

# The sparrow's fall (Mt 10:29)

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## Abstract

*According to Matthew 10:29, not one sparrow will fall to the ground "apart from the Father". The latter phrase is elliptical, and it is not clear what type of involvement from the Father is meant. This article examines how this verse is interpreted in the various Bible translations and by modern commentaries. Thereafter patristic writings are consulted in search of a solution. It shows that the interpretation of this verse is often rooted in theological doctrine.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 10:29 Jesus says "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground *apart from your Father*" (ἀνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν). The interpretation of this latter phrase is very intriguing. The phrase ἀνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν is elliptical, since it presumes some type of involvement by God. Does Jesus mean that the sparrow does not fall "without your Father being present", or "without his permission or consent", or "without his knowledge", or "without his will" (in the sense that He ordered the death of the sparrow)?

The interpretation of this verse is important, since it does have serious implications for the age-old theological debate on predestination and divine providence. In this article we will look at how different Bible translations and commentaries have interpreted this verse. We will then also look at how the Church Fathers treated it. In the past, much research has been done on the use and meaning of ἀνευ in classical writings, while almost no attention has been paid to how the Church Fathers interpreted this verse.

## 2. LEXICAL MEANING OF ἀνευ

Cook (1988:138) says that the word ἀνευ has at least four lexical possibilities. He admits that one of them, "without the inspiration (of a god)" is definitely not relevant to the context of Matthew 10:29. The other three possibilities are (a) presence (b) consent (c) will or help. Cook then examines the use of ἀνευ in

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various classical writings (including a Hebrew text and a few patristic texts). Eventually Cook draws the conclusion that the third sense (“will” or “help”) of ἄνευ seems the likeliest.

It is interesting that Thayer (1890:44) says that ἄνευ means “without one’s will or intervention”, and refers to Matthew 10:29 as an example of this usage. However, Moulton and Milligan (1930:42) says that ἄνευ must have the meaning of “without the knowledge of” rather than “in the absence of”. It seems that these dictionaries do not agree with one another regarding the meaning of ἄνευ though they use the same sources. I think Louw and Nida (1988:793) are correct when they say that “the particular manner or mode of involvement by God must depend upon the broader context and not upon the meaning of ἄνευ”. I therefore think it does not help us very much to look at how the word was used by classical writers, since the contexts in which they used the word differ very much from the context in which it is used in Matthew 10. It is perhaps more helpful to look at how the early Christian exegetes (who knew Greek) interpreted the word within the context of Matthew 10.

### **3. BIBLE TRANSLATIONS**

When one looks at Bible Translations, it reveals that Bible Translators are also not of the same opinion regarding the interpretation of this verse. Some Bible translators translate the phrase ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν literally as “without your Father” and they refrain from defining what type of involvement by God is intended. Examples of these translations are as follows:

NRSV: “Yet not one of them will fall to the ground *apart from your Father.*”

KJV: “and one of them shall not fall on the ground *without your Father.*”

NASB: “And yet not one of them will fall to the ground *apart from your Father.*”

Bijbel: “En niet één daarvan zal ter aarde vallen *zonder uw Vader.*”

De Bibel: “en toch zal niet één daarvan ter aarde vallen *zonder uw Vader.*”

OAV: “En nie een van hulle sal op die aarde val *sonder julle Vader nie.*”

Some other Bible Translations add the word “will” and translate ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν as “without *the will* of the Father”:

NIV: "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground *apart from the will of your Father.*"

Moffat: "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground *unless your Father wills it.*"

RSV: "And not one of them will fall to the ground *without your Father's will.*"

NKJV: "And not one of them falls to the ground *apart from your Father's will.*"

NAV: "En tog sal nie een van hulle op die grond val *sonder die wil van julle Vader nie.*"

Yet, some other Bible Translations add the word "knowledge" and translate ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν as "without *the knowledge* of your Father. These Bible translators think that this verse refers to God's omniscience:

JB: "And yet not one falls to the ground *without your father knowing.*"

NWT: "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground *without your Father's [knowledge].*"

CEV: "But *your Father knows* when any one of them falls to the ground."

