

## Galerius and Constantine: Edicts of Toleration 311-313

From the Internet History Sourcebooks Project and  
*Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, (Philadelphia, [1897?-1907?]).

*Both in the case of the edict of toleration by Galerius and that by Constantine and Licinius, the original Latin text is to be found in Lactantius, and merely a Greek translation in Eusebius, (H. E., Bk. VIII, 17, and X, 5). Both Mason and Allard take this view. (For discussion of the authorship of the De more. Pers. and the genuineness of the Edict of Milan see appendix to Vol. 11 of Gibbon, ed. by Bury.. 1896.)*

### Edict Of Toleration By Galerius (311 CE)

(Ch. 34) Among other arrangements which we are always accustomed to make for the prosperity and welfare of the republic, we had desired formerly to bring all things into harmony with the ancient laws and public order of the Romans, and to provide that even the Christians who had left the religion of their fathers should come back to reason ; since, indeed, the Christians themselves, for some reason, had followed such a caprice and had fallen into such a folly that they would not obey the institutes of antiquity, which perchance their own ancestors had first established; but at their own will and pleasure, they would thus make laws unto themselves which they should observe and would collect various peoples in diverse places in congregations. Finally when our law had been promulgated to the effect that they should conform to the institutes of antiquity, many were subdued by the fear of danger, many even suffered death. And yet since most of them persevered in their determination, and we saw that they neither paid the reverence and awe due to the gods nor worshipped the God of the Christians, in view of our most mild clemency and the constant habit by which we are accustomed to grant indulgence to all, we thought that we ought to grant our most prompt indulgence also to these, so that they may again be Christians and may hold their conventicles, provided they do nothing contrary to good order. But we shall tell the magistrates in another letter what they ought to do.

Wherefore, for this our indulgence, they ought to pray to their God for our safety, for that of the republic, and for their own, that the republic may continue uninjured on every side, and that they may be able to live securely in their homes.

(Ch. 35) This edict is published at Nicomedia on the day before the Kalends of May, in our eighth consulship and the second of Maximinus.

### Edict Of Milan (313 CE)

When I, Constantine Augustus, as well as I Licinius Augustus d fortunately met near Mediolanurn (Milan), and were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we

thought, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred; whence any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule And thus by this wholesome counsel and most upright provision we thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the Supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts) may show in all things His usual favor and benevolence. Therefore, your Worship should know that it has pleased us to remove all conditions whatsoever, which were in the rescripts formerly given to you officially, concerning the Christians and now any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation. We thought it fit to commend these things most fully to your care that you may know that we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship. When you see that this has been granted to them by us, your Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases; this regulation is made we that we may not seem to detract from any dignity or any religion.

Moreover, in the case of the Christians especially we esteemed it best to order that if it happens anyone heretofore has bought from our treasury from anyone whatsoever, those places where they were previously accustomed to assemble, concerning which a certain decree had been made and a letter sent to you officially, the same shall be restored to the Christians without payment or any claim of recompense and without any kind of fraud or deception. Those, moreover, who have obtained the same by gift, are likewise to return them at once to the Christians. Besides, both those who have purchased and those who have secured them by gift, are to appeal to the

vicar if they seek any recompense from our bounty, that they may be cared for through our clemency,. All this property ought to be delivered at once to the community of the Christians through your intercession, and without delay. And since these Christians are known to have possessed not only those places in which they were accustomed to assemble, but also other property, namely the churches, belonging to them as a corporation and not as individuals, all these things which we have included under the above law, you will order to be restored, without any hesitation or controversy at all, to these Christians, that is to say to the corporations and their conventicles: providing, of course, that the above arrangements be followed so that those who return the same without payment, as we have said, may hope for an indemnity from our bounty. In all these circumstances you ought to tender your most efficacious intervention to the community of the Christians, that our command may be carried into effect as quickly as possible, whereby, moreover, through our clemency, public order may be secured. Let this be done so that, as we have said above, Divine favor towards us, which, under the most important circumstances we have already experienced, may, for all time, preserve and prosper our successes together with the good of the state. Moreover, in order that the statement of this decree of our good will may come to the notice of all, this rescript, published by your decree, shall be announced everywhere and brought to the knowledge of all, so that the decree of this, our benevolence, cannot be concealed.

## Pliny the Younger's "Panegyric in Praise of Trajan" (Excerpts)

Trans. by FPGarland, from *Masterpieces of Eloquence*, ed. MW Hazeltine et al. (New York: Collier, 1905).

*Caius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, nephew and son of the elder Pliny, was born at Novum Comum in 62 CE. After studying rhetoric under Quintilian, he began his career as advocate at the age of nineteen. He subsequently served in Syria as a military tribune, was a quaestor under Domitian, and consul under the emperor Trajan. About the year 112 he governed Bithynia as imperial legate, his death occurring shortly after, in the year 114. He was more or less of a dilettante, painstaking, very desirous of making a literary reputation, and amiable, but lacking in force of character and original thought. His panegyric on Trajan (delivered to express his gratitude to the emperor, who had recently appointed him consul) is his only speech which really possessed vitality, and his letters, which exhibit his self-complacency, form entertaining reading.*

**I**t was a good and wise custom of our ancestors to begin no act or speech without prayer. They believed it only proper and prudent to reverence the gods and seek their aid and guidance. How much more ought we now to have recourse to prayer when, by command of the senate and the will of the people, your consul is about to make an expression of gratitude to a good prince! For what gift of the gods is better or nobler than a chaste, pious, godlike prince! And I am sure that even if there were still doubt as to whether rulers are given to the world by chance or by divine will, we should all feel that our prince was chosen by divine direction. For he was not found out by the secret power of fate, but by the open manifestation of Jupiter's will, and was chosen amid sacred altars in the same temple in which Jupiter dwells in person as clearly as he does in the starry heavens. It is therefore all the more fitting that I should turn in prayer to thee, Jupiter, most mighty and good, and ask that my address may prove worthy of me as consul, worthy of our senate, and worthy of our prince; that my words may bear the stamp of freedom, faith, and truth, and lack as much the semblance, as they do the need, of flattery.

Not only a consul, but every citizen, should strive to say nothing of our prince that might seem proper enough if spoken of some other prince. Let us, therefore, repress the utterances of fear. Let us speak as we feel. Let us emphasize clearly in our discourse the difference between the present and the past. Let our language show unmistakably that it is Trajan we thank, and his age that we praise. But let us not address him with the flattering title of a god or divinity; for we speak not of a tyrant, but of a fellow citizen; not of a master, but of a father. He boasts that he is one of us; nor does he forget that he is only a man, though the ruler of men. Let us, then, appreciate our good fortune and prove ourselves worthy of it. Let us, too, consider again and again how unworthy it would be to show greater regard for princes who rejoice in the servitude of their fellow citizens than for those who rejoice in their freedom. The people of Rome, who have retained the right to choose their princes, now praise the courage of Trajan as

enthusiastically as they did the beauty of Domitian, and applaud his devotion, self-restraint, and humanity as vociferously as they did the voice and the bearing of Nero. What, then, shall we commend? The divinity of our prince, his culture, his self-control, or his affability? We can do nothing worthier of our citizens and our senate than we have already done in conferring on him the surname of the Good — a title made peculiarly his by the arrogance of former princes. It is only natural and reasonable, then, that we should esteem ourselves happy and our prince happy, and pray that he may ever do deeds deserving of our praise. At all this he is affected even to tears, for he knows and feels that we speak of him as a man, not as a prince.

