

# Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

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Volume 22 | Issue 2

Article 5

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4-1-2005

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### Recommended Citation

Cross, Richard (2005) "Anti-Pelagianism and the Resistibility of Grace," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 22 : Iss. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol22/iss2/5>

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# ANTI-PELAGIANISM AND THE RESISTIBILITY OF GRACE

Richard Cross

I argue that accepting the resistibility of grace does not entail accepting either Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism, and offer seven models for the offer of grace that allow for the resistibility of grace: respectively, covenant theology, synergism, and five models that posit no natural human act of acceptance (while allowing for natural human acts of resistance). Of these, I conclude that all but covenant theologies avoid semi-Pelagianism, and that all avoid Pelagianism, as defined at the Second Council of Orange.

*'If anyone says that a person's free will when moved and roused by God gives no co-operation by responding to God's summons and invitation to dispose and prepare itself to obtain the grace of justification; and that it cannot, if it so wishes, dissent but, like something inanimate, can do nothing at all and remains merely passive: let him be anathema.'* (Council of Trent, session 6, canon 4)

## I

In what follows, I should like to consider a variety of positions on the Christian doctrines of justification and grace, in an attempt to see whether the views I discuss can plausibly be said to avoid both Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. What unites the various positions that I consider is the belief that justifying grace—justification—is *resistible*. Any theologian systematically committed to the irresistibility of grace *eo ipso* avoids Pelagianism. Pelagianism and the irresistibility of grace are logically incompatible. (This point will, I hope, become clearer in a moment, once I have offered a definition of 'Pelagianism.')

The reason for considering the problem is that it is not at all obvious that it is possible to reject Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism, while yet holding on to the resistibility of grace. Calvinist theologians, in particular, are skeptical here. I hope to show that they should not be. Nevertheless, I shall not be interested in any historical figures, and my focus here is merely conceptual. I hope, however, that the considerations I offer may be of some help in trying to evaluate past debates, patristic, medieval, and Reformation. Finally, by way of introduction, I shall not be concerned with arguments for or against the resistibility of grace. My interest is solely in determining whether any view that is committed to the resistibility of grace is *ipso facto* Pelagian.

First, then, relevant definitions. According to Canon 9 of the Second



Council of Orange (529), every good act that we do is brought about in us by God. In line with the Catholic tradition, I understand 'good' here to mean "salutary," and that the view that is being condemned is that we can in any sense cause our own salvation. Thus, Canon 3 of the same council condemns the view that the grace of God "can be conferred by human invocation," a condemnation that (if read as synonymous with Canon 9) is in accord with the interpretation of 'good' I am presupposing here.<sup>1</sup> And this gives us the "Pelagian" view that we somehow cause our own justification. Note that if grace is irresistible, then we have no causal role in the reception of grace, and Pelagianism is thus *ipso facto* false.

Canon 5 of the Council condemns the view that the beginning of faith in us is not through the gift of grace. And this constitutes the rejection of the "semi-Pelagian" view that the beginning of our justification is from us, not from God. The semi-Pelagian view is distinct from the Pelagian since the view that the beginning of our justification is from us does not entail that view that our justification is in any sense caused by ourselves.

Before continuing, we should note that the issues I consider here do not presuppose or require any particular doctrines of justification or atonement. In terms of justification, my interest is merely in how justification is acquired, not in what it consists in. (I use 'justification' synonymously with 'salvation'; this usage is not intended to imply any particular theory of justification.) In terms of the atonement, we should note that there is no obvious *conceptual* tie between justification and any particular theory of the atonement. In fact, there is no manifest conceptual tie between justification and atonement at all. There is no obvious conceptual reason why justification cannot proceed quite independently of Christ's saving work. Traditionally, of course, justification is linked to the atonement in the sense that the atonement is a necessary condition for justification. Discerning whether or not such a claim is true is well beyond my aims here, and whatever conclusion were held would make no difference to my argument.<sup>2</sup>