NAB: "Yet not one of them falls to the *ground without your Father's knowledge.*"

NCV: "... but not even one of them can die *without your Father's knowing it.*"

Bybel@kinders.co.za: "En tog gaan nie een van hulle dood *sonder dat God daarvan weet nie.*"

#### 4. COMMENTARIES

Some commentaries will make general statements on this verse. They point out that Matthew 10:29 is formulated as an exaggeration. By means of an *a minori ad maius* argument, Jesus wants to assure his followers that his Father will care for them. If God would look after sparrows, he would also look after people. The phrase τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν is a term of endearment and conveys intimacy.

Commentators also point out that according to Matthew 10:29 one could buy two sparrows for only a penny (an *assarion*). However, it seems from Luk. 12:6 that if a purchaser was prepared to spend another *assarion* to buy two more sparrows, he would get another sparrow for free.

Many of the commentaries refrain from making any comment whatsoever on the Greek phrase ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν (see e.g., Sand 1986; The Interpreter's Bible 2952; Grosheide 1954; Dickson 1981; Hare 1993). However, some other commentaries merely choose for one of the

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possible interpretations, without telling their readers that this phrase is elliptical, and that the type of involvement by God is debatable. These commentaries offer only one interpretation and their readers will not even know that there are also other interpretation possibilities.

There are only a few commentaries opting for “the knowledge of God”; Barclay (1975:389), for example, endorses the translation of the Revised Standard Version which says that “not one of them (the sparrows) falls to the ground *without the knowledge of God.*” Robertson (1930:83) concludes that “our Father who *knows* about the sparrows *knows* and cares about us”. Hagner (1993:286), too, thinks that the phrase ἀνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν means “without the knowledge and consent of your Father”.

A few other scholars propose two possibilities, namely *God's will or God's knowledge*. Smith (1989:150), for example, reminds his readers that though sparrows are cheap, they “neither live nor die outside God's *knowledge and will.*” And Gnilka (1986:388) says: “Der Sperling fällt nicht ohne den Vater – *sein Wollen? Sein Wissen?* – auf die erde.”

However, most scholars choose for the meaning “the will of God”. Luz (1990:128), for example, says “kein einziger Sperling wird zur Jagdbeute *ohne den Willen Gottes.*” Davies & Allison (2001:207) argues that “God is sovereign, so whatever happens must, despite appearances, somehow *be within his will.*” And Ridderbos (1974:207) also says that “... ook in deze bedeling geschiedt er niets, zelfs niet het allergeringste, *zonder uw Vader, d.i. buiten zijn wil om.*” Numerous other commentaries interpret this verse in terms of the “will of God” (see, e.g. Schnackenburg [1985:96], Van Bruggen [1990:180] and Hendriksen [1973:472].”

These scholars are definitely influenced by their theology of predestination. This becomes clear when one reads what theologians say about this verse. Maier (1983:357), for example, uses this verse to say “Gott *bestimmt* alles”. Grosheide (1954:168) argues on the same lines and says that “*en toch ... zal er niet één dood vallen ... of die God, die de Vader der apostelen zijn wil, bestiert het.*” Filson (1971:133) says more or less the same: “Thus God is purposeful, alert, and *active in all that occurs.*” Rienecker (1963:139) also believes that when a sparrow falls to the ground, it is governed by God's hand. Schmid (1963:226) says “wat u ook mag overkomen, *zij ook de dood, dat is Gods will ...*” And Schweizer (1973:161) says “darin ist eingeschlossen, *daß Gott auch das Unglück, das Niederstürzen des Sperlings oder eben das Getötetwerden des Jüngers in seiner Hand hat.*”

I fully agree with Nielsen (1971:210) when he emphasizes that it can become very dangerous when one deals with the *providentia Dei* in this way. He adds that “de uitdrukking ‘God wil het’ heeft in het verleden tot een onchristelijk fanatisme geleid, de uitdrukking ‘God wil het zo’ tot een onchristelijk fatalisme.”

It is clear, then, that most of the commentaries interpret this verse in terms of God’s *will*, and that this interpretation is firmly imbedded in the theology of predestination.