Let us retain, then, individually, in the hour of calm reflection, the same spirit that we had in the first heat of our devotion; and let us bear in mind that there is no kind of gratitude more sincere or more acceptable than that which, like the acclamations of the populace, is too spontaneous to be feigned. So far as I can, I shall try to adapt my address to the modesty and moderation of our prince, and shall consider not less what his delicacy will permit than what his merits deserve. It is the peculiar glory of our prince that, when I am about to render him an expression of gratitude, I fear not that he will think me niggardly, but lavish in his praise. This is my only anxiety; this my only difficulty. For it is an easy matter to render thanks to one who deserves them. Nor is there any danger that he will mistake the praise of culture for the censure of conceit; the praise of frugality for the censure of luxury; the praise of clemency for the censure of cruelty; the praise of liberality for the censure of avarice; the praise of benignity for the censure of malice; the praise of continence for the censure of lust; the praise of industry for the censure of laziness; or the praise of courage for the censure of fear. I do not even fear that I shall seem grateful or ungrateful according as I say a great deal or very little. For I have observed that even the gods themselves are pleased not so much by flawless perfection in the form of prayer, as by the uprightness and piety of their votaries. They

prefer him who brings to their altars a pure heart, to him who brings a studied prayer.

But I must comply with the will of the senate, which has decreed for the public advantage that the consul, by way of an address of thanks, shall remind good princes of what they have done, and bad princes of what they ought to do. This is all the more necessary now because our prince suppresses all private expressions of gratitude, and would prevent also public ones if he were permitted to forbid what the senate has decreed. In both cases, Caesar Augustus, you show moderation; for, in permitting here the expression of gratitude that you forbid in private, you honor not yourself, but us. Since, then, you have yielded to our wishes, the important thing is not for us to proclaim your merits, but for you to hear them.

I have often reflected how good and great the man should be whose beck and nod control the earth and sea, peace and war. But I should never, even if I had power equal to that of the gods, have conceived of a prince like ours. One man becomes great in war, but sinks into obscurity in peace. Another gains distinction in the arts of peace, but not in the profession of arms. One is feared because he is cruel; another loved because he is humble. One loses in public life the renown he gained in private; another loses in private life his public reputation. In short, there has been no prince in the past whose virtues have not been tarnished by vices. But our prince has obtained unprecedented praise and glory. His seriousness is not lessened by his cheerfulness, his gravity by his simplicity, or his dignity by his humanity. He is steady, tall, and stately in mien and bearing; and though he is in the prime of life his hair is becoming gray — a sign of approaching age. These are the marks that proclaim the prince. . . .

But though you possessed the proper qualifications, Caesar, you were unwilling to become emperor. You had therefore to be forced. Yet you could not have been forced but for the danger that threatened our country; you would not have assumed the imperial power were it not to save the empire. And I feel sure that the praetorians revolted because great force and danger were necessary to overcome your modesty. Just as the sea is calmer, and the sky clearer, after a storm, so the peace and security we now enjoy under your rule is greater after that uprising. So through all the vicissitudes of life adversity follows prosperity, prosperity adversity. The source of both lies hidden. Indeed the causes of good and evil in general deceive us by false appearances.

The revolt of the praetorians was a great disgrace to our age, a grave injury to the commonwealth. The emperor and father of the human race was besieged,

taken, and shut up; the power of saving men was taken from the mildest of old men; our prince was deprived of his most salutary power — freedom of action. If only such calamity could induce you to assume the reins of government I should say that it was worth the price. The discipline of the camp was corrupted, that you might correct it; a bad example was set, that you might act a good one; finally a prince was forced to put men to death against his will, that he might give the world a prince who could not be forced. You were destined to be adopted at some time or other; but we should never have known how much the empire owed you, had you been adopted sooner. Adopted by the emperor and called upon by your countrymen, you responded as did the great generals of old when summoned from abroad to defend their country. Thus father and son made an exchange at one and the same time: he gave you the empire; you restored it to him. Nay you even put the giver under obligation; for in sharing the imperial power with him you assumed the burden of care, while he enjoyed greater security. . . .

During the preceding reigns the barbarians had become insolent, and no longer struggled to gain their liberty, but fought to enslave us. But on your accession they were again inspired with fear and a willingness to obey your commands. For they saw that you were a general of the old stamp—one of those who had earned their title on fields heaped high with slaughter, or on seas resounding with the shouts of victory. The result is that we now accept hostages; we do not buy them. Nor do we now make peace on disadvantageous terms in order to keep up the appearance of success. Our enemies seek and implore peace; we grant or deny it according as the dignity of the empire requires. Those who obtain their request thank us; those to whom it is denied dare not complain, for they know that you have attacked the fiercest nations at that very time of the year which has hitherto been deemed most favorable for them and most unfavorable for us. I mean the season when the Danube is spanned with ice and supports on its hardened back the ponderous engines of war — the season when the savage tribes of the north are armed, not only with weapons, but with the fury of the elements. But the elements have no terrors for you, and on your approach the enemy shut themselves up in their hiding-places while our troops cross the river triumphantly and hurl against the barbarians the fury of their own winter. Such is the awe with which you have inspired the barbarians. . . .

Above all we ought to feel grateful because you allow the men whom you have made consuls to act with consular power. You offer no dangers, no causes of fear, to swerve the consuls from their duty; they listen to nothing against their will, nor do they make

decrees under compulsion. The dignity of the office still remains and will remain; and the consuls will not lose their security while they continue in power. If by any chance the consular power is diminished, the fault will be ours, not that of our age; for so far as our prince is concerned men may now be consuls who were formerly princes. Is there any adequate return we can make for the benefits we have received? None, except that we can always remember that we were consuls under you. Let us feel and vote, then, as becomes the dignity of our office, and let our conduct show that we believe the commonwealth still exists. Let us not withdraw our counsel or active service, or feel that we have been severed from the consulate, but rather let us feel that we are inseparably bound up with it. Finally let us cheerfully endure the labors and cares of our office; its honors and dignity we enjoy in full measure.

In conclusion I invoke upon all mankind the blessing of the guardian gods of our empire; and I pray you, especially, Jupiter Capitolinus, to favor us and add to all your other gifts the gift of perpetuity. You have heard us curse a wicked prince; now hear us bless a good one. We shall not weary you with a multitude of prayers; for we ask not peace, or security, or wealth, or honors; our simple and all-embracing prayer is the health of our prince. Nor will you be reluctant to grant it; for you already received him under your protection when you snatched him from the clutches of a rapacious robber. Otherwise, at a time when the high and mighty of the empire were shaken, he who was higher than all could not have stood unmoved. He remained unnoticed by a bad prince, though he could not but attract the attention of a good prince. If, then, he rules the empire well and for the advantage of all, I ask you, Jupiter, to spare him for our grandsons and great-grandsons, and to give him a successor of his own blood whom he shall have instructed and made worthy of adoption; or, if fate deny him this, I ask you to point out to him some one worthy of being adopted in the Capitol.

