with the power of free will, this freedom of the will incited each one to either progress (by imitation of God), or else it reduced a person to failure through negligence.' (Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis* 4.292)

‘In the preaching of the church, there is included the doctrine concerning a just judgment of God. When this teaching is believed to be true, it incites those who hear it to live virtuously and to shun sin by all means. For they clearly acknowledge that things worthy of praise and blame are within our own power.’
(Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis* 4.302)

The Ebionite Clementine Literature (2nd – 4th centuries)

Many scholars believe that the Ebionites, a Jewish Christian heterodox sect emphasizing the ‘two ways’ paradigm similar to the Didache and Epistle of Barnabas, are responsible for this literature. Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History 3.38 demonstrates an awareness of this literature and says, ‘And now some have only the other day brought forward other wordy and lengthy compositions as being Clement’s, containing dialogues of Peter and Appion, of which there is absolutely no mention in the ancients.’ A citation of this literature by Origen, later included by Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea in the *Philokalia*, has been disputed by Armitage Robinson. In any case, the literature is interesting from an historical standpoint, as it appears to date to the 2nd – 4th centuries in its composition and final form.

Clementine Homilies

‘But, you say, God ought to have made us at first so that we should not have thought at all of such things. You who say this do not know what is free-will, and how it is possible to be really good; that he who is good by his own choice is really good; but he who is made good by another under necessity is not really good, because he is not what he is by his own choice. Since therefore every one’s freedom constitutes the true good, and shows the true evil, God has contrived that friendship or hostility should be in each man by occasions. But no, it is said: everything that we think He makes us to think. Stop! Why do you blaspheme more and more, in saying this? For if we are under His influence in all that we think, you say that He is the cause of fornications, lusts, avarice, and all blasphemy. Cease your evil-speaking, ye who ought to speak well of Him, and to bestow all honour upon Him. And do not say that God does not claim any honour; for if He Himself claims nothing, you ought to look to what is right, and to answer with thankful voice Him who does you good in all things.’ (*Clementine Homilies* 11.8)

‘The prophet of the truth who appeared on earth taught us that the Maker and God of all gave two kingdoms to two, good and evil; granting to the evil the sovereignty over the present world along with law, so that he, it, should have the right to punish those who act unjustly; but to the good He gave the eternal to come. But He made each man free with the power to give himself up to whatsoever he prefers, either to the present evil or the future good.’
(*Clementine Homilies* 15.7)

‘And Simon said: But what if, being lifeless, it possesses a nature capable of producing what is evil and what is good? And Peter said: According to this statement, it is neither good nor evil, because it does not act by free choice, being lifeless and insensible. Wherefore it is possible to perceive distinctly in this matter, how, being lifeless, it produces as if it were living; and being insensible, it yet plainly fashions artistic shapes both in animals and plants. And Simon said: What! If God Himself gave it life, is not He, then, the cause of the evils which it produces? And Peter said: If God gave it life according to His own will, then it is His Spirit that produces it, and no longer is it anything hostile to God, or of equal power with Him; or it is impossible that everything made by Him is made according as He wishes. But you will say, He Himself is the cause of evil, since He Himself produces the evils through it. What sort, then, are the evils of which you speak? Poisonous serpents and deadly plants, or demons, or any other of those things that can disturb men?—which things would not have been injurious had not man sinned, for which reason death came in. For if man were sinless, the poison of serpents would have no effect, nor the activities of injurious plants, nor would there be the disturbances of demons, nor would man naturally have any other suffering; but losing his immortality on account of his sin, he has become, as I said, capable of every suffering. But if you say, Why, then, was the nature of man made at the beginning capable of death? I tell you, because of free-will; for if we were not capable of death, we could not, as being immortal, be punished on account of our voluntary sin.’ (*Clementine Homilies* 19.15)

‘Man, therefore, He created with free-will, and possessing the capability of inclining to whatever actions he wishes.’
(*Clementine Homilies* 20.2)

Clementine Recognitions

‘And after Lazarus, Joseph, who also was one of his followers, said: You have spoken all things rightly. Teach me also this, as I am eager to know it, why, when you give the same discourses to all, some believe and others disbelieve? And Peter said: It is because my discourses are not charms, so that every one that hears them must without hesitation believe them. The fact that some believe, and others do not, points out to the intelligent the freedom of the will. And when he said this, we all blessed him.’ (*Clementine Recognitions* 20.10)

‘Whether any one, truly hearing the word of the true Prophet; is willing or unwilling to receive it, and to embrace His burden, that is, the precepts of life, he has either in his power, for we are free in will. For if it were so, that those who hear had it not in their power to do otherwise than they had heard, there were some power of nature in virtue of which it were not free to him to pass over to another opinion. Or if, again, no one of the hearers could at all receive it, this also were a power of nature which should compel the doing of some one thing, and should leave no place for the other course. But now, since it is free for the mind to turn its judgment to which side it pleases, and to choose the way which it approves, it is clearly manifest that there is in men a liberty of choice.’ (*Clementine Recognitions* 5.6)

‘Therefore, before any one hears what is good for him, it is certain that he is ignorant; and being ignorant, he wishes and desires to do what is not good for him; wherefore he is not judged for that. But when once he has heard the causes of his error, and has received the method of truth, then, if he remain in those errors with which he had been long ago preoccupied, he shall rightly be called into judgment, to suffer punishment, because he has spent in the sport of errors that portion of life which was given him to be spent in living well. But he who, hearing those things, willingly receives them, and is thankful that the teaching of good things has been brought to him, inquires more eagerly, and does not cease to learn, until he ascertains whether there be truly another world, in which rewards are prepared for the good. And when he is assured of this, he gives thanks to God because He has shown him the light of truth; and for the future directs his actions in all good works, for which he is assured that there is a reward prepared in the world to come; while he constantly wonders and is astonished at the errors of other men, and that no one sees the truth which is placed before his eyes. Yet he himself, rejoicing in the riches of wisdom which he has found, desires insatiably to enjoy them, and is delighted with the practice of good works; hastening to attain, with a clean heart and a pure conscience, the world to come, when he shall be able even to see God, the king of all.’ (*Clementine Recognitions* 5.7)

‘But the sole cause of our wanting and being deprived of all these things is ignorance. For while men do not know how much good there is in knowledge, they do not suffer the evil of ignorance to be removed from them; for they know not how great a difference is involved in the change of one of these things for the other. Wherefore I counsel every learner willingly to lend his ear to the word of God, and to hear with love of the truth what we say, that his mind, receiving the best seed, may bring forth joyful fruits by good deeds. For if, while I teach the things which pertain to salvation, any one refuses to receive them, and strives to resist them with a mind occupied by evil opinions, he shall have the cause of his perishing, not from us, but from himself. For it is his duty to examine with just judgment the things which we say, and to understand that we speak the words of truth, that, knowing how things are, and directing his life in good actions, he may be found a partaker of the kingdom of heaven, subjecting to himself the desires of the flesh, and becoming lord of them, that so at length he himself also may become the pleasant possession of the Ruler of all.’ (*Clementine Recognitions* 5.8)

‘For he who persists in evil, and is the servant of evil, cannot be made a portion of good so long as he persists in evil, because from the beginning, as we have said, God instituted two kingdoms, and has given to each man the power of becoming a portion of that kingdom to which he shall yield himself to obey. And since it is decreed by God that no one man can be a servant of both kingdoms, therefore endeavour with all earnestness to betake yourselves to the covenant and laws of the good King. Wherefore also the true Prophet, when He was present with us, and saw some rich men negligent with respect to the worship of God, thus unfolded the truth of this matter: ‘No one,’ said He, ‘can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon;’ Matthew 6:24 calling riches, in the language of His country, mammon.’ (*Clementine Recognitions* 5.9)

Melito of Sardis (died c.180 AD)

On the Passover

“But man, who is by nature capable of receiving good and evil as soil of the earth is capable of receiving seeds from both sides, welcomed the hostile and greedy counselor, and by having touched that tree transgressed the command, and disobeyed God.” (Melito of Sardis, *On the Passover* 48)

Hippolytus of Rome (170 – 235 AD)

Against All Heresies

‘Now the world was made from nothing; wherefore it is not God; as also because this world admits of dissolution whenever the Creator so wishes it. But God, who created it, did not, nor does not, make evil. He makes what is glorious and excellent; for He who makes it is good. Now man, that was brought into existence, was a creature endued with a capacity of self-determination, yet not possessing a sovereign intellect, nor holding sway over all things by reflection, and authority, and power, but a slave to his passions, and comprising all sorts of contrarieties in himself. But man, from the fact of his possessing a capacity of self-determination, brings forth what is evil, that is, accidentally; which evil is not consummated unless you actually commit some piece of wickedness. For it is in regard of our desiring anything that is wicked, or our meditating upon it, that what is evil is so denominated. Evil had no existence from the beginning, but came into being subsequently. Since man has free will, a law has been defined for his guidance by the Deity, not without answering a good purpose. For if man did not possess the power to will and not to will, why should a law be established? For a law will not be laid down for an animal devoid of reason, but a bridle and a whip; whereas to man has been given a precept and penalty to perform, or for not carrying into execution what has been enjoined. For man thus constituted has a law been enacted by just men in primitive ages. Nearer our own day was there established a law, full of gravity and justice, by Moses, to whom allusion has been already made, a devout man, and one beloved of God. Now the Logos of God controls all these; the first begotten Child of the Father, the voice of the Dawn antecedent to the Morning Star. Afterwards just men were born, friends of God; and these have been styled prophets, on account of their foreshowing future events. And the word of prophecy was committed unto them, not for one age only; but also the utterances of events predicted throughout all generations, were vouchsafed in perfect clearness. And this, too, not at the time merely when seers furnished a reply to those present; but also events that would happen throughout all ages, have been manifested beforehand; because, in speaking of incidents gone by, the prophets brought them back to the recollection of humanity; whereas, in showing forth present occurrences, they endeavoured to persuade men not to be remiss; while, by foretelling future events, they have rendered each one of us terrified on beholding events that had been predicted long before, and on expecting likewise those events predicted as still future. Such is our faith, O all you men, — ours, I say, who are not persuaded by empty expressions, nor caught away by sudden impulses of the heart, nor beguiled by the plausibility of eloquent discourses, yet who do not refuse to obey words that have been uttered by divine power. And these injunctions has God given to the Word. But the Word, by declaring them, promulgated the divine commandments, thereby turning man from disobedience, not bringing him into servitude by force of necessity, but summoning him to liberty through a choice involving spontaneity.’ (Hippolytus of Rome, *Against All Heresies* 10.29)

Novatian of Rome (c. 200 – 258 AD)

On the Trinity

‘When he had given man all things for his service, he willed that man alone should be free. And lest an unbounded freedom would lead man into peril, He had laid down a command, in which man was taught that there was no evil in the fruit of the tree. Rather, he was forewarned that evil would arise if man were to exercise his free will in contempt of the law that had been given him....As a result, he could receive either worthy rewards or a just punishment. For he had in his own power that which he might choose to do.’ (Novatian, *On the Trinity* 5.612)

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200 – 258 AD)

Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews

‘The liberty of believing or not believing is placed in free choice. In Deuteronomy, it says, ‘Look! I have set before your face life and death, good and evil. Choose for yourself life, that you may live.’” (Cyprian of Carthage, *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews* 3.52)

On the Dress of Virgins (Treatise II)

“Now, when the world is filled and the earth supplied, they who can receive continency, living after the manner of eunuchs, are made eunuchs unto the kingdom. Nor does the Lord command this, but He exhorts it; nor does He impose the yoke of necessity, since the free choice of the will is left. But when He says that in His Father’s house are many mansions, He points out the dwellings of the better habitation. Those better habitations you are seeking; cutting away the desires of the flesh, you obtain the reward of a greater grace in the heavenly home. All indeed who attain to the divine gift and inheritance by the sanctification of baptism, therein put off the old man by the grace of the saving laver, and, renewed by the Holy Spirit from the filth of the old contagion, are purged by a second nativity.” (Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Dress of Virgins* 23)

