

Augustine

Augustine of Hippo (modern day Algeria) (354–430) was a Christian bishop and philosopher. His philosophical training was limited, but he was strongly influenced by the ancient philosophers he had read (especially Cicero and certain Neoplatonic writers) and synthesised classical (especially Platonic) thought with Christian belief. He was a prolific writer and his works were hugely influential upon the Church and later thinkers. Below are extracts from his work *On Free Choice (De Libero Arbitrio)*, written between 388 and 395, in which he examines why there is evil in the world and discusses how human freedom is compatible with God's foreknowledge. The translation is a modified form of that offered by P. King, *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will* (CUP, 2010).

On Free Choice (*De Libero Arbitrio*)

Book 1

[1.1.1] **EVODIUS:** Tell me, please, whether God is not the author of evil (*auctor mali*).

AUGUSTINE: I will tell you if you make it plain what sort of evil you are asking about. We tend to call something evil in two ways: firstly, when someone has done evil; secondly, when someone has suffered something evil.

EVODIUS: I want to know about both.

AUGUSTINE: If you know or believe that God is good — it is not allowed to think otherwise — then God does not do evil. However, if we admit that God is just — for you see, denying that is sacrilege — then God rewards the good. Equally, God gives punishments to those who are evil, and these punishments are evils to those who suffer them. Accordingly, if no one suffers penalties unjustly — which we must believe since we believe that this universe is governed by divine providence — then God is in no way the author of evils of one sort [i.e. when someone has done evil], but he is the author of evils of the other sort [i.e. when someone has suffered something evil].

EVODIUS: Then is there some other origin of that evil we have found not to come from God?

AUGUSTINE: Of course! Evil could not occur without an author. But if you ask *who* the author is, no answer can be given, for there is not just a single author – rather, each evil person is the author of their evildoing. If you doubt this, attend to what was said earlier about evildoings being redressed by God's justice. It would not be just to redress them unless they were done willingly (*nisi fierent voluntate*).

[...]

[1.2.4] **EVODIUS:** Very well, since you have forced me to admit that we do not learn to do evil, tell me: why do we do evil? (*dic mihi unde male faciamus*).

AUGUSTINE: You are raising a question which greatly troubled me in my youth. Worn out by it, it pushed me towards heretics and lay me low. I was deeply hurt by that fall and crushed under so many empty fables that if the love of discovering the truth had not succeeded in

requesting and receiving divine help for me, I would not have been able to escape from there and enjoy respite, recovering my earlier freedom of inquiry. And since so much was done to free me from that question, I shall guide you down the path I used to escape. God will be at hand and make us understand what we have come to believe. You see, we are well aware that this course is prescribed by the prophet, who said: “Unless you believe you shall not understand” (*nisi credideritis, non intellegitis*) [Isaiah 7:9]. We believe that everything there is comes from the one God, but that God is not the author of sins. But it troubles the soul. If sins come from the souls that God created, and those souls come from God, how is it that sins are not almost immediately traced back to God?

[1.2.5] **EVODIUS:** What you have now plainly stated is what troubles my thoughts and what has pushed and pulled me into this inquiry.

AUGUSTINE: Take heart and believe what you believe. There is no better belief, even if the reason why is hidden. Thinking the best of God is surely the truest beginning of piety and there isn't anyone who thinks the best of God without believing that he is: omnipotent; not changeable in even the smallest detail; the Creator of all good things; Who is more excellent than they are; and the most just Ruler of all He has created. Nor does God require the assistance of any nature in his creating – as though He were not sufficiently powerful all by Himself! It follows that God created all things from nothing. Yet out of Himself He did not create the one whom we call the only Son of God, but rather generated him as equal to Himself. When we try to describe the Son of God more plainly we call him “the power of God and the wisdom of God” [1 Corinthians 1:24]; through which He made everything that was made from nothing. Now that these points have been settled, let us try with God's help to obtain understanding of the problem you posed, as follows.

[1.3.6] You are in fact asking why it is we do evil (*quaeris certe unde male faciamus*). Accordingly, we should first discuss what it is to *do* evil (*quid sit male facere*). State what seems to you to be the case concerning this issue. If you cannot express it all with a few words, then at least acquaint me with your view by calling to mind some particular evil acts.

EVODIUS: Adultery, murder, and sacrilege — not to mention others that time and memory will not allow me to list. Is there anyone to whom these deeds do not seem evil?

AUGUSTINE: Then tell me first of all why you think it is evil to commit adultery. Is it because the law forbids it?

EVODIUS: It is not evil because it is forbidden by the law. Instead, it is forbidden by the law because it is evil.

AUGUSTINE: What if someone were to exaggerate the delights of adultery, pressing us insistently why we judge it to be evil and worthy of condemnation? Do you think that people who now want to understand, and not merely to believe, should take cover in the authority of the law? For my part I believe as you do. I resolutely believe that adultery is evil, and I proclaim that all societies ought to believe so. But now we are trying to know and establish most firmly through understanding what we have already accepted on faith. So think it over as carefully as you can, and tell me the reason by which you know that adultery is something evil.

EVODIUS: I know that it is evil because I would be unwilling to tolerate it in the case of my wife. Anyone who does to another what he is not willing to have happen to himself is undoubtedly doing something evil.

AUGUSTINE: What if someone's lust (*libido*) leads him to offer his wife to another, freely tolerating her being violated by him, and in turn desiring to have equal license with the other man's wife? Does he then seem to you to have done nothing evil?

EVODIUS: On the contrary, a great evil!

AUGUSTINE: But he does not sin according to your rule, since he does not do what he himself is unwilling to tolerate. Accordingly, you should look for something else to prove that adultery is evil.

[...]

[1.3.7] **AUGUSTINE:** Then perhaps lust is the evil in adultery, and you will run into difficulties as long as you are looking for evil in the outward visible deed. Now to understand that lust is the evil in adultery, consider the following. If a man does not have the opportunity to sleep with someone else's wife but it is plain somehow that he wants to do so, and that he is going to do so should the opportunity arise, he is no less guilty than if he were caught in the act.

EVODIUS: Nothing could be more obvious. Now I see that there is no need for a long discussion to persuade me about murder, sacrilege, and in fact all other sins. It is clear now that nothing but lust dominates in every kind of evildoing.

[...]

