Health, Well-being, and Old Age in Early Christianity

∴

Human Destiny and Divine Providence in Two Byzantine Authors of the Early Eighth Century

Vladimir Baranov*

Novosibirsk State University of Architecture, Design and Arts
baranovv@academ.org

Abstract

The well-being of a person was viewed by the Byzantines as a complex interplay of divine providence, guiding a person throughout his life to salvation, and his will, freely choosing between virtue and sin. Several solutions were given to the problem of misfortunes which might befall a person, since they could not result from the actions of a good God: from ultimate non-involvement of God into the voluntary actions of humans, to pedagogical temporary “stepping aside” by God to demonstrate the futility of human actions which go against the best predestined course of life, to active divine intervention as “bitter medicine” for the correction of human wrongdoings and putting an end to uncorrected sin. These problems are discussed in the treatise *On the Predestined Terms of Life* by Patriarch Germanus I of Constantinople and in the *Dialogue against the Manichees* by John of Damascus, who thoroughly adapted and reworked the Homily *That God Is Not the Author of Evil* by Basil of Caesarea for the discussion of theodicy.

Keywords

Patriarch Germanus I of Constantinople – John of Damascus – Theophylact Simocatta – Basil of Caesarea – theodicy – providence – foreknowledge – free will – mentalization

Issues* associated with divine providence are embedded in all aspects of Christian life, theology, and exegesis from the doctrine of creation to the Trinitarian doctrine and Christology, anthropology and discussions of prophetic revelations.¹ This article will attempt to answer the questions of why and in which way the problems of theodicy and divine foreknowledge have been discussed in relation to the external non-Christian world and in inner Christian polemics throughout the entire history of the Christian Church, focusing on two Byzantine authors of the late eighth–early ninth century, John of Damascus and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople.²

A summary of the problems which a Christian is faced with, in trying to harmonize the often turbulent events of his life with a belief in an all-loving, almighty and omniscient God was given by Nemesius of Emesa (fl. ca. 400) in the chapters on providence of his treatise *On Human Nature*:

These people, then, ascribe forethought for individual things to nature and mind; but the others say that god is concerned for the continuance of the things that are, so that none of the things that came to be should fail, and that it is with this alone that his providence is concerned; individual things are swept along at random. And for this reason many injustices, many murders and in short every sort of wickedness has its dwelling among men; and of these (men), as it chances, some escape justice, while others are indeed punished, the outcome not in every case being in accordance either with right reason or with law. And where neither law nor reason prevails, how could anyone say that it is God who exercises care? For indeed it comes about that the good for the most part suffer injustice and are humiliated and are surrounded by countless evils, while the wicked and violent grow in power and wealth and authority and all the other good things in life.³

* The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to Alexander Simonov for helping him to procure literature without which this study would have been impossible.

- 1 As Maximus the Confessor formulated the role of providence in Christian theology, "All doctrines are either about God or about visible and invisible beings, or about the providence and judgment of them (Πάντα τὰ δόγματα, ἢ περὶ Θεοῦ εἰσιν, ἢ περὶ ὁρατῶν καὶ ἀορατῶν, ἢ περὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς προνοίας καὶ κρίσεως)" (*Capita de caritate*, 1.78 PG 90, 977 B).
- 2 H. Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner* (OCA, 114), Rome, 1937; C. Parma, *Pronoia und Providentia: der Vorsehungsbegriff der Plotins und Augustins*, Leiden, 1971; Г.И. Беневич, *Краткая история «промысла» от Платона до Максима Исповедника* (SPh, 11), St. Petersburg, 2013 with an excellent overview of the philosophical background of the problem.
- 3 Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 43, 350.12–351.23, ed. M. Morani, Leipzig, 1987, p. 128; trans. R.W. Sharples, "Nemesius of Emesa and Some Theories of Divine Providence," *VC*, 37 (2) (1983), pp. 141–156, at p. 148.

Nemesius criticized solutions to the problem given by his ideological opponents, which ranged from the acknowledgement of providential care to its utter denial, giving room for random chance. In his opponents the concept of providential care might take the form of total determination or fate, distinction between the primary providence of a supreme god over the highest realms and secondary providence of the earthly realm, or providence only over the universals and not individuals. In his overview of the Greek philosophical theories of providence, Nemesius criticized the last position on the grounds that universals are constituted of and contemplated in particulars and without providential care for particulars, the universals would perish as well. The rift between belief in a just and merciful Christian God and the observed experience of everyday life provoked Nemesius to also introduce several arguments from the realm of theodicy.

In simple words, the problem can be formulated as follows: if there is predestination and God is almighty and omniscient, He may seem cruel and unjust according to common standards of human conduct. If He is merciful and does not interfere with human free will, His might is limited, and there may be multiple causes in the universe. Moreover, the Holy Scripture shows that He may change His mind or even originally send His message having something else on His mind, for example, promising death to Hezekiah through Prophet Isaiah, and then adding fifteen years of life after Hezekiah's prayer (2 Kings, 20). If God is almighty, omniscient, and all-loving, how could He allow for injustice done towards virtuous people, evil people escaping justice, or mass destructions or murders, often from natural disasters the power of which would totally be in His hands?⁴ In his reply Nemesius outlined the solutions which were to become standard for later theologians addressing the problem of providence: the claim that everything happens rightly under divine providence had to apply not to human actions. Human actions depend not on providence but on the human mind making a decision to take an action. Providence would deal with the effects or consequences of these actions. Moreover, since the soul is immortal, its virtue and not external goods, was of fundamental value for real happiness as opposed to the temporary and delusive happiness of this life.⁵

Another important source for future discussions of providence which, in addition to the problem of theodicy tried to harmonize seemingly disagreeing passages from Holy Scripture, was the homily by Basil of Caesarea *That God Is*

4 For an overview of the discussions on predestination, see M. Levering, *Predestination. Biblical and Theological Paths*, Oxford, 2011.

5 Sharples, "Nemesius of Emesa," p. 151.

Not the Author of Evil, which stressed the value of the free will of man,⁶ made a distinction between relative transitory evil which can be good and remedial for the soul, and true evil – sin which moves the human away from the source of life and results in death,⁷ and argued for the intervention of the providential, remedial, and pedagogical care of God Who sometimes by His foreknowledge and ultimate love is forced to apply harsh and drastic measures for weeding out the sin which takes deep roots in individual humans and human collectives.⁸

Never defined in formal conciliar terms, active debate on predetermined or changeable terms of human lives continued into the later period, which is testified to by the treatise *On the Predestined Terms of Life* by Theophylact Simocatta, written in the early seventh century and presenting two contestants propagating their opposing views on predetermination in front of judges who give their verdict as a third middle position. The discussion of providence and predetermination continued in the writings of Maximus the Confessor⁹ and Anastasius of Sinai,¹⁰ and reappeared in the dialogue by Patriarch Germanus under the same title as the treatise of Theophylact, already written some seventy years later, and in the chapters on providence from the *Dialogue against the Manichees* and *Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith* by John of Damascus, the contemporary of Patriarch Germanus. There is no need to present the contents of these sources in detail, which has been done in a number of publications.¹¹ It will suffice to briefly outline the general trends in the development of the debate and give some examples showing the continuity and innovation in the arguments advanced by the debating parties.

The common feature of these later writings is the shift in the polemical scope from discussing the errors of Greek philosophers regarding divine provi-

6 PG 31, 344 B-345 A.

7 PG 31, 332 C-333 B.

8 PG 31, 333 BD and 337 C-340 B.

9 G. Benevich, "Maximus Confessor's Teaching on God's Providence," in: *The Architecture of the Cosmos: St Maximus the Confessor. New Perspectives*, eds. A. Lévy, P. Annala, O. Hallamaa, and T. Lankila with the collaboration of D. Kaley, Helsinki, 2015, pp. 130-139; K. Parry, "Fate, Free Choice and Divine Providence," in: *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, eds. A. Kaldellis and N. Siniossoglou, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 350-355.

10 J.A. Munitiz, "The Predetermination of Death: The Contribution of Anastasios of Sinai and Nikephoros Blemmydes to a Perennial Byzantine Problem," *DOP*, 55 (2001), pp. 9-20.

11 *Theophylactus Simocates. On Predestined Terms of Life*, ed. and trans. C. Garton and L.G. Westerink (AM, 6), Buffalo, NY, 1978; *Germanos. On Predestined Terms of Life*, ed. and trans. C. Garton and L.G. Westerink (AM, 7), Buffalo, NY, 1979; *Teofilatto Simocatta: De vitae termino*, ed. G. Zanetto, Naples, 1979; K. Parry, "Fate, Free Choice and Divine Providence," pp. 341-360; see the review of this chapter by G.I. Benevich in *Scr*, 14 (2018), pp. 514-518.

dence, as was the case with Nemesisius, or the problem of theodicy as was the case in Basil's Homily. The later writings focused on the discussion of Scriptural passages supporting either predetermination or changes in the decisions of God in response to praiseworthy or reproachable human actions.