Archelaus (c. 250 – c. 300 AD)

Disputation With Manes

‘All the creatures that God made, He made very good. And He gave to every individual the sense of free will, by which standard He also instituted the law of judgment...And certainly whoever will, may keep the commandments. Whoever despises them and turns aside to what is contrary to them, shall yet without doubt have to face this law of judgment....There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he pleases.’ (Archelaus, *Disputation With Manes* 32, 33)

Methodius of Olympus (died 311 AD)

Concerning Free Will

‘Because there is nothing evil by nature, but it is by use that evil things become such. So I say, says he, that man was made with a free-will, not as if there were already evil in existence, which he had the power of choosing if he wished, but on account of his capacity of obeying or disobeying God. For this was the meaning of the gift of Free Will. And man after his creation receives a commandment from God; and from this at once rises evil, for he does not obey the divine command; and this alone is evil, namely, disobedience, which had a beginning. For man received power, and enslaved himself, not because he was overpowered by the irresistible tendencies of his nature, nor because the capacity with which he was gifted deprived him of what was better for him; for it was for the sake of this that I say he was endowed with it (but he received the power above mentioned), in order that he may obtain an addition to what he already possesses, which accrues to him from the Superior Being in consequence of his obedience, and is demanded as a debt from his Maker. For I say that man was made not for destruction, but for better things. For if he were made as any of the elements, or those things which render a similar service to God, he would cease to receive a reward befitting deliberate choice, and would be like an instrument of the maker; and it would be unreasonable for him to suffer blame for his wrong-doings, for the real author of them is the one by whom he is used. But man did not understand better things, since he did not know the author (of his existence), but only the object for which he was made. I say therefore that God, purposing thus to honour man, and to grant him an understanding of better things, has given him the power of being able to do what he wishes, and commends the employment of his power for better things; not that He deprives him again of free-will, but wishes to deprive him again of free-will, but wishes to point out the better way. For the power is present with him, and he receives the commandment; but God exhorts him to turn his power of choice to better things. For as a father exhorts his son, who has power to learn his lessons, to give more attention to them inasmuch as, while he points out this as the better course, he does not deprive his son of the power which he possessed, even if he be not inclined to learn willingly; so I do not think that God, while He urges on man to obey His commands, deprives him of the power of purposing and withholding obedience. For He points out the cause of His giving this advice, in that He does not deprive him of the

power. But He gives commands, in order that man may be able to enjoy better things. For this is the consequence of obeying the commands of God. So that He does not give commands in order to take away the power which He has given, but in order that a better gift may be bestowed, as to one worthy of attaining greater things, in return for his having rendered obedience to God, while he had power to withhold it. I say that man was made with free-will, not as if there were already existing some evil, which he had the power of choosing if he wished, ... but that the power of obeying and disobeying God is the only cause.’ (Methodius of Olympus, *Concerning Free-Will* 6.362)

‘[Methodius] says that it is in our power to do, or to avoid doing, evil. Otherwise, we would not be punished for doing evil nor be rewarded for doing good.’ (Methodius, 290 AD, 6.370, as quoted by Photius)

The Banquet of the Ten Virgins

‘Those [pagans] who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God Himself, making Him out to be the cause and author of human evils.’ (Methodius of Olympus, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins* discourse 8, ch.16)

Eusebius of Caesarea (260 – 340 AD)

(semi-Arian, Origenist)

‘The Creator of all things has impressed a natural law upon the soul of every man, as an assistant and ally in his conduct, pointing out to him the right way by this law; but, by the free liberty with which he is endowed, making the choice of what is best worthy of praise and acceptance, because he has acted rightly, not by force, but from his own free-will, when he had it in his power to act otherwise, As, again, making him who chooses what is worst, deserving of blame and punishment, as having by his own motion neglected the natural law, and becoming the origin and fountain of wickedness, and misusing himself, not from any extraneous necessity, but from free will and judgment. The fault is in him who chooses, not in God. For God has not made nature or the substance of the soul bad; for he who is good can make nothing but what is good. Everything is good which is according to nature. Every rational soul has naturally a good free-will, formed for the choice of what is good. But when a man acts wrongly, nature is not to be blamed; for what is wrong, takes place not according to nature, but contrary to nature, it being the work of choice, and not of nature.’ (The Christian Examiner, Volume One, published by James Miller, 1824 Edition, p.66)

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 298 – 373 AD)

Against the Heathen

‘Having then made themselves at home in these things, and not being willing to leave what was so near to them, they entangled their soul with bodily pleasures, vexed and turbid with all kind of lusts, while they wholly forgot the power they originally had from God.’ (Athanasius of Alexandria, *Against the Heathen* 3.2)

‘But having fallen in love with pleasure, she began to work it out in various ways. For being by nature mobile, even though she have turned away from what is good, yet she does not lose her mobility. She moves then, no longer according to virtue or so as to see God, but imagining false things, she makes a novel use of her power, abusing it as a means to the pleasures she has devised, since she is after all made with power over herself. For she is able, as on the one hand to incline to what is good, so on the other to reject it; but in rejecting the good she of course entertains the thought of what is opposed to it, for she cannot at all cease from movement, being, as I said before, mobile by nature. And knowing her own power over herself, she sees that she is able to use the members of her body in either direction, both toward what is, or toward what is not.’ (Athanasius of Alexandria, *Against the Heathen* 4.2 – 3)

‘Evil has not from the beginning been with God or in God, nor has any substantive existence; but that men, in default of the vision of good, began to devise and imagine for themselves what was not, after their own pleasure. For as if a man, when the sun is shining, and the whole earth illumined by his light, were to shut fast his eyes and imagine darkness where no darkness exists, and then walk wandering as if in darkness, often falling and going down steep places, thinking it was dark and not light—for, imagining that he sees, he does not see at all—so, too, the soul

of man, shutting fast her eyes, by which she is able to see God, has imagined evil for herself, and moving therein, knows not that, thinking she is doing something, she is doing nothing. For she is imagining what is not, nor is she abiding in her original nature; but what she is is evidently the product of her own disorder. For she is made to see God, and to be enlightened by Him; but of her own accord in God's stead she has sought corruptible things and darkness, as the Spirit says somewhere in writing, 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions [Ecclesiastes 7:29].' Thus it has been then that men from the first discovered and contrived and imagined evil for themselves. But it is now time to say how they came down to the madness of idolatry, that you may know that the invention of idols is wholly due, not to good but to evil. But what has its origin in evil can never be pronounced good in any point—being evil altogether.' (Athanasius of Alexandria, *Against the Heathen* 7.3 – 5)

*Life of Antony (362 AD)*³

"This was Antony's first struggle against the devil, or rather this victory was the Saviour's work in Antony, 'Who condemned sin in the flesh that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.' [Romans 8:3 – 4] But neither did Antony, although the evil one had fallen, henceforth relax his care and despise him; nor did the enemy as though conquered cease to lay snares for him. For again he went round as a lion seeking some occasion against him [1 Peter 5:8]. But Antony having learned from the Scriptures that the devices [Ephesians 6:11] of the devil are many, zealously continued the discipline, reckoning that though the devil had not been able to deceive his heart by bodily pleasure, he would endeavour to ensnare him by other means." (Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Antony* 7)

Athanasius' language doubles the active agency and provides a dual lens on Christian growth and sanctification. On the one hand, this was Antony's agency. But at the same time, it was Christ's work in and through him. For Athanasius, the logic of participation in Christ requires progress in 'virtue' in us. He is not here answering the question of which is 'prior' to the other. Athanasius merely calls attention to the dynamic.

What follows is Antony's intensification of his monastic practice. He 'repressed the body and kept it in subjection, lest haply having conquered on one side, he should be dragged down on the other' (7). He bore the labor 'easily' because of his 'eagerness of soul' and 'great zeal.' Antony would 'often' go 'the whole night without sleep,' eat 'bread and salt and water' only once a day or two days, 'often even in four.' He slept on the bare ground, not a mat. Antony then speaks himself, commenting on the cultivation of 'virtue':

'Progress in virtue, and retirement from the world for the sake of it, ought not to be measured by time, but by desire and fixity of purpose.'⁴

Athanasius connects the cultivation of 'virtue' with Jesus' own victory over spiritual temptation as summarized in Romans 8:3 – 4. Athanasius uses the word 'virtue' twenty three times in *Life of Antony*. Athanasius writes in his prologue to the work as 'training in the way of virtue.' Athanasius then allows Antony to compare himself in his own voice to the apostle Paul and the prophet Elijah through biblical quotations. Philippians 3:14 connects Antony's monastic practice to the apostle, 'Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before.' First Kings 18:15 connects Antony to Elijah, whose lengthy experience in the wilderness and characterization as a prophet provide a template for Antony, who similarly kept his focus on being in God's presence 'today,' whichever day that was: 'the Lord lives before whose presence I stand today.' The figure of Elijah is a powerful one in the background of Antony's mind and life, for many obvious reasons: wilderness sojourn, spiritual battles, miracles of healing, prophetic ministry, inspiration of others. References to Elijah occasionally emerge explicitly in the narrative of *Life of Antony*.

Placing *Life of Antony* alongside Athanasius' other theological works shows how integrated his christology, soteriology, and pastoral ministry were. I propose that we look at how Athanasius uses Romans 8:3 to inform us about that integration. Athanasius uses it in strategic places in his corpus; and the passage itself plays a vital role to Paul on those subjects, as Paul linked Jesus to us, his followers, by the Spirit on the theme of sanctification. Around

³ The following analysis of *Life of Antony* is an excerpt from my seminary paper, *Athanasius as Theologian of Sanctification: Life of Antony*. Available here: www.anastasiscenter.org/atonement-sources-ec-athanasius-of-alexandria.

⁴ Ibid 7

15 – 20 years prior, when Athanasius deployed Romans 8:3 – 4 in the first of his dogmatic works *Contra Arianos* 1, he did so in order to discuss both Christ’s atoning work, and Christ’s ministry towards us by his Spirit to provide us with virtue:

‘For since of things originate the nature is alterable, and the one portion had transgressed and the other disobeyed, as has been said, and it is not certain how they will act, but it often happens that he who is now good afterwards alters and becomes different, so that one who was but now righteous, soon is found unrighteous, wherefore there was here also need of one unalterable, *that men might have the immutability of the righteousness of the Word as an image and type for virtue*... For since the first man Adam altered, and through sin death came into the world, therefore it became the second Adam to be unalterable; that, should the Serpent again assault, even the Serpent’s deceit might be baffled, and, the Lord being unalterable and unchangeable, the Serpent might become powerless in his assault against all. For as when Adam had transgressed, his sin reached unto all men, so, when the Lord had become man and had overthrown the Serpent, that so great strength of His is to extend through all men, so that each of us may say, ‘For we are not ignorant of his devices. [2 Corinthians 2:11]’ Good reason then that the Lord, who ever is in nature unalterable, loving righteousness and hating iniquity, should be anointed and Himself sent, that, He, being and remaining the same, by taking this alterable flesh, ‘might condemn sin in it [Romans 8:3],’ and might secure its freedom, and its ability henceforth ‘to fulfil the righteousness of the law [Romans 8:4]?’ in itself, so as to be able to say, ‘But we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in us [Romans 8:9].’⁵

Created things, most notably human nature, have an alterable nature, shown especially by the fall and subsequent sinful decisions on the part of people. This shows that Athanasius’ focus when discussing atonement is ontological, not legal or forensic. Human beings require ‘the immutability of the righteousness of the Word as an image and type for virtue.’ To accomplish this, the Word of God had to become incarnate in sinful flesh in order to condemn the sin in it, and, through his resurrection, to secure human nature’s ‘freedom’ from sin for us, who walk by the Spirit. This is what qualifies the Son, says Athanasius immediately afterwards, to be *the dispenser of virtue*: ‘as being God and the Father’s Word, He is a just judge and lover of virtue, or rather its dispenser.’⁶ Jesus is not just the intellectual reference point for what virtue looks like, lived out in a human life, but from a distance. Rather, he is the dispenser of virtue into us as the Spirit of God dwells in us, which means, reciprocally, that we participate in him by his Spirit.