[1.15.33] **AUGUSTINE:** Hence the same things are used in a good manner by one person and in an evil manner by another. The person who uses them in an evil manner holds fast to them with love and is tangled up with them. That is to say, he is controlled by things that he ought to control, and, in setting them up as goods for himself that need to be put in order and treated properly, he holds himself back from the [true] good. However, the person who uses them rightly shows that they are goods, but not his own goods, for they do not make him good or better. Instead, they become good or better due to him. Hence he does not attach himself to them with love. Nor does he make them like the limbs of his soul (*animus*) (which happens through loving them), so that when they start to be cut off again he is not ravaged by pain and corruption. Rather, he is completely above them, possessing and governing them when there is need; he is ready to lose them, and more ready not to have them. Since this is how things are, then, do you think we should censure silver and gold because of greedy men, food because of gluttons, wine because of drunkards, attractive women because of fornicators and adulterers, and so on? Especially since you recognize that the physician makes good use of fire whereas the poisoner makes evil use of bread!

EVODIUS: You are absolutely right that the things themselves should not be blamed, but rather the people who use them in an evil manner.

[1.16.34] **AUGUSTINE:** Correct. We have now begun to see, I think, the power of eternal law, and to discover how far temporal law can extend in redress. We have also explicitly and adequately distinguished two kinds of things, the eternal and the temporal, and again two kinds of people: some who follow and take delight in eternal things, and others who follow and take delight in temporal things. We have established that what each person elects to pursue and embrace is located in the will, and that the mind (*mens*) is not thrown down from its stronghold of dominance, and from the right order, by anything but the will. It is also clear that when a person uses something in an evil manner, the thing should not be blamed, but rather the person using it in that evil manner. Let us return then, if you please, to the question posed at the beginning of our discussion, and see whether it has been solved. We set out to investigate what it is to do evil, and everything we have said we said to this end. As a result, we are now ready to turn our attention to consider whether evildoing is anything other than pursuing temporal things and whatever is perceived through the body (*temporalia et quaeque per corpus hominis partem vilissimam sentiuntur, et nunquam esse certa possunt*) (the least valuable part of a human being), which can never be fixed, as though they were great and wonderful, having neglected eternal things, which the mind enjoys through itself and perceives through itself and which it cannot lose while loving them (*quibus per seipsam mens fruitur et per seipsam*

percipit, et quae amans amittere non potest). For all evildoings – that is to say, all sins – seem to me to be included under this one heading. But I am waiting to know what you think.

[1.16.35] **EVODIUS:** It is as you say. I agree that all sins are contained under this one heading, when someone turns aside from divine and genuinely abiding things and towards changeable and uncertain things. Although the latter are rightly located in their proper place and attain a certain beauty of their own, it is the mark of a twisted and disordered soul (*animus*) to be subject to pursuing those things he was set above, to be in charge of as he might so command, in accordance with divine order and right. I also see that we have simultaneously resolved and answered what we planned to look into after the question what it is to do evil, namely why we do evil. Unless I am mistaken, we do it out of free choice of the will (*id facimus ex libero voluntatis arbitrio*), as the argument we dealt with here has established. However, I ask whether free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) itself, through which we are found guilty of having the ability to commit sin, ought to have been given to us by Him who made us. It seems that, if we lack it, we would not be bound to sin. My fear is that in this way God will also be reckoned as author of our evildoings.

Book 2

[2.1.1] **EVODIUS:** Now if possible, explain to me *why* God gave human beings free choice of the will. Surely, if we had not received it, we would not be able to sin.

AUGUSTINE: Do you already know for sure that God gave us something which you think we should not have been given?

EVODIUS: As far as I seemed to understand matters in the previous book, we have free choice of the will, and we do not sin unless we do so by means of it.

AUGUSTINE: I too remember that this was made evident to us then. But I have just asked you whether you know that God gave us what we have and through which we clearly sin.

EVODIUS: No one else, I think. We have our existence from God; whether we sin or act rightly, we deserve penalty or reward from Him.

AUGUSTINE: I want to know whether you clearly know (*liquido noveris*) this, or you are moved by authority to believe it readily, even though you do not know it.

EVODIUS: I admit that at first I believed this on authority. But what is more true than that every good is from God, that everything just is good, that a penalty for sinners and a reward for those acting rightly is just? From this it follows that it is God who bestows unhappiness on sinners and happiness on those acting rightly.

[2.1.2] **AUGUSTINE:** I do not disagree, but I am asking about the other point, namely: How do you know that we have our existence from God? You did not explain this now. Instead, you explained that we deserve penalty or reward from God.

EVODIUS: The answer to this question also seems to be clear, precisely on the grounds that God redresses sins – at least, if all justice comes from Him; for while conferring benefits on strangers is a sign of someone's goodness, redressing [the wrongdoings] of strangers is not thereby a sign of someone's justice. Accordingly, it is clear that we belong to God, since He is not only most generous to us in His excellence, but also is most just in redressing [wrongdoing]. In addition, I proposed and you granted that everything good is from God; human beings can also be understood to be from God on this score. For a human being *qua* human being is something good, since he can live rightly when he wills to.

[2.1.3] **AUGUSTINE:** Obviously, if these things are so, the question you raised has been solved. If a person is something good and could act rightly only because he willed to, then he ought to

have free will (*libera voluntas*), without which he could not act rightly. We should not believe that, because a person also sins through it, God gave it to him for this purpose. The fact that a person cannot live rightly without it is therefore a sufficient reason why it should have been given to him. Free will can also be understood to be given for this reason: If anyone uses it in order to sin, the divinity redresses him [for it]. This would happen unjustly if free will had been given not only for living rightly but also for sinning. How would God justly redress someone who made use of his will for the purpose for which it was given? Now, however, when God punishes the sinner, what does He seem to be saying but: “Why did you not make use of free will for the purpose for which I gave it to you?” – that is, for acting rightly. If human beings lacked free choice of the will, how could there be the good in accordance with which justice itself is praised in condemning sins and honouring right deeds? For what does not come about through the will would neither be sinning nor acting rightly. Consequently, penalty and reward would be unjust if human beings did not have free will. There ought to be justice in punishment and in reward, since justice is one of the goods that are from God. Hence God ought to have given free will to human beings.

