

Origenes Alexandrinus

by John Gill

This sermon explores the theological contributions of Origen of Alexandria, particularly his views on predestination and grace.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:4

Topics: "Predestination", "Divine Sovereignty"

Description

John Gill discusses the theological contributions of Origen of Alexandria, particularly his views on predestination and the pre-existence of souls. He highlights Origen's belief that souls are predestined based on their previous actions, a notion that has been criticized and rejected by other theologians like Jerome. Gill emphasizes that while Origen's writings contain contradictions, he also affirms the concept of divine predestination and grace, asserting that God's election is based on His will rather than human merit. The sermon explores the complexities of Origen's thoughts and their implications for understanding God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

Transcript

The

CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH.

Part 4

Chapter 1--Of Predestination

Section 8--Origenus Alexandrinus. A.D. 230.

Origen[1] of Alexandria, sometimes surnamed Adamantius, was born about A.D. 185; his father's name was Leonidas, who suffered martyrdom, A.D. 202. He succeeded Clement in the school of Alexandria, was ordained a presbyter at Caesarea about A.D. 228, and died at Tyre, A.D. 253. He wrote much, and many things are still extant under his name, great part of which are only translations by Rufinus, who took great liberty in altering and interpolating his works; so that it is not easy to know when we read Origen, or when Rufinus.

Perhaps many of the errors and mistakes he is charged with may be owing to the ill usage he has met with this way. It is said to be a tenet of his, that souls pre-existed in another state; and that according as they

behaved themselves in the other world, they either obtained the order of angels, or were thrust down to the earth, and united to bodies predestinated either to life or death, according to their past merits, which he sometimes calls,[2] preceding causes and more ancient ones.

This notion of his is mentioned by Jerome,[3] and rejected by him; who rightly observes, that men are chosen in Christ, not because they were or had been holy, but that they might be so. Origen's sentiments on this head were very peculiar, and are not allowed of on either side of the question before us; and therefore passages of this kind are very injudiciously cited by Dr. Whitby,[4] in this controversy. Indeed it cannot be denied, but that there are other passages in[5] the writings of this father which countenance the doctrine of predestination, upon the foresight of man's future purposes, desires, and actions in this life, which do not accord with his above notion, and shows either that he contradicts himself, or has not had justice done him.

And though one might not expect to meet with any thing in favor of the absolute and unconditional scheme in such a writer, yet there are several things said by him which agree with it. And, 1. He agrees with us in his sentiments of prescience and predetermination in general; he held, that nothing comes by chance, but that all things are appointed by God; yea, that the case of lots is not fortuitous, but according to divine predestination. Thus, speaking of the division of the land of Canaan to the Israelites, he has these words,[6] "Upon casting lots the inheritance is distributed to the people of God, and the lot moved, non.616 fortuitu, sed secundum hoc quod praedestinatum est a Deo, "not by chance, but according to what is predestinated by God."

His sense of the prescience of God is,[7] that "foreknowledge is not the cause of things future, but the truth he says is, that to esomenon aition tou toian di einai ten peri antou prognosin, that a thing being future, is the cause of God's foreknowledge of it; for not because it is known it is future, but because it will be, therefore it is known." To the same propose he says in another place,[8] "Not therefore any thing will be because God knows it to be future, but because it is future it is known by God before it comes to pass."

Which entirely accords with what we assert, that God did not decree any thing because he foresaw it, but he foresaw it because he decreed it. 2. He gives plain intimations, as if he thought that there was a certain number of men chosen by God, and given to Christ. By the elect in Matthew 24:30, who will be gathered together from the four winds, he understands[9] "all that are loved by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus." God, he says,[10] is indeed the God of all, tes ekloges esti Theos, He is the God of the election, and much more of the Savior of the election."

And elsewhere mentioning these words in John 17:5. And now, Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was; he makes this observation,[11] "the world here is to be understood of our world above the earth, apo gar toutou tou kosmou edoke to uio o pater anthropous, for out of this world the Father hath given men to the Son, for whom alone the Savior prays the Father, and not for the whole world of men." "And again may it be enquired, he says,[12] whether all men may be called the servants of this king, or some truly whom he foreknew and predestinated?" 3.

He asserts a predestination to grace, and particularly to faith, which is not consistent with predestination, upon a foresight of it. In one of his books he has these words:[13] "It seems that the knowledge of God is greater than to be comprehended by human nature, hence are so many mistakes in men concerning God, but by the goodness and love of God to man, and through wondrous and divine grace, the knowledge of God comes epi tous prognosei Theou pronatalephstentas, to them who were before comprehended in

the foreknowledge of God; or, according to the version of Gelenius, who to this were predestinated."

And in another part of his works, speaking of the conjunction of angels to men, and their care of them, he says,[14] that "an angel begins from the time of a man's conversion and faith to be joined to prognosthenti kata ton de ton chronon pisteuein kai proristhenti, to him that is foreknown and preordained to believe at that, even at that very time;" which shows that he held, that some are predestinated to believe, and that at a certain time; and so it has been, and is, that as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 4.

It is also manifest, from a certain passage of his, that he held that election does not spring from men's works, but from the mere will and pleasure of God; his words are these:[15] "All these things look this way, that the apostle may prove this;" That if either Isaac or Jacob, for their merits, had been chosen to those things which they, being in the flesh sought after, and, by the works of the flesh, had deserved to be justified; then the grace of their merit might belong to the posterity of flesh and blood also, but now, since, *electio eorum non ex operibus facta sit, sed ex proposito Dei, ex vocantis arbitro*, "their election does not arise from works, but from the purpose of God, from the will of him that calleth;" the grace of the promise is not fulfilled in the children of the flesh, "but in the children of God; that is, such, who likewise, as they, may be *ex proposito elegantur*, chosen by the purpose of God, and adopted for sons." ENDNOTES:

[1] Vide Fabricii Bibl. Graec. 50:5, c. 1, s. 26, p. 213.

[2] Origen. Philocal. c. 21. p. 65. Heri Arcwn, 50:2, c. 9, fol. 133; 50:3, c. 1, fol. 142, etc.; 3, fol. 145; and c. 5, fol. 148.

[3] Hieron. ad Avitum, tom. 2. p. 51; L. adv. Ruffin. Apolog. p. 68, M. 69; B. Comment. in Ephesians p. 90, C. D. E.

[4] Discourse, etc. p. 98; ed. 2. 96, 97.

[5] Vide Origin, in Rom.p. 424, 425; ed. Huet. in Numbers tom. 1:fol. 117; in Romans 1:1, fol. 133, tom. in. & 50:7, fol. 191, 192.

[6] In Josuam Homil. 23, fol. 173, H.

[7] Comment. in Genesis p. 8.

[8] In Romans 1:7, fol. 199, E.

[9] In Matthew Homil. 30, fol. 62, B.

[10] Comment. in Joannem, p. 48.

[11] Com. in Matthew p. 326.

[12] Ibid. p. 345.

[13] Contra cells. 1. 7, p. 361, 362.

[14] Comment. in Matthew p. 332.

[15] In Rom.I. 7, fol. 195, G.

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