Although we do not have hard evidence that Germanus was acquainted with Theophylact's treatise, it is quite possible, given the same title, the highly unusual genre of the dialogue for the eighth century, the central place of Basil's quote from his Homily,¹² and some twenty fully or partially overlapping Scriptural quotes and references out of a total of 133 in Germanus and 124 in Theophylact (according to the Scriptural sources identified by the editors).¹³

A distant echo of Nemesisius' criticism of Greek philosophical theories of providence can still be heard in Theophylact's treatise when the proponent of predetermination thus rebukes his opponent:

What place will you assign to "the season of every man has come before me," (Gen. 6: 13) or "the days of your death have drawn near," (Deut. 31: 14) or "my Spirit shall not continue indefinitely in the sons of men, but their days shall be a hundred and twenty years"? (Gen. 6: 3) This I ask you, champion as you are of that outlandish indeterminacy and introducer of those strange doctrinal novelties, portentous and like a kind of Platonic Ideas, phantasms of the mind and toys of a frivolous brain-improviser in fact of an evil Academy for the churches in all too Greek a fashion.¹⁴

Theophylact's proponent of predetermination makes his case referring to Is. 40:12 and saying that God the Maker portioned everything out "by measure and weight,"¹⁵ which places predetermination into the context of perfect order which God imposed upon creation. This suggests traces of polemics with old theories of providence only over the higher realm but not over the sublunar world, mentioned by Nemesisius.¹⁶ The same argument is brought forth by Germanus' proponent of predetermination who calls God the imposer of order and the binding force of creation, "who holds all things together and steers

12 PG 31, 333 B = eds. Garton and Westerink, *Theophylactus Simocates*, p. 8.2-3 = eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, p. 12.27-30.

13 Garton and Westerink, *Theophylactus Simocates*, pp. 40-42; Garton and Westerink, *Germanos*, pp. 79-82.

14 Eds. Garton and Westerink, *Theophylactus Simocates*, p. 6.5-12/p. 7 txt/tr.

15 Eds. Garton and Westerink, *Theophylactus Simocates*, p. 4.21-23/p. 5 txt/tr.

16 Sharples, "Nemesisius of Emesa," pp. 142-145.

into orderly process all of creation (τὰ πάντα συνέχοντος καὶ πρὸς τὸ εὐτακτον διακυβερώντος τὴν σύμπασαν κτίσιν).¹⁷

Just as Germanus, Theophylact's treatise embarks from the passage in Basil's Homily which is cited by the proponent of total predetermination, while the judges after hearing out the contestants rejected both "extreme" views and agreed on conditional determination which resulted from the outcomes of free human will: "both supplementation of life and bringing of death are literally mortised to the human race through virtue or vice (καὶ ζωῆς ἐπίδοσις καὶ θανάτου φορὰ ἀρετῇ ἢ κακίᾳ τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ φύλῳ προσπεπήγασιν)."¹⁸ The argument from the final verdict of the judges after the disputation that "life does have predestined terms inasmuch as, being children of earth, to earth we shall all go when we make our departure; but supplementation or abridgement is superimposed upon men's lives because of either virtue or vice in their souls"¹⁹ also seems to dwell on the idea of "rigid" providence over universals of natures as opposed to "fluid" providence over particulars. The latter appears in Nemesius and is reiterated by Patriarch Germanus through the words of his opponent of predetermination: "...by the completion of terms he [Basil-V.B.] meant man's returning to the earth, since it is herein that an end overtakes those who were determined at the outset by God, that is, 'Earth you are, and to earth you shall depart.' This is not to be understood of passage of time,"²⁰ to which the proponent of predetermination over individual lives thus replies:

The sentence originally assigned to man by God, that he should depart to earth from which he was taken, carries the implication that a single term was assigned against all the race, not many terms considered in the light of individual circumstances, but the voice of the teacher not only said that terms had been fixed in regard to each person, but also taught that the interest of each one is provided for in consequence of this. It is clear that the execution resulting from the first sentencing is one and the same for all mankind (for all of us alike return to earth, although the ways we

17 Eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, p. 56.29-30/p. 57 txt/tr. Cf. similar argument in Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, x, 42, 1188D-1189A, ed. and trans. N. Constatas, *Maximos the Confessor: On the Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, vol. 1, Cambridge, MA, 2014, p. 308-311, loosely based on Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 42-43 (cf. ed. Morani, pp. 120.337-121.6, 122.24-123.1, 125.5-10). See also K. Parry, "Fate, Free Choice and Divine Providence," p. 353, and John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 14 and 47, see below.

18 Eds. Garton and Westerink, *Theophylactus Simocates*, p. 24.13-15/p. 25 txt/tr.

19 Eds. Garton and Westerink, *Theophylactus Simocates*, p. 24.22-23/p. 25 txt/tr.

20 Eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, p. 16.23-27/p. 17 txt/tr.

die are different), whereas the fact that one ends his life more quickly or slowly than another demonstrates that God's Providence is dispensing this for our advantage. God metes out more life to one person so that he may by repentance rectify his previous errors, and snatches another away sooner so that he may not be stuck in the miry depth of his sin; or rather he dispenses such things according to the ineffable boundlessness of his wisdom and goodness, which not even an angel's mind can fully view, and by his own prognostic power he considers beforehand the ways in which the things that are to be will turn out, and by his just decision predestines their ends in a way appropriate to them.²¹

A comparison of Scriptural quotations between Basil's Homily, Theophylact's treatise, and Germanus' dialogue shows that despite the common problems discussed, all three sources generally employ different Scriptural passages. Only two passages (Deut. 32: 39, Ex. 14: 28) appear both in Basil and Theophylact, while no matching citations between Basil and Germanus have been found despite six references to Basil's Homily in Germanus's treatise.²² There is not a single correspondence of Psalm citations between Theophylact and Germanus, despite the fact that the *Book of Psalms* was the most frequently quoted book of the Bible for both authors. Such heavy and diverse use of the Bible indicates essentially the exegetical scope of debate for Theophylact and Germanus, and their use of the Scripture as a "meta-language" for presenting opposing views. Their true goal was setting the proper context for harmonizing God's actions and words in the Bible in accordance with the concept of pre-determination, which both authors considered to be correct. When this was

21 "ἡ μὲν γὰρ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ δοθεῖσα τὸ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἀπόφασις ἐκ θεοῦ, τὸ εἰς γῆν ἀναλύειν αὐτόν, ἐξ ἧς ἐλήφθη, ἓνα ὅρον δοθῆναι κατὰ παντὸς ὑπαγορεύει τοῦ γένους, καὶ οὐ πολλοὺς ἐκ τοῦ περὶ ἕκαστον θεωρουμένους· ἡ δὲ τοῦ διδασκάλου φωνὴ οὐ μόνον περὶ ἕκαστον ζωῆς ὅρους ἔφη πεπῆχθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ περὶ ἕκαστον συμφέρον ἐκ τούτου προσκοπεῖσθαι ἐδίδαξεν. δῆλον δὲ ὡς ἡ μὲν ἐκ τῆς πρώτης καταδίκης ἐπαγωγὴ μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ ἐπὶ πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐστίν (ὁμοίως γὰρ πάντες εἰς γῆν ἀποστρεφόμεθα, εἰ καὶ οἱ τρόποι τοῦ θανάτου διάφοροι), τὸ δὲ ἄλλον ἄλλου θάττον ἢ βραδύτερον ἀποβίωναι τὴν πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον ἡμῖν τοῦτο οἰκονομοῦσαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρόνοιαν διαδεικνυσιν, τῷ μὲν πρὸς τὸ μετανοεῖν τὰ φθάσαντα διορθώσασθαι σφάλματα πλεονα ἐπιμετροῦντος ζωὴν, τὸν δὲ πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐμπαγῆναι εἰς ὕλην τοῦ τῆς ἀμαρτίας βυθοῦ τάχιον προαρπάζοντος, μᾶλλον δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἄρρητον τῆς σοφίας αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀγαθότητος ἄβυσσον, ἣτινι μηδὲ ἀγγελικὸν ὅλως προσβλέψαι νοῦν δυνατόν, τὰ τοιαῦτα οἰκονομοῦντος, καὶ τῇ οἰκείᾳ προγνωστικῇ δυνάμει προθεωροῦντος τὰς ἐκβάσεις τῶν ἐσομένων, καὶ καταλλήλως τούτοις τῇ δικαίᾳ αὐτοῦ κρίσει τὰ τέλη τούτων προορίζοντος" (eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, p. 18.6-25/p. 19 txt/tr). Cf. Maximus, *Ambigua*, x, 42 precisely arguing that providence cares over particulars in each moment and circumstance of their existence; see below, n. 30.

22 Garton and Westerink, *Germanos*, p. 79.

impossible to do with some passages of the Bible, like with the case of Hezekiah, both Germanus and John of Damascus appealed to the concept of divine dispensation.²³

The later writings go back to Nemesius and Basil as sources of useful arguments, opinions, and examples, the extreme case being John of Damascus, who borrowed from Nemesius in his discussion of providence in *The Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith* and *Dialogue against the Manichees*.²⁴

In Syria and Palestine in the early eighth century, the Manichean dualism appeared to attract many Muslim and Christian thinkers, thus triggering the appearance of both Muslim²⁵ and Christian polemical treatises aimed at refuting Manichaeism, including the dialogue by John of Damascus.²⁶ To be sure, the problem of divine providence was not John's main concern in the *Dialogue against the Manichees*, but was a corollary of his essentially ontological attempt to ascribe all causality, sometimes resulting in bad or seemingly bad things happening to people, to a single principle. The problem of theodicy was resolved in Manichaeism on the basis of a simple line of reasoning: if God

