

Richard Rufus

Lectura Oxoniensis in Sent.,
Book I, Distinction 42

Translated by Astrid Storm

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Rufus, *Lectura Oxoniensis* in *Sent.* Book I, Distinction 42¹

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5 “Nunc de omnipotentia Dei” etc.² This distinction has five parts. The second part begins at “Sed quaeritur;”³ the third at “Sic ergo diligenter;”⁴ the fourth at “Ex quibusdam tamen auctoritatibus;”⁵ the fifth at “Sed ad hoc potest dici.”⁶

10 “Potest, sed facit” is in the first part.⁷ And we object here “that God’s will seems to be opposed to his potency,” because “potency is related⁸ to will, just as that which can be done is related to that which is willed.”⁹ But that which he can do and the thing willed are opposites, for he can do and will not to do. Therefore potency seems opposed to will.

15 But that does not follow, “since those who have the potency for all those things have the will.” For [God] can do something and [he] can not do that same thing, just as he can also will not to do it. “But if potency were precisely determined to the opposite of that which is willed, then there would be opposition between potency and will. That is impossible in God.”¹⁰

20 “Cuncta simul facere” is in the same part. We object to what Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad literam*, namely “that all things were created at once as far as matter and species are concerned.”¹¹ And again in Ecclesiasticus 18: “He who lives eternally created all things at once” (Ecclesiasticus 18:1).

¹ Translated from the provisory edition prepared by Gedeon Gál and Rega Wood. PL refers to *Patriologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne; PG refers to *Patriologia Graeca*.

² Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.1 I: 294; ed. I. Brady, Grottaferrata 1971.

³ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 294

⁴ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.3 I: 295

⁵ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.3 I: 296

⁶ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.3 I: 296

⁷ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.1 I: 294

⁸ Reading Alexander’s ‘habet’ rather than Rufus’ ‘habent’.

⁹ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.3 I: 426; ed. V. Doucet et al., Quarachhi 1951.

¹⁰ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.2 I: 426

¹¹ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.4 I: 427

What is said here we should understand about individuals or a single member of a species. But those others certainly should be understood about all the genres of singular things.¹²

5 And there are two opinions: namely one by Augustine, that all natures, general and specific, were created at once. But according to Augustine the production of individuals at appropriate times pertains to the work of governance. And perhaps sometime more will be said about this.

The other opinion is “that all things were created in genus and species successively over six days.”¹³

10 “Sed ratio prohibuit,”—that is, the [rational] will—is in the same part. And we object that if God’s will prohibits it, then God is contrary to himself.

And it seems to me that “ratio prohibuit” means that he did not will by the rational will. Not that there is a contradiction here in the will, but that he absolutely did not will it.

15 Nevertheless some authors note that there is more in the word ‘rationis’ than in the word ‘voluntatis’, and they say that this word ‘ratio’ “connotes order in things to be done—principally, however, the order of reward for merit and punishment for guilt. Moreover it would be contrary to order if he were to punish before there was guilt or reward without preceding merit,”¹⁴
20 which is why it is not appropriate for all things to be made at once.

A. What is connoted by this word “can” when we say “God can create A”

“Sed quaeritur...” is the second part,¹⁵ “where we ask what is connoted by this word ‘can’ when we say ‘God can create A.’ For when we say ‘God can be,’ ‘God can generate,’ that does not seem to connote some effect
25 in [propositions] of this kind. But concerning the first [proposition], we ask as was said, what is connoted there.”¹⁶ Similarly we also ask the same thing concerning this kind [of proposition] (“‘God knows this creature,’ ‘God wills this creature to be’”): what difference is connoted here –that is, what are we asking?
30 “For these three [words] are said of God, ‘power’, ‘scientific-knowledge’, ‘will’, and power extends in its order to more things than scientific-knowledge, and scientific-knowledge to more things than will.”¹⁷

¹² Cf. Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.3 I: 427. There seems to be a problem here.

¹³ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.4 I: 427

¹⁴ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.5 I: 428

¹⁵ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 294

¹⁶ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.6a I: 428

¹⁷ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.6a I: 428

“And some have said in this question that material potential is connoted in the first [proposition, namely, ‘God can create A’].”¹⁸ For if God can create A, then A can be made.

5 But this view is refuted, because “neither aptitudinal potency...nor even first potency of matter can be connoted there at all. For, as Augustine says in *De Symbolo*:¹⁹ ‘We believe in God omnipotent, for in making all things he is not made, and God is omnipotent because what he made, he made from nothing...That is his being is omnipotent so that not only the fabric itself, but also the matter finds its being with him who had no beginning in his being.’ From this it is evident that the potency of God does not posit the first potency of matter,”²⁰ for he creates it, too, entirely from nothing. Whence concerning that [proposition] we could also ask what is principally asked in the question proposed, for from eternity ‘God can create prime matter’ was true. What then is connoted there?

15 Some authors respond otherwise here, that in such a [proposition] “an actual entity is not connoted, but rather what can be.”²¹ They also say that the potency of God is distinguished from his scientific knowledge and will, in that “scientific-knowledge regards the true and will regards the good.”²²

20 I am not much concerned with this question, since it seems to me that the word ‘can’ when said of God does not connote some effect in a creature. In such words as ‘create’, ‘make,’ ‘justify’ it seems to me an effect is connoted. But by the first kind of words, which signified purely and solely divine essence, it does not seem to me that we connote an effect except conjunctively – namely, if we add the sort of word which itself connotes an effect, such as
25 “can ‘create’,” “wills ‘to justify’,” etc.

But given that authority of Augustine mentioned in *De Symbolo*, we can ask in passing whether the omnipotence of God is directed only toward creatures. That seems to some authors to be the case. On this basis they reply to that fallacy ‘whatever the Father can do, the Son can also do; but the Father can generate’ etc. For they say that the ‘whatever’ does not distribute except
30 for creatures.

