



THE ANÁSTASIS CENTER  
FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & MINISTRY

Romans 9 – 11,  
Predestination and Free Will,  
the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart,  
and Ongoing Outreach  
to the Jewish Community

**Mako A. Nagasawa**



# The Puzzling Language of Paul

- In Romans 9 – 11:
  - The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart
  - The Hardening of Israel’s Heart



# The **Hardening** of **Pharaoh**

9:17 For the Scripture says to **Pharaoh**, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My Name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.’<sup>18</sup> So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He **hardens** whom He desires.<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?’<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?



# The Hardening of Israel

<sup>11:7</sup> What then? What **Israel** is seeking, it has not obtained, but **those who were chosen** obtained it, and **the rest** were **hardened**; <sup>8</sup> just as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.’ ...<sup>25</sup> For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a **partial hardening** has happened to **Israel** until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...

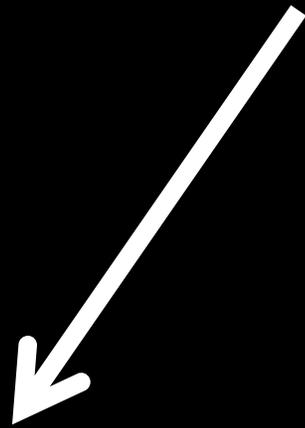
# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- How to explain Jewish unbelief?
- Did God just *use* Israel and trick them?
- How to interpret unbelief in general?
- How to understand God's character? Does God cause unbelief? Is God partly evil? Arbitrary?
- How to read Scripture? In what sense can we trust it?



# Understanding God's Character

God is just?

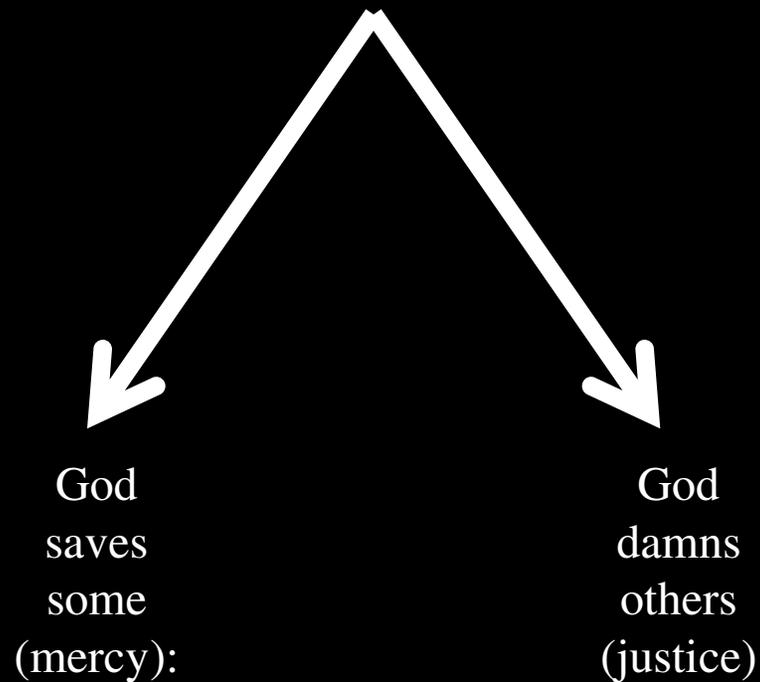


God  
saves  
some  
(mercy):

God  
damns  
others  
(justice)

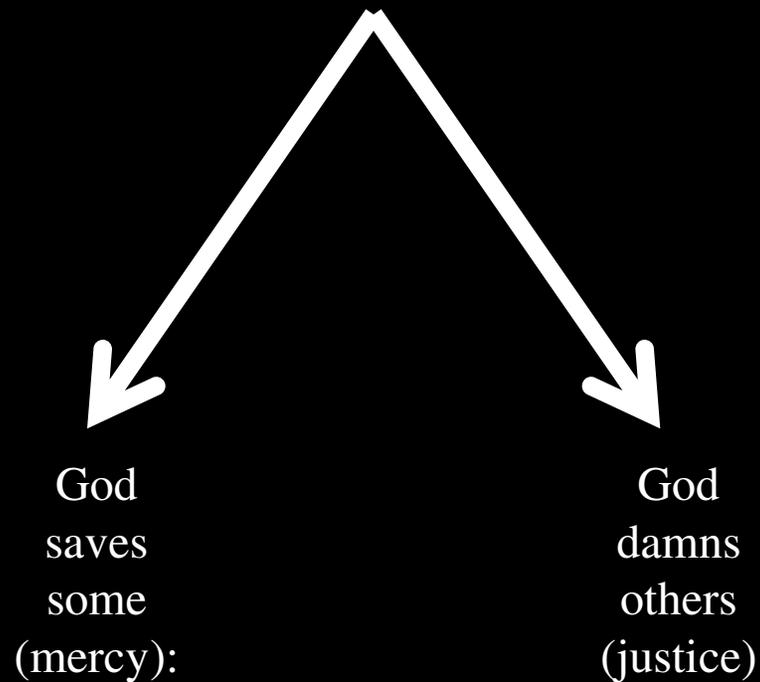
# Understanding God's Character

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# Understanding God's Character

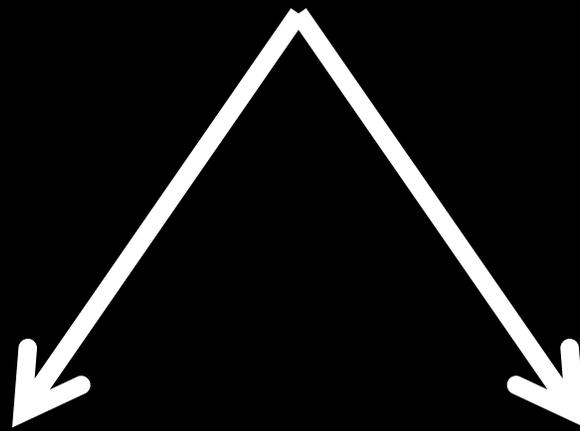
God is arbitrary:



# Understanding God's Character

God is arbitrary:  
**Romans 1 – 11**

- The strange feeling you get when you read Romans, if you interpret it this way



God  
saves  
some  
(mercy):

**Romans 1 – 8**

God  
damns  
others  
(justice)

**Romans 9 – 11**



# One View of Hardening

- Who is hardened? Most people
- Who hardens: God alone chooses
- Duration: lasts forever
- Consequences: eternal
- Purpose: eternal sorting
  - God saves: some
  - God damns: some
- God is arbitrary
- God's justice: retributive

# The Classical Christian View on Hardening

- Who is hardened? Most people
- Who hardens: God alone chooses
- Duration: lasts forever
- Consequences: eternal
- Purpose: eternal sorting
  - God saves: some
  - God damns: some
- God is arbitrary
- God's justice: retributive
- Who is hardened? **Only Pharaoh and some Jews**
- Who chooses: **human beings, then God seals**
- Duration: **momentary**
- Consequences: **historical**
- Purpose: **show more mercy**
  - God saves: **intends all**
  - God damns: **intends none**
- God is **loving & missional**
- God's justice: **restorative**

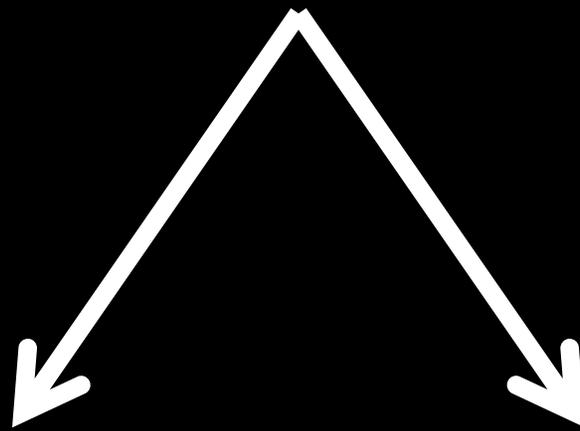
# Understanding God's Character

God is arbitrary:

**Romans 1 – 11**

God is loving  
and missional:

**Romans 1 – 11**



God  
saves  
some  
(mercy):

**Romans 1 – 8**

God  
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**Romans 9 – 11**



God offers  
Jesus' new  
humanity  
to ALL:

**Romans 1 – 11**

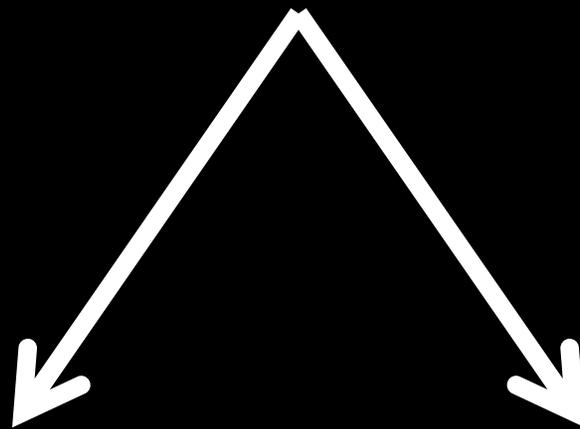
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God is arbitrary:

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God is loving  
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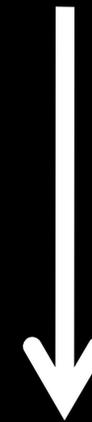


