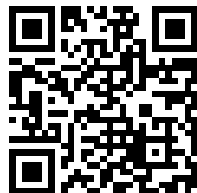

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THE WORKS OF
SAINT AUGUSTINE
*A Translation
for the 21st Century*

ANSWER
TO THE
PELAGIANS



Answer to the Pelagians:
The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins
and the Baptism of Little Ones,
The Spirit and the Letter, Nature and Grace,
The Perfection of Human Righteousness,
The Deeds of Pelagius,
The Grace of Christ and Original Sin,
The Nature and Origin of the Soul

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A Translation for the 21st Century

Part I – Books

Volume 23:

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introduction, translation, and notes

Roland J. Teske, S.J.

editor

John E. Rotelle, O.S.A.

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For

Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.

a true friend, scholar, and priest.

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General Introduction

This volume contains seven works of Saint Augustine of Hippo written between 412 and 420 or 421. They are all concerned with the Pelagian heresy from the time of its inception until after its condemnation in 418 by the emperor Honorius, by the Council of Carthage, and by Pope Zosimus. The works are *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum*), *The Spirit and the Letter* (*De spiritu et littera*), *Nature and Grace* (*De natura et gratia*), *The Perfection of Human Righteousness* (*De perfectione justitiae hominis*), *The Deeds of Pelagius* (*De gestis Pelagii*), *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* (*De gratia Christi et peccato originali*), and *The Nature and Origin of the Human Soul* (*De natura animae et ejus origine*).

Much of the history of the Pelagian controversy from its beginning in 411 or 412 until its definitive condemnation in 418 is sketched in the introductions to the various works of Augustine that are translated in this volume. From the winter of 411-412, when Augustine wrote *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* until the years immediately following the Council of Carthage in 418, Augustine wrote a series of works that reveal his growing awareness of the dangers of the Pelagian teaching as well as a parallel development of his own understanding of the role and function of the grace of Christ and the wounds inflicted upon our nature by original sin.

Modern scholarship has brought us to see that Pelagianism was not a uniform body of doctrine to which those we label as Pelagians all subscribed.¹ Rather, each of the figures in this early stage of the Pelagian controversy is quite distinct in his theology and bears at most a family resemblance to the others. This general introduction will briefly sketch the lives of the three major proponents of what we have come to label as Pelagianism up to and during the first stage of the Pelagian controversy, that is, up to the entrance of Julian of Eclanum into the fray. These three men are Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, and Pelagius. For Augustine's life the reader has Peter Brown's excellent biography.² For the development of Augustine's thought in confrontation with the Pelagians, Gerald Bonner's book and his many articles on Pelagianism offer the English reader the best introduction to current research.³ So too, B. R. Rees' *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* and *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers*⁴ provide a contemporary interpretation of Pelagius' life and thought and a translation of his extant letters which allow us to appreciate the tenor of his piety with its strong exhortations to achieve holiness and impatience with excuses.⁵

Rufinus the Syrian

Rufinus, a priest from the province of Palestine, probably of Syrian origin, is often billed as the real founder of the Pelagian heresy. Marius Mercator, in fact, claimed that he was the first to teach the new heresy at Rome during the pontificate of Anastasius (399-402) and that he led astray with his teachings the British monk, Pelagius.⁶ Already a monk in 393, Rufinus spent some time at Jerome's monastery in Bethlehem. Some scholars credit him with the Vulgate revision of a good part of the new testament.⁷ In 399 he arrived in Italy, carrying with him Jerome's Letters 81 and 84 as well as Jerome's translation of Origen's *De principiis*. At Rome he was the guest of the senator, Pammachius, where he came into contact with various members of the Roman aristocracy and met and influenced Pelagius and Caelestius. When Caelestius was questioned by Paulinus of Milan during the Council of Carthage in 411 or 412 about those who denied the transmission of original sin, he could produce only the name of "the holy priest, Rufinus."⁸ During his stay in Rome Rufinus wrote his *Liber de fide*,⁹ which, as recent studies have shown, Augustine refuted in his first work against the Pelagian heresy, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones*.¹⁰ Rufinus returned to Palestine where he died sometime after 415.

Caelestius

A man of a minor aristocratic family with legal training, Caelestius devoted himself to a life of asceticism before becoming a disciple of Pelagius around 390. He came into contact at Rome with Rufinus the Syrian after 399 in the company of the senator, Pammachius. With the fall of Rome he came to Africa where he asked to be ordained a priest in 411. Paulinus of Milan, the former secretary to Ambrose as well as his future biographer, accused Caelestius of heresy, submitting his indictment (*libellus accusationis*) to a gathering of bishops at Carthage in 411 or 412 at which Caelestius was condemned. Caelestius quickly left Africa for the East. Before 415 he wrote his *Book of Chapters* and his *Definitions*, and in 415 or 416 he was ordained a priest in Ephesus. He was condemned by Pope Innocent on 27 January 417, after the Councils of Carthage and Milevis in 416. After the death of Innocent on 12 March 417, Caelestius appealed his case to Pope Zosimus to whom he sent in 417 his *Profession of Faith at Rome (Libellus fidei Romae)* and his *Appeal (Libellus appellationis)*. Zosimus heard the appeal and reversed the condemnations of Diospolis (415) and of Carthage and Milevis (416). The bishops of Africa vigorously protested so that by mid-March 418 Zosimus began to yield to the pressure from Africa. Civil disturbances in Rome led the emperor Honorius to condemn Pelagius and Caelestius and to ban them from Rome at the end of April.

A plenary council of African bishops met at Carthage on 1 May 418 and drew up nine canons against Pelagianism which they sent on to Zosimus, who by late June wrote his letter, *Tractoria*, in which he gave his approval to the condemnation of both Pelagius and Caelestius. Caelestius turns up later in Constantinople where he was allied with the patriarch Nestorius; he was condemned along with Pelagius by the Council of Ephesus in 431 and, after this, disappeared from history.

Pelagius

Pelagius "was almost certainly a Briton by birth."¹¹ He came to Rome, perhaps as early as 380, where he led an ascetic life and was joined by Caelestius around 390. The two encountered Rufinus around 399.¹² Long before Augustine heard of Pelagius, Pelagius heard of Augustine. Sometime after 400 Pelagius heard a bishop, perhaps Paulinus, quote Augustine's words from the *Confessions*, "Grant what you command, and command what you will."¹³ Pelagius found the words intolerable and protested so strongly that he almost came to blows with the bishop.¹⁴

During his years in Rome he wrote the three books of his *Profession of Faith*, his *Selections from the Divine Scriptures*, and his *Expositions on the Letters of Saint Paul*. If, as Duval has persuasively argued, he also wrote at this time *Nature*, which in 415 Augustine received from Timasius and James and which he refuted in *Nature and Grace*, Pelagius formulated his understanding of nature and grace much earlier than has been thought and was not quite the reluctant heretic pushed into his more radical views by the badgering of Augustine that he has been taken to be.¹⁵

After the invasion of the Goths, he arrived in Africa, landing at Hippo, where he wrote to Augustine and received a letter in reply.¹⁶ Though Augustine and Pelagius later saw each other at Carthage, they seem never to have met, and Pelagius soon departed for the East where he resided in the former monastery of Rufinus of Aquilaea. At this period he criticized Jerome's *Contra Iovinianum* and his commentary on Ephesians and wrote his *Letter to Demetrias*.

Early in 415, Orosius, a bright, but tactless young Spanish priest, was sent by Augustine to Jerome, carrying Letters 166 and 167 to Jerome as well as the report of Caelestius' condemnation and Augustine's Letters 156 and 157. Orosius prevailed upon John of Jerusalem to convoke a diocesan synod in late June of 415 where he lodged accusations against Pelagius; the latter, however, escaped condemnation by acknowledging the need for grace in order to attain perfection.

Pelagius was summoned before a synod of fourteen bishops at Diospolis in late December 415 to answer a set of accusations drawn up by Orosius and

Jerome, but lodged against him by two deposed Gallic bishops, Lazarus of Aix and Heros of Arles, who were unable to be present at the synod. The contents of the indictment against him can be found in *The Deeds of Pelagius*, which Augustine wrote when he finally obtained an authentic version of the *Acta* of the Council. Meanwhile, Pelagius had circulated his own account of the proceedings in his *Report of His Defense* (*Chartula defensionis suae*), which he sent off to Augustine along with word of his acquittal by the fourteen bishops. Augustine wrote to John of Jerusalem, Eulogius of Caesarea, and other Eastern bishops in an endeavor to obtain an authentic account of the synod and finally received such from Cyril of Alexandria, which permitted him to write *The Deeds of Pelagius*.

After the Council of Diospolis Pelagius remained in Palestine, first under the protection of John of Jerusalem and then of his successor, Praylius. But after Zosimus' *Tractoria*, he was expelled from Jerusalem and from Palestine at the end of 418. There are some suggestions that he took refuge in Antioch and subsequently in Egypt. The date of his death is unknown.

The Translations

The translations have frequently broken down Augustine's long Latin sentences into less complicated and, I hope, clearer English ones. Additional paragraph breaks and occasional subtitles have been added in the hope of making the translations more readable. The divisions of the books into chapters and paragraphs has been retained, since scholarly references generally include both, even though references to the paragraph numbers would by themselves suffice. In the introductions, for example, to the individual works, I have referred to the paragraph numbers of the respective work by incorporating a reference to the particular paragraph or paragraphs into the text in order to avoid needless endnotes.

The quotations from the scriptures present a particular challenge for several reasons. One, a variety of Latin translations were used not merely by others whom Augustine cites, but by Augustine himself at different times. Every effort has been made to translate the same passage of scripture in the same way when the Latin text is the same. Where a particular passage reflects the Septuagint translation, LXX has been added to the reference.

Two, at times a very literal translation of the Latin was required in order to make sense of what Augustine says about the passage. For example, the Latin "*a facie peccatorum meorum*" (Ps 37:4) would normally be translated "in view of my sins," except that Augustine asks Vincent Victor whether he really thinks sins have a face.¹⁷ Other passages, of course, have a doctrinal importance. For example, in Romans 5:12, Augustine's text omits the word "*mors*: death" as

the subject of “*Et ita in omnes homines pertransiit*: And thus it was passed on to all human beings” so that the sin which entered the world through one man is understood to have been so passed on to all.¹⁸ So too, the clause from the same verse “*in quo omnes peccaverunt*: in whom all have sinned” presents an additional challenge when Augustine discusses whether “*quo*” refers to the sin or the first human being.¹⁹

Abbreviations

ALG	<i>Augustinus: Lehrer der Gnade</i>
BA	<i>Bibliothèque Augustinienne</i>
BAC	<i>Biblioteca de autores cristianos</i>
CCL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Latinorum</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
DS	<i>Denziger-Schönmetzer</i>
FC	<i>Fathers of the Church</i>
LXX	<i>Septuagint</i>
NBA	<i>Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana</i>
NPNF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
PLS	<i>Patrologia Latina Supplementum</i>

Notes

1. See Gerald Bonner, “Rufinus the Syrian and African Pelagianism,” *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 31-47, here 31.

2. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

3. Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (London: SCM Press, 1963). Also see the collection of his articles in *God's Decree and Man's Destiny* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987) and his more recent studies, “Pelagianism and Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), 33-51 and “Augustine and Pelagianism,” *Augustinian Studies* 24 (1993), 27-47.

4. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988 and 1991, respectively.

5. For a list of the known works—both extant and not—of each of the three, the reader should consult Flavio G. Nuvolone's article, “Pélage et Pélagianisme. I. Les écrivains,” especially columns 2890-2891, 2893-2895, and 2898-2902, in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* XI, 2889-2923.

6. Marius Mercator, *Liber subnotationum*, Praef. 2: PL 48, 111.

7. See Jean Gribomont in *Patrology IV: The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon*, ed. A. di Berardino (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1991), p. 246.

8. See *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 4, 3.

9. The text can be found in PL 48, 451-488. It has been edited by M. W. Miller in *Rufini Presbyteri Liber de Fide: A Critical Text and Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964).

10. See F. Refoulé, “Datation du premier concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus Fidei* de Rufin,” *Revue des études augustiniennes* 9 (1963), 41-49, as well as Gerald Bonner, “Rufinus of Syria and African Pelagianism,” *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 31-47.

11. Rhee, *The Letters*, p. 2.
12. F. Nuvolone, *art. cit.*, p. 2895.
13. *Confessions* X, 29, 40.
14. See *The Gift of Perseverance* 20, 53.
15. For the earlier dating of Pelagius' *Nature*, see Yves-Marie Duval, "La date du 'De natura de Pélage,'" *Revue des études augustinienne*s 36 (1990), 257-283. B. R. Rees, who views *Nature* as written by Pelagius in c. 414 in order to defend himself, says of Pelagius, "Once he had written his two treatises *On Free Will* and *On Nature* the die was cast: it was only a matter of time before the mills of the Church would grind him out of existence" (*Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic*, p. 90). If *Nature* was written during Pelagius' stay in Rome, i.e., before 410, as Duval argues, the picture of the development of Pelagius' thought becomes quite different.
16. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 27-28, 52.
17. See *The Nature and Origin of the Soul* IV, 16, 23.
18. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* I, 9, 10.
19. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* I, 10, 11.

**THE PUNISHMENT
AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS
AND THE BAPTISM OF LITTLE ONES**

Revisions II, 33 (60)

The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones: Three Books for Marcellinus

An urgent concern also arose which forced me to write against the new Pelagian heresy. Earlier we were opposing it, when there was need, not in writing, but by sermons and conferences, as each of us was able and ought to have. After there had been sent to me from Carthage some questions of theirs which I was to resolve by written reply, I first wrote three books, the title of which is *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*.

In them the discussion focused principally on the baptism of little ones on account of original sin and on the grace of God by which we are justified, that is, become righteous, even though in this life none so observe the commandments enjoining righteousness that they have no need to say in prayer for their own sins, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 7:12). With views opposed to all of these, they founded a new heresy.

In these books I still thought that I should not mention their names, in the hope that they could be more easily corrected. In fact, in the third book, which is a letter, but included among my books on account of the two to which I thought it should be joined, I mentioned the name of Pelagius with a certain amount of praise, because many spoke well of his life, and I refuted those statements which he did not set forth in his writings in his own name, but which he presented as what others were saying. Yet later, when he had become a heretic, he defended these ideas with a strong streak of stubbornness. On account of such statements, however, Caelestius, his disciple, had deserved excommunication before the episcopal tribunal at Carthage, at which I myself was not present.

In the second book, I said in a certain place that it will be granted to some people in the end that they will not feel death because of a swift transformation, for I was saving room for a more careful examination of this matter. After all, either they will not die, or by passing from this life to death and from death to eternal life by a very swift transformation, as in the blink of an eye, they will not feel death.

This work begins: *Quamvis in mediis et magnis curarum aestibus.*

Introduction

Historical Background

Augustine began his first work against the Pelagians, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sin and the Baptism of Little Ones*,¹ soon after Caelestius, the disciple of Pelagius, was condemned by the Council of Carthage in the late fall of 411 or early in 412. As the opening paragraph tells us, the immediate occasion of the work was a letter from the tribune, Flavius Marcellinus, asking Augustine to answer a series of questions. Though the letter from Marcellinus has not been preserved, the first paragraph of Book Three indicates that Marcellinus' chief concern was with the baptism of little ones and that this concern led him to ask Augustine to answer those who held (1) "that, even if he had not sinned, Adam would have died," (2) "that nothing passed to his descendants as a result of his sin by the process of generation," and (3) "that in this life there are and have been and will be human beings who have absolutely no sin."

In Book One Augustine responds to the first two propositions, while he spends all of Book Two on the third proposition, to which he returns in *The Spirit and the Letter*, because Marcellinus found it baffling that Augustine had maintained both that it is possible that human beings be completely free from sin and that apart from Christ there is no example of such human sinlessness. The second proposition reported to Augustine by Marcellinus obviously denies any inherited sin contracted from Adam by generation such that even newly born infants require baptism for the forgiveness of sins. The third proposition, which Augustine distinguishes into four separate questions, also denies any inherited sin, at least insofar as it maintains that there actually have been, are, or will be people who have no sin whatsoever at any time in their lives.

In the months following the fall of Rome to Alaric's Goths on 24 August 410, Pelagius passed through North Africa on his way from Rome to Jerusalem, landing at Hippo and soon leaving for Carthage. Augustine mentions in *The Deeds of Pelagius* 22, 46 that he saw him several times from a distance, but the two apparently never met. Pelagius' disciple, Caelestius, however, remained in Carthage where he disturbed many with his ideas about the abilities of human nature to avoid sin. When he asked to be ordained, he was accused of heresy by the deacon, Paulinus of Milan, formerly secretary to St. Ambrose—a fact of no small interest, since it clearly indicates that the doctrine of original sin did not originate with Augustine, as some historians of theology have maintained.²

Caelestius was brought before an episcopal tribunal, where Augustine reports that he refused to condemn those who say "that the sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race and that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression."³ Under questioning by Paulinus, Caelestius said that he was in doubt about the transmission of sin and claimed that the question was open to debate among Catholics. He could, however, offer only the name of Rufinus, a Roman priest, as one who shared this view with him. This priest was Rufinus the Syrian, whose *Profession of Faith* (*Liber de fide*) Augustine cites almost verbatim, though without mentioning the author, in *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* I, 18, 23 and who was reported by Marius Mercator as having introduced this heresy in the Roman Church during the pontificate of Anastasius (399-402).⁴ Indeed, by some, Rufinus is regarded as the real founder of Pelagianism.⁵ This first Council of Carthage concerned with the Pelagians, which took place after September of 411 and at the latest in January of 412, condemned Caelestius' teaching and excommunicated him.⁶ Augustine himself was not present at it, and though he reviewed the acts of the council during a later stay in Carthage,⁷ he does not seem to have been familiar with them at the time he wrote the first two books of *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*.

In *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 23, Augustine listed the propositions of Caelestius that were condemned at Carthage after they had been raised as charges against Pelagius at the Council of Diospolis in 415. These propositions which formed the core of the Pelagian teachings are: "Adam was created mortal so that he would die whether he sinned or did not sin." "The sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race." "The law leads to the kingdom just as the gospel does." "Before the coming of Christ there were human beings without sin." "Newly born infants are in the same state in which Adam was before his transgression." "The whole human race does not die through the death or transgression of Adam, nor does the whole human race rise through the resurrection of Christ."

Though Caelestius left Africa after being condemned, his followers and those of Pelagius continued to present a problem for the church of Carthage—so much so that Marcellinus wrote to Augustine with a plea for help and by his plea brought him into the controversy against Pelagius and his followers as a writer, though he states in the *Revisions* II, 33 (60) that he and others had previously combatted the heresy in sermons and conferences.

Marcellinus, the brother of the proconsul Arpingius, had been sent to North Africa in the winter of 411-412 by the emperor Honorius to convoke and preside over a conference between the Catholics and the Donatists and, in general, to supervise ecclesiastical affairs. During the conference with the Donatists held at Carthage in June of 411 Marcellinus had come to know Augustine. Indeed,

through their common efforts at Church unity in preparation for and during the conference, a warm friendship grew up between the two men. In a letter written after Marcellinus' execution on 13 September 413, Augustine described him at length in highly laudatory terms; a short excerpt from the letter is sufficient to indicate Augustine's high opinion of his friend:

He lived as a religious man—a Christian in his heart and in his life. This reputation preceded him so that he arrived with it in the cause of the Church; this reputation stayed with him after his arrival. What moral goodness he had, what loyalty in friendship, what zeal for learning, what sincerity in religion! He was chaste in marriage, restrained as a judge, patient toward enemies, warm toward friends, humble toward the saints, loving toward all. He was quick to bestow favors, slow to ask for them; he loved good deeds and was saddened by sins.⁸

Marcellinus appealed for help to Augustine in the winter of 411–412, because, as Augustine recalled, “Many of our weak brothers were being disturbed by these questions and by the assertion of these opinions which are now fiercely argued and heatedly debated everywhere.”⁹ Indeed, Augustine tells us that Marcellinus was daily enduring the troublesome arguments of those raising these questions so that he consulted the bishop of Hippo by letter,¹⁰ the letter which brought Augustine to write the first of his works against the Pelagians.

Thus, Augustine came to write *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*, the first in the long list of works against “the enemies of the grace of God” that ultimately earned for him the title, “*Doctor gratiae*: Teacher of Grace.” This letter was not, however, the only influence Marcellinus had on Augustine's writing career. His difficulties with Augustine's position in *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* evoked Augustine's second book against the Pelagians, *The Spirit and the Letter*, and it was again Marcellinus who by another letter to Augustine induced him to write the twenty-two books of his great work, *The City of God*. Hence, it was a deep personal loss for Augustine when Marcellinus and his brother were executed for their alleged connection with the uprising of Heraclian.