In what follows, I shall consider seven different views that accept the resistibility of grace, and assess whether the various views are able to avoid Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. There are clearly more possible views than these, more or less Pelagian; I have made my choice with an eye merely on the rejection of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. The question, of course, is whether or not some view manages to avoid the claims that we cause our own salvation, or that we initiate our own salvation. Now, it is very hard to work out what is the sufficient *cause* of some state of affairs, and almost as hard to work out what counts as the initiation of a process that results in a certain state of affairs. I do not attempt to provide principled reasons in favor of some analysis over another, partly because I am not sure that such principled reasons exist in every case. I rely rather on intuitions. These seem to me firm enough to bear the weight that I am putting on them—not least because the kinds of intuitions that I appeal to would, I think, be regarded as sufficient and reasonable for the sorts of moral judgement that we have to make in daily life (and perhaps even for legal purposes). But I leave the plausibility of my intuitions here to the reader to judge.

## II

First, let me begin with what is, from a soteriological point of view, the weakest theory: the covenant theology of some late-medievals and certain Arminians. The essence of this view is that God promises to justify—or at least to offer grace to—someone who satisfies certain minimal ethical conditions. (For the medievals, the relevant condition is for a person “to do what is in him” [i.e. to do the best he can]; for the Arminians, the condition is to lead a minimally good life.)

Is such a view Pelagian? I doubt it. Consider the following general case. Person  $x$  freely promises to do action  $a$  if person  $y$  acts in way  $w$ . We would not, I think, say that  $y$  causes  $a$  in the case that  $y$  acts in way  $w$ . We would say that  $x$  causes  $a$ . So, as a case of such a promise or covenant, if God freely promises to justify me in the case that I satisfy certain moral requirements, justification is caused not by me but by God.

There is an immediate objection to this line of reasoning. God is necessarily good, and so, as a matter of necessity, keeps his promises. All other agents are, in principle, peccable. And it may be that the reason why we assume  $x$  causes  $a$  in the case that  $y$  acts in way  $w$ , even if  $x$  has promised to cause  $a$  in the case that  $y$  acts in way  $w$ , is that—given  $x$ 's peccability— $y$ 's action is not sufficient for  $a$ .  $x$  could always break his promise. And it may be that in the case of an agent who cannot break his promise, we would want to claim that the cause of the ultimate effect is simply the prior agent— $y$ 's causing  $w$  is sufficient for  $x$  to cause  $a$ , and  $y$  is thus the ultimate cause of  $a$ .

I believe, however, that I can buttress my basic intuition here by considering how we assign blame and praise. Consider a case in which some agent is hard-wired in a way that prevents him from ever breaking a promise. The agent I have in mind, however, is not conspicuously good in any other way. Suppose that this agent freely promises to do a bad deed every time I act in accordance with an obligation of mine. It seems to me that I am not to blame for the bad deeds that this person causes, even if I am aware of the promise that he has made. And there is a reason for this. The agent's promise was *free*. He did not have to make it. It is his free promise that causes him to act in the way that he does, *not* my actions. *Pari passu*, then, it is God's free covenant that causes my salvation in this medieval and Arminian view.

There is an objection that would be made to this by any card-carrying Calvinist. Does the view not amount to my actions' *meriting* justification? The simple answer here is, No. Forget, for the moment, about the divine promise. Merit would only arise in the case that my actions placed God under some sort of obligation to justify me, or something functionally equivalent to obligation.<sup>3</sup> And—setting aside a divine promise—such an obligation or quasi-obligation could arise only if the nature of my actions were such as morally to require justification as a reward. (In such a case, a promise to reward the actions would be superfluous if the rewarding agency were necessarily good.) Still, nothing about my account thus far entails that the minimal requirements that need to be satisfied for justification are such that justification is *morally* necessitated by them (or necessitat-

ed in some way that does duty for moral necessitation in the case that God is not morally good). Consider the reward assigned on the basis of a free divine promise. If there is merit here at all, it is what the scholastics used to call merit *de congruo*—the *appropriateness* of God's rewarding an action. In fact we do not even need to talk of merit *de congruo* at all. God's promise could be wholly gratuitous, and nothing about my actions would have any intrinsic meritorious value—they would be, other than the divine promise to reward them, wholly valueless, and not be such as to make it even appropriate for God to reward them. In any case the only obligation is imposed by God on himself. It seems to me that there is nothing Pelagian about this.