And this opinion appears true from that authority of Augustine’s where it is said; “He is omnipotent, since he makes from nothing.”

¹⁸ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.6b I: 428

¹⁹ August., *Sermo II de symbolo* 3.6, PL 40: 639

²⁰ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.6c I: 428

²¹ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.6c I: 429

²² Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.6c I: 429

But on the contrary, is not “the Father’s being able to generate” a capacity of the Father? And generally, is being able to generate a capacity?

Again, if God is said to be omnipotent only in regard to creatures, then if there were going to be no creatures at all, God would not be omnipotent.

5 Who would say that?

I suppose that [God] is neither made more potent on account of his creatures nor would he have been less potent if there had never been a creature. And then perhaps we would say that his omnipotence, by which he can and could, is like God alone being eternal, having no principle other than himself. By his omnipotence God could and can be in the highest unity of essence, being most truly triune in persons. And such highest potency exceeds all created understanding.

10

In reply to that Augustinian authority, I suppose that the ‘since’ does not indicate cause, but rather consequence.

15 **B. That God does not make all actions by himself and immediately**

“Non post ambulare” is in the second part,²³ where that opinion appears false that posits that God performs immediately all these material acts. For example, when an element is transmuted into an element, it generates an element. And God produces immediately all vile works “which are entirely alien to the nature of divinity,” as the master says here.²⁴ He does not himself perform such actions, neither does he have them in himself. Hence he neither generates, nor alters—a body, I say—but he works such actions among creatures. For he makes a man to walk and fire to transmute.

20

But on the contrary it appears that God alone creates. Augustine, in *De Trinitate*, book 5, chapter 11: “But as regards the category of action, that perhaps may be said most truly of God alone, for God alone makes and is not made.”²⁵ But in the same place he adds, “Neither is he acted on by anything that pertains to his substance, because he is God.”

25

The same in *De civitate Dei*, book 5²⁶: “All bodies are subject to the will of God, since they have no power unless it comes from him. Moreover material causes which are passive rather than active are not numbered among efficient causes.”

30

²³ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 294

²⁴ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 294

²⁵ August., *De Trinitate* 5.8, PL 42: 917

²⁶ August., *De civitate Dei* 5. 9, PL 41: 151

The same in *De vera innocentia*,²⁷ and it is the solution to the question: “God made many good things in man which man did not make, but man makes nothing which God does not make first so that man may make it.”

Also, as Anselm says in *De concordia gratiae Dei et liberi arbitrii*:²⁸
 5 “I say that the will as an instrument causes all the movements of the will. But [God] is more truly said to make all that nature or [human] will makes, for he makes nature and the will as an instrument.”

The same in *De conceptu Virginale*, chapter 11: “The power of God alone produces certain things, certain other things are produced by created nature, and the will of the creature produces certain things. Whence it is evident that these are the three ways things happen—namely, the extraordinary,
 10 the natural, and the willed.”²⁹

From these things it is evident, and chiefly from that authority of Augustine in *De vera innocentia*, that there are some actions which God does not have in himself nor does he do them immediately and per se. But God
 15 does this in the sense that some creature may do such bad things, and he permits the creature to do so.

C. Whether Christ Can Lie

“Non potest mentiri” is in the second part.³⁰ This is sufficiently confirmed by the authority of Augustine in the text here “the potency of God is
 20 great” etc. And the same authority, in *Contra Faustum*, book 22... “God cannot sin at all just as ‘he cannot deny himself’.”³¹

“And likewise, Dionysius, in *De divinis nominibus*, God is ‘truth itself existing,’ and lying is a fall from truth.”³² Therefore if God could lie, he
 25 could fall from truth, and therefore he could fall from existence.

And likewise, Anselm in *Cur Deus homo*, book 1, chapter 22,³³ says “For a will cannot wish to tell a lie unless it is one in which the truth has been corrupted, or rather, one that has been corrupted by deserting the truth.” Nei-

²⁷ Augustine (?); see rather *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*; 2.9.21, PL 44: 586

²⁸ Anselm, *De concordia gratiae Dei et liberi arbitrii*, ch. 11, PL 158: 537A, 537D

²⁹ Anselm, *De conceptu Virginale*, ch. 11 PL 158: 445D

³⁰ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 295

³¹ August., *Contra Faustum* 22, PL 42: 414; Bible reference, II Tim 2:13b

³² Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, ch. 7 PG 3: 894; PL 122: 1156; in Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.7 I.429

³³ Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 1.12, PL 158: 378B

ther does it follow: if God wishes to lie, then it is just to lie, but rather that that is not God.

On the contrary, however, Anselm objects in *Cur Deus homo*, book 2, chapter 10:³⁴ “In what manner shall we say,” he says, “that he could not lie, since he says to the Jews concerning the Father, ‘If I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like you, a liar’ (John 8:55). And among these words he says, ‘I know him not.’ Who will say that he could not have uttered those four words, as if (in other words) he had said, ‘I know him not’? Which if he were to have done, as he himself says, he would be a liar — that is, he would be a sinner.”
 5
 10 Wherefore (if he could say this) he could, as it appears, both lie and sin.

Anselm solves this [problem] by saying that “all power follows will,”³⁵ as when I say ‘I can speak,’ ‘if I will’ should be understood. For if ‘will’ is not understood, then there is not power, but necessity.

Thus we can say concerning Christ that he could lie, if the subtext is, “if he should wish.”³⁶ And since no one can lie unwillingly, neither could he have lied unwillingly, no more than if we could say “nor could he have lived lying.” Thus he both could and could not lie.