My indebtedness to you, conscript fathers, I need hardly speak of, for it is recorded on public monuments. You have borne witness in a most gratifying manner to the peace and quiet of my tribuneship, to my moderation and discretion as praetor, and to the zeal and constancy with which I looked after the interests of our allies. You have approved, too, of my appointment as consul with such unanimity as to show me that I must make a constant effort to retain and increase your good will, for I know that we cannot tell whether a candidate deserves office until he has obtained it. Although I saw, then, what short roads led to office, I preferred the longer road of honor. I have passed through a period of gloom and fear to an era of security and

happiness. I have been hated by a bad prince; I love a good one. I shall always, therefore, show you the respect and deference due you from a man who looks upon himself not as a consul or ex-consul, but as a candidate for the consulship.

## Jerome: Letters

Trans W.H. Fremantle, in *Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (New York: 1893);

All texts from the Internet History Sourcebooks Project

For an introduction to Jerome, consult: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08341a.htm>

### LETTER XXII. TO EUSTOCHIUM. [extracts]

**M**any years ago, when for the kingdom of heaven's sake I had cut myself off from home, parents, sister, relations, and--harder still--from the dainty food to which I had been accustomed; and when I was on my way to Jerusalem to wage my warfare, I still could not bring myself to forego the library which I had formed for myself at Rome with great care and toil. And so, miserable man that I was, I would fast only that I might afterwards read Cicero. After many nights spent in vigil, after floods of tears called from my inmost heart, after the recollection of my past sins, I would once more take up Plautus. And when at times I returned to my right mind, and began to read the prophets, their style seemed rude and repellent. I failed to see the light with my blinded eyes; but I attributed the fault not to them, but to the sun. While the old serpent was thus making me his plaything, about the middle of Lent a deep-seated fever fell upon my weakened body, and while it destroyed my rest completely--the story seems hardly credible--it so wasted my unhappy frame that scarcely anything was left of me but skin and bone. Meantime preparations for my funeral went on; my body grew gradually colder, and the warmth of life lingered only in my throbbing breast. Suddenly I was caught up in the spirit and dragged before the judgment seat of the Judge; and here the light was so bright, and those who stood around were so radiant, that I cast myself upon the ground and did not dare to look up. Asked who and what I was I replied: "I am a Christian." But He who presided said: "Thou liest, thou art a follower of Cicero and not of Christ. For 'where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.'"(4) Instantly I became dumb, and amid the strokes of the lash--for He had ordered me to be scourged--I was tortured more severely still by the fire of conscience, considering with myself that verse, "In the grave who shall give thee thanks?"(5) Yet for all that I began to cry and to bewail myself, saying: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord: have mercy upon me."

### LETTER LXX. TO MAGNUS AN ORATOR OF ROME. [extracts]

**Y**ou ask me at the close of your letter why it is that sometimes in my writings I quote examples from secular literature and thus defile the whiteness of the church with the foulness of heathenism. I will now briefly answer your

question. You would never have asked it, had not your mind been wholly taken up with Tully; you would never have asked it had you made it a practice instead of studying Volcatius' to read the holy scriptures and the commentators upon them. For who is there who does not know that both in Moses and in the prophets there are passages cited from Gentile books and that Solomon proposed questions to the philosophers of Tyre and answered others put to him by them.(2) In the commencement of the book of Proverbs he charges us to understand prudent maxims and shrewd adages, parables and obscure discourse, the words of the wise and their dark sayings;(3) all of which belong by right to the sphere of the dialectician and the philosopher. The Apostle Paul also, in writing to Titus, has used a line of the poet Epimenides: "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies."(4) Half of which line was afterwards adopted by Callimachus. ... And as if this were not enough, that leader of the Christian army, that unvanquished pleader for the cause of Christ, skilfully turns a chance inscription into a proof of the faith.(3) For he had learned from the true David to wrench the sword of the enemy out of his hand and with his own blade to cut off the head of the arrogant Goliath.(4) He had read in Deuteronomy the command given by the voice of the Lord that when a captive woman had had her head shaved, her eyebrows and all her hair cut off, and her nails pared, she might then be taken to wife.(5) Is it surprising that I too, admiring the fairness of her form and the grace of her eloquence, desire to make that secular wisdom which is my captive and my handmaid, a matron of the true Israel? Or that shaving off and cutting away all in her that is dead whether this be idolatry, pleasure, error, or lust, I take her to myself clean and pure and beget by her servants for the Lord of Sabaoth? My efforts promote the advantage of Christ's family, my so-called defilement with an alien increases the number of my fellow-servants. Hosea took a wife of whoredoms, Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and this harlot bore him a son called Jezreel or the seed of God.(6) Isaiah speaks of a sharp razor which shaves "the head of sinners and the hair of their feet;"(7) and Ezekiel shaves his head as a type of that Jerusalem which has been an harlot,(8) in sign that whatever in her is devoid of sense 'and life must be removed.

## Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*

Translation from Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and the Internet Medieval Source Book  
For and introduction to Augustine of Hippo's life, beliefs, and works, see the three entries available online at:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02089a.htm>

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02091a.htm>

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>

### BOOK II

#### CHAP. 40: Whatever Has Been Rightly Said by the Heathen, We Must Appropriate to Our Uses.

**M**oreover, if those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said aught that is true and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use from those who have unlawful possession of it. For, as the Egyptians had not only the idols and heavy burdens which the people of Israel hated and fled from, but also vessels and ornaments of gold and silver, and garments, which the same people when going out of Egypt appropriated to themselves, designing them for a better use, not doing this on their own authority, but by the command of God, the Egyptians themselves, in their ignorance, providing them with things which they themselves were not making a good use of; in the same way all branches of heathen learning have not only false and superstitious fancies and heavy burdens of unnecessary toil, which every one of us, when going out under the leadership of Christ from the fellowship of the heathen, ought to abhor and avoid; but they contain also liberal instruction which is better adapted to the use of the truth, and some most excellent precepts of morality; and some truths in regard even to the worship of the One God are found among them. Now these are, so to speak, their gold and silver, which they did not create themselves, but dug out of the mines of God's providence which are everywhere scattered abroad, and are perversely and unlawfully prostituting to the worship of devils. These, therefore, the Christian, when he separates himself in spirit from the miserable fellowship of these men, ought to take away from them, and to devote to their proper use in preaching the gospel. Their garments, also,—that is, human institutions such as are adapted to that intercourse with men which is indispensable in this life,—we must take and turn to a Christian use.

61. And what else have many good and faithful men among our brethren done? Do we not see with what a quantity of gold and silver and garments Cyprian, that most persuasive teacher and most blessed martyr, was loaded when he came out of Egypt? How much

Lactantius brought with him? And Victorinus, and Optatus, and Hilary, not to speak of living men! How much Greeks out of number have borrowed! And prior to all these, that most faithful servant of God, Moses, had done the same thing; for of him it is written that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. And to none of all these would heathen superstition (especially in those times when, kicking against the yoke of Christ, it was persecuting the Christians) have ever furnished branches of knowledge it held useful, if it had suspected they were about to turn them to the use of worshipping the One God, and thereby overturning the vain worship of idols. But they gave their gold and their silver and their garments to the people of God as they were going out of Egypt, not knowing how the things they gave would be turned to the service of Christ. For what was done at the time of the exodus was no doubt a type prefiguring what happens now. And this I say without prejudice to any other interpretation that may be as good, or better.