Is the covenant view that I am considering here semi-Pelagian in the way that I have defined this latter term? I suspect that it is, though I do not know of a knock-down argument to show this. Clearly, the question is: what initiates the process of justification in this covenant theology? There are two possible contenders: God's promise, and the human person's satisfaction of the minimal moral requirements for justification. Although there do not seem to be any decisive arguments here, I believe nevertheless that a reasonably powerful case can be made to the effect that it is the human action, on this covenant theology, that is the initiation of justification. The argument considers the relationship between the promise or covenant, on the one hand, and the process of justification, on the other. The basic intuition is that the promise is, causally, too remote from any particular instance of justification to count as the initiation of such an instance. The promise is more like a general condition for justification: it is more like the "machinery" of justification than a causal part in the process itself. The promise is a way of setting up a process of justification. But what initiates the process is the human action. The promise is not a particular divine action preventively giving grace to a particular individual. The actual gift is *subsequent* to the individual's acting in the minimally required way.<sup>4</sup>

An analogy may help here. Consider a machine that is used to manufacture sausages. The machine is a general condition for the manufacture of sausages. But we would not say that the mere presence of the machine initiates the production of a particular sausage. We would say that the sausage manufacturer does this when he starts the machine running. Analogously, then, I conclude that covenant theologies are indeed semi-Pelagian in the sense defined. Still, I do not believe that this argument would be sufficient to convince someone very strongly wedded to the anti-Pelagian structure of a covenant theology. Such a person could insist that God's promise counts as the initiation of every process of justification, and thus hold that a covenant theology is neither Pelagian nor semi-Pelagian.

### III

The six remaining theologies that I consider all insist that the initiation of an individual's justification is God's active offer of grace to that individual. Such views, then, are by definition not semi-Pelagian. Nevertheless, since, on the theories I am considering here, grace is resistible, any active offer of grace requires some form of acceptance. This acceptance is not in any

sense *prior* to the actual particular offer of grace to any individual. Covenants or promises are irrelevant here. A covenant of the kind described above is required only if the offer of grace itself is to be made conditional on the satisfaction of certain minimal ethical requirements.

Since all the views that I have in mind hold to the resistibility of grace, it is important to understand, as a preliminary point, that the acceptance of grace, provided that it consist in some positive act, cannot itself be the necessary result of any divine gift. For consider acceptance on the assumption that it is itself a divine gift. Either this gift is resistible or not. If it is irresistible, then grace is irresistible. If the gift of acceptance is resistible, then the gift of acceptance itself needs accepting. Consider this second-level acceptance. If it is an irresistible divine gift, then grace is irresistible. If it is resistible, then we will need another divine gift to allow us to accept it, and so on *ad infinitum*. Acceptance, therefore, cannot be a divine gift if grace is to be resistible, and, by the same token, anyone who holds that acceptance is such a gift will have to be committed to the irresistibility of grace. What I shall be concerned with in the rest of this short article is seeing whether it is possible to combine robust anti-Pelagianism with some view according to which the human acceptance of the offer of grace is not itself the result of grace (i.e. is not sufficiently caused by grace).