Either this response does not please me or I do not sufficiently understand it. And in the first place what [Anselm] said does not seem to be true, that potency follows will, as concerns those things which are subject to both—namely, to the potency and the will of God. For God can make something and will not to make it, whence that condition is not necessary—namely, that “God can do this if he wills to.” Unless perhaps you should understand ‘God can do this, if he wills that he be able to do it,’ which we can very well concede.
 20
 25

But we need not distinguish; it is obvious that God cannot lie, but neither can Christ. This is unqualifiedly a non-capacity. He could have uttered a false proposition, but he could not lie. For lying is asserting something against one’s own conscience, which a mind in which there is no corruption cannot do.
 30

“Infirmittatis” is in this part.³⁷ “We note two infirmities. Said negatively, it was in Adam before sin; and said privatively, it is a consequence of sin. And neither manner of infirmity was in God nor was it in Christ.”³⁸

³⁴ Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 2.10, PL 158: 373D

³⁵ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.7 I: 429; Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 2.10, PL 158: 408 D

³⁶ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.7 I: 429

³⁷ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 295

³⁸ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.9 I: 430

And concerning this subject matter—namely, removing infirmity and difficulty from God—consider Hilary, in *De Trinitate*, at the end of book 9, the opinion found above at the beginning of distinction 20.³⁹

5 “Non igitur in potentiae, etc.” is in the same part.⁴⁰ “Anselm, in *De libero arbitrio*, says, ‘the power to sin is neither liberty nor a part of liberty,’⁴¹ instead it is a non-capacity rather than a capacity. ‘For he who can do these things can do that which does not profit him and is not suitable. In as much as he can do such things he is the more perverse and the less able [to resist] that [perversity]’.”⁴²

10 “Non potest mori etc.” is in the same part.⁴³ “Four defects are mentioned here: One is on the part of the body conjoined to the soul, namely, death; the other on the part of the soul which is the thinking part, namely error; the third pertains to the motive part of the soul. But this is twofold—namely, acting or being acted on. The defect in acting is understood as being
15 conquered, the defect in being acted on is understood as being made miserable.”⁴⁴

“Potest tamen haec etc.” is in the end of that part.⁴⁵ And we object on the basis of Wisdom 1 [13]: “God does not make death.” And therefore he cannot kill you.

20 And the response is, “as the Gloss says: ‘Whatever is contrary to nature is not from God. But sin is contrary to nature, from which death and everything that pertains to death arises.’ The sense is this: He does not make death—that is, he neither makes death nor does he make the cause of death, as death is caused by sin, but [he makes it] as a just penalty inflicted by sin.”⁴⁶

25 **D. Why we call God omnipotent and what God can and cannot do**

“Sic⁴⁷ ergo diligenter” is in the third part⁴⁸, where the Master explains why it is said that ‘God is omnipotent’, which is, as we should say in summary, as he himself concludes at the end of this part: Thence we say that what

³⁹ Hales, *Glossa* 1.20.1 I: 209; reference is to Hilary, *De Trin.* ch. 5

⁴⁰ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 295

⁴¹ Anselm, *De libero arbitrio*, ch. 1, PL 158: 489C

⁴² Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.10 I: 430; second Anselm quotation from *Proslogion* ch. 7, PL 158: 230 B

⁴³ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 295

⁴⁴ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.12 I: 430

⁴⁵ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.2 I: 295

⁴⁶ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.13 I: 431

⁴⁷ Should be ‘hic’.

⁴⁸ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.3 I: 295

is truly called omnipotent can do everything the capacity for which is a potency. And the master takes his opinion in this part from Hugo, who, in distinguishing the potency of God, says in *De sacramentis*, book 1, part 2, chapter 22:⁴⁹ “The power of God is twofold: first, it is to do something; second, it is to be acted upon by nothing. On both accounts we say that God is omnipotent. To be sure God can do everything apart only from that which cannot be done without injury, in which respect he is nonetheless omnipotent, because if he could do that, he would not be omnipotent. He can do everything and yet he cannot destroy himself. For this capacity would not be a capacity, but a non-capacity. And therefore he can do everything for which the capacity is a potency, and therefore he is truly omnipotent since he cannot be impotent.”

Epilogue

Behold, in sum you have two things—namely, why he is called omnipotent and also, more generally, what things God can and cannot do.

You also have the same in Augustine in *De civitate Dei*, book 5b:⁵⁰ “We do not diminish his power when we say that he cannot die or be deceived. Thus there are things which, if he could do them, would certainly lessen his power. For we call him omnipotent because he does whatever he wills and does not suffer what he does not will. For if that were to happen to him, then he would by no means be omnipotent. Whence on account of that which he cannot do, he is omnipotent.”

In sum, therefore, some authors assume according to the rule that “whatever indicates imperfection—in passive things, material things, privative things, inordinate things, instrumental things—this capacity is in itself a non capacity, and therefore these things are not attributed to the potency of God in himself...although they are attributed to another subject.”⁵¹

“Non ob aliud” is in the fourth part.⁵² And again, in *De civitate Dei*, book 12, chapter 3:⁵³ “God is not called omnipotent for any other reason except because he can will whatever.” And from this it seems that God could not do anything but what he wills. To this the response of the Master in the text

⁴⁹ Hugo, *De sacramentis*, 1.2.22, PL 176.24

⁵⁰ August., *De Civitate* 5.10, PL 41: 152

⁵¹ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.12 I: 431

⁵² Lombard, *Sent.* I.42.3 I: 297

⁵³ August., *De Civitate* 12.7.1, PL 41: 719

seems sufficient to me, which is in the fifth part of the distinction, where he says, “sed adversus eos”⁵⁴ etc.