[2.2.4] EVODIUS: I grant that God gave it. But I ask you: If free will was given for acting rightly, does it not seem that it should be unable to be turned towards sinning, as justice itself was given to people for living correctly? Who in the world can live in an evil manner through justice? Likewise, no one could sin through the will if the will was given for acting rightly.

AUGUSTINE: God will enable me to answer you, I hope. Or rather, He will enable you to answer yourself, when the greatest teacher of all, truth itself, instructs you from within. But if you hold that God gave us free will – which I had asked you about – as something that is known for certain, I want you to tell me briefly whether we should say that God ought not to have given what we acknowledge he gave. Now if it is uncertain whether God gave it, we rightly ask whether it was well given. Then if we find that it was well given, we also find that it was given by Him from whom all goods are given to the soul; or if we find that it was not well given, then we realize it was not given by Him Whom it is blasphemous to blame. On the other hand, if it is certain that God gave it, then, no matter how it was given, we must recognize that it should neither not have been given, nor have been given otherwise than it was given. For it was given by Him Whose deed cannot be faulted in any way.

[2.2.5] EVODIUS: While I hold this with unshakeable faith (*inconcussa fide*), I do not yet hold it with knowledge (*tamen quia cognitione nondum teneo*). So let us conduct our inquiry as though all these points were uncertain. From the uncertainty whether free will was given for acting rightly, on the grounds that we can also sin through it, I see that it also becomes uncertain whether He ought to have given it. For if it is uncertain whether it was given for acting rightly, it is also uncertain whether it ought to have been given. Consequently, it will also be uncertain whether God gave it. For if it is uncertain whether it ought to have been given, it is uncertain whether it was given by Him Whom it is blasphemous to believe gave something that ought not to have been given.

AUGUSTINE: You are certain that God exists, at least.

EVODIUS: I hold this unshakeably, too, but by believing it rather than by having a theoretical grasp of it (*etiam hoc non contemplanedo, sed credendo inconcussum teneo*).

[...]

[2.18.49] EVODIUS: First, then, I would like you to prove to me that free will is something good (*aliquid bonum esse liberam voluntatem*); then I will grant that God gave it to us, since I acknowledge that all good things are from God.

AUGUSTINE: Did I not in the end prove this with so much effort in the previous argumentation? You admitted that every bodily appearance and form maintains its existence from the highest form of all things, i.e. from truth (*omnem speciem formamque corporis a summa omnium rerum forma, id est a veritate, subsistere fatereris*), and you granted that they are good. Truth itself declares in the gospel that the hairs on our head are numbered. Has it slipped your mind what we said about the supremacy of number, and its power that “reaches from one end to the other” [Wis. 8:1]? How terribly perverse it is to number the hairs on our head among the good things (though among the least and lowly of them), nor to find any author to whom they may be attributed but God as the Maker of all good things (since great and small good things are from Him from Whom every good thing exists), and yet to have doubts about free will – without which even those who live badly grant that we cannot live rightly! Please tell me now which seems better: something in us without which we can live rightly, or something in us without which we cannot live rightly?

EVODIUS: Stop, stop! I am ashamed of my blindness. Who could doubt that the latter is far more excellent?

AUGUSTINE: Then will you now deny that a one-eyed man can live rightly?

EVODIUS: Away with such great madness!

AUGUSTINE: Then since you grant that the eye in the body is a good thing, even though its loss does not prevent one from living rightly, does not free will, without which no one lives rightly, seem to you to be something good?

[2.18.50] Consider justice, which no one uses for evil. Justice is counted among the highest goods there are in human beings – as well as all the virtues of the soul (*virtutes animi*), upon which the right and worthwhile life is grounded. For no one uses prudence or courage or moderateness for evil. Right reason prevails in all of them, as it does in justice itself (which you mentioned). Without it they could not be virtues. And no one can use right reason for evil (*recta autem ratione male uti nemo potest*).

Therefore, the virtues are great goods (*magna bona*). But you must remember that not only great but even small goods (*minima bona*) are able to exist from Him alone from Whom all good things are, namely God. The previous line of argument established this, and you agreed to it many times with joy. Hence the virtues by which we live rightly are great goods. The beauties of any given physical objects, without which we can live rightly, are small goods, whereas the powers of the soul (*animus*), without which we cannot live rightly, are intermediate goods (*media bona*). No one uses the virtues for evil, but the other goods – namely, the intermediate and small goods – can be used not only for good but also for evil. Hence no one uses virtue for evil, because the task of virtue is the good use of things that we can also fail to use for good. But no one uses something for evil in using it for good. Accordingly, the abundance and the greatness of God’s goodness has furnished not only great goods but also intermediate and small goods. His goodness is more to be praised in great goods than in intermediate goods, and more in intermediate goods than in small goods, but more in all of them than if He had not bestowed them all.

[2.19.51] **EVODIUS:** I agree. But one point bothers me. Our question is about free will; we see that it uses other things for good or not. How is it also to be counted among the goods we use?

AUGUSTINE: In the way we know all things of which we have knowledge by reason (*quomodo omnia quae ad scientiam cognoscimus, ratione cognoscimus*), and yet reason itself is also counted among the things we know by reason. Or did you forget that when we asked what is known by reason, you conceded that reason is also known by reason? So do not be surprised that even if we use other things by free will, we are able to use free will through free will itself. The will

that uses other things somehow uses itself, the same way as reason, which knows other things, knows itself too. Memory does not only embrace all the other things we remember. Since we do not forget that we have memory, memory also somehow grasps memory itself in us, and it remembers not only other things but also itself – or, rather, we remember other things as well as memory itself through it.

[2.19.52] Thus when the will, which is an intermediate good, holds fast to the unchangeable good as something common rather than private – like the truth, which we have discussed at length without saying anything adequate – a person grasps the happy life. And the happy life, i.e. the attachment of the soul (*animus*) holding fast to the unchangeable good, is the proper and fundamental good for a human being. It also includes all the virtues, which no one can use for evil. Although the virtues are great and fundamental goods in human beings, we thoroughly understand that they are proper to each person, not that they are common. Truth and wisdom, however, are common to all, and people become wise and happy by holding fast to them. Of course, one person does not become happy by the happiness of another. Even if you emulate another in order to be happy, you seek to become happy by means of what you saw made the other person happy, namely through the unchangeable and common truth. Nor does anyone become prudent by another person's prudence, or is made courageous by another's courage, or moderate by another's moderateness, or just by another's justice. Instead, you conform your soul (*animus*) to those unchangeable rules and beacons of the virtues, which live uncorruptibly in the truth itself and in the wisdom that is common, to which the person furnished with virtues whom you put forward as a model for your emulation has conformed and directed his soul (*sed coaptando animum illis incommutabilibus regulis luminibusque virtutum, quae incorruptibiliter vivunt in ipsa veritate sapientiaque communi, quibus et ille coaptavit et fixit animum, quem istis virtutibus praeditum sibi ad imitandum proposuit*).