Augustine wrote *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* after the Council of Carthage, hence, after September 411, its earliest possible date.¹¹ In Letter 139 to Marcellinus written before 28 February 412, Augustine said,

I have forgotten why, after I sent the volume to Your Excellence, I received back from you the books on the baptism of little ones, unless I perhaps found them defective, when I looked at them, and wanted to correct them, but I have still not done so, as I have been incredibly busy. You should know that the letter, which I was also to write for you and add to these, has progressed slightly, but is still unfinished,

though I had already begun to dictate it, when I was there [i.e., at Carthage].¹²

Hence, the first two books of *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* were completed—except for final emendations, which may have been extensive—early enough for Augustine to have sent them to Marcellinus, received them back from him, and supposedly forgotten why he received them back by the end of February 412.¹³ The third book, which was written as a letter and added to the other two books by reason of its content, was still unfinished at the time of Letter 139. Between the completion of the first two books and the writing of the third, Augustine obtained a copy of Pelagius' *Expositions of the Letters of Saint Paul*¹⁴ which contained an interpretation of Romans 5:12 of which Augustine had not been previously aware. Realizing that it required its own refutation, Augustine produced the third book of *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*.¹⁵

The Structure and Contents of the Work

Book One first argues against the claim that Adam would have died, even if he had not sinned (paragraphs 2-8); then it defends the transmission of original sin to Adam's descendants by generation (paragraphs 9-20); finally, it takes up the principal concern of Marcellinus, namely, the purpose of infant baptism (paragraphs 21-61). The question of infant baptism leads Augustine to muster the scriptural texts that show that Christ is the savior and redeemer of the newborn (paragraphs 33-38) and that all human beings need Christ's redemption (paragraphs 39-61). The work is heavily laden with scriptural citations; in fact, approximately one fourth of the words in the translation of the first book are direct quotations from the Bible.

Augustine rejects in paragraphs 2-8 the Pelagian claim that Adam would have died, even if he had not sinned, as contrary to the clear statements of scripture. He does not deny that Adam had a mortal body, but claims that his mortal body would not have aged and suffered death, if he had remained obedient to God's commandment.

Marcellinus had reported to Augustine that those people who had aroused his concern had distorted the sense of Romans 5:12, but he did not indicate how they had interpreted the text. In paragraph 9, Augustine explains that he has tried to discover how they interpreted the passage and suggests that they held that Paul was referring to the death of the soul that is sin itself and that they maintained that sin was passed on to all human beings, not by propagation, but by imitation. Pelagius had, in fact, written in his commentary on Romans, "As by the example of Adam's disobedience many sinned, so too by the obedience of Christ many are justified."¹⁶ In opposition to the view that Adam's sin has been transmitted to all of Adam's descendants by imitation, Augustine sets out

to prove that sin has passed to all by generation. It is here that Augustine uses for the first time in his writings the expression "original sin" to refer to the sinful condition in which human beings are born as the result of Adam's sin.

His Old Latin version of Romans 5:12 omitted the word "death" so that "sin" was understood as the subject of "was passed on to all human beings." Hence, in Romans 5:12 Augustine believed that he had a clear statement of sin's transmission to all human beings. Furthermore, his Latin text seemed to say that all sinned either in Adam or in Adam's sin, though neither reading is accepted by modern exegetes.

In paragraphs 12-20 Augustine continues his explanation of Romans 5, clarifying the roles of the law, of sin, and of grace, a theme to which he will return again and again and to which he devoted the whole of *The Spirit and the Letter*. The fact that all human beings are born with the guilt of Adam's sin explains the need for baptism for the forgiveness of sins, even in the case of newly born infants. In paragraph 21 Augustine states that infants who die without baptism will be subject to condemnation, though theirs will be the mildest punishment of all. Augustine is adamant (paragraph 22) in his denial that infants have any personal sins for which they need baptism. He cites in paragraph 23 a passage almost verbatim from Rufinus the Syrian's *Liber de fide*, in which Rufinus claimed that infants are baptized, not so that their sins might be forgiven, but so that they might be spiritually created in Christ and attain a share in the kingdom of heaven.¹⁷ Augustine indicates in paragraph 24 that some appealed to the Lord's statement in Matthew 19:14 that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the little ones. Though Augustine wavers between taking these little ones as an example of humility and seeing them as already made righteous by baptism, he insists in accord with Luke 5:32 that Christ either did not come to call them or that they were sinners. Just as they cannot as yet profess the faith in their own words but are counted as believers by reason of the words of their parents or sponsors, so they express their repentance by reason of the words of those who make the renunciations for them (paragraph 25).

The Pelagians wanted to grant to unbaptized infants salvation and eternal life, even though they accepted the Lord's words in John 3:3.5 which excluded them from the kingdom of God or of heaven. Against this view Augustine appeals in paragraphs 26-27 to words of the Lord, *Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in you* (Jn 6:54), and maintains that those words apply to little ones, since in Augustine's time little ones received the Eucharist at their baptism, as is still the practice in Eastern churches. So too, in paragraphs 28-29 he appeals to John 3:35-36, arguing that either the little ones are to be counted as believers in the Son or they will not have life, but the anger of God will remain over them. Yet, when it comes to the question of why one infant dies after baptism and another dies without it, Augustine can only point to Paul's

cry, *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God* (Rom 11:33). To the Pelagian complaint that it is unjust to deprive unbaptized little ones of both the kingdom and eternal life, Augustine asks them how it is just on their view to deprive an unbaptized infant of the kingdom of heaven (paragraph 30).

An alternative explanation of the fact that human beings are born sinful claimed that preexistent souls sinned in their heavenly dwelling and, as punishment, came down to bodies appropriate to their merits. Such was the view attributed to Origen, and such was the view that Augustine himself seems at some point to have held.¹⁸ In paragraph 31 Augustine flatly rejects any prenatal sin on the basis of Romans 9:11-12, in which Paul rejects as an explanation of the election of Jacob and rejection of Esau their having done anything either good or bad before they were born.¹⁹ Augustine points out that the appeal to prenatal sin does not, in any case, solve the mystery of divine election and that its proponents are left to cry out, *O the depth* (Rom 11:33), when confronted with a good person who lives where he is unable to receive baptism, while a sinner is baptized and dies. In paragraph 32 Augustine produces examples meant to counter the theory that souls are more heavily weighed down by earthly bodies in proportion to the gravity of their prenatal sin; he points, for example, to the simple-minded whose affliction should, according to the theory, have been due to their grave prenatal sin, but who are baptized and live good Christian lives.

Hence, Augustine urges the Pelagians to assent to the authority of scripture (paragraph 33) which proclaims Christ as physician, as savior, and as redeemer for little ones as well as for adults. He points to the practice of Punic Christians who refer to baptism as salvation and who call the Eucharist life (paragraph 34), again insisting that they are salvation and life for little ones as well as for adults and that, if little ones were not sinners, they would not need salvation and life.

Christ came as light so that everyone who believes in him might not remain in the darkness, according to John 12:46; hence, Augustine argues that, if the little ones are not numbered among believers, they remain in that darkness. Some people, Augustine tells us in paragraphs 36-38, interpret John 1:19 as implying that every human being is enlightened by the true light at birth, though they admit that we still need baptism in order to attain the kingdom of God. After distinguishing various meanings of enlightenment, Augustine insists that the enlightenment of the gift of faith is given only in baptism by which the little ones become believers.

In paragraphs 39-56, Augustine amasses a series of scripture texts on Christ as redeemer and our participation through baptism in the salvation and redemption he has brought. The transmission of original sin through generation leads him to distinguish in paragraph 57 between the good use of sexual desire in marriage for the procreation of children and concupiscence itself, which is an evil. In paragraphs 58-62 he returns to scripture and develops the theology of

baptism and union with Christ found in the crucial third chapter of John's gospel. He points out in paragraph 63 that the very form of baptism with its exorcism, renunciations, and profession of faith indicates that a little one is baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Well aware that not all those against whom he is arguing hold the same views, Augustine notes in paragraph 64 that some in the Pelagian camp maintain that infants are sinless so that baptism for the forgiveness of sin is a fraud, while others hold that sins are forgiven, but claim that infants have committed personal sins. Augustine regards the supposition that infants sin in their own lives immediately after birth as absurd and describes the darkness of their ignorance in paragraphs 65-69. Finally, in paragraph 70 he concludes the first book with the claim that, though all sins are forgiven in baptism, concupiscence remains. The fact that concupiscence remains leads into the question of the second book.

At the beginning of Book Two, Augustine turns to the third point raised by Marcellinus' letter, namely, whether there has been, is now, or will be anyone in this life, apart from Christ, who has no sin whatsoever. In paragraph 2 he indicates that the words of the Lord's Prayer, *And bring us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13), point to our need for God's help if we are to overcome temptation. The Pelagians correctly see that we do not sin unless we will to, but they fail to see that we need the full strength of the will if we are to avoid sin. However, concupiscence remains, Augustine insists, in paragraph 4, in the body of this death. Though its guilt is removed when infants are baptized, it remains as something against which we must struggle in this life until death is swallowed up in victory. Hence, we pray for the forgiveness of our sins and ask not to be brought into temptation, because we have lost our strength and need to be healed from the wounds of sin. As a result, Augustine claims in paragraphs 5-6 that we cannot do what is right without God's help and need to pray that God will grant what he commands. Otherwise, we would be like the Pharisee who thought he had already attained perfection and did not ask for God's help to grow in righteousness.

Augustine then turns in paragraph 7 to the principal topic of Book Two: whether human beings can attain or have attained sinlessness (*impeccantia*). He divides the topic into four questions: (1) Can human beings be sinless in this life? (2) Is there actually someone without sin? (3) Why are no human beings without sin, though a sinless life is possible? and (4) Can or could there be a human being who has had or will have absolutely no sin?

To the first question Augustine answers in paragraph 7 that human beings can be without sin in this life "by the grace of God and free choice." He insists, however, that our free choice is God's gift, not merely insofar as it exists, but insofar as it is good. Augustine's answer to the second question (paragraphs 8-25) is considerably longer. Two scripture texts, *No living person will be found*

righteous in your sight (Ps 142:2) and *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8), lead Augustine to a negative answer. The Pelagians, however, appealed to the apparently contrary text, *Those who have been born of God do not sin and cannot sin, because his seed remains in them* (1 Jn 3:9). In response, Augustine cites many scripture texts to show that our renewal in the Spirit, begun by the full forgiveness of sins in baptism, is at present only partial and needs to be completed as we are renewed from day to day until we attain the fullness of our redemption at the resurrection of our bodies. Thus he is able to counter the objection (paragraph 11) that a righteous person ought to produce a righteous child, just as sinners give birth to sinners, since human beings bear children, not insofar as they are children of God, but insofar as they are still children of this world.

In paragraphs 12-21, Augustine turns to a list of women and men whom scripture describes as righteous: Noah, Daniel, Job, Elizabeth and Zachary, all figures to whom the Pelagians appealed.²⁰ Augustine grants that they were righteous and beyond reproach, but argues that they were not sinless. Even Paul, in fact, had not attained perfection. Though we are commanded to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, no one actually attains perfect sinlessness in this life. In paragraph 22 Augustine shows from Paul that Christians can in this life be perfect in one respect and yet lack perfection in another. He argues in paragraph 23 that God commands us to be sinless, though he foreknows that we will sin, just as he gave Adam and Eve the commandment about not eating the fruit of the tree, though he foreknew they would sin. Even Paul, who fought the good fight, ran the race, and kept the faith, had not yet attained perfect sinlessness; rather, because of his firm hope he spoke as though he had attained what still lay ahead. Hence, in paragraph 25, Augustine concludes this section by granting that there were many outstandingly holy women and men, but none of them were sinless.

In paragraph 26 Augustine turns to the third question: Why are no human beings in this life without sin, though they can be when God's grace helps their will? Augustine gives a brief answer: Because they do not will to be without sin. But the answer becomes long when the question shifts to the more profound one of why human beings do not will to be without sin. His answer points to their ignorance and weakness: either they do not know what is right or they find no delight in it. For we will something with greater strength in proportion to our certainty about its goodness and our delight in that goodness. In this work, as in others prior to 418, Augustine explains the influence of grace upon the human will in terms of God's providing knowledge and causing delight in the known good, not in terms of his acting directly upon the will.²¹ Thus, in paragraph 27 he says, "Hence, at one moment a person has the knowledge to undertake, perform, and complete a good deed; at another one does not. At one moment a

person finds delight in this; at another one does not." Whatever good we human beings have, we have received, Augustine insists following 1 Corinthians 4:7. Yet, we must not "defend grace in such a way that we seem to destroy free choice" and must not "stress free choice in such a way that we are judged ungrateful to the grace of God . . ." (paragraph 28). If one attributes to God whatever good will we have, just because he has given us our existence, without which the good will could not exist, then we would be forced to attribute our bad will to him for the same reason (paragraph 29). Hence, we must attribute to God, not only the natural good of free choice, which we can misuse, but the good will, which we cannot misuse (paragraph 30).

Though we can turn away from God by our own evil will, we cannot turn back to him except by a good will which we cannot have without his help (paragraph 31). Yet, why God turns back to himself some and not others lies hidden in God's plan (paragraph 32). When we pray for God's help to do what is right, we ask "that he disclose what was hidden and that he make attractive what was not pleasing" (paragraph 33). Even God's holy people are at times healed of their defects more slowly so that "the good attracts them less than suffices for accomplishing what is right, whether it remains hidden from them or it is already clearly seen" (paragraph 33).

At last, Augustine turns in paragraph 34 to his fourth question: whether there can or could ever be a completely sinless human being. Augustine's first question had asked about the possibility of human sinlessness as something that can be brought about in this life by the help of God's grace. The present question asks whether any human beings could be absolutely free from sin in their whole lives so that they were not merely free from all personal sins, but also from original sin. Hence, since all human beings apart from the one mediator between God and human beings enter this world with original sin, the question can only be answered in the negative.²²

In paragraphs 35-36, Augustine turns to the story of the fall and stresses that the sin of Adam and Eve was a sin of disobedience and that, as a result of their disobedience, they came to experience the disobedience of their flesh, which Augustine sees most clearly exemplified in involuntary sexual arousal. Augustine argues (paragraph 37) that from their sinful flesh our sinful flesh is born that needs purification by the sacrament of Christ. He was born, not in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that we who are born in sinful flesh might be reborn as children of God (paragraph 38).

In paragraphs 39-40 Augustine argues that even a child of baptized parents needs to be baptized, fending off the claim that children of baptized parents receive baptism in their parents' bodies, as Levi received tithes from Melchizedek in the loins of Abraham. So too, Augustine argues against the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14 as implying that children of believers have a

cleanness and holiness that replaces the need for baptism; he shows that there are various kinds of sanctification, such as that conferred by the imposition of hands upon a catechumen, which do not dispense from the need for baptism (paragraphs 41-42). Again, Augustine tries to explain the need for children of the baptized parents to be baptized, insisting in paragraph 43 that the sacrament of rebirth presupposes birth so that unborn children cannot be reborn in their baptized parents. Augustine struggles to explain why, despite the fact that parents receive the full forgiveness of their sins in baptism, they beget offspring with the guilt of original sin (paragraph 44). Again, he explains in paragraph 45 that concupiscence remains in the baptized, not as something that needs forgiveness, but as something to be overcome with the help of grace and eventually destroyed in the resurrection of the body. But from the moment of Adam's sin until the end of this carnal generation, no human being is entirely free from all sin apart from the one mediator, and he is the one savior of both little ones and adults (paragraph 47-48).

Augustine turns in paragraph 49 to another Pelagian objection, namely that, if Adam's sin caused us to die, then those who believe in Christ should not die, since Adam's sin did not produce more harm than Christ's coming produced good. He replies that Adam's sin has indeed brought about bodily death for all, but that Christ has brought us redemption and resurrection to endless life. Christ could have exempted believers from bodily death, but that would have removed from faith its challenge and its merit (paragraphs 50-51). So too, the Lord performed miracles when faith was in its infancy, but faith is stronger to the extent that it does not rely on such things (paragraph 52).

A similar objection argues that, if death came from sin, we should no longer die once we have our sins forgiven in baptism (paragraph 53). Augustine answers that, though the guilt of sin has been removed, some of the penalties of sin remain to try us in the struggle of life. Death remains for us so that through faith we can conquer the fear of death (paragraph 54). After their dismissal from paradise, the sinful flesh of Adam and Eve needed to be taught obedience through labors, even though their sin was forgiven (paragraph 55). The fact that David suffered punishment for his sin, even though the sin was forgiven, confirms the same point (paragraph 56).

Hence, Augustine urges his reader in paragraph 57 to hold to the rule of faith that only Christ was born without any sin and to cling to the middle path, neither claiming to be without sin nor simply abandoning oneself to sin. Augustine brings the book to a close by pointing out that the Pelagian concession that little ones need redemption should really lead them to see that even little ones have sin and, therefore, need Christ's salvation and redemption.

The work had originally ended with the second book. However, no sooner had Augustine completed the first two books than he came upon Pelagius'

Exposition of Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, as he explains to Marcellinus in the beginning of the third book. In it he found a new argument against the transmission of sin. Hence, Augustine adds the third book as a letter to Marcellinus; his sole objective in it is the refutation of the interpretation of Romans 5:12, which Pelagius reports as the thought of those who oppose the transmission of sin, not as his own position. Here Pelagius is for the first time mentioned by name, though Augustine refers to him as "a holy man" (paragraph 1) and "a fine and praiseworthy man, as those who know him say" (paragraph 5).

The new argument found in Pelagius' work sets out to reduce to absurdity the idea that Adam's sin harmed those who did not themselves sin; it claims that, if Adam's sin harmed those who did not sin, then Christ's righteousness ought to benefit even those who do not believe (paragraph 2). It is, however, clear that Christ's righteousness does not benefit those who do not believe. Hence, the objectors would have us conclude that Adam's sin did not harm those who did not themselves sin, especially since the grace of Christ by far surpasses Adam's sin, as Paul assures us in Romans 5:15.

In his reply Augustine latches onto the argument's concession that Christ's righteousness does benefit baptized little ones. He appeals to their Christian faith that Christ's righteousness can benefit only believers. Hence, he concludes that little ones must be included among believers. "Just as by the responses of those through whom they are reborn the Spirit of righteousness gives them a faith which they could not have by their own will, so the sinful flesh of those through whom they are born gives them a guilt which they have not yet contracted in their own life" (paragraph 2). However, since Mark 16:16 is clear that those who do not believe and are not baptized will be condemned, little ones could not be justly condemned if they did not have original sin, since they have no personal sin (paragraph 3).

In paragraphs 5-6 Augustine is careful to note that Pelagius merely reports the views of others in his commentary on Romans and does not present these arguments in his own name. Augustine tries to put the best interpretation he can on Pelagius' procedure so that he does not at this point condemn him personally, though he clearly sees that the opinions and views Pelagius reports are opposed to the Christian faith.

In the face of the reported claims that Romans 5:12 is not clear, Augustine insists that texts that one finds unclear should be interpreted in the light of those which are perfectly clear (paragraph 7) and appeals to John 3:5, Matthew 1:21, and Matthew 9:12 as texts that clearly show the need for baptism and the roles of Jesus as savior and physician (paragraph 8). On the other hand, he is unwilling to concede that there is anything ambiguous in the passage from Romans except for Romans 5:14 in which Adam is said to be the form of what is to come—a text which both he and Pelagius interpreted in different ways.

In paragraphs 10-14 Augustine offers several citations from Cyprian's Letter 64, as well as from two of Jerome's writings, to show that it is the ancient tradition of the Church that infants are to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, which in their case can only be the sin inherited from Adam, since they are obviously incapable of personal sin. Since Jerome is a contemporary, the proof from the Church's ancient tradition really amounts to the letter of Cyprian alone. It was not until 418 that Augustine appealed to Ambrose in support of his view on original sin.²³ On the other hand, Augustine is confident that, if he only had the opportunity to question a man of immense learning like Jerome, he would have been able to supply further evidence. In any case the canonical books are clear and authoritative; Romans 5:12 states that all sinned in Adam, "when they were all still that one man in virtue of that power implanted in his nature by which he was able to beget them." Through this presence of the whole race in Adam when he sinned, Augustine explains that little ones share in Adam's guilt, even though they were not yet living their own lives.

In paragraphs 15-18 Augustine turns to a series of three objections drawn from Pelagius' *Exposition of Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans*. The first objection argues that, if God forgives personal sins, he surely will not hold one guilty of the sin of another, i.e., of Adam's sin. Augustine answers that what was once Adam's sin becomes ours when we are born. The second objection argues that baptized parents cannot pass on to their children the sin they no longer have. Along with complaints about the ignorance of those who ask such questions, Augustine appeals to a pair of analogies: One, the son of a circumcised father is born uncircumcised, and two, wheat grown from grains from which the chaff has been removed grows with chaff. Augustine says that, if he were arguing against people who rejected the necessity of baptism, he would use such arguments to show the need for baptism. But since the Pelagians with whom he is arguing grant the necessity of baptism, though not for the forgiveness of sins, he argues that even they must admit that the children of Christian parents are not born Christians. The third objection drawn from Pelagius argues that, if the soul of the newborn did not come from Adam by generation, it is unjust that the soul bears the sin of Adam. Augustine notes the wariness of the objector with regard to the difficult question of the soul's origin and replies with an equal wariness, challenging the objector to show the justice in a newly born child's suffering bodily pains and torment from demons. And finally, in paragraphs 19-23, he offers a summary of the whole work and brings it to an end. He emphasizes the centrality of three passages from Paul, namely, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, and 1 Corinthians 15:54-56, for showing that our being subject to bodily death is punishment for Adam's sin and that the sinfulness with which we are born is the inherited result of Adam's sin. Hence, even newly born infants need Christ's baptism for the forgiveness of sin, and there exists no

human being—apart from Jesus Christ—who has been, is, or will be completely sinless.

The Pelagian Sources

In I, 34, 63, Augustine refers to “a brief memo: *libellus brevissimus*” which contains the view that infants receive redemption from baptism, if not the remission of sin. Scholars generally agree that this “memo” is the document which Caelestius submitted in his own defense to the Council of Carthage in 411 or 412. Once Augustine cites almost verbatim the *Liber de fide* of Rufinus the Syrian,²⁴ who has been called the real founder of Pelagianism. F. Refoulé has also pointed out a series of verbal parallels between statements from this work by Rufinus and the positions to which Augustine replies in the first thirty-four chapters of Book One. By the time of the third book Augustine obviously had come upon Pelagius’ *Expositions of the Letters of Saint Paul* which he cites frequently.