E. Whether the potency of God extends to more things than his will

5 Some authors, however, state an objection at that place where it is said
 “not on account of something else (non ob aliud)”: “For it seems from this that
 the omnipotence of God is determined by his will.” But how can this be? “For
 potency seems to be more general and seems to extend itself to more
 things.”⁵⁵

10 “But Wisdom 12 appears to say something contrary: ‘But your capac-
 ity is at your will’ (Wisdom 12:18). And so potency follows will or is appro-
 priate to will. And the same point can be based on the passage of Anselm
 above.”⁵⁶

15 “And again, there is the commentary on the verse in Luke 5 which
 says: ‘If you wish, you can heal me’ (Luke 5:12), where Ambrose says, ‘You
 see that he cannot doubt, since the will of God is power,’⁵⁷ and so his capacity
 cannot be other than his will.”⁵⁸ Or if it extends to more, how is it that potency
 does not go out from will so that the potency of God and the will may not be
 the same?⁵⁹

20 Some people respond that this is true,⁶⁰ namely that these are entirely
 the same in God: essence, potency, and will, but essence is understood abso-
 lutely, while potency and will are understood in comparison with and in rela-
 tion to creatures, although they can be absolutely accepted in God himself, as
 was said before. And because potency respects to more subjects, since po-
 tency respects the possibility of things that can be enlarged, but will respects
 25 act and the actual existence of things, therefore capacity is said to pertain to
 more than will.

Similarly, we might truly say that God is not all things which he
 knows, and yet his scientific-knowledge is his essence.

⁵⁴ Lombard, *Sent.* I.42.3 I: 297

⁵⁵ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.14a I: 431-32

⁵⁶ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.14b I: 432; refer to section C above for the Anselm quotation:
 “all power follows will”.

⁵⁷ Ambrose, *Exposito Evangelii secundum Lucam* 5.4, PL 15: 1636C

⁵⁸ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.14c I: 432

⁵⁹ The meaning here appears unclear.

⁶⁰ Not identified.

Therefore what is objected on the basis of authority, what ought to be understood is not that the potency of God is subject to the will, but that the execution of potency into act is from his will.

5 “Non potest a se, sed a Patre” is in the fifth part,⁶¹ where we note that “this preposition ‘through’ respects nature. Whence he neutrally excludes ‘without another’, so that the sense is ‘can *through* himself’, that is, he does not need another. But ‘from’ indicates the authority of a first cause. Alternatively this preposition ‘through’ respects a thing that is a cause, and this preposition ‘from’ respects the essence of the cause.”⁶²

10 Again we note that “this [proposition] is twofold: ‘the Father can make all things through the Son’. For the verbal determination can be by reason of the act related to matter, or the act related to person. The first way is true; the second is false. For it is not the case that the Father *can* through the Son, but that he can operate through the Son.”⁶³ Concerning this matter, refer to distinction 37 F above.

F. Whether God could take from someone grace or rectitude of will and whether he could make that something that has already been done was not done

20 Next we can dispute whether God is omnipotent or not. Although one must not doubt this law, nevertheless we can also be convinced of this by an abundance of reason, just as Richard of St. Victor also does in book 1 of the *Sententiarum*.⁶⁴ God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.⁶⁵ “Moreover it is greater to have omnipotence than any power whatsoever which lacks something of the plenitude of omnipotence.”⁶⁶ Therefore God has this plenitude, therefore he is omnipotent or he is not God.

25 Again, “Since God knows all things, if he understands something of the plenitude of his power which he could not have, there will be more in his knowing than in his capacity,”⁶⁷ and thus his scientific-knowledge will be extended to more than his potency. Since this is false, it remains that God is om-

⁶¹ Lombard, *Sent.* 1.42.5 I: 297

⁶² Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.16 I: 433

⁶³ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.16 I:433

⁶⁴ Rich., *De Trinit.* 1.21, ed. j. Ribaillier, Paris 1958 p. 103, PL 196: 900

⁶⁵ From Anselm, *Proslogion* ch. 15, PL 158: 243D

⁶⁶ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.11 I: 430

⁶⁷ Rich. *De Trinitate* 1.21, ed. j. Ribaillier, Paris 1953 p. 104, PL 196: 900; citation includes both quotations within this paragraph.

nipotent. Therefore we gather that ‘he can do all things whatever whose capacity is a potency. For there are certain things which it is much better not to be able to do than to be able to do, such as to be able to be deficient and similar things. For these are indications of weakness rather than signs of majesty.’”⁶⁸ Therefore we more correctly and more truly call him omnipotent because we remove all arguments of infirmity from [our description] of his potency.

On the contrary, namely that he is not omnipotent, we maintain in disputation since it appears that he cannot do all things. And this is apparent by many arguments. First, because [God] himself in acting is assisted, as it says in Corinthians 3, “We are God’s assistants” (I Cor. 3:9). Whence it does not seem that he alone has the capacity to complete that by himself. For it belongs to us both to believe and to will, as it is stated above by Augustine in *Retractionem* book 1, chapter 22: these things do not happen unless we will them. Therefore it seems, following this, that [God] cannot justify us by himself, and thus he is not omnipotent.

Responsio

I suppose that the reply to this is that in such works what God does, he does wholly and principally, and first he moves the free will. But since the free will can prepare consent or set an obstacle to grace, therefore it is said to assist. But because this action of God is doing something, and it is not producing something out of pure nothing, therefore he does not do this by himself without the free will, but in the free will itself, and with it. Whence we do not call him omnipotent because he gave the whole and made the whole out of nothing, and first moves the free will and prepares it to will, and in no way needs an assistant, but rather we, who are assistants, are in need. But, as I have said, since such an operation both leads to something and to an entity, and is not the production of a creature from nothing, but is rather the leading of an already existing creature into merit and perfection, therefore reason entirely requires that he, who ought to merit and as a consequence ought to be rewarded, should assist in such an action.

Or, briefly, it can be said another way: only God himself can give grace per se, as he does, but man does not receive it except willingly.

There is another objection in this question. If God is omnipotent, then he can do all things and has all power, and therefore he can steal and seduce

⁶⁸ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42.11 I: 431

and the like. Hence Jeremiah 20 says, “He seduced me and I was seduced” (Jer. 20:7).

Again, the powers of the wicked are choice-worthy.