God  
saves  
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(mercy):

**Romans 1 – 8**

God  
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God offers  
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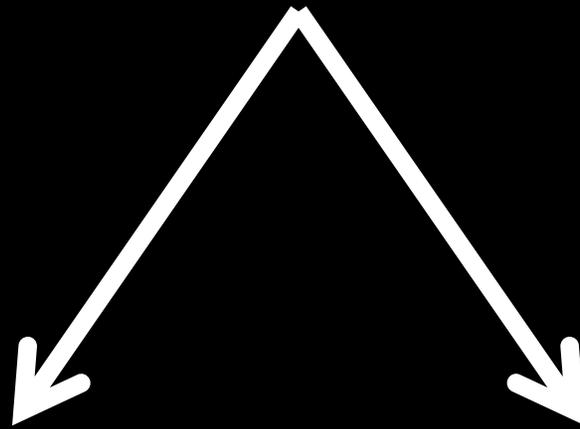
God  
condemned  
sin in the flesh  
of Jesus:

**Rom.6:6; 8:3**

# Understanding God's Character

God is arbitrary:  
**Romans 1 – 11**

God is loving  
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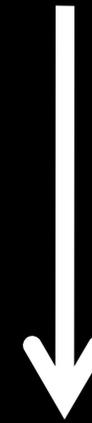


God  
saves  
some  
(mercy):

**Romans 1 – 8**

God  
damns  
others  
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**Romans 9 – 11**



God offers  
Jesus' new  
humanity  
to ALL:  
**Romans 1 – 11**

God's wrath is  
part of His love  
and serves His  
love

God  
condemned  
sin in the flesh  
of Jesus:  
**Rom.6:6; 8:3**

# Romans 9 – 11 in outline



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A. **Mission:** Paul wants more Jews to know Jesus (9:1 – 6)

How to understand what comes here in between?

How does this section support Paul's mission?

A'. **Mission:** Paul more motivated to share Jesus with both Gentiles and Jews; God desires to show mercy to all. (11:28 – 36)



# Why Is Paul on a Mission?

<sup>9:1</sup> I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup> that **I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.** <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of **my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,** <sup>4</sup> **who are Israelites,** to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, <sup>5</sup> whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.



# Why Is Paul on a Mission?

<sup>11:13</sup> But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow **I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen** and **save** some of **them**...<sup>30</sup> For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of **their** disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so **these** also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you **they also may now be shown mercy**. <sup>32</sup> For God has shut up (i.e. *verbally silenced*, c.f. Rom.3:20) **all** in disobedience so that He may show mercy to **all**. <sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!...<sup>36</sup> For from Him and through Him and to Him are **all things**. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.



# Romans 9 – 11 in outline

- A. **Mission**: Paul wants more Jews to know Jesus (9:1 – 6)
- B. **'Israel' is not ethnic or genetic**; God pruned down (9:6 – 13)
- C. **God hardened hearts** of Pharaoh and Israelites (9:14 – 24)
- D. **God's Word did not fail**: Israel's remnant (9:25 – 33)
- E. Christ is the *telos* of the covenant (10:1 – 13)
- D'. **God's Word did not fail**: Gentiles (10:14 – 11:6)
- C'. **God hardened hearts** of Israelites (11:7 – 12)
- B'. **'Israel' is not ethnic or genetic**; God grafting in (11:13 – 27)
- A'. **Mission**: Paul more motivated to share Jesus with both Gentiles and Jews; God desires to show mercy to all. (11:28 – 36)



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# Israel: An Ethnicity or a Faith?

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# Israel: An Ethnicity or a Faith?

- ‘Jacob have I loved; Esau I hated’
  - Malachi 1:2 – 3, Romans 9:13
  - A demonstration of God’s arbitrary will to choose who belongs to Him or not?
  - Or something else?

# Israel: An Ethnicity or a Faith?

- ‘Jacob have I loved; Esau I hated’
  - God narrowed the covenant people according to Jacob’s faith
  - Not God’s emotions towards Jacob and Esau
- Esau developed a relationship with God (Gen.32 – 33)
  - Esau’s generosity and eagerness to reconcile with Jacob
  - Jacob says the ‘face of Esau’ is like the ‘face of God’ (Gen.32:30; 33:10) God’s blessing of fertility and prosperity also fell on Esau and his family (Gen.36)
- ‘Jacob have I loved, Esau I hated’
  - Unique, not generalizable



# Israel: An Ethnicity or a Faith?

- People not descended from Abraham and Sarah who joined Israel
  - **Shua's daughter** (Genesis 38:2): Canaanite woman, married Judah
  - **Tamar** (Genesis 38:6): Canaanite woman, married Judah's son
  - **'The mixed multitude' from Egypt** (Exodus 12:38 – 49): became part of Israel during the Exodus and was probably circumcised (*see Origen, et.al.*)
  - **Caleb** (Numbers 32:12; Genesis 15:19): the son of Jephunneh, who was identified with the tribe of Judah but was ethnically a Kenizzite, a Canaanite
  - **Rahab and household** (Joshua 6:17 – 25): a Canaanite family who joined Israel during the conquest of Canaan; Rahab married Salmon – of the tribe of Judah – and became an ancestor of King David
  - **The Gibeonites** (Joshua 9 – 11): a Canaanite tribe
  - **Ruth** (Ruth 4:13): a Moabitess who married Boaz – who was of the tribe of Judah and became an ancestor of King David
  - **Bathsheba the Hittite** (2 Samuel 11 – 12): became a wife of King David
- Warnings against marrying outsiders (e.g. Neh.13) are an inter-*faith* issue, not an inter-*ethnic* issue

# Israel: An Ethnicity or a Faith?

- Believers who remained outside the Jewish covenant
  - Melchizedek in Gen.14
  - Abimelech in Gen.20
  - Esau in Gen.33 and 36
  - Balaam in Num.22 – 24 (?)
  - Naaman the Syrian in 2 Ki.5
  - Ninevites in Jonah
  - Nebuchadnezzar in Dan.2 – 4
- Belief in God and participation in the Sinai covenant were not absolutely synonymous
  - For more explanation of the Jewish covenant, see my paper *Why Choose a Chosen People?* found here: <https://www.anastasiscenter.org/gods-goodness-israel-why>
- In light of Jesus, the question is, what and who is ‘Israel’?



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# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

Plague	Exodus Text	Type	Warning?	Time of Warning	Instruction Formula	Who Speaks?	Who Hardens Pharaoh's Heart?
1	7:14 – 24	Blood	Yes	In the morning	Station yourself	Aaron	Pharaoh
2	7:15 – 8:11	Frogs	Yes	None	Go to Pharaoh	Aaron	Pharaoh
3	8:12 – 15	Lice	None	None	None	Aaron	Pharaoh
4	8:16 – 32	Flies	Yes	In the morning	Station yourself	God	Pharaoh
5	9:1 – 7	Pestilence	Yes	None	Go to Pharaoh	God	Pharaoh
6	9:8 – 12	Boils	None	None	None	Moses	God
7	9:13 – 35	Hail	Yes	In the morning	Station yourself	Moses	Pharaoh
8	10:1 – 20	Locust	Yes	None	Go to Pharaoh	Moses	God
9	10:21 – 29	Darkness	None	None	None	Moses	God
10	11:4 – 7 & 12:29 – 30	Death of Firstborn	Yes	None	None	God	God

Source: Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus* (New York: Schocken, 1996), p.76; cf. Umberto Cassuto, *Exodus* (Chicago: Publisher's Row, 2005), p.92 – 93; James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.144 – 155

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- The Significance of the Exodus Narrative
  - Clearly one story woven tightly together using literary patterns
  - The number 10 is associated with a foundation on which more is built
    - Ten utterances of God in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3
    - Ten people listed between Adam and Noah in Genesis 5
    - Ten generations listed between Shem and Abraham in Genesis 11
    - Ten genealogies before the nation Israel in Genesis 2 – 50
    - Ten plagues on Egypt in Exodus 7 – 12
    - Ten commandments for Israel in Exodus 19
    - Ten healings by Jesus in Matthew 8 – 9, which is Matthew's compressed summary
  - Was Paul pulling one part of it out of context?

