

**THE ORTHODOX CHURCH
CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA**

**THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH
and
THE DOGMAS**

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

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Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Many of the ancient philosophers, such as Philo, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and others, contemplated the universe, its mighty laws, its capabilities, its beauty etc. They believed in God's providence as a fact, but frequently, they limited it to the creation of the universe with its laws; believing that God left the universe after its creation, and the control of its laws. The Alexandrian Fathers looked upon philosophy as a divine gift that partially revealed the truth but not with a full view. They believed in God's providence in its biblical sense; namely it embraced all creation in general and man in particular. It surpassed time and space, for it concerned man even before his creation, i.e., before the time when he was in the Divine Mind, and it still takes care of him on earth and will continue acting into eternal life, or in the world to come. Divine Providence cares for believers, unbelievers and irrational creatures. This is revealed through God's tender mercies, kindness and chastening; through the pleasant events, and through the evil (sorrowful) ones.

Divine providence is one aspect of the grace of God, for the depth of the latter is revealed through the Incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Incarnate Son of God.

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

PROVIDENCE AND THE UNIVERSE

GOD'S IMMANENCE TO THE UNIVERSE

St. Clement of Alexandria repeatedly emphasized the transcendence of God, perhaps to clarify the gap between the essence and the nature of God and those of the universe. He said: [God of the universe who is above all speech, all conception, all thought, can never be committed to writing, being inexpressible even by His own power¹.]

[God is invisible and beyond expression by words..., what is divine is unutterable by human power (2 Cor. 12:4; Rom. 11:33)...

¹ *Stromata* 5:10:65.

The discourse concerning God is most difficult to deal with².]

[For human speech is by nature feeble and incapable of declaring God. I do not mean His name,...nor do I mean His Essence, for this is impossible, but the power and the work of God³.]

[The First Cause is not then in space, but above both space and time, and name and conception⁴.]

[God is One, and beyond the One, and above the monad itself⁵.]

St. Clement, who describes this gap between God and the creation, declares that God is not far from the world, particularly from His noblest creature in this world, namely man. For He created the universe out of His gracious love for man, and for the same reason He still cares for all the universe. We can say that He is involved in our world out of His infinite love and heavenly fatherhood to us.

St. Clement believes that the universe is a clear proof of God's providence. W.E.G. Floyd says: [Clement's proof for the existence of divine providence, if proof is needed, is a theological argument based on order and design in the universe. This is evident, he argues, even from the most superficial glance at the world, to deny that it is an attack on the true doctrine⁶.]

St. Clement expresses the close relation between God and the universe, saying: [He who is far off has come very near; oh ineffable marvel! "I am a God who is near at hand", says the Lord (Jer. 23:23)... He is very near by virtue of His power (providence) which holds all things in its embrace. " Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?!" Jer. 23: 24). For the power of God is always

² *Stromata* 5: 12.

³ *Stromata* 6: 18: 166.

⁴ *Stromata* 5: 11: 71.

⁵ *Paidagogos* 1:8:71.

⁶ W.E.G. Floyd: *Clement of Alexandria's Treatment of the Problem of Evil*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 36.

present, in contact with us, in the exercise of inspection, of beneficence and of instruction⁷."]]

John Patrick says: [Thus the transcendence of God, in the thought of Clement, is consistent with God's immanence, rather the immanence is an essential factor in His conception⁸.].

Origen also speaks of the superlative transcendence of the life of God⁹ to deny that God is extended in physical universe in any material or quasi-material sense. At the same time he repeatedly clarifies God's immanence to confirm God's infinite goodness and love for man. He says: [For how do we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28), if His power does not surround and hold together the universe? And what is heaven but the throne of God, and the earth His footstool, as the Savior Himself declares, except by His power, which fills the whole universe, both heaven and earth, as the Lord says (Jer. 23:24)¹⁰?

St. Athanasius who speaks about God's transcendence also confirms His immanence. He says: [God is in all and in every part...He contains everything and is at once with all and in each part ¹¹.] Athanasius declares that out of God's goodness and grace He is not far from any of us, since it is in Him that we live, move, and exist (Acts 17:28), but the relationship is totally different than that between God and His World, for the world is not near to Him by grace but is one with Him in the same Divine essence. he is His own Son naturally and eternally. St. Athanasius says: [...The Son of God is not a creature. For the Son says "I and the Father are One" and "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me", John 10:30...The Word then is in the Father as being His own; but things originate, being external, are attached, as being by nature foreign, and attached by free choice. For a Son which is by nature, is one with him who begat him; but he who is from without, and is made a son, will be attached to the family. Therefore he (Moses) immediately adds: "What nation is there so great who has God drawing nigh unto them," Deut. 4:7 (LXX), and elsewhere, "I am a God drawing nigh¹¹, Jer. 23:23 (LXX), for to things originate He draws nigh, as being strange to

⁷ *Stromata* 2:2.

⁸ *J. Patrick: Clement of Alexandria, London 1914, p.73.*

⁹ *G.L. Prestige: God in Patristic Thought, SPCK 1975, 26.*

Him, but to the Son, as being His own, He does not draw nigh, but He is in Him. And the Son is not attached to the Father, but Co-exists with Him; whence also Moses says again in the same Deuteronomy, "You shall obey His voice, and apply yourselves unto Him," Deut. 13:4, but what is applied, is applied from without ¹².]

O wonderful divine love! We who were foreigners became attached to the transcendent God through His goodness and grace!

GOD'S UNIVERSAL PROVIDENCE

God who is immanent to His creation created it through His grace or good will ¹³, for "*nothing at all exists unless He had willed it to exist*"¹⁴." This active and gracious will of God or this Divine providence is still at work, caring for the creation. Plato and others philosophers thought that the divine providence was constrained into the creation of the universe with its mighty laws, but St. Clement of Alexandria clarified that God who never ceases to do good; nevertheless, He would cease to be a gracious God¹⁵. He says that the universe looks like an axe, has no power in itself, but is in need of the hand of God to use it in the proper work and to realize its aim. [Just as the axe does not cut unless someone uses it, or a saw without someone sawing with it, for they do not work by themselves, but have certain physical qualities which accomplish their proper work by the exertion of the artisan; so also by the universal providence of God, through the medium of secondary causes, the operative power is propagated in succession to individual objects ¹⁶].

Here, I refer to the words of St. Clement who said that God's rest (Sabbath) does not consist of ceasing to act, for this means to cease to be God, but rather realized by His work in the universe attaining its aim. May our gracious God act in us as His beloved Creatures that by His providence we may become perfect in Him and He might find His rest in us.

At last, I borrow the words of one of the early pioneers of Coptic monasticism, namely St. Macarius the Great, who expressed God's immanence in our spiritual life:

[If you seek the Lord in the depth, there you find Him.

If you seek Him in the water, you find Him, "doing wonders",
Exod. 15:11

If you seek Him in the den, there you find Him between two
lions, guarding the righteous Daniel.

If you seek Him in the fire there you find Him succoring His
servants.

If you seek Him in the mountain, there you find Him with Elias
and Moses.

He is everywhere- beneath the earth, above the heavens, and
within us as well. He is everywhere. So too your own soul is near you,
and within you, and without you; for wherever you please, in countries
far away, there your mind is, whether westwards or eastwards, or in the
skies; there it is found. Let us then seek above all things to have the
brand and the seal of the Lord upon us...¹⁷].

[He (God) shows Himself everywhere, in the mountains, and in
the sea, and beneath the deep...¹⁸].