The Text and Previous Translations

The text translated is that of C. F. Urba and J. Zycha in CSEL 60 (Vienna, 1913), 3-151. I have also at times adopted the emendations to the text suggested in the ALG edition. The work has been previously translated into English by P. Holmes in NPNF 5/1 (New York, 1887; repr. 1971), 15-78. In the present century it has also been translated into Spanish by V. Capánaga in BAC 79 (Madrid, 1952), 200-439; into German by A. Fingerle in ALG I (Würzburg, 1964), 54-301; and into Italian by I. Volpi in NBA 17/1 (Rome, 1981), 15-239.

Notes

1. Because of the length of the title, I will hereafter use in this introduction the short title, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione*), which Augustine himself used to refer to the work in his *Revisions* II, 59 (33). He also referred to it as: *The Books on the Baptism of Little Ones* (*Libri de baptismo parvulorum*) in Letter 139, 3 and in *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 21, 24. He also called it: *The Works on the Baptism of Little Ones and the Perfection of Human Righteousness* (*Opuscula de baptismo parvulorum et de perfectione iustitiae hominis*) in *The Spirit and the Letter* 1, 1. Possidius used the title: *Two Books on the Baptism of Little Ones for Marcellinus and a Letter to Him on the Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* (*De baptismo parvulorum ad Marcellinum libri duo et epistola ad ipsum de peccatorum meritis et remissione*) in his *Operum sancti Augustini elenchus* (MA II, 149-233, here 171).

2. See, for example, J. Gross, *Geschichte des Erbsündendogmas. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Problems vom Ursprung des Übels. I. Entstehungsgeschichte des Erbsündendogmas von der Bibel bis Augustinus* (München und Basel, 1960), 375: “Augustinus is somit im Vollsinn des Wortes der Vater des Erbsündendogmas.”

3. *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 2, 2.
4. Marius Mercator, *Liber subnotationum* in *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin, I, v, 5. "Under the supreme pontiff of the Roman Church, Anastasius, of holy memory, Rufinus, formerly Syrian in nationality, first introduced this question which is foolish and no less hostile to the true faith. . . ."
5. For the role of Rufinus in the development of Pelagian thought, see Gerald Bonner, "Rufinus the Syrian and African Pelagianism," *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970) 31-47, as well as his *Augustine and Pelagianism in the Light of Modern Research*. The Saint Augustine Lecture, 1970 (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1972); both are reprinted in *God's Decree and Man's Destiny. Studies on the Thought of Augustine of Hippo* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987). See also Bonner's "Pelagianism and Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992) 33-51 and 24 (1993) 27-47.
6. See F. Refoulé, "Datation du premier concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus fidei* de Rufin," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 9 (1963) 41-49. This important article not merely established the date of the Council of Carthage, but showed that Rufinus' *Liber de fide* was the work Augustine refuted in the first thirty-four chapters of *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* and that the so-called Augustinian concept of original sin antedated Augustine and was already widely known in the Church at the end of the fourth century.
7. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 23.
8. Letter 151, 8: CSEL 44, 388.
9. *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 25.
10. *Ibid.*
11. See F. Refoulé, "Datation du premier concile de Carthage," 41-49.
12. Letter 139, 3: CSEL 44, 152.
13. In his *The Origin of the Soul in Saint Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987), pp. 104-115 and 198-200, Robert J. O'Connell argues for a later date for the completion of the work, largely on the basis of Augustine's rejection of prenatal sin in this work, a view which, according to O'Connell, Augustine came to only some years later.
14. Pelagius' work is extant: *Expositiones XIII Epistularum Pauli Apostoli*, ed. A. Souter (Cambridge, 1926); reprinted in PLS I, 1110-1374.
15. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* III, 1, 1.
16. Pelagius, *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* 5:19: PLS I, 1138.
17. Refoulé's article, "Datation du premier concile de Carthage," has shown that Augustine was refuting this work of Rufinus throughout the first thirty-four chapters of *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*.
18. See Orosius' *Consulation or Memorandum to Augustine on the Error of the Priscillianists and Origenists* 3 and Augustine's *To Orosius in Refutation of the Priscillianists and Origenists* 8, 9, for the attribution of this error to Origen and its refutation by Augustine. For the ablest argument that Augustine himself held the doctrine of the fall of the soul into mortal bodies, see the many books of R. J. O'Connell.
19. See R. J. O'Connell's *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), pp. 179-200, where O'Connell argues for a later dating of *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* on the grounds that Augustine did not come to see Rom 9:11 as excluding all prenatal sin until late 417 or spring of 418.
20. See, for example, Pelagius' letter, "To Demetrias" 5, 1-6, 3, in R. B. Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 29-70. The letter, written in 413, illustrates the Pelagian appeal to scriptural models of righteousness.
21. This change in the functioning of grace in Augustine's theology is one of the major points made in J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980). On p. 9, he says, "The explanation of the mode of divine control over the human will in the process of conversion changed in 418 from the original theory of a manipulation of the environment of choice to an assertion of direct influence on the will through an interior grace."
22. In *Nature and Grace* 36, 42, Augustine finds the Virgin Mary at the end of Pelagius' list of righteous men and women from the scriptures. Pelagius said, "Piety demands that we admit that

she was without sin." Augustine says, "Let us then leave aside the holy Virgin Mary; on account of the honor due to the Lord, I do not want to raise here any question about her when we are dealing with sins. After all, how do we know what wealth of grace was given her in order to conquer sin completely, since she merited to conceive and bear the one who obviously had no sin?"

23. See *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 41, 47.

24. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sin and the Baptism of Little Ones* I, 18, 23.

Book One

1, 1. We are pressed on all sides by the worries and concerns we have over sinners who abandon God's law,¹ though we count them as punishments for our own sins. I did not, nonetheless, want to be and, to tell you the truth, I could not endure to be any longer indebted to your zeal, Marcellinus, for it makes you very dear and pleasing to us. We are, in fact, compelled either by the love which makes us one in the immutable One, as we are being transformed for the better, or by the fear of offending God in you. For he has given you this desire, and by serving you I serve him who has given it to you. I am so compelled, as I said, so pulled and drawn, to solve as best I can, given my modest abilities, these questions which you posed, when you wrote to me.² In fact, this matter has presently driven all the others from my mind, until I produce something that proves that I have been of service, if not sufficiently, at least obediently, to your good desire and that of those who are worried about these matters.

If Adam Had Not Sinned, He Would Not Have Died

2, 2. These people say, "Adam was created so that he would die, even if he did not sin, not as a punishment for his guilt, but by the necessity of his nature."³ They, of course, try to take the words of the law, *On the day that you eat, you will surely die* (Gn 2:17), as referring, not to the death of the body, but to the death of the soul that occurs when one sins. The Lord indicated that unbelievers had died the latter sort of death, when he said of them, *Let the dead bury their dead* (Mt 8:22 and Lk 9:60). What reply, then, will they make, when they read that, by way of rebuke and condemnation, God also said to the first man after his sin, *You are earth, and you will return to earth* (Gn 3:19). After all, it was obviously his body that was earth, not his soul, and it was by the death of that body that he was going to return to earth. He was surely earth in terms of his body and bore the animal body in which he was created; nonetheless, if he had not sinned, he was going to be changed into a spiritual body⁴ and pass into the state of incorruption, which is promised to believers and saints, without suffering the punishment of death. We not only experience in ourselves a desire for that state, but we also acknowledge it because of the apostle's statement. He says, *In this body we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, if only we might be found clothed and not naked. We who are in this present dwelling groan in our distress, for we do not want to be stripped, but to be clothed over with immortality and incorruption, so that what is mortal might be*

swallowed up by life (2 Cor 5:2-4). Accordingly, if Adam had not sinned, he was not going to be stripped of his body; rather, he was going to be clothed over with immortality and incorruption so that what was mortal might be swallowed up by life, that is, that he might pass from an animal to a spiritual body.

3. 3. There was, after all, no need to fear that, if he lived here in his animal body for a long time, he would be burdened by old age and gradually come to die by growing old. God kept the clothes and shoes of the Israelites from wearing out during those many years.⁵ Why should we be surprised if the power of the same God would grant to the first man, if he remained obedient, that, though he had an animal, that is, a mortal body, he would enjoy in it a state that would allow him to live for many years without any diminishment? And then at the time God willed, he would pass from mortality to immortality without death intervening. For, just as this flesh which we now have is not invulnerable, simply because it need not suffer a wound, so Adam's flesh was not immortal, simply because it did not need to die. In my opinion, those who were taken from this life without dying were granted such a condition while still in their animal and mortal body. Henoch and Elijah, after all, have not during their long life deteriorated by reason of old age, and I do not believe that they were transformed into that spiritual sort of body that we are promised at the resurrection, because the Lord was the first to have that sort of body. Perhaps they have no need of these earthly foods which restore us as they are consumed, but from the time that they were carried off, they continue to live and are satisfied, just as Elijah was during those forty days when he survived on a cup of water and piece of bread.⁶ Or, if there was need of earthly foods, these men are perhaps fed in paradise, as Adam was before he deserved to leave there because of his sin. As I see it, he received refreshment against deterioration from the fruits of the trees and stability against old age from the tree of life.⁷

Adam's Sin Is the Cause of Bodily Death

4. 4. I do not know how the words, *You are earth, and you will return to earth* (Gn 3:19), can be interpreted except as referring to bodily death. But besides this passage which the Lord spoke while imposing punishment, there are other testimonies which make it perfectly clear that the human race earned death, not merely death of the spirit, but also death of the body. The apostle says to the Romans, *But if Christ is in you, the body is indeed dead on account of sin, but the spirit is life on account of righteousness. If then the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will bring to life even your mortal bodies through his Spirit dwelling in you* (Rom 8:10-11). I do not believe that so clear and so obvious a statement needs anyone to interpret it; it merely needs someone to read it. He says, *The*

body is dead, not on account of its earthly frailness, because it has been made from the dust of the earth, but *on account of sin* (Rom 8:10). What more could we want? He was most careful not to say, "mortal," but "dead."

5, 5. After all, the body could be mortal without being destined to die, before being changed into that state of incorruption which is promised to the saints at the resurrection.⁸ So too, this body of ours can be, so to speak, liable to illness,⁹ without being destined to become ill. After all, is there anyone who has flesh that cannot become ill, even if in a particular case the person dies before becoming ill? So too, that body was already mortal. The transformation into the state of eternal incorruption would have swallowed up this mortality, if righteousness, that is, obedience, had lasted in the man, but the mortal body experienced death only on account of sin. That transformation in the future resurrection is not only not going to have any death, for death came about on account of sin; it is also not going to have any mortality of the sort that the animal body had before sin. Hence, Paul did not say, "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also bring to life your dead bodies," though he had said "dead body" above. Rather, he said, *He will bring to life even your mortal bodies* (Rom 8:11). That is, he will not only make them to be not dead, but not mortal, when the animal body rises as spiritual and this mortal body dons immortality and what is mortal is swallowed up by life.¹⁰

6, 6. I am amazed that anyone wants something clearer than this clear statement. But perhaps one should listen to what they say in opposition to this clarity. They say that we should understand that the body is dead in the sense in which scripture said, *Put to death your earthly members* (Col 3:5). In this sense, however, the body is put to death on account of righteousness, not on account of sin. After all, we put to death our earthly members in order that we might act with righteousness. Or, they might suppose that *on account of sin* was added, so that we might understand not: "because sin was committed," but: "so that sin might not be committed." Then scripture would mean that the body is dead so that we do not commit sin. But then what did he mean, when after adding, *but the spirit is life*, he went on to say, *on account of righteousness?* (Rom 8:10). After all, it was enough to mention the life of the spirit, so that one would understand here too, "so that sin might not be committed." Then we would understand that each of them has a single purpose: both the body is dead and the spirit is life so that sin might not be committed. Thus, even if he wanted merely to say, *on account of righteousness*, that is, on account of acting righteously, each of them could refer to this. That is, both the body is dead and the spirit is life on account of acting righteously. But he in fact said that the body is dead on account of sin and the spirit is life on account of righteousness, assigning different recompenses to different things: to the body of death the punishment of sin, but to the life of the spirit the reward of righteousness. Hence, it is beyond

doubt that *the spirit is life on account of righteousness* (Rom 8:10), that is, as a reward of righteousness. How else then ought we or can we understand the words, *the body is dead on account of sin*, except as the punishment of sin, unless, of course, we are going to try to twist and distort the perfectly clear meaning of scripture as we choose? The following words also throw light on this. In describing the grace of the present era, he said that the body was indeed dead on account of sin, because the punishment of sin, that is, the necessity of death, remains in the body which has not yet been renewed by the resurrection. But the spirit is life on account of righteousness, because, although we are still *burdened by the body of this death* (Rom 7:24), we already breathe more easily *in terms of the interior human being* (Rom 7:22), since we have begun to be renewed in the righteousness that comes from faith. Nonetheless, so that human ignorance might not be without any hope for the resurrection of the body, he says that the very body which he called dead in the present world on account of the punishment of sin will be brought to life in the world to come on account of the reward of righteousness. And it will be brought to life, not merely in the sense that it will become alive after being dead, but in the sense that it will become immortal after being mortal.

7. 7. I am afraid that an explanation may simply obscure something that is quite clear, but pay attention to the light found in the apostle's words. He says, *But if Christ is in you, the body is indeed dead on account of sin, but the spirit is life on account of righteousness* (Rom 8:10). He said this so that people would not suppose that they had little or no benefit from the grace of Christ, since they were necessarily going to die a bodily death. They ought, of course, to be aware that the body still bears the punishment of sin, because it is subject to death, but that the spirit has already begun to live because of the righteousness of faith, even though the spirit itself had in human beings been extinguished by a sort of death stemming from unbelief. Therefore, you should not, he said, suppose that you have received a small gift by reason of the fact that Christ is present in you, because your spirit lives on account of righteousness in the body that is dead on account of sin. Nor should you give up hope for the life of the body either. *For if the Spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will bring to life even your mortal bodies through his Spirit dwelling in you* (Rom 8:11). Why does the fog of bickering continue to block out such a strong light? The apostle cries out, *The body is indeed dead in you on account of sin*, but even your mortal bodies will be brought to life on account of righteousness. On account of that righteousness the spirit is already life, and all of this will be brought about through the grace of Christ, that is, *through his Spirit dwelling in you*. And yet they cry out against this! Paul even says how it will come about that life will transform death into life by putting it to death. *Therefore, my brothers and sisters*, he says, *we owe nothing to the flesh so that*

we should live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if you put to death the works of the flesh, you will live (Rom 8:12-13). What else does this mean but this: If you live according to death, the whole of you will die, but if you put death to death by living according to life, the whole of you will live?

8, 8. Similarly, how can the words, *Death came through a man, and the resurrection of the dead came through a man* (1 Cor 15:21), be understood otherwise than as referring to the death of the body? For he said this when he was speaking of the resurrection of the body, and he was arguing for it with great insistence and passion. He said, *Death came through a man, and the resurrection of the dead came through a man. For, just as all die in Adam, so too all will be brought to life in Christ* (1 Cor 15:21-22). What was he saying to the Corinthians in this passage but what he also said to the Romans: *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death* (Rom 5:12). Those people want to interpret this death, not as the death of the body, but as the death of the soul. They imply that he was saying something else to the Corinthians by the words, *Death came through a man*. Here they certainly may not understand the death of the soul, because the passage is dealing with the resurrection of the body, which is just the opposite of the death of the body. He mentioned there only the death that came about through a man and not sin, precisely because he was not dealing with the righteousness which is the opposite of sin, but with the resurrection of the body, which is the opposite of the death of the body.

All Share in Adam's Sin by Generation, Not Merely by Imitation

9, 9. You have intimated in your letter that they try to twist into a new and different meaning the testimony of the apostle in which he says, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death* (Rom 5:12). But you have not mentioned what meaning it was that they derived from those words. As far as I have been able to find out from others, this is what they think of that text: The death mentioned in that passage is not the death of the body which they deny Adam merited by sinning; it is, rather, the death of the soul which occurs in the sin itself, and this sin passed from the first man to other human beings not by propagation, but by imitation.¹¹ Hence, they refuse to believe that in the case of little children original sin¹² is removed by baptism, since they maintain that there is no sin at all in newborns. But if the apostle had wanted to mention the sin that entered this world, not by propagation, but by imitation, he would have called its originator not Adam, but the devil. Of the latter scripture says, *The devil is a sinner from the beginning* (1 Jn 3:8). We also read regarding him in the Book of Wisdom, *By the hatred of the devil, death entered the world* (Wis 2:24). After all, this death came to human beings from the devil, not because they came from

him by propagation, but because they imitated him. Hence, it immediately added, *Those who belong to him imitate him* (Wis 2:25). Thus, when the apostle mentioned the sin and the death that passed from the one to all by propagation, he made their originator the one from whom the propagation of the human race took its beginning.

10. Of course, all those who through disobedience transgress God's commandment imitate Adam. But it is one thing for him to be an example for those who sin by their will; it is something else for him to be the origin of those born with sin. After all, the saints also imitate Christ in the pursuit of righteousness. For this reason the same apostle says, *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ* (1 Cor 11:1). But apart from this imitation his grace also produces within us our enlightenment and justification by that action of which his same preacher says, *Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything; it is, rather, God who gives the increase* (1 Cor 3:7). By this grace he brings into his body even infants who are baptized, and they are certainly unable to imitate him. Apart from his having offered himself as an example of righteousness to those who imitate him, the one in whom all are brought to life¹³ also gives to the faithful the most hidden grace of his Spirit, and he also bestows this grace upon little ones in a hidden manner. So too, apart from his being an example for those to imitate who willingly transgress the commandment of the Lord, the one in whom all die also infects in himself with the hidden corruption of his carnal concupiscence all those who are to come from his lineage. For this reason and none other, the apostle says, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it¹⁴ was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned¹⁵* (Rom 5:12). If I were to state this, these people would resist and cry out that I speak incorrectly and think incorrectly. They would, of course, find in these words no other meaning, regardless of who spoke them, than the meaning which they refuse to find in the apostle. But because they are the words of one to whose authority and teaching they yield, they accuse us of being slow to understand, while they try to twist a perfectly clear statement into some other meaning. Paul said, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death* (Rom 5:12). This means by propagation, not by imitation; otherwise, he would say, "Through the devil." He is speaking of the first man, who was called Adam, a point which no one doubts. And thus, he says, *it was passed on to all human beings* (Rom 5:12).

10, 11. Then, note the carefulness, the propriety, the clarity with which the next clause is stated, *in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). For if you have here understood the sin that entered the world through the one man in which sin all have sinned, it is certainly clear that personal sins of each person by which they alone sinned are distinct from this one in which all have sinned, when all were that one man. But if you have understood, not the sin, but that one man, in which

one man all have sinned, what could be clearer than that clear statement? For we read that those who believe in him are justified in Christ on account of the hidden communication and inspiration of spiritual grace,¹⁶ which makes whoever clings to the Lord one spirit.¹⁷ Even though his saints also imitate him,¹⁸ I would like to find something of the sort said of those who have imitated his saints. Has anyone been said to have been justified in Paul or in Peter or in anyone else of those who have an eminent authority among the people of God? We are, of course, said to be blessed in Abraham in accord with God's words to him, *All the nations will be blessed in you* (Gn 12:3 and Gal 3:8), on account of Christ who is called his offspring according to the flesh.¹⁹ This is stated more clearly, when the same idea is put as follows, *All the nations will be blessed in your offspring* (Gn 22:18). I doubt that anyone will find it stated in the words of God that someone has sinned or sins in the devil, though all sinful and evil persons imitate him. But with regard to the words of the apostle concerning the first man, *in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12), they continue to resist the propagation of sin and raise in objection the idea of imitation to cloud over the issue.

The Roles of Sin, the Law, and Grace

12. Notice the words that follow. For, after he said, *In whom all have sinned*, he went on to say, *For before the law there was sin in the world* (Rom 5:12-13), that is, because the law could not take away sin. After all, it came so that sin might be more abundant.²⁰ This holds both for the natural law under which each person with the use of reason begins to add personal sins to original sin and for the written law given to the people by Moses. *For, if a law had been given which could give life, righteousness would, of course, come from the law. But scripture has enclosed all things under sin so that on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe* (Gal 3:21-22). *But sin was not imputed, when the law did not exist* (Rom 5:13). What does *was not imputed* mean but that in their ignorance people did not know it was sin? Nor did the Lord God regard sin as non-existent, since scripture says, *Those who have sinned apart from the law will perish apart from the law* (Rom 2:12).

11, 13. He said, *But death reigned from Adam until Moses* (Rom 5:14), that is, from the first man right up to the law which God promulgated, since even the law could not remove the reign of death. For the reign of death means that the guilt of sin lords it over human beings in such a way that it does not permit them to attain eternal life, which is true life, but draws them to the second death,²¹ which is eternal punishment. In any human being this reign of death was destroyed only by the grace of the savior. That grace was also at work in the saints of old, all those who, before Christ came in the flesh,²² had recourse to

his helping grace, not to the letter of the law, which can only command, but cannot provide help. This was hidden in the Old Testament in accord with God's perfectly just plan for the different times, but it has now been revealed in the New Testament. Hence, *death reigned from Adam until Moses* in all human beings who were not helped by the grace of Christ so that the reign of death in them was destroyed. Hence, it reigned in those *who did not sin in the likeness of the transgression of Adam*, that is, in those who did not sin, as he did, by their own personal will, but contracted original sin from him *who is the pattern of what was to come* (Rom 5:14). For in him the pattern of condemnation was established for his posterity yet to come who would come into being from his lineage. Thus, from the one man all are born destined for a condemnation,²³ from which only the grace of Christ sets them free.²⁴ I know, of course, that most Latin manuscripts read as follows: *Death reigned from Adam until Moses in those who sinned in the likeness of the transgression of Adam* (Rom 5:14), and those who have this reading give it the same interpretation. They understand that those who sinned in Adam sinned in the likeness of his transgression so that they are born like him. Just as they are human beings from a human being, so they are sinners from a sinner, persons destined to die from one destined to die, and persons under condemnation from one under condemnation. But all or nearly all the Greek manuscripts from which the Latin translation was made have the text as I first cited it.