A second reference to Romans 8:3 in *Contra Arianos* 2 demonstrates the same idea. In this passage, Athanasius specifically rejects the idea that we only have Christ ‘externally’ and ‘not in ourselves’ by the Spirit.

‘To give a witness then, and for our sakes to undergo death, to raise man up and destroy the works of the devil, the Saviour came, and this is the reason of His incarnate presence... This the Apostle, learning from Him, thus sets forth... ‘For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the ordinance of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit [Romans 8:3 – 4]’... Not for Himself then, but for our salvation, and to abolish death, and to condemn sin, and to give sight to the blind, and to raise up all from the dead, has He come; but if not for Himself... For if, as they [the Arians] hold... we have Him not in ourselves but externally; as, for instance, as receiving instruction from Him as from a teacher. And it being so with us, sin has not lost its reign over the flesh, being inherent and not cast out of it. But the Apostle opposes such a doctrine a little before.’⁷

Athanasius maintains in his *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* that ‘the Spirit is the *energeia* of the Son,’⁸ and is ‘in the Word,’⁹ while simultaneously, ‘the Son is in the Spirit.’¹⁰ He does not, however, reject the importance of

⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos* 1.51

⁶ Ibid 1.52

⁷ Ibid 2.55 – 56

⁸ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* 1.20, 30

⁹ Ibid 3.5

¹⁰ Ibid 1.20; see C.R.B. Shapland’s footnote 10 on page 115 of his translation and commentary for how other patristic writers used this phrase both before and after Athanasius

‘receiving instruction from him’ categorically. The Spirit brings into the believer both spiritual power and intellectual content. The role of our human mind is notably important, as it was in Paul’s usage in Romans 8:5 – 8, and as Athanasius says again in both *Contra Arianos* 1 and 2. In both discussions, Athanasius quotes from Romans 8:3 – 4 and 8:9 to connect Christ’s humanity to ours by the Spirit, as before. What Jesus did in his humanity and to his humanity, he will do in us by the Spirit, as we are led by *words* and *instruction*. This requires *our mental assent*:

‘Since here also the ministry through Him has become better, in that ‘what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh [Romans 8:3],’ ridding it of the trespass, in which, being continually held captive, it admitted not *the Divine mind*. And having rendered the flesh capable of the Word, He made us walk, no longer according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit [Romans 8:4], and say again and again, ‘But we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit [Romans 8:9].’¹¹

‘When for our need He became man, consistently does He use language, as ourselves, ‘The Lord has created Me,’ that, by His dwelling in the flesh, sin might perfectly be expelled from the flesh [Romans 8:3], and we might have a *free mind* [Romans 8:5 – 8].’¹²

The probable reason I can discern for Athanasius stressing the mind is because of his interrelated view, based on Scripture, of God’s relationship with humanity centered through rational language. Three major biblical texts – the creation hymn of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 which introduces Genesis, the first genealogy (of ten in Genesis) which follows in Genesis 2:4 – 4:26, and especially the story of Babel in Genesis 11:1 – 9 – display a keen interest in the role of language in the relationship between God and human beings. Appropriately, Athanasius uses the terminology of God’s Son as Word and Wisdom impressing himself upon the human mind when he created us. One result of which is that we, through our minds, might be capable of knowing him, and through him, the Father. Thus, says Athanasius, we might ‘not only be, but be good’:

‘Now the Only-begotten and very Wisdom of God is Creator and Framer of all things; for ‘in Wisdom have You made them all,’ he says, and ‘the earth is full of Your creation.’ But that what came into being might not only be, but be good, it pleased God that His own Wisdom should condescend to the creatures, so as to introduce an impress and semblance of Its Image on all in common and on each, that what was made might be manifestly wise works and worthy of God. For as of the Son of God, considered as the Word, *our word is an image*, so of the same Son considered as Wisdom *is the wisdom which is implanted in us an image*; in which wisdom we, having the power of knowledge and thought, *become recipients* of the All-framing Wisdom; and through It we are able to know Its Father.’¹³

We are designed by God by His Wisdom (Word and Son) and in His Wisdom. We participate in God’s Wisdom by virtue of our creation, and we resemble God in our capacity for rationality. If Jesus pressed the ‘Divine Mind’ into the flesh, then we must have had, at the very least, an originally ‘rational nature’ which he restored. And that rational human nature was, and still is, a human nature that needs development, through the human mind and soul, reflecting on *words*, which Athanasius discussed in *Against the Heathen* 2 – 6. If God spoke creation into existence *ex nihilo*, and if God brought creation into being with stable rational concepts and interrelationships, then human beings had to learn that language and those concepts and those interrelationships by experience. Even in God’s first interactions with Adam and Eve, language is presupposed. God spoke. But what did He utter? And God must have anchored certain words in the human mind, and probably some very preliminary sense of their meaning (‘be fruitful

¹¹ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos* 1.60

¹² Ibid 2.56

¹³ Ibid 2.78 emphasis mine. At least two second century Christian writers strongly suggest this awareness – important to note because both of them came from Asia Minor, which was the mission field of the apostles, intentionally. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 4.38.1 refers to Adam and Eve as ‘infants.’ John E. Toews, *The Story of Original Sin* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), p.50 credits Theophilus of Antioch (d.183 – 185 AD), *Letter to Autolycus* 25 with being the first to write that Adam had been *nepios*, ‘a child,’ and needing to properly mature. Irenaeus repeats that in *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 11, 14. I suspect that Theophilus and Irenaeus meant that Adam and Eve were mentally, not biologically, children. In any case, the minds of Adam and Eve needed to be gradually filled by experiential knowledge which they could coordinate with the abstract words God shared with them from the outset.

and multiply'; 'eating'; 'dying'; etc.). But the meaning of those words had to be filled out in the divine-human partnership and through human experience. Moreover, Adam and Eve were entrusted with the task of producing more language (naming animals, children, etc.). And Jesus' speech cannot be divided into an operation of his divine nature or his human nature; curiously most patristic writers seem willing to assign miracles to his divinity and suffering to his humanity, but never address his speech, which seems to me to be both, significantly.

The Johannine stress on the words of the Word appears to have made a deep impression on Athanasius. Jesus says, 'If you *continue in my word*, then you are truly disciples of mine' (Jn.8:31). 'If anyone loves me, he will *keep my word...*' (Jn.14:23). 'If you abide in me, and *my words abide in you...*' (Jn.15:7). To work out our union with Christ in human experience, the Spirit acts through the *words* of the Word of God. The Spirit accompanies the Son's words: 'For he whom God has sent speaks the *words* of God; for he gives the *Spirit* without measure' (Jn.3:34). Another Johannine statement links Spirit and *words* as an overflowing of the linking of Spirit and *the Word* in the humanity of Jesus: 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life' (Jn.6:63). The truth of the Son's incarnation is vitally important, but it is not Jesus' physical human flesh that must be consumed in cannibalistic ritual, Jesus says to qualify that misunderstanding. Rather, it is the Spirit, who takes of the union of divine and human natures in the person of Jesus, who overflows Jesus through his spoken words, and comes into other human beings as food and drink on a different plane of human need. For the apostle John, the Spirit is personally involved in the disciples testifying about Jesus: 'The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify about me, and you will testify also' (Jn.15:26 – 27). The Spirit takes the words of the Word and so develops the believer that way. For John, this does not appear to be reducible to one or the other of the two natures of the now-incarnate Word. As the apostle John records Jesus praying to the Father on behalf of the disciples as distinct from the rest of the world, 'The *words* which You have given me, I have given them... I have given them Your *word*... Sanctify them in the truth; Your *word* is truth' (Jn.17:8, 14, 17). Not without reason does Luke call Christians 'servants of the word' (Lk.1:2) – 'word' not in the sense of 'Word' the eternal Logos, although neither Luke nor Athanasius would disagree with that, but the particular teaching and peculiar narrative of Jesus of Nazareth rendered into human words. Pastorally as Athanasius engages this inheritance of 'the words of the Word' from Jesus and the apostles, he deploys the creational framework of Wisdom imprinting itself upon us with our human wisdom, which contains the capacity for receiving more wisdom. Thus must the human mind operate, not only here in *Life of Antony*, but in his *Letters*.

Varied human responses to the *words* of the Word also give rise to a diverse church. As Brakke notes, Athanasius creatively used the parable of the sower, the seed, and the four soils (Mt.13:1 – 8) with the word bringing forth varied crops of thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold to reflect how 'human beings have chosen for themselves' various marital or single vocations: producing a crop of thirty-fold and sixty-fold refers to being married in a godly way; producing a crop of a hundred-fold refers to taking a vow of chastity:

'Now, it produces fruits that differ from one another so as to make manifest the zeal of free will and progress. Wherever there is free will, there is inferiority. And this is nothing other than a revelation that humanity is free and under its own power, having the capacity to choose for itself what it wants.'¹⁴

'And further, when the word is sown it does not yield a uniform produce of fruit in this human life, but one various and rich; for it brings forth, some an hundred, and some sixty, and some thirty, as the Saviour teaches— that Sower of grace, and Bestower of the Spirit. And this is no doubtful matter, nor one that admits no confirmation; but it is in our power to behold the field which is sown by Him; for in the Church the word is manifold and the produce rich. Not with virgins alone is such a field adorned; nor with monks alone, but also with honourable matrimony and the chastity of each one. For in sowing, He did not compel the will beyond the power. Nor is mercy confined to the perfect, but it is sent down also among those who occupy the middle and the third ranks, so that He might rescue all men generally to salvation.'¹⁵

Athanasius also used the parable of the talents/minas (Mt.25:14 – 30; Lk.19:11 – 27) in like manner. However much we might question Athanasius for being overly specific with these parables per se (e.g. marriage vs. singleness; etc.), we see the consistency in his overall paradigm. Human choices alone explain the difference in crop yield or financial return. Hence, in his *Tenth Festal Letter*, when he refers to the parable of the sower, the

¹⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria, *First Letter to Virgins* 20, 23 (see Brakke, p.48ff., 280ff.)

¹⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Tenth Festal Letter* 4

Alexandrian bishop explicitly equates ‘the Saviour [who] teaches’ with his identity as ‘Bestower of the Spirit.’ By 338 AD, in a very practical, pastoral context, Athanasius already offers an explanation of *word* and Spirit, rooted in the union of *Word* and Spirit from which the former issues forth.

Demonstrating his consistency, Athanasius counsels a leading monk named Amun about male ‘nocturnal emissions’ with sensitive discernment about the *will* and the *mind*: To the extent that it happens ‘independently of will,’¹⁶ regard it as any natural bodily secretion; only explore the matter to the extent that someone is plagued in his conscience by profane thoughts. Thoughts to be repented of must also be expressible in *words*, and measurable by qualitative moral comparison against the *words* of Jesus. The apostles seem to have also held the view that an informed *and* errant will is constitutive of sin: per Romans 7:7 (‘On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law’); James 4:17 (‘Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin’); and the incident in Acts 23:1 – 5 where Paul unknowingly reviles a/the high priest (‘I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people’’).