[2.19.53] Therefore, when the will adheres to the common and unchangeable good, it achieves the great and fundamental goods of a human being, despite being an intermediate good. But the will sins when it is turned away from the unchangeable and common good, towards its private good, or towards something external, or towards something lower (*voluntas autem aversa ab incommutabili et communi bono, et conversa ad proprium bonum, aut ad exterius, aut ad inferius, peccat*). The will is turned to its private good when it wants to be in its own power; it is turned to something external when it is eager to know the personal affairs of other people, or anything that is not its business; it is turned to something lower when it takes delight in bodily pleasures (*Ad proprium convertitur, cum suae potestatis vult esse; ad exterius, cum aliorum propria, vel quaecumque ad se non pertinent, cognoscere studet; ad inferius, cum voluptatem corporis diligit: atque ita homo superbus, et curiosus, et lascivus effectus, excipitur ab alia vita, quae in comparatione superioris vitae mors est*). And thus someone who is made proud or curious or lascivious is captured by another life that, in comparison to the higher life, is death. Even this life is ruled by the oversight of divine providence, which puts all things in order in their appropriate places and distributes to each what is due according to his deserts. Thus it turns out that the good things desired by sinners are not in any way evil, and neither is free will itself, which we established should be numbered among the intermediate goods. Instead, evil is turning the will away from the unchangeable good and towards changeable goods. Yet, since this turning away and towards is not compelled but voluntary (*voluntaria*), the deserved and just penalty of unhappiness follows upon it.

[2.19.54] But perhaps you are going to raise the question: Since the will is moved when it turns itself away from the unchangeable good towards the changeable good, where does this movement come from (*unde iste motus existat*)? It is surely evil, even if free will should be

numbered among good things on the grounds that we cannot live rightly without it. If this movement, namely turning the will away from the Lord God, is undoubtedly a sin, then surely can we not say that God is the author of sin? Therefore, this movement will not be from God. Then where does it come from?

If I were to reply to your question that I do not know, perhaps you will then be the sadder, but I will at least have replied truthfully. What is nothing cannot be known (*sciri enim non potest quod nihil est*). Hold firm with unshakeable piety (*pietatem inconcussam*) that you will not encounter, by sensing or understanding or whatever kind of thinking, any good thing which is not from God. Hence there is no nature you encounter that is not from God. Do not hesitate to attribute to God as its Maker everything in which you see number and measure and order (*omnem quippe rem ubi mensuram et numerum et ordinem videris, Deo artifici tribuere ne cuncteris*). Once you remove these things entirely, absolutely nothing will be left. For even if some inchoate vestige of a form were to remain, where you find neither measure nor order nor number – since wherever these exist the form is complete – you must also take away that vestigial form, which seems to be a sort of material its Maker needs to complete. For if the completion of a form is good, the vestigial form is already something good (*quia etsi remanserit aliqua formae alicuius inchoatio, ubi neque mensuram neque numerum neque ordinem invenias, quia ubicumque ista sunt, forma perfecta est; oportet auferas etiam ipsam inchoationem formae, quae tamquam materies ad perficiendum subiacere videtur artifici. Si enim formae perfectio bonum est, nonnullum iam bonum est et formae inchoatio*). Thus if every good were taken away, what will be left is not something, but instead absolutely nothing. Yet every good is from God. Therefore, there is no nature that is not from God. Thus see what the movement of turning away pertains to. We admit that this movement is sin, since it is a defective movement, and every defect is from nothing (*motus ergo ille aversionis, quod fatemur esse peccatum, quoniam defectivus motus est, omnis autem defectus ex nihilo est*). Be assured that this movement does *not* pertain to God! Yet this defective movement, since it is voluntary, is placed within our power (*qui tamen defectus quoniam est voluntarius, in nostra est positus potestate*). If you fear it, you must not will it; if you do not will it, it will not exist. What then is more secure than to be in that life where what you do not want cannot happen to you! But since we cannot rise of our own accord as we fell of it, let us hold on with firm faith to the right hand of God stretched out to us from above, namely our Lord Jesus Christ; let us await Him with resolute hope and desire Him with burning charity. If you still think there is something about the origin of sin that should be looked into more carefully, we should defer it until another discussion.

EVODIUS: I comply with your will to defer to another time the issues stemming from this, for I agree that we have not yet looked into the matter sufficiently.

Book 3

[3.1.1] **EVODIUS:** It has been made completely clear to me that free will (*libera voluntas*) should be counted among good things. Indeed, it is not among the least of them. We are therefore also compelled to admit that free will was given by the divinity, and ought to have been given. If you think the time is right, I want to know this from you: Where does the movement come from by which the will is turned away from the common and unchangeable good and is turned to its private goods, or to goods belonging to another, or to lower goods – all of which are completely changeable (*unde ille motus existat, quo ipsa voluntas avertitur a communi atque incommutabili bono, et ad propria vel aliena vel infima, atque omnia commutabilia convertitur bona*)?

AUGUSTINE: What is the point of knowing this?

EVODIUS: If free will was given in such a way that it has this movement as something natural, then it is turned to these [lesser goods] by necessity, and no blame can be attached where nature and necessity predominate.

AUGUSTINE: Does this movement please you or displease you?

EVODIUS: It displeases me.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore you find fault with it.

EVODIUS: Certainly I do.

AUGUSTINE: Hence you find fault with a blameless movement of the soul (*animi motum inculpabilem*).

EVODIUS: I do not find fault with a blameless movement of the soul. Rather, I do not *know* whether there is any blame in leaving the unchangeable good behind to turn to changeable goods.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, you find fault with what you do not know.