14. He goes on to say, *But the gift is not completely like the sin. For, if on account of the sin of one man many have died, the grace of God and the gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, has been much more abundant for many* (Rom 5:15). It has not been abundant for many more, that is, for many more human beings, for there are not more who are justified than are condemned, but it has been much more abundant. Adam fathered many who were guilty as a result of his single transgression, but Christ destroyed and forgave by his grace even those sins human beings committed by their own will and added to the original sin in which they were born. He stated this more clearly in what follows.

12, 15. Consider more carefully his statement that on account of the sin of one man many have died. After all, why did he say, *on account of the sin of one man* and not rather "on account of their own personal sins," if we are to understand this passage as speaking of imitation and not propagation? Notice what follows: *But the gift does not come in the same way as sin came through the one who sinned. For judgment starts from the one and leads to condemnation, but grace starts from many sins and leads to justification* (Rom 5:16). Let them state at this point how imitation has any place in these words. He says, *From the one and leads to condemnation*. From one what, if not from one sin? He explains this when he adds, *But grace starts from many sins and leads to justification*. Why then does judgment start from one sin and lead to condem-

nation, but grace starts from many sins and leads to justification? If there is no original sin, would it not be true not only that grace leads human beings to justification from many sins, but also that judgment leads them to condemnation from many sins? After all, grace pardons many sins, and judgment also condemns many sins. If people are brought to condemnation as the result of the one sin, because all the sins which are condemned were committed in imitation of that one sin, there is the same grounds for understanding that they are led to justification from the one sin, since all the sins which are forgiven for those who have been justified have been committed in imitation of that one sin. Yet that is not, of course, what the apostle understood when he said, *Judgment starts from the one sin and leads to condemnation, but grace starts from many sins and leads to justification* (Rom 5:16). But let us understand the apostle and see that he said that judgment starts from the one sin and leads to condemnation, because it would be sufficient reason for condemnation, even if there were only original sin in human beings. The condemnation of those who added personal sins to original sin is more severe, and more severe for individuals in proportion to the gravity of each person's sins. But that sin alone which was contracted from our origin separates people from the kingdom of God. Even little ones who have died cannot enter that kingdom without having received the grace of Christ, as this person admits. But that sin also keeps them from salvation and eternal life. For there is no salvation and eternal life apart from the kingdom of God into which one is brought only by the community of Christ.

13, 16. Thus we have contracted from Adam, in whom we have all sinned, not all our sins, but only original sin. But from Christ, in whom we are all justified, we obtain the forgiveness not only of that original sin, but also of the other sins which we have added to it. Therefore, *the gift does not come in the same way as the sin came through the one who sinned* (Rom 5:16). For judgment coming from the one sin, that is, from original sin, if it is not forgiven, can lead to condemnation, but grace starting from many sins that have been forgiven, that is, not from original sin alone, but also from all the rest, leads to our justification.

17. *For, if on account of the sin of one man, death reigned through the one man, far more shall those who receive an abundance of grace and righteousness reign in life through the one Jesus Christ* (Rom 5:17). Why did death reign through the one man on account of the sin of the one man, if not because, in that one man in whom all sinned, they were held bound by the chain of death, even if they did not add personal sins? Otherwise, death did not reign on account of the sin of the one man through the one man, but on account of the many sins of many through each one who sins. For, if the rest are dead on account of the sin of another, precisely because they followed after and imitated the one who preceded them in sinning, then Adam has for a much better reason died on account of the sin of another. For the devil sinned before him in order to persuade

him to sin as well. But Adam did not try to persuade those who imitate him, and many who are called his imitators have either not heard or do not believe that he existed or committed such a sin. How much more correctly, as I said, would the apostle have made the devil the originator! Then he could say that sin and death passed from him to all,²⁵ if he had wanted in this passage to teach not propagation, but imitation. It makes much more sense, after all, to call Adam the imitator of the devil who persuaded him to sin, if we can call people imitators of Adam, though Adam did not try to persuade them to sin or was utterly unknown to them. What does the phrase mean, *who receive an abundance of grace and righteousness* (Rom 5:17)? It surely means that they were given the grace of forgiveness, not only for that sin in which all sinned, but also for those sins which they added to it, and that human beings received such righteousness that, though Adam consented to sin when he was enticed, they do not yield even when pressured. Since the kingdom of death draws many more into eternal punishments, what can it mean that they will *reign in life* far more (Rom 5:17), unless we understand that both passages are speaking of those who have passed from Adam to Christ, that is, from death to life? For they will reign without end in eternal life far more than death reigned in them for a time and with an end.

18. *And so, just as the sin of one led to the condemnation of all human beings, so the justification of one leads to righteousness of life for all human beings* (Rom 5:18). If we have imitation in mind, this sin of the one will be that of the devil. But since it is clear that the text is speaking of Adam and not of the devil, we are left to understand not imitation, but the propagation of sin.

14. For his words concerning Christ, *the justification of one* (Rom 5:18), express this better than if he said, "the righteousness of one man." He is speaking, of course, of that justification by which Christ makes the sinner righteous.²⁶ He does not set this justification before us as an example to be imitated; rather, it is something that he alone can do. The apostle could, of course, say with correctness, *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ* (1 Cor 11:1), but he would never say, "Be justified by me, as I am justified by Christ." There can be, there are, and there have been many righteous human beings for us to imitate, but Christ alone is righteous and justifies others.²⁷ For this reason scripture says, *For those who believe in him who justifies sinners, faith is credited to them as righteousness* (Rom 4:5). If anyone, then, would dare to say, "I justify you," it would follow that this person should also say, "Believe in me." But no holy person could say that except *the Holy of Holies* (Dn 9:24). He says, *Believe in God, and believe in me* (Jn 14:1), so that, because he makes the sinner righteous, the faith of one who believes in him may be counted as righteousness.

15, 19. For, if imitation alone produces sinners through Adam, why does imitation alone not produces righteous persons through Christ? *For just as the*

sin of one led to the condemnation of all human beings, so the justification of one leads to righteousness of life for all human beings (Rom 5:18). In accord with such a view, those two individuals should not have been Adam and Christ, but Adam and Abel. For many sinners have gone before us in this life, and those who sinned at a later time imitated them. These people, nonetheless, would have it that scripture mentioned Adam alone as the one in whom all would sin²⁸ by imitation, because he was the first human being to sin. On such grounds Abel ought, likewise, to be called the one in whom human beings are justified by imitation, since he was the first human being to live righteously. Or, if it was on account of the crucial moment of time marking the beginning of the New Testament that Christ was proposed as the head of those who are righteous by imitation, then Judas, who betrayed him, ought to be made the head of sinners. On the other hand, if Christ is the one in whom all are justified, because it is not merely imitation of him that makes persons righteous, but the grace that gives them rebirth through the Spirit, then Adam is the one *in whom all have sinned*, because it is not merely imitation of him that makes them sinners, but the penalty that gives them birth through the flesh. This is the reason that it says “all” both times. After all, not all who are born through Adam are reborn through Christ. But the statement is correct, because, as no one is born in the flesh except through Adam, so no one is born spiritually except through Christ. For if some human beings could be born in the flesh other than through Adam and some could be born²⁹ in the Spirit other than through Christ, “all” would not have a clear meaning in either this passage or the other one. Scripture later refers to the same “all” as “many.” In a particular case, a few can be all there are. But many are born in the flesh and many are born spiritually, though not as many are born spiritually as are born in the flesh. Nonetheless, as birth in the flesh includes all human beings, so spiritual birth includes all the righteous. For, as no one is a human being apart from birth in the flesh, so no one is a righteous human being apart from spiritual birth, and there are many in each group. *For just as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man many will be made righteous* (Rom 5:19).

20. *But the law entered in so that sin might abound* (Rom 5:20). This was the sin that human beings added to original sin by their own will, not through Adam. This sin is also taken away and healed through Christ. For, *where sin abounded, there grace was even more abundant so that, as the reign of sin led to death*—including the sin which human beings did not inherit from Adam, but added by their own will—*so the reign of grace might through righteousness lead to eternal life* (Rom 5:20-21). But there is no righteousness apart from Christ, as there are some sins apart from Adam. Hence, after he said, *as the reign of sin led to death*, he did not at this point add, “through one man” or “through Adam,” because it said above that, when the law entered in, sin abounded, and

this sin is not that which comes from our origin, but that which comes from our own will. But when he said, *so the reign of grace might through righteousness lead to eternal life*, he added, *through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 5:21). For only original sin is contracted through birth in the flesh, but through rebirth in the Spirit we have forgiveness, not only of original sin, but also of voluntary sins.

Little Ones Who Die without Baptism Are Condemned

16, 21. Accordingly, one can correctly say that little ones who leave the body without baptism will be under the mildest condemnation of all. But one who preaches that they will not be under any condemnation misleads others very much and is himself very mistaken. For the apostle says, *Judgment starts from one sin and leads to condemnation* (Rom 5:16) and a little later, *The sin of one led to the condemnation of all human beings* (Rom 5:18). Hence, even though Adam's body was animal and mortal, when he sinned by not obeying God, his body lost the grace which made it completely obedient to his soul. At that moment there came into being that animal arousal of which human beings are rightly ashamed and which caused Adam to be embarrassed by his nakedness. At that moment too, they contracted a disease from an unexpected and deadly corruption. The result for them was that they lost the stability of the life in which they were created and began to move toward death through ages subject to change. Thus, although they lived for many years after this, they began to die on that day on which they received the law of death by which they began to age and grow old. For time does not stand still even for a moment. Rather, it unceasingly slips past, and everything involved in constant change gradually moves, not toward an end that perfects, but toward one that destroys. In that sense God's words, *On the day that you eat, you will surely die* (Gn 2:17), have been fulfilled. As a result, then, of this disobedience of the flesh, as a result of this law of sin and death, all who are born in the flesh need to be reborn spiritually, not only so that they may come to the kingdom of heaven, but also so that they may be set free from the condemnation of sin. Thus they are born in the flesh, subject to both the sin and the death of the first human being, and they are reborn in baptism, joined to both the righteousness and the eternal life of the second. In accord with this, we find in Sirach, *The beginning of sin was brought about by the woman, and we all die by reason of her* (Sir 25:24). Whether it says "by the woman" or "by Adam," both belong to the first human being, because, as we know, the woman came from the man and both had one flesh. Hence, we have the words of scripture, *And they will be two in one flesh. Therefore, they are no longer two*, says the Lord, *but one flesh* (Mt 19:5-6).

17, 22. Hence, it will not take a great effort to refute those who say that little ones are baptized in order to be forgiven the personal sin which they have

contracted in this life, not the sin which they inherited from Adam. For, when they reflect a little by themselves, without wanting to be argumentative, on how absurd and unworthy of discussion their claim really is, they will immediately change their position. But if they refuse to do so, we should not place so little hope in the human mind that we fear that they will persuade anyone of their position. These people were themselves driven to say this, unless I am mistaken, as a result of some other position they previously adopted. That is, they must admit that sins are forgiven in baptism, and they refuse to admit that there is a sin derived from Adam which they concede that the little ones are forgiven. Hence, they are forced to accuse infants of sin, as if they are safer in accusing infants by the very fact that the accused cannot speak in their own defense. But, as I said, let us leave these people aside. After all, words or proofs are superfluous for establishing the innocence of infants in the life which they live in their own persons immediately after their birth, if the human mind fails to recognize it, unaided by the help of any argument.

18, 23. On the other hand, those people do raise a question and seem to offer something worth consideration and discussion. They claim that little ones newly born from their mothers' wombs do not receive baptism on account of the forgiveness of sin, but so that, through spiritual procreation, they might be created in Christ and become partakers of the kingdom of heaven, and in the same way children and *heirs of God, coheirs with Christ* (Rom 8:17).³⁰ But when we ask them whether those who are not baptized and have not become coheirs with Christ and sharers in the kingdom of heaven will have at least the benefit of eternal salvation at the resurrection of the dead, they find themselves in serious difficulties and see no way out. After all, will any Christian tolerate hearing that someone can attain eternal salvation without being reborn in Christ? He willed that this rebirth be brought about by baptism back when he was about to institute such a sacrament for those who needed to be reborn for the hope of eternal life. For this reason the apostle said, *Not as a result of the works of righteousness which we performed, but in accord with his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth* (Ti 3:5). He stated that this salvation is a matter of hope, while we live this life, when he said, *For we are saved in hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; after all, why should one hope for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we look forward to it with patience* (Rom 8:24-25). Who then would dare to claim that little ones can attain eternal salvation without this rebirth, as if Christ did not die for them? After all, *Christ died for sinners* (Rom 5:6). But, if they are not held by any bond of sinfulness stemming from their origin, how did Christ, who died for the sinners, die for these infants who obviously have done nothing sinful in their own lives? If they are not afflicted by the disease of original sin, why do those caring for³¹ them bring them out of a holy fear to Christ the physician, that is, to receive the

sacrament of eternal salvation? Why are they not told in church, “Take these innocents away; *it is not those whose are in good health who need a physician, but those who are sick* (Mt 9:12); Christ did not come to *call the righteous, but sinners*” (Lk 5:32)? No one ever said, no one ever says, and no one ever will say something as false and contrived as that in the Church of Christ!

19, 24. No one should think³² that little ones should be brought to baptism, because, just as they are not sinners, so they are not righteous. Why, given that opinion, do some mention that the Lord praised the goodness of this age, when he said, *Let the little ones come to me, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven?* (Mt 19:14). For if he said this, not on account of the likeness to humility, since humility makes people little, but on account of the praiseworthy life of children, they are, then, righteous as well. After all, one could not be correct otherwise in saying, *To such belongs the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 19:14), since it can only belong to the righteous. But perhaps it is not wrong to say that the Lord praised the life of little ones, when he said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, because the interpretation is correct that found a likeness of humility in that young age. On the other hand, perhaps one should maintain the interpretation I mentioned, that little ones should be baptized, because, as they are not sinners, so they are not righteous. But after he said, *I have not come to call the righteous*, as if he received the reply, “Whom then have you come to call?” he immediately added, *but sinners to repentance* (Lk 5:32). And thus, just as he did not come to call them, if they are righteous, so he did not come to call them, if they are not sinners, for he said, *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*. Accordingly, they seem to rush, not only pointlessly, but also wrongly, to his baptism, though he does not call them. Heaven forbid that we hold such a view! The physician, then, calls them; he is not needed by those who are in good health, but by those who are sick, and he has come, not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.³³ And since they are not yet held guilty of any sins from their own lives, the illness stemming from their origin is healed in them by the grace of him who saves them through the bath of rebirth.³⁴

25. Someone will say, “How, then, are they called to repentance? Can such little ones repent of anything?” To this we answer: If they should not be called repentant, because they do not yet have a mind capable of repentance, they should not be called believers, because they likewise do not yet have a mind capable of believing. But if they are correctly called believers, because they in some sense profess the faith by the words of their parents,³⁵ why should we not also first regard them as repentant, since we see that they renounce the devil and this world by the words of these same parents? All of this takes place in hope by the power of the sacrament and of the divine grace which Christ has given to the Church. Moreover, is there anyone who does not know that, if baptized infants, upon coming to the age of reason, do not believe and do not refrain from

illicit desires, they derive no benefit from what they received as children? If, nonetheless, they depart from this life, after receiving baptism, the guilt to which they were held subject by reason of their origin has been removed, and they will be made perfect in that light of the truth. While remaining unchangeable for eternity, that light enlightens those who have been made righteous by the presence of the Creator. For sins alone produce the separation between human beings and God, and they are removed by the grace of him through whom we are reconciled, when he *makes the sinner righteous* (Rom 4:5).

There Is No Eternal Life apart from the Kingdom of God

20, 26. These people stand in awe of the statement of the Lord, *Unless one has been born again, one will not see the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:3). When he explained it, he said, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one will not enter the kingdom of heaven* (Jn 3:5). Hence, they try to ascribe salvation and eternal life to unbaptized little ones as a recompense for their innocence. But, by a novel and strange hypothesis, they try to exclude them from the kingdom of heaven, because they were not baptized, as if there could be the eternal salvation of eternal life apart from the inheritance of Christ, apart from the kingdom of heaven. They do, of course, have a place in which to take refuge and hide, because the Lord did not say, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one will not have life*, but said, *one will not enter the kingdom of heaven* (Jn 3:5). For if he had said the former, no doubt could arise on this point. Let the doubt, then, be removed; let us, I say, listen to the Lord, not to the suspicions and conjectures of mortals. Let us listen to the Lord, I say, as he speaks, not about the sacrament of the holy bath, but of the sacrament of his holy table which no one approaches properly unless he is baptized. The Lord says, *Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in you* (Jn 6:54). What more are we looking for? What answer can anyone make to this, unless stubbornness turns its feisty muscles against the firmness of the clear truth?³⁶

27. Or will anyone dare to say that this statement does not hold for little ones and that they can have life in themselves without sharing in this body and blood? For he did not say, "Unless one has eaten," as he said regarding baptism, *Unless one has been reborn* (Jn 3:5); rather, he said, *Unless you eat* (Jn 6:54), as if he were addressing those who were able to hear and understand him, something that little ones, of course, cannot do. But one who says this fails to notice this point: Unless the statement includes all people so that, without the body and blood of the Son of Man, they cannot have life, adults would have no reason to be concerned about it. After all, if you consider, not the intent, but the words of the speaker, it can seem that they were addressed only to those people to whom

the Lord was then speaking, since he did not say, "Unless one has eaten," but *Unless you eat* (Jn 6:54). What happens to his statement in the same passage, where he says, *The bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world* (Jn 6:52)? In accord with this statement, then, we see that this sacrament includes us as well, who did not yet exist at the time when he was saying these words. For we cannot say that we do not belong to the world for the life of which Christ gave his flesh. Who is going to doubt that the term, "world," refers to human beings who come into this world by birth? For, in another passage, he said, *The children of this world are born and beget children* (Lk 20:34). Accordingly, his flesh, which was given for the life of the world, was also given for the life of the little ones, and if they have not eaten the flesh of the Son of Man, they will not have life either.

28. For this reason we also have the statement, *The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hand. One who believes in the Son has eternal life, but one who does not believe in the Son will not have life. Rather, the anger of God remains over him* (Jn 3:35-36). In which of these classes, then, are we to put infants? Among those who believe in the Son, or among those who do not believe in him? "In neither of them," someone will say, "because they cannot as yet believe, and they should not be counted as unbelievers." That is not what the rule of the Church indicates, for it includes baptized infants among the faithful. Moreover, if those who are baptized are counted among the faithful on account of the power and the celebration of this great sacrament, although they do not in their heart and on their lips do what belief and profession imply,³⁷ then those who lack the sacrament should be regarded as among those who do not believe in the Son. Hence, if they leave the body without this grace, they will meet with what scripture says: They will not see life. Rather, the anger of God remains over them.³⁸ And, since it is clear that they do not have personal sins, what is the reason for this, if they are not held subject to original sin?

21, 29. It was correct not to say, "*The anger of God will come over him, but remains over him.*" This is the anger by which we are all under the power of sin; the apostle says of it, *For we were once by nature children of anger, just as the others* (Eph 2:3). From this anger nothing sets us free except *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). Why this grace comes to one person and does not come to another can have a hidden, but not an unjust cause. *Is there injustice in God? Heaven forbid* (Rom 9:14). But we must first bend our necks before the authorities of the holy scriptures so that through faith each of us may come to understanding. Scripture did not, after all, say without a reason, *Your judgments are like a great abyss* (Ps 36:7). As if he were gasping at the depth of this abyss, the apostle cried out, *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* (Rom 11:33). He has prefaced this with a statement of amazing depth, when he said, *For God has enclosed all in unbelief*

so that he might have mercy upon all (Rom 11:32). As if struck with horror at this depth, he says, *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and unsearchable his ways! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who first gave something to him so that he will be repaid? For all things are from him and through him and in him. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen* (Rom 11:33-36). Thus we have a very limited mind for investigating the righteousness of God's judgments, for investigating his gratuitous grace. This grace is not unjust despite the lack of previous merits; it does not disturb us so much when it is offered to the unworthy as when it is denied to others who are equally unworthy.