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND OUR CREATION

We are indebted to the Gracious God not only for the existence
of the universe for our sake and caring for it continuously on our behalf,
and for our coming into existence from nothing, but also for the special
love of God for us even before our creation. St. Clement of Alexandria
states that man, the noblest of the created objects¹, the dearest creature to
God, was in the Divine Mind before the creation. In His infinite love,
God created the universe for man's sake, then He created man in His
image and likeness to enjoy communion with Him.

Man is justly dear to God, since he is His workmanship. The
other works of creation, He made by the word of command alone, but
man He formed by Himself, by His own hand, and breathed into him
what was particular to Himself. What, then, was fashioned by Him, and
after His likeness, either was created by God Himself as being desirable

on its own account, or was formed as being desirable on account of something else.

St. Clement of Alexandria².

- ❖ Nothing that exists owes its existence to itself: You alone have been granted your existence from no other. We all-i. e. the whole creation-did not exist before we were created: our existence is due to the will of the Creator³.
- ❖ The fact that we exist cannot possibly be a reward of our works but is due to the grace of our Creator⁴.
- ❖ (On 'rational beings') whatever goodness existed in their being was there not by nature, but by the beneficence of their Creator... the Creator granted to the minds He had created, the faculty of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own, since it was reserved by their own free will⁵.
- ❖ No one, Jew or Gentile, is devoid of this law, which is in men by nature. It will be found that God gave man all the feelings and all the impulses

by which he could strive and progress towards virtue; and besides that He implanted in him the power of reason, by which he might recognize what he ought to do and what to shun. God is found to have bestowed all this on all men alike⁶.

Origen

- ❖ He did not merely create man, as He did all the irrational creature on earth, but made them(men) after His own image, giving them a portion even of the power of His own Word; so that having as it were a kind of reflection of the Word, and being made rational, they might be able to abide in blessedness, living the true life which belongs to the saints in paradise. But knowing once more how the will of man could sway to either side, in anticipation He secured the grace given them by the law and by the spot in which He placed them. He brought them into His own garden, and gave them a law, so that, is they kept the grace and remained good, they might still keep life in paradise without sorrow or pain or care, besides having the promise of in corruption in heaven.

St. Athanasius

A COMMANDMENT OF LOVE

Perhaps someone asks: Why did the Gracious God set a commandment to Adam and Eve in them paradise, while He knew in advance that they would disobey it and fall under the statement of ever-death?

This commandment-in fact- was not a burden that our parents had to carry but it was a gift granted to them through the Divine providence; how?

1. God, the Eternal "Love", created man to His likeness, i.e. had a nature of love, desired to love and to be loved by others. God satisfied him with His special and personal love, but man was in need to express his response to God's love by love. The commandment was a method through which the first parents might use to reveal their practical love for their Creator.

We are in need of God's commandments not only to help us in the attainment of holiness and sanctification (in Jesus Christ) but also to express our response towards God's love by our obedience to His commandments, not as firm laws we are subject to, but as a way to reveal our sincere love toward our Heavenly Father. These commandments are in fact our Father's advice to us, His children, without them we lack the way to declare our adoption to Him, and our practical response⁸..

2. Without the commandments, man does not practice one of the greatest gifts of God, namely free will. For through the commandments he has the choice to accept God in his life and obey Him, or to reject Him and disobey His commandments.

3. God, who granted our first parents the commandment to reveal their love to Him, did not leave them alone, but He was their Helper if they willed. St. Macarius the Great spoke about Adam's capabilities in God, saying:

[So long as the Word of God was with him, and the commandment, everything was his. The Word Himself was to him an inheritance; He was His clothing, and a glory that was his defense (Is. 4:5); he was his instruction. He asked him to give names to all things: "Call this heaven, this sun, this moon, this earth, this a bird, this a beast, this a tree;" as he was taught, so he named them... The Word Himself being with him was everything to him, whether knowledge, or experience, or inheritance, or instruction..., and so long as he abode in the commandment, he was a friend of God⁹.]

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S LIFE

God who loves man takes care of him in all aspects of life; His providence embraces everything even the number of hairs in his head (Matt 10:30; Luke 12:7); therefore we have to acknowledge that all events - even the trivial things - happen not by chance¹ but by divine providence.

1. PROVIDENCE EMBRACES EVERYTHING

t... The things that happen to men... do not do so by chance or accident, but for a purpose so carefully calculated, so lofty, that not even the number of the "hairs" of our head" (Matt 10:30) is outside it-and that not only of the saints but (one may say) of all men; this providence extends even to "two

sparrows" which are sold for a penny (Matt 10:29) whether "sparrows" is meant spiritually or literally².

- ❖ To such a degree has Divine providence embraced everything that not even the hairs of our head have escaped being numbered by Him³.

Origen

- ❖ If it is unworthy of God to exercise His providence, to things so small, as the hair of the head, the sparrow (Matt 10:29,30), and the grass of the field (Matt. 6:25-30), then it was unworthy of Him to make them. For what things are the subject of His Providence, of those he is the Maker through His proper Word .
St. Athanasius⁴.

2. PROVIDENCE EMBRACES EVEN THE ANIMAS

- ❖ Providence primarily cares for rational beings, but encompasses irrational animals which also profit from what is designed for man⁵
For since God clearly rules over the motion of heaven and what is in it and over what is accomplished on earth and sea by His divine skill- the birth, origins, foods, and growth of all different animals and plants- it is

foolish to close our eyes and not look to God (cf. Is. 6: 10; Matt 13: 15' Acts 28:27)⁶.

Origen

3. AN EVERACTING PROVIDENCE

St. Clement states that God's goodness is ever at work, like the care of a shepherd for his sheep, a king for his subjects, and a father for his children⁷. Origen also says: [Nothing has been or will be neglected by God, who at every point does what is fitting that He should do in a shifting and changing world. Just as at the different seasons of the year a farmer does different agricultural works on the earth and its corps, so God cares for whole ages as if they were just years (so to speak); in each age He does what the interests of the universe suggest- a matter which is most clearly understood in its real truth, and thus brought to fulfillment, by God alone⁸].

4. GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S SANCTIFICATION

St. Clement clarifies that the Divine providence embraces man as a whole; his body, his mind and his soul. God takes care of our bodies and their needs such as food, clothing, health etc... and of our minds to be involved in sound thoughts, but in particular He cares for the sanctification of our souls, bodies, senses, minds etc... God as the true Friend of man, by His Divine providence, designs and acts for man's sanctification, so that he might be holy like his Creator, the Holy One.

†" There is none holy like the Lord ": However great is man's growth in holiness and his attainment in purity and sincerity, yet none can be as holy as the Lord, because He is the bestower of holiness, while man receives it; He is the fountain of holiness... while man... drinks from it; He is the light of holiness while man looks at it

† Thus the work of the Father, which confers on all existence, is found more glorious and splendid, when each one, through participation in Christ as "Wisdom", "Knowledge", "Sanctification", advances and comes to higher degrees of progress. Likewise when each, through participation in the Holy spirit, has been sanctified and made purer and of higher integrity, and thus is more worthy to receive the grace of

wisdom and knowledge, in order that all stains of pollution and ignorance may be removed and that he may receive such advancement in integrity and purity. Hence the life which he received from God may be worthy of God, whose purpose is to make it pure and perfect: that the creature should be as worthy as the Creator. For in this way also shall man, whose Creator wished him to be so, receive from God the power to exist forever and to abide for eternity¹⁰.