To render my suggestion in biblical-historical and covenantal terms, if Jesus is a ‘new Adam,’ then just as Adam contained within himself the material for all genetic variation subsequently, or at least was a channel for such, inclusive of Eve and the unusual nutrition of the garden, so also Jesus contains within himself all the material for all the variation for his renewed people, which is infinitely vast because he is the creator who became incarnate (Jn.1:3). Similarly, if Jesus is a ‘new Israel,’ then just as Jacob-Israel contained within himself, or was the channel for, the vocations of twelve or thirteen tribes (depending on how we count Levi and Joseph), so Jesus contains within himself, or is the channel for, all the various vocations of his people. If Jesus is a new Moses, or mediator of the new covenant, then he contains all the words needed to represent each person to the Father. If Jesus is a new David, then just as David contained within himself the songs and praises with which he led his people in worship, so Jesus contains within himself not just one human response but all true human responses to the Father. It appears that the figures of Adam, Jacob/Israel, Moses, and David were particular covenantal persons in whom *words* were specially ‘stored up.’ Adam is associated with the naming of creation (Gen.2:19 – 20); Jacob spoke words of prophetic blessing upon his twelve sons (Gen.49); Moses spoke words of mediation on behalf of Israel to maintain the covenant (Ex.32:30 – 33:23). David is connected to the Book of Psalms as the worship leader par excellence. For Jesus to renew, surpass, and fill to the full those figures means something about his own humanity, or role as an emblematic human being, that makes him *unlike* other human beings. His humanity is our humanity *ontologically*, but his humanity is a corporate humanity *vocationally* because it is the humanity of the Word, the humanity of the new covenant, the humanity of the new head of all humanity. Central to this observation is the connection between being the human partner with God in the formation of a covenant and being the bearer of words.

Against Apollinaris

‘When you hold these sentiments, you become accusers of the Maker of nature. When God at the beginning formed Adam, did He make sin innate in him? If so, what need was there then of a commandment? And how was it that He condemned man after he had sinned? And how was it also that Adam did not know good and evil before his transgression? Him, “whom God formed for incorruption, and as an image of His own eternity” [Wisdom 2:21], He made with a nature sinless and a will free to choose...’ (Pseudo-Athanasius, *Contra Apollinarium* 1:15)

Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306 – 373 AD)

Hymns of Nativity

God saw that mankind, worship things created:

He put on a created body, that in our custom He might capture us.

Lo! In this our form, He that formed us healed us

And in this created shape, our Creator gave us life.

He drew us not by force: blessed be He Who came in ours

And joined us in His!

¹⁶ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Letter #48 to Amun*

(Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Nativity*, Hymn 14, Stanza 12)

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 312 – 386 AD)

Catechetical Lectures

The soul is self-governed: and though the devil can suggest, he has not the power to compel against the will. He pictures to you the thought of fornication: if you will, you accept it; if you will not, you reject. For if you were a fornicator by necessity, then for what cause did God prepare hell? If you were a doer of righteousness by nature and not by will, wherefore did God prepare crowns of ineffable glory? The sheep is gentle, but never was it crowned for its gentleness: since its gentle quality belongs to it not from choice but by nature. (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* IV)

Basil of Caesarea (c. 329 – 379 AD)

Hexaemeron: Homilies on the Six Days of Creation

It is equally impious to say that evil has its origin from God; because the contrary cannot proceed from its contrary. Life does not engender death; darkness is not the origin of light; sickness is not the maker of health. In the changes of conditions there are transitions from one condition to the contrary; but in genesis each being proceeds from its like, and not from its contrary. If then evil is neither uncreate nor created by God, from whence comes its nature? Certainly that evil exists, no one living in the world will deny. What shall we say then? Evil is not a living animated essence; it is the condition of the soul opposed to virtue, developed in the careless on account of their falling away from good. Do not then go beyond yourself to seek for evil, and imagine that there is an original nature of wickedness. Each of us, let us acknowledge it, is the first author of his own vice. Among the ordinary events of life, some come naturally, like old age and sickness, others by chance like unforeseen occurrences, of which the origin is beyond ourselves, often sad, sometimes fortunate, as for instance the discovery of a treasure when digging a well, or the meeting of a mad dog when going to the market place. Others depend upon ourselves, such as ruling one's passions, or not putting a bridle on one's pleasures, to be master of our anger, or to raise the hand against him who irritates us, to tell the truth, or to lie, to have a sweet and well-regulated disposition, or to be fierce and swollen and exalted with pride. Here you are the master of your actions. Do not look for the guiding cause beyond yourself, but recognise that evil, rightly so called, has no other origin than our voluntary falls. If it were involuntary, and did not depend upon ourselves, the laws would not have so much terror for the guilty, and the tribunals would not be so without pity when they condemn wretches according to the measure of their crimes. But enough concerning evil rightly so called. Sickness, poverty, obscurity, death, finally all human afflictions, ought not to be ranked as evils; since we do not count among the greatest boons things which are their opposites. Among these afflictions, some are the effect of nature, others have obviously been for many a source of advantage. Let us then be silent for the moment about these metaphors and allegories, and, simply following without vain curiosity the words of Holy Scripture, let us take from darkness the idea which it gives us. (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, *Homily* 2.4 – 5)

If the origin of our virtues and of our vices is not in ourselves, but is the fatal consequence of our birth, it is useless for legislators to prescribe for us what we ought to do, and what we ought to avoid; it is useless for judges to honour virtue and to punish vice. The guilt is not in the robber, not in the assassin: it was willed for him; it was impossible for him to hold back his hand, urged to evil by inevitable necessity. Those who laboriously cultivate the arts are the maddest of men. The labourer will make an abundant harvest without sowing seed and without sharpening his sickle. Whether he wishes it or not, the merchant will make his fortune, and will be flooded with riches by fate. As for us Christians, we shall see our great hopes vanish, since from the moment that man does not act with freedom, there is neither reward for justice, nor punishment for sin. Under the reign of necessity and of fatality there is no place for merit, the first condition of all righteous judgment. But let us stop. You who are sound in yourselves have no need to hear more, and time does not allow us to make attacks without limit against these unhappy men. (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, *Homily* 6.7)

‘Nothing is stable in man; here from nothingness he raises himself to perfection; there after having hasted to put forth his strength to attain his full greatness he suddenly is subject to gradual deterioration, and is destroyed by diminution. Thus, the sight of the moon, making us think of the rapid vicissitudes of human things, ought to teach us not to pride ourselves on the good things of this life, and not to glory in our power, not to be carried away by uncertain riches, to despise our flesh which is subject to change, and to take care of the soul, for its good is unmoved. If you cannot behold without sadness the moon losing its splendour by gradual and imperceptible decrease, how much more distressed should you be at the sight of a soul, who, after having possessed virtue, loses its beauty by neglect, and does not remain constant to its affections, but is agitated and constantly changes because its purposes are unstable. What Scripture says is very true, “As for a fool he changeth as the moon.” [Sirach/Ecclesiasticus 27:11]’ (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, *Homily* 6.10)

“But to any one who understands the meaning of Scripture no one of these passages accuses God of being the Cause and Creator of evil. He who uses the words, “I form the light and create darkness,” describes Himself not as Creator of any evil, but as Demiurge of creation. “It is lest thou shouldst suppose that there is one cause of light and another of darkness that He described Himself as being Creator and Artificer of parts of creation which seem to be mutually opposed. It is to prevent thy seeking one Demiurge of fire, another of water, one of air and another of earth, these seeming to have a kind of mutual opposition and contrariety of qualities. By adopting these views many have ere now fallen into polytheism, but He makes peace and creates evil. Unquestionably He makes peace in thee when He brings peace into thy mind by His good teaching, and calms the rebel passions of thy soul. And He creates evil, that is to say, He reduces those evil passions to order, and brings them to a better state so that they may cease to be evil and may adopt the nature of good. ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God.’ This does not mean Make now for the first time; it means Renew the heart that had become old from wickedness. The object is that He may make both one. The word create is used not to imply the bringing out of nothing, but the bringing into order those which already existed. So it is said, ‘If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.’ Again, Moses says, ‘Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath He not made thee and created thee?’ Now, the creation put in order after the making evidently teaches us that the word creation, as is commonly the case, is used with the idea of improvement. And so it is thus that He makes peace, out of creating evil; that is, by transforming and bringing to improvement. Furthermore, even if you understand peace to be freedom from war, and evil to mean the troubles which are the lot of those who make war; marches into far regions, labours, vigils, terrors, sweatings, wounds, slaughters, taking of towns, slavery, exile, piteous spectacles of captives; and, in a word, all the evils that follow upon war, all these things, I say, happen by the just judgment of God, Who brings vengeance through war on those who deserve punishment. Should you have wished that Sodom had not been burnt after her notorious wickedness? Or that Jerusalem had not been overturned, nor her temple made desolate after the horrible wickedness of the Jews against the Lord? How otherwise was it right for these things to come to pass than by the hands of the Romans to whom our Lord had been delivered by the enemies of His life, the Jews? Wherefore it does sometimes come to pass that the calamities of war are righteously inflicted on those who deserve them—if you like to understand the words ‘I kill and I make alive’ in their obvious sense. Fear edifies the simple. ‘I wound and I heal’ is at once perceived to be salutary. The blow strikes terror; the cure attracts to love. But it is permissible to thee to find a higher meaning in the words, ‘I kill’—by sin; ‘I make alive’—by righteousness. ‘Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.’ He does not kill one and make another alive, but He makes the same man alive by the very means by which He kills him; He heals him by the blows which He inflicts upon him. As the proverb has it, ‘Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell.’ The flesh is smitten that the soul may be healed; sin is put to death that righteousness may live. In another passage it is argued that death is not an evil. Deaths come from God. Yet death is not absolutely an evil, except in the case of the death of the sinner, in which case departure from this world is a beginning of the punishments of hell. On the other hand, of the evils of hell the cause is not God, but ourselves. The origin and root of sin is what is in our own control and our free will.” (Basil of Caesarea, *Homily* 9)

Basil’s *Homily* 9 is a demonstration that God is not the Author of Evil. It has been conjectured that it was delivered shortly after some such public calamity as the destruction of Nicæa in 368. St. Basil naturally touches on passages which have from time to time caused some perplexity on this subject. He asks if God is not the Author of evil, how is it said “I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil,” and again, “The evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem,” and again, “Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it,” and in the great song of Moses, “See now that I, even I, am he and there is no god with me: I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal”?)

‘The soul deteriorated when it was perverted from its natural state. What was the soul’s supreme good? Attachment to God and conjunction with Him through love. When it failed in this, the soul deteriorated because of weaknesses of many various kinds. But why was it at all capable of evil? Because of its self-determined impulse, an endowment specially appropriate to rational nature. Freed from all constraint and endowed by the Creator with self-determining life, because made in God’s image... it had the right and power to preserve its natural state of life, by persevering in the contemplation of the good, and the enjoyment of spiritual pleasure. It had also the power to turn away from the good. And this it is that happened when, sated with this blessed delight, and weighted down as it were with drowsiness, it slipped from the higher sphere, and was mingled with the flesh, for the sake of the enjoyment of base satisfactions.’ (Basil the Great, *Homily 9.5*, B#15, p.61; quoted by Johanna Manley, *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox: Daily Scripture Readings and Commentary for Orthodox Christians* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), p.167) I have found this passage attributed to Basil and quoted elsewhere, but it is not contained in Basil’s *Hexaemeron*, nor in Philip Schaff’s *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Basil: Letters and Select Works*.