5 And again, God can do depraved things. And the Apostle says in Romans 13: “There is no power except from God. All power is from the Lord God” (Romans 13:1). And Augustine, in *de Civitate Dei*, book 5b⁶⁹: “The highest power is in his will which assists the good wills of created spirits, judges evil wills, and subjects them all to divine order. He grants power to some, and does not grant it to others. Just as he is the creator of all natures, so
10 he is the giver of all power, but not of all wills. Of course, bad wills do not come from him, since they are contrary to the nature that comes from him.”

From these things it is apparent that [God] himself is the giver of all power. And since he gives nothing that he does not have, he has all power, and thus either he is not omnipotent or he has potency to steal and other such
15 things.

[The objector]⁷⁰ responds to these matters that in truth, just as Isidorus says in *De summo bono*, book 3, chapter 61: “The will of malicious men can by no means be fulfilled unless God shall have given the power.”⁷¹ Therefore he entirely gives all power, as appears from many considerations.

20 And also all power, as power, is good, as the same Isidore says again in book 2, chapter 40⁷²: “Union and power are certainly goods per se, but through things which surround them, evil exists... For power through pride, through suppression of justice, and also through the crookedness of evil exists, [and such powers] are injurious to divinity⁷³ and also to power. But this is on
25 account of what is adjacent, not [power] itself, but as in the example of the upright journey where thorns are born, which arising from hidden [places] harm him who walks along the right way.”

It can also be said in reply to the objections that when we say, “The potency of stealing and the like,” we note potency and action and also deformity of action, and the first two are from God and he is their author, but the
30 third is not truly from him, nor is he their author.

Another objection again is that God, who cannot take uprightness of will from someone, is not omnipotent. For Anselm proves this in *De libero*

⁶⁹ August. *De Civ.* 5.9, PL 41: 151

⁷⁰ Not identified.

⁷¹ Isidore, *Sent.* 3.57, PL 83: 728 D

⁷² Isidore, *Sent.* 2.40.14, PL 83: 646 D

⁷³ Reading ‘divitiae’ from Isidore rather than Rufus’ ‘nuptiae’.

arbitrio, chapter 8. And the reasoning by which he tries to prove this is subtle, and to someone perchance it may be difficult to see clearly.⁷⁴

We can extract his argument, therefore, as follows, based on the evidence: to be just is for the will to preserve that uprightness on account of uprightness itself. But for the will to will what God wills it to will, is for it to be just. Therefore for the will to will what God wills it to will, is to preserve uprightness of will on account of uprightness itself. This syllogism is in the first mode of the first figure.⁷⁵ After which we conclude by the denial of the consequent: God does not will for the will to preserve uprightness of will on account of uprightness itself, therefore he does not will for the will to will that it will that will. That can by no means stand.

That is a subtle argument, but it does not appear to conclude truly, for God gave me justice, and freely, not by compulsion nor on account of merit, therefore how is it that he cannot also withdraw it? What prohibits him, what could resist? You answer: He cannot, because he does not will. And I say, on the contrary, that you do not respond well, because he can do something which he does not will.

Again, [God] can return me to pure nothingness, therefore he can bring it about that I would not preserve my uprightness of will on account of uprightness itself.

But you say: this is true, but as long as I exist and will to preserve that uprightness of will, he cannot take that from me.

To this I respond: if I should will that preservation, and he should will to take that from me, then since I would will contrary to his will, and thereby be unjust, I would already have lost it. And so it would seem entirely possible that he could take that will from me.

But you say: this capacity, is not a capacity in God, but rather a non-capacity.

To this I respond: judge this rightly. For what you say does not seem sufficiently true, because it seems rather that whatever is turned toward something other by God himself, God himself could both construct and destroy and change by his will. Or if he could not do such things, he does not seem unqualifiedly omnipotent. For things turned toward another by [God] himself, seem to be entirely subjects of his omnipotence, but those things which pertain to him himself and to his being, are by no means so, since he

⁷⁴ Anselm *De lib.* ch. 8; Anselm argues from God's justice, which doesn't permit his taking away rectitude of will. See also below, where Rufus refers again to Anselm's argument.

⁷⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *An. Priora* 1.4.26b 26-33

can take nothing away from himself. But it seems that he can take away from everything other than himself, whatever is had, in whole and in part, both good and bad.

5 Richard of Saint Victor says about this: “The free will of the Lord is not acted on nor can it be acted upon, because to cause violence to him is neither fitting for the Creator nor possible for the creature.”⁷⁶

The same [author], elsewhere: “It is one thing to have freedom and another to have power. Freedom is that which cannot be forced to will something; however privation of power is that which is not sufficient to do something good.” Man, in sinning, “gave up power, not freedom.”⁷⁷

10 For the opposite conclusion we could say with Anselm: if he could take away justice, then he could cause injustice, and so he would be the author of evil.

15 For the same point: just as it is mercy to give grace, so it seems like cruelty and impiety to take away grace; therefore if God himself cannot be impious, he cannot he take away justice.

For the same point: It seems entirely unjust and iniquitous to take from me what is mine by merit without my demerit; therefore if God cannot be unjust, neither shall he have been able to take from me my justice. For it is my justice as long as I am just. For although he gave it to me freely, that does not mean that it is not mine.

20 At present, I should respond just as before to these arguments as follows: namely that he cannot take away his justice from someone without his demerit, though if demerit has preceded already God does not take justice from him but rather that person deserts his justice spontaneously.

25 This is how I respond at present, or we can reply as is done in the immediately following distinction on potency: perhaps God could do this absolutely, but he could not in justice. Or in other words, from unqualified potency he can, but not from appropriate potency. For this is not appropriate to his goodness.

30 Again, we object that God may not be omnipotent, because he cannot make what is incorrupt from the corrupt. From that Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, book 26:⁷⁸ ...

35 And from these things the question is solved whereby it might be asked whether God could make past time not to be, or not to have been past.

⁷⁶ Rich., *De statu interioris hominis* 1.3, PL 196: 1118.