† (God) cares for the soul [i.e. the seat of the faculties] of every man, that he may be rational, that he may attain knowledge, that his intelligence may find exercise in (the life of) the body, that his senses (Heb. 5:14) may be good fettle¹¹,

Origen

† Truly The saints have never said that it was by their own efforts that they secured the direction of the way in which they walked in their course towards advance and perfection of virtue, but rather they prayed for it to the Lord, saying "Direct me in thy truth," and "direct my way in thy sight." Ps. 24(25):5:6:9. but someone else declares that he discovered this very fact not only by faith, but also by experience, as it were from the very nature of things: "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not his: neither is it in a man to walk and to direct his steps." Jer. 10:23. And the Lord Himself says to Israel: "I will direct him like a green fir-tree: from Me is thy fruit found." Hos. 14:9. 12

Abbot Paphnutius¹².

God's grace and mercy always do in us what is good, and that when it forsakes us, that the efforts of the worker are useless, and that however earnestly a man may strive, he cannot regain his former condition without His help, and that this saying is constantly fulfilled in our case: that it is "Not of him that willeth or runneth but of God which hath mercy," (Rom. 9:16).

Abbot Daniel¹³

5.PROVIDENCE AND REVEALING THE TRUTH

The Alexandrian Fathers who were involved in studying the Holy Scriptures seeking the true knowledge, and who conceived that our Savior is the Teacher of the Truth, the Way and the Door of the Truth, but He Himself is the Truth, looked to revealing the Truth "or to the divine" knowledge (gnosis), as of the best gift of the divine providence. By this gift, man deals with God not as a servant with his master, or as a tool in the hands of an artist, but as a child who has a true knowledge of his father, and as a bride who enters with her groom in the bridal chamber, where they practice unity in mind and heart before unity of the body.

The divine providence uses every means to reveal the mysteries of God, at first through creation, and through the natural laws God grants to man. He also speaks to us through our daily life, so that we can be in touch with him.

He sent Moses' Law, his prophets and at Last The "Truth" Himself descended to our world after becoming a Man to reveal Himself to us and for raise our souls, minds and motions unto the bosom of the Father, by His Holy Spirit.

† The organ of the body which knows God is not the eye (of the body) but the mind, for it sees that which is in the image of the Creator, and it has received by the providence of God the faculty of knowing Him¹⁴

† "The invisible things of God", i.e. the things conceived by the mind, "are understood by the things that are made", and "are clearly seen from the creation of the world" by the process of thought. And [the disciples of Jesus], in their ascent from the created things of the world, do not halt in the invisible things of God; but after sufficient mental exercise among them to produce understanding, they ascent to the eternal power of God and (quite simply) to His divinity. They know that, out of love to man, God revealed His truth and that which may be known of Himself-and this not only to those devoted to Him, but also to those who known nothing of pure worship and piety towards Him, but who by God's providence have ascended to the knowledge, and impiously hold down the truth in unrighteousness; and just because of this knowledge... they can no longer plead an excuse before God¹⁵.

Origen

† The knowledge also of the law they daily endeavor to gain not by diligence in reading, but by the guidance and illumination of God as they say to Him: "Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths:" and "Open You mine eyes: and I shall see the wondrous things of Thy law:" and teach me to do your will, for Thou art my God;" and again: "Who teaches man knowledge," Ps. 24(25):4; 98 (99): 18;142(143):10.93(94:10).

† Further, the blessed David asks of the Lord that he may gain that very understanding, by which he can recognize God's commands which he well knew were written in the book of the law and he says "I am Thy servant: O give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments", Ps. 118(119):125. Certainly he was in possession of understanding, which had been granted to him by nature, and also had at his fingers' ends a knowledge of God's commands which were preserved in writing in the law: and still he prayed the Lord that he might learn this more thoroughly as he knew that what came to him by nature would not be sufficient for him, unless his understanding was enlightened by the Lord by a daily illumination from Him, to understand the law spiritually and to recognize His commands. More clearly, the "chosen vessel" also declares very plainly this which are insisting on. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do according to good will," Phil. 2:13. What could well be clearer than the assertion that both our good will and the completion of our work are fully wrought in us by the Lord? And again "For it is granted to you for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him but also .o suffer for Him," Phil. 1:29. Here also he declares that the beginning of our conversion and faith, and the endurance of suffering is a gift to us from the Lord. And David too, as he knows this, similarly prays that the same thing may 'e granted to him by God's mercy. "Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought in us;" Ps. 67(68):29. Showing that it is not enough for the beginning of our salvation to be granted by the gift and grace of God unless it has been continued and ended by the same pity and continual help from Him.

Abbot Paphnutius16.

6. THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE CONCERNING GOOD AND EVIL ANGELS

In the early centuries of Christianity as the pagan world was terribly in the hold of demons and evil spirits on men, a question was raised: how do we explain the existence of demons who are ruling the lives of men in a world governed by God's Providence?

The Alexandrian Fathers who experienced the grace of God replied with the following points:

a. Men became sons of Satan (John 8:44) and willingly entered in close relationship with him instead of attaining the adoption to God and receiving unity with Him . It is our own responsibility and not gods to choose between God or Satan.

b. St. Clement of Alexandria and also Origen explained that the demonic order attempts to make man fall, lead him into slavery and to ally him with themselves. The divine providence does not leave us helpless before the demons, for it supports us with the angels for our protection if we accept their actions for our sakes (Heb. 1:14), and to lead the believers to the heavenly wedding room if the believers wish.

c. The Alexandrian Fathers explained that in the battle against the demons we are not alone, for the battle rises between God Himself and Satan. If

ing with the Bridegroom²²
St. Clement of Alexandria

† (Christians need not have fear of demons) For even if the demons were not kindly disposed to them, they could still suffer no harm from them, being under the guardianship of the Supreme God who is kindly-disposed to them because of their piety, and who makes His divine angels stand over those worthy to be guarded that they suffer not from the demons²³.

† We are not under the control of demons but of the God of the universe, through Jesus Christ who brings us to Him. According to the laws of God, no demon has inherited control of the things on the earth; but one may suggest that through their own defiance of the law they divided among themselves those places where there is no knowledge of

God and the life according to His will, or where there are many enemies of His divinity. Another suggestion would be that because the demons were fitted to govern and punish the wicked, they were appointed by the Word that administers the universe, to rule those who have subjected themselves to sin and not to God².

† If I belong to the Church, no matter how small I may be, my angel is free to look upon the face of the Father. If I am outside the Church, he does not dare...

Indeed, each of us has an adversary who seeks to draw us into the ranks of his own leader²⁵. (Origen states that good angels are more powerful, able to defend us against the adversary²⁶).

† When a man has received the faith, Christ who has redeemed him by His blood from his evil masters entrusts-him, since hereafter he is to believe in God, to a holy angel who, because of his great purity, always sees the face of the Father²⁷.

† "For He has appointed His angels over you; to keep you in all your ways," Ps. 90: 11... For it is the just who needs the aid of the angels of God, so as not to be overthrown by the devils, and so that his heart will not be pierced by the arrow which flies in the darkness²⁸.

† The Shepherd (of Hermas) makes the same statement, saying that two angels (one good and the other evil) accompany every single man; and whenever good thoughts come into our mind, it says they are put there by the good angel; but if they are otherwise, it says that is the impulse of the evil angel²⁹.

† For everyone is influenced by two angels, one of justice and the other of iniquity. If there are good thoughts in our heart, there is no doubt that the angel of the Lord is speaking to us. But if evil things come into our hearts, the angel of the evil one is speaking to us³⁰.