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Evidence that Pharaoh was First to Harden His Heart:
  - God predicts it
    - <sup>3:19</sup> But I know that **the king of Egypt will not permit you to go**, except under compulsion. <sup>20</sup> So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. <sup>21</sup> I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed.
  - God says He will further harden Pharaoh's heart, to make 10 numerical signs
    - <sup>4:21</sup> The LORD said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but **I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go**.
    - <sup>7:3</sup> But **I will harden Pharaoh's heart** that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Pharaoh's Agency and Personal Responsibility (Plagues 1 – 5)
  1. (**PASSIVE VOICE, ASCRIBED TO PHARAOH**) <sup>7:13</sup> Yet **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, '**Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go...**
  2. (**PASSIVE VOICE**) <sup>7:22</sup> But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. <sup>23</sup> Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this.
  3. (**ACTIVE VOICE**) <sup>8:15</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
  4. (**PASSIVE VOICE**) <sup>8:19</sup> Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.' But **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (**ACTIVE VOICE**) <sup>8:32</sup> But **Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also**, and he did not let the people go (connects 4<sup>th</sup> occasion to previous)
    - 'As the Lord had said' (Ex.8:19): God foresaw Pharaoh's choices (Ex.3:19 – 21)

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Pharaoh's Agency and God's Agency (Plagues 5 – 7)
  5. (**PASSIVE VOICE**) <sup>9:7</sup> Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But **the heart of Pharaoh was hardened**, and he did not let the people go.
  6. (**ACTIVE VOICE**) <sup>9:12</sup> And **the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.
  7. (**PASSIVE VOICE**) <sup>9:34</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, **he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.** <sup>35</sup> **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Pharaoh's Agency and God's Agency (Plagues 8 – 10)
  8. (ACTIVE VOICE) <sup>10:1</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, <sup>2</sup> and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.' ...  
<sup>10:20</sup> But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.
  9. (ACTIVE VOICE) <sup>10:27</sup> But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go.
  10. (ACTIVE VOICE) <sup>11:10</sup> Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Hardness of heart probably comes from the motif that Adam was made from the ground



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# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Jeremiah uses the motif of clay, referring to the reshaping of Israel in Babylon (where Abraham and Sarah came from):
  - Jeremiah 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, <sup>2</sup> ‘Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will announce My words to you.’ <sup>3</sup> Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. <sup>4</sup> But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so **he remade it into another vessel**, as it pleased the potter to make. <sup>5</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, <sup>6</sup> ‘Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?’ declares the LORD. ‘Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.’
- Prior to the Babylonian exile, Israel had a choice to obey or disobey God



# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

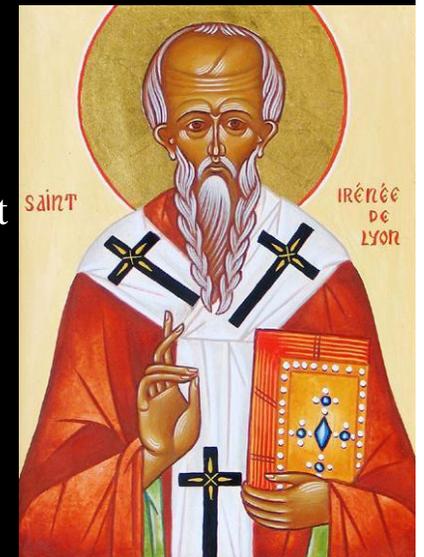
- Moses uses the phrase in one other place, reflecting human choice:
  - Deut.15:7 If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, **you shall not harden your heart**, nor close your hand from your poor brother; <sup>8</sup> but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.
- God desires **softness of heart, and we have choice in the matter**

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon (130 – 202 AD), the first writing theologian after the New Testament:

‘If, then, thou art God's workmanship, await the hand of thy Maker which creates everything in due time; in due time as far as thou art concerned, whose creation is being carried out. Offer to Him **thy heart in a soft and tractable state**, and preserve the form in which the Creator has fashioned thee, having moisture in thyself, lest, by **becoming hardened, thou lose the impressions of His fingers**. But by preserving the framework thou shalt ascend to that which is perfect, for **the moist clay** which is in thee is hidden [there] by the workmanship of God. His hand fashioned thy substance; He will cover thee over within and without with pure gold and silver, and He will adorn thee to such a degree, that even ‘the King Himself shall have pleasure in thy beauty.’ [Ps.45:11] But if thou, **being obstinately hardened**, dost reject the operation of His skill, and show thyself ungrateful towards Him, because thou wert created a [mere] man, by becoming thus ungrateful to God, thou hast at once lost both His workmanship and life. For creation is an attribute of the goodness of God but to be created is that of human nature. If then, thou shalt deliver up to Him what is thine, that is, faith towards Him and subjection, thou shalt receive His handiwork, and shall be a perfect work of God.’

(Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 39, paragraph 2)

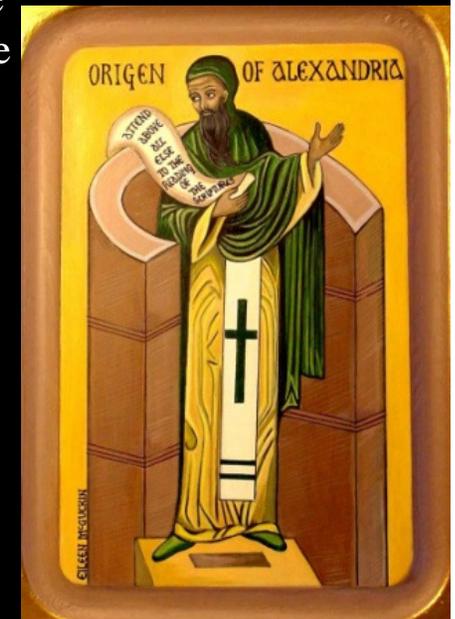


# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

Origen of Alexandria (184 – 254 AD), a teacher, scholar, and prolific writer on biblical exegesis, textual criticism, hermeneutics, theology, and spirituality:

‘But, to establish the point more clearly, it will not be superfluous to employ another illustration, as if, e.g., one were to say that it is the sun which hardens and liquefies, although liquefying and hardening are things of an opposite nature. Now it is not incorrect to say that the sun, by one and the same power of its heat, **melts wax** indeed, but dries up and **hardens mud** not that its power operates one way upon mud, and in another way upon wax; but that the qualities of mud and wax are different, although according to nature they are one thing, both being from the earth. In this way, then, one and the same working upon the part of God, which was administered by Moses in signs and wonders, made manifest **the hardness of Pharaoh**, which he had conceived in the intensity of his wickedness **but exhibited the obedience of those other Egyptians** who were intermingled with the Israelites, and who are recorded to have quitted Egypt at the same time with the Hebrews.’

(Origen, *De Principiis*, book 3, chapter 1 ‘On the Freedom of the Will’, paragraph 11), probably drawing the image of wax-mud from Jewish commentator Philo of Alexandria (*Quis rer.div.her.*181:3, 41).

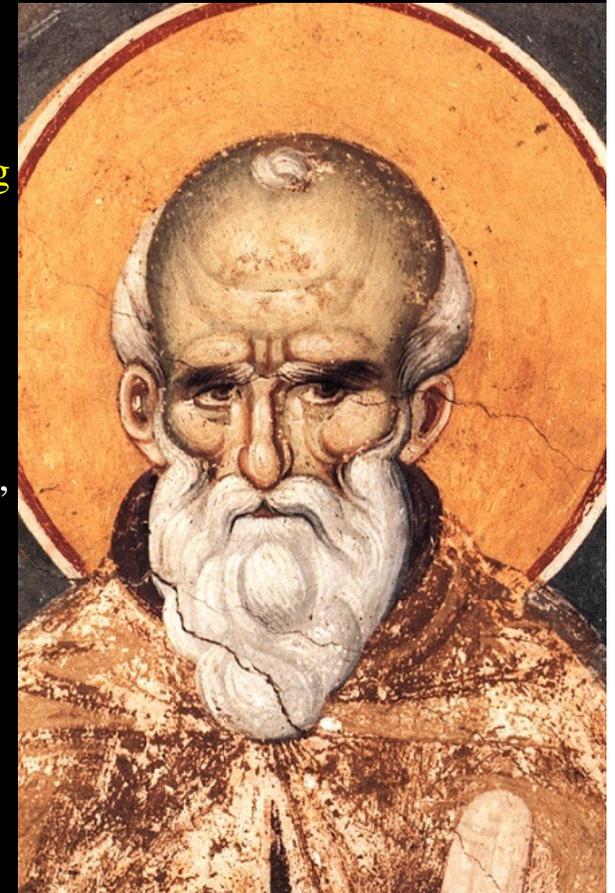


# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

Maximus the Confessor (580 – 662 AD), leading orthodox theologian and martyr during the Monothelite Controversy:

‘God is the sun of justice, as it is written, who shines rays of goodness on simply everyone. The soul develops according to its free will into either wax because of its love for God or into mud because of its love for matter. Thus just as by nature **the mud is dried out by the sun and the wax is automatically softened**, so also every soul which loves matter and the world and has fixed its mind far from God is **hardened as mud according to its free will and by itself advances to its perdition, as did Pharaoh**. However, every soul which loves God is softened as wax, and receiving divine impressions and characters it becomes the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’

(Maximus Confessor, Selected Writings, *Chapters on Knowledge*, paragraph 12 (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), p.130).



# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- The double metaphor of wax and mud in Philo, Irenaeus, Origen, and Maximus
  - God knows a few cases when His word will push Pharaoh too far
  - Very strong traditions of Jewish and early Christian belief in human free will regarding creation and redemption
  - Not divine determinism
  - Paul's use in Romans 9 – 11
    - Origen, Maximus, etc. tend to see the 'hardening' as simultaneously due to Pharaoh and God
    - I tend to think it is something God did to 'lessen' His influence in Pharaoh in plagues 6, 8, 9, 10 in order to achieve the significance of 'ten words' (ten words in the Genesis creation, ten words at Sinai, etc.)
- In fact, every Christian theologian and commentator prior to Augustine strongly believed in human free will
  - Catholics take Augustine as still affirming human free will
  - See my list of quotations *Human Free Will in the Early Church Fathers* found here: <https://www.anastasiscenter.org/gods-goodness-creation>

# The Hardening of the Human Heart

The Gospel of Mark:

**Hardness of heart** comes up for each person, eventually, at variable times

- Mark 3:5 After looking around at them [the Pharisees] with anger, grieved at their **hardness of heart**, [Jesus] said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’
- Mark 6:51 Then he got into the boat with them [the disciples], and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, <sup>52</sup> for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but **their heart was hardened**. (*Note the same passive voice as Exodus, denoting their responsibility.*)
- Mark 10:2 Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing him, and began to question him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. <sup>3</sup> And he answered and said to them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ <sup>4</sup> They said, ‘Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.’ <sup>5</sup> But Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your **hardness of heart** he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation...