#### Chap. 41: What Kind of Spirit is Required for the Study of Holy Scripture.

62. But when the student of the Holy Scriptures, prepared in the way I have indicated, shall enter upon his investigations, let him constantly meditate upon that saying of the apostle's, "Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies." For so he will feel that, whatever may be the riches he brings with him out of Egypt, yet unless he has kept the passover, he cannot be safe. Now Christ is our passover sacrificed for us, and there is nothing the sacrifice of Christ more clearly teaches us than the call which He himself addresses to those whom He sees toiling in Egypt under Pharaoh: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." To whom is it light but to the meek and lowly in heart, whom knowledge doth not puff up, but charity edifies? Let them remember, then, that those who celebrated the passover at that time in type and shadow, when they were ordered to mark their doorposts with the blood of the lamb, used hyssop to mark them with. Now this is a meek and lowly herb, and

yet nothing is stronger and more penetrating than its roots; that being rooted and grounded in love, we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,—that is, to comprehend the cross of our Lord, the breadth of which is indicated by the transverse wood on which the hands are stretched, its length by the part from the ground up to the cross-bar on which the whole body from the head downwards is fixed, its height by the part from the crossbar to the top on which the head lies, and its depth by the part which is hidden, being fixed in the earth. And by this sign of the cross all Christian action is symbolized, viz., to do good works in Christ, to cling with constancy to Him, to hope for heaven, and not to desecrate the sacraments. And purified by this Christian action, we shall be able to know even “the love of Christ which passes knowledge,” who is equal to the Father, by whom all things, were made, “that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.” There is besides in hyssop a purgative virtue, that the breast may not be swollen with that knowledge which puffs up, nor boast vainly of the riches brought out from Egypt. “Purge me with hyssop,” the psalmist says, “and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness.” Then he immediately adds, to show that it is purifying from pride that is indicated by hyssop, “that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.”

Chap. 42: Sacred Scripture Compared with Profane Authors.

63. But just as poor as the store of gold and silver and garments which the people of Israel brought with them out of Egypt was in comparison with the riches which they afterwards attained at Jerusalem, and which reached their height in the reign of King Solomon, so poor is all the useful knowledge which is gathered from the books of the heathen when compared with the knowledge of Holy Scripture, For whatever man may have learnt from other sources, if it is hurtful, it is there condemned; if it is useful, it is therein contained. And while every man may find there all that he has learnt of useful elsewhere, he will find there in much greater abundance things that are to be found nowhere else, but can be learnt only in the wonderful sublimity and wonderful simplicity of the Scriptures.

When, then, the reader is possessed of the instruction here pointed out, so that unknown signs have ceased to be a hindrance to him; when he is meek and lowly of heart, subject to the easy yoke of Christ, and loaded with His light burden, rooted and grounded and built up in faith, so that knowledge cannot puff

him up, let him then approach the consideration and discussion of ambiguous signs in Scripture. And about these I shall now, in a third book, endeavor to say what the Lord shall be pleased to vouchsafe.

\* \* \*  
BOOK IV

Chap. 1.--This Work Not Intended as a Treatise on Rhetoric.

1. This work of mine, which is entitled *On Christian Doctrine*, was at the commencement divided into two parts. For, after a preface, in which I answered by anticipation those who were likely to take exception to the work, I said, “There are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends: the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning, and the known, the meaning.” As, then, I have already said a great deal about the mode of ascertaining the meaning, and have given three books to this one part of the subject, I shall only say a few things about the mode of making known the meaning, in order if four books.

2. In the first place, then, I wish by this preamble to put a stop to the expectations of readers who may think that I am about to lay down rules of rhetoric such as I have learnt and taught too, in the secular schools, and to warn them that they need not look for any such from me. Not that I think such rules of no use, but that whatever use they have is to be learnt elsewhere; and if any good man should happen to have leisure for learning them, he is not to ask me to teach them either in this work or any other.

Chap. 2: It Is Lawful for a Christian Teacher to Use the Art of Rhetoric.

3. Now, the art of rhetoric being available for the enforcing either of truth or falsehood, who will dare to say that truth in the person of its defenders is to take its stand unarmed against falsehood? For example, that those who are trying to persuade men of what is false are to know how to introduce their subject, so as to put the hearer into a friendly, or attentive, or teachable frame of mind, while the defenders of the truth shall be ignorant of that art? That the former are to tell their falsehoods briefly, clearly, and plausibly, while the latter shall tell the truth in such a way that it is tedious to listen to, hard to understand, and, in fine, not easy to believe it? That the former are to oppose them, to melt, to enliven, and to rouse them, while the latter shall in defense of the truth be sluggish, and frigid, and somnolent? Who is such a fool as to think this wisdom? Since, then, the faculty of eloquence is

available for both sides, and is of very great service in the enforcing either of wrong or right, why do not good men study to engage it on the side of truth, when bad men use it to obtain the triumph of wicked and worthless causes, and to further injustice and error?

### Chap. 3: The Proper Age and the Proper Means for Acquiring Rhetorical Skill.

4. But the theories and rules on this subject (to which, when you add a tongue thoroughly skilled by exercise and habit in the use of many words and many ornaments of speech, you have what is called eloquence or oratory) may be learnt apart from these writings of mine, if a suitable space of time be set aside for the purpose at a fit and proper age. But only by those who can learn them any one who cannot learn this art quickly can never thoroughly learn it at all. Whether this be true or not, why need we inquire? For even if this art can occasionally be in the end mastered by men of slower intellect, I do not think it of so much importance as to wish men who have arrived at mature age to spend time in learning it. It is enough that boys should give attention to it; and even of these, not all who are to be fitted for usefulness in the Church, but only those who are not yet engaged in any occupation of more urgent necessity, or which ought evidently to take precedence of it. For men of quick intellect and glowing temperament find it easier to become eloquent by reading and listening to eloquent speakers than by following rules for eloquence. And even outside the canon, which to our great advantage is fixed in a place of secure authority, there is no want of ecclesiastical writings, in reading which a man of ability will acquire a tinge of the eloquence with which they are written, even though he does not aim at this, but is solely intent on the matters treated of; especially, of course, if in addition he practice himself in writing, or dictating, and at last also in speaking, the opinions he has formed on grounds of piety them, and who speak with fluency and elegance, cannot always think of them when they are speaking so as to speak in accordance with them, unless they are discussing the rules themselves. Indeed, I think there are scarcely any who can do both things--that is, speak well, and; in order to do this, think of the rules of speaking while they are speaking. For we must be careful that what we have got to say does not escape us whilst we are thinking about saying it according to the rules of art. Nevertheless, in the speeches of eloquent men, we find rules of eloquence carried out which the speakers did not think of as aids to eloquence at the time when they were speaking, whether they had ever learnt them, or whether they had never even met with

them. For it is because they are eloquent that they exemplify these rules; it is not that they use them in order to be eloquent.