- 23 Eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, p. 34.1-6; John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 80.6-10, ed. B. Kotter, *Opera polemica*, Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos IV (PTS, 22), Berlin–New York, 1981, p. 395; translations of passages from the *Dialogue* are mine). Divine pedagogy is the main method of treating the problems of providence by Joseph Hazzaya, the Syrian contemporary of Patriarch Germanus and John of Damascus; see ed. and trans. N. Kavvas, *Joseph Hazzaya, On Providence* (TSEC, 8), Leiden–Boston, 2016.
- 24 On the Nemesian parallels in the chapter on providence from *The Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith*, see A. Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 140-142. Another parallel can be added: John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 78.1-5 seems to be a paraphrase of Nemesius, *De natura hominis*, 43, ed. Morani, p. 129.26-130.1.
- 25 S. Stroumsa and G. Stroumsa suggested that Manichaeism might have fostered the discussions on free will in early Islam and ultimately resulted in shaping some basic Muslim doctrines of theodicy (S. Stroumsa and G. Stroumsa, "Aspects of Anti-Manichaeism Polemics in Late Antiquity and Under Early Islam," *Harvard Theological Review*, 81.1 (1988), pp. 37-58 at pp. 52-54); see also J.C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, Sheffield and Oakville, 2011; D. Baran Tekin, "Mani and His Teachings according to Islamic Sources: An Introductory Study," in: *Manichaeism East and West*, eds. S.N.C. Lieu, N.A. Pedersen, E. Morano, and E. Hunter (CFMAM, 1), Turnhout, 2017, pp. 1-9, and S. Griffith, "John of Damascus and the Church in Syria in the Umayyad Era: The Intellectual and Cultural Milieu of Orthodox Christians in the World of Islam," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 11.2 (2018): v, 20 (<<https://hugoye.bethmardutho.org/article/hv11n2grif5th>>, accessed November, 20, 2018).
- 26 On the polemics against Manichaeism in John of Damascus, see Louth, *St. John Damascene*, pp. 61-71. On the cultural and theological environment of John of Damascus, see N.G. Awad, *Umayyad Christianity. John of Damascus as a Contextual Example of Identity Formation in Early Islam* (IHT, 12), Piscataway, NJ, 2018.

is the source of goodness, and evil is obviously present in this world and in sacred history, evil could not proceed from God but should be ascribed to another, evil, principle, which resulted in attributing all good things to one, divine, principle of light, and all bad things to the other, dark principle of matter.²⁷

One of the conclusions of John Demetracopoulos, who discovered some sources of the *Dialogue* was that “there is still room for *Quellenforschung*.”²⁸ An indication of where to look for other sources of the *Dialogue* appears in an argument of John of Damascus aimed at undermining the radical solution of the problem of theodicy by the Manicheans. John of Damascus writes:

For if no man knows the things of a man, save the spirit which is in him (1 Cor. 2: 11), but neither each person knows all things of himself, since he does not know the future and what he wants, or what he will wish or want tomorrow, how can the one who often forgets what he thought about know the will of God and His wish? God exercises providence according to His foreknowledge of everything. And for us, who do not know the future, nor the past, nor the entire present, His direction seems irregular, but in fact it is regular, good, and just (Εἰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐδεὶς ἐπίσταται εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκάστου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ πάντα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ἕκαστος τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπίσταται – οὐ γὰρ τὸ μέλλον γινώσκει οὐδέ, τί βούλεται ἢ τί θελήσει καὶ βουλευθῇ αὐρίον, ἐπίσταται –, πῶς οὖν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ θέλημα καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ βουλὴν γινώσεται, ὃς πολλάκις καί, ὣν ἐβουλεύσατο, εἰς λήθην ἔρχεται; Προνοεῖται ὁ θεὸς κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ πρόγνωσιν τῶν ἀπάντων. Καὶ δοκεῖ μὲν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσι μὴδὲ τὰ μέλλοντα μὴδὲ τὰ προγεγονότα μὴδὲ πάντα τὰ ἐνεστῶτα ἀνώμαλος ἢ κυβέρνησις αὐτοῦ, ὁμαλὴ δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀγαθὴ καὶ δικαία τῷ ὄντι).²⁹

27 Cf. Titus of Bostra, *Contra Manichaeos*, 1, 1, eds. A. Roman, T.S. Schmidt, P.-H. Pourier, É. Crégheur, and J.H. Declerck, *Titi Bostrensis Contra Manichaeos Libri IV: Graece et Syriace* (CCG, 82), Turnhout, 2013, pp. 9.11-11.23; John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 2.12-13: “...matter, that is evil, was lifeless, unmoved, ugly, abominable darkness, senseless for many ages” (ed. Kotter, p. 352). On the notion of “good” in Manichaeism, see J.K. Coyle, “The Idea of the ‘Good’ in Manichaeism,” in: Idem., *Manichaeism and Its Legacy* (NHMS, 69), Leiden, 2009, pp. 51-64.

28 J.A. Demetracopoulos, “In Search of the Pagan and Christian Sources of John of Damascus’ Theodicy,” in *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, ed. A. Rigo in coll. with P. Ermilov, and M. Trizio (BSBHC, 4), Turnhout, 2012, pp. 50-86 at p. 84.

29 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 77.10-78.4, ed. Kotter, p. 393.

This argument seems to be a borrowing of a similar argument advanced by Maximus the Confessor in defense of the care of providence over particulars:

For if the differences and variations among human beings are great and incomprehensible, as are the differences between one man and another, and even between a man and himself, in ways of life and customs, in opinions, choices, and desires, in their needs, their skills, their knowledge, and pursuits, in the virtually infinite thoughts of their minds, and in all the changes they undergo in all that happens to them in each day and hour (for man is a capricious animal, and rapidly changes according to his needs or the circumstances), then it follows of necessity that providence, which by precognition has comprehended all particulars in their individuality, will appear to be different, manifold, and complex, and adapt itself all the teeming details that exceed the comprehension of man's mind, extending itself to fit each particular thing of thought, down to the most minute movements that occur in the soul and the body.³⁰

John of Damascus adapts the argument of Maximus in a simplified form to make his own point: the changeable mind, thoughts, and desires of a person make it empirically impossible to know the scope and purpose of providence. However, John of Damascus introduces this "common-sense" argument by a stronger, theological, statement which expands the Cappadocian anti-Eunomian doctrine concerning incomprehensibility of the divine substance: we cannot know providence not only empirically but also theoretically since "just as His substance is incomprehensible, so is His will and providence" ("Ὡςπερ γὰρ ἡ οὐσία αὐτοῦ ἀκατάληπτος, οὕτω καὶ ἡ θέλησις καὶ ἡ πρόνοια αὐτοῦ)."³¹

In Basil's above-mentioned homily on theodicy where the citation later used by Theophylact and Germanus appeared as a starting point of the discussion of predetermination, Basil did not mention either Manichaeism or the Manichaean myth on the primordial struggle between the good and evil principles.³² However, he employed the arguments standard for anti-Manichaean polemics, the main being the goodness of creation as the work of a good God, and the non-existing status of evil as a pedagogical remedy of God or privation of goodness resulting from the abuse of free will.

³⁰ *Ambigua* x, 42, 1192D-1193B; ed. and trans. Constanas, vol. 1, p. 316-319.

³¹ John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 77.9-10, ed. Kotter, p. 393.

³² On Basil's anti-Manichaean stance, see F. Decret, "Basile le Grand et la polemique anti-manichéenne en Asie Mineure au i^{ve} siècle," *Studia Patristica*, 17.3, ed. E.A. Livingstone, Oxford, 1982, pp. 1060-1064.

The Manichaean rejection of Biblical anthropomorphisms and the apparent involvement of the God of Israel with evil,³³ as well as highly spiritualizing interpretation of the New Testament gave very little common Scriptural grounds for polemics, even when polemics were not with a real but with a literarily constructed Manichean. Thus, the polemical methodology used by Christian authors, including John of Damascus, largely relied on arguments from “the common principles of thought” (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι) and “natural concepts” (αἱ κατὰ φύσιν ἔννοιαι),³⁴ which might occasionally lead them to the same or similar solutions without necessarily borrowing argumentation from each other. In order to show that John of Damascus was likely to have been inspired by Basil’s Homily in his discussion of evil and providence with the Manichaean opponent, it will not be sufficient to show the overlapping arguments, many of which became standard throughout the long history of anti-Manichaean polemics, but to focus on the form of the arguments, examples used, and the cumulative number of overlapping arguments surfacing in both treatises.

Thus advancing the classical Patristic argument on the non-substantial status of evil as partial or complete privation of good: “Evil is nothing else but loss and voluntary privation of that which was given by God to rational nature (Τὸ δὲ κακὸν οὐδὲν ἕτερόν ἐστιν εἰ μὴ ἀποβολὴ καὶ στέρησις ἐκούσιος τῶν ὑπὸ θεοῦ τῇ λογικῇ φύσει δεδωρημένων),”³⁵ John of Damascus gives an example of the “substantial” existence of the eye and blindness as a “non-substantial” privation of the eye:

... wholeness of body is good, and the loss of one member is partial evil, not a being, but privation of the existing thing. It can be seen or comprehended in the existing being not as existent, but as being lost, as, for

33 S. Stroumsa and G. Stroumsa, “Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics,” p. 42.

34 See Titus of Bostra, *Contra Manichaeos*, I, 1; I, 5, ed. A. Roman et al., p. 11.31; p. 19.15-16. On the use of “common” argumentation in anti-Manichaean polemics, see G.G. Stroumsa, “Titus of Bostra and Alexander of Lycopolis: A Patristic and a Platonist Refutation of Manichaean Dualism,” in: *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. R.T. Wallis et al., (SNAM, 6), Albany, NY, 1991, pp. 339-351, at p. 339-340, and n.19 at p. 347; S. Stroumsa and G. Stroumsa, “Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics,” p. 41. For French translation of Greek and Syriac versions of Titus’ treatise, see *Introd., trans.*, A. Roman, T.S. Schmidt, P.-H. Poirier, *Titus de Bostra. Contre les Manichéens* (CCT, 21), Turnhout, 2015. On Titus’ treatise, see N.A. Pedersen, *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God – A Study of Titus of Bostra’s Contra Manichaeos: The Work’s Sources, Aims and Relation to its Contemporary Theology* (NHMS, 56), Leiden, 2004, and P.-H. Poirier and T. Pettipiece, *Biblical and Manichaean Citations in Titus of Bostra’s Against the Manichaeans: An Annotated Inventory* (IPM, 78), Turnhout, 2017.