# The Hardening of the Human Heart

The Gospel of Mark:

**The corruption of the heart** comes up as a universal diagnosis

- Mark 7:20 And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of the **heart** of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup> deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things proceed **from within** and defile the man.’

# The Hardening of the Human Heart

## The Hebrew Scriptures

**The corruption of the heart** comes up as Israel's self-diagnosis: Moses

- Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his **heart** was only evil continually.
- Genesis 8:21 ...the LORD said to Himself, '...the intent of man's **heart** is evil from his youth...'
- Deuteronomy 30:1 So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, <sup>2</sup> and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your **heart** and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, <sup>3</sup> then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you... <sup>6</sup> Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your **heart** and the **heart** of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your **heart** and with all your soul, so that you may live.

# The Hardening of the Human Heart

## The Hebrew Scriptures

**The corruption of the heart** comes up as Israel's self-diagnosis: David, Isaiah

- Psalm 36:1 Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his **heart**;  
There is no fear of God before his eyes.
- Psalm 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.  
10 Create in me a clean **heart**, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- Isaiah 28:13 Then the Lord said, 'Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their **hearts** far from Me...'

# The Hardening of the Human Heart

## The Hebrew Scriptures

**The corruption of the heart** comes up as Israel's self-diagnosis: Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 4:3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, 'Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. <sup>4</sup> Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and remove the foreskins of your **heart** ...'
- Jeremiah 9:26 ...all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of **heart**.
- Jeremiah 17:1 The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus; with a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their **heart** and on the horns of their altars...<sup>9</sup> The **heart** is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? <sup>10</sup> I, the LORD, search the **heart**, I test the mind...
- Jeremiah 31:31 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... <sup>33</sup> I will put My law within them and on their **heart** I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'

# The Hardening of the Human Heart

## The Hebrew Scriptures

**The corruption of the heart** comes up as Israel's self-diagnosis: Ezekiel

- Ezekiel 11:19 And I will give them one **heart**, and put a new **spirit** within them. And I will take the **heart** of stone out of their flesh and give them a **heart** of flesh, <sup>20</sup> that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. <sup>21</sup> But as for those whose **hearts** go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,' declares the Lord GOD.
- Ezekiel 36:24 For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> Moreover, I will give you a new **heart** and put a new **spirit** within you; and I will remove the **heart** of stone from your flesh and give you a **heart** of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My **Spirit** within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

# The Hardening of the Human Heart

## Paul's Letter to the Romans

**The corruption of the heart** is what Jesus solves in himself

- Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. <sup>29</sup> But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the **heart**, by the **Spirit**, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.
- Romans 6:5 For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our **old self** was crucified with him, in order that **our body of sin** might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; <sup>7</sup> for he who has died is freed from sin.
- Romans 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son **in the likeness of sinful flesh** and as an offering for sin, **He condemned sin in the flesh**

# The Classical Christian View on Hardening of Heart

- ‘Hardness of heart’ refers to a general condition, and the extreme end of that condition
- God hardened human heart(s) only on two historical occasions...
- Who is hardened? **Only Pharaoh and some Jews**
- Who chooses: **human beings, then God seals**
- Duration: **momentary**
- Consequences: **historical**
- Purpose: **show more mercy**
  - God saves: **intends all**
  - God damns: **intends none**
- God is **loving & missional**
- God’s justice: **restorative**

# The Classical Christian View on Hardening of Heart

- First Exodus
  - God hardened the heart of Pharaoh to bring about the first Exodus, of Israel out of Egypt (and, relatedly, Sihon of Og in Dt.3:30) and into the garden land
- Second Exodus
  - God hardened the hearts of the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day to bring about the second Exodus, of the true Israel (Jesus) out of corrupted human flesh and into fulfilled human nature
- Who is hardened? **Only Pharaoh and some Jews**
- Who chooses: **human beings, then God seals**
- Duration: **momentary**
- Consequences: **historical**
- Purpose: **show more mercy**
  - God saves: **intends all**
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- God is **loving & missional**
- God's justice: **restorative**



# The Classical Christian View on Hardening of Heart

- Hardness of heart comes about when God's love pushes a person too far
  - For Pharaoh, the loss of Israelite slaves and his honor was too far
  - For Israel at the time of Jesus, the inclusion of Gentiles was too far
- Notice the symmetry: A Gentile ruler, then Jewish rulers
- Who is hardened? **Only Pharaoh and some Jews**
- Who chooses: **human beings, then God seals**
- Duration: **momentary**
- Consequences: **historical**
- Purpose: **show more mercy**
  - God saves: **intends all**
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- God's justice: **restorative**



# The Hardening of Pharaoh

<sup>9:17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My Name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.’ <sup>18</sup> So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He **hardens** whom He desires. <sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?’ <sup>20</sup> On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?

*A temporary hardening to achieve an historical purpose, where God used Pharaoh’s own choice to reject Him, to deliver Israel from slavery into freedom*

# The Hardening of Israel



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<sup>11:7</sup> What then? What **Israel** is seeking, it has not obtained, but **those who were chosen** obtained it, and **the rest** were **hardened**; <sup>8</sup> just as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.’ ...<sup>25</sup> For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a **partial hardening** has happened to **Israel** until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...

*A temporary hardening to achieve an historical purpose, where God uses Israel’s leaders’ own choice to reject Him, to deliver Jesus from a fallen human nature, into a cleansed human nature*

# The Classical Christian View on Hardening of Heart

- These are the only two times where God reciprocally hardens people, i.e. intensifying the ‘cost’ of His request
- Paul believed that God’s hardening of the Jews of his generation had lifted; *otherwise he would not have continued reaching out to them*
- Who is hardened? **Only Pharaoh and some Jews**
- Who chooses: **human beings, then God seals**
- Duration: **momentary**
- Consequences: **historical**
- Purpose: **show more mercy**
  - God saves: **intends all**
  - God damns: **intends none**
- God is **loving & missional**
- God’s justice: **restorative**

# The Classical Christian View on Hardening of Heart

- Once God achieves His historical purpose (Exodus), the hardening is off
- We should *never, ever* apply the language of ‘God hardened that person’s heart’ outside of these two occasions
- ‘*God* hardens hearts’ does not refer to people’s general unbelief
- Who is hardened? **Only Pharaoh and some Jews**
- Who chooses: **human beings, then God seals**
- Duration: **momentary**
- Consequences: **historical**
- Purpose: **show more mercy**
  - God saves: **intends all**
  - God damns: **intends none**
- **God is loving & missional**
- God’s justice: **restorative**

# The Classical Christian View on Hardening of Heart

- Paul was referring to the Exodus narrative with literary integrity
- Paul was aware of the interplay of Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart and God's hardening of his heart, to achieve a historical purpose
- Who is hardened? **Only Pharaoh and some Jews**
- Who chooses: **human beings, then God seals**
- Duration: **momentary**
- Consequences: **historical**
- Purpose: **show more mercy**
  - God saves: **intends all**
  - God damns: **intends none**
- **God is loving & missional**
- God's justice: **restorative**

# The Classical Christian View on Hardening of Heart

- All early Christians, because they were strong Trinitarians
  - Irenaeus, *Against the Heathen*, book 4, ch.39, paragraph 2
  - Origen, *On First Principles*, book 3, ch.1, ‘On the Freedom of the Will’
  - John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*
  - See *Free Will in the Patristics*, found here: <https://www.anastasiscenter.org/gods-goodness-creation>; see also church historian Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100 – 600 AD)*, ch.6, ‘Nature and Grace’
- Eastern Orthodox (100%)
  - See church historian Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600 – 1700 AD)*, ch.5, ‘The Vindication of Trinitarian Monotheism’
- Roman Catholics (on paper)
  - Interpret Augustine as supporting free will, including Thomas Aquinas
- Among Protestants, systematic Trinitarian theologians
  - Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p.345 – 61
  - Donald Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, p.142
  - N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, p.231 – 257



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# Romans 9 – 11 in outline



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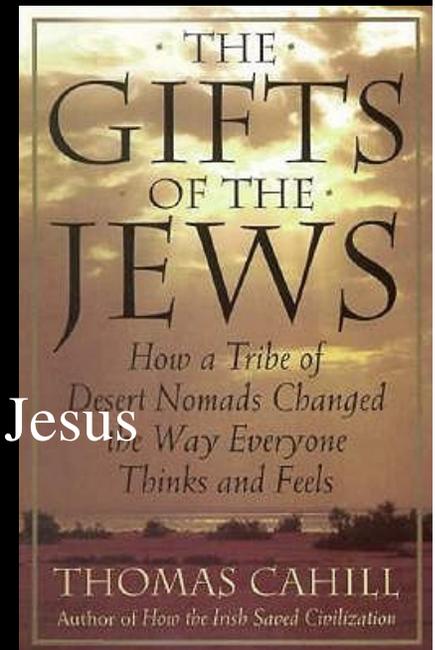
- A. Mission: Paul wants more Jews to know Jesus (9:1 – 6)
  - B. ‘Israel’ is not ethnic or genetic; God pruned down (9:6 – 13)
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          - D’. **God’s Word did not fail**: Gentiles (10:14 – 11:6)
            - C’. God hardened hearts of Israelites (11:7 – 12)
              - B’. ‘Israel’ is not ethnic or genetic; God grafting in (11:13 – 27)
- A’. Mission: Paul more motivated to share Jesus with both Gentiles and Jews; God desires to show mercy to all. (11:28 – 36)

# Why God's Word Cannot Fail

- To Himself: 'Let there be light'; and there was light. (Gen.1:3); ten times in Genesis 1
- To Abram: 'I will redeem your descendants from bondage.' (paraphrase of Gen.15:13 – 15)
- To Abram and Sarai: 'You will have a son' (Gen.17:15 – 19)
- To Samuel: 'David will be king of Israel' (1 Sam.16:1 – 13)
- Etc. etc.