† There had to be angels who are in charge of holy works, who teach the understanding of the eternal light, the knowledge of the secrets of God and the science of the divine³¹.

† (The angels also are evangelists) Now if there are men who are honoured with the ministry of evangelists, and if Jesus Himself brings forth tidings of good things, and preaches the Gospel to the poor, surely those messengers who were made spirits by God (Ps. 104:4), those who are flames of fire, ministers of the Father of all, cannot have been excluded from being evangelists also (Luke 2:10:11)³².

† The apostles have the angels to assist them in the accomplishment of their ministry of preaching, in the completion of the Gospel work³³.

Origen

† The angels of the Lord who followed Him upon earth, seeing Him arise, announced His coming to the Virtues of heaven, so that they might open their gates. The Powers were filled with amazement at seeing Him in the flesh. That is why they cried, "Who is this?" astounded by this mysterious order of salvation³⁴...

† The vision of the angels works softly and peaceably, awaking joy and exultation³⁵.

† And justly indeed; for if there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7), what should there be over the abolition of sin, and the resurrection of the dead?... How much would the (Heaven's) hosts joy and exultation be, as they rejoice and watch in our assemblies, those that are held continually, and specially those at Easter?³⁶.
St. Athanasius

7. PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S ACTION

I have already discussed the role of man in his own redemption, clarifying that man's positive role does not oppose the free saving grace of God nor His providence³⁷. God insists on man's role to confirm at least two things: man's free choice or free will as a precious divine gift, without it man lacks his own existence as a man; and God's friendship to man, for He acts together with His beloved man, although the latter has no power to do any good work without God's grace.

† ...man, who has the power to think everything out and arrange everything in order, seeing that he is co-operating with providence... and doing works which are not only the product of God's foresight but of his own³⁸

† (On Ps. 127:1): Except the Lord build the house'): "Such a blessing would be beyond the range of our choosing, that the strength of the Lord should lay hold on the work of the builder and co-operate with him in the task of finishing it, which he could not do himself... Just as I should say good husbandry, which brings forth a good crop, is compounded of what is under the husbandman's control - his skill at his work, and what is not under his control but depends on providence - a favorable climate and a sufficient supply of rain: even so the good, which a rational being seeks, is compounded by the effects of his own choice and of the divine power which co-operates with a man who chooses the highest as his aim. And it is not only for the achievement of honor and goodness that we need both our own choice and the divine cooperation which is independent of it; we need both also for the continued possession of these virtues³⁹.

† Note that we say nothing is done apart from His providence-not His will. Many things take place against His will but nothing apart from His providence, for providence is that with which He cares for, dispenses, provides for, the things that are done: His will is that with which He wills something or does not will it⁴⁰.

† Germanus: where then is there room for free will, and how is it ascribed to our efforts that we are worthy of praise, if God Both begins and ends everything in us which concerns our salvation?

Paphnutius: This would fairly influence us, if in every work and practice, the beginning and the end were everything, and there were no middle in between. And so as we know that God creates opportunities of salvation in various ways, it is in our power to make use of the opportunities granted to us by heaven more or less earnestly. For just as the offer came from God Who called him "get thee out of thy country,"

so the obedience was on the part of Abraham who went forth; and as the fact that the saying "come into the land" was carried into action, was the work of him who obeyed, so the addition of the words "which I will show thee" came from the grace of God Who commanded or promised it. But it is well for us to be sure that although we practice every virtue with unceasing efforts, yet with all our exertions and zeal we can never arrive at perfection, nor is mere human diligence and toil of itself sufficient to deserve to reach the splendid reward of bliss, unless we have secured it by means of the co-operation of the Lord, and His directing our heart to what is right. And so we ought, every moment, to pray and say with David "Order my steps in thy paths that my footsteps slip not:" Ps. 16(17):5, and "He hath set my feet upon a rock and ordered my goings:" Ps. 39(40):3, that He who is the unseen ruler of the human heart may vouchsafe to turn to the desire of virtue that will of ours, which is more readily inclined to vice either through want of knowledge of what is good, or through the delights of passion. And we read this in a verse in which the prophet signs very plainly: "Being pushed I was overturned that I might fall," where the weakness of our free will is shown and "the Lord sustained me: " Ps. 117 (118): 13, again this shows that the Lord's help is always joined to it, and by this, that we may not be altogether destroyed by our free will, when He sees that we have stumbled, He sustains and supports us, as it were by stretching out His hands. And again: "If I said my foot was moved;" viz., from the slippery character of the will, "Thy mercy, O Lord helped me," Ps. 93 (94):18. Once more he joins on the help of God to his own weakness, as he confesses that it was not owing to his own efforts but to the mercy of God, that the foot of his faith was not moved. And again: "According to the multitude of the sorrows which I had in my heart," which sprang most certainly from my free will, "Thy comforts have refreshed my soul, " i.e., by coming through Thy inspiration into my heart, and laying open the view of future blessings which Thou hast prepared for them who labour in thy name, they not only removed all anxiety from my heart, but actually conferred upon it the greatest delight. And again: "Had it not been that the Lord helped me, my soul had almost dwelt in hell," He certainly shows that through the depravity of this free will he would have dwelt in hell, had he not been saved by the assistance and protection of the Lord. For "By the Lord," and not by free will, "are a man's steps directed," and "although the righteous fall" at least by free will, "he shall

not be cast away." And why? because "the Lord upholdeth him with His hands," Ps. 36(37):23,24 and this is to say with the utmost clarity: None of the righteous are sufficient of themselves to acquire righteousness, unless every moment when they stumble and fall the Divine mercy supports them with His Hands, that they may not utterly collapse and perish, when they have been cast down through the weakness of free will.

Abbot Paphntius⁴¹.

8. PROVIDENCE AND GOD SELF-GIVING

God grants His beloved creature, namely man, many blessings in this world and in the world to come. He aims for the unity of man with Himself not to grant him everything but mainly Himself. Therefore the Alexandrian Fathers saw the kingdom of God not as something we will attain but as God Himself dwelling in us, granting Himself to us. What we are longing for even in eternity is unity with God.

† As a wealthy maiden, betrothed to a husband, may receive ever so many presents before the marriage, ornaments, dresses, or costly vessels, but is not satisfied until the time of the wedding comes and she is made one with him. So does the soul, when it is engaged as a bride to the heavenly Bridegroom, receive, from the Spirit, gifts of healing, it may be of knowledge, or of revelation, but it is not satisfied, until it attains complete union, namely, charity, which can never change nor fail, which sets those who have longed for it free from Passion and from agitation.

Or as a babe that is dressed with pearls and costly clothes, when it is hungry, thinks nothing of what it wears, but despises them, and cares only for its nurse's breast, how it may get the milk, so reckons it to be, I pray you, even with the spiritual gifts of God. To whom be glory for ever. Amen. St. Macarius the Great⁴².