## 5. THE GREEK CHURCH FATHERS

It is interesting that the Greek Church Fathers *never* interpreted Matthew 10:29 in terms of “God’s will”. As a matter of fact, Origen (*Fragmenta in Luc.*, *fragm.* 192) makes it very clear that when Christ said that a sparrow would not fall on the ground “without your Father” ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν, it does not refer to *the will* of the Father, but to his *foreknowledge* (οὐ τὴν βούλησιν δείκνυσιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν πρόγνωσιν). In several other writings Origen again emphasizes that this verse is proof of God’s foreknowledge/providence (προνοία, see, for example, *fragmenta ex comm. in Epist. ad Ephes.* sect. 29; see also *Selecta in Psalmos*, MPG 12:1452).

Origen (*Fragmenta in Luc.*, *fragm.* 192) adds that all events can be divided into one of the following three categories: (a) Some of the events can be classified as being *in accordance with the will of God* (ἃ μὲν κατὰ βούλησιν). (b) Other events merely *enjoy the approval of God* (ἃ δὲ κατ’ εὐδοκίαν). (c) And then there are other events *which are merely allowed by Him* (ἃ δὲ κατὰ συγχώρησιν) without being in his absolute will. Chrysostom (*in Petrum et Eliam*, MPG 50.732b) agrees with this and refers to the denial of Peter as an example of an event which was merely allowed (συγχωρήθη) by God in order to prove to other people his love for mankind. Origen therefore says that the fall of the sparrow is *not willed* by God, but He did *know it beforehand*, and therefore allowed it to happen.

As a matter of fact, Church Fathers often made a distinction between God’s positive will for the good and his permission of the evil (See, for example, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.12; Theodoret, *haereticarum fabularum compendium* 5.23). Elsewhere Theodoret (*Interpretatio in Ezechielium*, MPG 81:1109) says that nothing escapes the notice of the Father. He then also quotes the verse regarding the sparrows and says that God regulates (πρυτανεύει) some things, while he merely allows (συγχωρεῖ) other things to happen. Sometimes God allows (παραχωρῶν) things to

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happen because of the free will (αὐτεξουσίῳ) of men, and at other times he allows (συγχωρῶν) things to happen so that people can be punished.

At another instance Origen (*de principiis*, iii,3) argues that all occurrences in the world, whether they be mournful or otherwise, are brought about by God, not indeed by God, and yet not without Him. Sometimes God can permit individuals, such as Job, to fall for a certain time, under the power of others. Elsewhere (*Scholia in Lucam* MPG 17:356) Origen says that the Father's care and his knowledge of the minutest detail become evident when Jesus says that not even a sparrow falls on the earth without the Father. In this writing Origen explicitly links God's foreknowledge (γνώσις) with his care (προνοία).

Chrysostom (*In Matthaeum*, hom. ix, MPG 57:179) says that when Jesus said that not one sparrow will fall on the ground "without your father", He was signifying that nothing is done without His knowledge. Chrysostom adds that "while He knows all, yet not in all does He act." He also says that God "does has the power to hinder it", and we should therefore know that when God does not hinder something, it is because of his *providence and care for us*.

Chrysostom also refers to the murder by Herod of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, after having been outwitted by the Magi. He says that everybody who listens to this story of violent slaughter is filled with horror. But one should not think that God didn't have the power to prevent it, or that He was ignorant of this. As a matter of fact God foretold this explicitly through his prophet Jeremiah (Jr 31:15). But the fact that God did not prevent it, is proof of his unspeakable *providence and care*, and therefore we should not become troubled and despondent.

In another homily (*In Matthaeum*, hom. xxxiv, MPG 57:400) Chrysostom again states that a sparrow will never fall without the knowledge of God. He then adds that that does not mean that a sparrow falls "by his operation". Chrysostom says that God is not ignorant of anything that befalls us, and that He loves us more truly than a father. He has a perfect knowledge, and cares for us. Chrysostom also says that God does not promise his followers deliverance from death, but permits them to die, granting them more than if He had not allowed them to suffer it.