35 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 14.7-8, ed. Kotter, p. 358.

example, the eye and vision exist and are, but blindness is not an essence but the destruction of the existing eye. It is contemplated in the whole and existent body not as being but as a privation of the existent eye (καὶ ὥσπερ ἡ ὀλοκληρία τοῦ σώματος καλόν, ἡ δὲ ἐνὸς μέλους ἀποβολὴ μερικὸν κακὸν οὐχ ὑπάρχον, ἀλλ' ὑπάρχοντος στέρησις. Ὁρᾶται δὲ ἡτοι νοεῖται ἐν τῷ ὄντι οὐχ ὡς ὄν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀπογενόμενον, οἷον ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ ἡ ὄρασις ὑπάρχει καὶ ἔστιν, ἡ δὲ τύφλωσις οὐκ ἔστιν οὐσία, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ὑπάρξαντος ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀπώλεια. Θεωρεῖται δὲ ἐν τῷ συνισταμένῳ καὶ ὄντι σώματι οὐχ ὡς ὄν, ἀλλ' ὡς ὑπάρξαντος ὀφθαλμοῦ στέρησις).³⁶

This passage not only reiterates the same argument, but also employs the same example of blindness as privation of vision, given by Basil in his Homily:

For wickedness does not subsist as if it were a living being. Nor do we hold that its essence coexists in another subsistence. For evil is a privation of good. The eye was created, but blindness comes into being following the destruction of eyes (Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ὑφεστῶς, ὥσπερ τι ζῶν, ἡ πονηρία· οὔτε οὐσίαν αὐτῆς ἐνυπόστατον παραστήσαι ἔχομεν. Στέρησις γὰρ ἀγαθοῦ ἐστὶ τὸ κακόν. Ὁφθαλμὸς ἐκτίσθη· τυφλότης δὲ τῇ ἀπωλείᾳ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐπεγένετο).³⁷

36 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 14.14-19, ed. Kotter, p. 358.

37 PG 31, 341 BC, trans. by V.E.F. Harrison, *On the Human Condition: St Basil the Great*, Crestwood, NY, 2005, p. 73. Cf. John of Caesarea, *Syllogismi sanctorum Patrum*, No. 6 (ed. B.J. Bennett, *The Origin of Evil. Didymus the Blind's Contra Manichaeos and Its Debt to Origen's Theology and Exegesis*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Toronto, 1997, p. 329/331 txt/tr) = pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Manichaeos*, No. 3 (ed. Bennett, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 332/333 txt/tr): "Nothing is evil in substance, since evil is a quality. But no quality is a substance. Therefore evil is not a substance (Οὐδὲν κατ' οὐσίαν κακόν, τῷ τὸ κακὸν ποιὸν εἶναι· οὐδὲν δὲ ποιὸν οὐσία· τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐκ οὐσία)." See also Idem., "Didymus the Blind's Knowledge of Manichaeism," in: *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and Its World*, eds. P. Mireeki and J. BeDuhn (NHMS, 50), Leiden, 2001, pp. 38-67. On the use of this argument in John of Caesarea, who, however, applies the example of light and darkness, see B. Bennett, "The Physics of Light, Darkness and Matter in John the Grammarian's *First Homily against the Manichaeans*: Early Byzantine Anti-Manichaean Literature as a Window on Controversies in Later Neoplatonism," in: *Mani in Dublin. Selected Papers from the Seventh International Conference of the International Association of Manichaean Studies in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, 8-12 September 2009*, eds. S.G. Richter, C. Horton, and K. Ohlhafer (NHMS, 88), Leiden, 2015, pp. 19-33 at p. 28.

Another correspondence which we encounter in both treatises is the distinction between seeming evil according to sense-perception,³⁸ consisting of pains and discomforts of the body, and true evil according to reason, which is sin. Thus Basil argues:

Therefore, having learned these things clearly from God, you can distinguish for yourself between the kinds of evil, and know which is real evil, namely sin, whose end is destruction, and what seems evil because it is painful to the senses but has a capacity for good, such as distresses that bring about a cessation of sin, whose fruit is the eternal salvation of souls (Ταῦτα δὴ οὖν εἰδὼς παρὰ Θεοῦ, καὶ διηρημένα ἔχων παρὰ σεαυτῷ τοῦ κακοῦ τὰ εἶδη, καὶ εἰδὼς τί μὲν τὸ ὄντως κακὸν, ὅτι ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἥς τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια· τί δὲ τὸ δοκοῦν μὲν κακὸν διὰ τὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἀλγυνόν, ἀγαθοῦ δὲ δύνανται ἔχον, ὡς αἱ κακώσεις αἱ πρὸς ἐποχὴν τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐπαγόμεναι, ὧν οἱ καρποὶ σωτηρία ψυχῶν αἰώνιος).³⁹

John of Damascus distinguishes between true and seeming evil along very similar lines, extending the opposition between true evil according to reason and false evil according to the senses to goodness, which can be true as obedience to God, and delusive and evil when it takes the form of sensible pleasures:

One should know that both goodness and evil are understood in two ways: goodness in the proper sense is said about that which was given by God Who is good according to nature. <...> But good not in the proper sense but in a figurative sense and customarily is said about that which seems pleasant to our senses and desire, what delights for some time, but later brings bitter fruit, what happens against the law of the Creator and what seems good, yet is not good, but properly evil. And in the same way, evil in the proper sense is and is said about that which happens against the law of the Creator. Evil not in the proper sense, but according to the customary use is said about that which is toilsome and grievous for our senses, that which now brings pain, but later gives the fruit of salvation and of everlasting joy (Χρὴ γὰρ εἰδέναι, ὡς διττῶς λέγεται τὸ τε ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν· ἀγαθὸν γὰρ κυρίως λέγεται τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φύσει ἀγαθοῦ θεοῦ δεδωρημένον. <...> Λέγεται δὲ ἀγαθὸν οὐ κυρίως, ἀλλὰ καταχρηστικῶς καὶ καθ' ἡμετέραν

38 Cf. "what our senses perceive as evil is one thing, while what is evil in its own nature is another (Κακὸν τοίνυν τὸ μὲν ὡς πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν αἴσθησιν, τὸ δὲ ὡς πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν)" (PG 31, 333 A, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 67).

39 PG 31, 341 B, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 62.

συνήθειαν τὸ τῇ αἰσθήσει ἡμῶν καὶ τῇ ἐφέσει φαινόμενον ἡδύ, ὃ πρὸς καιρὸν μὲν τέρπει, ὕστερον δὲ πικρὸν καρπὸν ἀποδίδωσι, παρὰ τὸν νόμον τοῦ κτίσαντος γινόμενον καὶ δοκοῦν ἀγαθὸν εἶναι, ὅπερ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ κυρίως κακόν. Καὶ τὸ κακὸν ὁμοίως· κυρίως μὲν κακὸν ἔστι καὶ λέγεται τὸ παρὰ τὸν νόμον τοῦ κτίσαντος γινόμενον. Λέγεται κακὸν οὐ κυρίως, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν συνήθειαν τὸ καθ' ἡμετέραν αἰσθησιν ἐπίπονον καὶ ἀλγεινόν, ὅπερ πρὸς μὲν τὸ παρὸν ὀδύνας, ὕστερον δὲ καρπὸν σωτηρίας καὶ ἀενάου εὐφροσύνης ἀναδίδωσιν).⁴⁰

The description of the seeming evil in John of Damascus: "...τὸ καθ' ἡμετέραν αἰσθησιν ἐπίπονον καὶ ἀλγεινόν, ὅπερ πρὸς μὲν τὸ παρὸν ὀδύνας, ὕστερον δὲ καρπὸν σωτηρίας καὶ ἀενάου εὐφροσύνης ἀναδίδωσιν" seems to be a close paraphrase of Basil's "διὰ τὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἀλγεινόν, ἀγαθοῦ δὲ δύνανται ἔχον, ὡς αἱ κακώσεις αἱ πρὸς ἐποχὴν τῆς ἀμαρτίας ἐπαγόμεναι, ὧν οἱ καρποὶ σωτηρία ψυχῶν αἰώνιος."

Just as Basil, John of Damascus referred to the final verdict of the creation account that everything which was created was "very good" (Gen. 1: 31).⁴¹ However, in the anti-Manichaean context of the discussion of providence in the end of his treatise, John of Damascus felt it necessary to elaborate on the reasons why the creation was "very good": this goodness was "the best order which preserves for each being that which is according to its nature, and this precisely is virtue, while the disruption of order, that is disorder, is evil (Ἀγαθὸν μὲν γάρ ἐστι τάξις ἀρίστη ἐκάστω τὸ κατὰ φύσιν οἰκεῖον διασφύζουσα – ταυτὸν δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀρετὴ –, κακία δὲ ἡ τῆς τάξεως λύσις εἴτουν ἀταξία)."⁴² The concept of measure and order imposed by God upon all of creation, including material beings, which we have seen in Theophylact and Germanus, must have been used as a polemical tool against the basic Manichaean doctrine correlating evil with matter as "the disorderly movement" (ἄτακτος κίνησις).⁴³

40 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 15.1-15, ed. Kotter, p. 360; a very similar passage is 81.3-11, ed. Kotter, p. 395; cf. 60.1-6, ed. Kotter, p. 379.

41 PG 31, 341 C; John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 14.6, 47.1, ed. Kotter p. 258 and 376.

42 John of Damascus *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 47.12-14, ed. Kotter, p. 377, the same passage is repeated in 81.1-3, ed. Kotter, p. 395. Cf. Basil's "the soul is made evil through a perversion of what is according to nature (ἐκακώθη δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ, παρατραπέισα τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν)" (PG 31, 344 B, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 73).