EVODIUS: Do not push my words too much! I said “I do not know whether there is any blame” in such a way that I wanted it to be understood without a doubt that there *is* blame. In saying “I do not know” I was in fact completely ridiculing doubt about such a clear matter.

AUGUSTINE: See how certain the truth is! It has forced you to forget so quickly what you said just a minute ago. If that movement exists by nature or necessity, it cannot be blameworthy in any way. But you hold so firmly that it *is* blameworthy that you think doubt about so certain a matter is ridiculous. Therefore, why did it seem to you that what you clearly demonstrate is false should be affirmed or declared to be certain with no hesitation? You said: “If free will was given in such a way that it has this movement as something natural, then it is turned to these [lesser goods] by necessity, and no blame can be attached where nature and necessity predominate.” You should have had no doubts that it was not given in this way, seeing that you do not doubt that the movement is blameworthy.

EVODIUS: For my part, I called the movement blameworthy, and hence it displeases me. I cannot doubt that we should find fault with it. But I deny that the soul which is drawn away from the unchangeable good to changeable goods by that movement should be blamed, if its nature is such that it is moved by it necessarily.

[3.1.2] **AUGUSTINE:** You grant that this movement surely ought to be blamed. What does it belong to?

EVODIUS: I see it in the soul (*animus*), but I don't know what it belongs to.

AUGUSTINE: You do not deny that the soul is moved by that movement, do you (*numquid negas eo motu animum moveri*)?

EVODIUS: No.

AUGUSTINE: Then do you deny that the movement by which a stone is moved is a movement belonging to the stone (*negas ergo motum quo movetur lapis, motum esse lapidis*)? I am not speaking of the movement by which we move the stone, or by which the stone is moved through some external force (such as when it is thrown upwards). Rather, I am speaking of the movement by which it directs itself downwards and falls to the ground.

EVODIUS: I do not deny that the movement by which, as you say, a stone is inclined and strives earthward, is a movement belonging to the stone. But this movement is natural. If the soul (*anima*) also has its movement in this way, it too is surely natural, and since it is naturally moved it cannot rightly incur blame. Even if it were moved to something pernicious, it is compelled by the necessity of its nature. Since we have no doubt that this movement is

blameworthy, we should henceforth completely deny that it is natural, and so it is *not* similar to the movement by which the stone is naturally moved.

AUGUSTINE: Did we accomplish anything in the previous two books?

EVODIUS: We did indeed.

AUGUSTINE: All right. I believe you recall that in Book 1 we were in full agreement that the mind (*mens*) becomes a slave to lust only through its own will: it cannot be forced to this ugliness by what is higher or by what is equal, since it is unjust; nor by what is lower, since it is unable. Hence it remains that it is by its own movement (*proprius motus*) that [the soul] turns the will for enjoyment from the Creator to the creature. If this movement warrants blame – anyone who doubted it seemed to you to deserve ridicule – then it is surely not natural but voluntary. It is similar to the movement by which a stone is borne downwards, in that just as the movement of the stone is its own (*iste proprius est lapidis*), so too with the soul (*sic ille animi*). But it is dissimilar in that the stone does not have it in its power to restrain the movement by which it is brought downwards (*quod in potestate non habet lapis cohibere motum quo fertur inferius*). In contrast, while the soul (*animus*) does not will, it is not moved to take delight in lower things, leaving higher things behind (*dum non vult, non ita movetur, ut superioribus desertis inferiora diligit*). Hence the movement of the stone is natural, but the movement of the soul (*animus*) is voluntary. Thus if anyone were to say that the stone “sins” because it tends earthward by its weight, I will not say that he is more stupid than the stone, but rather that he is certainly thought to be a madman. However, we charge the soul (*animus*) with sin when we find it guilty of abandoning higher goods to put lower goods first for its enjoyment. Consequently, what need is there to investigate where the movement of the will comes from, the movement by which it is turned from the unchangeable good to the changeable good? We admit that it is a movement of the soul (*animus*) and that it is voluntary, and therefore blameworthy. All useful teaching that deals with this subject amounts to this: Once we have restrained and condemned that movement, let us turn our will away from its lapse into temporal goods and turn it to the enjoyment of the everlasting good.

[3.1.3] **EVODIUS:** I see and somehow grasp and comprehend the true things you are saying. For there is nothing I sense as firmly and intimately as that I have a will and that I am moved by it to the enjoyment of something (*non enim quidquam tam firme atque intime sentio, quam me habere voluntatem, eaque me moveri ad aliquid fruendum*).

Surely I find nothing I might call mine if the will – by which I am willing or unwilling – is not mine! Accordingly, if I do anything evil through it, to whom should it be attributed but me? Since the God who made me is good, and I do nothing good except through the will, it is clearly apparent that it was given to me by God, who is good, for this purpose. Yet if the movement by which the will is turned one way or another were not voluntary and placed in our power, a man should neither be praised for swinging with the hinge (so to speak) of his will to higher things, nor blamed for swinging with it to lower things (*motus autem quo huc aut illuc voluntas convertitur, nisi esset voluntarius, atque in nostra positus potestate, neque laudandus cum ad superiora, neque culpandus homo esset cum ad inferiora detorquet quasi quemdam cardinem voluntatis*). Nor should he ever be admonished to put these things aside and to will to acquire eternal things, or to be unwilling to live badly and to will to live well. But anyone who holds that a person should not be so admonished should be expelled from human companionship!

[3.2.4] Since these things are so, it perplexes me beyond words how it could happen that God has foreknowledge of everything that will happen, and yet we do not sin by any necessity (*quomodo fieri possit ut et Deus praescius sit omnium futurorum, et nos nulla necessitate peccemus*).

Anyone who said that something can turn out otherwise than God previously foreknew would be trying to destroy God's foreknowledge with his senseless irreligiousness. Accordingly, if God foreknew that a good man was going to sin (*Quapropter, si praescivit Deus peccatum esse bonum hominem*) — anyone who allows that God has foreknowledge of everything that will happen must grant me this — well, if this is the case, I do not say that God would not make him (for He made him good) (*non dico non eum faceret, bonum enim fecit*); nor could any sin of his harm God, Who made him good; instead, He showed His own goodness in making him, even showing His justice in punishing him and His mercy in redeeming him — I do not say, therefore, that God would not make him, but I do say this: Since God had foreknown that he was going to sin, it was necessary that what He foreknew would be the case would happen (*non itaque dico, non eum faceret; sed hoc dico, quoniam peccatum esse praesciverat, necesse erat id fieri, quod futurum esse praesciebat Deus*). So how is the will free where such unavoidable necessity is apparent (*quomodo est igitur voluntas libera ubi tam inevitabilis apparet necessitas*)?