Athanasius (*Orationes tres contra Arianos*, MPG 26:200) refutes the argument of the Arians that God deemed the creation as unworthy, and that He only created Jesus, through whom the rest of the cosmos was created. Athanasius argues that this statement is a distortion of the truth since God even today remains involved in his creation. He then quotes Matthew 10:29 which shows that God is even concerned about sparrows. Athanasius does

not employ this verse to emphasize God's will or God's knowledge regarding the sparrows, but rather his care for and involvement in the creation. He therefore also quotes other verses such as Matthew 6:26 ("Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them").

I could find only one exception in all the Greek patristic writings: When Basil (*Hom. super Psalmos*, MPG 29, p. 329, line 43) quotes Matthew 10:29, he replaces ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς with ἄνευ τοῦ θεοῦ θελήματος. However, when he interprets the verse, he again does not argue that God "*willed* the fall of the sparrow". He immediately refers to the "eye of God which notices even the minutest detail".

We must therefore conclude that the Greek Church Fathers never interpreted this verse as God who *willed* the death of the sparrow. As a matter of fact they explicitly distanced themselves from such an explanation. But they always interpreted it that God *knew it beforehand*, and that he *cared* for the sparrows. God knows beforehand what is going to happen, and He is omnipresent and cares.

## 6. THE LATIN CHURCH FATHERS

We have now seen that the Greek Fathers never interpreted Matthew 10:29 in terms of God's will. However, this verse was always used by them to rather prove God's *fore-knowledge, providence, omniscience* and *care*. The Latin Fathers, on the other hand, always interpreted this verse in terms of *God's will*.

Cyprian (*Epistula* 59, 5) argues that God's care for the sparrows shows that not even unimportant matters occur *without the will of God*. That means to Cyprian that nothing happens without God's knowledge or permission (*aut non sciente aut non permittente deo*). In *Epistula* 66,1 he again quotes Matthew 10:29 and emphasizes that even things of little consequence are not done without the consciousness and permission of God (*sine conscientia et permissu dei*). It is interesting that in both letters Cyprian's quotation of Matthew 10:29 includes the reading "sine patris *voluntate*".

Hieronymus (*Commentarium in Epistulam ad Ephes.* iii.5, MPL 26:562) says that one should always rejoice, not only when good things happen, but also when things happen which we do not want. We should always remember that everything is in accordance with *God's will*, and he then quotes Matthew 10:29, which again includes the phrase "sine Patris *voluntate*". In his *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* (i.10, MPL 26:68-69), Hieronymus again quotes Matthew 10:29, but when he interprets it, he immediately adds

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the phrase “sine Dei voluntate” and says that nobody will die “without the will of God”.

Augustine (*Collatio cum Maximino Arianorum episcopo*, MPL 142:732) says that nothing happens without the permission of the Father (sine permissione Patris). As a proof text he gives a verbatim quotation of Matthew 10:29, except for replacing “sine Patre vestro” with “sine voluntate Patris”. Elsewhere (*Contra Adimantum Manichaei Discipulum*, MPL 42:169) Augustine sees God’s treatment of the sparrows as an example of his providence when He rules the world. In *Enarratio in Psalmum cxlv* (MPL 37:1893-4) Augustine again wants to show that God is concerned about every detail. He quotes Matthew 10:29 and again includes “sine voluntate Patris vestri” in his version of this verse. Augustine (*De agone Christiano*, MPL 40:295-6) also uses Matthew 10:29 as a proof text that even the smallest creatures and plants are controlled by the almighty power of God (*omnipotentia Dei*).

The question arises why did all the Greek Fathers interpreted Matthew 10:29 in terms of “God’s knowledge” or “God’s presence and care”, while the Latin Fathers preferred to interpret this verse in terms of “the will of God”. I think the answer lies in the fact that in the second and third century the Greek Fathers ignored the theme of predestination. As Burns (1997:944) puts it: “in their struggle against Gnosticism and other forms of determinism, they insisted upon the role of individual free choice in both good and evil.” It was only from the fourth century and onwards that Augustine (who borrowed ideas from Cyprian) initiated a new understanding of divine sovereignty.