# Why God's Word Cannot Fail

- The pattern: God speaks to act, and acts as He speaks
  - ‘Surely the LORD God will do **nothing** except that which He reveals to His servants the prophets.’ (Amos 3:7)
  - ‘Prophets’ are those to whom God speaks first
  - Notice that a doctrine of God’s omnicausality would contradict Amos 3:7 and the biblical pattern to which Amos was referring
- Pattern of Promise – Fulfillment
  - The Jews contributed the world’s first linear sense of history, and the “happy ending”
- Paul has to explain why not all Jews have come to Jesus
  - A failure of God’s word?

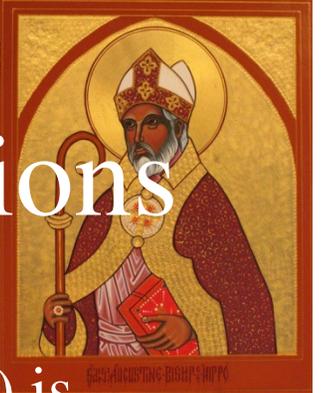




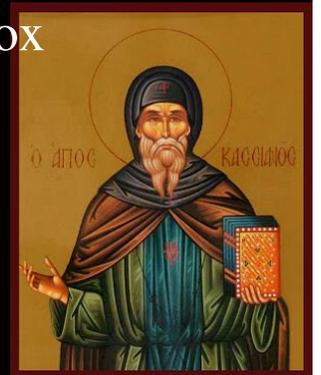
# God's Actions and Human Actions

- God does not cause the behavior of all people; He only causes what He has **spoken**
- God's speech-acts
  - leave room for genuine human free will, and real interaction between God and us
  - are events in our time and history – very significant epistemologically
  - give rise to the “happy ending”
  - allow God to be 100% good, not partly evil

# God's Actions and Human Actions



- Augustine's *monergism* ('one will'; God is *omnicausal*) is problematic and incorrect
  - If you believe in *monergism*, then you must attribute all human sinfulness back to God, including the fall, subsequent sins, unbelief, evil, injustice, and perdition
  - All earlier theologians believed in human free will as the only way God can be 100% good
    - See *Free Will in the Patristics*, found here: <https://www.anastasiscenter.org/gods-goodness-creation>
  - Augustine himself, in his early years, believed in free will
  - John Cassian, another leading theologian (the 'Eastern Orthodox spokesman'), wrote a sensitive, critical response to Augustine
    - Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, ch.4



# Paul's Understanding of God's Word, Israel and the Nations

<sup>9:25</sup> As He says also in **Hosea [2:23; 1:10]**, 'I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.'" <sup>26</sup> And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God.' <sup>27</sup> **Isaiah [10:22 – 23]** cries out concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; <sup>28</sup> for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly.' <sup>29</sup> And just as **Isaiah [1:9]** foretold, 'Unless the Lord of Sabaoth left to us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah.' <sup>30</sup> What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, <sup>33</sup> just as it is written **[Isaiah 8:14; 28:16; cf. Ps.118:22]**, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in him will not be disturbed.'

# Paul's Understanding of God's Word, Israel and the Nations

<sup>10:14</sup> How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written [**Isaiah 52:7**], 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good tidings!' <sup>16</sup> However, they did not all heed the good news; for **Isaiah [53:1]** says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. <sup>18</sup> But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have [**Ps.19:4**]; 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.' <sup>19</sup> But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First **Moses [Dt.32:21]** says, 'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding I will anger you.' <sup>20</sup> And **Isaiah [65:1]** is very bold and says, 'I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.' <sup>21</sup> But as for Israel He says [**Isa.65:2**], 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'

# Paul's Understanding of God's Word, Israel and the Nations

## The Prophecy of Isaiah: in Romans 9 – 11

<i>Romans</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>	<i>LXX/MT</i>
Romans 9:27 – 28	Isaiah 10:22 – 23	LXX
Romans 9:29	Isaiah 1:9	LXX
Romans 9:32 – 33	Isaiah 8:14; 28:16	LXX/MT
Romans 10:11	Isaiah 28:16	LXX
Romans 10:15	Isaiah 52:7	LXX/MT
Romans 10:16	Isaiah 53:1	LXX
Romans 10:20 – 21	Isaiah 65:1 – 2	LXX
Romans 11:8	Isaiah 6:9 – 10; 29:10	LXX/MT
Romans 11:26 – 27	Isaiah 59:20 – 21	LXX
Romans 11:27	Isaiah 27:9	LXX
Romans 11:33 – 34	Isaiah 40:13	LXX

# Paul's Understanding of God's Word, Israel and the Nations

## The Torah of Moses: in Romans 9 – 11

1. God's Spirit 'hovers' as God creates heaven and earth; God places humanity in a garden land, but they leave in exile and with a corruption in human nature (Gen.6:5 – 6; 8:21); origin of all nations (Gen.1 – 11)

See Mako A. Nagasawa, Chiastic Structure of the Pentateuch,  
found here: <https://www.anastasiscenter.org/bible-torah>

- 1'. God must circumcise human hearts after Israel's exile (30:6); 'heaven' and 'earth' (32:1) witness destiny of Israel and nations; God's Spirit 'hovers' (32:11) over Israel as they enter garden land (Dt.30:1 – 34:12)  
**Paul's quotation of Moses comes from here (Dt.32:21)**

# Paul's Understanding of God's Word, Israel and the Nations

1. Paul is actually *following* Moses and the Prophets
  1. In the diagnosis of the human heart
  2. And the hardening of Israel's heart (Dt.32:21; Isa.6:9 – 10) at the coming of the Messianic King (Isa.52:13 – 53:12)
  3. In saying that God will speak truth about Himself to Israel through Gentile nations, after the Exile

Dt.32:15 But Jeshurun [Israel] grew fat and kicked—  
You are grown fat, thick, and sleek—  
Then he forsook God who made him,  
And scorned the Rock of his salvation...

Dt.32:21 They have made Me jealous with what is not God;  
They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.  
**So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people;  
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation**

# Paul's Understanding of God's Word, Israel and the Nations

1. Paul is actually *following* Moses and the Prophets in agreeing
  1. The human heart does need healing
  2. Israel's heart would be hardened (Dt.32:21; Isa.6:9 – 10) when Messiah comes (Isa.52:13 – 53:12)
  3. God will speak truth about Himself to Israel through Gentile nations, after the Exile
  4. The Tabernacle – Temple was God's Plan B next to meeting God face to face on mtn.
  5. Moses had seen Israel fail repeatedly, became the mediator, but failed himself
  6. Sinai Laws intended to be temporary (diminished version of creation order)
  7. The 'chosen people' idea is vital for self-diagnosis but relativized; the 'chosen people' are expected to fail as they resist God



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# Romans 9 – 11 in outline



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# Why a Chosen People At All?

- Example of receiving God's retributive justice?
- The foil for Jesus and the church?



# Why a Chosen People At All?

- The Chosen **People** (Narrowing):
  - Abraham & Sarah
  - Isaac, not Ishmael
  - Jacob, not Esau
  - Judah, not the other eleven brothers
  - David as king
  - Solomon and the royal line
- The Chosen **One**: (Mt.12:18; Lk.9:35)
  - Jesus, the embodiment and fulfillment of Israel;  
Jesus alone did what Israel could not do:  
defeat the flesh, change the heart,  
restore human nature to God (Rom.8:1 – 4)
- The Widening: the world





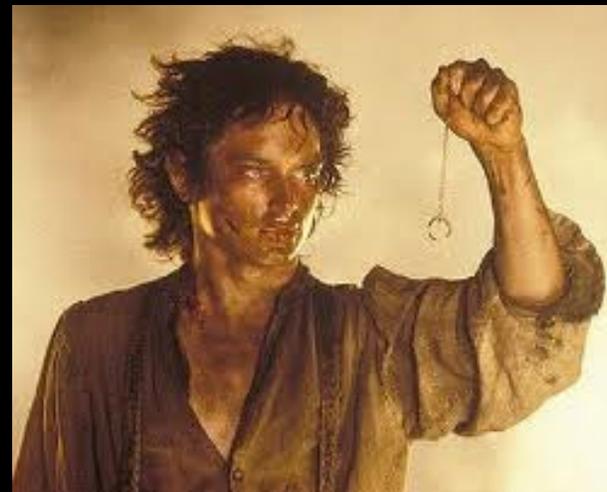
# Why a Chosen People At All?