[3.2.5] AUGUSTINE: You have pounded on the door of God's mercy; may He be within and open it wide! However, I think that most people are bothered by this question because they do not raise it in a religious way: They are quicker to excuse their sins than to confess them. Alternatively, they are eager to hold that there is no divine providence ruling over human affairs (*aut enim nullam divinam providentiam praesse rebus humanis libenter opinantur*). While they entrust their bodies and souls to blind chance, they deliver themselves to be battered and torn apart by lusts. Denying divine judgments and avoiding human judgments, they think to ward off their accusers with Fortune as their defence. Yet they usually portray Fortune as blind, so that either they are better than that by which they think themselves to be ruled, or they admit that they perceive and declare those things with the same blindness. Nor is it absurd to grant that they do all things by the ways in which chance falls out, when they themselves fall by what they do. But we have said enough in Book 2 against this view, which is filled with foolish and senseless error. There are others, however, who do not dare to deny that God's providence rules over human life. Yet they prefer to believe, in wicked error, that God's providence is weak or unjust or evil, rather than to confess their sins in humble religiousness. If they would all permit themselves to be persuaded so that when they think of the best and the most just and the strongest, they would believe that the goodness, justice, and power of God are by far greater than and superior to anything they conceive in their thoughts; and considering their own selves, they understood that they owe thanks to God, even if He had willed them to be something lower than they are; and from all their bones and the pith of their conscience they cried out: "I said: My Lord, be merciful to me!

Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You!" [Ps. 40:5 (41:4 rsv)] — well, *then* they would be led by the certain paths of divine mercy into wisdom. As a result, they would be neither proud when uncovering new things nor disturbed at not uncovering anything. In coming to know, they would become better instructed to see; in being ignorant, they would become the more ready to search. I have no doubt that you are already persuaded of this. See how easily I shall reply to your important question once you answer a few initial queries.

[3.3.6] Surely what perplexes and upsets you is how these two claims are not opposed and inconsistent (*non sint contraria et repugnantia*): [1] God foreknows everything that will be (*Deus praescius sit omnium futurorum*); and [2] We sin not by necessity but by the will (*nos non necessitate, sed voluntate peccamus*). For if God foreknows that someone is going to sin, you say, it is necessary that he sin (*Si enim praescius est Deus, inquis, peccatum esse hominem, necesse est ut peccet*); but if it is necessary, then there is no choice of the will in his sinning, but an unavoidable and fixed necessity instead (*si autem necesse est, non ergo est in peccando voluntatis*

arbitrium, sed potius inevitabilis et fixa necessitas). You fear that by this reasoning we infer either that it will be impiously denied that God foreknows everything that will be *or*, if we cannot deny this, that we concede that we sin not by the will, but by necessity (*non voluntate, sed necessitate peccari*). Does anything else bother you?

EVODIUS: Nothing else right now.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, you think that everything God foreknows happens not by will but by necessity (*Res ergo universas quarum Deus est praescius, non voluntate sed necessitate fieri putas*).

EVODIUS: Yes, exactly.

AUGUSTINE: Wake up and look within yourself for a bit. Tell me, if you can: What kind of will are you going to have tomorrow – to sin, or to act rightly (*dic mihi, si potes, qualem sis habiturus cras voluntatem, utrum peccandi, an recte faciendi*)?

EVODIUS: I do not know.

AUGUSTINE: Well, do you think God does not know either?

EVODIUS: In no way would I think that.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, if He knows your will of tomorrow, and He foresees the future wills of all people who either exist now or will exist, so much the more does He foresee what He is going to do with regard to the just and the irreligious (*Si ergo voluntatem tuam crastinam novit, et omnium hominum, sive qui sunt, sive qui futuri sunt, futuras praevidet voluntates, multo magis praevidet quid de iustis impiisque factururus sit*).

[...]

AUGUSTINE: Therefore God already foreknows today what He is going to do a year from now.

EVODIUS: He always foreknew this. I agree that He also knows it now, if it is going to be so.

[3.3.7] **AUGUSTINE:** Tell me, please, whether you are not a creature of His, or your happiness will not come about in you.

EVODIUS: Quite the contrary: I am His creature, and it will come about in me that I shall be happy.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, your happiness will come about in you, through God's action, not by will but by necessity.

EVODIUS: His will *is* necessity for me.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, you are going to be happy against your will!

EVODIUS: If it were in my power to be happy, surely I would already be happy. I will it even now, yet I am not happy, since it is not I but He who makes me happy.

AUGUSTINE: How well the truth cries out from within you! You could not perceive anything to be in our power except what we do when we will. Accordingly, nothing is so much in our power as the will itself (*Quapropter nihil tam in nostra potestate, quam ipsa voluntas est*). Surely it is at hand with no delay as soon as we will. Hence we can rightly say: "We do not grow old by our will but rather by necessity," "We do not become ill by our will but rather by necessity," "We do not die by our will but rather by necessity," and anything else of the sort. But who is so mad as to dare say "We do not *will* by our will..." (*non voluntate autem volumus, quis vel delirus audeat dicere*)? Consequently, although God foreknows our future wills, it does *not* follow from this that we do not will something by our will (*quamobrem, quamvis praesciat Deus nostras voluntates futuras, non ex eo tamen conficitur ut non voluntate aliquid velimus*). As for what you said about happiness, namely that you do not make yourself happy, you said it as if I had denied it. However, I maintain that when you are going to be happy, it will not be against your will but willingly. So although God has foreknowledge of your future happiness — and nothing could happen otherwise than He foreknew, since then it would not be *foreknowledge* — nevertheless, we are not forced to hold on these grounds something quite

absurd and far from the truth, namely that you are not willing to be happy. God's foreknowledge of your future happiness (which is certain even today) does not take away your will for happiness at the time when you begin to be happy.

Likewise, a blameworthy will, if anything of the sort is going to be in you, will not thereby *not* be your will, merely because God foreknows that it is going to be.