## **6. THE GREEK TEXT**

In the course of this study, another interesting aspect came to the fore, namely a realization how loosely and inaccurately the Church Fathers quoted Biblical texts. Though this is not directly part of the main focus of this article, it does have a bearing upon the way early theologians interpreted a specific verse. It also sheds light on interesting practices in the Early Church which are not always understood by modern Biblical exegetes. Ancient theologians did not set a high value on the exact wording of the Biblical text. We should remember that it was difficult to look up a verse because Biblical verses were not numbered. Neither did they always have readily access to the Scriptures. Therefore the Church Fathers often merely gave an approximate version of a Biblical text as they remembered it off-handedly. This also had an effect on the interpretation of the text. The quotation of Matthew 10:29 by Church Fathers will show how many versions of this verse existed in the early Church.



Origen (*Fragmenta in Luc.*, *fragm.* 192; see also *Scholia in Lucam* MPG 17:356) quotes this verse very freely. Instead of οὐ πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν (“no one will fall to the ground without your Father”), Origen says τήρει δέ, ὅτι οὐ πτωσιν στρουθίου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“God protects, because no sparrow will fall to the ground”). This, of course, is not correct, since Jesus did not say that no sparrow will fall to the ground. At another instance Origen (*fragmenta ex comm. in Epist. ad Ephes.* sect. 29) mixes the wording of this verse with the wording of the corresponding verse in Luke 12, when he says τὰ β ἄσσαρίων πωλούμενα πέντε στρουθία ὧν ἔν οὐ πίπτει εἰς παγίδα χωρὶς τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς πατρός. Note that Origen replaces ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν (“on the earth”) with εἰς παγίδα, (“into a snare”) and he also replaces ἄνευ with χωρὶς. Moreover, the manuscript reading τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν becomes τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς πατρός. In *Selecta in Psalmos* (MPG 12:1452) Origen adds the definite article (τοῦ) to the noun ἄσσαρίου, and he replaces πατρὸς ὑμῶν with πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Chrysostom (*In Matthaeum*, *hom.* xxxiv, MPG 57:400) also changes ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν to εἰς παγίδα (“into a snare”). This reading is followed by several Fathers, but has no manuscript authority. The roots of this reading probably lie in Amos 3:5: Εἰ πεσεῖται ὄρνεον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἄνευ ἰζευτοῦ; εἰ σχασθήσεται παγὶς ἐπὶ τῆς ἄνευ τοῦ συλλαβεῖν τί; (“Will a bird fall on the earth without a fowler? Will a snare be taken up from the earth without having taken anything?”). He also adds τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς but again without the article τοῖς. Chrysostom (*In Matthaeum*, *hom.* ix, MPG 57:179) adds τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, but this time without the article τοῖς.

Athanasius (*Orationes tres contra Arianos*, MPG 26:200) also adds τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς to the phrase ἄνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν. In *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* (MPG 28:640) he changes ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν to ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, and he changes Πατρὸς ὑμῶν to Πατρὸς μου, and he again adds τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, but this time without the article τοῖς (see also Theodoret, *Interpretatio in Ezecheliem*, MPG 81:1109). In *Apologia de fuga*, 9 Athanasius has ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς παγίδα and in *Apologia de fuga*, 15 he has εἰς παγίδα ἐμπεσεῖν. Theodoret (*Interpretatio in Ezecheliem*, MPG 81:1109) replaces ἄνευ with παρεκτός.

The above shows that the early theologians did not have the same obsession than modern exegetes with quoting accurately when they interpreted the Scriptures.

## 7. LATIN TEXT

Translations of the Bible into Latin began to appear in the second half of the second century. These versions also differed considerably one from the other. I will now use the Vulgate reading of Matthew 10:29 as a basis when I compare the different versions with one another. Historically speaking this process is invalid, since the Vulgate was essentially the work of one man, namely Eusebius Hieronymus, who worked on this project ca. 400 AD. It is therefore not valid to (say) accuse Cyprian (ca 205-58) as having “misquoted” the Vulgate. However, this is not what is meant when the Vulgate is used as a basis. The intention is merely just to use one reading as a yard stick in order to detect variations in other readings. It will enable one to become aware of the differences, and also understand one of the reasons why verses were interpreted differently by ancient theologians.