⁷⁷ Rich., *De stat. int.* 1.13, PL 196: 1125

⁷⁸ August., *Contra Faustum* 26.5, PL 42: 481

And similarly concerning the past corruption of something, God cannot make the corruption not be or not to have been past—namely, to make it so that what has been done not be done. For this is to make contradictory opposites simultaneously true.⁷⁹ And he cannot do this, because he himself only exists and does not not exist, and he is truth alone and not falsity.

G. Whether God could do everything which is impossible for human beings

The next question is: Since God could [do] many things which are impossible for a human, whether he could do *all* things which are impossible for humans or not. And if not, which things can he do and which not?

And it seems that [he can do] all impossible things. For in Matthew 19 it says, “All things are possible for God” (Matt. 19:26); again, Matthew 14: “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you” (Mark 14:36); and Luke 18: “Those things which are impossible for human beings, are possible for God” (Luke 18:27).

Again, Anselm, in *Cur Deus Homo*, book 2, chapter 17⁸⁰: “All necessity and impossibility is subject to his will...and nothing is necessary or impossible unless he himself wills it.” And shortly thereafter: “There is in him no necessity to do and no impossibility not to do, since in him it is only the will which is at work.”⁸¹ From this it seems that he could do all impossible things.

And it is answered that certain impossibilities pertain to the divine essence, such as ‘God does not exist’, ‘God is not just,’ ‘God is not truth.’ Other impossibilities however pertain only to creatures, and such impossibilities are subject to the divine will. The first kind of impossibilities, however, are not [subject to the divine will]. For God’s existence or non-existence is subject to the divine will, but is not subject to the divine power.

Which impossible things can God therefore do and not do? I suppose, as has already often been said, that God can do those things whose capacity is a potency, and which can be done without injury [to the divine]. God can universally and precisely do these things.

⁷⁹ Arist., *Eth. Nic.* 6.2.1139b10; Aristotle quoting Agathon: “For this alone is lacking even to God, to make undone things that have once been done.”

⁸⁰ Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 2.17, PL 158: 421D

⁸¹ Rufus’ ‘faciendi’ in the second clause of Anselm quotation does not appear in PL; it has been omitted in the translation.

H. Whether God can make it to be true that: ‘a human is an ass’

Again we ask whether God can make it true that ‘a human is an ass and the converse’. It seems that he can, for he made this true, that ‘God is human’, which is much greater.

5 Some people concede that he can.

But it seems that this could not be a capacity at all, for it would be in vain and of no utility. But God can do nothing in vain,⁸² rather he makes everything that he makes on account of something. Whence that capacity seems to be contrary to wisdom and divine ordination, because whatever he makes
10 he makes wisely and ordinally.

Again, I say further, if that were to happen, it would need to be by personal union. But asinine nature is not a nature which can be personified, any more than [the nature of] stone nor fire. However human nature can naturally be personified. And therefore the capacity⁸³ to make it true that “God is human” is something and a great capacity, but the capacity to make this proposition true: “An ass is human” is entirely frivolous and is a non-capacity.
15

J. Whether it is appropriate for God alone to be omnipotent, and whether Christ the man is omnipotent

20 Next we ask whether it is appropriate for God alone to be omnipotent. And it does not seem so, because Christ-man is omnipotent. For Augustine says in his third epistle, namely to Volusius, speaking about the human Christ: “When God worthily assumes the name of humanity by [Christ], ascribing to divinity his bounty, man accepts the bounty of his divinity; therefore he (man)
25 is omnipotent.”

And again, this human is God, therefore he is omnipotent.

For the same point, there is the Gospel of Matthew, in the last chapter: “All power is given to me” (Matt. 28:18) etc. Rabanus, expounding this passage, says that this is said not about the coeternal divinity of the Father, but
30 about the assumed humanity.⁸⁴

And Bede on the same passage:⁸⁵ ... And so concerning created power he says, “all power is given to me.”

⁸² Cf. Arist., *De caelo* 2.11.291b13; regarding nature doing nothing in vain

⁸³ Text emended from ‘possit’ to ‘posse’.

⁸⁴ Cf. Rabanus Maurus, *Commentarium in Matthaeum* 8.27, PL 107: 1152B

⁸⁵ Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis* 2.12, PL 93: 167D

And again, great men⁸⁶ assert and say that Christ wills by his created will all things that he wills by the uncreated will. By the created scientific-knowledge and power he knows and can do all things which he knows and can do by uncreated scientific-knowledge and power. And in this way Christ by created⁸⁷ will, scientific-knowledge, and power is all-willing, omniscient, and omnipotent.

And they confirm this through Damascene, in the end of chapter 62⁸⁸:

...

Let us concede that this man is omnipotent and also his soul, omnipotent insofar as it is united with the Word. And yet it does not follow from this that it is not true that only God is omnipotent. For this man, even if omnipotent, is not omnipotent insofar as he is man.

Nevertheless, others say that this man is not omnipotent even if he is omniscient.

Again, we treated this subject above, in distinction one near the end.

Still others object that “Not only God is omnipotent, because [it says in] Matthew 17: ‘If you will have had faith just as a grain of salt and you had said to this mountain, move, then it will not be impossible for you’ (Matt. 17:21). And in Mark 9: ‘all things are possible to those who believe’ (Mark 9:23).”⁸⁹

“And it is answered that the first authority speaks about the miraculous. But some things are miraculous which are similar to what happens according to actual nature, as when vision [is restored] to a blind person. But some things exceed nature both in act and in mode, as when God becomes man, a virgin gives birth, and other such things. When we say “nothing will be impossible for you,” such things do not fall under the distribution [of the word ‘all’], but others do.”⁹⁰

I do not assert this response, for I am about to say something more about miracles which will perchance be more evident.