[3.3.8] See how great the blindness is with which the following objection is raised: "If God foreknew what my will is going to be, then, since nothing can happen otherwise than He foreknew, it is necessary that I will what He foreknew; yet if it is necessary, we admit that I do not will it by my will at that time but rather by necessity" (*Si praescivit Deus futuram voluntatem meam, quoniam nihil aliter potest fieri quam praescivit, necesse est ut velim quod ille praescivit: si autem necesse est, non iam voluntate, sed necessitate id me velle fatendum est*). What exceptional foolishness! How then can it not happen otherwise than God foreknew, unless there is the will that He foreknew to be your will (*Quomodo ergo non potest aliud fieri quam praescivit Deus, si voluntas non erit, quam voluntatem futuram ille praesciverit*)? I shall pass over the equal monstrosity uttered by this objector that I mentioned a little while ago, namely "It is necessary that I so will." He tries to take away the will by assuming necessity. For if it is necessary that he will, on what grounds does he will when it is not his will?

Suppose the objector does not say this but instead says that, since it is necessary that he will, he does not have the will itself in his power. Then the same problem will arise that you yourself ran into when I asked whether you were going to be happy against your will. You answered that if you had the power you would already be happy, for you said that you lacked only the power, not the will. I then added that the truth cries out from within you. For we cannot deny that we ourselves have the power, except while what we will is not present to us. Yet when we will, if we lack the will itself, surely we do *not* will. But if it can happen that we do not will when we will, surely the will is present in those who will; nor is there anything in our power other than what is present to those who will. Hence our will would not be a will if it were not in our power. Quite the contrary: Since it *is* in our power, it is free in us. What we do not have in our power, or what can not be what we have, is not free in us.

Thus it turns out both that we do not deny that God has foreknowledge of everything that will be, and nevertheless that we do will what we will. For although He has foreknowledge of our will, it is the will of which He has foreknowledge. Therefore, it is going to be our will, since He has foreknowledge of our will. Nor could it be our will if it were not in our power. Therefore, He has foreknowledge of our power (*potestas*). Hence power is not taken away from me due to His foreknowledge – it is thus mine all the more certainly, since He whose foreknowledge does not err foreknew that it would be mine.

EVODIUS : Look: Now I do not deny that it is necessary that anything God foreknows happen (*non nego ita necesse esse fieri quaecumque praescivit Deus*), and that He foreknows our sins in such a way that our will still remains free and placed in our power (*ita eum peccata nostra praescire, ut maneat tamen nobis voluntas libera, atque in nostra posita potestate*).

[3.4.9] **AUGUSTINE :** Then what bothers you? Did you perhaps forget what we covered in Book 1? Will you deny that, since nothing either higher or lower or equal forces us, it is we ourselves who sin through the will?

EVODIUS: I certainly do not presume to deny any of these points. But still, I confess, I do not yet see how these two things are not in conflict with each other: God's foreknowledge of our sins (*praescientia Dei de peccatis nostris*), and our free choice in sinning (*nostrum in peccando liberum arbitrium*). For we must allow both that God is just and that He has foreknowledge. Yet I would like to know the following: [1] How does God justly punish sins that necessarily

happen (*qua iustitia punitur peccata quae necesse est fieri*)? [2] How is it that future events God foreknows do not happen necessarily (*quomodo non sit necesse fieri quae futura esse praescivit*)? [3] How is whatever necessarily happens in His Creation not to be imputed to its Creator (*quomodo non Creatori deputandum est, quidquid in eius creatura fieri necesse est*)?

[3.4.10] AUGUSTINE: On what grounds does our free will seem to be in conflict with God's foreknowledge? Because it is foreknowledge, or because it is God's foreknowledge?

EVODIUS: Because it is God's foreknowledge.

AUGUSTINE: Well then, if *you* foreknew someone was going to sin, would it not be necessary that he sin?

EVODIUS: It surely would be necessary that he sin (*imo necesse esset ut peccaret*). My foreknowledge would not be *foreknowledge* unless I foreknew matters that are certain.

AUGUSTINE: Hence it is not because it is God's foreknowledge that what is foreknown must happen, but merely because it is foreknowledge — which, if it does not know in advance matters that are certain, surely is nothing at all.

EVODIUS: I agree. But where are you going with this?

AUGUSTINE: Unless I am mistaken, you would not force someone to sin as a result of foreknowing that he is going to sin. Nor would your foreknowledge force him to sin, despite the fact that he undoubtedly *is* going to sin, since otherwise you would not *foreknow* that it is going to be so. Therefore, just as these two things are not opposed, namely that you know by your foreknowledge what someone is going to do by his will, so

too God, although He does not force anyone into sinning, nevertheless foresees those who are going to sin by their own will.

[3.4.11] Why, then, should a God equipped with justice and foreknowledge not redress what he does not force to happen? Just as you do not force past things to have happened by your memory, so too God does not force future things to happen by His foreknowledge. And just as you remember some of the things you have done and yet have not done all the things you remember, so too God foreknows all the things of which He is the author and yet is not the author of all the things He foresees. He is not the evil author of these things; He justly exacts retribution for them.

These are the grounds, then, on which you should understand how God justly punishes sins, namely because He does not do the things He knows will happen. For if He ought not hand out punishments to sinners because He foresaw that they were going to sin, on that account neither should He hand out rewards to those who act rightly, since He foresaw nonetheless that they would act rightly. Instead, let us acknowledge these two points: first, it pertains to His foreknowledge that nothing that will be escapes Him; secondly, it pertains to justice that sin, which is committed with the will, does not happen unpunished by His judgment, just as much as His foreknowledge does not force it to happen.

[3.5.12] Now as for [3] – how whatever necessarily happens in His Creation is not to be imputed to its Creator – it will not easily dislodge the rule of religiousness we agreed to keep in mind, namely that we ought to render thanks to our Creator. His bountiful goodness would be praised most justly even if He had made us for some lower level of His Creation. Although our soul is festering with sins, it is still more exalted and better than if it were turned into mere visible light. See indeed how much even souls given over to the bodily senses praise God for the magnificence of this sort of light! Accordingly, do not let it upset you that sinning souls are blameworthy, so that you are led to say in your heart that it would have been better had they not existed. They are blameworthy in comparison with themselves, [namely] when one thinks of how they would be had they been unwilling to sin. Still, God their arranger should be given

the highest praise that human beings can offer, not only because He justly puts them in order as the sinners they are, but also because He has arranged them so that even when they are stained by sin they are not in any way surpassed in dignity by mere physical light (for which He is nonetheless praised).