5. And, therefore, as infants cannot learn to speak except by learning words and phrases from those who do speak, why should not men become eloquent without being taught any art of speech, simply by reading and learning the speeches of eloquent men, and by imitating them as far as they can? And what do we find from the examples themselves to be the case in this respect? We know numbers who, without acquaintance with rhetorical rules, are more eloquent than many who have learnt these; but we know no one who is eloquent without having read and listened to the speeches and debates of eloquent men. For even the art of grammar, which teaches correctness of speech, need not be learnt by boys, if they have the advantage of growing up and living among men who speak correctly. For without knowing the names of any of the faults, they will, from being accustomed to correct speech, lay hold upon whatever is faulty in the speech of any one they listen to, and avoid it; just as city-bred men, even when illiterate, seize upon the faults of rustics.

### Chap. 4: The Duty of the Christian Teacher.

6. It is the duty, then, of the interpreter and teacher of Holy Scripture the defender of the true faith and the opponent of error, both to teach what is right and to refute what is wrong, and in the performance of this task to conciliate the hostile, to rouse the careless, and to tell the ignorant both what is occurring at present and what is probable in the future. But once that his hearers are friendly, attentive, and ready to learn, whether he has found them so, or has himself made them so the remaining objects are to be carried out in whatever way the case requires. If the hearers need teaching, the matter treated of must be made fully known by means of narrative. On the other hand, to clear up points that are doubtful requires reasoning and the exhibition of proof. If, however, the hearers require to be roused rather than instructed, in order that they may be diligent to do what they already know, and to bring their feelings into harmony with the truths they admit, greater vigor of speech is needed. Here entreaties and reproaches, exhortations and upbraidings, and all the other means of rousing the emotions, are necessary.

### Chap. 5: Wisdom of More Importance than Eloquence to the Christian Teacher.

7. And all the methods I have mentioned are constantly used by nearly every one in cases where

speech is the agency employed. But as some men employ these coarsely, inelegantly, and frigidly, while others use them with acuteness, elegance, and spirit, the work that I am speaking of ought to be undertaken by one who can argue and speak with wisdom, if not with eloquence, and with profit to his hearers, even though he profit them less than he would if he could speak with eloquence too. But we must beware of the man who abounds in eloquent nonsense, and so much the more if the hearer is pleased with what is not worth listening to, and thinks that because the speaker is eloquent what he says must be true. And this opinion is held even by those who think that the art of rhetoric should be taught; for they confess that “though wisdom without eloquence is of little service to states, yet eloquence without wisdom is frequently a positive injury, and is of service never.” If, then, the men who teach the principles of eloquence have been forced by truth to confess this in the very books which treat of eloquence, though they were ignorant of the true, that is, the heavenly wisdom which comes down from the Father of Lights, how much more ought we to feel it who are the sons and the ministers of this higher wisdom! Now a man speaks with more or less wisdom just as he has made more or less progress in the knowledge of Scripture; I do not mean by reading them much and committing them to memory, but by understanding them aright and carefully searching into their meaning. For there are who read and yet neglect them; they read to remember the words, but are careless about knowing the meaning. It is plain we must set far above these the men who are not so retentive of the words, but see with the eyes of the heart into the heart of Scripture. Better than either of these, however, is the man who, when he wishes, can repeat the words, and at the same time correctly apprehends their meaning.

8. Now it is especially necessary for the man who is bound to speak wisely, even though he cannot speak eloquently, to retain in memory the words of Scripture. For the more he discerns the poverty of his own speech, the more he ought to draw on the riches of Scripture, so that what he says in his own words he may prove by the words of Scripture; and he himself, though small and weak in his own words, may gain strength and power from the confirming testimony of great men. For his proof gives pleasure when he cannot please by his mode of speech. But if a man desire to speak not only with wisdom, but with eloquence also (and assuredly he will prove of greater service if he can do both), I would rather send him to read, and listen to, and exercise himself in imitating, eloquent men, than advise him to spend time with the teachers of rhetoric; especially if the men he reads and listens to are justly praised as having spoken, or as being accustomed to speak, not only with eloquence, but with wisdom also. For eloquent speakers are heard with pleasure; wise speakers with profit. And, therefore, Scripture does not say that the multitude of the eloquent, but “the multitude of the wise is the welfare of the world.” And as we must often swallow wholesome bitters, so we must always avoid unwholesome sweets. But what is better than wholesome sweetness or sweet wholesomeness? For the sweeter we try to make such things, the easier it is to make their wholesomeness serviceable. And so there are writers of the Church who have expounded the Holy Scriptures, not only with wisdom, but with eloquence as well; and there is not more time for the reading of these than is sufficient for those who are studious and at leisure to exhaust them.

## Justinian: The Digest and Institutes

*The Digest of Justinian*, C. H. Monro, ed. (Cambridge, MA, 1904);

*The Institutes of Justinian*, B. Moyle, trans. 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1896).

All texts from the Internet History Sourcebooks Project

### CORPUS IURIS CIVILIS, 6TH CENTURY

[Although Law as practiced in Rome had grown up as a type of case law, this was not the "Roman Law" known to the Medieval, or modern world. Now Roman law claims to be based on abstract principles of justice that were made into actual rules of law by legislative authority of the emperor or the Roman people. These ideas were transmitted to the Middle Ages in the great codification of Roman law carried throughout by the emperor Justinian (527-565). The *Corpus Iurus Civilis* was issued in Latin in three parts, *The Digest*, *the Institutes* and a textbook. Currently in the World there are just three widespread legal systems: the "Common Law" of the Anglo-American legal tradition, Islamic Sharia, and Roman Law [in, for instance, most of Europe, Scotland, Quebec and Louisiana]. Each was spread by different sorts of imperialism in the past.]

#### THE DIGEST: PROLOGUE

The Emperor Caesar, Flavius, Justinianus, Pious, Fortunate, Renowned, Conqueror, and Triumpher, Ever Augustus, to Tribonianus His Quaestor, Greeting:

With the aid of God governing Our Empire which was delivered to Us by His Celestial Majesty, We carry on war successfully. We adorn peace and maintain the Constitution of the State, and have such confidence in the protection of Almighty God that We do not depend upon Our arms, or upon Our soldiers, or upon those who conduct Our Wars, or upon Our own genius, but We solely, place Our reliance upon the providence of the Holy Trinity, from which are derived the elements of the entire world and their disposition throughout the globe.

Therefore, since there is nothing to be found in all things so worthy of attention as the authority of the law, which properly regulates all affairs both divine and human, and expels all injustice; We have found the entire arrangement of the law which has come down to us from the foundation of the City of Rome and the times of Romulus, to be so confused that it is extended to an infinite length and is not within the grasp of human capacity; and hence We were first induced to begin by examining what had been enacted by former most venerated princes, to correct their constitutions, and make them more easily understood; to the end that being included in a single Code, and having had removed all that is superfluous in resemblance and all iniquitous discord, they may afford to all men the ready assistance of true meaning.

