

Guido Stucco. *Not Without Us: A Brief History of the Forgotten Catholic Doctrine of Predestination During the Semipelagian Controversy*. Tuscon, AZ: Fenestra Books, 2006. 294 pp. Paper. ISBN: 1-58736-533-2. \$21.95.

In this review I shall provide an overview of the contents of the book including its purpose and conclusions, interact with its scholarship, and draw attention to its contributions to the study of the historical development of the doctrine of predestination.

The purpose of *Not Without Us* is two fold: “to trace the historical development of the Catholic doctrine of predestination and to present a concise summary of the views expressed by ecclesiastical writers during the Semipelagian controversy that took place in the V and VI centuries” (p. 11). The subtitle of the book explains further its contents. According to Stucco, most Catholics are unaware of the church’s teachings on predestination, hence the term “forgotten.”

Although the subtitle refers to “*the* forgotten Catholic doctrine” in the singular, *Not Without Us* presents three Catholic views of predestination that emerged from the Semipelagian controversy. One position sees predestination simply in terms of divine foreknowledge of free human choices in the future. This was the view of the Semipelagians, Arnobius the Younger and Faustus of Riez. On the other side is the position headed by Augustine and expressed in the writings of Fulgentius of Ruspe. It asserts particular election by God’s sovereignty and irresistible grace. A mediating view, that Stucco says is expressed in Prosper of Aquitaine, Pope Leo I, and the Council of Orange, attributes all of salvation to grace, but grace that does not necessarily involve particular election. This view Stucco calls the Magisterial view, the moderate Augustinian view, and “Arausican Spirituality” after the Latin name for the city of Orange. One of the book’s conclusions is that a Catholic today has the freedom to choose, from among these three views, the position most congenial to him (p. 161). According to Stucco, his Catholic upbringing and theological education passed on to him a Semipelagian view of predestination. However, because of his research on the Semipelagian controversy, he has shifted his allegiance to the moderate Augustinian view reflected in the canons of the Second Council of Orange in 529.

A refreshing read, *Not Without Us* is not a sociology of religion text masquerading as historical theology, and Augustine is not the bad guy. While the trend of many church historians is to reduce ecclesiastical controversies to little more than political power struggles, this book is theological throughout. Additionally, the author does not follow that strand of patristic scholarship which portrays Augustine as never having completely abandoned Manichaeism. Stucco’s avoidance of these Herculean pillars is laudable.

In the introduction, he lays out four central issues that were debated during the Semipelagian controversy—the origin of a person’s faith, the roles of human freedom and God’s grace in a person’s salvation, predestination, and final perseverance. His observation that certain Semipelagian views eventually became official Catholic doctrine, including the universality of God’s grace and the notion of cooperation of the human will in the process of salvation, I found insightful.

Stucco divides the Semipelagian controversy, which lasted over a century, into five phases, moving beyond Rebecca Weaver’s 1996 study which separated the debate into two phases. In reality, the Semipelagian controversy is the sum of about twenty different brief historical episodes, each with its own characters stemming from a variety of localities, producing distinctive texts, and wrestling with unique questions, albeit related to the four central issues discussed above. The inaccuracy that results from amalgamating these episodes can be illustrated by focusing on Fulgentius’ writings on grace. In 517, Fulgentius in Sardinia and Monimus in Carthage, both adherents of Augustine’s theology of grace, corresponded on whether their mentor

taught predestination to evil. The fruit of this encounter was Fulgentius' treatise *Ad Monimum*. In 519, a verbal dispute broke out between a Scythian monk named John Maxentius and an Algerian bishop named Possessor, both of whom were residing in Constantinople at the time. The spat erupted over the principle, "It is ours to choose, and God's to complete," over the canonical status of Faustus of Riez' treatise on grace, and over interpretation of the Pauline passage about Jacob and Esau. Maxentius' views are contained in a letter and a few *libelli*. Maxentius and his followers then wrote to Fulgentius, stated their opinion on these issues, and asked for his response. This resulted in Fulgentius' *Letter 17* written in the name of the African bishops and Fulgentius' *On the Truth of Predestination and Grace*. If a scholar were to summarize Fulgentius' contribution to the Semipelagian controversy as one who took an Augustinian position against Semipelagians, such a statement would be deficient at best. For, while in both episodes Fulgentius touched upon predestination, in the former Fulgentius taught against hyper-predestinarianism, while in the latter he asserted predestination against its Semipelagian deniers. Therefore, although episodes of the Semipelagian controversy contain commonalities, applying the principle of *e pluribus unum* is the best means for full comprehension of the issues. In other words, the whole of the Semipelagian controversy can be grasped optimally when each of the historical episodes with its unique characters, questions, and texts, is thoroughly examined. *Not Without Us* advances scholarship in this direction.