43 Cf. John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 61.1-2, ed. Kotter, p. 380: "There was, as you say, matter without beginning, unoriginated, in its own borders, eternally disorderly moving (ἀεὶ ἀτάκτως κινουμένη)." For the discussion of the disorderly movement in the *Conversation of John the Orthodox with a Manichaean* and its sources in Titus of Bostra, see B. Bennett, "The Conversation of John the Orthodox with a Manichaean: An Analysis of its Sources and Its Significance for Manichaean Studies," in: *New Light on Manichaeism: Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism*, ed. J.D. BeDuhn (NHMS, 64), Leiden, 2009, pp. 29-44 at pp. 38-39. Titus of Bostra's claim that God put order into

The problem of the discrepancy between the goodness of the original creation and the observable reality is closely related to the figure of the devil as the main actor and instigator of evil-doing. However, in order to remove even the slightest possibility that the devil somehow embodies absolute evil, John of Damascus adopted the old philosophical argument used as early as Titus of Bostra, that substances cannot be contrary to each other, and good and evil are just like white and black colors, which are not substances but qualities existing in a substance.⁴⁴ John argued that the devil was not completely evil since he

creation incorporated the elements of Plato's *Timaeus* (Pedersen, *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God*, pp. 274-275). For the overview of the Manichaean doctrine, see S.N.C. Lieu, "Some Themes in Later Roman Anti-Manichaean Polemics II," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 69 (1986), pp. 235-275. For the list of Patristic anti-Manichaean works, see S.N.C. Lieu, "Some Themes in Later Roman Anti-Manichaean Polemics I," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 68 (1985), pp. 434-472, at pp. 464-469. On Manichaeism in the Roman Empire, see S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2d ed. (WUNT, 63), Tübingen, 1992; M. Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, Urbana and Chicago, 2008. On the anti-Manichaean polemics, see W.W. Klein, *Die Argumentation in den griechisch christlichen Antimanichaica* (SOR, 19), Wiesbaden, 1991; B. Bennett, "Iuxta unum latus erat terra tenebrarum: The Division of Primordial Space in Anti-Manichaean Writers' Descriptions of the Manichaean Cosmogony," in: *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World*, ed. P. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn (NHMS, 50), Leiden, 2001, 68-78; G. Fox, J. Sheldon, S.N.C. Lieu, *Greek and Latin Sources on Manichaean Cosmogony and Ethics* (CFMSS, 6), Turnhout, 2010; S.N.C. Lieu and J. Sheldon, "Simplicius on Manichaean Cosmogony," in: *In Search of Truth: Augustine, Manichaeism and Other Gnosticism, Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty*, eds. J.A. van den Berg et al. (NHMS, 74), Leiden, 2011, pp. 217-228; E. Smagina, "The Manichaean Cosmogonical Myth as a 'Re-written Bible,'" in: *In Search of Truth*, pp. 201-216; eds. I. Gardner, S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 2004, and A.I. Хосроев, *История манихейства (Prolegomena)*. Источники и исследования, St. Petersburg, 2007.

- 44 Titus of Bostra, *Contra Manichaeos*, I, 13, eds. A. Roman et al., pp. 29-35; Pedersen, *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God*, pp. 262-275. Cf. John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 13, ed. Kotter, pp. 357-358; pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, IV, 20-23, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, I. *De divinis nominibus* (PTS, 33), Berlin-New York, 1990, pp. 164-172, esp. p. 165.16-20, p. 168.1-2, p. 171.2-6; pseudo-Didymus, *Contra Manichaeos*, I, 1: "if there are two unoriginate first principles [i.e. good and evil] and these are contraries, then either their opposition is absolute or they have some common attributes. Nothing, however, is regarded as a contrary in an absolute sense; therefore they have common features, such as existence and being substances and whatever else is found to be common to them (ἔχουσιν ἄρα καὶ αὐταὶ κοινὰ, τὸ εἶναι, τὸ οὐσίαι εἶναι καὶ εἴ τι ἕτερον εὐρίσκεται περὶ αὐτὰς κοινόν). The fact that one is good while the other is evil and that one is light while the other is darkness makes them contraries. The fact that they are substances is conceived of as prior to their being good and evil. Their opposition therefore lies not in what they have in common, but rather in what is peculiar to each" (ed. Bennett, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 284/302 txt/tr); the similar argument appears in pseudo-Didymus, *Contra Manichaeos*, II, 8, ed. Bennett, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 286; cf. Didymus, *Contra Manichaeos*, 20.1-3, p. 293, 22.1-3, ed. Bennett, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 294.

still participated in being which was a goodness originating from the good God,⁴⁵ and possessed free will as a rational creature.⁴⁶

Both Basil and John of Damascus addressed the problem of how a good God could create the devil knowing that he would have turned evil, and, accordingly, create the first man, knowing that he would fall. Theodicy and the problem of free will had been correlated already in the early anti-Manichaean polemics,⁴⁷ taking over from anti-dualistic discussions of free will against the Gnostics.⁴⁸ Both authors explained along very similar lines that virtue was a corollary of rationality and free will and it would have not been an act of love on the part of God to create a mechanical tool which could not sin, but by the same token could not excel in virtue. Basil thus explained:

45 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 33-36, ed. Kotter, pp. 372-373.

46 Cf. Basil of Caesarea: "For what reason is the human being evil? Because of his freedom of choice. For what reason is the devil evil? For the same reason: the devil possesses a life endowed with self-determination, and the authority rests in himself either to remain with God or to become estranged from the good. <...> Thus the devil is wicked because he possesses wickedness by free choice, not through a natural opposition to the good ("Πόθεν γάρ πονηρὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος; Ἐκ τῆς οἰκείας αὐτοῦ προαιρέσεως. Πόθεν κακὸς ὁ διάβολος; Ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς αἰτίας, αὐθαίρετον ἔχων καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ζωὴν, καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῇ κειμένην τὴν ἐξουσίαν, ἢ παραμένειν τῷ Θεῷ, ἢ ἀλλοτριωθῆναι τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. <...> Οὕτω πονηρὸς ὁ διάβολος, ἐκ προαιρέσεως ἔχων τὴν πονηρίαν, οὐ φύσις ἀντικειμένη τῷ ἀγαθῷ") (PG 31, 345 D and 348 A, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 76). Speaking about the demons, Serapion of Thmuis states that the free will remains reasonable and incorrupt despite sin (ed. R.P. Casey, *Serapion of Thmuis*. Against the Manichees, *Harvard Theological Studies*, 15, Cambridge, MA, 1931, 29.27-31, p. 45; O. Herbel, *Serapion of Thmuis: Against the Manicheans and Pastoral Letters* (ECS, 14) Strathfield, NSW, 2011, p. 28). For the German translation with extensive introduction, see ed. K. Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis. Echte und unechte Schriften sowie die Zeugnisse des Athanasius und anderer* (PTS, 37), Berlin-New York, 1992.

47 On the philosophical background of the notion of προαίρεσις, see J.M. Rist, "Prohairesis: Proclus, Plotinus, et alii," in: *De Jamblique à Proclus*, ed. H. Doerrie (EACFH, 21), Geneva, 1975, pp. 103-122 and Bennett, *The Origin of Evil*, pp. 176-234.

48 S. Stroumsa and G. Stroumsa, "Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics," pp. 48, 51. On the non-substantial status of evil as the action of unhealthy free will in Serapion of Thmuis, see his *Contra Manichaeos*, 4.4-15, ed. Casey, *Serapion of Thmuis*, p. 31; 19.18-21; p. 38; 20.5-8; p. 38. Cf. Titus of Bostra, *Contra Manichaeos*, 11, 3-4, eds. A. Roman et al., pp. 101-105, where Titus, however, does not draw on the concept of free will but reason as a faculty making a choice between virtue and vice. On the notion of free will and evil in Gregory of Nyssa, see C. Moerschini, "Goodness, Evil and the Free Will of Man in Gregory of Nyssa," in: *Fate, Providence and Moral Responsibility in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought. Studies in Honour of Carlos Steel*, eds. P. d'Hoine and G. Van Riel (AMP, Series 1, 49), Leuven, 2014, pp. 343-356; A.A. Mosshammer, "Non-Being and Evil in Gregory of Nyssa," VC, 44 (1990), pp. 136-167. On the Jewish sources of the doctrine of free will and providence see P.S. Alexander, "Predestination and Free Will in the Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in: *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, eds. J.M.G. Barclay and S. Gathercole (LNTS, 335), London, 2006, pp. 27-49.

... God does not love what is done out of necessity but what is accomplished out of virtue. And virtue comes into being out of free choice and not out of necessity. But free choice depends on what is up to us. And what is up to us is free will. Accordingly, the one who finds fault with the Creator for not fashioning us by nature sinless is no different from one who prefers the nonrational nature to the rational, and what lacks motion and impulse to what has free choice and activity (Καὶ Θεῷ τοίνυν οὐ τὸ ἡναγκασμένον φίλον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐξ ἀρετῆς κατορθούμενον. Ἀρετὴ δὲ ἐκ προαιρέσεως, καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίνεται. Προαίρεσις δὲ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἥρτηται. Τὸ δὲ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον. Ὁ τοίνυν μεμφόμενος τὸν ποιητὴν ὡς μὴ φυσικῶς κατασκευάσαντα ἡμᾶς ἀναμαρτήτους, οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ τὴν ἄλογον φύσιν τῆς λογικῆς προτιμᾷ, καὶ τὴν ἀκίνητον καὶ ἀνόρμητον τῆς προαιρετικῆς καὶ ἐμπράκτου).⁴⁹

In the same manner, John of Damascus argued that rational beings – the devil included – had free will and were ultimately prone to changes as being created or once transformed from non-being into being.⁵⁰ It is remarkable that in addition to the same reasoning, the passages from Basil and John of Damascus also show a great degree of textual conformity. John of Damascus writes that the devil was created free:

... because he acts not out of necessity, for all rational beings are self-determined. What will one use the rational faculty for, if he is not self-determined? How will one become virtuous or good, if he is not self-determined?