The first of the six remaining views is that the acceptance of grace offered counts, in effect, as a work—something that the person to whom grace is offered actually *does*. Furthermore, it is a work that is entirely within the agent's own power, and entirely a result of the *natural* dispositions and inclinations of the agent. Now, this work may about as minimal a work as can be conceived. But a work it is, its possibly minimal nature notwithstanding. (The work need not be minimal; presumably, its precise identity would be dependent wholly on a divine decision.) This would amount to one version of the view known to early Lutheran theologians as "synergism"—and vehemently rejected by such theologians as Pelagian. Is this Lutheran rejection correct? This largely depends on how the Pelagian claim is construed. If we hold that Pelagianism amounts to the claim that we can *sufficiently* save ourselves by our own actions, then the version of synergism that I am considering here is not Pelagian. After all, by definition synergism holds that there are two necessary and jointly sufficient causes of our justification—God and ourselves—and hence we cannot on this view sufficiently cause our own justification. If God's action is necessary, then our action alone is not sufficient. Still, we could read the Second Council of Orange as affirming that no action of ours can have any sort of causal role—even if not a sufficient causal role—in justification. In this case, the version of synergism that I am considering here would indeed amount to Pelagianism.

I think it is important to keep in mind that nothing about the statements made by the Council implies one of these readings over and above the other. Why should anyone adopt the stronger reading? One answer that certain theologians in the past have favored is simply that if our own free acceptance is required for justification, then God's grace is not wholly reliable. Still, this answer depends on an acceptance of the doctrine of the irresistibility of grace, and for the purposes of this discussion I am not presup-

posing such a doctrine—indeed, I am proceeding as if this doctrine is false. It seems to me that the question of the absolute reliability of divine grace is on the face of it a question independent of Pelagianism.<sup>5</sup>

Another reason for adopting the stronger reading may go something like this. The offer of grace, and our acceptance of it, are sequentially ordered parts of a process. In one sense an element in a process is not sufficient for the outcome of that process; it is merely necessary. Still, someone could insist that the element is sufficient for the outcome given the causally prior parts of the process. It is precisely this intuition, I think, that motivates some theologians to believe that any theology that allows for an independent act of accepting grace will turn out to be Pelagian. The thought is a mistake, since the sequential nature of the causal cooperation does not prevent it from being cooperation, and hence does not require that an action later in the process is any sense a sufficient cause of the effect. So it seems to me that synergism amounts to Pelagianism only if it is felt that any ascription of a causal role to human activity in justification—even if not a sufficient causal role—is Pelagian. And it is not clear that the Second Council of Orange requires this view.

#### IV

Suppose, however, that we do adopt such a rigid reading of anti-Pelagianism, and require for orthodoxy that there can be no natural active human cooperation in justification. Would such a position require us to accept the irresistibility of grace? I doubt it; and seeing how we can avoid the irresistibility of grace even given a rejection of synergism brings me to my next three possible anti-Pelagian options—the third, fourth, and fifth of the seven I propose in all. It seems to me that it would be possible to hold both that no naturally caused act of acceptance is required in order for divine grace to be received by the person to be justified, and that grace can nevertheless be resisted. The basic idea is that, in the case of someone whom God has chosen for justification, the reception of grace is, as it were, the default position; grace is received automatically unless the person places some active bar or block on the reception of grace—that is to say, unless the person actively *resists* the grace.

I am going to suppose—for my next three anti-Pelagian options—that for a person *p* to accept grace is for *p* not to resist the bodily execution of some action *a*, somehow resistibly brought about by God in *p*. For the theory, it does not matter what *a* consist in, but let me for now claim that *a* must be a morally good action, or one which would have been morally good if brought about by merely creaturely agency. If we hold that justification consist in explicit faith, we will want to say something slightly different from what I am about to propose. I shall consider the explicit faith option later.

All three of the theologies that I am about to propose require us to accept claims that are in one way or another debatable. The first requires us to accept a claim that may be theologically dubious in this anti-Pelagian context, namely, that the causal origin of *a* is an inclination internal to the agent—though unlike the synergistic position considered in the previous

section, this inclination is entirely supernatural, irresistibly given by God. The second and third require the philosophically controversial notion of an interior act of will, distinct from any exterior act.