After having concluded this work and collected it all in a single volume under Our illustrious name, raising

Ourself above small and comparatively insignificant matters, We have hastened to attempt the most complete and thorough amendment of the entire law, to collect and revise the whole body of Roman jurisprudence, and to assemble in one book the scattered treatises of so many authors which no one else has heretofore ventured to hope for or to expect and it has indeed been considered by Ourselves a most difficult undertaking, nay, one that was almost impossible; but with Our hands raised to heaven and having invoked the Divine aid, We have kept this object in Our mind, confiding in God who can grant the accomplishment of things which are almost desperate, and can Himself carry them into effect by virtue of the greatness of His power.

\* \* \*

We desire you to be careful with regard to the following: if you find in the old books anything that is not suitably arranged, superfluous, or incomplete, you must remove all superfluities, supply what is lacking, and present the entire work in regular form, and with as excellent an appearance as possible. You must also observe the following, namely: if you find anything which the ancients have inserted in their old laws or constitutions that is incorrectly worded, you must correct this, and place it in its proper order, so that it may appear to be true, expressed in the best language, and written in this way in the first place; so that by comparing it with the original text, no one can venture to call in question as defective what you have selected and arranged. Since by an ancient law, which is styled the *Lex Regia*, all the rights and power of the Roman people were transferred to the Emperor, We do not derive Our authority from that of other different compilations, but wish that it shall all be entirely Ours, for how can antiquity abrogate our laws?

### **THE INSTITUTES: SOURCES OF LAWS**

**J**ustice is the set and constant purpose which gives to every man his due. jurisprudence is the knowledge of things divine and human, the science of the just and the unjust....

The precepts of the law are these: to live honestly, to injure no one, and to give every man his due. The study of law consists of two branches, law public and law private. The former relates to the welfare of the Roman State; the latter to the advantage of the individual citizen. Of private law then we may say that it is of threefold origin, being collected from the precepts of nature, from those of the law of nations, or from those of the civil law of Rome.

The law of nature is that which she has taught all animals; a law not peculiar to the human race, but shared by all living creatures, whether denizens of the air, the dry land, or the sea. Hence comes the union of male and female, which we call marriage; hence the procreation and rearing of children, for this is a law by the knowledge of which we see even the lower animals are distinguished. The civil law of Rome, and the law of all nations, differ from each other thus. The laws of every people governed by statutes and customs are partly peculiar to itself, partly common to all mankind. Those rules which a state enacts for its own members are peculiar to itself, and are called civil law: those rules prescribed by natural reason for all men are observed by all people alike, and are called the law of nations. Thus the laws of the Roman people are partly peculiar to itself, partly common to all nations; a distinction of which we shall take notice as occasion offers....

Our law is partly written, partly unwritten, as among the Greeks. The written law consists of statutes, plebiscites, senatusconsults, enactments of the Emperors, edicts of the magistrates, and answers of those learned in the law. A statute is an enactment of the Roman people, which it used to make on the motion of a senatorial magistrate, as for instance a consul. A plebiscite is an enactment of the commonalty, such as was made on the motion of one of their own magistrates, as a tribune.... A senatusconsult is a command and ordinance of the senate, for when the Roman people had been so increased that it was difficult to assemble it together for the purpose of enacting statutes, it seemed right that the senate should be consulted instead of the people. Again, what the Emperor determines has the force of a statute, the people having conferred on him all their authority and power by the *lex regia*, which was passed concerning his office and authority. Consequently, whatever the Emperor settles by

rescript, or decides in his judicial capacity, or ordains edicts, is clearly a statute: and these are what are called constitutions.

## Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Excerpts)

Translated from the Latin by Richard Hooker © 1994, the Internet History Sourcebooks Project  
Read Boethius in *Philosophic Classics*, pp. 316-21, and the following excerpts.

### Fate and Providence<sup>1</sup> (Book IV, Prose 6)

It remains," I said, "for you to explain this apparent injustice I'm suffering now (that is, Boethius' imprisonment, torture, and impending execution)."

"The question you're asking," Lady Philosophy replied with a smile, "is the grandest of all mysteries, one which can never be explained completely to the human intellect, for, when one problem is removed, many more arise to take its place, and arise and arise unless the mind is keen and awake. For the problem you raise touches on a number of difficult questions: the simplicity of Providence, the nature of Fate, the unpredictability of Chance,<sup>2</sup> divine and human knowledge, predestination, and free will. You know the difficulty involved in these questions; nevertheless, I will try to answer them in the short space allotted us."

Then, as though she were beginning for the first time, Philosophy said, "The coming-into-being of all things, and the entire course that changeable things take, derive their causes, their order, and their forms from the unchanging mind of God. The mind of God set down all the various rules by which all things are governed while still remaining unchanged in its own simplicity. When the government of all things is seen as belonging to the simplicity and purity of the divine mind, we call it 'Providence.' When this government of all things is seen from the point of view of the things that change and move, that is, all things which are governed, from the very beginning of time we have called this 'Fate.' We can easily see that Providence and Fate are different if we think over the power of discernment each has. Providence is the divine reason, the divine *logos*, and only belongs to the highest ruler of all things: it is the perspective of the divine mind. 'Fate,' on the other hand, belongs to

the things that change and is the way in which Providence joins things together in their proper order. Providence views all things equally and at the same time, despite their diversity and seemingly infinite magnitude. Fate sets individual things in motion once their proper order and form has been established. In other words, Providence is the vision of the divine mind as it sees the unfolding in time of all things, and sees all these things all at once, whereas the unfolding of these events in time, seen as they unfold in time, is called Fate. Even though the two are different, the one depends on the other, for the complex unfolding of Fate derives from the unity of Providence. Think of it this way: a craftsman imagines in his mind the form of whatever thing he intends to make before he sets about making it; he makes it by producing in time through a succession of acts that thing that he originally conceived of in his mind. God, in his Providence, in a unified and simple way, orders all things that are to be done in time; Fate is the unfolding in time through a succession of acts in the order God has conceived. Therefore, whether or not Fate is worked out by angelic spirits serving God, or by some "soul," or nature, or the motions of the stars, or the devil himself, or by none or all of these, one thing you can be certain of: Providence is the unchangeable, simple, and unified form of all things which come into and pass out of existence, while Fate is the connection and temporal order of all those things which the divine mind decided to bring into existence. This leads to the conclusion that all things subject to Fate are in turn subject to Providence; therefore, Fate itself is subject to Providence.

"However, some things subject to Providence are not in turn subject to Fate. For example: consider the example of spheres orbiting around a central point. The sphere closest to the center inscribes a motion very much like the center itself, since its orbit is very small, whereas the outermost sphere circles about in a massively wide orbit which increases in size the farther the sphere retreats from the center. If any of these spheres were to occupy the center, it would become simple like the center and cease to move in space. In this very same way are things related to the divine mind: whatever is at the greatest distance from the divine mind is the most entangled in the nets of Fate; whatever is nearest to the divine mind approaches the center of everything. If anything should adhere directly to the divine mind, it ceases to move and frees itself from the necessities of Fate. We

---

<sup>1</sup> "Providence" means more than "foreknowledge" or "prevision," it also implies "governance." God not only knows everything, but somehow governs everything through a chain of causation.