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329 – 390 AD)

Oration 2

12. What does he mean by this? As I take it, that goodness can with difficulty gain a hold upon human nature, like fire upon green wood; while most men are ready and disposed to join in evil, like stubble, I mean, ready for a spark and a wind, which is easily kindled and consumed from its dryness. For more quickly would any one take part in evil with slight inducement to its full extent, than in good which is fully set before him to a slight degree. For indeed a little wormwood most quickly imparts its bitterness to honey; while not even double the quantity of honey can impart its sweetness to wormwood: and the withdrawal of a small pebble would draw headlong a whole river, though it would be difficult for the strongest dam to restrain or stay its course.

13. This then is the first point in what we have said, which it is right for us to guard against, viz.: being found to be bad painters of the charms of virtue, and still more, if not, perhaps, models for poor painters, poor models for the people, or barely escaping the proverb, that we undertake to heal others [Luke 4:23] while ourselves are full of sores.

14. In the second place, although a man has kept himself pure from sin, even in a very high degree; I do not know that even this is sufficient for one who is to instruct others in virtue. For he who has received this charge, not only needs to be free from evil, for evil is, in the eyes of most of those under his care, most disgraceful, but also to be eminent in good, according to the command, Depart from evil and do good. And he must not only wipe out the traces of vice from his soul, but also inscribe better ones, so as to outstrip men further in virtue than he is superior to them in dignity. He should know no limits in goodness or spiritual progress, and should dwell upon the loss of what is still beyond him, rather than the gain of what he has attained, and consider that which is beneath his feet a step to that which comes next: and not think it a great gain to excel ordinary people, but a loss to fall short of what we ought to be: and to measure his success by the commandment and not by his neighbours, whether they be evil, or to some extent proficient in virtue: and to weigh virtue in no small scales, inasmuch as it is due to the Most High, from Whom are all things, and to Whom are all things. [Romans 11:35]

15. Nor must he suppose that the same things are suitable to all, just as all have not the same stature, nor are the features of the face, nor the nature of animals, nor the qualities of soil, nor the beauty and size of the stars, in all cases the same: but he must consider base conduct a fault in a private individual, and deserving of chastisement under the hard rule of the law; while in the case of a ruler or leader it is a fault not to attain to the highest possible excellence, and always make progress in goodness, if indeed he is, by his high degree of virtue, to draw his people to an ordinary degree, not by the force of authority, but by the influence of persuasion. For what is involuntary apart from its being the result of oppression, is neither meritorious nor durable. For what is forced, like a plant violently drawn aside by our hands, when set free, returns to what it was before, but that which is the result of choice is both most legitimate and enduring, for it is preserved by the bond of good will. And so our law and our lawgiver enjoin upon us most strictly that we should tend the flock not by constraint but willingly. [1 Peter 5:2]

16. But granted that a man is free from vice, and has reached the greatest heights of virtue: I do not see what knowledge or power would justify him in venturing upon this office. For the guiding of man, the most variable and manifold of creatures, seems to me in very deed to be the art of arts and science of sciences. Any one may recognize this, by comparing the work of the physician of souls with the treatment of the body; and noticing that, laborious as the latter is, ours is more laborious, and of more consequence, from the nature of its subject matter, the power of its science, and the object of its exercise. The one labours about bodies, and perishable failing matter, which absolutely must be dissolved and undergo its fate, [Genesis 3:19] even if upon this occasion by the aid of art it can surmount the disturbance within itself, being dissolved by disease or time in submission to the law of nature, since it cannot rise above its own limitations.

17. The other is concerned with the soul, which comes from God and is divine, and partakes of the heavenly nobility, and presses on to it, even if it be bound to an inferior nature. Perhaps indeed there are other reasons also for this, which only God, Who bound them together, and those who are instructed by God in such mysteries, can know, but as far as I, and men like myself can perceive, there are two: one, that it may inherit the glory above by means of a struggle and wrestling [Ephesians 6:12] with things below, being tried as gold in the fire [1 Peter 1:7] by things here, and gain the objects of our hope as a prize of virtue, and not merely as the gift of God. This, indeed, was the will of Supreme Goodness, to make the good even our own, not only because sown in our nature, but because cultivated by our own choice, and by the motions of our will, free to act in either direction. The second reason is, that it may draw to itself and raise to heaven the lower nature, by gradually freeing it from its grossness, in order that the soul may be to the body what God is to the soul, itself leading on the matter which ministers to it, and uniting it, as its fellow-servant, to God. (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 2*, paragraphs 12 – 17)

Gregory of Nyssa (335 – 395 AD)

The Great Catechism

For it is unworthy of God, either that He should not will what is good, or that He should be unable to do it. “If, therefore, the Faith is a good thing, why,” they ask, “does not its grace come upon all men?” Now, if in our representation of the Gospel mystery we had so stated the matter as that it was the Divine will that the Faith should be so granted away amongst mankind that some men should be called, while the rest had no share in the calling, occasion would be given for bringing such a charge against this Revelation. But if the call came with equal meaning to all and makes no distinction as to worth, age, or different national characteristics (for it was for this reason that at the very first beginning of the proclamation of the Gospel they who ministered the Word were, by Divine inspiration, all at once enabled to speak in the language of any nation, viz. in order that no one might be destitute of a share in the blessings of evangelical instruction), with what reasonableness can they still charge it upon God that the Word has not influenced all mankind? For He Who holds the sovereignty of the universe, out of the excess of this regard for man, permitted something to be under our own control, of which each of us alone is master. Now this is the will, a thing that cannot be enslaved, and of self-determining power, since it is seated in the liberty of thought and mind. Therefore such a charge might more justly be transferred to those who have not attached themselves to the Faith, instead of resting on Him Who has called them to believe. For even when Peter at the beginning preached the Gospel in a crowded assembly of the Jews, and three thousand at once received the Faith, though those who disbelieved were more in number than the believers, they did not attach blame to the Apostle on the ground of their disbelief. It was, indeed, not in reason, when the grace of the Gospel had been publicly set forth, for one who had absented himself from it of his own accord to lay the blame of his exclusion on another rather than himself. (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism* 30)

Translators William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff, take note of this passage. In their footnote to it, they add: “The following passage is anti-Calvinistic. Gregory here, as continually elsewhere, asserts the freedom of the will; and is strongly supported by Justin Martyr, i. 43: “If it has been fixed by fate that one man shall be good, and another bad, the one is not praiseworthy, the other not culpable.

And again, if mankind has not power by a free choice to flee the evil and to choose the good, it is not responsible for any results, however shocking.”¹⁷

On the Making of Man

Gregory wrote *On the Making of Man* to accompany his brother Basil’s *Hexaemeron*. The two should be read together, at the very least to reflect Gregory’s efforts to make clear what he believed they believed in common about that Genesis material and theological anthropology.

9. And here, I think there is a view of the matter more close to nature, by which we may learn something of the more refined doctrines. For since the most beautiful and supreme good of all is the Divinity Itself, to which incline all things that have a tendency towards what is beautiful and good, we therefore say that the mind, as being in the image of the most beautiful, itself also remains in beauty and goodness so long as it partakes as far as is possible in its likeness to the archetype; but if it were at all to depart from this it is deprived of that beauty in which it was. And as we said that the mind was adorned by the likeness of the archetypal beauty, being formed as though it were a mirror to receive the figure of that which it expresses, we consider that the nature which is governed by it is attached to the mind in the same relation, and that it too is adorned by the beauty that the mind gives, being, so to say, a mirror of the mirror; and that by it is swayed and sustained the material element of that existence in which the nature is contemplated.

10. Thus so long as one keeps in touch with the other, the communication of the true beauty extends proportionally through the whole series, beautifying by the superior nature that which comes next to it; but when there is any interruption of this beneficent connection, or when, on the contrary, the superior comes to follow the inferior, then is displayed the misshapen character of matter, when it is isolated from nature (for in itself matter is a thing without form or structure), and by its shapelessness is also destroyed that beauty of nature with which it is adorned through the mind; and so the transmission of the ugliness of matter reaches through the nature to the mind itself, so that the image of God is no longer seen in the figure expressed by that which was moulded according to it; for the mind, setting the idea of good like a mirror behind the back, turns off the incident rays of the effulgence of the good, and it receives into itself the impress of the shapelessness of matter.

11. And in this way is brought about the genesis of evil, arising through the withdrawal of that which is beautiful and good. Now all is beautiful and good that is closely related to the First Good; but that which departs from its relation and likeness to this is certainly devoid of beauty and goodness. If, then, according to the statement we have been considering, that which is truly good is one, and the mind itself also has its power of being beautiful and good, in so far as it is in the image of the good and beautiful, and the nature, which is sustained by the mind, has the like power, in so far as it is an image of the image, it is hereby shown that our material part holds together, and is upheld when it is controlled by nature; and on the other hand is dissolved and disorganized when it is separated from that which upholds and sustains it, and is dissevered from its conjunction with beauty and goodness.

12. Now such a condition as this does not arise except when there takes place an overturning of nature to the opposite state, in which the desire has no inclination for beauty and goodness, but for that which is in need of the adorning element; for it must needs be that that which is made like to matter, destitute as matter is of form of its own, should be assimilated to it in respect of the absence alike of form and of beauty.

13. We have, however, discussed these points in passing, as following on our argument, since they were introduced by our speculation on the point before us; for the subject of enquiry was, whether the intellectual faculty has its seat in any of the parts of us, or extends equally over them all; for as for those who shut up the mind locally in parts of the body, and who advance for the establishment of this opinion of theirs the fact that the reason has not free course in the case of those whose cerebral membranes are in an unnatural condition, our argument showed that in respect of every part of the compound nature of man, whereby every man has some natural operation, the power of the soul remains equally ineffective if the part does not continue in its natural condition. And thus there came into our argument, following out this line of thought, the view we have just stated, by which we learn that in the compound

¹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 5. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893), p.684 see footnote 2011.

nature of man the mind is governed by God, and that by it is governed our material life, provided the latter remains in its natural state, but if it is perverted from nature it is alienated also from that operation which is carried on by the mind.

14. Let us return however once more to the point from which we started — that in those who are not perverted from their natural condition by some affection, the mind exercises its own power, and is established firmly in those who are in sound health, but on the contrary is powerless in those who do not admit its operation; for we may confirm our opinion on these matters by yet other arguments: and if it is not tedious for those to hear who are already wearied with our discourse, we shall discuss these matters also, so far as we are able, in a few words. (Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, chapter 12, paragraphs 9 – 14)

‘Thus there is in us the principle of all excellence, all virtue and wisdom, and every higher thing that we conceive: but pre-eminent among all is the fact that we are free from necessity, and not in bondage to any natural power, but have decision in our own power as we please; for virtue is a voluntary thing, subject to no dominion: that which is the result of compulsion and force cannot be virtue.’ (Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, chapter 16, paragraph 11)

11. Thus there is in us the principle of all excellence, all virtue and wisdom, and every higher thing that we conceive: but pre-eminent among all is the fact that we are free from necessity, and not in bondage to any natural power, but have decision in our own power as we please; for virtue is a voluntary thing, subject to no dominion: that which is the result of compulsion and force cannot be virtue. (Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, chapter 16, paragraph 11)

The Life of Moses

Gregory of Nyssa wrote *The Life of Moses* in the mode of what is called anagogical exegesis. He largely treats it as an allegory which would be helpful in the practical pursuit of virtue in Christ.

