

*Divine Providence in Gregory of Nyssa and his Theological Milieu*  
St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College Symposium

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**1. Origen and Plotinus**

*Enn.* 3.2.10, trans. Armstrong, 79:

And as for the heavenly circuit, it does not work so that nothing is in our power; for if the All was external to us, it would be just as its makers wished, so that, if it was gods who made it, men, even impious ones, would do nothing opposed to them. But as it is, this [power of free action] originates in men.

**2. Sarapion of Thmuis (after 326).**

*Contra Manichaeos* 29.29-31; trans. Herbel:

“For free-will, whether in the state of understanding or in the state of falling, nevertheless has not been released from being reasonable but retains this [ability] incorrupt.”

**3. Leo the Great (440-461)**

Preface to *ep. 15 to Turibius of Astorga*; trans. Neil, 84.

But if the belief and teaching (of Priscillian) is allowed, there will be no due reward for virtue or due punishment for vice; and every decree – not only human laws but even divine constitutions – will be dissolved, because there can be no judgement of good or bad actions if in both cases the necessity of fate controls the mind's activity, and people's actions are not determined by people but by the stars.

*Ep.* 15.10; trans. Neil, *Leo the Great*, 89

And so the church, which is the body of Christ, fears nothing from the injustices of the world, because it desires nothing from temporal goods nor does it fear being overwhelmed by the empty din of fate; for it has learned to grow by bearing tribulations with patience.

**4. Gregory of Nyssa**

*On The Soul and the Resurrection* 8, trans. C. Roth, 95-96:

Therefore an automatic and fortuitous impulse will govern all of life, if no providence pervades what exists. Besides, rational foresight will be altogether useless, virtue will have no benefit and remaining unacquainted with evil will be of no value. For everything will be entirely in the power of chance, and life will be just like ships without ballast...It is not possible for virtue to develop in those whose nature has its beginning from the opposite. If our life is divinely directed, we must also agree that evil does not begin our life; but if we come into being through evil, in every way we will live entirely according to it.

*On the soul and the resurrection* 5; trans. Roth, 69.

When the vessel [of the body] is dissolved, the soul which has possessed it continues to recognize it just as well from the mere remains... The soul always knows its own body as it is when it coheres in its shape...

#### **5. Theodoret of Cyrrihus (c.423-457/66)**

Editor's Preface, *On Providence*, trans. Halton, 4-5:

For Theodoret...providence is the divine action *ad extra* which sustains everything in existence. The divine government of the world is the execution of the eternal divine world-plan in time.

*Letter to Leo the Great*, trans. NPNF 212, *Ep.* 52.2

For it has proved both points equally well, viz., the Eternal Godhead of the Only-begotten of the Eternal Father, and at the same time His manhood of the seed of Abraham and David, and His assumption of a nature in all things like ours, except in this one thing, that He remained free from all sin: for sin is engendered not of nature, but of free will.

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