The first of these—my third anti-Pelagian option—posits that the relevant action is the causal result of a supernatural inclination. Such an inclination would be (irresistibly) given by God to a person, such that the inclination is sufficient-unless-impeded for the action. The performance of the action counts as the acceptance of grace. I understand an inclination here to be a positive tendency to perform an act, such that, if nothing intervenes, the act is brought about. On this sort of view, an inclination is not itself an act, and acting in accordance with the inclination does not require any kind of *further* causal cooperation on the part of the agent: it does not require the agent to will or choose the relevant action *a*, though it does require that the agent not deliberately will/choose/do something other than *a*.<sup>6</sup> The action would nevertheless count as the relevant human person's action, since it is brought about by something internal to the person, namely, the inclination.

A close example may make things clearer. Consider a generally involuntary but controllable act such as blinking. My blinking goes on automatically: I do not usually will it, or consciously cause it. But I can prevent it if I wish, at least for a time; indeed, I can deliberately cause it too. I take it, in fact, that I have a (natural) inclination to blink, and the inclination is causally sufficient for the action.<sup>7</sup> I am supposing that acting in accordance with the relevant divinely-given inclination will be like this, and this amounts to my third anti-Pelagian strategy: the God-given inclination is sufficient-unless-impeded for an action *a* that constitutes the acceptance of grace, and this sufficiency means that the creature does not need to will or choose *a*, or in some other way *further* causally cooperate in *a* (over and above the causally sufficient role played by the inclination).<sup>8</sup>

On this view, the action certainly belongs to the agent, since it is caused by some inclination internal to the agent. But it is a divinely-originated inclination, internal to the agent, that is sufficient (unless impeded) for the action. The agent brings no causal contribution of his or her own other than the divinely-originated inclination. Still, it may be felt that any causal contribution to the action, internal to the agent, entails some sort of synergism. For whether or not the inclination is natural or divinely-endowed in some special way, it is still the agent's inclination, and to this extent is still a causal contribution that is proper to the agent, and as such independent of direct divine causal activity in the performance of the act. So my next two options dispense with such an internal origin altogether.

My fourth anti-Pelagian strategy posits straightforwardly that the relevant action *a* is brought about directly by God—and not by means of (say) an inclination. God brings about the bodily motion in which some act *a* consists. This strategy, along with the fifth, that I consider in a moment, requires the notion of an interior act of will, such that the agent's *willing a* is distinct from the agent's *doing a*. The fourth anti-Pelagian strategy involves the distinctive claim that the agent's not-willing/choosing/doing not-*a* consists in the agent's willing *a*. Could an agent will *a* and yet there be some sense in which the agent is not responsible for doing *a*, or in which the agent's willing is not a causally necessary condition for *a*'s being done?



There seem to me to be two options consistent with an affirmative answer to these questions. *Ex hypothesi*, *a* is brought about by God. So the first option is that God sever whatever causal mechanisms obtain between the interior act—willing *a*—and the exterior act—doing *a*. The choosing or willing does not have any causal role, for God's action remains sufficient-unless-impeded. The creature's choosing or willing is counterfactually sufficient, as we might say: it would have been sufficient were God not causally responsible for bringing about the bodily execution of the action. The second option is simply that *a* is causally overdetermined, brought about sufficiently by God, and sufficiently by the created agent. Clearly, we can on this understanding claim both that *a* is brought about by God, and that *a* is brought about by the creature; on this option, we would need to assert that *a* is salvific merely in the case that it is true that *a* is brought about by God, irrespective of the truth of the claim that *a* is brought about by the creature.<sup>9</sup> So the relevant salvific claim is that *a* is brought about by God, and thus Pelagianism, even on the rigidly anti-synergistic understanding that I am considering here, is avoided.