12. Human nature is divided into male and female, and the free choice of virtue or of evil is set before both equally. For this reason the corresponding example of virtue for each sex has been exemplified by the divine voice, so that each, by observing the one to which he is akin (the men to Abraham and the women to Sarah), may be directed in the life of virtue by the appropriate examples. (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, book 1, chapter 12)

3. We are in some manner our own parents, giving birth to ourselves by our own free choice in accordance with whatever we wish to be, whether male or female, moulding ourselves to the teaching of virtue or vice.’ (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, book 2, chapter 3)

44. For truly the assistance which God gives to our nature is provided to those who correctly live the life of virtue. This assistance was already there at our birth, but it is manifested and made known whenever we apply ourselves to diligent training in the higher life and strip ourselves for the more vigorous contests. 45. So as not to interpret the figures by our own figure, I shall set forth my understanding about this more plainly. There is a doctrine (which derives its trustworthiness from the tradition of the fathers) which says that after our nature fell into sin God did not disregard our fall and withhold his providence. No, on the one hand, he appointed an angel with an incorporeal nature to help in the life of each person and, on the other hand, he also appointed the corruptor who, by an evil and maleficent demon, afflicts the life of man and contrives against our nature. 46. Because man finds himself between these two who have contrary purposes for him, it is in his power to make the one prevail over the other. While the good angel by rational demonstration shows the benefits of virtue which are seen in hope by those who live aright, his opponent shows the material pleasures in which there is no hope of future benefits, but which are present, visible, can be partaken of, and enslave the senses of those who do not exercise their intellect. 47. If, then, one should withdraw from those who seduce him to evil and by the use of his reason turn to the better, putting evil behind him, it is as if he places his own soul, like a mirror, face to face with the hope of good things, with the result that the images and impressions of virtue, as it is shown to him by God, are imprinted on the purity of his soul. Then his brother brings him assistance and joins him, for the angel, who in a way is a brother to the rational and intellectual part of man's soul, appears, as I have said, and stands by us whenever we approach the Pharaoh.’ (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, book 2, chapters 44 – 47).

Hans Boersma comments on the above passage, “The fact that divine grace is present in people’s lives from the time of their birth means that free choice does not reflect a purely natural or strictly autonomous human power. Instead, God already actively assists the human person long before he chooses to perform a virtuous act. Of course, for Gregory divine assistance does increase or decrease depending on how we interact with it. It is not the kind of assistance that eliminates free choice.”¹⁸

It is as if someone who has not seen the sun blames it for causing him to fall into the ditch. Yet we do not hold that the luminary in anger pushes into the ditch someone who does not choose to look at it. Rather, we would interpret this statement in a more reasonable manner: It is the failure to participate in the light that causes the person who does not see to fall into the ditch. 96 In the same way, the thought of the Apostle should be clear, that it is those who do not acknowledge God who are delivered up to shameful affections, and that the Egyptian tyrant is hardened by God not because the divine will places the resistance in the soul of Pharaoh but because the free will through its inclination to evil does not receive the word which softens resistance. (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, book 2, chapter 76)

Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, in their Introduction to their translation of Nyssa’s *Life of Moses*, offer this summary: “Free Will and Divine Cooperation: 72 The place of the freedom of human choice in Gregory’s thought is fundamental to the *Life of Moses*. The *theoria* begins with the teaching that we are in some manner our own parents, “giving birth to ourselves by our own free choice in accordance with whatever we wish” (II, 3). Since the fall, each individual is placed between an angel appointed in God’s providence to help him and a demon who contrives to corrupt his nature (II, 45f.). Placed between these contenders, man chooses which one he follows and makes the one with whom he sides the victor (II, 14). Gregory is compelled to give extensive treatment to a major obstacle to his view—God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart (II, 73-88). He insists that the initial movement away from God is man’s. God sends the same influences; they incline one man in one direction and another in another. “We men have in ourselves, in our own nature and by our own choice, the causes of light or of darkness, since we place ourselves in whichever sphere we wish to be” (II, 80). “Since then in the same place evil comes to one but not to the other, the difference of free choices distinguishing each from the other, it is evident that nothing evil can come into existence apart from our free choice” (II, 88). In keeping with this emphasis, divine activity is seen as a cooperation, which comes to assist the soul that has made the first moves toward virtue. The Holy Spirit guides toward the good those who are worthy (II, 121). “For truly the assistance which God gives to our nature is provided to those who correctly live the life of virtue” (II, 44).”¹⁹

Ambrose of Milan (340 – 397 AD)

Letter 17

‘Ambrose, Bishop, to the most blessed Prince and most Christian Emperor Valentinian...No one is injured because God is set before him. He keeps his own opinion. You do not compel a man against his will to worship what he dislikes. Let the same liberty be given to you, O Emperor, and let every one bear it with patience, if he cannot extort from the Emperor what he would take it ill if the Emperor desired to extort from him. A shuffling spirit is displeasing to the heathen themselves, for everyone ought freely to defend and maintain the faith and purpose of his own mind.’ (Ambrose of Milan, *Letter 17*, paragraph 7)

Ambrose is admittedly encouraging the Emperor to express toleration at the political level for people who are not Christians. Ambrose is not giving a theological anthropology or an exegesis of Scripture. Nevertheless, the language of free will is present, and presumably anchors the policy posture that Ambrose urges.)

John Chrysostom (c. 349 – 407 AD)

¹⁸ Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa: An Analogical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.240 – 241

¹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, translated by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), p.15.

Homilies in Praise of Paul

‘But let no one on hearing these things think that this call was a matter of compulsion, for he was able to return again to the way from which he had come. Indeed many, after seeing other, greater marvels, turned back again, both in the New and in the Old Testament – for example, Judas, Nebuchadnezzar, Elymas the magician, Simon, Ananias and Sapphira, the entire Jewish people. But not Paul. He, after gazing upon the undefiled light, intensified his course and flew towards heaven... Now when you hear these things, don’t think that the call was compulsory. God does not compel, but allows people to be masters of their own choices even after the call... So then, believe, for God calls you from heaven [too], if you have a right-minded soul. But if you are senseless and twisted, then not even a voice borne to you from above will suffice for salvation.’ (Homilies in Praise of Paul 4, translated by Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p.458 – 459)

God never draws anyone to Himself by force and violence. He wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one (Sermon on the words ‘Saul, Saul...’ 6 (P.G. 51, 144)).

‘By calling the Law spiritual, he shows it to be a teacher of virtue and hostile to vice... And this the lauded do, by frightening, admonishing, chastising, correcting, recommending every kind of virtue. How then, was sin produced, if the teacher was so admirable? It was from the listlessness of its disciples... for when the body had become mortal, it was henceforth a necessary thing for it to receive concupiscence, and anger and pain, and all the other passions, which required a great deal of wisdom to prevent their flooding us, and sinking reason in the depths of sin. For in themselves they were not sin, but when their extravagance was unbridled, it had this effect. So... desire is not sin... Paul... is not finding fault with the body, but pointing out the soul’s superiority. For the whole duty of pilotage has been put into its hands... Paul here points out, giving the governing power to the soul. After dividing man into these two parts – the soul and the body – he says in effect that the flesh has less reason, and is destitute of discretion, and ranks among things to be led... Now the essence of the soul and body end of that choice are not the same, for the two first are gods work, and the other is emotion from ourselves... do you notice what a great thralldom that of vice is, in that it overcomes even a mind that delighted in the law? He shows the necessity of having grace present with us, and that the well doing here in belongs alike to the Father and the Son.’ (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 13). Chrysostom was commenting on Romans 7:14 – 25. He attributes ‘motion’ to us, along with ‘choice.’

‘When we let the flesh have its own will in everything, and it exceeds its proper bounds and rises up against the soul, then it destroys and corrupts everything. This is not owing to its own nature, but because it is out of proportion... And what hope of salvation is there left, if it is impossible for one who is bad to become good? This is not what he says. How else would Paul have become such as he was? How would the penitent thief, or Manasses, or the Ninevites – or how would David, after falling, have recovered himself? How would Peter after the denial have raised himself up? (1 Cor.5:5). How could the man who had lived in fornication have been enlisted among Christ’s fold? (2 Cor.2:6 – 11). How could the Galatians who had ‘fallen from grace’ (Gal.5:4) have regained their former dignity? What he says, then, is not that it is impossible for one who continues wicked to be subject to God. Yet for a man to be changed, and so become good, and subject to Him, is easy... It cannot but be that where the Spirit is, there Christ is also. For wheresoever one Person of the Trinity is, there the whole Trinity is present. For it is undivided in Itself, and has a most entire Oneness.’ (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 13).

‘Romans 9, verse 15. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’ Comments: ‘But here there was one sin on which all the Jews joined, that of the molten calf, and still some were punished, and some were not punished. And this is why He says, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion [Exodus 33:19]: observe context. For it is not yours to know, O Moses, he means, which are deserving of My love toward man, but leave this to Me. But if Moses had no right to know, much less have we. And this is why he did not barely quote the passage, but also called to our minds to whom it was said. For it is Moses, he means, that he is speaking to, that at least by the dignity of the person he might make the objector modest.’ (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 16) What is significant is that this is a historical example. This is not an example of eternal destinies.

‘Romans 9, verses 20 – 21. Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus? Hath not the potter power, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?’ Comments: ‘Here it is not to do away with free-will that he says this, but to show, up to what point we ought to obey God. For in respect of calling God to account, we ought to be as little disposed to it as the clay is. For we ought to abstain not from gainsaying or questioning only, but even from speaking or thinking of it at all, and to become like that lifeless matter, which follows the potter’s hands, and lets itself be drawn about anywhere he may please. And this is the only point he applied the illustration to, not, that is, to any enunciation of the rule of life, but to the complete obedience and silence enforced upon us. And this we ought to observe in all cases, that we are not to take the illustrations quite entire, but after selecting the good of them, and that for which they were introduced, to let the rest alone. As, for instance, when he says, ‘He couched, he lay down as a lion’ [Numbers 24:9]; let us take out the indomitable and fearful part, not the brutality, nor any other of the things belonging to a lion. And again, when He says, ‘I will meet them as a bereaved bear’ [Hosea 13:8], let us take the vindictiveness. And when he says, ‘Our God is a consuming fire’ [Hebrews 12:29], the wasting power exerted in punishing. So also here must we single out the clay, the potter, and the vessels. And when he does go on to say, ‘Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?’ do not suppose that this is said by Paul as an account of the creation, nor as implying a necessity over the will, but to illustrate the sovereignty and difference of dispensations; for if we do not take it in this way, various incongruities will follow, for if here he were speaking about the will, and those who are good and those not so, He will be Himself the Maker of these, and man will be free from all responsibility. And at this rate, Paul will also be shown to be at variance with himself, as he always bestows chief honor upon free choice. There is nothing else then which he here wishes to do, save to persuade the hearer to yield entirely to God, and at no time to call Him to account for anything whatever. For as the potter (he says) of the same lump makes what he pleases, and no one forbids it; thus also when God, of the same race of men, punishes some, and honors others, be not thou curious nor meddlesome herein, but worship only, and imitate the clay. And as it follows the hands of the potter, so do thou also the mind of Him that so orders things. For He works nothing at random, or mere hazard, though thou be ignorant of the secret of His Wisdom. Yet you allow the other of the same lump to make various things, and findest no fault: but of Him you demand an account of His punishments and honors, and will not allow Him to know who is worthy and who is not so; but since the same lump is of the same substance, you assert that there are the same dispositions. And, how monstrous this is! And yet not even is it on the potter that the honor and the dishonor of the things made of the lump depends, but upon the use made by those that handle them, so here also it depends on the free choice. Still, as I said before, one must take this illustration to have one bearing only, which is that one should not contravene God, but yield to His incomprehensible Wisdom. For the examples ought to be greater than the subject, and than the things on account of which they are brought forward, so as to draw on the hearer better. Since if they were not greater and did not mount far above it, he could not attack as he ought, and shame the objectors. However, their ill-timed obstinacy he silenced in this way with becoming superiority. And then he introduces his answer. Now what is the answer?’