1. On Prayer 5.
2. De Principiis 2:11:5. [See Drewery].
3. Contra Celsus 8:70 [See Drewery].
4. C. Arians 2:26.
5. C. Celsus 4:74.
6. Exhortation to Martyrdom 4.
7. Stromata 6:17:157, 158.
8. C. Celsus 4:69. [See Drewery].
9. In 1 Sam. Hom 2. [See Drewery].
10. De Princop. 1:3:8 [See Drewery].
11. In Her. hom. 3.
12. Cassian: Conf. 3;13 (See N. & P.N. Frs.)
13. Ibid 4:5. (N. & P.N. Fathers).
14. C. Celsus 7:33.
15. Ibid 7:46.
16. Cassian: Conf. 3;14, 15 (N.& P.N. Frs.
17. Suppl. 24;10.
18. Strom. 6:17. [See Strom 7:2].
19. Ibid 6;17.
20. Strom 7:1; In Lev. hom 9:8 [Jean Danielou: the angels and their missions according to the Fathers of the Church, tr. by D. Heimann, Westminster MD, 1982, p. 63].
21. Strom. 7:12.
22. Excerpt., 27; see also Stromata 7:3 [Danielou, p. 92, 93].
23. Contra Celsus 8:27.
24. Ibid 8:33.
25. In Luc. 35.
26. Comm. in Matt 13,28.
27. Comm. in Matt. 13,28.
28. In Num. hom 5:3.
29. In Luc. hom 35.
30. Ibid.
31. In Num. hom. 14-2.
32. Comm. in Ioan 13.
33. In Num. hom 11:4.

- 34. Exp. in ps. 23.
- 35. Vita Antonii 35.
- 36. Paschal Letters 6:10.
- 37. Fr. T. Malaty: Man & Redemption, 1987 (last chapter).
- 38. Contra Celsus 4:82. [See Drewery].
- 39. Sel. Ps. 4:6. [See Drewery].
- 40. In Gen. hom 3:2 [See Drewery].
- 41. John Cassian: conf. 3;11, 12 (N & P.N. Fathers, p. 325-6).
- 42. Hom 45:7.

4

PROVIDENCE AND GOD'S FATHERHOOD

Some modern thinkers try to deform the relation between God and man, looking to God as an isolated being who lives in His own heaven far away from our world, who desires to govern mankind by any means, and to destroy man's freedom. This opinion is contrary to the Christian faith, for God reveals His providence in its greatest depth through His Fatherhood to men. God is not in need of men's worship or offerings but of their hearts to lift them up to His glories, to enjoy His eternal love, and practice their sonship to Him. The Alexandrian Fathers explain this biblical thoughts in the following points:

1. St. Clement of Alexandria states that we are by nature entirely strange, have no natural relation to God; nevertheless He loves us and cares for us as a true Father for His beloved children. He says: [God in everything is greater than man... This is the greatest proof of the goodness of God: that such being our relation to Him, and being by nature wholly estranged, He nevertheless cares for us. For the affection in animals to their progeny is natural, and the friendship of kindred minds is the result of intimacy. But the mercy of God is rich towards us, who are in no respect related to Him; I say either in our essence or nature, or in the peculiar energy of our essence, but only in our being the work of His will. And Him who willingly, with discipline and teaching, accepts the knowledge of the truth, He calls to adoption, which is the greatest advancement of all¹].

[O surpassing love for men! Not as a teacher to his scholars, not as a master to his domestics, nor as God to men, but as a father the Lord admonishes His children².]

St. Athanasius also says: [For God not only created them to be men, but called them to be sons, as having begotten them...

God is not our Father by nature, but of that Word in us, in whom and because of Him we cry "Abba, Father," Gal; 4:6... The Father calls them sons, in whomsoever He sees His own Son³.

2. God - in His infinite love - declared Himself in the Old Testament as the Father of the believers but nobody, even the patriarchs and the prophets, dared to call Him: "Father". In the New Testament, the Father sent His only Begotten Son to call the believers to abide in Him by the Holy spirit, and thus they attain the adoption to the Father. This is the gift of the New Testament, which Isaiah the prophet foretold, saying: "For the Lord God will... call His servants by another

(a new) name," Is. 65:15. What is the new name except "The children of God"?!)

† And my servants shall be called by a new name, He says, fresh and eternal, pure and simple, and childlike and true, which shall be blessed on earth...

Rightly, then, are those called children who know Him as their Father, who are simple, and infants and guileless...

The Father of the universe cherishes affection towards those who have fled to Him; and having begotten them again by His Spirit to the adoption of children, knows them as gentle, and loves those alone, helps and fights for them; and therefore He bestows on them the name children⁴.

† The Gnostic (the believer who has true spiritual knowledge) in virtue of being a lover of the one true God, is the really perfect man and friend of God, and is *placed in* the rank of sons⁵.

St. Clement of Alexandria

† It is right to examine what is said in the Old Testament quite carefully to see whether any prayer may be found in it calling God "Father". Up till now, though I have looked carefully as I can, I have not found one. I

do not mean that God was not called Father or that those who are supposed to have believed in God were not called sons of God; but nowhere have I found, in a prayer, the boldness proclaimed by the Saviour in calling God "Father"...

But even if God is called "Father" and those who are begotten by the Word of Faith in Him are called sons (Deut. 32:6,18,20; Is. 1:2; Mal.1:6), the certainty and immutability of son ship cannot be seen in the Old Testament. Indeed, the passages I have listed indicate that those called sons are guilty, since according to the Apostle, "So long as heir is a child, he is no better than a servant, though he is lord of all, but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the Father," Gal. 4:1-2. And "the fullness of time", Gal. 4:4, is present in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when those who wish receive the adoption of sons, as Paul teaches in these words, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of son ship in which we cry, "Abba, Father", Rom. 8:15. And in John, "But to all who received him, He gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." John 1:12. And because of the "Spirit of son ship", we have learned in the general letter of John, concerning those born of God, that "no one born of God commits sin, for His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God", 1 John 3:9.

Origen⁶.

† We are sons and gods because of the Word in us, so we shall be in the Son and in the Father, and we shall be accounted to have become one in Son and in Father, because that spirit is in us, which is in the Father.
St. Athanasius⁷.

1. stromata 2116.
2. protrop 9:82.
3. Against Arians 2:59.
4. paedagogus 1:5.
5. strom 7: 11.
6. On Prayer 22:1,2.
7. Against Arians 2,25,24.

5

PROVIDENCE FOR MANKIND,

CHURCH AND EVERY PERSON

God as an Omniscient One, sees the whole and each thing at a glance¹, and in His love for men "*His providence is in private, in public... He cares for all*."²

God's goodness is not mechanical, but the goodness of a loving personality³; He takes care of all mankind, of His Church and for every body personally. For He is not adversary of anyone nor the enemy of anyone⁴.

Floyd⁵ states that Clement was unashamed of his theology of providence (*paranoia*) because of its almost universal popularity among serious and well-educated persons in the Greco-Roman world of his day, but there was an essential difference between Clement and the philosophers. For the latter often looked to providence as merely equated with natural laws, for God established the unalterable laws of the universe as one might wind a clock; the pattern once set runs of its own accord. God is a monarch who reigns but not rules. St. Clement declares that God's care is for the universe, human being, the Church and at the same time for everybody personally. He is the Lover of every man.

Floyd says: "When Clement teaches providential concern for the individual, his comments are profuse. Since man is God's most noble creation, but nonetheless a finite creature, God, out of pity for this weakness, sympathizes with the nature of each man. By His omniscience and omnipotence, He knows the needs of every person and like a king for his people or a shepherd for his flock, dispenses his beneficence accordingly. Nothing that matters to man is too petty for God's concern, for "even the very hairs of his head are numbered and the most minute movements are surveyed⁶."

Origen Says:

† For the number of souls is, as far as we can see, infinite; and the same is true of their characters, and they have innumerable motions, projects, purposes, and impulses. There is One alone who can manage all these for the best manager, since He knows the fitting times, the appropriate assistance to be given, the ways of training and direction. And He is the God and the Father of the whole universe⁷.

† His providence cares for us every day- in public and in private, secretly and openly, even when we know it not⁸.