30. For these people think it unjust that little ones who leave the body without the grace of Christ are deprived not only of the kingdom of God, into which they admit that they cannot enter unless they are reborn by baptism, but also of eternal life and salvation. They ask how it can be just that one person is set free from original sinfulness and another is not, though both share the same condition. Let them respond in terms of their own view how it is just that again and again baptism is offered to one person so that he enters the kingdom of God and is not offered to another, though the case of each of them is on a par. They are disturbed over the reason why from these two, though both were equally sinners in terms of their origin, the one to whom baptism is granted is freed from this bond and the other to whom this grace is not granted is not freed. Why, then, are they not equally disturbed that from two who are innocent in terms of their origin, one received baptism and can enter the kingdom of God and another did not receive it and cannot approach the kingdom of God? In each case we, of course, come back to that exclamation, *O the depth of the riches!* (Rom 11:33). Why from among the baptized little ones is one of them taken *so that evil would not change its mind* (Wis 4:11) and another lives on to be evil? Would not both enter the kingdom of heaven, if both were taken? And yet there is no injustice in God.³⁹ Why? Who is not troubled? Who is not forced to exclaim at such a great depth,⁴⁰ when some little ones are afflicted by an unclean spirit,⁴¹ and others suffer nothing of the sort, when some, like Jeremiah, are made holy in the wombs of their mothers,⁴² though, if there is original sin, all are equally guilty and, if there is not, they are equally innocent? What is the source of this great diversity, if it is not that his judgments are inscrutable and his ways unsearchable.⁴³

The Rejection of the Preexistence of Souls

22, 31. Or are we perhaps supposed to hold that exploded and rejected theory that souls first sin in their heavenly dwelling and gradually and slowly come down to bodies corresponding to their merits and suffer more or less bodily

afflictions for the life they previously lived? Holy scripture clearly contradicts this opinion and says, while commending grace, *They were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, but in order that God's plan might remain in accord with his choice, scripture said that the older will serve the younger, not because of any works, but because of the one who calls* (Rom 9:11-12). Those who hold this position do not, nonetheless, escape the difficulty of this question; rather, they are trapped by it and are stuck there. And, just as we are, they are forced to exclaim, *O the depth!* (Rom 11:33). Why does it happen that some who are from youth on quite modest, talented, and temperate, who to a large extent conquer sexual desires, hate greed, and detest luxury, and who develop into persons much inclined toward and suited for the other virtues, live, nonetheless, in a place where the grace of Christ cannot be preached to them? *For how will they call upon him in whom they have not believed? Or how will they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear of him without someone to preach?* (Rom 10:14). Yet other persons who are slow of wit, given to sexual desires, buried deep in crimes and wrongdoing, are so guided by providence that they hear the word, believe, are baptized and then taken by death—or, if they are kept in this life, live in a praiseworthy manner. Where have these two different kinds attained such diverse merits—I do not mean so that the latter believe, while the former do not believe, which comes from the individual will, but so that the latter hear what they believe while the former do not hear, for this does not fall within the individual's power? Where, I ask, have they attained such diverse merits? If they lived another life in heaven so that in accord with their actions they are driven or fall to earth and are held in bodily containers suited to the life they previously lived, we must believe that the former lived a better life prior to this mortal body, since they merited not to be weighed down by it very much. Thus they had fine talents and were driven by milder desires of the body, which they could easily overcome. Yet they did not merit that grace be preached to them, though it alone could set them free from the destruction of the second death.⁴⁴ But the other, in accord with worse merits, as they suppose, became attached to heavier bodies. And, for this reason, they were dull of heart and were overcome by the allurements of the flesh with its burning desire. Moreover, by a life of great sinfulness, they added on earth worse sins to those previous sins by which they merited to come here. Nonetheless, they either heard on the cross, *Today you will be with me in paradise* (Lk 23:43), or they attached themselves to some apostle and, transformed by his preaching, were saved by the bath of rebirth,⁴⁵ so that, where sin abounded, grace might be even more abundant.⁴⁶ I simply cannot see what answer those people might make; in their desire to defend the righteousness of God by human conjectures and in ignorance of the depth of his grace, they have composed myths lacking any probability.

32. Many things can be said about the marvelous vocations of human beings which we have read about or encountered ourselves. These destroy the opinion of those who believe that the souls of human beings lived lives of their own prior to these bodies of theirs so that by those lives they came to these bodies in accord with their different merits to meet with different experiences, either good or bad, in this life. But my concern to bring this work to a close does not allow me to delay any longer on them. I will not, nonetheless, pass over one remarkable point among many which I have found. These people suppose that souls are weighed down more or less by earthly bodies as a result of the merits of the previous life they lived in the heavenly regions prior to this body. In accord with this opinion of theirs, who would not claim that those people sinned more wickedly and more seriously before this life who merited to lose the light of their mind to such an extent that they are born with a mind close to that of animals? I do not mean those who are slow-witted—for we use that expression of others—but those who are so stupid that, even with hair curled to incite laughter, they provide the intelligent with the entertainment of their simplemindedness. The common people call them by the term, “morons” (*moriones*), which is derived from the Greek word. One of these persons, nonetheless, was so Christian that, though he patiently endured all the injuries done to him with an amazing simplicity, he could not tolerate an injury done to the name of Christ or, in his own person, to the religion in which he had been instructed. He would not cease pursuing with stones blasphemers—intelligent people, of course—who said these things to provoke him, and on such grounds he would not spare even his masters. I think that such persons were predestined and created so that those who can might understand that the grace of God and the Spirit, who *breathes where he wills* (Jn 3:8), do not on this account leave out any kind of natural talent from the children of mercy. And, likewise, they do not leave out any kind of natural talent from the children of hell. And so, *Let him who boasts boast in the Lord* (1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17). But what response can those people make who claim that for the merits of a previous life individual souls receive different earthly bodies by which some are weighed down more and others less? They claim that human natural abilities differ in accord with the same merits so that some are more quick-witted and others more dull and that divine grace is bestowed to set human beings free in accord with the merits of the previous life. How are they going to ascribe to that man both a terrible previous life so that he was born simpleminded and so meritorious a life that he was, for that reason, preferred to many very clever people in terms of the grace of Christ?

33. Let us then yield and give our assent to the authority of holy scripture which can neither deceive nor be deceived. And as we believe that those who have not yet been born have done nothing good or bad to make a difference in their merits,⁴⁷ so we have not the slightest doubt that all are subject to the sin

which entered the world through one human being and has been passed on to all human beings.⁴⁸ And from that sin only *the grace of God through our Lord, Jesus Christ* (Rom 7:25), sets us free.

Christ Is the Physician, Savior, and Redeemer for Little Ones

23. It is not those who are in good health, but those who are sick, who need his coming as a physician, for he did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.⁴⁹ Only one who has been born again of water and the Spirit⁵⁰ will enter into his kingdom, and no one will attain eternal life apart from his kingdom, since those who have not eaten his flesh⁵¹ and do not believe in the Son will not have life,⁵² but the anger of God remains over them. Only the physician who came, not on account of those who are in good health, but on account of those who are sick, only *the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world* (Jn 1:29), only the savior of whom the human race was told, *Today a savior has been born for you* (Lk 2:11), only the redeemer whose blood wipes away our transgression, sets people free from this sin, from this illness, from this anger of God. Even if they do not have personal sin because of their age, those who carry with them original sin are by nature children of this anger.⁵³ Who will be so bold as to say that Christ is not the savior and redeemer of infants? But from what does he save them, if they do not have the disease of original sin? From what does he redeem them, if they were not sold through their origin from the first human being to the power of sin?⁵⁴ In our judgment, then, apart from Christ's baptism, no eternal salvation is promised to infants except that promised by the divine scripture, which we should prefer to all the powers of the human mind.

24. 34. Punic Christians are perfectly correct in calling baptism "salvation" and in calling the sacrament of Christ's body "life." What is their basis for doing this, if it is not, as I believe, the ancient and apostolic tradition? That tradition leads them to regard it as a mark of the Church of Christ that without baptism and participation in the Lord's table no human being can attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and eternal life. After all, scripture also testifies to this as we have stated above. For what else do those who call baptism "salvation" hold but what scripture says, *He saved us through the bath of rebirth* (Ti 3:5) and what Peter said, *So too, baptism has saved you in a similar manner* (1 Pt 3:21)? What else do those who call the sacrament of the Lord's table "life" say but what scripture says: *I am the living bread who have come down from heaven*, and *The bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world*, and *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you* (Jn 6:51-52.54)? If, then, as so many and such great testimonies of God agree, no one can hope for either salvation or eternal life without baptism and the body and blood of the Lord, there is no reason to promise either salvation or eternal life to little ones without these. Moreover, if only sins separate one

from salvation and eternal life, it is the guilt of sin that is removed in little ones by these sacraments. Scripture says that none are free from that guilt, *even if their lives last but a single day* (Jb 14:5 LXX).⁵⁵ For this reason there is also this passage in the psalms, *For I was conceived in iniquity, and amid sins my mother fed me in the womb* (Ps 51:7). Either this was said in the name of human beings in general, or, if David said this of himself personally, he was certainly not born out of wedlock, but from a lawful marriage. Hence, we should have no doubt that Christ's blood was also shed for infants who were to be baptized. Before that blood was shed, it was given and entrusted to us in the sacrament so that he said, *This is my blood which will be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins* (Mt 26:28). But these people deny that those human beings are set free, who they do not want to admit are under the power of sin. After all, from what are they set free, if they are not held captive in slavery to sin?

35. He said, *I came into the world as light so that everyone who believes in me does not remain in darkness* (Jn 12:46). By saying this, what did he show but that everyone who does not believe in him remains in darkness and, by believing, one brings it about that one does not remain in darkness. What do we take this darkness to be but sins? But however else one may interpret this darkness, one who does not believe in Christ will in any case remain in it, and it is certainly a punishment, not like the darkness of night that is needed to provide rest for animals.

25. Hence, if little ones do not enter the number of believers by the sacrament which God established for this purpose, they will certainly remain in this darkness.

36. And yet some believe that they are enlightened as soon as they are born.⁵⁶ They interpret in that sense the text of scripture, *He was the true light that enlightens every human being that comes into this world* (Jn 1:9). But if that is so, it is very puzzling why, after having been enlightened by the only Son, since he was the Word in the beginning, God with God,⁵⁷ they are not admitted to the kingdom of God and are not *heirs of God, coheirs with Christ* (Rom 8:17). For even those who hold this view admit that they receive this latter only through baptism. Hence, if those who have been already enlightened are not fit to attain the kingdom of God, they ought at least to be happy to receive the baptism by which they become fit for it. And yet, we see them resist it with much weeping, and we pay no attention to their ignorance at that age so that we perform for them, even as they resist, the sacraments which we know are of benefit to them. After all, why does the apostle say, *Do not have minds like children* (1 Cor 14:20), if their minds have already been enlightened by that true light which is the Word of God?⁵⁸

37. Hence, the gospel says, *He was the true light that enlightens every human being that comes into this world* (Jn 1:9). The gospel said this, because no human

being is enlightened save by that light of the truth which is God. Thus none should suppose that they are enlightened so as to learn by someone from whom they hear something. And I do not mean merely if one happens to have as a teacher some great human being, but not even if one happens to have an angel. The word of truth is externally presented by means of a bodily voice; nonetheless, *neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything; it is, rather, God who gives the increase* (1 Cor 3:7). A human being hears someone speaking, either another human being or an angel, but in order that one might see and know that what is said is true, that light which remains eternally, but also *shines in the darkness* (Jn 1:5), is interiorly shed upon the mind. But as this sun in our sky is not seen by the blind, though it in a sense clothes them with its rays, so this light is not grasped by the darkness of folly.⁵⁹

38. But why, after saying, *that enlightens every human being*, did it add, *that comes into this world* (Jn 1:9)? This is the source of the idea that he enlightens the minds of little ones as they are born right at their bodily emergence from the womb of their mother. Although the Greek reads so that one could understand the light itself as coming into this world, nonetheless, if we must interpret it as speaking of every human being coming into this world, I see two possibilities. Either, like many things we find in the scriptures, the phrase was simply stated in such a way that, even if it is removed, nothing is lost from the meaning. Or, if we are to believe that this was added to indicate some distinction, it may have been said to differentiate spiritual enlightenment from this bodily enlightenment which brings light to the eyes of the body, whether by the sources of light in the heavens or by any fire. In that case, it spoke of the interior human being coming into this world, since the exterior human being is bodily, as this world is. Then it would equivalently say: He enlightens every human being coming into a body, in accord with the words of scripture, *I obtained a good soul, and I have entered a body that has been defiled* (Wis 8:19-20). If, then, that he *enlightens every human being that comes into this world* (Jn 1:9) was stated in order to make some distinction, it was either stated in such a way as to convey that he enlightens every interior human being. For, when the interior human being becomes truly wise, it is enlightened only by that which is the true light. Or it intended to call reason itself enlightenment, like the creation of the interior eye. For it is from reason that the human soul is called rational, and this reason remains hidden, as if at rest and asleep, but still present and implanted, as it were, in little ones. In this case one should not oppose the idea that the enlightenment took place when the soul was created, and it is not absurd to understand that this occurs when a human being comes into the world. Even though this eye has been created, it must, nonetheless, remain in darkness, if it does not believe in him who said, *I came into the world as light so that everyone who believes in me does not remain in darkness* (Jn 12:46). Mother Church has no doubt that this takes place in little

ones by means of the sacrament; she offers them her maternal heart and lips so that they may be initiated in the sacred mysteries, because they cannot yet believe unto righteousness with their own heart or make profession with their own lips unto salvation.⁶⁰ And no believer hesitates to call them believers—a name which is, of course, taken from believing. And yet, it was not these little ones themselves, but others who made the responses for them during the sacred rites.

The Scriptures Speak of Christ as the Redeemer

26, 39. It would take far too long, if we were to discuss the individual testimonies from scripture in this way. Hence, I think it is more appropriate to bring together the many testimonies, that come to mind or that seem sufficient, which make it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh,⁶¹ and that he took the form of the servant and became obedient unto the death of the cross for no other reason than the following.⁶² It was so that, by the dispensation of his grace filled with mercy, he might bring to life all those of whom he is the head, when they have become members inserted in his body. It was so that he might save them, set them free, redeem them, and enlighten them for the attainment of the kingdom of heaven. For they were previously situated in the death, illness, slavery, captivity, and darkness of sins, under the power of the devil, the prince of sinners. It was so that he would be the mediator between God and human beings.⁶³ And, it was so that, after he had by the peace of his grace brought to an end the hostilities stemming from our godlessness, we would through him be reconciled to God,⁶⁴ having been rescued for eternal life from the eternal death that awaited us. Once this point has been made abundantly clear, it will follow that those who do not need life, salvation, liberation, redemption, and enlightenment cannot belong to this dispensation of Christ's grace which was brought about by this lowliness he assumed. And since this dispensation of grace includes the baptism by which they are buried with Christ⁶⁵ so that they might be incorporated in him as his members, that is, as believers in him, they certainly do not need baptism, since they have no need of that benefit of forgiveness and reconciliation which comes about through the mediator. In any case, those people grant that little ones should be baptized, because they cannot stand up against the authority, which was, beyond any doubt, given to the whole Church through the Lord and the apostles. They should, then, also grant that they need these benefits of the mediator so that, washed by the sacrament and love of the faithful and thus incorporated into Christ's body, which is the Church, they might be reconciled to God. Thus they would become in him living, saved, set free, redeemed, and enlightened. From what, save from the death, failings, guilt, subjection, and darkness of sins? And since they committed at that age no sins in their own life, there remains only original sin.

27, 40. This argument will be stronger when I have mustered the many testimonies I promised. We have already cited above, *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners* (Lk 5:32). So too, when he entered the home of Zacchaeus, he said, *Today salvation has come to this house, since this man too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost* (Lk 19:9-10). He made the same point concerning the lost sheep which was sought after and found, while the ninety-nine were left untended; he made the same point concerning the one coin out of ten that was lost.⁶⁶ For this reason, *It was necessary*, as he said, *that repentance and the forgiveness of sins be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Lk 24:46-47). At the end of his gospel, Mark testifies that the Lord said, *Go into the whole world and preach the good news to every creature. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved, but those who do not believe will be condemned* (Mk 16:15-16). But who does not know that for infants to believe means to be baptized and not to believe means not to be baptized? Although we have already quoted some passages from the Gospel of John, note these as well. John the Baptist said of him, *Behold, the Lamb of God; behold, the one who takes away the sins of the world* (Jn 1:29). And the Lord says of himself, *Those who belong to my sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they will not perish for eternity* (Jn 10:27-28). Since little ones begin to belong to his sheep only by baptism, they will certainly perish, if they do not receive it, for they will not have the eternal life which he will give to his sheep. So too, in another passage he says, *I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me* (Jn 14:6).

41. The apostles accepted this teaching. Observe the great solemnity with which they proclaim it. In his first letter, Peter says, *Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In accord with the abundance of his mercy, he gave us a new birth for the hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for an immortal, untarnished, unfading inheritance that is kept in heaven for you who live in God's truth through faith in the salvation that has been made ready to be revealed in the last times* (1 Pt 1:3-5). A little later he says, *May you be found destined for the praise and glory of Jesus Christ whom you once did not know, but in whom you now believe, though you do not see him. But when you see him, you will rejoice with an indescribable joy and with a glorious joy as you receive the inheritance of the faith, the salvation of your souls* (1 Pt 1:7-9). So too, in another passage, he says, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he has adopted, so that you may announce the great deeds of him who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light* (1 Pt 2:9). Again he says, *Christ has suffered for our sins, a righteous man for the unrighteous, so that he might bring us to God* (1 Pt 3:18). Likewise, when he recalled the eight human beings saved in Noah's ark, he said, *So too, baptism*

has saved you in a similar manner (1 Pt 3:21). Little ones are strangers to this salvation and light, and they will remain lost and in darkness, unless they are joined by adoption to the people of God and hold onto Christ who suffered as a righteous man for the unrighteous so that he might bring them to God.⁶⁷

42. From the Letter of John the following passages came to mind which I thought indispensable for this question. He says, *But if we walk in the light, as he too is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, will cleanse us from every sin* (1 Jn 1:7). Likewise, he says in another passage, *If we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is greater, because this is the testimony of God. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in themselves. Those who do not believe God make him a liar, because they do not believe in the testimony which he gave concerning his Son. And this testimony is that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Those who have the Son have life; those who do not have the Son do not have life* (1 Jn 5:9-12). Little ones, then, will not only not have the kingdom of heaven, but will not even have life, if they do not have the Son, and they can have him only through baptism. So too, in another passage, he says, *The Son of God has been revealed for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil* (1 Jn 3:8). Little ones, then, will not share in the grace of the revelation of the Son of God, if he does not destroy the works of the devil in them.

43. Now pay attention to the testimonies of the apostle Paul on this topic. They are, of course, more numerous, since he wrote more letters and took greater care to emphasize the grace of God in confrontation with those who were proud of their works. Not knowing God's righteousness and wanting to establish their own righteousness, they were not subject to the righteousness of God.⁶⁸ In the Letter to the Romans, he says, *The righteousness of God for all who believe; for there is no distinction. All have, after all, sinned and lack the glory of God. They have been gratuitously justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God made him a sacrifice of atonement in his own blood through faith in order to show his righteousness with respect to the sins committed earlier during the time of God's patience in order that he might reveal his righteousness in the present time, that he is righteous and justifies those who have faith in Jesus* (Rom 3:22-26). In another passage he also says, *For one who works recompense is not counted as a grace, but as something owed. But for one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies sinners, faith is credited to him as righteousness. In that way David also declared blessed the person whom God accepts and to whom he grants righteousness without works, "Blessed are they whose iniquities have been forgiven and whose sins have been covered over. Blessed are they to whom God has not imputed sin"* (Rom 4:4-8 with Ps 32:1-2). So too, he says a little later, *Scripture did not say that faith was credited to him on his account alone, but on our account. For it will be credited*

to us who believe in him who raised up Christ Jesus, our Lord, from the dead. He was betrayed on account of our sins, and he rose on account of our justification (Rom 4:23-25). Shortly afterward, he says, *When we were still weak, Christ died for sinners at the proper time* (Rom 5:6). Elsewhere he says, *We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under the power of sin. I do not know what I do, for I do not do what I want; rather, I do what I hate. But if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. Now it is not I who do this, but the sin that dwells in me. For I know that the good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. I can will the good, but I cannot do it. I do not do the good that I want, but I do the evil that I do not want. But if I do what I do not want, then it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me. I find it, then, to be a law that, when I want to do good, evil lies at hand for me. For I delight in the law of God in terms of the interior human being, but I see another law in my members that resists the law of my mind and holds me captive in the law of sin which lies in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:14-25). Let those who can claim that human beings are not born in the body of this death so that they can also claim that they do not need the grace of God through Jesus Christ to be set free from the body of this death. A little later he says, *For what the law could not do inasmuch as it was weakened by the flesh God has done; he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by sin he condemned sin in the flesh* (Rom 8:3). Let them claim, if they dare, that Christ would have had to be born in the likeness of sinful flesh, if we were not born in sinful flesh.

44. Similarly, he writes to the Corinthians, *First of all, I handed on to you what I myself received, that Christ has died for our sins according to the scriptures* (1 Cor 15:3). So too, he says to the same Corinthians in his second Letter, *The love of Christ compels us, for we believe that one has died for all. Hence, all have died, and he has died for all so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who has died for them and has risen. At present then we know no one in terms of the flesh, and if we did know Christ in terms of the flesh, we now no longer know him in that way. If, then, any are in Christ, they are a new creation; what is old has passed away; see, everything has been made new. But all this comes from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. How did he do that? God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding their sins against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. We function, then, as ambassadors of Christ, and God speaks words of encouragement through us. On behalf of Christ we beg you to be reconciled to God. For him who did not know sin, he made sin on our behalf, so that in him we might be the righteousness of God. As your fellow workers, we beg you not to receive*

God's grace in vain. For he says, "At a favorable moment I have heard you, and on the day of salvation I have helped you" (Is 49:8). Look, this is the favorable moment, this is the day of salvation (2 Cor 5:14-6:2). If little ones have no need for this reconciliation and salvation, who is going to try to bring them to Christ's baptism? But if they do, they are among the dead for whom Christ has died, and they cannot receive reconciliation and salvation from him unless he does not hold against them the sins that have been forgiven.