- The Chosen People (Israel):
  - To voluntarily be God's covenant human partner
  - To be a microcosm of humanity (multi-ethnic)
  - To live by God's Word and hope for a happy ending
  - To diagnose the corruption of human nature
  - To document the diagnosis
  - To anticipate God's cure and His dwelling within people
  - To oppose pagan systems and glimpse the Trinity (Temple)

# Why a Chosen One?



- The Chosen One (Messiah Jesus):
  - To voluntarily be God's covenant human partner
  - To be God's new humanity
  - To be/live by God's Word and embody/hope for a happy ending
  - To reverse the corruption of human nature in his own body
  - To validate the diagnosis
  - To be God's cure and be His dwelling in human personhood
  - To explain the Trinity and share his Spirit



# Why a Chosen One?



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- The Chosen One (Messiah Jesus):
  - <sup>8:3</sup> For **what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh [of Israel]**, God did: sending His own Son **in the likeness of sinful flesh** and as an offering for sin, **He condemned sin in the flesh**, <sup>4</sup> so that the requirement of the Law (Torah) might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

# Why a Chosen One?



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- The Chosen One (Messiah Jesus):

- Therefore, as I have already said, He caused man (human nature) to cleave to and to become, one with God... **But the law coming, which was given by Moses...** laid, however, a weighty burden upon man, **who had sin in himself**, showing that he was liable to death. For as the law was spiritual, it merely made sin to stand out in relief, but did not destroy it. For sin had no dominion over the spirit, but over man. For it behooved Him who was **to destroy sin**, and redeem man under the power of death, that He should Himself be made that very same thing which he was, that is, **man**; who had been drawn by sin into bondage, but was held by death, so **that sin should be destroyed by man**, and man should go forth from death. For as by the disobedience of the one man who was originally moulded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life; so was it necessary that, by the obedience of one man, who was originally born from a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation. Thus, then, **was the Word of God made man**, as also Moses says: ‘God, true are His works.’ But if, not having been made flesh, He did appear as if flesh, His work was not a true one. But **what He did appear, that He also was**: God recapitulated **in Himself** the ancient formation of man, **that He might kill sin**, deprive death of its power, and vivify man; and therefore His works are true. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 18, paragraph 7)

# Why a Chosen One?



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- The Chosen One (Messiah Jesus):
  - ‘Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent **corruption**, repentance would have been well enough; but when once transgression had begun men came under **the power of the corruption** proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the Image of God. No, repentance could not meet the case. What – or rather Who – was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing? Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the **corruption** of death, He surrendered His body to death instead of all, and offered it to the Father...This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned to **corruption**, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.’ (Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 2:8 – 9; on the nature of corruption see 1:5)

# Why a Chosen One?



- The Chosen One (Messiah Jesus):
  - ‘When it is asked how, after abolishing sins, Christ removed the discord between us and God and acquired a righteousness, it may be replied generally that he provided us with this **by the whole course of his obedience... From the moment he put on the person of a servant**, he began to pay the price of liberation for our redemption...In order, however, to define the manner of salvation more surely, scripture ascribes it to Christ’s death as its property and attribute. Yet there is no exclusion of **the rest of the obedience which he performed in his life; as Paul comprehends the whole of it, from the beginning to the end**, when he says, ‘he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross’...Nor was this without **inward conflict, because he had taken our infirmities**, and it was necessary to give this proof of his obedience to his Father. And it was no mean specimen of his incomparable love to us, to contend with **horrible fear**, and amid those dreadful torments to neglect all care of himself, that he might promote our benefit.’ (John Calvin, *Institutes* 2.16.5)
  - To see a Catholic affirming the idea that Jesus was incarnate in sinful, not sinless, human flesh, see Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M., *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993)

# Why a New Chosen People?

- Those ‘in Christ’ (‘chosen people’, Eph.1; ‘predestined’):
  - To voluntarily be God’s covenant human partners
  - To be God’s new humanity in Jesus (multi-ethnic)
  - To live by God’s Word and hope for a happy ending
  - To receive Jesus’ new humanity in our own bodies
  - To document the use of the cure
  - To receive God’s cure and be His dwelling in human persons
  - To proclaim the Trinity and manifest God

# Why a New Chosen People?

- What does it mean to be ‘predestined’?
  - Our *destination* has always been deeper sharing in the life of God through the Word-Son of God
    - ‘All things are from him and through him and to him’ (Rom.11:36; 1 Cor.8:6; Eph.1:9 – 10; Col.1:16)
    - Christians are those who are willingly being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom.8:28 – 30)
    - God already upholds us ‘in the Son’: ‘In him all things hold together’ (Col.1:16; cf. Acts 17:26) probably a reflection on God’s Word from creation continuing to resonate
  - Becoming like the Son requires our free choice to love
    - Because the Father does not coerce the Son, God does not coerce us: ‘Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you’ (Jn.15:8)
  - Predestination *requires* freely chosen love

# Why a New Chosen People?

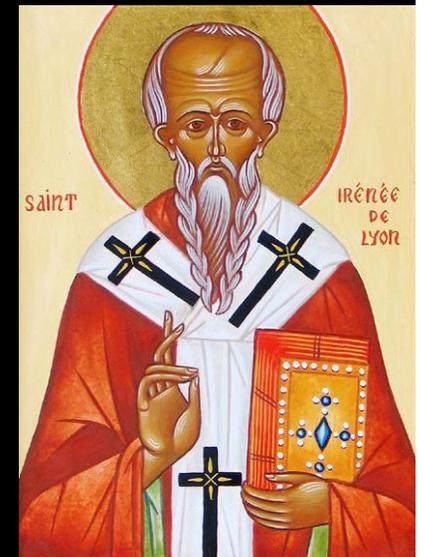
- What does it mean to be ‘predestined’?
  - However, for some, by their own resistance, that destination will be torment – in effect, God says to them:
    - ‘I judge to separate sinfulness from the person’ to someone who wants to be the judge of other people
    - ‘Let me kill the cancer’ to someone who thinks his disease is normal
    - ‘I deny you that to which you’re addicted’ to someone addicted to something else
    - ‘I forgive you’ to someone who believes she has not done anything wrong
    - ‘I love you’ to someone who feels stalked and wants distance
  - God does not *predestine* anyone to condemnation
    - Even hell is God’s love, since His wrath serves His love
    - See Mako A. Nagasawa, *Hell as the Love of God*, found here: <https://www.anastasiscenter.org/gods-goodness-fire>
  - Our *mission* is an expression of Jesus’ life and God’s character
    - To be missional, inviting others to respond to God’s ‘predestination’ of all humanity in Christ

# Why a New Chosen People?

- What does it mean to be ‘predestined’?
  - ‘...God made man a free [being] from the beginning, possessing his own power, even as he does his own soul, to obey the behests 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...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...’ (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, ch.37, paragraphs 1 – 2)

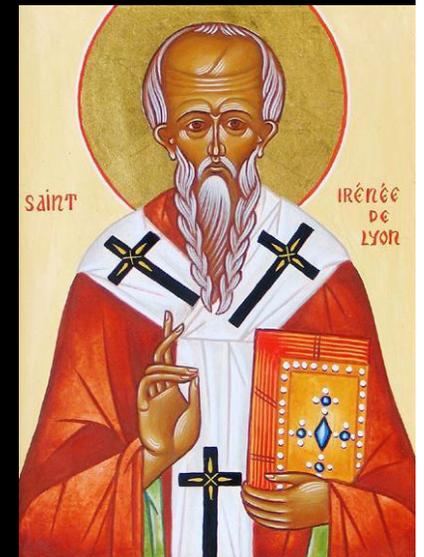
# Why a New Chosen People?

- What does it mean to be ‘predestined’?
  - ‘...man, a created and organized being, is rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God, the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made], but man making progress day by day, and ascending towards the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One. For the Uncreated is perfect, that is, God.’ (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, ch.38, paragraph 3)



# Why a New Chosen People?

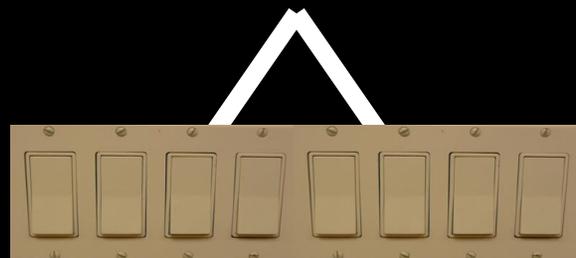
- What does it mean to be ‘predestined’?
  - ‘...if thou, being obstinately hardened, dost reject the operation of His skill, and show thyself ungrateful towards Him, because thou wert created a [mere] man, by becoming thus ungrateful to God, thou hast at once lost both His workmanship and life. For creation is an attribute of the goodness of God but to be created is that of human nature. If then, thou shalt deliver up to Him what is thine, that is, faith towards Him and subjection, thou shalt receive His handiwork, and shall be a perfect work of God.’ (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, ch.39, paragraph 2)



# Understanding God's Character

God is arbitrary:  
**Romans 1 – 11**

God is loving  
and missional:  
**Romans 1 – 11**



Is God's character  
a bunch of light  
switches on a flat  
level?