† All things have been created primarily for the benefit of the rational being... God does not care, as Celsus thinks, only of the universe as a whole but, besides the whole, of every rational being in particular. Yet His providence for the whole never fails. For even if some part of it degenerates because of the sin of the rational being, God sees to (Economies) its purification and to the subsequent turning back of the universe to Himself⁹.

1. Stromata 6: 17

2. Ibid 7: 2

3. Ibid 1: 27 , 1:11.

4. Ibid 7 : 12.

5. Floyd: Clement of Alexandria, s treatment of the problem of evil, Oxford University Press 1971 ,p. 35.

7. De principiis 3;1:14 (In Philocalia 21:13).

8. Sel. Ps. 14:44.

9. Contra Celsus 4:99

6

PROVIDENCE AND CHASTENING

W. Floyd says: [Besides the rosy picture of providence which depicts God as the merciful provider, Clement is not blind of its shadow. Providence is also a disciplinary art which chastens man both for his own benefit and as an example to others. Censure is the mark of fatherhood, of God, and of goodwill; not ill will. -Therefore God is good despite the rid, threatening and fear¹⁰¹].

John Patrick says: [The controversy raised by Marcion led Clement to touch specially on the relation of the Divine justice to the Divine goodness²].

Marcion attributes justice to the God of the Old Testament, describing Him as violent in His punishment of men, while he attributes goodness to the God of the New Testament, describing Him as kind and

1

pitiful to men. St. Clement clarifies that the God of the Old Testament is the same of the New Testament, and God is merciful and good in His justice and just in His goodness.

Punishment by God does not arise from anger; He is truly just and good at the same time. His punishment of men is not for vengeance, but always disciplinary and remedial. He chastises for three reasons:

1. For the sake of the person who is chastised that he rises superior to his former self. He aims the salvation of the reprovved.

2. By the way of example of others, that by admonition they may be driven back from sin before committing it.

3. God chastises the wrong-doer that the wronged person may not become an object of contempt and a fit subject for being wronged.

† "Do not any longer", he says, "my son, despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him," Prov. 3: 11. O surpassing love for man! Not as a teacher speaking to his scholars, not as a master to his domestics, nor as God to men, but as a Father the Lord admonishes His children³.

† For there is nothing which the Lord hates", Wisd. 11:24... Nor He wishes anything not to exist ... If then He hates none of the things which He has made, it follows that He loves them. Much more than the rest, and with reason, will He love man, the noblest of all objects created by Him, and a God-loving being... But he who loves anything wishes to do it good... God therefore cares for man and takes care of man...

"How then", they say, "If the Lord loves man, and is good, is He angry and punishes?" ...

Many of the passions are cured by punishment ... For reproof is, as it were, the surgery of the passions of the soul... Reproach is like application of medicines, dissolving the callosities of the passions, and purging the impurities of the lewdness of life; and in addition, reducing the excrescences of pride, restoring the patient to the healthy and true state of humanity⁴.

† See how God, through His love of goodness, seeks repentance; and by means of the plan he pursues of threatening silently, shows His own love for man. " I will avert," He says; "My face from them, and show what shall happen to them," Deut. 32:20. For where the face of the Lord looks, there is peace and rejoicing; but where it is averted, there is introduction of evil⁵.

† He uses the bitter and biting language of reproof in His consolations by Solomon, tacitly alluding to the love for children that characterizes His instruction, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; For whom the Lord loves he corrects, just as a father the son in whom he receives," Prov. 3:11,12⁶.

† Such is the disciple of wisdom ("for whom the Lord loves He chastens"), causing pain in order to produce understanding, and restoring to peace immortality⁷.

St. Clement of Alexandria

If it was not of use towards the conversion of sinners to put them to torment, a merciful and kind God would never have visited crime with punishment. But like a most indulgent father He "chastens" (Prov. 3:11) His son to teach him, and like a most far-seeing master he reproveth an unruly pupil with a look of severity, lest the latter, secure of being loved, should perish.

Some of you may be so outraged by the very word "anger" as a necessary dispensation! The speaker (of Ps. 6: 1) knows that the "wrath" of God is a means to human healthfulness, and is applied to the task of healing the sick, of curing those who have scorned to hear His word... Everything that comes from God and seems harsh is actually of avail for teaching and healing. God is doctor, father, master- and not severe, but lenient... When you find people, according to the accounts of Scripture, punished, you should "compare with Scripture" (cf. 1 Cor 2:13)... and you will see that what appears the harshest is actually the sweetest.

Origen^{8,11}

1 w. floyd , p. 40.

2 john Patrick p. 90.

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3. st clement of alex . : protrep. 9.
 4. paedagogus 1: 8.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid 1:9.
 7. stromata 2:2.
 8. origin : In Ezek , Hom. 1:2 (see Drewery.)

PROVIDENCE AND EVIL

The Alexandrian Fathers in their controversy with the heretical Gnostics dealt with Divine Providence in its relation to evil. They had to answer the following question:

1. Are the world, materials, bodies, birth, marriage etc. evil things ?
2. How do we explain the temptations to which Christians are exposed and the triumph of unrighteousness in persecuting them ?
3. How do we explain the existence of evil in a world governed by Divine Providence ?

1. THE WORLD AND EVIL

The Gnostics regarded the world as intrinsically evil, but the Alexandrian Fathers, especially St. Clement considered the world as a divine gift to man, governed by the providence of God. It is the best of all possible worlds. God loves everything He created and hates nothing. Truly it is just a bridge for man to pass over into to eternity and enjoy the heavenly glories, but it is formed by the gracious God who creates no evil.

Floyd says :[Like the Gnostics, Clement conceded a gap between the Supreme Being and the visible world, but unlike them he saw it bridged by God Himself instead of by intermediary beings or demons. By the incarnation, on one hand, God entered the world as a human being, and on the other hand, by His example, passion, and death, He "pointed the path" towards unity with Him through grace. According to the Gnostics there is no solution at all for the relation between God and the world¹.

This is the highest excellence which orders all things in accordance with the Father's will and holds the helm of the universe in the best way, with unwearied and tireless power, working all things in which it operates, keeping in view its hidden designs.

St. Clement of Alexandria²

2. MATTER AND EVIL

St. Clement of Alexandria protests against the Marconites who said that matter is evil; on the contrary, he declared that it is under the control of God; everything created by the Good God is good, even the riches...

Wealth is like a tool which may be used skillfully or the reverse; it may be a servant of righteousness or unrighteousness. The words of Christ to the rich young man in Mark 10:17-31 are not to be understood in a carnal sense, but we must seek to penetrate their innermost meaning.

† It is not the outward act, but something else indicated by it, greater, more godlike, more perfect, the stripping off of the passions from the soul itself and from the disposition, and the cutting up by the roots and casting out of what is alien to the mind...

Riches which also benefit our neighbors, are not be thrown away...

If you use (wealth) skillfully, it is skillful; if you are deficient in skill, it is affected by your want of skill, being itself destitute of blame, such an instrument is wealth. Are you able to make the right use of it ? It is subservient to righteousness. Does one make a wrong use of it ? It is, then, a minister of wrong. For its nature is to be subservient not to rule. That then, which of itself has neither good nor evil, being blameless, ought not to be blamed; but that which has the power of using it well or ill, by reason of its possessing voluntary choice. And this is the mind and judgment of man which has freedom in himself and self-determination in the treatment of what is assigned to it.

So, let no man destroy wealth, rather ? the passions of the soul, which are incompatible with the better use of wealth. So that, becoming virtuous and good, he may be able to make good use of these riches.