<sup>2</sup> Boethius will later define Chance as the explanation given to any outcome which occurs from a sequence of causes which had other purposes in mind. For instance, someone plowing a field unearths a treasure chest; since the discovery of a treasure chest was not in the plowman's mind when he began to overturn the soil, he ascribes the discovery of treasure to "Chance." There are, Boethius will argue, causes that are "above" the causes we know or think about.

conclude that the changing course of Fate is to the immovable unity of Providence as reasoning is to intellect, as that which comes into and passes from existence is to that which always exists, as time is to eternity, as a circle to its center. Fate moves the heavens and all the stars, governs the basic elements and their combinations, and transforms these mixtures and combinations of elements in reciprocal change. Fate renews all mortal things by allowing them to reproduce into similar creatures. This same power, this Fate, connects all the actions and fortunes of humanity into an unbreakable chain of causation; these causes have their origin in unchangeable Providence, therefore, these causes, too, must be unchangeable. This is how things of the world are governed: all things are produced and affected by an unchangeable order of causes that originate in the unity and simplicity of the divine mind, and this unchangeable order of causes, because it never changes, controls the changeable things which would, without this governance, fall into chaos and disorder. Therefore, even though to you, since you do not understand the unchanging order that governs all things, the changeable things of this world may seem to be chaotic and disordered, still everything is governed by a set and proper order which directs everything in existence towards the Good. Nothing whatsoever is ever done or created for the sake of evil, which includes the actions of evil men, which also are directed towards the good even though their perverted and wretched wills do not conceive this. The order which derives from the center of all things does not turn anyone from their proper course.

“Now, your original question concerns the apparent confusion and disorder which seems to be manifestly shown forth when good men both prosper and suffer, and evil men both prosper and suffer and get both what they want and what they do not want. First, is human judgement so perfect that it can discern who is truly good and who is truly evil? If that were true, why do humans disagree so often, so that the same person is thought by one group to deserve the highest rewards and is thought by another group to deserve the most miserable punishments? Even if I were to grant that some people can somehow distinguish between good and evil people, would that person also be able to look inside the soul and, like a doctor examining a body, discern the inner condition of the person? . . . Now the health of the soul is virtue, and the sickness of the soul is vice. Now, who else is the physician of the soul but God, who preserves and rewards the good and punishes the wicked, and who sees in the great panorama of Providence what is best for everyone? Here is the great conclusion about Fate we have been tending to: divine wisdom understands and does what humanity,

in their ignorance, never can understand.

“Because of this ignorance, I will confine myself to explaining what your limited intellect can understand about the divine mind. You may see a man and judge him to be just and good; Providence, which sees all things including the inner condition of the man, may view the man completely otherwise. Thus the poet Lucan wrote that even though Cato was on the side of the conquered, the gods were on the side of the conquerors.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, when something happens which appears contrary to your opinion of right and wrong, it is your opinion which is wrong and confused, while the order of things is right. Let me give you an example. Suppose we have a man who is so fortunate that he seems to be the beloved of God and men. This man may be so weak that were he to suffer any adversity at all, even the slightest, he would buckle and collapse and forsake all virtue and goodness if he did not feel it brought him any profit. Therefore, God in his wise governance spares this poor man any adversity that might ruin his virtue, so that he who cannot bear suffering need not suffer. Suppose we have another man, perfectly virtuous, saintly, and truly beloved of God; this man may also be kept free from illness because it is not right for him to suffer any adversity at all. . . . To other people, Providence mixes both prosperity and adversity according to the condition of their souls; Providence gives suffering to those who would be ruined by too much prosperity, and tests others with sufferings and difficulties who would strengthen their virtue and patience with such sufferings. Most humans are of two types: some are terrified of burdens they can easily bear, while others dismiss burdens they are, in fact, unable to bear. Providence leads both these types through various trials to self-knowledge. Some people earn fame through glorious death or by not breaking down under the most horrific torture; these people prove that evil cannot overcome goodness: it is beyond doubt that these adversities were good, just, and beneficial to the ones who suffered them.

“Let us look at evil men. Sometime their lives are easy and sometimes painful; the source of both of

---

<sup>3</sup> Cato was considered one of the most virtuous men of Rome. In the Civil War between Caesar and Pompey, Cato sided with Pompey and killed himself when Caesar triumphed, preferring to die rather than live under an unjust regime. Lucan is the author of the epic poem about this battle, the *Pharsalia*, which sides with Pompey (even though Lucan is writing at the time of Nero) and paints Julius Caesar as a monster. The remark quoted here is meant to be facetious: Lucan believes Cato made the right judgement whereas the gods absurdly favored the most wicked man in the conflict.

these effects is the divine mind and both of these effects are wrought for the same reasons. Of course, no-one marvels when wicked people suffer, since everyone believes they deserve what they get, for such suffering and punishment prevents others from committing crimes and urges those who are suffering to reform their ways. Yet, evil men who prosper are an extremely powerful argument for good people, for they see, in the prosperity of the wicked, how they should judge the good fortune the wicked often enjoy. The prosperity of the wicked lead to another good, for if it is in the nature of a particular wicked man to be driven to violence and crime if he suffer poverty, Providence prevents this by granting him great wealth. Such a man might compare his evil nature to the good fortune he is enjoying and grow terrified at the possibility of losing his good fortune; he may then reform and behave uprightly as long as he fears losing his wealth. Some evil men who undeservedly enjoy worldly prosperity are driven to ruin by their reprobate character; some evil men have been given the right to heap adversity on the good so that the latter may be tested and strengthened. You see, there is just as much disagreement between evil men and other evil men as there is between evil and good men, because such evil men are frequently in conflict with themselves and their consciences, and are frequently wracked with guilt and self-hatred at their foolishness. From this Providence works the great mystery in which the evil make other evil men good. For when an evil man finds himself unjustly suffering because of other evil men, that man flares with anger and loathing for those evil men and returns to virtue because he cannot stand to be like the men he hates. To the divine mind alone are all evil things good, because the divine mind brings about good effects from these seemingly evil causes. All things are part of a predetermined order, so that when something moves from the place it has been assigned, it moves into a new order of things. As far as Providence is concerned, there is nothing, nothing whatsoever, that is left to Chance. . . .

“It is sufficient for humans to understand one and only one thing: God, who has created everything in nature, also governs all things and directs them towards good. Since God preserves all things, which are, after all, in his image, God also excludes necessarily, all evil from the boundaries of his government. If you consider only Providence as the governor of all things, you will conclude that evil, which seems to exist all over the universe, does not exist.

**Providence and Free Will  
(Book V, Prose 4 and 6)**

*If it is granted that Providence sees everything, (past, present, and future), that means that God, from*

*the perspective of Providence, knows in advance everything we are going to do. If that were true, it implies that human beings really don't have any choice in the matter, that our actions have been "predestined" before we even decide to act. Boethius is now convinced that there is no evil in the world, but is now puzzled by this problem of the relation between God's Providence and human "free will," for if all things are predestined, how can we be responsible for our actions? How can we be punished or rewarded if we are not responsible for our actions? The question hinges on the notion of "necessity," which simply defined, means that things happen because of some extrinsic rule either enforced from above or implanted in the very nature of things. Boethius is asking, is the universe "mechanistic"? If God knows things in the future, have their outcomes already been "determined"? Philosophy will answer the question by redefining "necessity." Pay close attention; this rather obtuse and high-falutin' argument will form one of the cornerstones in the development of Enlightenment rationality and science of which we are the heirs.*

**Prose 4**

Philosophy replied, “This is an old enigma about Providence and has occupied your mind for much of your life; no-one, however, has ever really thought about the problem carefully. The reason the problem is so enigmatic is because human reason can never really understand the unity and simplicity of the divine mind. If human beings could understand the divine mind, the problem would disappear. . . .