God  
saves  
some  
(mercy):

**Romans 1 – 8**

God  
damns  
others  
(justice)

**Romans 9 – 11**



God's wrath is  
part of His love  
and serves His  
love

God offers  
Jesus' new  
humanity  
to ALL:

**Romans 1 – 11**

God  
condemned  
sin in the flesh  
of Jesus:

**Rom.6:6; 8:3**



# Understanding God's Character

- Can you say to your non-Christian friend, 'God loves you'? Do you want their salvation more than God?
- Does God want to undo all human evil? Or does He require human evil to exist? Do you want social justice more than God?
- Is God partly evil? Is God 100% good?
- Does God value every person? Does He anchor universal human dignity?
- Which justice is highest in God? Retributive vs. Restorative?
- Is 'double predestination' consistent with the nature of God as Trinity?  
(i.e. attributes are not lightswitches on a flat and equal level, but organized under God's love, goodness)



# ‘Double Predestination’

- Definition: Where God makes a choice before, or without reference to, the Fall; this means that God wills and assures the Fall.
- Considered hypothetically by many and rejected
  - e.g. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.37.1 – 2, ‘But if some had been made by nature bad, and others good...’
- First asserted by Lucidus of Verona (4<sup>th</sup> century), the regional Council of Arle in 473 AD condemned it as a heresy
- The second council of Orange in 529 AD condemned it as a heresy, and denied that Augustine’s theology taught it
- Gottsalk of Orbais (808 – 867 AD) taught this and various councils condemned it as a heresy: Quierzy (853 AD), Valence (855 AD), Savonnieres (859 AD), Metz (863 AD, with Pope Nicholas I)
- Considered by the early church to not be consistent with the Trinity, since God’s love undergirded free will itself, and God is love
  - e.g. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 2.7; 7.44; not a bifurcation between ‘love vs. retributive-justice-wrath’



# ‘Double Predestination’

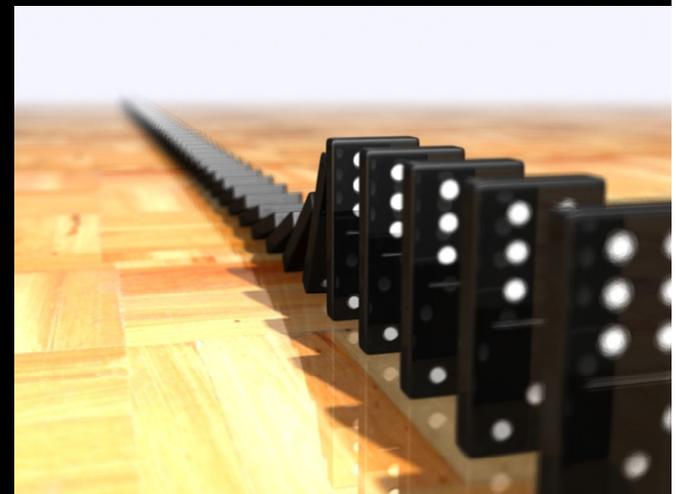
‘Such was the force of St. Augustine’s intellect that some of his ideas entered permanently into Western theology. The most obvious, perhaps, is that of ‘predestination,’ the idea that God from eternity elects some to save, while ‘reprobating’ the rest to damnation, which Augustine believed to be the teaching of St. Paul. Such an idea never really arose in the Eastern Christian world. The Latin word ‘praedestinare’ is a far stronger verb than the original Greek ‘proorizein,’ which really means little more than to ‘mark out in advance.’ [My note: *Augustine did not master Greek!*] More importantly, Augustine’s interpretations of certain passages in Paul were quite novel... All Christians believe that we are born in sin – that is, enslaved to death, suffering corruption in our bodies, minds and desires, alienated from God – but only in the West did the idea arise that a newborn infant is somehow already guilty of transgression in God’s eyes. In part, this is because the Latin text of Romans 5:12 with which Augustine was familiar contained a mistranslation of the final clause of the verse, one that seemed to suggest that ‘in’ Adam ‘all sinned’. The actual Greek text, however, says nothing of the sort; it says either that as a result of death all sinned, or that because sin is general all things die; but it does not impute guilt to those who have not yet committed any evil.’

(David Bentley Hart, *The Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of 2000 Years of the Christian Faith* (London: Quercus, 2012), p.77; also Hart, ‘Traditio Deformis,’ *First Things*, May 2015)

# ‘Double Predestination’

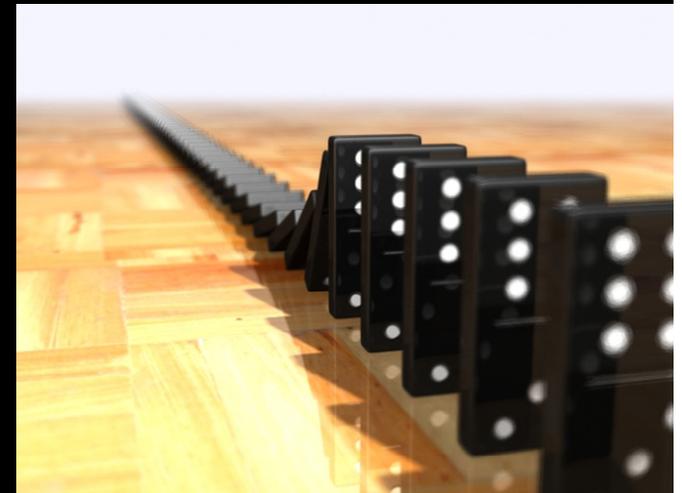
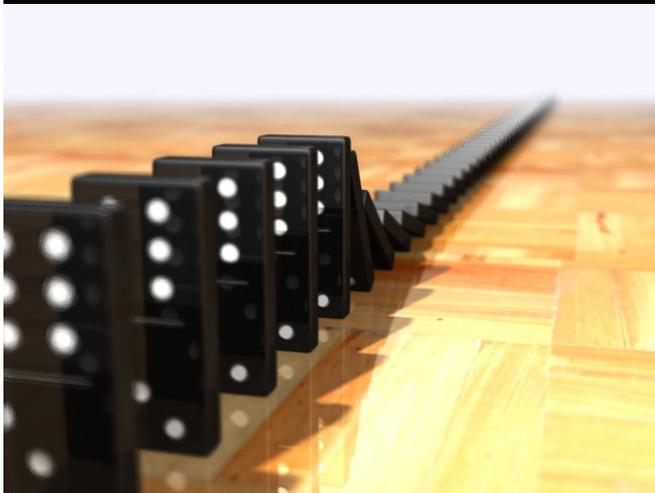
- Taught by Muslim theologians
  - Influenced by Aristotle’s theory of the prime mover, with focus on efficient, mechanical causation
  - A unitarian God has no constraints of nature/character (e.g. trinitarian love) upon his power
  - God is a ‘naked will’ who can enact a predetermined narrative (the pre-existence of the Qur’an) with people predetermined to reject God

(see David Bentley Hart’s lecture *Nihilism and Freedom* at [nagasawafamily.org/david\\_bentley\\_hart\\_lecture.mp3](http://nagasawafamily.org/david_bentley_hart_lecture.mp3) and also Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2006), p.20 – 21)



# ‘Double Predestination’

- ‘God as absolute, unconstrained power’ taught by William of Ockham (1285 – 1347 AD)
- Taught by Domingo Banez (1528 – 1604 AD), a Spanish Dominican and Scholastic theologian who claimed to interpret Thomas Aquinas in this way (very disputed); especially under the influence of Aristotle and interest in mechanical causality (‘voluntarism’)
- Taught by John Calvin (1509 – 1564 AD) and Theodore Beza (1519 – 1605 AD) in Geneva, Switzerland



# ‘Double Predestination’

- If double predestination is true, then how did the earliest Christians get it wrong...
  - So soon after having direct contact with the apostles?
    - You need a very good historical explanation to explain why the earliest Christians made such a deep, widespread, and uniform mistake!
  - While being so concerned to work out Trinitarian theology?
    - This is the big theological consideration
    - Can a truly Trinitarian theology conclude anything different?



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# What's at Stake?