[3.5.13] I also caution you to be careful about the following point. Perhaps you should not claim that it would have been better for them not to have existed. Instead, you should say that they ought to have been made differently.

Now whatever may strike you as better in true reason, you should know that God, as the Creator of all goods, has made it. For it is not true reason but envious weakness when you think something should have been made better and then want nothing else lesser to be made, as if you wished the Earth had not been made once you saw the heavens – thoroughly unreasonable! You would be right in finding fault if you saw that the Earth had been made but the heavens passed by. In that case, you could say that the Earth ought to have been made the way you can think of the heavens. But since you perceive that the object in whose likeness you wanted the Earth to be patterned has also been made, though it is called the heavens rather than the Earth, then you should not be envious at all, I think, that something lesser was made too (and it was the Earth), since you have not been cheated out of something better.

Again, there is so great a variety in the parts of the Earth that nothing to do with its appearance occurs to anyone considering it which God, the Maker of everything, did not make [somewhere] in the entire collection. From the most fecund and charming land we arrive by intermediate stages at the most unproductive and barren, so that you would not dare to find any at fault except in comparison with a better. Thus you would ascend through all the levels of praiseworthiness to discover the best kind of land; yet you do not want it to exist all by itself. But how great is the distance between the entire Earth and the heavens! The wet and windy natures are put in between. From these four elements come a variety of other likenesses and forms, uncountable by us though God has enumerated them all. There can be something in the world that you do not think of with your reason, then, but there cannot fail to be something you think of with true reason (*vera ratio*).

Nor can you think of anything better in Creation that has escaped the Maker of Creation. The human soul (*anima*) is naturally linked to the Divine Reasons, upon which it depends when it declares: “It would be better to make *this* rather than *that*.” If it speaks the truth and sees what it says, it sees by the [divine] reasons to which it is linked. Therefore, let the human soul believe that God made what it knows by true reason He ought to have made, despite not seeing it among the things that have been made. For instance, even if someone could not see the heavens with his eyes, and yet by true reason were to gather that something of the sort ought to have been made, he should believe that it was made, although he did not see it with his eyes: He would not have seen that it ought to have been made except in these [divine] reasons through which everything was made. No one can see with a truthful thought what is not there, to the extent that [what is not there] is not true.

[3.5.14] Many people go astray on this score. Although they conceive better things with their minds, they search for them with their eyes in inappropriate places. It is like someone who, grasping perfect roundness in his mind, becomes upset that he does not find it in a nut, never having seen any round object except fruits of this sort. Thus, despite seeing with the most true reason that a creature so devoted to God that it will never sin, even though it has free will, is better, some people are stricken with grief while looking upon people’s sins: not so that they stop sinning, but rather because they were made. They declare: “He should have made us such that we always want to enjoy His unchangeable truth and never want to sin.” They should not

rant and rage! God did not force them to sin merely because he gave to those whom He made the power whether they would so will. Indeed, there are some angels who never have sinned and never will sin. Accordingly, if you take delight in a creature who does not sin due to the perseverance of its will, there should be no question that you rank it by right reason (*recta ratio*) ahead of one that sins. But just as you rank it in thought, so did God the Creator rank it when putting things in order. Believe that there is such a creature in the loftier realms of the heights of the heavens! For if the Maker furnished goodness to a creature whose future sins He foresaw, He would certainly furnish this goodness so as to make a creature which He foreknew would not sin.

[3.5.15] That exalted [creature] has its perpetual happiness in its perpetual enjoyment of its creator, which it deserves for its perpetual will to hold fast to justice. Next, the creature who sins also has his own place. He has lost happiness through his sins, but he has not squandered his ability to regain happiness. Furthermore, the [sinner] surely comes before the creature who is possessed by the perpetual will to sin, [namely the Devil]. Between the [Devil] and the [angels] who remain in the will to justice, the sinner marks out a certain intermediate position. He derives his elevated position from the humility of repentance. For not even from the creature He foreknew not only to be going to sin, but also to be going to persist in the will to sin, did God withhold the bestowal of His goodness, so that He not create it. For just as even a wandering horse is better than a stone that does not wander off because it has no perception or movement of its own, so too a creature that sins through free will is more excellent than one that does not sin because it does not have free will. And just as I might praise wine as good of its kind while faulting someone who got drunk on it, and yet put the same person whom I faulted and who is still drunk ahead of the wine I praised on which he got drunk, so too material creations are rightly praised at their level, although those who turn away from the perception of truth by using them immoderately are to be faulted. The same point holds again. Despite their perversity and “drunkenness” (of its kind), people who are ruined by their greed for material objects, which are praiseworthy at their level, are to be preferred to those selfsame material creations. Not because their vices deserve it, but still because of the worthiness of their nature.

[3.5.16] Hence every soul (*anima*) is better than any body. No matter how far a sinning soul falls, it is not made into a body by any transformation. Nor is it completely deprived of being a soul. Thus, it does not lose in any way the feature of being better than body. Now light holds the first place among bodies. Consequently, the least soul is put ahead of the first body. It can happen that some other body is put before the body belonging to a given soul, but not in any way before the soul itself.

Therefore, why should God not be praised? Let Him be praised with praise that cannot be described! Even though He made those [good angels] who were going to abide in the laws of justice, He also made other souls which He foresaw would sin – indeed, ones which He foresaw would *persevere* in their sins. Yet these souls are better than [things] which cannot sin because they have no rational and free choice of the will (*rationale ac liberum voluntatis arbitrium*). These in turn are still better than the radiance, no matter how splendid, of any physical objects, which some people in great error worship as the substance of God the Highest himself. In the order of bodily creatures from galaxies all the way to the number of hairs on our heads, the beauty of good things at each stage is so interwoven that only the most ignorant say: “What is this, and why is it so?” Everything has been created in its order. How much more ignorant, then, to say this about any given soul, which, no matter how much lessening or defect its loveliness has come to, will undoubtedly exceed the worthiness of all bodies!