This may all seem implausible, and if it does, then the notion of an act of will can be used to develop a further anti-Pelagian strategy—my fifth—that allows for the resistibility of grace. On this fifth strategy, the act *a* itself is simply brought about by God, without any causal origin in the person, or any interior act of will for *a* on the part of the person. The created person wills neither *a* nor not-*a*: the person's will is simply indifferent to *a*. In distinction from the fourth anti-Pelagian view, the person does not will *a* at all, though in line with the views considered thus far in this section, the fifth view maintains that willing not-*a* constitutes resisting grace. On this fifth view, as on the fourth, God moves the person like a puppet: God brings about the bodily motions in which some act *a* consists. But unlike the fourth view, the person thus moved has no act of will of his own at all. This avoids the claim that the action is at all an action of the creature. But the divine motion can be sufficient-unless-impeded for *a*. For, *prior* to *a*, the creature can will, choose, or do not-*a* (in some sense of 'prior,' for if *a* is really prevented, there is no act for the impeding act to be prior to).<sup>10</sup> Perhaps on this view *a* will not be a morally good act: but it could be counterfactually good (as we might say)—it would have been good had it been brought about by merely creaturely agency.<sup>11</sup> Note that my fourth and fifth anti-Pelagian strategies are combinable: not-willing not-*a* could consist either in willing *a*, or in being wholly indifferent about *a*, willing neither *a* nor not-*a*—and a combined theory would allow for both possibilities.

It is worth pausing here to consider a little more closely precisely what it is that I am proposing. It might be thought that the concession that a person can impede God's bringing about *a* in her by preemptively doing not-*a* somehow makes her salvation wholly up to her after all, since God's doing *a* is still dependent on her not doing not-*a*. My proposal, however, is that her doing not-*a* at a time *t* simply prevents God from bringing about *a* at in her *t*, provided that God does not coercively prevent her from doing not-*a*. This amounts to a kind of Augustinianism: damnation is, and salvation is not, something which is brought about by the creature. God can, of course, make it hard for her to do not-*a* (perhaps by giving her an inclination not to

do not-*a*). But that is another question.

Is the view that a person can impede God's action by somehow "getting there first" a plausible view of resistance? It is, in the sense that not doing not-*a* is necessary for God's doing *a*; and what is necessary in this case is just the creature's *refraining* from acting. Equally, resistance does not need to be conscious. But if this be felt to be unsatisfactory, a more nuanced view is available. After all, if the relevant action is of a kind that would, if brought about by the creature independently, count as a moral action—as I am supposing—then it is likely to be a complex and drawn out activity, consisting of more than one stage. And if it is the sort of action that takes a reasonable amount of time, then opportunities for resistance arise throughout—right up to the moment at which the action is completed. There is no reason for the resistance of grace not to be like this.

Consider a related example. Suppose someone moves me in such-and-such a way—perhaps (taking a crude example) I wake up to find myself traveling in an ambulance. Suppose too that I have, all the time that I am conscious of being in the ambulance, the option not to be there. Perhaps I can simply ask the driver to stop and let me out. If I do not do this, then I do not impede the action that is done to me—being brought to hospital, or whatever. But—by the same token—I do not causally contribute to it, other than counterfactually (i.e. by not impeding it). Does not-impeding *a* amount to wanting or doing *a*? Not generally, given the coherence of the notion of an interior act of will, for given this it is possible to accept that there are many things that I, for example, neither impede nor want—even in the case that I can impede them. If I do not do something, I remain in the ambulance. But it would be odd to describe this as a case of my going to the hospital (as opposed to being brought there).

None of this, of course, entails that God is the causal origin of all morally good works—though we certainly could claim this if we wished. Neither do we have to commit ourselves to the position that God offer grace to all—though of course such a position is certainly possible. The point about any morally good work not brought about as the direct result of divine grace is that such a work cannot be relevant to the process of justification.<sup>12</sup>

Thus far, I have supposed that the acceptance of grace consists in the bodily execution of some factually or counterfactually good act. Traditionally, of course, grace and the acceptance of grace are closely tied to the notion of faith. Suppose, for example, that justifying grace consists, or could consist, in divinely-originated faith.<sup>13</sup> Since I am supposing that grace is resistible, I need such faith to be a voluntary matter. I thus need to posit that faith consists in, or results from, some sort of interior act of will distinct from any exterior act—distinct, in other words, from any bodily execution of an act. My last two anti-Pelagian strategies make precisely these presuppositions.