Chapter one focuses upon the Hadrumetum crisis and the disagreement of the Massalians with Augustine's doctrine. It summarizes ten texts from this period including Augustine's *On Grace and Free Will*, *On Correction and Grace*, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, and *On the Gift of Perseverance*, John Cassian's *Conference 13 on the Protection of God*, and various letters. To this chapter could be added a letter of Januarius to Valentinus edited by Germain Morin in "Lettres inédites de s. Augustin et du prêtre Januarien dan l'affaire des moines d'Adrumète," *Revue Bénédictine* 18 (1901):241-256 at 249-50. When the monks at Hadrumetum were asking for clarification of Augustine's doctrine of grace, their abbot Valentinus wrote to a priest named Januarius for his opinion. Januarius' reply, restricting the word "all" in 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, and Romans 5:18, is significant because it shows that from the very beginning of the Semipelagian controversy Augustine was not alone in such interpretations.

Chapter two treats writings by Prosper of Aquitaine and Arnobius the Younger. Stucco utilizes the best and latest research, attributing both the *Indiculus* and pseudo-Augustinian *Hypomnesticon* to Prosper. The chapter spends eight pages examining the contents of the *Hypomnesticon* and includes a paraphrase of its sixth chapter which deals with predestination. This is a great contribution to scholarship on Prosper and Semipelagianism, as no English translation of this text exists, and the last English-language study of this text by Chisholm dates from about forty years ago. The study of Arnobius in chapter two of *Not Without Us*, along with the translation of Books 2 & 3 of his *Praedestinatus* in Appendix D, make up the book's main contribution, and is reason enough for patristic scholars and anyone interested in the history of predestination to purchase the book. *Praedestinatus*, dating from the 430s, is a scathing attack on predestination, which is presented as the culmination of all heresies. Existing in very few manuscripts and printed editions, it was recently edited in Volume 25b of Brepols' *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*. Since Stucco still owns the copyright to *Not Without Us*, I highly recommend that he submit his translation of Arnobius' *Praedestinatus* to the Ancient Christian Writers or Fathers of the Church series. Its publication in one of those series will ensure wider dissemination and perpetuity for the duration of that series.

Because some have attributed *On the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart* to Apponius, and have dated it in the mid-fifth century, Stucco discusses this text in chapter two. However, I think it is better to follow Morin, Plinval, Ferguson, Martinetto, TeSelle, and Di Berardini in attributing it to Pelagius and assigning it before the year 411. The most thorough examination of the Pelagian context of *On the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart* is Appendix Two (pp 313-28) of Carole C. Burnett's dissertation "God's Self-Revelation in the Theology of Pelagius" (Catholic

University of America, 1998). However, I am grateful for Stucco's synopsis of this unique patristic text interpreting Romans 9, a treatise which is in need of a critical edition and English translation.

Chapter three of *Not Without Us*, entitled "Fulgentius of Ruspe and Faustus of Riez," begins with an analysis of the contents of Faustus' *De gratia*. Stucco enumerates ten views of Augustinians that Faustus, the quintessential representative of the Semipelagian position, opposed. The chapter then turns its attention to the Augustinian, Fulgentius, giving a five page summary of his *Letter 15*, *Letter 17*, and *On the Truth of Predestination and Grace*, all texts that did not make it into Robert Eno's 1997 translation of selected works of Fulgentius in Volume 95 of *Fathers of the Church*.

Toward the end of chapter three Stucco reviews the contents of an obscure mid-fifth century pseudo-Fulgentian writing entitled *Liber de praedestinatione et gratia*. Very little secondary literature has been written on it and no English translation of it exists. Nevertheless, it is significant for its correlation of predestination with the attribute of divine timelessness. In the development of this view of predestination, the text serves as a bridge between Augustine in the early fifth century who hinted at it and Boethius in the early sixth century, who elaborated upon it in his *Consolation of Philosophy*.