‘Romans 9, verses 22, 23, 24. What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has chosen, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.’ Comments: ‘What he means is somewhat as follows. Pharaoh was a vessel of wrath, that is, a man who by his own hard-heartedness had kindled the wrath of God. For after enjoying much long-suffering, he became no better, but remained unimproved. Wherefore he calls him not only a vessel of wrath, but also one fitted for destruction. That is, fully fitted indeed, but by his own proper self. For neither had God left out anything of the things likely to recover him, nor did he leave out anything of those that would ruin him, and put him beyond any forgiveness. Yet still, though God knew this, He endured him with much long-suffering, being willing to bring him to repentance. For had He not willed this, then He would not have been thus long-suffering. But as he would not use the long-suffering in order to repentance, but fully fitted himself for wrath, He used him for the correction of others, through the punishment inflicted upon him making them better, and in this way setting forth His power. For that it is not God’s wish that His power be so made known, but in another way, by His benefits, namely, and kindnesses, he had shown above in all possible ways. For if Paul does not wish to appear powerful in this way (not that we should appear approved, he says, but that you should do that which is honest,) [2 Corinthians 13:7], much less does God. But after that he had shown long-suffering, that He might lead to repentance, but he did not repent, He suffered him a long time, that He might display at once His goodness and His power, even if that man were not minded to gain anything from this great long-suffering. As then by punishing this man, who continued incorrigible, He showed His power, so by having pitied those who had done many sins but repented, He manifested His love toward man. But it does not say, love towards man, but glory, to show that this is especially God’s glory,

and for this He was above all things earnest. But in saying, which He had afore prepared unto glory, he does not mean that all is God's doing. Since if this were so, there were nothing to hinder all men from being saved. But he is setting forth again His foreknowledge, and doing away with the difference between the Jews and the Gentiles. And on this topic again he grounds a defense of his statement, which is no small one. For it was not in the case of the Jews only that some men perished, and some were saved, but with the Gentiles also this was the case. Wherefore he does not say, all the Gentiles, but, of the Gentiles, nor, all the Jews, but, of the Jews. As then Pharaoh became a vessel of wrath by his own lawlessness, so did these become vessels of mercy by their own readiness to obey. For though the more part is of God, still they also have contributed themselves some little. Whence he does not say either, vessels of well-doing, or vessels of boldness (παρρησίας), but vessels of mercy, to show that the whole is of God. For the phrase, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, even if it comes in the course of the objection, still, were it said by Paul, would create no difficulty. Because when he says, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, he does not deprive us of free-will, but shows that all is not one's own, for that it requires grace from above. For it is binding on us to will, and also to run: but to confide not in our own labors, but in the love of God toward man. And this he has expressed elsewhere. Yet not I, but the grace which was with me. [1 Corinthians 15:10] And he well says, Which He had afore prepared unto glory. For since they reproached them with this, that they were saved by grace, and thought to make them ashamed, he far more than sets aside this insinuation. For if the thing brought glory even to God, much more to them through whom God was glorified. But observe his forbearance, and unspeakable wisdom. For when he had it in his power to adduce, as an instance of those punished, not Pharaoh, but such of the Jews as had sinned, and so make his discourse much clearer, and show that where there were the same fathers, and the same sins, some perished, and some had mercy shown them, and persuade them not to be doubtful-minded, even if some of the Gentiles were saved, while the Jews were perishing; that he might not make his discourse irksome, the showing forth of the punishment he draws from the foreigner, so that he may not be forced to call them vessels of wrath. But those that obtained mercy he draws from the people of the Jews. And besides, he also has spoken in a sufficient way in God's behalf, because though He knew very well that the nation was fitting itself as a vessel of destruction, still He contributed all on His part, His patience, His long-suffering, and that not merely long-suffering, but much long-suffering; yet still he was not minded to state it barely against the Jews. Whence then are some vessels of wrath, and some of mercy? Of their own free choice. God, however, being very good, shows the same kindness to both. For it was not those in a state of salvation only to whom He showed mercy, but also Pharaoh, as far as His part went. For of the same long-suffering, both they and he had the advantage. And if he was not saved, it was quite owing to his own will: since, as for what concerns God, he had as much done for him as they who were saved.' (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 16)

'Romans 11, verse 6. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.' Comments: 'And this he said out of a wish to show that He was most desirous that they might be saved. Deuteronomy 5:29 For not only would their salvation be easily brought about, but it was also God's greatest glory to display His love toward man. Why then are you afraid of drawing near, since you have no works demanded of you? Why are you bickering and quarrelsome, when grace is before you, and why keep putting me the Law forward to no purpose whatsoever? For you will not be saved by that, and will mar this gift also; since if you pertinaciously insist on being saved by it, you do away with this grace of God. Then that they might not think this strange, having first taken those seven thousand; he said that they were saved by grace. For when he says, Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace; he shows that they also were saved by grace. And not hereby only, but likewise by saying, I have reserved unto Myself. For this is the language of One Who shows that He Himself was the chief Contributor. And if by grace, it will be said, how came we all not to be saved? Because ye would not. For grace, though it be grace, saves the willing, not those who will not have it, and turn away from it, who persist in fighting against it, and opposing themselves to it.' (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 18)

'But it is not all simply from the action of the Spirit, but on condition of our contributing our part as well. This is why he says, 'in believing.'" (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 28) Chrysostom was commenting on Romans 14:13, which says, 'Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD)

On the Two Souls (392 AD)

‘[the] will is a movement of mind, no one compelling, either for not losing or for obtaining something... every one also who does a thing unwillingly is compelled...’ ‘Wherefore whatever these souls do, if they do it by nature not by will, that is, if they are wanting in a movement of mind free both for doing and not doing, if finally no power of abstaining from their work is conceded to them; we cannot hold that the sin is theirs.’ (Augustine of Hippo, *On the Two Souls*, chapters 10, 12. Written 392 AD against Manichaeism)

On the Spirit and the Letter (412 AD)

‘Since God, therefore, in such ways acts upon the reasonable soul in order that it may believe in Him (and certainly there is no ability whatever in free will to believe, unless there be persuasion or summons towards some one in whom to believe), it surely follows that it is God who both works in man the willing to believe, and in all things prevents us with His mercy. To yield our consent, indeed, to God’s summons, or to withhold it, is (as I have said) the function of our own will... For the soul cannot receive and possess these gifts, which are here referred to, except by yielding its consent.’ (Augustine of Hippo, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 412 AD)

‘Our will would not be a will were it not in our power. Precisely because it is within our power it is free for us.’ (Augustine of Hippo, *De libero arbitrio* 3, 3, 8)

‘Clearly the wicked do not know that you are everywhere. But you are not bound within the limits of any place. You alone are always present, even to those who set themselves apart from you. Let them then turn back and look for you. They will find that you have not deserted your creatures as they have deserted their Creator. Let them turn back, and they will find you in their hearts, in the hearts of all who confess to you and throw themselves upon your mercy, in the hearts of all who have left the hard path and come to weep upon your breast. Gently you wipe away their tears. They weep the more, but now their tears are tears of joy, because it is not some man of flesh and blood but you, O Lord, their Maker, who remakes them and consoles them.’ (Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* book 5.2)

‘It will be I who wills and I who does not will; I, I will be the one. I did not used to fully will nor did I used to fully not will. Hence there arose my struggle with myself...’ (Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* 8, 10, 22).

‘God has created me with free will; if I have sinned, I have sinned... I, I; not fate, not chance, not the devil. (In Psalms 31, 2, 6)²⁰

But Augustine began to change his mind:

On the Predestination of the Saints (426 AD)

‘We see that many come to the Son because we see that many believe in Christ, but when and how they have heard this from the Father, and have learned, we see not. It is true that that grace is exceedingly secret, but who doubts that it is grace? This grace, therefore, which is hiddenly bestowed in human hearts by the Divine gift, is rejected by no hard heart, because it is given for the sake of first taking away the hardness of the heart. When, therefore, the Father is heard within, and teaches, so that a man comes to the Son, He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh.’ (chapter 13)... ‘Away, then, with the thought that any one comes not, who has heard of the Father and has learned.’ (chapter 14)... ‘Faith, then, as well in its beginning as in its completion, is God’s gift; and let no one have any doubt whatever, unless he desires to resist the plainest sacred writings, that this gift is given to some, while to some it is not given... But why He delivers one rather than another—”His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out.” For it is better in this case for us to hear or to say, “O man, who are you that repliest against God?” than to dare to speak as if we could know what He has chosen to be kept secret.’ (Augustine of Hippo, *On the Predestination of the Saints* 16)

David Bradshaw explores why Augustine made this mistake: “If one were to summarize the differences between the Eastern and Western traditions in a single word, that word would be synergy. For the East, the highest form of communion with the divine is not primarily an intellectual act, but a sharing of life and activity. It led to a tendency

²⁰ Cited in Angelo Berardino, editor, *Patrology, Volume IV: The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics Inc., 1991), p.414.

to think of earthly, bodily existence as capable of being taken up and subsumed within the life of God. Emphasis was placed not on any sudden transformation at death, but on the ongoing and active appropriation of those aspects of the divine life that are open to participation. In the West, synergy played remarkably little role. Although various reasons might be conjectured for this difference, its immediate cause was the happenstance way in which Greek learning was transmitted to the West. Most of the works in which the ideal of synergy had been developed were not translated into Latin; furthermore, even if they had been, Latin offered no terms as suitable as *energeia* [energy] and its cognates for situating the notion of synergy within a broad metaphysical context. In place of the synergistic ideal and its accompanying metaphysics, Augustine impressed upon Western thought a number of interlocking assumptions: that God is simple; that He is intrinsically intelligible; that He can be known in only two ways, through created intermediaries or a direct intellectual apprehension of the divine essence; and that the highest goal of human existence is such direct intellectual apprehension. It is true that Augustine's theory of illumination (which I have not attempted to discuss) leaves open a certain sense in which the intellect can perceive God directly in this life without a created intermediary. This theory suffers from many obscurities, however, and Aquinas, under Aristotelian influence, quietly laid it aside.

"Despite such differences, the West remained almost unanimous in its acceptance of the Augustinian assumptions. The results were far-reaching and profound. One I have emphasized was that the presence of God within creatures, whether through participation in the divine perfections or through the special indwelling of grace, had to be understood in terms of efficient causality. This created a certain sense of distance between God and creatures – one that readily enough developed into a sense, not only of distance, but of autonomy. It is surely no accident that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as the western church was disengaging itself from its eastern counterpart, western culture as a whole developed a sharply more naturalistic stance in areas such as art, science, law, and government, as well as in various forms of religious devotion. This naturalism found expression in philosophy in the widespread assumption that there is a sphere of "natural reason" independent of revelation. Prayer and asceticism likewise came to be understood differently than in the East – not as contributing to the ongoing deification of body and soul, but as a way of disciplining the body while focusing and elevating the mind. The Augustinian elevation of the intellect thus placed at the heart of western spiritual practice a kind of practical dualism. By the high Middle Ages, naturalism, rationalism, and dualism formed a pervasive and tightly interlocking set of stances toward the world. Each supported the others, and all drew sustenance from their common root in the Augustinian metaphysics of the divine essence."²¹

Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390 – c. 455 AD)

Calling All the Nations (450 AD)

Calling of All the Nations (450 AD) was Prosper's attempt to reconcile Augustine of Hippo's teaching on grace in which he suggests that God wishes all men to be saved. The argument is that although all human beings do not receive the grace that saves, they do receive God's general grace. Written in AD 450, the *Calling of All Nations* was Prosper's most original contribution to theology. (Wikipedia, 'Prosper of Aquitaine')

John Cassian (360 – 435 AD)

Conferences

'It cannot then be doubted that *there are by nature some seeds of goodness in every soul implanted by the kindness of the Creator: but unless these are quickened by the assistance of God, they will not be able to attain to an increase of perfection...* And therefore the will always remains free in man, and can either neglect or delight in the grace of God. For the Apostle would not have commanded saying: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' [Phil.2:13] had he not known that it could be advanced or neglected by us. But that men might not fancy that they had no need of Divine aid for the work of Salvation, he subjoins: '*For it is God that works in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure.*' And therefore he warns Timothy and says: 'Neglect not the grace of God which is in

²¹ David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.264 – 266.

thee;’ and again: ‘For which cause I exhort thee to stir up the grace of God which is in thee...’ (John Cassian, *Conferences* 13.12)

Vincent of Lerins (died c. 445 AD)

TBD

The Council of Orange (529 AD)

Canon 13. Concerning the restoration of free will. The freedom of will that was destroyed in the first man can be restored only by the grace of baptism, for what is lost can be returned only by the one who was able to give it. Hence the Truth itself declares: “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Conclusion: ‘We not only do not believe that any are foreordained to evil by the power of God, but even state with utter abhorrence that if there are those who want to believe so evil a thing, they are anathema. We also believe and confess to our benefit that in every good work it is not we who take the initiative and are then assisted through the mercy of God, but God himself first inspires in us both faith in him and love for him without any previous good works of our own that deserve reward, so that we may both faithfully seek the sacrament of baptism, and after baptism be able by his help to do what is pleasing to him. We must therefore most evidently believe that the praiseworthy faith of the thief whom the Lord called to his home in paradise, and of Cornelius the centurion, to whom the angel of the Lord was sent, and of Zacchaeus, who was worthy to receive the Lord himself, was not a natural endowment but a gift of God's kindness.’