These two final strategies correspond respectively to the third and fifth strategies just outlined. According to the sixth anti-Pelagian strategy, God gives someone an inclination to an act of faith, such that the inclination is sufficient-unless-impeded for the interior act of faith. The account then goes through exactly as for the third anti-Pelagian strategy, with the excep-

tion that the inclination is for an interior act, not for the bodily execution of some act. According to the seventh anti-Pelagian strategy, God's direct action is sufficient-unless-impeded for the interior act of faith—as for the fifth anti-Pelagian strategy, *mutatis mutandis*.<sup>14</sup> I do not need to adjudicate on what precisely saving faith might consist in. But I take it that, since on the view I am defending faith is a voluntary matter, it is more likely to consist in trust (in the offered salvation—*fiducia*, in the technical theological jargon) than in belief in certain propositions. After all, *believing* is on the face of it a state, not something subject to direct voluntary control.<sup>15</sup>

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If I am right, there is a variety of different views open to someone who wants to hold both that all forms of Pelagianism are false and that grace is resistible. It may be thought that in proposing these views, I am overlooking one of the fundamental motivations for the view that grace is irresistible, namely, the sheer *difficulty* of acting well (i.e. in accordance with the prompting of divine grace). In reply, I would suggest that the views I consider here make use of the notions of God's inclining us to act in the relevant ways, or of God's moving us to act in the relevant ways. Someone who is not satisfied with these possible answers will need to accept the irresistibility of grace with all the attendant difficulties of that view. In any case, if we want to hold that God saves sinners, not just saints, we will probably need to make the moral requirements of salvation rather low, irrespective of our view on the question of Pelagianism. But that is another issue.<sup>16</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. That is to say, the Council is not denying that we can perform *morally* good works; merely that any such work can have any sort of causal role in our justification. Compare Aquinas's claim that we can perform morally good works without grace: *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 5 c. Nothing that I rely on in my argument here requires this reading, and the reader could adopt, if she wished, the stronger claim that we can perform no morally good act without grace.

2. There is, of course, at least one theory of justification that aims to link it logically with the atonement: namely, the Reformed view that, necessarily, justification consists in the extrinsic imputation of Christ's righteousness. I do not know whether such a theory is true; even if it is true, however, my arguments here, about the anti-Pelagian structures of certain theologies that admit the resistibility of grace, will be untouched.

3. I add this last clause partly to take account of the common traditional view that God has no obligations: see on this, in particular, Thomas V. Morris, "Duty and Divine Goodness," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 21 (1984): 261-8.

4. It should go without saying that I am supposing that the individual's response here is not causally dependent on any special divine action. If it were, of course, then the doctrine would not be semi-Pelagian, since the response to the divine promise would be initiated by God, not by a creature.

But if the human response were so dependent, the theory would resemble one or more of the theories that I discuss below, and it would be hard to see why the divine promise was not simply redundant.

5. The question of the irresistibility of grace is, however, linked with the question of divine sovereignty, inasmuch as it is clearly the case that a powerful motivation for accepting the irresistibility of grace is a strong doctrine of divine sovereignty. If my argument in this paper is correct, then the rejection of Pelagianism is in principle independent of the question of divine sovereignty.