If there were to be a revision of *Not Without Us*, I would suggest the following change in the order of the texts reviewed in chapter three—that the *Letter of Peter the Deacon* be coupled with Fulgentius' response to it, *Letter 17*; and that Fulgentius' *Letter 15* be joined with his *On the Truth of Predestination*, since *Letter 15* is probably the cover letter to that treatise.

Chapter four, the shortest of them, covers Caesarius of Arles and the Second Council of Orange. It provides a three page summary of Caesarius' brief treatise *De gratia*. This is yet another contribution to scholarship, since little if any secondary literature on it exists. My dissertation, "Fulgentius of Ruspe on the Saving Will of God" (Saint Louis University, 2004), 207-14, contains a translation of it. After Caesarius, chapter four presents the teachings of Orange on grace and free will, and cites many of its canons.

Chapter five is a summary of the major figures, texts, and doctrinal issues of the Semipelagian controversy. Those who have little toleration for Semipelagianism may not be happy with Stucco's refusal to label Semipelagianism as a heresy; others may find it irenic. One feature in this chapter which I have never come across in studies on Semipelagianism is Stucco's relation of these issues with the possibility of the salvation of those who never heard of Jesus (pp. 18, 143-4, 155-6). To me, this seems more reflective of a modern Catholic concern than a question that disquieted the characters in the fifth and sixth century Semipelagian controversy.

In reading the conclusion I found myself becoming defensive at its statement that "the Augustinian party was guilty of escalating the theological debate by invoking the charge of heresy and the label of Pelagianism to discredit their opponents" (p. 154). While the statement may have merit, in my opinion, the Semipelagians were much nastier in their polemics than the Augustinians. Faustus threatened the priest Lucidius with excommunication because he believed in predestination, and made him subscribe to a document very intolerant of strict Augustinian views. Arnobius called predestinarians heretics and "antichrists." And Vincent of Lerins attributed to the Augustinians the view that when mothers commit incest with their sons they are doing this by the will of God.

Augustinian-minded readers of *Not Without Us* may be pleased with Stucco's assessment that "the Augustinian view of predestination can withstand any biblical and theological objection leveled against it by fellow Christians. In other words, I found no conclusive evidence that it is unbiblical and 'unfounded.' On the contrary, I have concluded that it is logically consistent and that it forms a homogeneous whole" (p. 156).

Appendices A & B contain citations from Scripture pertaining to God's grace and the issues which were debated in the Semipelagian controversy. Appendix C shows the doctrine of grace in various prayers from the Roman Missal, illustrating the tension that still exists between

Augustinian and Semipelagian theology in the Roman church's contemporary prayer life. Appendix D contains a seventy page translation of Arnobius' *Praedestinatus*. A bibliography and endnotes follow. Endnotes #287-306 are missing from page 293.

The book has already encouraged me to further research, namely, to seek the identity of Arnobius' opponent in *Praedestinatus*. I narrowed the choices down to Augustine, Quodvultdeus, and Prosper, and discovered that good cases can be made for each. However, I believe I have found literary evidence in Book 3 of *Praedestinatus* that Arnobius' work was directed specifically against Prosper. On page 204 of Stucco's translation Arnobius writes, "We condemn them [the predestinarians] not by resorting to authority but by employing true arguments." This statement seems to be a direct reaction to and stab at Prosper's statement in *On Grace and Free Will Against Cassian the Lecturer*, 21.4: "Accordingly, the wicked errors of such men must be countered less by way of argument than by the weight of authority" (ACW 32:136). This literary correspondence may also help date the *Praedestinatus* more accurately. Corroborating my suggestion that Arnobius' nemesis was Prosper is the circumstantial evidence that both were living in or near Rome in the 430s. Arnobius' views on grace are also contained in his Psalms commentary, which may shed light upon the proposed interchange between Arnobius and Prosper on predestination. Interestingly, Prosper also wrote a Psalms commentary during his tenure at Rome. Therefore, the question of a possible relationship between the two Psalms commentaries is worth exploring.

Not Without Us, written a decade after Rebecca Weaver's well-received study of the Semipelagian controversy, makes significant contributions to scholarship. It offers analysis of and commentary upon a host of Latin texts seldom studied, and provides the first English translation of Arnobius' *Praedestinatus*. Stucco is working on a second volume tracing the history of predestination from the Council of Orange to Thomas Aquinas. I very much look forward to it. If it will be anything like this book, I anticipate that it will shed light upon Latin texts on predestination from medieval Christendom that are rarely investigated.

Francis X. Gumerlock