“Let us start with the following supposition: foreknowledge exists but does not impose necessity on the things it has foreknowledge of. If this were true, the will of human beings would still be independent and absolutely free. Your answer to this would be: even if foreknowledge does not impose necessity, it still indicates that the things it has foreknowledge of will necessarily happen, so that, even if there were no foreknowledge, the possible existence of such foreknowledge would show that the future outcome of all things is somehow necessary. In order to prove that foreknowledge can exist, we first need to prove that all things happen through necessity, since foreknowledge indicates such a necessity. If necessity did not govern things, then no foreknowledge could exist. All proofs depend not on outside arguments, but on deduction from proper and necessary causes. How can it happen, then, that the things which are foreseen will not happen?

However, we are not arguing that the things which are foreseen will not happen, only that they have nothing in their natures which make it necessary that they should happen, that is, that there can be

divine foreknowledge without necessity. Look now, we see things happening around us all the time . . . do you think these things are happening out of necessity just because you see them happening?"

"No," I replied. . . .

"Then, since these things happen without necessity, these very same things are not determined by necessity before they happen. Therefore, some things are destined to occur at some future time which are not determined by necessity. . . . For just as knowledge of things which are occurring right now before our eyes does not imply that they are happening out of necessity, so also divine foreknowledge of the things of the future imposes no necessity on those things or their outcomes.

"But you'll answer that the question concerns the existence of divine foreknowledge, that there can be no foreknowledge of things which do not occur by necessity. These two things, you'll say, are utterly incompatible: things foreseen must necessarily happen, and if this necessity were not there, those things could not be foreseen. You will say that any knowledge, including foreknowledge, qualifies as knowledge only if it knows things that are certain; so that if uncertain things (anything not governed by necessity) are known as certain (such as divine foreknowledge), this knowledge is, in reality, opinion, not knowledge. . . . The origin of your error in these matters is your assumption that whatever is known is known by the nature of the thing known. However, this assumption is false. Everything which is known is known not according to its own nature and power, but by the capacity and power of the knower.

"Confused? Let me give you an example: a body that is round is known to be round in one way through touch and in another way through vision. The vision, which remains at a distance from the round body, takes in the entire body all at once by means of reflected light, but the touch must make contact with the body and understand it in parts by moving about the surface. A human being is understood in different ways by the senses, the imagination, the reason, and the intellect: the senses understand the form as it is constituted in matter; the imagination understand the form without the matter; the reason goes far beyond this in comprehending the universal form of the species which inheres in particular things; the intellect is higher than all these, and passes beyond the universe and sees clearly with the mind the pure Form itself.

## Prose 6

"Since we have shown that knowledge is not based on the thing known but on the nature of the knower, let us consider the nature of the Divine

Being and what sort of knowledge it has. All rational creatures judge the Divine Being to be eternal, so we should start by explaining the nature of eternity, for this will reveal to us the nature of the Divine Being and the capacity of divine knowledge.

Eternity is the entire and perfect possession of endless life at a single instant. This becomes clear when we consider temporal things: whatever lives in time lives only in the present, which passes from the past into the future, and no temporal thing has such a nature that it can simultaneously embrace its entire existence, for it has not yet arrived at tomorrow and no longer exists in yesterday. Even one's life today exists only in each and every transient moment. Therefore, anything which exists in time . . . cannot properly be considered eternal, for anything in time does not embrace the infinity of life all at once, since it does not embrace the future or the past. Only that which understands and possesses the infinity of endless life, that lacks no future nor has lost any past, can properly be considered eternal. Such an eternal thing fully possesses itself, is always present to itself, and possesses all the infinity of changing time before itself. . . .

God should not be thought of as older than creation, but rather prior to it in terms of simplicity and unity. For the endless motion of the things in time imitate the single present of God's changeless intellect. . . . Since every intellect understands according to its own nature, and since God lives in an eternal present, with no past or future, His knowledge transcends the movement of time and exists only in a single, simple, unified present. This knowledge encompasses all things, the endless course of the past and the future, in one single vision as if the infinity of things past and present were occurring in a single instant. Therefore, if you consider the divine foreknowledge through which God knows all things, you will conclude that it is not a knowledge of things in the future but a knowledge of an unchanging present. That is why it is called Providence rather than "prevision," because it sees everything not from their inferior perspective but from above, as it were. Why then, do you think that the things which Providence sees in its eternal present are governed by necessity whereas the things which you see in your present you don't regard as being governed by necessity? Does your vision of things impose necessity on the things which are present before you?"

"Not at all," I replied.

Lady Philosophy continued, "If we may properly compare God's vision to human vision, He sees all things in an eternal present just as humans see things in a non-eternal present. If you consider divine vision in this light, it follows that divine foreknowledge

does not change the nature or the properties of individual things: it simply sees those things as present which we would regard as future. The intellect of God is not confused or changeable: He knows all things intuitively, whether these things happen of necessity or not. Think of it this way: you may happen to see at one and the same time a man walking down the street and the sun shining in the sky; even though you see both of these at one and the same time, you recognize that one action is a voluntary action, the man walking down the street, and the other is necessary, the shining of the sun. In this manner, the divine mind looks down on all things and, without intervening and changing the nature of the things it is viewing, sees things as eternally present but which, in respect to us, belong to the future. Therefore, when God knows that something is going to happen in the future, he may know a thing which will not happen out of necessity, but voluntarily; God's foreknowledge does not impose necessity on things.

"But you might answer that whatever God foresees as happening must necessarily be happening. Now, if we were to be absolutely precise about this word, "necessity," I would have to agree with your objection. But I would answer that a future event may be necessary as regards God's knowledge or vision of it, but voluntary and undetermined in regards to its own nature. How can I say this? There are two types of necessity. One is simple, as when we say that all humans are necessarily mortal. The other is conditional, as when you see a man walking, it is necessary that he's walking, or else you wouldn't see him walking. For whenever a thing is known, it is known as it is and as it must be. This conditional necessity, however, does not imply simple necessity, for it is not caused by the particular nature of the thing, but on some condition added to the thing. No necessity forces the walking man to walk: he has voluntarily chosen to move himself forward using his feet. However, as long as he's walking, he is necessarily moving himself forward using his feet. In the same manner, if Providence sees anything in its eternal present, it follows that this thing exists necessarily in the way Providence sees it, but it may not exist the way it does out of some necessity in its nature. So God sees future things that are the result of human free will; these things, then, are necessary, on the condition that they are known by God, but, considered only in themselves, they are still free in their own natures. . . .

Since all this is true, we can conclude that the freedom of human will remains completely independent of God's foreknowledge, and the laws which prescribe rewards and punishments are just since they provide rewards and punishments for the

free actions of the human will rather than reward or punish things that happen of necessity. God sees us from above and knows all things in his eternal present and judges our future, free actions, justly distributing rewards and punishments . . .