45. Likewise, he writes to the Galatians, *May grace and peace be yours from God the Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for our sins in order to remove us from this present evil age (Gal 1:3-4). And in another passage he says, The law was given for the sake of transgression until the offspring should come to whom the promise pertains; it was decreed by angels through the hand of a mediator. But a mediator implies more than one, and God is one. Is the law, then, opposed to what God has promised? Heaven forbid! For, if a law had been given which could give life, righteousness would, of course, come from the law. But scripture has enclosed all things under sin so that on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe (Gal 3:19-22).*

46. He also writes to the Ephesians, *You were dead because of the transgressions and sins in which you once lived in accord with the age of this world, in accord with the prince of the power of the air, that spirit which is now at work in the children of disbelief. We all once lived among them in the desires of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of its inclinations, and we were by nature children of anger, just like the others. But God who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead by sins, brought us to life with Christ, by whose grace we have been saved (Eph 2:1-5). Shortly afterward he says, You have been saved by grace through faith. This does not come from you; rather, it is God's gift. It is not the result of works so that no one may be filled with pride. We are, after all, the result of his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good deeds which God prepared so that we might live our lives in them (Eph 2:8-10). A little later he says, You were then without Christ, separated from the community of Israel and strangers to the covenants and the promise. You had no hope and were without God in this world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once distant have become near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; he has made the two one, removing the wall of stone, the hostility, dividing us. He has in his flesh rendered powerless the law with the decrees of its commandments so that he might, while bringing about peace, form in himself a new human being from the two and through the cross transform both of them into one body for God, slaying in himself the hostility. He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were distant and the good news of peace to those who were near, for*

through him we both have access in the one Spirit to the Father (Eph 2:12-18). Elsewhere he writes, As the truth is present in Jesus, lay aside the old human being in accord with your former way of life. Be renewed, rather, in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new human being, the one who was created unto God in righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:21-24). And in another passage he says, Do not sadden the Holy Spirit of God with whom you have been sealed for the day of redemption (Eph 4:30).

47. He writes as follows to the Colossians, *Give thanks to the Father who makes us capable of sharing the heritage of the saints in the light. He has snatched us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption through the forgiveness of sins (Col 1:12-14). Elsewhere he says, You have been made full in him who is the head of every principality and power. For in him you have been circumcised by a circumcision that has not been made by hand through the removal of flesh from the body, but by the circumcision of Christ you were buried with him in baptism. In him you have also risen through faith in the action of God who raised him from the dead, and though you were dead in your sins and in your uncircumcised flesh, he brought you to life along with him. He forgave all our sins, and he wiped out the record of our debts that stood against us, removing it and fixing it to the cross. He stripped himself of the flesh and made a public spectacle of the principalities and powers, triumphing over them in himself (Col 2:10-15).*

48. And to Timothy he wrote, *It is a message full of mercy and worthy of complete acceptance that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners. Of them I am the first. I have obtained mercy so that in me first of all Christ might display his complete patience for the instruction of those who are going to believe in him unto eternal life (1 Tm 1:15-16). Likewise he says, For God is one; one too is the mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself up as redemption for all (1 Tm 2:5-6). In his second Letter to the same Timothy, he says, Do not, then, be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me, a prisoner on account of him. Rather, work with me for the gospel in accord with the power of God who is saving us and calling us with his holy vocation, not in accord with our deeds, but in accord with his plan and the grace which has been given to us in Christ Jesus before endless ages, but has now been revealed through the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He has stripped death of its power and through the gospel has brought light to life and incorruption (2 Tm 1:8-10).*

49. He also wrote to Titus, *Awaiting that blessed hope and the revelation of the great God and our savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and cleanse us for himself as a people great in number and zealous for good works (Ti 2:13-14). In another passage he said, But when the kindness and mercy of the savior, our God, appeared, not because*

of the works of righteousness which we performed, but in accord with his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out in great richness upon us through Jesus Christ, our savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in accord with the hope of eternal life (Ti 3:4-7).

50. Some people regard the Letter to the Hebrews as uncertain. I have, nonetheless, read that some who hold views contrary to this position of ours concerning the baptism of little ones have wanted to use it as evidence for certain of their views. I myself am moved more by the authority of the eastern churches which includes it among the canonical books. Hence, one should note how many testimonies it contains in favor of our side. In its beginning we read, *Gradually and in many ways God spoke in former times to our forefathers through the prophets; finally, in the present time he has spoken to us through his Son, whom he made heir of all things, through whom he also made all ages. He is the reflection of his glory and the image of his substance; he also rules all things by his powerful word. He has brought about the purification from sins and has taken his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb 1:1-3).* And shortly thereafter he said, *For if the message proclaimed by the angels had such force that every transgression and act of disobedience received its just recompense, how are we going to escape, if we disregard this great salvation? (Heb 2:2-3).* In another passage he says, *For this reason the children shared the same flesh and blood, and in a like fashion he shared in theirs so that he might through death destroy the one who had power over death, that is, the devil, and might set free those who were held in servitude to him through their whole life out of fear of death (Heb 2:14-15)* A little later he says, *Hence, he had to be like his brothers in every respect so that he might be the merciful and trustworthy high priest in those things which have to do with winning God's forgiveness for the sins of the people (Heb 2:17).* Elsewhere he said, *Let us cling to our confession, for we do not have a priest who is unable to share our weaknesses with us. He has, in fact, experienced everything, just like us, apart from sin (Heb 4:14-15).* And in another passage, he said, *He has an unsurpassable priesthood. Hence, he can bring about the salvation of those who come to God through him, for he lives forever to make intercession for them. It was fitting, after all, that we have a high priest of this sort: righteous, without malice, undefiled, removed from sinners, raised above the heavens, who does not have the daily need, as the high priests did, to offer sacrifice first for his own sins, then for the people. For he did this once for all when he offered himself (Heb 7:24-27).* In another passage he said, *For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by hand, which resembled the true one; rather, he entered heaven itself to appear on our behalf before the face of God. He did not offer himself many times, as the high priest enters the sanctuary once a year with the blood of another. Otherwise, he would have had*

to suffer many times from the creation of the world, but now he has appeared once at the end of the ages for the forgiveness of sin through his sacrifice. Just as it is determined for human beings that they die only once and, after that, face judgment, so Christ was offered once in order to bear the sins of many. He will appear a second time without sins for the salvation of those who await him (Heb 9:24-28).

51. The Revelation of John bears witness that these praises are offered to Christ by a new song: *You are worthy to receive the book and open its seals, because you have been slain and have in your blood redeemed us for God from every tribe and language and people and nation* (Rv 5:9).

52. So too, in the Acts of the Apostles the apostle Peter said that the Lord Jesus was the source of life, when he rebuked the Jews because they had killed him. He said, *But you have placed a burden on and rejected the holy and righteous one, and you have asked that a murderer be allowed to live and be released to you, for you have slain the source of life* (Acts 3:14-15). In another passage he says, *This is the stone rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone. For there is no other name under heaven given to human beings by which we can be saved* (Acts 4:11-12). Elsewhere he said, *The God of the fathers⁶⁹ has raised up Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on the cross. God has exalted him in his glory as prince and savior in order to grant to Israel repentance and the forgiveness of sins in him* (Acts 5:30-31). Similarly, he says in another passage, *All the prophets bear witness to this man that everyone who believes in him receives the forgiveness of sins through his hand* (Acts 10:43). In the same book the apostle Paul says, *Let it be known to you, brothers, that the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you through this man. You were not able to be justified by all the prescriptions in the law of Moses, but everyone who believes in him is justified* (Acts 13:38-39).

53. Whose pride and rebellion against God's truth would not be repressed by this great mass of testimonies? Many others can be found, but we must not overlook the need to bring this work to a close. I considered it superfluous to introduce numerous scriptural proofs in support of my position from the books of the Old Testament as well. For what is hidden there under the veil of apparently earthly promises is revealed in the preaching of the New Testament. The Lord himself briefly pointed out and described the usefulness of the old books, when he said that those things which were written about him in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled, namely, that *it was necessary that Christ suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Lk 24:46-47). And Peter said, as I mentioned just before, that all the prophets bear witness to this man that everyone who believes in him receives the forgiveness of sins through his hand.⁷⁰

54. It is, nonetheless, more appropriate to introduce a few testimonies from the Old Testament which may serve to supplement or rather to top off what we already have. In speaking through the prophet, the Lord himself says in the psalm, *For the saints who dwell in the land, he has made all my wishes for them marvelous* (Ps 16:3), not their merits, but *my wishes*. For what did they have but what comes next? *Their weaknesses have been multiplied* (Ps 16:4), over and above the mere fact that they were weak. For this reason *the law entered in so that sin might abound* (Rom 5:20). But what does he add? *Afterward, they made haste* (Ps 16:4). When their weaknesses were multiplied, that is, as sin abounded, they more eagerly sought for a physician so that, where sin abounded, grace might be even more abundant.⁷¹ Then he says, *I will not gather their assemblies for bloody sacrifices* (Ps 16:4), for, when they formerly gathered in the tent or in the temple, the many bloody sacrifices proved them to be sinners rather than purified them. *I will not now*, he says, *gather their assemblies for bloody sacrifices*, for the one bloody sacrifice has been offered for many so that they may be truly purified by it. Next he says, *Nor will I remember their names upon my lips*, inasmuch as they are purified and renewed. For their names were once: children of the flesh,⁷² children of the world,⁷³ children of anger,⁷⁴ children of the devil,⁷⁵ the unclean, sinners, the wicked. But afterward they were: children of God,⁷⁶ the new name for the new human beings singing the new song in the New Testament. Let us not be ungrateful to the grace of God, whether we are little ones or grown-ups, whether we are young or old. The voice of the whole Church cries out, *I have wandered off like a lost sheep* (Ps 119:176); the voice of all Christ's members cries out, *We have all gone astray like sheep, and he was handed over for our sins* (Is 53:6). This whole passage in Isaiah is prophetic. When Philip explained it to him, the eunuch of Queen Candace believed in Christ.⁷⁷ See how often it stresses this point and teaches this to those who are proud and contentious. *He was a wounded man*, it says, *and one who knew how to endure weaknesses; for this reason his face is turned away, bearing injuries and not much appreciated. He bears our infirmities, and he is amid sorrows on our behalf. And we thought that he was suffering sorrows, wounds, and punishment. But he was wounded on account of our sins, and he became weak on account of our iniquities. In him we learned of our peace; by his bruises we were healed. We all went astray like sheep, and the Lord handed him over for our sins. And he did not open his mouth because he was mistreated. He was led off like a sheep for sacrifice, and like a lamb before his shearer, he made not a sound; thus he did not open his mouth. His judgment was removed in humility. Who will tell of his generation? For his life will be taken from the earth. He was brought to death by the iniquities of my people. I will repay the evil on account of his burial and the rich on account of his death, because he did no wrong and had no deceit upon his lips. The Lord wishes to cleanse him of his wound. If you*

have given your life on account of your sins, you will see offspring with a long life. The Lord wishes to remove his soul from sorrows, to show him the light and form his mind, to justify the righteous one who serves the many well, and he will bear their sins. For this reason he will have many heirs and share the spoils of the mighty, because his soul was handed over to death and he was reckoned as one of the wicked. And he bore the sins of many and was handed over on account of their iniquities (Is 53:3-12). Note too the words of that same prophet which the Lord himself declared were fulfilled in his own person, when he held the office of reader in the synagogue, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; for this reason he has anointed me to bring the good news to the humble. He has sent me so that the broken-hearted might find comfort, to announce forgiveness to prisoners and sight to the blind* (Is 61:1 and Lk 4:18-19). Without any exception, then, let all of us who want to belong to his body, enter through him into his sheepfold, and share in the endless life and salvation which he promises to his people, recognize him—let us, I say, recognize the one *who committed no sin and bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might be separated from sin and live with righteousness; by his wounds we have been healed, though we were weak,*⁷⁸ *like straying sheep* (1 Pt 2:22-24-25).

28, 55. Since this is so, sound faith and sound doctrine have held that no one of those who have come to Christ through baptism has ever been excluded from the grace of the forgiveness of sins and that no one can possess eternal salvation apart from his kingdom. For this eternal salvation was made ready *to be revealed in the last times* (1 Pt 1:5), that is, at the resurrection of the dead, who do not belong to the eternal death, which is called the second death,⁷⁹ but to the eternal life which God, who does not lie, has promised to his holy and faithful ones. All those who have a share in this life will be brought to life only in Christ, just as they have all died in Adam.⁸⁰ For, just as all who are born according to the will of the flesh⁸¹ die only in Adam, *in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12), so from these persons all who are reborn according to the will of the Spirit are brought to life only in Christ in whom they are all made righteous. For, just as by one man all were brought to condemnation, so by one man all are brought to justification.⁸² And there is no middle ground so that one who is not with Christ must be with the devil. Hence, the Lord himself wished to remove from the hearts of those whose faith was incorrect this middle ground which they try to assign to unbaptized little ones. They would have them to be in eternal life as if by the merit of their innocence, but not with Christ in his kingdom, since they were not baptized. To silence them the Lord uttered this decisive statement, when he said, *One who is not with me is against me* (Mt 12:30). Take any little ones then. If they are already with Christ, why are they baptized? But if—as the truth maintains—they are baptized so that they may be with Christ, those who are not baptized are certainly not with Christ. And since they are not with Christ,

they are against him. We must not and cannot, after all, undermine or change his statement which is quite clear. Why, then, are they against Christ, if not because of sin? It is not, after all, because of their body and soul, each of which is God's creation. Moreover, if it is because of sin, what sin is found in that age but that original and ancient sin? There is in fact one sinful flesh in which all are born for condemnation, and there is one flesh in the likeness of sinful flesh,⁸³ through which all are set free from condemnation. It did not say "all" there, as if we are to understand that all those who are born in sinful flesh are purified through the flesh like sinful flesh. *For not all have faith* (2 Thes 3:2). Rather, we are to understand that all who share in the birth from a carnal union are born in sinful flesh, and all those who share in the birth from a spiritual union are purified only through the flesh like sinful flesh. That is, the former are born through Adam for condemnation; the latter through Christ for justification. It is as if we were to say, "There is one midwife in this city who assists at the birth of all," and "There is one teacher of literature who teaches all." In the first case we can understand only all who are born, and in the latter only all who learn. All who are born do not, nonetheless, learn literature, but it is clear to anyone that it was correct to say in the former case, "She assists at the birth of all," since no one is born without her help. And in the latter case it is correct to say, "He teaches all," because apart from his instruction no one learns.

56. Having considered all the divine testimonies which I mentioned, either discussing each one individually or combining many of them together, or other similar testimonies which I have not mentioned, I find nothing but what the universal Church maintains. She must remain vigilant against all profane novelties.⁸⁴ The Church holds that all human beings are separated from God unless they are reconciled to God through Christ, the mediator, and that one can be separated from God only by the barrier of sins. Hence, one can only be reconciled to God through the forgiveness of sins through the one grace of the most merciful savior,⁸⁵ through the one sacrifice of the true priest. Thus all the children of the woman who believed the serpent,⁸⁶ so that she was corrupted by lust, are set free from the body of this death⁸⁷ only through the son of the Virgin who believed the angel so that she gave birth without sinful lust.⁸⁸

Concupiscence and the Goodness of Marriage

29, 57. The goodness of marriage, then, does not consist in the heat of concupiscence, but in the permissible and morally good way of using that ardor appropriate to the propagation of offspring, not to satisfying lust. It is this will, not that pleasure which belongs to marriage.⁸⁹ The fact, then, that the ardor of concupiscence stirs disobediently in the members of the body of this death,⁹⁰ that it tries to cast down and draw the whole mind to itself, that it does not arise

when the mind wants and does not quiet down when the mind wants, is due to the evil of sin with which every human being is born. But when it is restrained from foul and illicit acts and is permitted only for bringing forth in an orderly manner new members of the human race, it is the good of marriage through which a human being is born in a well-ordered society. No one is reborn in Christ's body unless he is first born in the body of sin.⁹¹ But as it is evil to use something good in an evil way, so it is good to use something evil in a good way. There are, then, these two, good and evil, and there are another two, good use and evil use; combined together, they make four distinct groups. One makes good use of a good in dedicating one's continence to God; one makes evil use of a good in dedicating one's continence to an idol. One makes an evil use of an evil in giving concupiscence free rein for adultery; one makes a good use of an evil in confining concupiscence to marriage. Just as, then, it is better to make good use of a good than to make good use of an evil, although each of them is good, so too, one who gives his virgin to marriage does something good and one who does not give her to marriage does something better.⁹² I have discussed this question to the extent that the Lord permitted me, given my weak abilities, much more extensively and satisfactorily in two other books, one, *The Good of Marriage*, the other, *Holy Virginity*. Those people, then, who exalt the flesh and blood of the transgressor in opposition to the flesh and blood of the redeemer, should not defend the evil of concupiscence by means of the good of marriage; they should not be bolstered in the pride of their strange error on account of the children, because the Lord offered us an example of humility drawn from their young age. He alone was born without sin whom the Virgin conceived without union with a man, not by the concupiscence of the flesh, but by the obedience of her mind. She alone was able to bear the medicine for our wound who did not bring forth her holy child from the wound of sin.

Jesus' Teaching on the Necessity of Baptism

30, 58. Let us now examine more carefully, to the extent that the Lord provides his help, the very chapter of the gospel where it says, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one will not enter the kingdom of heaven* (Jn 3:5). If these people were not moved by that statement, they would not think that little ones should be baptized at all. They argue, "It does not say, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit*, one will not have salvation or eternal life. It only says, *one will not enter the kingdom of heaven*. Hence, little ones are to be baptized precisely in order that they too might be with Christ in the kingdom of heaven, where they will not be, if they have not been baptized. And yet, even if little ones die without baptism, they will have salvation and eternal life, since they are not bound by any sin."⁹³ First of all, though they say this, these people never explain how it is just that the image of God, though sinless,

can be separated from the kingdom of God. Second, let us see whether the Lord Jesus, the one and only good teacher,⁹⁴ has not indicated and shown in this gospel reading that it is only by means of the forgiveness of sins that the baptized attain the kingdom of God. And yet, for those who understand correctly, the statements, *Unless one has been born again, one cannot see the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:3) and *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:5), ought to be sufficient. After all, why are we born again, if we do not need to be made new? From what do we need to be made new but from our old state? From what old state but that in which our old human being is crucified along with Christ so that the body of sin might lose its power?⁹⁵ Or, why does the image of God not enter the kingdom of God, unless the impediment of sin prevents this? Nonetheless, as we have proposed, let us attentively and carefully examine, as best we can, the whole context of this gospel reading which pertains to the topic of this discussion.

59. *There was a man, it says, among the Pharisees, by the name of Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. This man came to him at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher, for no one can produce these signs which you produce, if God is not with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly I tell you, unless one has been born again, one cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can one be born when one is old? Can one re-enter one's mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly I tell you, unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised that I said to you, You must be born again. The Spirit breathes where he wills, and you hear the sound he makes. But you do not know from where he comes or where he goes. So it is with everyone who has been born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can these things come about?" Jesus answered him and said, "Are you a teacher in Israel and do not know this? Truly, truly I tell you that we know what we speak and we bear witness to what we see, but you do not accept our testimony. If I spoke to you of earthly things and you have not believed, how are you going to believe, if I speak to you of heavenly things? No one ascends into heaven but he who came down from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven. And as Moses raised up the serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man must be raised up in order that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life. For God has so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life. God did not, after all, send his Son into the world in order that he might judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him. One who believes in him is not judged, but one who does not believe has already been judged because of not believing in the name of the*

only-begotten Son of God. This is the judgment: the light has come into the world and human beings loved the darkness more than the light, for their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light so that their deeds may not be made known. But those who act in accord with the truth come to the light so that their deeds may be revealed, for they were done in God" (Jn 3:1-21). Up to this point the whole conversation that has been developed is relevant to the topic we are discussing; after this, the narrator takes a different tack.

31, 60. When Nicodemus failed to understand what had been said, he asked the Lord how these things could come about. Let us see what the Lord responds to this. Surely, if he agrees to answer the question he was asked, namely, "How can these things come about?" ⁹⁶ he is going to say how human beings coming from a carnal birth can attain a spiritual rebirth. Hence, he noted briefly the lack of knowledge in one who considered himself superior to others because he was a teacher, and he rebuked the lack of faith of all such people, because they did not accept the testimony given by the truth. He also added that he spoke to them of earthly matters and that they did not believe, and he asked and wondered how they would believe heavenly matters. Nonetheless, he goes on, and to the question he was asked, namely, how these things can come about, he answers that others will believe, if they do not. He says, *No one ascends into heaven but he who came down from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). He explains, "In this way, there will come about the spiritual birth that transforms earthly human beings into heavenly ones. Human beings could not attain this, unless they were made my members. Thus the same one ascends who came down, since no one ascends save the one who came down." Hence, all who need to be transformed and raised up must come together into the unity of Christ, so that the Christ who has come down may himself ascend. He does not regard his body, that is, his Church, as something distinct from himself. For, we quite correctly interpret, *They will be two in one flesh* (Gn 2:24), as referring to Christ and the Church, and he himself said of this flesh, *Therefore, they are no longer two, but one flesh* (Mt 19:6 and Mk 10:8). But human beings were utterly unable to ascend, because *no one ascends into heaven but the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven* (Jn 3:13). For, though he became the Son of Man on earth, he did not think it inappropriate to use the title, Son of Man, of his divinity, by which he remained in heaven, when he came down to earth. After all, he did not want us to understand two Christs, the one God and the other man, but one and the same Christ, both God and man: God, because *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1), and man, because *the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us* (Jn 1:14). And thus by reason of the distance between the divinity and human weakness, the Son of God remained in heaven, and the Son of Man lived on earth. But by

reason of the unity of the person, by which the two substances are the one Christ, the Son of God lived on earth, and the Son of Man remained in heaven. Thus, from believing things that are more difficult to believe, one comes to believe things easier to believe. For, the divine substance, which is far more remote and more lofty by reason of its incomparable superiority, was able on our account to take up a human substance so that there came to be one person, and thus the Son of Man, who was on earth on account of the weakness of the flesh, is himself in heaven by reason of the divinity in which the flesh shares. Hence, how much more believable it is that other holy human beings who believe in him become one Christ with the man Christ. Thus, when all ascend by reason of his grace and union with him, the one Christ who came down from heaven ascends into heaven. Thus the apostle said, *As in one body we have many members, but all the members of the body, though they are many, are still one body, so it is with Christ* (1 Cor 12:12). He did not say, “And so it is with the Christs,” that is, with the body of Christ and the members of Christ, but *so it is with Christ*, calling the head and body one Christ.