49 PG 31, 345 B, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 75.

50 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 31.45-47: "Thus, rational beings are capable of change because they were brought into being from non-being, but they have free will because they are rational (Τὰ οὖν λογικὰ δεκτικὰ μὲν ἐστὶ τροπῆς διὰ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι παραγωγὴν, ἀλλ' αὐτεξούσια διὰ τὸ λογικὰ εἶναι)" (ed. Kotter, p. 370). Cf. John of Damascus *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 5.2-11, ed. Kotter, p. 354; *Expositio fidei*, II, 27.1-7, ed. B. Kotter, *Expositio fidei*, Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos II (PTS, 12), Berlin-New York, 1973, p. 98. Cf. Didymus, *Contra Manichaeos*, 24-26: "He who created the capacity to undertake evil by one's own inclination is not the cause of evil, for God made one to be a rational creature whom he wished to be good of its own purposive choice, having the power to incline toward either good or evil. God wished the latter to be good, choosing the good voluntarily, for no created thing can be good involuntarily: instead, all who are good are so voluntarily. It was necessary then that whoever would be good by their own purposive choice should possess an ability which is the same as an aptitude for the acquisition of the good. And it followed that what is capable of good is also capable of evil. <...> Thus, even if God created the substance which is called the 'Devil,' he did not make it a devil but made it capable of virtue, so that it might possess virtue, and capable of vice, so that it might abstain from vice" (Bennett, *Origin of Evil*, pp. 295-296/317-318 txt/tr).

For it is not virtue, which happens under duress or according to the natural necessity; this is why irrational beings have no virtue (Αὐτεξούσιον δέ, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης· πᾶν γὰρ λογικὸν αὐτεξούσιον. Εἰς τί γὰρ τῷ λογικῷ χρήσεται μὴ ὦν αὐτεξούσιος; "Ἡ πῶς ἐν ἀρετῇ γενήσεται ἡ ἀγαθὸς ἔσται μὴ ὦν αὐτεξούσιος; Τὸ γὰρ βίᾳ γινόμενον ἢ ἀνάγκῃ φύσεως οὐκ ἀρετὴ· ὅθεν οὐδὲ ἔχει ἀρετὴν τὰ ἄλογα).⁵¹

In another passage John of Damascus addressed the same problem using the simile of a physician. This simile could have been chosen deliberately for countering the Manichaean doctrine of Mani as a true physical and spiritual healer.⁵² God knows the future, and He created the devil-to-be good, even though He knew that he would abuse his free choice, become evil, and inflict punishment upon himself, always tortured by the unquenchable desire for evil and sin. John of Damascus explains that God acted just as a doctor who foresees the future disease but is not its cause, since the disease was caused by other reasons, and in fact the disease determines the foreknowledge of the doctor due to his skill and knowledge.⁵³

John Demetracopoulos has shown that John of Damascus borrowed the simile of a physician who predicts but is not accountable for the disease, from Ammonius and Stephanus of Alexandria.⁵⁴ This simile, albeit not in the form of literal borrowing, also occurs in Basil's Homily, and if indeed John of Damascus used the Homily, as we argue, it might have inspired him to employ the simile in a form which better suited his purposes. The simile of the physician from Basil's Homily is rather simple: since people are grateful to the doctor even though he applies displeasing procedures, rightly placing the cause of the suffering in the disease and not in the doctor, so by the same token they should not put the blame on God for their sufferings which have the same remedial purpose, just not for the body but for the soul.⁵⁵ John of Damascus, however,

51 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 69.17-20, ed. Kotter, p. 388. However, in the *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 75.13-15, John of Damascus qualified that after the fall, demons are incapable of changing (ed. Kotter, p. 391).

52 The motifs of sickness and healing permeate various Manichaean sources. As J.K. Coyle observed, this makes it possible "to permit at least one generalization, namely, that the condition of the soul in the material body is usually described in Manichaeism as one of pain, sickness or wounding" (J.K. Coyle, "Healing and the 'Physician' in Manichaeism," in: Idem., *Manichaeism and Its Legacy* (NHMS, 69), Leiden, 2009, pp. 101-121 at p. 102).

53 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 37.11-14, ed. Kotter, p. 374; 79.9-11, ed. Kotter, p. 394.

54 Demetracopoulos, "In Search of the Pagan and Christian Sources," pp. 69-74.

55 "And you do not accuse physicians of any wrong in his cuttings and burnings and complete mutilations of the body; but rather you probably pay him money and you call him a

embedded the simile into his vision of providence based on the philosophical framework of Ammonius' discussion of knowledge, cause and action, derived from Aristotle's *De interpretatione*⁵⁶ via the possible mediation of Origen and Stephanus of Alexandria, who likened the doctor's skill of prognosis to divine foreknowledge.⁵⁷ God in His foreknowledge is not the cause of the evils of this world, but it is the other way around: it is the abuse of free will resulting in sins and misfortunes, which is the cause of God's foreknowledge and remedial actions.

An important point in John of Damascus' doctrine of providence was that divine foreknowledge encompasses everything yet God wills to act not on the causes of human actions which are in the realm of free will, but on the results of these actions,⁵⁸ transforming even the outcomes of evil human actions into something good:

God knows evil as good, as He knows fornication as yearning, and friendship, and unity.⁵⁹ And with Him even the causes of evil are the forces doing good things – the chosen vessels (cf. Acts 9:15) were often born from fornication (Οἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κακὸν ὡς ἀγαθόν, ὥσπερ τὴν πορνείαν οἶδεν ὡς ἔφεσιν καὶ φιλίαν καὶ ἔνωσιν. Καὶ παρ' αὐτῷ καὶ αἱ αἰτίαι τῶν κακῶν δυνάμεις ἀγαθοποιοί· πολάκις ἐκ πορνείας γεγέννηται σκεύη ἐκλογῆς).⁶⁰

In this passage John of Damascus seems to elaborate on a similar point from Basil's Homily, where Basil explains the Scriptural passages ascribing the involvement of God with evil:

savior, since he has produced illness in a small part of the body to prevent the suffering from spreading throughout the whole of it... And further, one must understand that there are moderate and curable illnesses of human beings, which are helped by care, but whenever the disease is shown to be too severe for treatment, it becomes necessary to cut off the part that has become useless, so that the illness does not continue and proceed to spread into the vital organs. Therefore, as the physician is not the cause of the surgery or the cautery, but the illness is, so also, as the obliteration of cities has its source in the excess of those who have sinned, God is acquitted of all blame" (PG 31, 333 BD, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 68).

56 Demetracopoulos, "In Search of the Pagan and Christian Sources," pp. 62-69.

57 Ibid., pp. 71-74.

58 Cf. John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 79.1-9, ed. Kotter, p. 394; *Expositio fidei*, 11, 30.2-4, ed. Kotter, p. 103. On free will in John of Damascus, see M. Frede, "John of Damascus on Free Will," in: *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou, Oxford, 2002, pp. 63-95.

59 Cf. pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, IV, 20.1-5, ed. Suchla, p. 167.

60 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 48.1-3, ed. Kotter, p. 377.

... he creates evils,⁶¹ that is, he transforms them and brings improvement, so that they cease to be evils and participate in the nature of good (κτίζει δὲ κακά· τουτέστι, μετακοσμεῖ αὐτὰ καὶ εἰς βελτίωσιν ἄγει· ὥστε, ἀποθέμενα τὸ εἶναι κακά, τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν μεταλαβεῖν).⁶²

In another passage John of Damascus cited the Scriptural references to the vessel as a metaphor for a person having a specific capacity, addressing the goodness of God the Creator and human power to use free will for turning himself into a “vessel of honor”:

Goodness is that, whatever He wants, “and the potter has power to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor” (Rom. 9: 21). He is the One who creates both righteous and sinners, but it is not Him who makes them righteous or sinners, honorable or dishonorable, for the Apostle thus says in the Epistle to Timothy, adding after enumerating the evils: “Whoever therefore purges himself from these, will be a vessel unto honor” (2 Tim. 2: 21). Since we are self-determined, we have the power to purge ourselves from the most shameful passions, or defile ourselves (“Ὁ γὰρ θέλει, τοῦτό ἐστιν ἀγαθόν· “Καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ κεραμεὺς ποιῆσαι ὁ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν σκευὸς, ὁ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν.” Αὐτὸς μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς τε δικαίους καὶ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς – ἀλλ’ οὐκ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ αὐτοὺς δικαίους ἢ ἁμαρτωλοὺς – ἢ τιμίους ἢ ἀτίμους· φησὶ γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς ἀπόστολος ἐν τῇ πρὸς Τιμόθεον ἐπιστολῇ, προαριθμήσας τὰς κακίας, ἐπάγει λέγων· “Ὅστις οὖν ἐκκαθάρῃ ἑαυτὸν ἐκ τούτων, γέγονε σκευὸς ἐκλογῆς.” Αὐτεξούσιοι γὰρ γενόμενοι ἐξουσίαν ἔχομεν καθάραι ἑαυτοὺς ἐκ τῶν αἰσχρίστων παθῶν καὶ μολύναι ἑαυτούς).⁶³

It seems hardly to be a coincidence that both John of Damascus and Basil essentially spoke about the same idea of free will leading to a certain spiritual disposition. They even referred to two identical passages from two Epistles. By citing adjacent verses to those used by Basil, John of Damascus seems to follow up on the text and examples of Basil who wrote:

... when the Apostles speaks of “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” (Rom 9: 22), let us not imagine that there is a kind of wicked preparation of Pharaoh, for then it would be more just to transfer the causality

61 Basil refers here to the verse “There are not evils in the city which the Lord did not make” (Am. 3: 6) from the beginning of the section.