And to the other [objection, when it is said:] “‘everything is possible to those who believe’, it is replied: this is by reason of faith itself and in virtue of him whom we believe and who gave faith itself freely...For, as Ambrose says,

⁸⁶ Not identified.

⁸⁷ Text emended from ‘creatas’ to ‘creatam’

⁸⁸ Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 62.7; ed. Buytaert, St. Bonaventure 1955.

⁸⁹ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42. 17 Ia I: 434

⁹⁰ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42. 17 Id I: 435

the faith of Christ in your heart is Christ in your heart, and so that omnipotence is attributed first to Christ and subsequently to the believer.”⁹¹

K. Whether all things made miraculously are possible according to nature and whether some are made contrary to nature

5 Next we ask about the potency of God concerning miracles themselves. And first, we ask whether all things made miraculously are said to be possible or impossible, or whether certain ones are and certain ones are not.

 And it is established that for God, all things are possible which are done. But we subsequently ask whether things are possible or impossible naturally. It seems that they are impossible naturally, for it is naturally impossible
10 for a virgin to give birth, and other such things.

 But on the contrary: if things are naturally impossible, then they seem to be contrary to nature. Therefore God, when he does these things, acts contrary to nature. But he himself established nature by his will; therefore if he
15 acts contrary to nature, he is also acting contrary to his proper will.

 But listen to Augustine, who says in *De vera innocentia[e]*⁹² that God does nothing contrary to nature in miracles: ...

 For the same point, in *De civitate Dei*, book 21, chapter 4:⁹³ “We call a portent something that is contrary to nature, although such things actually
20 aren’t contrary to nature. For how can something that happens by the will of God be contrary to nature? The ‘nature’ of any particular created thing is what the Creator willed it to be. Therefore, a portent is merely contrary to nature as it is known, not as it is.”

 Again, Augustine, in *Contra Faustum*, book 26, chapter 3⁹⁴: “God
25 does nothing contrary to nature. For whatever is done by him, who appoints all natural order and measure and proportion, must be natural in every case. And man himself acts contrary to nature only when he sins; and then by punishment he is brought back again to nature...But it is not improper when we say that God does a thing contrary to nature, because it is contrary to what we
30 know in nature.” For what is said to be contrary to nature according to human custom, is that which is contrary to the use of nature known by mortals, nor do we deny this, as was said by the Apostle in Romans 11:24: “If you were cut out of the wild olive tree, which is natural to you, and you were grafted in to

⁹¹ Hales, *Glossa* 1.42. 17 II c-d I: 435

⁹² August., *De miraculis naturalibus* 283, PL 45:1883

⁹³ August., *De Civitate* 11.8, PL 41:721

⁹⁴ August., *Contra Faustum* 26.3, PL 42: 480

the good olive tree contrary to nature...” He called “contrary to nature” that which is contrary to the *custom* of nature.

Again, in *De mirabilibus divinae Scripturae*, book I, chapter 1⁹⁵: ...

5 Pay careful attention to this last opinion of Augustine—namely, what he says about sweetness being hidden in the bitter water. What can this be? Is this different from what philosophers say? The matter of contraries is the same, and contraries are in the same matter potentially, and contraries are designed to happen to the same subject. Whence it is evident that a contrary is potentially in a contrary. And since it exists there potentially, it is not nothing.
10 It is necessary that some form should be there, but incompletely, and this form is common to each of the contraries. And then what will we more rightly understand as the seminal reason in a matter than this common form?

Let us return to book 2 of *De mirabilibus*, chapter 25⁹⁶: ...

15 Again, in *Super Genesim ad literam*, book 9⁹⁷, he plainly teaches that in miracles God does not do anything that is contrary to nature. For he says, “The elements of the physical world also have a fixed power and quality determining for each thing what it can do or not do and what can be done or not be done with it... Thus a bean does not come from a grain of wheat nor wheat from a bean, and a man does not come from a beast nor a beast from a man.
20 But over this whole movement and course of nature there is the power of the Creator, who is able to do in all creatures something other than what the seminal reasons would bring about, but not something that He Himself had not originally made possible to be done by Him in them. For He is omnipotent not by arbitrary power but by the strength of wisdom.”

25 And shortly thereafter⁹⁸ “[There is the mode of being by which] this time of life is fertile, another is not; by which a human being can speak and a beast cannot. The formative principles of these and similar modes of being are not only in God but also have been inserted by Him into creatures and joined to them... That a woman sterile in her youth should bear a child in her old age,
30 that an ass should speak and so on with other such examples—God gave to the substances which He created the possibility that these actions could happen in them. For not even He would do in them what He Himself predetermined was impossible to be done in them, since He Himself is not more powerful than Himself. Nevertheless, according to another mode of being He gave to these

⁹⁵ August. (?), *De mirabilis* 1.1, PL 35: 2151

⁹⁶ August. (?), *De mir.* 1.28, PL 35: 2187

⁹⁷ August., *De Genesi ad literam* 9.17, PL 34:406; revised from J. H. Taylor’s translation, *Ancient Christian Writers Series*. Newman Press, 1982.

⁹⁸ August., *De Gen. ad lit.* 9.17, PL 34:406

creatures the determination that these occurrences would not happen by virtue of natural forces but by the virtue of the fact that they had been created so that their nature would be under the influence of a more powerful will.”

5 And after that, he subjoins concerning Eve,⁹⁹ “But it was not determined in the original creation that the woman was to be created in precisely that way...this act of creation determined only the possibility that it could be done thus, so that God would do nothing by a changeable will contrary to the causes which His will created.”

10 We can evidently gather from these sayings that God does nothing contrary to nature when he changes one thing into another, and whatever two things are transmuted into each other have something hidden in common.

But we could ask whether God will have made something contrary to nature in the conception of the Savior. And it does not seem so, for he made the body of our Lord from the pure and clean blood of the Virgin, therefore he made human flesh from blood, which is not contrary to nature.¹⁰⁰

15 But he made another thing that does not seem to be natural, but neither does it seem contrary to nature, instead it seems very much above nature, namely the union of the word of God with that human nature in a person. That seems entirely not to have had a seminal reason in the matter from which it was made, for in that ineffable work, there was no transmutation at all.