32, 61. This is a great and astounding honor. Because it cannot come about except by the forgiveness of sins, he goes on to say, *And as Moses raised up the serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man must be raised up in order that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life* (Jn 3:14-15). We know what happened in the desert back then.⁹⁷ Many were dying from snake bites. Then the people confessed their sins and prayed to the Lord through Moses so that this poison might be taken from them. And thus, at the command of the Lord, Moses raised up the bronze snake in the desert and told the people that whoever is bitten by a snake should look up at that bronze snake. As soon as they did this, they were cured. What is the raising of the snake but the death of Christ in that figure of speech in which the cause signifies the effect? Death, of course, came from the snake who persuaded the man to commit the sin as a result of which he merited to die. The Lord did not take into his flesh sin, which is like the venom of the snake, but he did take death. Thus the punishment of sin was present in the likeness of sinful flesh without guilt so that he might destroy in sinful flesh both the guilt and the punishment.⁹⁸ Just as, then, one who looked upon the snake that was raised up was both cured of the venom and freed from death, so now one who is conformed to the likeness of Christ's death through faith in him and his baptism is set free from sin by justification and from death by resurrection. This is, after all, what he says, *In order that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life* (Jn 3:15). What need, then, is there that a little one be conformed to the death of Christ through baptism, if he has in no way been poisoned by the bite of the snake.

33, 62. Moreover, if—as he goes on to say—*God has so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son so that everyone who believes in him may not*

perish, but have eternal life (Jn 3:16), little ones were going to perish and were not going to have eternal life, if they did not believe in the only-begotten Son of God through the sacrament of baptism. He came for the time being, not so that he might judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him,⁹⁹ especially since he goes on to say, *One who believes in him is not judged, but one who does not believe has already been judged because of not believing in the name of the only-begotten Son of God* (Jn 3:18). Where then do we locate the baptized little ones but among the believers, as the authority of the universal Church everywhere cries out? We locate them, then, among those who believe, for they receive this through the power of the sacrament and the responses of those who present them. And, accordingly, we rank those who have not been baptized among those who have not believed. Moreover, if those who have been baptized are not judged, these others are judged because they lack baptism. He adds, *This is the judgment: the light has come into the world and human beings loved the darkness more than the light* (Jn 3:19). Why did he say, *The light has come into the world*, unless he was speaking of his coming? Without the sacrament of his coming how can the little ones be in the light? Or how do those people in their love of darkness not hold this too? As they themselves do not believe, they suppose that their little ones need not be baptized, when they fear their bodily death. But he says that the works of those who come to the light are done in God,¹⁰⁰ since they understand that their justification does not belong to their own merits, but to the grace of God. *It is God, after all*, says the apostle, *who produces in us the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13).¹⁰¹ In this way there comes about the spiritual rebirth of all those who come to Christ from their birth in the flesh. Christ himself revealed this; he himself explained it, when he was asked how these things could come about; on this question he left to no one the freedom of human debate. Let the little ones not be kept from the grace of the forgiveness of sins; there is no other way to come to Christ. No one can be reconciled to God and come to God in any other way than through Christ.

The Very Form of Baptism Indicates Sins Are Forgiven

34, 63. What shall I say about the very form of the sacrament? I wish that some of those who think differently would bring a little one to me for baptism. What does my exorcism do for the child, if it is not held in servitude to the devil? These persons would have to make the responses to me on behalf of the same little one whom they present, because the child could not make the responses on its own. How, then, are they going to say that the child renounces the devil, if the devil had no claim on the child? How are they going to say that the child is turning back to God, if the child had not been turned away? How are they

going to say that, among other things, the child believes in the forgiveness of sins, if the child receives no forgiveness? If I thought that they held views contrary to these, I would not permit them to approach the sacraments with the little one. In this matter I fail to grasp their disposition before other human beings or their thoughts as they stand before God, and I do not want to say anything more harsh.

Some of them saw that a false and deceptive form of baptism is administered to little ones, when one seems to speak of and effect the forgiveness of sins, but none takes place, and they saw that nothing more damnable and detestable than that can be said or thought. Furthermore, with regard to the necessity of baptism for little ones, they grant that they need redemption, as is stated in the brief memo by one of them,¹⁰² who was, nonetheless, unwilling to say anything clearer regarding the forgiveness of any sin. But as you have conveyed to me in your letter,¹⁰³ they admit, as you say, that baptism brings about the forgiveness of sins, even in the case of little ones. That is not surprising. After all, what else could they mean by redemption? But they say, "They began to have sin, not from their origin, but in their own life, after they were born."¹⁰⁴

64. Hence, you see the wide range of opinions that exist among those people against whom I have already argued long and extensively in this work. I have read a book by one of them, and I have refuted its contents as best I could.¹⁰⁵ You see, then, the great difference of opinion that exists between those, as I began to say, who maintain that little ones are completely pure and free from all sin, both original and personal, and those who think that they have, after having been born, contracted personal sins, from which they believe that they need to be cleansed by baptism. Moreover, with an eye on the scriptures and authority of the whole Church and the form of the sacrament itself, the latter group correctly saw that baptism brings about forgiveness of sins in little ones, but they either are unwilling to say or cannot see that whatever sin they have stems from their origin. The former group, however, looked to human nature, which is available for everyone's consideration, and correctly saw—as was easy to do—that they could at that age have contracted no sin in their own life. But to avoid admitting original sin, they claim that little ones have no sin at all. On these points, then, let them first agree among themselves about the individual truths they state, and the result will be that they will in no way disagree with us. For if the former grant to the latter that baptized little ones obtain the forgiveness of sins and if the latter grant to the former that little ones have not yet contracted any sin in their own life, as nature itself cries out in the silent infants, then let both of them grant to us that in little ones there remains only original sin that has to be removed by baptism.

Infants Have Committed No Sins in Their Own Lives

35. 65. Or do we need to investigate, discuss, and spend time on this point too? That is, are we to prove and explain how infants, whom everyone calls innocents for this very reason, have committed nothing evil by means of their own will, without which there can be no sin belonging to one's own life? Look at their great weakness of mind and body, their ignorance of everything, their complete inability to obey a command, their inability to understand or observe any law, whether natural or written, and their lack of the use of reason for either side of a question. Does not all this proclaim and demonstrate their freedom from personal sin with a silence that bears stronger witness than any language of ours? Let the very obviousness of the matter speak for itself, for I am never so at a loss for words as when the matter under discussion is more obvious than anything one can say.

66. I would like whoever holds this opinion to tell me what sin he saw or suspected in an infant fresh from the womb, for whose redemption he admits that baptism is now necessary. Let him tell me what evil the infant committed in this its own life by its body or its mind. Perhaps it cries and bothers adults, but I would be surprised if this should be attributed to sinfulness and not rather to unhappiness. Is it that its crying is not stopped by any reasoning of its own or by the prohibition of someone else? But this is a mark of the profound ignorance in which it lies. As a result of this ignorance, when it becomes stronger after a while, it will, when angered, strike even its mother and often her breasts which it demands when it is hungry. These things are not merely tolerated, but even loved in little ones. With what sort of love do we love them but with the carnal love which finds pleasure in laughter and joking which are based on the apparent absurdity of even clever human beings? If their thoughts corresponded to what they said, we would not laugh at their wit, but at their folly. We even see that those foolish people, whom the common folk call "morons," are used for the amusement of the clever and are valued more highly than the clever in the estimate of the slave market. The carnal affection of those who are in no sense fools is able to take such delight over another's misfortune. For one person finds pleasure in the foolishness of another, though he would not himself want to be such a person.

Though a father looks forward with delight to such things and coaxes them from the baby talk of his little son, if he knew that his son would be a man of that sort when he grew up, he would surely not hesitate to mourn for him with greater sorrow than if he were dead. But as long as there is hope of development and one believes that the light of intelligence will dawn with the increase in years, children's verbal attacks, even against their parents, are not only not taken as harmful, but are even regarded as charming and pleasant. No prudent person would approve of children not merely not being restrained from words or deeds

of this sort, once they can be held back, but even of their being provoked to do this, because some adults love laughter and silliness. For, in general, at an age at which they recognize their father and mother, they do not dare to speak ill of either of them, unless this sort of thing is either permitted or demanded by one or both of them. But these things are characteristic of those little ones who are already uttering words and can express the emotions of their mind by some spoken signs. Let us, rather, turn our eyes to the deep ignorance of the newly born, from which, as they develop, they come to this babbling but transient silliness, as if in growing up they were striving for knowledge and speech.

36, 67. Let us, I say, ponder the darkness of a mind that is, of course, rational; in that darkness they are even ignorant of God, and they resist his sacraments, even when they are baptized. I ask why and when they were plunged into this darkness. Did they acquire it here, and did they forget God through extreme negligence in this life of their own, though they lived prudently and religiously even in the wombs of their mothers? Let those who dare say such things; let those who wish listen to them; let those who are able believe such things. I myself am convinced that only those whose minds have been befogged by the stubbornness of defending their own views can hold this position.

Or is there no evil of ignorance and, hence, none to be removed? What then is the purpose of this plea, *Do not bear in mind the sins of my youth and of my ignorance* (Ps 25:7). For, even if those sins deserve greater condemnation that are committed by persons with knowledge, still, if there were no sins of ignorance, we would not read the passage I cited, *Do not bear in mind the sins of my youth and of my ignorance*. Why or when or from where was the soul of a newly born infant thrust into that densest darkness of ignorance in which, though certainly a human soul, certainly a rational soul, it remains not only untaught, but unteachable? If it belongs to human nature to begin in this way and our nature is not now defective, why was Adam not created as such? Why was he able to obey a command and capable of naming his wife and all the animals? For he said of her, *She will be called "woman"* (Gn 2:23), and *Whatever Adam called a living soul, that is its name* (Gn 2:19). But this child does not know where it is, what it is, by whom it was created; it is already guilty of sin, though not yet capable of obeying a command; it is involved in and overwhelmed by so thick a fog of ignorance that it cannot be roused, as from sleep, so that it might at least become aware of these things, once they were pointed out. Rather, one must await the time when it has slept off this drunkenness of sorts, not during a single night, as usually happens even in the worst cases, but gradually over many months and years. Until this happens, we put up with so many things in little ones that we punish in adults that we cannot even count them. If little ones acquired this great evil of ignorance and weakness, after they were born in this life, where, when, and how did they suddenly become

wrapped in such darkness through the commission of some great act of godlessness?

37, 68. Someone will object, "If these things are not characteristics of a pure nature, but the beginnings of a defective nature, because Adam was not created in such a state, why did Christ, who was far more excellent and certainly born of the Virgin without any sin, come to us in the weakness of infancy?" We reply to this objection that Adam was not created in such a state, because he was not created in sinful flesh, since he had no parent who sinned before him. But we are born in this state, because we are born in sinful flesh, since Adam sinned before us. Christ, then, was born in this state, because he was born in the likeness of sinful flesh so that from sin he might condemn sin.¹⁰⁶ We are not, after all, dealing with the size of Adam's body, since he was not created as a little one, but had the full growth of his members. One can say that the animals were also created that way, and that it is, nonetheless, not the result of a sin of theirs that their young are born as little ones. But we are not presently investigating this question. Rather, we are dealing with the strength of his mind and his use of reason so that he received with docility God's commandment and the law with its prescription and was able to obey it with ease, if he willed to do so. But now human beings are born so that they are utterly unable to do this on account of the terrible ignorance and weakness, not of the flesh, but of the mind, although we all admit that there is present in a little one a soul, not of another, but of the same substance as there was in the first human being, that is, a rational soul. And yet, the great weakness of the flesh indicates, I believe, some penal condition. In any case I wonder whether, if those first human beings had not sinned, they would have had offspring of the sort that could not use their tongue or hands or feet. They would perhaps have had to be born as little ones on account of the size of the womb. And yet, the rib which he made into the woman is a small part of the body,¹⁰⁷ and God did not on that account make a little wife for the man. Hence, the omnipotence of the creator certainly could have made his children into adults immediately after they were born.

38, 69. But—to drop this point—he could certainly have given Adam's offspring what he has given even to many animals. Their young are little and do not develop mentally as their bodies grow, since they do not have a rational soul. But, even when they are at their smallest, they run about and recognize their mothers. They are not brought to suckle at the breasts by the care and help of another; rather, they themselves know how to find them with remarkable ease, though they are located in a hidden spot on the mother's body. A newly born human, on the other hand, does not have feet capable of walking or hands able even to scratch, and unless the nipple of the breast is inserted in its motionless lips by the help of a nurse, they do not see where they are and, despite their nearness to the breasts, they are better able to cry of hunger than to suck.

Moreover, this weakness of the body corresponds perfectly to the weakness of the mind. The flesh of Christ would not have borne the likeness of sinful flesh, if this flesh were not the sinful flesh by the weight of which the rational soul is so weighed down,¹⁰⁸ regardless of whether the soul itself is derived from the parents or is created right there or breathed in from above. I put off for now any investigation of this topic.

Concupiscence Remains after Baptism

39, 70. In little ones the grace of God brings it about that sinful flesh loses its power¹⁰⁹ through the baptism of the one who came in the likeness of sinful flesh.¹¹⁰ But it does not lose its power so that in the living flesh itself the concupiscence spread through and born into it is suddenly done away with and no longer exists; rather, it loses its power so that what was present at birth is not harmful at death. For, if one lives on after baptism and comes to an age capable of obeying a commandment, one has a means of fighting and, with God's help, of overcoming concupiscence, if one has not received his grace in vain and does not want to be rejected. After all, it is not granted even to adults in baptism, unless perhaps by an ineffable miracle of the omnipotent creator, that the law of sin, which is present in the members, struggling against the law of the mind,¹¹¹ is completely destroyed and no longer exists. Rather, whatever evil one has thought, said, or done, while enslaved through the mind's subjection to this concupiscence, is completely destroyed and regarded as if it had not occurred. The bond of guilt is broken by which the devil held the soul through that concupiscence, and the wall is torn down by which he separated human beings from their creator. Yet, it continues on in the battle in which we chastise our body and subject it to servitude.¹¹² It remains either to be released for permissible and necessary purposes or to be held in check by continence. But the Holy Spirit, who knows far better than we do everything past, present, and future about the human race, has foreknown and predicted a human life of the sort that no living person is found righteous in the sight of God.¹¹³ Hence, it happens that through ignorance or weakness we do not exert all the powers of our will against it, and we give in to it with regard to some things which are not permitted. We give in more seriously and more often to the degree that we are worse, and we give in less seriously and less frequently to the degree that we are better. But this has to do with the question whether there can be or is or will be a human being without sin in this life, apart from the one who said, *Behold, the prince of the world comes, and he will find nothing in me* (Jn 14:30). Since we must discuss this question with somewhat greater care, let the present volume end here so that we can investigate it from a fresh start.

Notes

1. Aside from the continued concerns of a pastor for his flock, Augustine surely had in mind the controversy with the Donatists. Though a conference between the Catholic and Donatist bishops held at Carthage in June of 411 under the supervision of Marcellinus and at the order of the emperor, Honorius, ended with a victory for the Catholics and with stronger legal measures against the Donatists, the schism continued to occupy Augustine's time and energy.

2. The letter from the tribune, Marcellinus, to Augustine is lost. At the beginning of the third book Augustine summarizes the points about which Marcellinus had asked him to reply, namely, that, even if Adam had not sinned, he would have died, that as a result of his sin nothing was passed on to his descendants by generation, especially on account of infant baptism, and that there have been, are, and will be human beings who have no sin at all.

3. Caelestius, the disciple of Pelagius, who was in fact in Carthage at this time, taught this doctrine. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 2, 23 and *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 2, 12, for Caelestius' thesis.

4. See 1 Cor 15:44. Augustine uses Paul's terms, "animal" and "spiritual," to describe the mortal and the risen body. He holds that Adam's body was mortal, though, if he had not sinned, he would not have died, since bodily death is, according to scripture, a punishment for Adam's sin. The Pelagian position claimed that death was natural and would have occurred whether or not Adam sinned.

5. See Dt 29:5.

6. See 1 Kgs 19:6-8.

7. See Gn 2:9.

8. See 1 Cor 15:52.

9. Augustine here coins the term "*aegrotabile*," which literally would be something like "sicken-able."

10. See 1 Cor 15:44.53-54.

11. Augustine offers no source for this Pelagian thesis.

12. Here Augustine uses for the first time the term, "original sin," to refer to the sin of Adam which has been passed on to the whole human race.

13. See 1 Cor 15:22.

14. The Vulgate has: "*Et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit*: and thus death was passed on to all human beings." Augustine's Old Latin version omits the subject, "*mors*: death," following some ancient Greek manuscripts. Thus, according to Augustine's text, it is sin that was passed on to all human beings. Hence, Augustine believed he had in this text a clear scriptural proof of the transmission of Adam's sin to all his descendants.

15. The relative pronoun in the clause, "in whom all have sinned: *in quo omnes peccaverunt*," is subsequently in this passage interpreted as referring both to the sin and to Adam. In English one has to choose between "in which" and "in whom." Neither interpretation is accepted by modern exegetes. In *Answer to Two Letters of the Pelagians* IV, 4, 7, Augustine came to see that the relative pronoun could not have referred to "sin," since the Greek word is feminine, while the relative pronoun is masculine.

16. See Rom 4:5 and Gal 2:16.

17. See 1 Cor 6:17.

18. The editors of the CSEL edition linked the preceding clause with the last sentence. I have followed the emendation of the German translators in ALG in linking it with the following sentence.

19. See Gal 3:16.

20. See Rom 5:20.

21. See Rv 20:14.

22. See 1 Jn 4:2 and 2 Jn 7.

23. See Rom 5:18.

24. See Ti 2:11.

25. See Rom 5:12.

26. See Rom 4:5.

27. See Rom 3:26.

28. The CSEL text has "*peccaverunt*: sinned," in accord with a minority of the older mss. I have followed ALG.

29. The CSEL text has "*regenerari*: reborn," in accord with a minority of the older mss. I have followed the reading in ALG.

30. This passage comes close to being a direct quotation from Rufinus the Syrian's *Profession of Faith* (*Libellus de fide*) 40: "Infants, therefore, do not receive baptism on account of sins, but so that through spiritual procreation, they might be created in Christ and become partakers of the heavenly kingdom, as blessed Paul teaches in this way: *If one is in Christ, one is a new creature* (1 Cor 3:17), and again, *But if sons and heirs, heirs of God, coheirs with Christ* (Rom 8:17).

31. The manuscripts have: "*currentium*: those running"; the CSEL editors have plausibly suggested "*curantium*: those caring for."

32. Though the editors of the ALG text suggest: "*Ac si quis existimet*: And if anyone thinks," I have followed PL and CSEL which read: "*Ac ne quis existimet*."

33. See Lk 5:31-32.

34. See Ti 3:5.

35. Augustine uses the term, "*gestantium*: those who bear them." The editors of the ALG text suggest that the term includes those to whom we refer as "godparents" or "sponsors."

36. The strength of Augustine's argument rests upon the fact that at his time infants received the Eucharist at baptism, a practice that is still found in some Eastern Churches.

37. See Rom 10:10.

38. See Jn 3:36.

39. See Rom 9:14.

40. See Rom 11:33.

41. See Lk 6:18.

42. See Jer 1:5.

43. See Rom 11:33.

44. See Rv 20:6.

45. See Ti 3:5.

46. See Rom 5:20.

47. See Rom 9:11-12.

48. See Rom 5:12.

49. See Lk 5:31-32.

50. See Jn 3:5.

51. See Jn 6:54.

52. See Jn 3:36.

53. See Eph 2:3.

54. See Rom 7:14.

55. Augustine's Old Latin version follows the Septuagint, but the Hebrew text has no reference to the newly born.

56. The text of ALG, contrary to the Maurists and the CSEL edition, takes the previous text which is a dependent clause in the Latin with the following sentences. I have made it into an independent sentence.