62 PG 31, 336 B, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 69.

63 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 72.6-13, ed. Kotter, p. 390.

to the one preparing him. Rather, when you hear “vessel,” understand that each of us has been made for something useful. It is in a big house, where some vessels are of gold, some of silver, some of earthenware, and some of wood (2 Tim. 2: 20). The free choice of us provides the likeness in the material. The vessel of gold is the one who is pure in character and without guile, while the silver is inferior in merits to that one. The earthenware is one earthly minded and fit to be crushed, and the wood is one prone to be defiled through sin and become fuel for eternal fire.⁶⁴

If John of Damascus knew Basil's Homily, and thoroughly adapted and reworked its main points relating to the problems of evil, divine foreknowledge, and free will, we may try to locate a passage from the *Dialogue against the Manichees* inspired by the following statement of Basil which also became the starting point for the discussion of predetermination in Theophylact and Germanus:

Death is brought to those whose time of life is completed; from the beginning the just judgment of God has appointed this for each person (θάνατοι δὲ ἐπάγονται, τῶν ὁρῶν τῆς ζωῆς πληρωθέντων, οὓς ἐξ ἀρχῆς περὶ ἕκαστον ἔπηξεν ἡ δικαία τοῦ Θεοῦ κρίσις, πόρρωθεν τὸ περὶ ἕκαστον ἡμῶν συμφέρον προβλεπομένου).⁶⁵

We can indeed find such a passage at the end of the *Dialogue*. It has all key elements of Basil's passage: terms of human life and divine judgment which foreknows the destiny of the person from before the ages. However, John of Damascus added an important component to Basil's idea. As the uncreated first principle, God is immutable and therefore his preexisting judgment is also steadfast and unchangeable:

64 "Ὡστε, κὰν λέγῃ ποτὲ ὁ Ἀπόστολος, 'Σκευὴ ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν,' μὴ κατασκευήν τινα πονηράν οἰηθῶμεν εἶναι τοῦ Φαραῶ (οὕτω γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸν κατασκευάσαντα δικαιότερον ἡ αἰτία μετενεχθήσεται). ἀλλ' ὅταν ἀκούσῃς 'σκευὴ,' νόει, ὅτι πρὸς τι χρησίμουν ἕκαστος ἡμῶν πεποιήται. Καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ οἰκίᾳ τὸ μὲν τοι χρυσοῦν ἐστὶ σκευὸς, τὸ δὲ ἀργυροῦν, τὸ δὲ ὀστράκινον, τὸ δὲ ξύλινον (τῆς προαιρέσεως ἑκάστου τὴν πρὸς τὰς ὕλας ὁμοιότητα παρεχομένης· καὶ χρυσοῦν μὲν ἐστὶ σκευὸς ὁ καθαρὸς τὸν τρόπον καὶ ἄδολος· ἀργυροῦν δὲ, ὁ ὑποδεέστερος ἐκείνου κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν· ὀστράκινον δὲ, ὁ τὰ γήινα φρονῶν καὶ πρὸς συντριβὴν ἐπιτήδειος· καὶ ξύλινον, ὁ εὐκόλως διὰ τῆς ἀμαρτίας καταρρύπνουμενος καὶ ὕλη γινόμενος τῷ αἰωνίῳ πυρί) οὕτω καὶ ὀργῆς σκευὸς, ὁ πᾶσαν τὴν τοῦ διαβόλου ἐνέργειαν, ὥσπερ ἀγγεῖον, χωρήσας, καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐγγενομένην αὐτῷ ἐκ τῆς φθορᾶς δυσωδίαν οὐκέτι ἀχθῆναι πρὸς χρήσιν δυνάμενος, ἀλλ' ἀφανισμοῦ μόνου καὶ ἀπωλείας ἄξιος (PG 31, 340 BC, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, pp. 71-72).

65 PG 31, 333 B, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, p. 68.

We will thus know that God has predetermined everything according to His foreknowledge. The divinity is unchangeable, and He judges not from knowledge but from foreknowledge. Thus, if He judges and determines on a daily basis, and learns daily of the things which happen and, as some say, repents and adds years of life, they do not know what they are saying. For if He repents and adds, both His will and knowledge are changeable, and this is unworthy of God ("Ὅτι δὲ προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα κατὰ τὴν πρόγνωσιν αὐτοῦ, οὕτως γνωσόμεθα. Ἀτρεπτον τὸ θεῖον καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐπιγνώσεως κρίνον, ἀλλ' ἐκ προγνώσεως. Εἰ οὖν καθ' ἡμέραν κρίνει καὶ ὀρίζει, καθ' ἡμέραν γινώσκει τὸ γινόμενον καὶ, ὥς τινές φασι, καὶ μεταμελεῖται καὶ προστίθῃσιν ἔτη ζωῆς, μὴ εἰδόντες, τί φασιν. Εἰ γὰρ μεταμελεῖται καὶ προστίθῃσι, τρεπτόν ἔχει καὶ τὸ θέλημα καὶ τὴν γνώσιν, καὶ τοῦτο ἀνάξιον τοῦ θεοῦ)."⁶⁶

In his recent article on the predestined terms of life in the Byzantine authors, Dirk Krausmüller has gathered ample evidence on the persistence of the debate on the fixed or changeable terms of life well into the Middle Byzantine period. He aptly connected the debate on the terms of life with the debates on the efficacy of the saints' prayers and intercession and concluded that the followers of the opposing views "were related to particular socio-political ideals" modeling their views on either strong centralized imperial power with fixed laws or loose central administration whose decisions were susceptible to the influences from the periphery, linking the former group with central bureaucrats, and the latter group with "people who represented particularistic interests."⁶⁷

66 John of Damascus, *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, 80.1-6, ed. Kotter, pp. 394-395. Cf. John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, 11, 30.1-8, ed. Kotter, p. 103. Sharing the common point of departure and following a similar trajectory of tradition, Germanus arrives at a very similar position: cf. "For he himself knows all things before they come about, knows them from everlasting and not just shortly before. He does not guess at the future from evidence but by a divine and ineffable power apprehends the outcome of what is to be and foresees future things as it were before his eyes. And thus in consonance with what he has foreseen he also predetermines his own judgments upon them. For human beings apply the relevant judgments after the issues of events, but God observes the future as though it were already present, and in accordance with this he divines infallibly the value appropriate to each person, or rather the lot advantageous for him, whether in extension of life or in smallness and contraction of his time of living; for the foreknowledge manifested in his case is not falsified in any particular whatever, even the slightest, but by his transcendent power consists of a cognisance accurate to the utmost degree" (eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, pp. 24.28-26.12/pp. 25, 27 txt/tr). In his dialogue, Germanus also emphasizes not temporal and sequential foreknowledge, but simultaneous and whole (eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, p. 54.21).

67 D. Krausmüller, "Affirming Divine Providence and Limiting the Powers of Saints: The

Krausmüller is absolutely right that “the real issue was how one should conceptualise the Christian God.”⁶⁸ However, it may be suggested that in addition to the social-political dimension, which in this case seems to be too clear-cut and simplistic, the differences in conceptualizing God’s providence can give us something more valuable – a glimpse into the inner worldview and modes of decision making by the proponents of both groups or their systems of *mentalization*, if we apply the modern psychological concept to varying attitudes towards predetermination of human life.

Mentalization or reflective functioning is the capacity to perceive and interpret human behavior “in terms of intentional mental states, e.g. needs, desires, feelings, beliefs, goals, and reasons”⁶⁹ and see the behaviors of significant others in terms of underlying psychological motivations, thoughts, feelings, and intentions.⁷⁰ Mentalization is especially important as a resilience tool in case of trauma and adversity.⁷¹ Adversity and stress hamper “reflective mentalization” and become traumatic when they are accompanied by the feeling that one’s mind is alone. In regular circumstances an accessible other mind provides the social referencing which makes it possible to frame a frightening and otherwise overwhelming experience. Mentalizing capacity is an acquired skill which originates from interacting with a caregiver who is capable of accurate

Byzantine Debate about the Term of Life (6th–11th Centuries),” *Scr*, 14 (2018), pp. 392–433 at p. 433.

68 Ibid., p. 400.

69 P. Fonagy, G. Gergely, and M. Target, “The Parent-Infant Dyad and the Construction of the Subjective Self,” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48, (2007), pp. 288–328 at p. 288. On various aspects of mentalization, see J.G. Allen, P. Fonagy, *The Handbook of Mentalization-Based Treatment*, Hoboken, NJ, 2006; *Mentalization: Theoretical Considerations, Research Findings, and Clinical Implications*, ed. F.N. Busch (Psychoanalytic Inquiry Book Series, 29), Hoboken, NJ, 2008; J.G. Allen, P. Fonagy, and A. Bateman, *Mentalizing in Clinical Practice*, 2008; *Handbook of Mentalizing in Mental Health Practice*, eds. A.W. Bateman and P. Fonagy, Washington, D.C., 2012; R. Liljenfors and L.-G. Lundh, “Mentalization and Intersubjectivity: Towards a Theoretical Integration,” *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 32.1 (2015), pp. 36–60; D. Bevington, P. Fuggle, L. Cracknell, and P. Fonagy, *Adaptive Mentalization-Based Integrative Treatment. A Guide for Teams to Develop Systems of Care*, Oxford, 2017, and E. Jurist, *Minding Emotions: Cultivating Mentalization in Psychotherapy*, New York, 2018.