Cyprian's version of Matthew 10:29 (in his *Epistula* 59,5 and *Epistula* 66,1) differs considerably from the Vulgate reading. He has “et neuter eorum cadit in terram sine patris voluntate” instead of “et unus ex illis non cadet super terram sine patre vestro”. Arnobius (*Expositiunculae in Evangelium*, cap. xv) writes “in terra” instead of “super terram”, and he also adds “sine voluntate patris vestri” and also “qui in caelo est”.

Hieronymus also gives versions of Matthew 10:29 which differ considerably from the Vulgate of which he is the father. In *Commentarium in Epistulam ad Ephes.* iii.5 (MPL 26:562) he even combines the wording of Luke 12:6 and Matthew 10:29 into a new version: “quinque passeris, qui venduntur dipondio, gubernari: quorum unus non cadit in laqueum sine Patris voluntate”. Note that Hieronymus replaces “unus ex illis” of the Vulgate with “quorum unus”, and he changes “cadet” to “cadit”, and replaces “super terram” with “in laqueum”, and then he also replaces “sine patre vestro” with “sine Patris voluntate”.

Augustine (*Collatio cum Maximino Arianorum episcopo*, MPL 142:732) gives a verbatim quotation of Matthew 10:29, except for replacing “sine Patre vestro” with “sine voluntate Patris”. In another work (*contra Adimantum Manichaei Discipulum*, MPL 42:169) he replaces “sine Patre vestro” with “sine Patris vestri voluntate”. He also changes “ex illis” to “ex his”, and he changes “cadet” to “cadit”. In another writing (*Enarratio in Psalmum cxlv*, MPL 37:1893-4) he changes “ex illis” to “ex eis” and “super terram” to “in terram” and adds “sine voluntate Patris vestri”. In *De agone Christiano* (MPL 40:295-6) Augustine changes “unus ex illis” to “unus eorum”, “cadet” to “cadit”, “super terram” to “in terram” and he adds “sine voluntate Patris vestri”.

Hilary (*de Trinitate*, liber iv, MPL 10:101) also changes cadet to cadit, and also adds “sine voluntate Patris vestri”. In Rufinus' Latin Translation of

Origen's *de principiis* (iii, 3) "unus ex illis" is changed to "unus ex ipsis", and the phrase "qui in caelo est" is added to the noun "patris". In the Latin version of Irenaeus's *adversus haereses* (ii, 26) "unus ex illis" is again changed to "unus ex his" and "sine Patris vestri voluntate" is added.

The above shows that the Latin Fathers quoted Matthew 10:29 indifferently, or perhaps there were just numerous different Latin versions in circulation.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the above that all the Greek Church Fathers interpreted Matthew 29 as referring to God's *fore-knowledge* and his *omniscience* and *omnipresence*. God knows when we are being hurt, and He is always present and cares for us. But they refrained from assigning suffering to God's *will*. The Latin Church Fathers, on the other hand, always interpreted Matthew 10:29 in terms of God's *will*. This interpretation was firmly imbedded in their theology of predestination.

Nielsen (1971:211) is in line with the Greek Church Fathers when he says "Het woord van de troostende en zorgende aanwezigheid van God, zoals dat in vele psalmen opklinkt, geeft aan het "niet zonder uw Vader" een heel andere strekking dan het griezelige "God wil het zo." Nielsen, as well as the Greek Church Fathers, links Matthew 10:29 with Psalm 139:5: "You hem me in – behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me."

To conclude, Bible translators who opted for "the will of God", are merely perpetuating a traditional interpretation which goes back to the Latin Fathers. And these Latin Fathers were influenced by their theology of predestination. This interpretation has become so popular, that Bible translators do not even recognize other possibilities. Even the new Multivertaling Bybel gives the reading of the NAB ("En tog sal nie een van hulle op die grond val *sonder die wil van julle Vader* nie") and adds only one alternative translation, namely "sonder julle Vader"). In the light of the comments of the Greek Church Fathers, there are also other possibilities, such as "without the knowledge of the Father" or "without the presence of the Father". Bible Translators should look anew at the reading of Matthew 10:29 when they begin to work on a new Afrikaans translation of the Bible.

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