St. Clement of Alexandria³

Riches and possessions are taken in the Holy Scripture in three different ways, i.e., as good, bad, and indifferent. Those are bad, of which it is said: "The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger," Ps. 33(34): 11, and "Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation:" Luke 6:24, and to have cast off these riches is the height of perfection; and a distinction which belongs to those poor who are

commended in the gospel by the Lord's saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" Matt. 5:3, and in the Psalm: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him", Ps 33 (34):7 and again: "The poor and needy shall praise thy name," Ps. 73(74):21 Those riches are good, to acquire which is the work of great virtue and merit, and the righteous possessor of which is praised by David who says, "The generation of the righteous shall be blessed: glory and riches are in his house, and his righteousness remaineth for ever:" Ps. 111 (112):2,3, and again "the ransom of a man's life are his riches," Prov. 13:8. And of these riches it is said in the Apocalypse to him who has them not and to his shame is poor and naked: "I will begin," says he, to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich and wealthy and have need of nothing: and newest not that thou are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear," Rev. 3:16-18. There are some also which are indifferent, i.e., which may be made neither good nor bad; for they are made neither one nor the other in accordance with the will and character of those who use them: of which the blessed Apostle says, "Charge the rich of the world not to be high-minded nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in God (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy), to do good, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation that they may lay hold on the true life," 1 Tim 6:17-19. These are what the rich man in the gospel kept, and never distributed to the poor, while the beggar Lazarus was lying at his gate desiring to be fed with his crumbs; and so he was condemned to the unbearable flames and everlasting heat of hell fire,(Luke 14 19f.).

Abbot Paphnutius⁴

3. MAN'S BODY AND EVIL

Marcion considered the body of man, being formed of matter, as evil by nature; it is a enemy of the soul. Plato looked upon it as the grave of the soul. On the contrary, the Alexandrian Fathers-perhaps except Origen - had a sanctified view of the body, for the following reasons:

a. It is created by God, who is Good, and created no evil. He hates nothing, even the body, but loves all which He created⁵.

b. The body is the instrument, the seat and the possession of the soul⁶.

c. As a dwelling Place of the soul, it shares with her the sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit⁷, and man as whole - body and soul - will be glorified in the world to come.

d. The harmony of the body contributes to the goodly disposition of the soul and of the mind⁸.

e. The Word of God assumed our humanity in its true meaning and received a real body to declare the sanctification of our bodies. He became Man that He might speak with the mouth of a man⁹. He did not despise our body which He took for Himself, assumed it to Himself as a proof of the essential worth of mankind (the whole human nature), matter and the world.

Those, then, who look upon created matter and vilify the body are wrong; not considering that the frame of man was formed erect for the contemplation of heaven, and that the organization of the senses tends to knowledge; and that the members and parts are arranged for good, not for pleasure. This abode becomes receptive of the soul which is most precious to God; and is dignified with the Holy Spirit through the sanctification of soul and body, perfected with the perfection of the Savior. And the succession of the three virtues is found in the Gnostic (a believer who has spiritual gnosis or knowledge), who morally, physically and logically occupies himself with God...¹⁰

The soul is not good by nature, nor on the other hand, is the body bad by nature...

God improves all things all things to the good, but the soul which has chosen the best life the life that is from God and righteousness - changes earth to heaven....

† The harmonious mechanism of the body contributes to the understanding, which leads to goodness of nature...
He who in the body has devoted himself to a good life, is being sent on to the state of immortality¹¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

❖ There be some who wear out their bodies with abstinence; but because they have no discretion, they are a great way from God.

St. Anthony the Great

4. AFFLICTION AND EVIL¹³

According to the Gnostics, the problem of evil was insoluble, for there was no explanation of the existence of evil in the world and afflictions exposed to the believers unjustly by persecutors in a world governed by the Almighty and Good God, where nothing takes place without His Good will.

St. Clement of Alexandria and other Alexandrian Fathers offer the solution, in the following points:

a. The existence of evil does not oppose the Divine providence or the goodness of God, for through this providence man attains free will, one of the best divine gifts. Therefore God does not prevent evil, but he does not cause it. The responsibility lies with him who makes a choice; God is not responsible¹⁴.

Osborn says:

Clement states the problem and gives his answer. God did not will that our Lord and the martyrs should suffer. Yet nothing ever happens which is not God's will.

" The only possible solution left, expressed concisely, is that such things happen without the prevention of God. Only this preserves the providence and the goodness of God. We must not think that God actively causes our affliction. That is quite unthinkable; but we should be of the conviction that He does not prevent those who cause them¹⁵.

A distinction is here made between what God causes and what happens without God's prevention. It would be inconsistent with God's providence and goodness for Him to cause evil. But it is not inconsistent with the providence and goodness of God for evil things to happen without his prevention. Good things are caused by God. Evil things happen without his prevention...

Therefore what prevents is a cause, while what does not prevent judges the soul's choice justly; so that God is never in any way responsible for the evil in our lives¹⁶. The causes of sins are choice and desire¹⁷. Not that any one voluntarily chooses evil, but, pleasure deludes one into thinking that something bad is good and desirable. It is in our own power to avoid ignorance. the choice of what is base and pleasant and the deceptions of the devil.

Despite the activity of the devil, 'God orders all things from above for good: Nothing can oppose God, nothing can stand against Him, for He is the Almighty Lord. The thoughts and deeds of the rebellious are partial and spring from a bad disposition. Though they originate in a diseased condition the universal providence steers them to a healthy conclusion..¹⁸

A modern thinker has said, "Without freedom to choose the evil, or the lower good, a man might be a well-behaved puppet or a sentient automaton, but not a moral agent. But the best possible world implies the existence of moral agents; its crown cannot be the puppet or the automaton^{19:20} .

b. God does not prevent those who cause afflictions, for He bestows upon men free will, but He transforms their evil choice into good. He did not prevent the folly of the Cross, but brought good out of it²¹.

Osborn says:

God does not prevent his adversaries from doing evil but "He uses up for good the wrongs which his adversaries have dared against him". Clement quotes Isaiah 5:5: "I shall destroy the wall and it shall become a trampling-ground". This verse refers to the vineyard which produced brambles instead of grapes. God did not destroy it but removed the wall which had protected it. Animals were no longer prevented from trampling the vines under foot. Their trampling, though an act of aggression and destruction, was to have beneficial results. The brambles would be destroyed and the vineyard would be cleared of its wrong contents. God uses the crimes of the enemies of his vineyard for the benefit of the vineyard. For providence, as Clement goes on to say, is a form of correction, which benefits those who experience it.

There are other ways in which God turns evil into good. Philosophy is the result of a crime, wisdom was stolen from God, but God turned theft to good account.

It is the chief work of Divine providence not to allow the evil which results from willful revolt to remain useless and unprofitable and to become altogether harmful. For it is the function of the Divine wisdom and virtue and power not only to do good (for this is the nature of God, so to speak, as that of fire is to heat and that to light is to give light), but also and above all to a good and useful end what has happened through the evils contrived by any, and to use to good account things which appear to be bad, as is the testimony which proceeds from temptation¹².