70 P. Fonagy, G. Gergely, E. Jurist, and M. Target, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization and the Development of the Self*, New York, 2002.

71 Bateman and Fonagy, *Mentalization-Based Treatment for Personality Disorders*, p. 124. See also P. Fonagy, M. Steele, H. Steele, A. Higgitt, and M. Target, “The Emanuel Miller Memorial Lecture 1992. Theory and Practice of Resilience,” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 35 (1994), pp. 231–257. On the psychological aspects of trauma, see S. Fowler, *The Relationship between Traumatic Events and Psychological Symptomatology and the Moderating Role of Mentalization*, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2016, <<https://digitalcommons.georgia-southern.edu/etd/1440>>, accessed December 26, 2018.

“reading” the intentions of the person under his care, does not overwhelm him, and helps him to develop affect regulation, sense of mind, and self-reflection. In simple terms, mentalization is the capacity for finding logic and meaning (λόγος as the Byzantines would call it) in the surrounding world and occurring events,⁷² and understanding the inner emotional responses to such events in yourself and others from a rational perspective.

No doubt, an average Byzantine would face what we call “traumatic experiences” such as natural disasters, war conflicts, diseases and deaths of those close to him much more frequently than our average contemporary. However, the skill of reflective functioning was also planted in Byzantines not only through parental care as is the case today but also through Christian practices such as regular confession, prayer, awareness of one’s passions, and especially ascetic training of watching over one’s thoughts and inclinations, measuring one’s actions in accordance with the “true goal” – salvation and deification, and relativizing the value of transitory earthly goods such as wealth or health against the universal divine plan of salvation of the immortal soul and acquiring virtue by each human being. We do not choose our parents, who might or might not give us the behavioral patterns of mentalization for imitation, but for a Byzantine believer such patterns could have also been given by their spiritual fathers, the exemplary figures of sacred history like Prophet David, or even God Himself revealing His plan of salvation in the Bible and spiritual literature, harmonizing and explaining the seeming contradictions and discrepancies of God’s words and actions.⁷³

72 S.A. Appelbaum defines psychological mindedness as a person’s “ability to see relationships among thoughts, feelings, and actions, with the goal of learning the meanings and causes of his experience and behavior” (S.A. Appelbaum, “Psychological-Mindedness: Word, Concept and Essence,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 54(1) (1973), pp. 35-46 at p. 36).

73 On parenting and childhood in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, see: eds. C. Laes and V. Vuolanto, *Children and Everyday Life in the Roman and Late Antique World*, London–New York, 2017; V. Vuolanto, *Children and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: Continuity, Family Dynamics and the Rise of Christianity*, Farnham, 2015; according to Blake Leyerle, parents in Late Antiquity did love their children, yet did not have close relationships with them “owing to the use of household slaves” (B. Leyerle, “Appealing to Children,” *J ECS*, 5 (1997), pp. 243-270 at pp. 245, 254-255); B. Shaw, “The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine,” *Past and Present*, 115 (1987), pp. 3-51; S. Harvey, “Sacred Bonding: Mothers and Daughters in Early Syriac Hagiography,” *J ECS*, 4 (1996), pp. 27-56; ed. H. Moxnes, *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, London, 1997; G. Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity*, New York, 1999; D. O’Roark, “Parenthood in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of Chrysostom,” *GRBS*, 40 (1999), pp. 53-81, and eds. A. Papaconstantinou and A.-M. Talbot, *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium*, Washington, D.C.–Cambridge, MA, 2009.

Basil of Caesarea started the Homily mentioned above with a mosaic of Psalm citations describing the successful and exemplary mentalization by Prophet David, and contrasting it to failed mentalization of others in response to similar hardships:

There are many kinds of teaching shown us through the holy singer David by the Spirit who acts in him. For at one time, as the prophet describes to us in full his own sufferings, and how he bears nobly the things befalling him, through his own example he leaves us a most manifest teaching of patient endurance, as when he says, "Lord why have they multiplied who afflict me?" At another time he commends the great goodness of God and the swiftness of his help, which is granted to those who truly seek him, saying, "When I called, the God of my justice heard me; the words uttered by the prophet have the same meaning, which say, "When you are speaking, he will say, 'Behold, I am with you'". That is, he did not call beforehand, and God's hearing anticipated the aim of the invocation. Again, offering supplications to God and entreaties, he teaches us in what manner it is proper for those who are in sin to propitiate God: "Lord, do not reprove me in your anger, nor punish me in your wrath." And in the twelfth Psalm he points out a certain lengthening of temptation in the words that say, "How long, Lord, will you forget me to the end?" Through this whole psalm he teaches us not to be downcast in affliction, that the amount of torment brought upon each to prove him is proportionate to the faith present in him. Then when he has said, "How long Lord, will you forget me to the end?" and, "How long will you turn away your face from me?", straightway he passes to the evil of the atheists. When one of the little things in life gives offense to them, not bearing the more troublesome circumstances, straightway they become doubtful in their minds about whether there is a God who is attentive to things in this world, whether he watches over each person's concerns, whether he distributes to each the things of which he is worthy. Then when they truly endure ill-advised conditions for a long time, they confirm in themselves the evil belief, and they declare in their hearts that there is no God... Moreover, as this enters into his mind, he then moves freely through every sin. For if there is no overseer, if there is nobody who repays each according to the merit of his actions, what prevents oppression of the poor, murder of orphans, killing of widows and strangers, daring to do every profane practice, wallowing in unclean and abominable passions and all bestial desires?⁷⁴

74 PG 31, 329 AC, trans. Harrison, *On the Human Condition*, pp. 65-66.

The dynamics of failed mentalization described by Basil – uncontrolled affect, frustration, depression, and irrational, affect-based behavior – well fits the development of the clinical psychopathology in modern patients with borderline personality disorder and the accompanied dysfunctional mentalizing who may slip into non-mentalizing modes, exhibiting inability to control their affects, trust, and place actions in perspective of their consequences, committing substantial errors in interpreting others' intentions which causes conflicts and problematic relationships, showing inability to cope with stress, and exhibiting impulsive behavior.⁷⁵

Mentalization is about the relationship with another. The recurrent discussion of the problems of providence, predetermination, and free will in Patristic authors can thus be viewed as attempts at mentalizing and “tuning up” their personal relationship with God based on the concepts derived from their upbringing or spiritual tradition, Scripture, and mystical experience.⁷⁶ Yet, even successful mentalization in this area could follow two models. The first of them was the “anthropomorphic” view of God as a mighty friend, “catching up” with a human’s free self-will and correcting continuous mistakes and misdeeds until the person is put on the right spiritual track or until the point of frustration when the human life is finally taken away, without predetermined terms of life, but rather with life expanded or reduced “in a real-time-mode” depending on the spiritual constitution of the person.⁷⁷

The second view, propagated by both Germanus and John of Damascus envisioned God as an artist painting a beautiful canvas of human and sacred history, which He had envisioned before the ages but is executing in time, offering the best scenario at every moment of life for every human being, steadfast in His promises and willingly withdrawing his power of action from free human will, yet mastering the circumstances of each human life to make it possible to exercise free will in accordance with His preexisting and unchangeable divine plan and transforming the seeming evil which resulted from the misuses of the human will “from the outside” and the ensuing tribulations, misfortunes, and diseases into beneficial remedies of salvation. For both authors, divine foreknowledge did not remove free will from the picture thus turning the knowledge of human actions into fate. Evil people would not be found worthy of

75 See A. Bateman and P. Fonagy, *Mentalization-Based Treatment for Personality Disorders: A Practical Guide*, New York, 2016.

76 Thus Stephen Grimm argues that the experience of ordinary Christians can also be considered mystical since it involves “an element of direct encounter and union with God” (S. Grimm, “The Logic of Mysticism,” *European Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 7(2) (2015), pp. 109-123).

77 For the overview of the sources, see Krausmüller, “Affirming Divine Providence,” pp. 392-433.

award just fulfilling the predestined terms, since it is intent, not outcome, which is found praiseworthy or reproachable by God.⁷⁸ Providence and free will coincide in the case when the person acts in accordance with the universal striving for the truly good or virtue, embedded by God in creation which was originally and essentially “very good” (Gen 1: 31).

In this model God appears not as an anthropomorphic helper, but before and beyond the created time, holding the universe as if in the palm of his hand. Such a model would be naturally preferred for literate thinkers with a wide scope of thought, well-versed in the Scripture and its exegetical harmonization in the Patristic tradition, and having a holistic view of God, creation, and sacred history.

Abbreviations from the article in addition to abbreviation list from *Scrinium* (2018)

AM	Arethusa Monographs
AMP	Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
BSBHC	Byzantios. Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization
CCT	Corpus Christianorum in Translation
CFMAM	Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum. Analecta Manichaica
CFMSS	Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum, Series Subsidia
EACFH	Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique de la Fondation Hardt
IHT	Islamic History and Thought
SNAM	Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern
SOR	Studies in Oriental Religions
SPh	Smaragdus Philocalias
TSEC	Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity

78 Cf. “... the more than infinite wisdom and goodness of God allows the foul play to go forward for the advantage of the victims, as has been said before, the incomprehensibility of the divine judgments having been everywhere spread before our eyes. It is then the mind and the disposition that is examined. It is the doer’s aim which either crowns or convicts him” (eds. Garton and Westerink, *Germanus*, p. 64.22-27/p. 65 txt/tr). Cf. Titus of Bostra, *Contra Manichaeos*, I, 34, eds. A. Roman et al., p. 85.39-45.