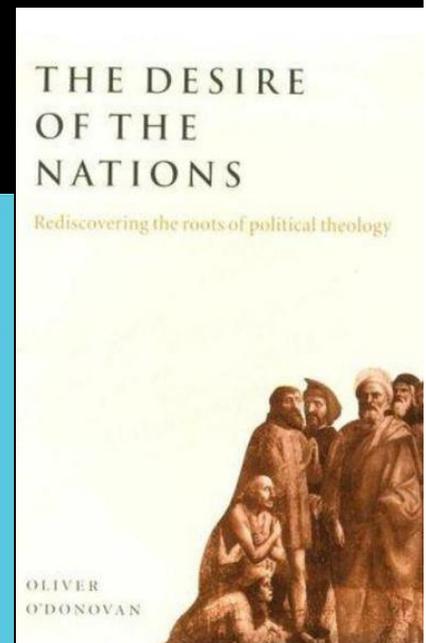
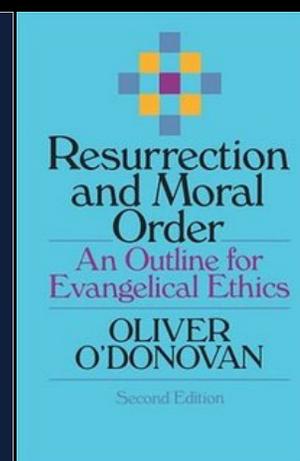
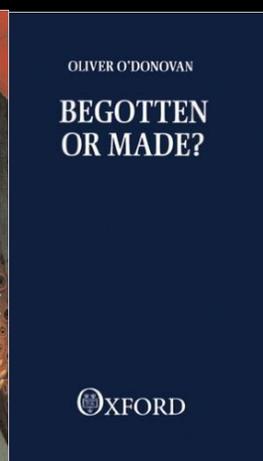
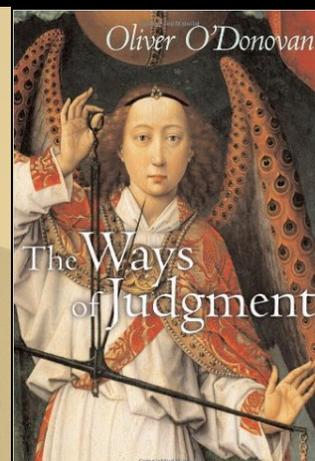
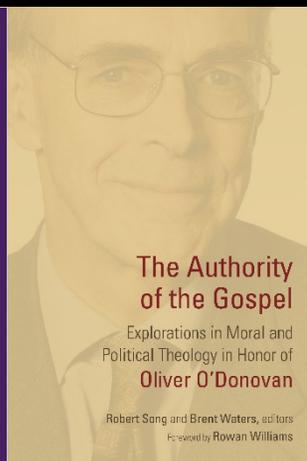
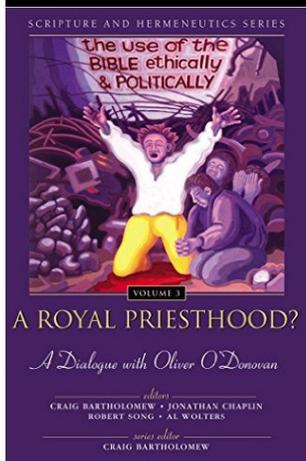
- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- How to explain Jewish unbelief?
- Did God just *use* Israel and trick them?
- How to interpret unbelief in general?
- How to understand God's character? Does God cause unbelief? Is God partly evil? Arbitrary?
- How to read Scripture? In what sense can we trust it?

# What's at Stake?

- **How to read *Romans*?**
  - Not as an expansion of Galatians, but a mirror image
    - Note: Emperor Claudius kicked out Jews from the city of Rome in 49 AD, which would have led to an all Gentile Christianity; Paul was writing in 57 AD to call for a reinvigoration of/reconnection to Jewish Christianity
  - Rom.1 – 8: A defense of the Sinai covenant and God's partnership with the Jewish chosen people, to prepare for Messiah
  - Rom.14 – 15: A defense of Jewish Christianity

# What's at Stake?

- **How to read *Romans*?**
  - Rom.9 – 11: Explanation for *ongoing*, loving Christian mission to Jews
    - Respect for Mosaic Israel →
    - Respect/tolerance for other faiths, too →
    - Christian political pluralism, not theocracy →
    - Might have saved Europe the 'wars of religion'?



# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- **Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?**
  - Paul *does not* proof text
  - Paul *respects* the literary and canonical qualities of Hebrew Scripture (see especially the Torah and Isaiah)
  - Paul is thinking as a Jewish theologian, seeing Jesus as Messiah, reading Torah and Isaiah especially

# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- **How to explain Jewish unbelief?**
  - Free choice
  - But sin is addictive, we impact our own human nature
  - Rationale: Ethnocentrism and/or belief in genetic descent
  - Jewish law-keeping as identity markers

# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- How to explain Jewish unbelief?
- **Did God just *use* Israel and trick them?**
  - No!
  - A voluntary chosen people was necessary to document the diagnosis, prepare the way for the cure, receive it, and love their enemies

# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- How to explain Jewish unbelief?
- Did God just *use* Israel and trick them?
- **How to interpret unbelief in general?**
  - Human free choice
  - Not God's choice

# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- How to explain Jewish unbelief?
- Did God just *use* Israel and trick them?
- How to interpret unbelief in general?
- **How to understand God's character? Does God cause unbelief? Is God partly evil? Arbitrary?**
  - God is Triune and therefore 100% good
  - His inner triune relations existed prior to creation and therefore condition everything about Him ('God is love')

# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- How to explain Jewish unbelief?
- Did God just *use* Israel and trick them?
- How to interpret unbelief in general?
- How to understand God's character? Does God cause unbelief? Is God partly evil? Arbitrary?
- **How to read Scripture? In what sense can we trust it?**
  - God acts by speaking, calling forth genuine human choice
  - Progressive self-revelation by God, climaxing in Jesus

# What's at Stake?

- How to read *Romans*?
- Whether to trust Paul's use of the Hebrew Scriptures?
- How to explain Jewish unbelief?
- Did God just *use* Israel and trick them?
- How to interpret unbelief in general?
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- How to read Scripture? In what sense can we trust it?



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# Appendix A: Scriptures Related to the Topic of Predestination

- Ephesians 1:3 – 14
- John 6:37 – 44
- Romans 8:28 – 30



# Ephesians 1:3 – 14

<sup>1:3</sup> **Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has blessed us with every **spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places in Christ,  
<sup>4</sup> just as **He chose us in him** before the foundation of the world,  
**that we would be holy and blameless** before Him  
in love <sup>5</sup> **He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ** to Himself,

**according to the kind intention of His will,** <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory  
**of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us** in the beloved  
<sup>7</sup> in him we have **redemption** through his blood,  
the **forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches  
**of His grace** <sup>8</sup> **which He lavished on us** in all wisdom and insight

<sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of **His will, according to His kind intention**  
which He purposed

**in him** <sup>10</sup> with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times,  
that is, the summing up of **all things** in Christ,  
**things** in the heavens and things on the earth  
**in him** <sup>11</sup> also we have obtained an inheritance,

having been **predestined according to His purpose** who works all things after the counsel of His will,  
<sup>12</sup> to the end **that we** who were the first to hope in Christ **would be to the praise of His glory**  
<sup>13</sup> in him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--**having also**  
**believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise,**  
<sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge of our **inheritance**, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession,  
to the **praise of His glory.**

# Ephesians 1:3 – 14

- In chiastic structures, the center point interprets or explains the outside points. Implications:
  - God is summing up (‘recapitulating’, cf. Irenaeus) *all things*, including *all people*, ‘in Christ’ or ‘under’ Christ (v.10)
  - The ‘us/we/you’ is not meant to be permanently exclusive of others, or understood in such a way that the *all things* is qualified
  - God’s choice to bless all people revolves around and is carried out in Christ, *the chosen one* (‘the beloved,’ v.6), who shares his inheritance and blessing with us
    - To see Jesus identified as *the chosen one* see Lk.9:35, Mt.12:18, and implicitly Mt.3:13 – 17, Lk.3:21 – 22 where ‘beloved one’ and ‘chosen one’ are used interchangeably

# Ephesians 1:3 – 14

- In chiastic structures, outer points are mirrored. Implications:
  - *God's* choice ('He chose us' in v.4) is symmetrically arranged with *our* choice to believe in Christ ('in him you also...believed' in v.13)
  - God's predestination of believers through adoption (v.5) is symmetrically arranged with the inheritance God bestows (v.11), not to any statement of exclusion of others
  - Hence, the term 'predestination' here, as in Romans, refers to the *destination* of all things to be re-headed up under Jesus, and the inheritance of the new creation given first to Jesus
  - How we experience that is up to us

# John 6:37 – 44

- <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> This is the will of him who sent me, that of all that He has given me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I myself will raise him up on the last day.’ <sup>41</sup> Therefore the Jews were grumbling about him, because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down out of heaven.’ <sup>42</sup> They were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven’?’ <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

# John 6:37 – 44

- v. 37: *All that* the Father gives me will come to me (**all human nature**)
- v. 37: And *whoever* comes to me I will never drive away (**persons**)
- v. 39: This is the will of Him who sent Me, that *of all* that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise *it* up on the last day (**all human nature**)
- v. 40: For this is the will of My Father, that *everyone* who beholds the Son and *believes in Him* will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise *him* up on the last day (**persons**)
- v.44: *No one* can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws *him*; and I will raise *him* up on the last day (**persons**)

# John 6:37 – 44

- There is play back and forth between the neuter and the personal
- Everyone gets raised up on the last day by Christ by virtue of sharing human nature with him
  - Christ is the source of life for everyone, even the wicked
  - If he wasn't raised up, then they would not be raised up
- But some will come to him in belief, and some not
  - 'All that the Father gives to me' is not synonymous with 'the elect' or 'believers'; it simply means all human nature, which exists in all human persons

# Romans 8:28 – 30

- <sup>28</sup> And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup> and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

# Romans 8:28 – 30

- Foreknowledge: God foreknows every human being
- Predestination: God predestines every human being to be conformed to the image of Christ
- Call: God calls every human being; some say yes, others no
- Justification:
  - God justifies Jesus as the new humanity (Rom.4:25; Odes of Solomon 17:2), which is rooted in heart-circumcision on the other side of Israel's exile (Dt.30:6; Rom.2:28 – 29; 6:6; 10:4 – 10)
  - 'No condemnation' (i.e. justification) for those 'in Christ' by the Spirit (Rom.8:1); justification is not *outside* Christ somewhere 'in the mind of God'
- Glorification:
  - 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Rom.5:2; Col.1:27) for every believer
  - God still resurrects unbelievers in and through Christ, so His *image* is still present in them but the *likeness* is warped
  - God still offers Jesus (and justification in him) to those who do not believe; this is akin to saying, 'I forgive you!' to someone who believes he has done nothing wrong, and 'I can cut out the cancer!' to someone who believes he is healthy