20 Concerning this subject matter, consider Damascene, chapter 46:¹⁰¹ ...

L. Whether God can change anything into anything

25 Since among the miracles previously treated it is evident that something is changed into another, we can ask universally whether God could change anything into anything.

And it seems so, according to Augustine in *De civitate Dei*, book 21, chapter 5¹⁰²: “Just as,” he says, “it was not impossible for God to create any natures he chose to create, so it is not impossible for him to change natures into what he chose to create.”

30 On the contrary, there is not something common to everything. For example [nothing is common to] substance and accident. Therefore he cannot change substance into accidents or the converse.

⁹⁹ August., *De Gen. ad lit.* 9.18, PL 34:407

¹⁰⁰ Emendation: “est” added.

¹⁰¹ Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, 46.2

¹⁰² August., *De Civ.* 21.8, PL 41: 722

Next I ask whether he could change any substance whatever into any [other] substance. For Augustine says concerning this, in *Super Genesim ad literam*, book 7¹⁰³: “...that any body, earthly or heavenly, is changed into soul and becomes an incorporeal being is not to my knowledge held by anyone and is not part of our faith.”

5 And later in that part,¹⁰⁴ “that every bodily substance can be changed into every other bodily substance can be believed, but to believe that any bodily substance can be changed into soul is absurd.”

10 The same author, in *De immortalitate animae*,¹⁰⁵ eloquently disputes this question whether the rational soul could be changed into a body. “This,” he says, “cannot happen unless the soul itself wishes it or is forced to wish it by something else. The soul could, however, never wish this, for all its appetite is for the body, either to possess it, or to vivify it, or in some sense to fabricate it, or in some way to be mindful of it. However none of these things can happen if [the soul] itself is not better than the body; or if will be the body, it will not be better than the body. Therefore [the soul] would not wish to be a body.”

20 But neither can [the soul] be forced. For by whom? Certainly, it would have to be by something more potent, and therefore a body could not force it, for no body is more potent than a soul in any manner. But neither can a soul be forced by a soul. For a more potent soul does not force something unless it is subject to its power, neither in any manner is a soul subject to the power of another soul except by its lust. It is said, moreover, that a soul cannot lust after a body. Therefore it cannot be forced to do this by that which does not have power to act, except by subordinate lust.

25 But neither can it be forced by God. Certainly God gives counsel to the soul, and therefore he cannot force [the soul] to be converted into a body. If, therefore, it is neither being acted on by its own will or by something else forcing it, it cannot be acted on at all.

30 And again, since a body subsists through [the soul], [the soul] itself can by no means be changed into a body. For no body is made except by receiving its species through a soul. Yet if the soul were to be made into body, it would lose the species of the soul; therefore it could not give a species to the body,¹⁰⁶ and therefore the body would not receive the species through the [soul] itself. So plainly we have finished this question.

35

¹⁰³ August., *De Genesi ad literam* 7.12, PL 34: 362

¹⁰⁴ August., *De Gen. ad lit.* 7.20, PL 34: 365

¹⁰⁵ August., *De immort.* 1.13, PL 32: 1031

¹⁰⁶ Reading ‘corpori’ instead of ‘corpore’.

On this matter, Boethius says in his book *De duabus naturis in Christo*:¹⁰⁷

5 “Things cannot be changed and interchanged. Neither can a corporeal substance be changed into an incorporeal substance, nor can incorporeal natures interchange their proper forms. For only those things can be changed that have a common subject of the same matter, nor can all things do so, but only those which can act and by acted upon by each other...Bronze cannot be changed into stone or into grass.”

10 He makes the same point shortly thereafter,¹⁰⁸ “The nature of no incorporeal substance rests on a material basis, but there is no body that does not have matter as a subject,” etc.

In this saying of the authority Boethius you have it explicitly: if body A can be changed to body B, they have something in common, namely matter.

15 **M. Since in all transmutation there must be something in common, we ask whether primordial matter alone suffices as what is common everywhere.**

20 But afterwards you ask and consider whether pure, bare, primordial matter alone suffices to be the common matter in both bodies. And it does not seem so, for from this it would follow that one thing can turn into pure nothingness. For example, what is mutated would become pure nothing, it is dissolved into some other preexisting form in the same matter, and that form would be further dissolved into another preexisting [form]. And this does not go on *ad infinitum*, therefore it will stop at some final and most propinquous matter. And that is the end of the dissolution of A, and that same thing is the root of all forms of A. And again it will be the beginning and the origin of the production and generation of all forms.

25 Judge for yourself what worth this has if it is true.

¹⁰⁷ Boethius, *De persona et naturis duabus (contra Eutychen)* 6, PL 64: 1349c, 1349d

¹⁰⁸ Boethius, *De persona et naturis duabus* 6, PL 64: 1350b

Word List

		conveniens, entis — appropriate
		culpa, ae, f. — guilt
		cupiditas, tatis, f. — lust
5		dator, oris, m. — giver
		elation, onis, f. — pride
		ius, iuris, n. — law
		operator, ari, f. — work
		praedicamentum, i n. — category
10		non posse, n. — non capacity
		noto, are — indicate
		oppressio, onis, f. — supression
		paena, ae f. — punishment
		posse, n. — capacity
15		potentia, ae, f. — potency
		potentia aptitudinis — aptitudinal potency
		potestas, potestatis, f. — power
		praevaricatio, onis, f. — crookedness
		prima potentia materiae — first potency of matter
20		ratio, onis f. — reason
		rectitudo, inis f. — uprightness
		scientia, ae, f. — scientific-knowledge
		simpliciter — unqualifiedly
		species, ei, f. — likeness