❖ We say that by the providence and wisdom of God all things are so ordered in this world that nothing is wholly useless to God, whether it be evil or good... God did not create evil, nor, when others have contrived it, does He prevent it although He could. But he uses evil for necessary ends. For by means of those in whom is evil, He makes those who are working towards the achievement of goodness famous and praiseworthy. For if evil disappeared there would be nothing to stand over against goodness, and goodness, having no opposite,

¹² Stromata 1:86, 2:55:22.

would not shine out with its greater brightness and proved superiority. Virtue is not virtue if it be untested and unexamined...(Origen compares Joseph and his brethren, the sin of the latter being necessary for the whole story of Exodus to Deuteronomy; Balak; Judas Iscariot - even the devil, for if he were suppressed) this would entail the simultaneous disappearance of our struggle against his wiles, and he who had struggled "lawfully" (2 Tim 2:5) could no longer expect ~he crown of victory.

Origen

c. St. Cletmet looked to evil in ~he world as an educative and disciplinary art, for the soul has much to learn from evil. God, by His providence, changes even our faults into medicine for our salvation, for He is the Lover of men. For example, St. Clement, in his arguing against Basilides, explained that martyrs are not punished for their sins by martyrdom. It comes because of the sin and injustice of their persecutors. But God does not leave even martyrdom without beneficial results. The martyr is brought by the discipline of suffering to sanctification²⁴.

- ❖ If we are told that certain unpleasant experiences - so called "evils" are inflicted by parents, teachers, and pedagogues (tutors), or by surgeons who use cutlery or the knife for purposes of healing, we say that parents... inflict "evil", but that would not be an accusation against them; in just the same way God is said to inflict such "evils" for purposes of correcting and healing²⁵.
- ❖ And the fact that the temptations that come to us are meant to show us who we are or to make known the secret things in our hearts are established²⁶.
- ❖ At least we must suppose that the present temptation has come about as a testing and trying of our love for God. "For the Lord is tempting you," as it is written in Deuteronomy, "to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul" (Deut. 13:3: cf. Matt. 22:37; Deut 6:5) But when you are tempted, "You shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments", especially "you shall hear his voice and cleave to Him, when He takes you from the regions here and associates you

with Himself for what the Apostle calls "the increase of God" in Him (Col 2: 19)²⁷.

- ❖ Faith is tested by temptations, and when it conquers one temptation and its faith has been thus proved, it comes to another one; and it passes, as it were, from one stage to another So, when it proceeds through the different temptations of life and faith one by one, it is said to have stages in which increase in virtues are sought one by one In this way there is fulfilled what is written, "They will go from virtue to virtue" Ps 84:7 until the soul arrives at its goal, namely the highest summit of virtues, and crosses the rivers of God and receives the heritage promised it²⁸.
- ❖ The soul, unless it is somehow salted with constant temptations, immediately becomes feeble and soft For this reason the saying is established that every sacrifice shall be salted with salt (Lev 2:13)²⁹.
- ❖ Temptation, as I think, gives a kind of strength and defense to the soul For temptations are so mingled with virtues that no virtue appears to be seemly or complete without them³⁰. Origen
- ❖ For the patience of Job did not bring any gain to the devil, through making him a better man by his temptations, but only to Job himself who endured them bravely; nor was Judas granted freedom from eternal punishment, because his act of betrayal contributed to the salvation of mankind For we must not regard the result of the deed, but the purpose of the doer Wherefore we should always cling to this assertion; viz, that evil cannot be brought upon a man by another, unless a man has admitted it by his sloth or feebleness of heart: as the Apostle confirms this opinion of ours in a verse of Scripture "But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God " But by saying "All things work together for good," he includes everything alike, not only things fortunate, but also those which seem to be misfortunes.

Abbot Theodore³¹.

d. Floyd says that by the Divine Providence the world is in harmony, despite the contradictions, such as heat and cold; dryness and wetness;

givers and receivers; life and death, even good and evil These different forces challenge

man to use his power of free choice.

e. Origen looks upon afflictions, like suffering and martyrdom, not as an evil event but as a gift which is granted to some believers by God's Providence. He says [No one comes to the contest of martyrdom without Providence³²].

God uses the martyrdom of His believers as a witness to attract others to the Christian faith.

† Let us learn from this passage what great advantage accrue through the Christian persecutions, how great a grace is bestowed, how God becomes the champion of the Christians, how abundantly the Holy Spirit is poured on them. For the grace of God is then most mightily at hand when the savagery of men is stirred up; and then do we have peace with God when are in suffering from men because of the justice of war...Although Moses and Aaron stand high through the achievements of their lives, although in natural attainments they are pre-eminent, nevertheless the glory of God could never have shone on them unless they had come to be persecuted, in tribulation and danger, nay almost at the point of being killed. And you (my hearers), you too, must not suppose that the glory of God can shine upon you if you are idle or asleep³³

† (Providence) granted increase and boldness of speech to the multitude in spite of the fact that there were countless obstacles to the spread of the teaching of Jesus in the world. But since it was God who wished the Gentiles also to be helped by the teaching of Jesus Christ, every human plot against the Christians has been thwarted, and the more kings and local rulers and peoples everywhere have humiliated them, the more they have grown in numbers and strength³⁴.

Origen

F - Abbot Theodore (of Egypt) explained the biblical passages: "I am the Lord, and there is none else... I make peace, and create evil," Is. 45:6,7; "Shall here be evil in a city which the Lord has not done ? " Amos, 3:6. He said: [Sometimes holy Scripture is wont by an improper use of terms to use "evils" for "affliction," not that these are properly and in their nature evils, but because they are imagined to be evils by those on whom they are brought for their good. For when divine judgment is reasoning with men it must speak with the language and feelings of men. For when a doctor for the sake of health, with good reason, either cuts or cauterizes those who are suffering from the inflammation of ulcers, it is considered an evil by those who have to bear it. Nor are the spur and the whip pleasant to a restive horse. Moreover, all chastisement seems at the moment to be a bitter thing to those who are chastised, as the Apostle says: "Now all chastisement for the present indeed seems not to bring with it joy but sorrow; but afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it most peaceable fruits of righteousness, " and "whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives: for what son is there whom the father doth not correct? " Heb. 12:6- 11. And so evils are sometimes wont to stand for afflictions, as where we read; "And God repented of the evil which He has said that He would do to them and He did not," Jonah 3:10 (LXX). And again: "For Thou Lord, are gracious and merciful, patient and very merciful and ready to repent of the evil," Joel 2:13 (LXX) i.e., of the sufferings and losses which Thou are forced to bring upon as the reward of our sins. And another prophet, knowing that these are profitable to some men, and certainly not through any jealousy of their safety, but with an eye to their good, prays thus: "Add evils to them O Lord, add evils to the haughty ones of the earth," Is. 26:15 (LXX) and the Lord Himself says "Lo, I will bring evils upon them," Jer. 11:11 i.e., sorrows, and losses, with which they shall for the present be chastened for their soul's health, and so shall be at length driven to return and hasten back to Me whom in their prosperity they scorned. And so that these are originally evil we cannot possibly assert: for to many they conduce to their good and offer the occasions of eternal bliss, and therefore (to return to the question raised) all those things, which are thought to be thought upon us as evils by our enemies or by any other people, should not be counted as evils, but as things indifferent. For in the end they will not be what he thinks, who brought them upon us in his

rage and fury, but what he makes them who endures them. And so when death has been brought upon a saint, we ought not think that an evil has happened to him but a thing indifferent; which is an evil to a wicked man, while to the good it is rest and freedom from evils. "For death is rest to a man whose way is hidden," Job 3:23 (LXX) And so a good man does not suffer any loss from it, because he suffers nothing strange, but by the crime of an enemy he only receives (and not without the reward of eternal life) that which would have happened to him in the course of nature, and pays the debt of man's death, which must be paid by an inevitable law, with the interest of a most fruitful passion, and the recompense of a great reward³⁵].