The Latin-speaking bishops who gathered at Orange viewed baptism as restoring ‘freedom of the will’ because they coordinated baptism as washing away the corruption of sin from the fall. This is the doctrine of ancestral sin, where the original corruption is passed down. It is not Augustine’s doctrine of original guilt being passed down to all the descendants of Adam and Eve.

Maximus the Confessor (c. 580– 662AD)

Ad Thalassios

‘Thus we are not permitted to say that, among the saints, it was grace alone that produced knowledge of divine mysteries without any contribution from the natural capacities of the saints to receive such knowledge.’ (Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassios*, Question 59.3)

‘From this it is clear that all saints both received revelations from the Spirit and searched out their principles in order to unveil what had been revealed to them, and that the grace of the Holy Spirit in no way abolishes the power of nature. To the contrary: grace makes nature – which had been weakened by habits contrary to nature – strong enough once again to function in ways according to nature, and it leads it upward to comprehension of divine realities.’ (Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassios*, Question 59.6)

‘This means to abstain from evil deeds and from the deluded contemplation of the senses; and to put on sackcloth, that is, the habit of mind that mortifies the passions contrary to nature, but which produces virtues and knowledge according to nature; and to cry out fervently to God, which obviously means to confess earnestly their former sins, and by their humility to propitiate Him who is able to grant forgiveness for their former ways. And to ask, moreover, for immutable power in their actualization of superior things, and in the guarding of their power of free choice, for God eagerly grants this to those who ask to receive it, and, as if from an “evil way,” to impede their mind from returning to its former deception, and to cast off from the soul’s practical powers the state of mind that conceives wickedness.’ (Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassios*, Question 64.12)

John of Damascus (675 – 749 AD)

Exposition of the Orthodox Faith

‘Moreover, it is to be observed that the choice of what is to be done is in our own hands : but the final issue depends, in the one case when our actions are good, on the cooperation of God, Who in His justice brings help according to His foreknowledge to such as choose the good with a right conscience, and, in the other case when our actions are to evil, on the desertion by God, Who again in His justice stands aloof in accordance with His foreknowledge. Now there are two forms of desertion: for there is desertion in the matters of guidance and training, and there is complete and hopeless desertion. The former has in view the restoration and safety and glory of the sufferer, or the rousing of feelings of emulation and imitation in others, or the glory of God: but the latter is when man, after God has done all that was possible to save him, remains of his own set purpose blind and uncured, or rather incurable, and then he is handed over to utter destruction, as was Judas. Matthew 26:24 May God be gracious to us, and deliver us from such desertion. Observe further that the ways of God's providence are many, and they cannot be explained in words nor conceived by the mind. And remember that all the assaults of dark and evil fortune contribute to the salvation of those who receive them with thankfulness, and are assuredly ambassadors of help. Also one must bear in mind that God's original wish was that all should be saved and come to His Kingdom. 1 Timothy 2:4 For it was not for punishment that He formed us but to share in His goodness, inasmuch as He is a good God. But inasmuch as He is a just God, His will is that sinners should suffer punishment. The first then is called God's antecedent will and pleasure, and springs from Himself, while the second is called God's consequent will and permission, and has its origin in us. And the latter is two-fold; one part dealing with matters of guidance and training, and having in view our salvation, and the other being hopeless and leading to our utter punishment, as we said above. And this is the case with actions that are not left in our hands. But of actions that are in our hands the good ones depend on His antecedent goodwill and pleasure, while the wicked ones depend neither on His antecedent nor on His consequent will, but are a concession to free-will. For that which is the result of compulsion has neither reason nor virtue in it. God makes provision for all creation and makes all creation the instrument of His help and training, yea often even the demons themselves, as for example in the cases of Job and the swine. (John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 2.29, ‘Concerning Prescience and Predestination’)

‘We ought to understand that while God knows all things beforehand, yet He does not predetermine all things. For He knows beforehand those things that are in our power, but He does not predetermine them. For it is not His will that there should be wickedness nor does He choose to compel virtue... Bear in mind, too, that virtue is a gift from God implanted in our nature, and that He Himself is the source and cause of all good, and without His co-operation and help we cannot will or do any good thing. But we have it in our power either to abide in virtue and follow God, Who calls us into ways of virtue, or to stray from paths of virtue, which is to dwell in wickedness, and to follow the devil who summons but cannot compel us. For wickedness is nothing else than the withdrawal of goodness, just as darkness is nothing else than the withdrawal of light. While then we abide in the natural state we abide in virtue, but when we deviate from the natural state, that is from virtue, we come into an unnatural state and dwell in wickedness.’ (John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 2.30, ‘Concerning Prescience and Predestination’)

‘We hold, therefore, that free-will comes on the scene at the same moment as reason, and that change and alteration are congenital to all that is produced. For all that is produced is also subject to change. For those things must be subject to change whose production has its origin in change. And change consists in being brought into being out of nothing, and in transforming a substratum of matter into something different. Inanimate things, then, and things without reason undergo the aforementioned bodily changes, while the changes of things endowed with reason depend on choice. For reason consists of a speculative and a practical part. The speculative part is the contemplation of the nature of things, and the practical consists in deliberation and defines the true reason for what is to be done. The speculative side is called mind or wisdom, and the practical side is called reason or prudence. Every one, then, who deliberates does so in the belief that the choice of what is to be done lies in his hands, that he may choose what seems best as the result of his deliberation, and having chosen may act upon it. And if this is so, free-will must necessarily be very closely related to reason. For either man is an irrational being, or, if he is rational, he is master of his acts and endowed with free-will. Hence also creatures without reason do not enjoy free-will: for nature leads them rather than they nature, and so they do not oppose the natural appetite, but as soon as their appetite longs after anything they rush headlong after it. But man, being rational, leads nature rather than nature him, and so when he desires aught he has the power to curb his appetite or to indulge it as he pleases. Hence also creatures devoid of

reason are the subjects neither of praise nor blame, while man is the subject of both praise and blame. Note also that the angels, being rational, are endowed with free-will, and, inasmuch as they are created, are liable to change. This in fact is made plain by the devil who, although made good by the Creator, became of his own free-will the inventor of evil, and by the powers who revolted with him, that is the demons, and by the other troops of angels who abode in goodness.' (John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 2.27, 'Concerning the Reason of Our Endowment with Free Will')

Man, however, being endowed with reason and free will, received the power of continuous union with God through his own choice, if indeed he should abide in goodness, that is in obedience to his Maker. Since, however, he transgressed the command of his Creator and became liable to death and corruption, the Creator and Maker of our race, because of His bowels of compassion, took on our likeness, becoming man in all things but without sin, and was united to our nature. Hebrews 2:17 For since He bestowed on us His own image and His own spirit and we did not keep them safe, He took Himself a share in our poor and weak nature, in order that He might cleanse us and make us incorruptible, and establish us once more as partakers of His divinity. (John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 4.13)

It is to be observed that it is the custom in the Holy Scripture to speak of God's permission as His energy, as when the apostle says in the Epistle to the Romans, Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? And for this reason, that He Himself makes this or that. For He is Himself alone the Maker of all things; yet it is not He Himself that fashions noble or ignoble things, but the personal choice of each one. And this is manifest from what the same Apostle says in the Second Epistle to Timothy, In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth: and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. 2 Timothy 2:20-21 And it is evident that the purification must be voluntary: for if a man, he says, purge himself. And the consequent antistrophe responds, If a man purge not himself he will be a vessel to dishonour, unmeet for the master's use and fit only to be broken in pieces. Wherefore this passage that we have quoted and this, God has concluded them all in unbelief Romans 11:32, and this, God has given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, all these must be understood not as though God Himself were energising, but as though God were permitting, both because of free-will and because goodness knows no compulsion.

His permission, therefore, is usually spoken of in the Holy Scripture as His energy and work. Nay, even when He says that God creates evil things, and that there is no evil in a city that the Lord has not done, he does not mean by these words Amos 3:6 that the Lord is the cause of evil, but the word 'evil' is used in two ways, with two meanings. For sometimes it means what is evil by nature, and this is the opposite of virtue and the will of God: and sometimes it means that which is evil and oppressive to our sensation, that is to say, afflictions and calamities. Now these are seemingly evil because they are painful, but in reality are good. For to those who understand they became ambassadors of conversion and salvation. The Scripture says that of these God is the Author.

It is, moreover, to be observed that of these, too, we are the cause: for involuntary evils are the offspring of voluntary ones.

This also should be recognised, that it is usual in the Scriptures for some things that ought to be considered as effects to be stated in a causal sense, as, Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight, that You might be justified when You speak, and prevail when You judge. For the sinner did not sin in order that God might prevail, nor again did God require our sin in order that He might by it be revealed as victor. For above comparison He wins the victor's prize against all, even against those who are sinless, being Maker, incomprehensible, uncreated, and possessing natural and not adventitious glory. But it is because when we sin God is not unjust in His anger against us; and when He pardons the penitent He is shown victor over our wickedness. But it is not for this that we sin, but because the thing so turns out. It is just as if one were sitting at work and a friend stood near by, and one said, My friend came in order that I might do no work that day. The friend, however, was not present in order that the man should do no work, but such was the result. For being occupied with receiving his friend he did not work. These things, too, are spoken of as effects because affairs so turned out. Moreover, God does not wish that He alone should be just, but that all should, so far as possible, be made like Him. (John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 4.19)

God in His goodness brought what exists into being out of nothing, and has foreknowledge of what will exist in the future. If, therefore, they were not to exist in the future, they would neither be evil in the future nor would they be foreknown. For knowledge is of what exists and foreknowledge is of what will surely exist in the future. For simple being comes first and then good or evil being. But if the very existence of those, who through the goodness of God are in the future to exist, were to be prevented by the fact that they were to become evil of their own choice, evil would have prevailed over the goodness of God. Wherefore God makes all His works good, but each becomes of its own choice good or evil. Although, then, the Lord said, Good were it for that man that he had never been born Mark 14:21, He said it in condemnation not of His own creation but of the evil which His own creation had acquired by his own choice and through his own heedlessness. For the heedlessness that marks man's judgment made His Creator's beneficence of no profit to him. It is just as if any one, when he had obtained riches and dominion from a king, were to lord it over his benefactor, who, when he has worsted him, will punish him as he deserves, if he should see him keeping hold of the sovereignty to the end. (John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 4.21)