6. Lest there be any doubt about this, I am assuming that whatever view we adopt of causation, causal relations are not reducible to constant conjunction, and should not be understood merely counterfactually. I think that there are reliable intuitions about the ways in which particular events and particular substances may be connected to each other, and that these intuitions posit more robust connections than constant conjunction or mere counterfactual dependence. For our commonsense notion is that there are things in the world—substances—that are able to cause certain effects, such that there is some genuinely explanatory relation—some real linkage—between the cause and the effect. Neither constant conjunction nor counterfactual dependence maintains such a connection. A definition of causation that is faithful to our intuitions on the matter would have to include the fact that a cause seems to make some genuine contribution to the effect: something that the cause is or does is responsible for the effect; the effect somehow derives from the cause.

7. It will not make much difference to my account whether or not we think of blinking as an action. Blinking could be merely an event; but deliberately resisting the inclination to blink is surely an action.

8. There is, of course, a distinction between blinking and the type of action that could be relevant to the acceptance of grace. Blinking is not only involuntary but for the most part unconscious. There is no reason to suppose that the acceptance of grace need be thus unconscious; indeed, the kind of complex moral action that would be relevant in this case would certainly be something that the agent would be aware of—though, of course, the agent need not be aware that the action would be salvific. Virtuous habits would be analogous: someone acts in accordance with such a habit unless she actively resists; but she nevertheless would certainly be consciously aware of the action thus brought about. She would not act virtuously merely through negligence, as it were. *Pari passu*, the person accepting grace would not act in accordance with the inclination through negligence, even if such a person were not aware that the act thus brought about counted as the acceptance of divinely-offered grace.

9. We may not, on this view, need to exploit the notion of an act of will at all, simply asserting that *a* is done by God and that *a* is done by the creature, irrespective of any account of the causal mechanisms involved. But I am not sure about this.

10. This account does not entail, of course, that prior to *a* there has to be some sort of act of will or choice for *a*. So there are no problems of causal regress here. (I owe this point, along with some of the material in this section, to Thomas Williams.) The fact that there does not need to be an act of will or choice for *a* prior to *a* allows acceptance not to be prior to the offer of grace: the offer of grace to a person is God's moving her body, and acceptance is not resisting; this non-resistance is not prior to God's moving the person's body.

11. We could perhaps claim that the action is good, and that it is in some very loose sense the creature's action, in the sense that the creature does not resist its being brought about in him.

12. Does the belief that someone justified could merit (further) reward from God entail any form of Pelagianism (as Protestants have often asserted against

Catholics)? I do not see that it should do. The Pelagian claim is that we somehow cause our own salvation, and *ex hypothesi* this is not what is caused by the good works of someone who is already justified. Catholic views concerning the sacrament of penance (confession) may require more work. After all, it is certainly an acceptable Catholic view that contrition is required for the restoration of justification. But this could easily be covered by the theory I am proposing here, namely that God can cause works (though not such that we cannot resist this causal influence), the performance of which constitutes the acceptance of justifying grace. Contrition could be just such a work. Protestants may find Catholic talk of gaining and losing justification puzzling. But this puzzlement springs ultimately from the Reformed view that justification consists in the extrinsic imputation of Christ's righteousness—and this is not an issue that I want or need to discuss here. My positions are on the whole independent of any specific theory of the atonement. One necessary precondition for the view that someone justified could merit further reward from God is that there are supererogatory works, and there may be arguments against the possibility of such works—though I do not know of a successful one.

13. I say 'could consist', because these theories can easily be combined with any of those just adumbrated.

14. There is no correlate to the fourth strategy here, because on the view I am considering faith is a voluntary matter, and thus an interior act. And there can be no interior act of wanting to have faith that is distinct from having faith. (I do not mean that someone could not say [and mean] that she wants to have faith but cannot. This is surely a way of saying that she holds certain overriding beliefs that are incompatible with Christian faith.)

15. I am grateful to William Hasker, and to an anonymous referee for *Faith and Philosophy*, for this point. It is perhaps worth keeping in mind that even Catholic theologians make space for the notion of trust in the understanding of justifying faith: see e.g. Aquinas's discussion at *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 2, a. 2.

16. Thanks to Thomas Williams, Keith Ward, and the editor and two anonymous referees of this journal.