57. See Jn 1:1.

58. See Jn 1:9.

59. See Jn 1:5.

60. See Rom 10:10.

61. See 1 Jn 4:2 and 2 Jn 7.

62. See Phil 2:7-8.

63. See 1 Tm 2:5.

64. See Rom 4:10.

65. See Rom 6:4 and Col 2:12.

66. See Lk 15:3-10.

67. See 1 Pt 3:18.

68. See Rom 10:3.

69. The CSEL edition adds “*nostrorum*: our.” I have followed the ALG version.
70. See Acts 10:43.
71. See Rom 5:20.
72. See Rom 9:8.
73. See Lk 20:34.
74. See Eph 2:3.
75. 1 Jn 3:10.
76. See Rom 9:8.
77. See Acts 8:27-29.
78. The Maurists suspect an omission in the text at this point.
79. See Rv 2:11 and 20:6.14.
80. See 1 Cor 15:22.
81. See Jn 1:13.
82. See Rom 5:18.
83. See Rom 8:3.
84. See 1 Tm 6:20.
85. See Ti 2:11.
86. See Gn 3:1-6.
87. See Rom 7:24.
88. See Lk 1:26-38.
89. The Maurists bracket this sentence, since it is omitted in a majority of the oldest manuscripts, but it is retained in the CSEL edition.
90. See Rom 7:24.
91. See Rom 6:6.
92. See 1 Cor 7:38.
93. This is probably a quotation from the Pelagian work mentioned below in I, 34, 64.
94. See Mt 23:10.
95. See Rom 6:5-6.
96. See Jn 3:9.
97. See Nm 21:6-9.
98. See Rom 8:3.
99. See Jn 3:17.
100. See Jn 3:21.
101. Here it is not clear whether the good will is that of God or of human beings. In the second book of this work, Augustine interprets the good will as that of human beings, though in his later *Correction and Grace* 9, 24, he clearly takes it as referring to God’s will.
102. The “brief memo: *libellus brevissimus*” to which Augustine refers is the short work which Caelestius composed to defend himself before the episcopal tribunal in Carthage in 411. In Letter 175, 6, Augustine says, “Caelestius admitted in his memo in the Church of Carthage that even little ones receive redemption through the baptism of Christ.” Augustine also refers to the memo in *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 18, 21.
103. Augustine refers to the letter of Marcellinus which occasioned the writing of this work; see above I, 1.
104. This would seem to be a quotation from the Pelagian work mentioned in the following paragraph.
105. Augustine never indicates who was the author of this Pelagian work, though he apparently quotes from it frequently in this and the next book. Some scholars have suggested that the work is the *Liber fidei* by Rufinus the Syrian, the arguments of which Augustine seems to have had in mind in Book One and which he even cited at least once (see I, 18, 23).
106. See Rom 8:3.
107. See Gn 2:22.
108. See Wis 9:15.
109. See Rom 6:6.
110. See Rom 8:3.
111. See Rom 7:23.

112. See 1 Cor 9:27.

113. See Ps 143:2.

Book Two

The Question of Freedom from Sin in This Life

1, 1. We have, I believe, my dear Marcellinus, sufficiently discussed the baptism of little ones in the previous book. We have shown that they are baptized in order to attain not only the kingdom of God, but also salvation and eternal life. No one can possess the latter apart from the kingdom of God and without the community with Christ the savior, for which he has redeemed us by his blood. In the present book, however, I have undertaken to discuss and clarify, with as much care and ability as God grants, the following question: Is there anyone now living, or has anyone ever lived, or will anyone ever live in this world without any sin whatever? I leave aside, of course, the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus *who gave himself up as redemption for all* (1 Tm 2:6). But you should not be surprised, if the question of the sin and the baptism of little ones repeatedly arises in this discussion because of some need or on some given occasion, and we must not shirk the duty of responding, as best we can, in those places to every question that requires an answer from us.

The Lord's Prayer Indicates a Solution to the Question

2, 2. The solution of this question concerning human life free from sin's stealthy attack or unexpected conquest is especially required on account of our daily prayers. For there are some who rely so heavily on the free choice of the human will that they suppose that we need no help, even from God, in order to avoid sin, after our nature has once and for all received the free choice of the will. From this it follows that we need not pray so that we do not enter into temptation,¹ that is, that we are not overcome by temptation, either when it deceives and takes hold of us in our ignorance or when it pushes and pulls us in our weakness. I do not have the words to explain how harmful to our salvation in Christ, how destructive and contrary to the religion which we have been taught, and how strongly opposed to the piety with which we worship God it is that we do not beg the Lord to receive such a benefit or that we suppose that the words, *And bring² us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13), were inserted in the Lord's Prayer without any purpose.

Free Choice Alone Is Insufficient against Temptation

3, 3. They think that they say something clever—as if any of us were unaware of this—when they say that “if we do not will to, we do not sin, and God would not command human beings to do what would be impossible for the human will.”³ But they see less well that, in order to overcome temptation in the case of some things which we desire wrongfully or fear wrongfully, we at times need the great and full strength of the will. He who willed that the prophet truthfully say, *No living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2), foresaw that we will not in every case fully use this power. Knowing in advance that we were going to be such persons, the Lord gave us, even after baptism, certain salutary remedies against the guilt and the bonds of sin and willed that they be effective, namely, works of mercy.⁴ For he said, *Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and they will give to you* (Lk 6:37-38). Who, after all, would leave this life with any hope of attaining eternal salvation, as long as the judgment stands, *Whoever has observed the whole law, but has offended on one point, has become guilty on every count* (Jas 2:10)? Yet there follows soon afterward, *Speak and act as if you are beginning to be judged by the law of freedom. For judgment will be without mercy for one who does not show mercy, but mercy triumphs over judgment!* (Jas 2:12-13).

4, 4. Concupiscence, then, remains in the members of the body of this death as the law of sin.⁵ It is present in the little ones at birth, though its guilt is removed when little ones are baptized. It remains for the combat that is life, but it does not punish with damnation those who die before engaging in that combat. It holds unbaptized little ones enmeshed in guilt and draws them to damnation, like children of anger,⁶ even if they die as little ones. But in the case of baptized adults who have the use of reason, whenever the mind consents to that same concupiscence in order to sin, it is due to one's own will. After the destruction of all sins and after the removal of that guilt as well, by which it held them in bonds from their origin, it remains in the meanwhile for the combat that is life, until death shall be swallowed up by victory.⁷ Then, when peace has been achieved, there will remain nothing more to be conquered. It will do no harm whatsoever to those who do not consent to it regarding what is forbidden. But it holds guilty those who consent to it regarding what is forbidden. And unless they are healed by the medicine of penance and works of mercy through the heavenly priest who makes intercession for us,⁸ it brings them to the second death and to damnation.

For this reason, when the Lord was teaching us to pray, he advised us to say, among other things, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:12-13). For evil remains in our flesh, not by reason of the nature in which human beings were created by God, but by reason of the sinfulness into which they have fallen. Now,

having lost their strength, they are not healed with the same ease of will with which they were wounded. The apostle says of this evil, *I know that the good does not dwell in my flesh* (Rom 7:18). He commands us not to obey this evil, when he says, *Let sin, then, not reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires* (Rom 6:12). If, then, we consent to these desires stemming from the concupiscence of the flesh by an illicit turn of the will, we say in order to heal this wound, *Forgive us our debts*. And drawing a remedy from works of mercy, we add, *As we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). But so that we do not consent to it, we beg for help with the words, *And bring us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13)—or as some manuscripts have it, *Lead us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13). It is not that God himself tempts someone with such a temptation. *For God is not a tempter toward evil; rather, he tempts no one* (Jas 1:13). But we pray that, if we should begin to be tempted by our concupiscence, we may not lack his help so that we may be victorious in him and not be enticed and carried off. Finally, we mention what will be accomplished in the end, when what is mortal will be swallowed up by life:⁹ *But deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13). At that time, after all, there will be no concupiscence of the sort that we are commanded to fight and to which we are commanded not to consent. We can, then, briefly ask for this whole cluster of three benefits as follows: “Forgive us those times in which we have been carried off by concupiscence; help us not to be carried off by concupiscence; take concupiscence away from us.”

We Need God's Help If We Are to Act Righteously

5. 5. We are not, of course, helped by God to sin, but we cannot do what is right or carry out the commandment of righteousness in every respect, unless we are helped by God. The body's eye is not helped by light so that, closed and turned away, it may withdraw from the light; rather, it is helped by it to see, and it cannot do so at all unless the light helps it. In the same way, God, who is the light of the interior human being, helps the sight of our mind, so that we do something good, not according to our own righteousness, but according to his righteousness. But if we turn away from him, that is our fault; then we are wise according to the flesh; then we consent to the concupiscence of the flesh with respect to what is forbidden.¹⁰ God, then, helps those who turn to him, but abandons those who turn away. But he also helps us to turn to him—something that this light certainly does not do for the eyes of body. He commands us with the words, *Turn toward me, and I will turn toward you* (Zec 1:3), and we say to him, *Turn us to you, O God of our salvation* (Ps 85:5) and *God of power, turn us to you* (Ps 80:8). What else are we saying but, “Grant what you command”?¹¹ He commands us with the words, *Be intelligent, you who are without understanding among the people* (Ps 94:8), and we say to him, *Give me understanding*

that I may learn your commandments (Ps 119:73). What else are we saying but, "Grant what you command"? He commands with the words, *You shall not go after your desires* (Sir 18:30), and we say, "We know that no one can be chaste unless God grants this."¹² What else are we saying but, "Grant what you command"? He commands with the words, *Act righteously* (Is 56:1), and he also says, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be satisfied* (Mt 5:6). From whom ought we to ask the food and drink of righteousness but from him who promises those who hunger and thirst for it that they will be satisfied.

6. Let us then drive away from our hearing and from our minds those who say that, having received once and for all free choice of the will, we need not pray that God might help us not to sin. Not even the Pharisee of the gospel was blinded by such darkness. He was mistaken in thinking that his righteousness was perfect and in supposing that he had attained its fullness. But he still gave thanks to God, because he was not like other human beings unjust, thieves, and adulterers, like the tax collector, since he fasted twice a week and gave away a tenth of all he possessed. He did not ask that his righteousness be increased, but by giving thanks to God for the things he had, he admitted that he had received everything from him. He, nonetheless, met with disapproval for two reasons: As though he had his fill, he asked to receive nothing to nourish his righteousness, and he acted in an insulting manner toward the tax collector, preferring himself to a man who hungered and thirsted for righteousness.¹³ What, then, will befall those people who, even if they admit that have no righteousness or that they do not have complete righteousness, presume that they must get it from themselves and need not ask for it from their creator where its storehouse and source is found? Nor does it follow that we should rely on prayers alone in this matter and not bring to bear the strength of our will upon living a good life. After all, God is said to be our helper,¹⁴ and we cannot be helped unless we try to do something ourselves, because God does not produce our salvation in us as if we were mindless rocks or beings in whose nature he did not create reason and will. But why he helps one and not another, helps one to this extent and another to that, and helps one in this way and another in that, lies with him in the decision of his hidden justice and in his surpassing power.

The First Question: Can Human Beings Be Sinless in This Life?

6, 7. One need not, of course, with a rash incautiousness, immediately oppose those who say that there can be human beings in this life without sin. After all, if we say that it is impossible, we will be disparaging both the free choice of persons who use their will to strive for this as well as the power and mercy of God who brings it about by his help. But it is one question whether this is

possible; it is quite another whether it is actually the case. It is still another question why it is not actually the case, if it is not so, though it is possible. And it is still another question not only whether there is someone who has never had any sin whatsoever, but whether there can or could ever be such a person. If someone asks me in accord with these four ways of posing the question whether a human being can be without sin in this life, I admit that one can be by the grace of God and free choice. I have no doubt that free choice itself belongs to the grace of God, that is, to God's gifts, not only insofar as it exists, but also insofar as it is good, that is, insofar as it turns to carrying out God's commandments. In that way God's grace not merely shows us what we are to do, but also helps us so that we are able to do what God has shown us. After all, what do we have that we have not received?¹⁵ For this reason Jeremiah also says, *I know, Lord, that a man's path does not lie in his power and that it is not up to a man to walk and direct his steps* (Jer 10:23). For the same reason, when someone said to God in the Psalms, *You prescribed that your commandments be strictly observed* (Ps 119:4), he did not rely on himself to do it, but immediately expressed the hope, *May my paths be guided to observe your ordinances. Then I will not be put to shame, as I gaze upon all your commandments* (Ps 119:5-6). Does anyone hope for what so lies in his power that he needs no help to do it? He shows clearly enough in what follows from whom one should hope for this, since it does not come from chance or fate or anything else but God. He says, *Guide my journeys according to your word, and let not all sinfulness lord it over me* (Ps 119:133). From servitude to this damnable lordship those are set free whom the Lord Jesus gave the power to become children of God, when they welcomed him.¹⁶ From this terrible dominion they needed to be set free, for he said to them, *If the Son sets you free, then you will truly be free* (Jn 8:36). Because of these and many other testimonies of this sort, I cannot doubt that God has not commanded human beings anything impossible and that nothing is impossible for God in terms of assisting and helping us to accomplish what he commands. Hence, human beings can, if they want, be without sin, if they are helped by God.

The Second Question: Is There Actually Someone without Sin?

7, 8. But if one asks the question I put in second place, namely, whether it is actually the case, I do not believe it is. For I prefer to believe the scripture which says, *Do not enter into judgment with your servant, because no living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2). There is, then, need of God's mercy which triumphs over judgment, and the person who does not show mercy will not have God's mercy.¹⁷ When the prophet said, *I have said, Against myself I will declare my sin to the Lord, and you have forgiven the wickedness of my heart*, he immediately added, *Every holy person will pray to you for this at the*

proper time (Ps 32:5-6). He said, *Every holy person*, not “every sinner.” These are, after all, the words of holy persons, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). Hence, there are in the Revelation of the same apostle those one hundred and forty-four thousand holy men who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins, and no lie was found on their lips, because they were beyond reproach.¹⁸ They were, of course, beyond reproach, precisely because they truthfully reproached themselves. And no lie was found on their lips, precisely because, if they were to say that they had no sin, they would deceive themselves, and the truth would not be in them, and there would certainly be a lie where the truth was absent. For, the righteous person certainly does not lie when he accuses himself as he begins to speak.¹⁹

Our Adoption as Children of God Remains Incomplete

9. Accordingly, because they consider the scriptures less than they should, they are greatly misled by the words of scripture, *Those who have been born of God do not sin and cannot sin, because his seed remains in them* (1 Jn 3:9), even if other passages say something of this sort. For they do not notice that people become children of God to the extent that they begin to exist in the newness of the Spirit²⁰ and begin to be renewed in the interior human being according to the image of him who created them.²¹ All the old weakness is not done away with from the moment of one's baptism. Rather, the renewal begins with the forgiveness of all sins and is realized to the extent that one who is wise is wise about spiritual things.²² But the other things are realized in hope, until they are brought about in reality as well, when the body itself will be renewed into the better state of immortality and incorruption with which we will be clothed at the resurrection of the dead. After all, the Lord called this a rebirth, not the sort that takes place in baptism, but a rebirth in the sense that what now has begun in the spirit will be completed in the body as well. He said, *In the rebirth when the Son of Man shall sit on his throne of majesty, you too will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Mt 19:28).

A total and complete forgiveness of sins is brought about in baptism. But suppose that there were immediately realized the total and complete change of the human being into a new and eternal state. I do not mean this in terms of the body which clearly is still tending toward its old corruption and death and must be renewed in the end when there will truly be a new condition. But apart from the body, if in the mind itself, which is the interior human being, a completely new condition was brought about in baptism, the apostle would not say, *Though our exterior human being is being corrupted, the interior human being is being renewed from day to day* (2 Cor 4:16). Certainly those who are still being renewed from day to day have not been wholly renewed. And to the extent that

they have not yet been renewed, to that extent they are in their old condition. Moreover, to the extent that they are still in their old condition, even though they have been baptized, to that extent they are still children of the world. But to the extent that they are in their new condition, that is, as a result of the full and complete forgiveness of sins and to the extent that they are wise in terms of the Spirit²³ and lead lives that correspond to this, they are children of God. For interiorly we put off the old human being and don the new one, because it is there that we set aside the lie and speak the truth, as well as the other things by which the apostle explains what it means to put off the old human being and don the new one *who was created according to God in the righteousness and holiness of the truth* (Eph 4:22-24). He exhorts the baptized faithful to do this, but they would not still need this admonition, if it had already been completely accomplished in baptism. And yet it has been accomplished, just as we have been saved, for *he saved us through the bath of rebirth* (Ti 3:5). But in another passage he explains how this has been accomplished, *Not only they, but we too possess the first fruits of the Spirit, and we groan within ourselves, as we await our adoption, the redemption of our body. For we are saved in hope, but a hope that is seen is not hope. After all, why should one hope for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we look forward to it with patience* (Rom 8:23-25).

8. 10. Our adoption as God's children will become complete when our body is also redeemed. We now have the first fruits of the Spirit, and in that respect we have now really become children of God. In the other respects, however, as we have been saved and renewed in hope, so we are children of God in hope. But because our salvation has not yet become a reality, we are not yet fully renewed and are not yet children of God, but children of the world. We make progress, then, toward renewal and a righteous life inasmuch as we are children of God, and in that respect we cannot sin at all. We make progress until the whole of our being undergoes this transformation, even the respect in which we are still children of the world. In that respect, after all, we can still sin. Thus it is that, on the one hand, *Those who have been born of God do not sin* (1 Jn 3:9) and, on the other, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). Our being children of the flesh and of this world, then, will be done away with, and our being children of God and persons reborn of the Spirit²⁴ will be brought to perfection. For this reason John also says, *Beloved, we are now children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be* (1 Jn 3:2). What do *we are* and *we shall be* mean, if not that we are in hope and we shall be in reality? For he goes on to say, *We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2) Hence, we have now begun to be like him, because we have the first fruits of the Spirit, and we are still unlike him because of the remnants of our old condition. Hence,

we are children of God because of our rebirth by the Spirit to the extent that we are like him, and we are children of the flesh and of the world to the extent that we are unlike him. As like him, then, we cannot sin, but as unlike him, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves* (1 Jn 1:8). And this lasts until our adoption has become complete and the sinner is no more so that, if you look in his place, you will not find him.²⁵

Why the Righteous Do Not Give Birth to Righteous Children

9, 11. It was pointless, then, for some to have produced this argument and to have said, "If a sinner gave birth to a sinner so that a little one is freed from its guilt of original sin in the reception of baptism, [a righteous person] ought also to give birth to a righteous child."²⁶ The argument implies that one bears a child according to the flesh insofar as one is righteous and not rather insofar as the law of sin is stirred in one's members by concupiscence and is turned by the law of the mind to the purposes of propagation. Hence, one gives birth insofar as one still carries about the old condition among the children of the world, not insofar as one enters into the new condition among the children of God. *For the children of this world are born and beget children* (Lk 20:34). Hence, what is born is such as it is, because what is born of the flesh is flesh. But only the children of God are righteous. Insofar, however, as they are children of God, they do not bear children according to the flesh, because they themselves have been born of the Spirit, not of the flesh.²⁷ But those of them who give birth to children give birth as a result of this flesh, since they have not yet transformed completely all the remnants of their old condition into perfect newness. Hence, any children born as a result of that old and weak condition are necessarily themselves also old and weak. Thus they must themselves be renewed for another birth through the forgiveness of sins. But if they do not receive that rebirth, righteous parents will do them no good. Such parents are righteous in the Spirit, but they did not give them birth by the Spirit. But if they do receive that rebirth, even parents who are not righteous do them no harm. For in the latter case, the children have passed by spiritual grace into the hope of an eternal new condition; in the former case, they remain entirely in the old condition by reason of their carnal mind.

Noah and Daniel Were Righteous, But Not Sinless

10, 12. The testimony, then, which says, *Those who have been born of God do not sin* (1 Jn 3:9), does not contradict the testimony which says to those who have already been born of God, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). For as long as any human being,

even though now wholly existing in hope and already partially renewed by spiritual rebirth, carries about *the body which is being corrupted and weighs down the soul* (Wis 9:15), one must distinguish, even in a single human being, to what part something belongs and on what grounds something is said. For, as I see things, scripture does not readily provide such great testimony to the righteousness of anyone as it does to the three servants of God, Noah, Daniel, and Job. The prophet Ezekiel said that they alone can be freed from the threat of God's anger;²⁸ he was, of course, using those three men as symbols for three kinds of human beings who were to be set free. He took Noah as the symbol of righteous leaders of peoples on account of his governance of the ark, which is like the Church; he took Daniel as the symbol of righteous celibates; he took Job as the symbol of righteous married people. If there should happen to be another interpretation, we need not discuss it now. It is, nonetheless, sufficiently clear from this testimony of the prophet and from other divine testimonies how outstanding these men were in righteousness. And yet, no sober person would say that drunkenness is not a sin, even though it befell such a great man. For Noah was, as we find in scripture, drunk,²⁹ though heaven forbid that he was a drunkard.

13. After the prayer which Daniel poured out to God, he said of himself, *I prayed and confessed to the Lord my God my sins and the sins of my people* (Dn 9:20). It was for that reason, unless I am mistaken, that Ezekiel, whom we mentioned above, said to a certain proud person, *Are you wiser than Daniel?* (Ez 28:3). Nor can one say in this case what some people argue in opposition to the Lord's Prayer. They say, "Although the apostles, who were holy and already perfect and who had absolutely no sin, said this prayer, it was on behalf of the imperfect and those still sinners that they said, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). Thus, by saying *our debts*, they showed that there existed in the one body both those who still had sins and they themselves who had absolutely no sin."³⁰ In Daniel's case one certainly cannot say this. He foresaw, I believe, as a prophet, that this presumptuousness would one day arise, since he often repeated in prayer, *We have sinned* (Dn 9:5.11.15). When he explained to us why he said this, we did not hear him say, "I prayed and confessed to the Lord my God the sins of my people."³¹ Nor did he blur the distinction and say, "I confessed to the Lord my God our sins," so that it was uncertain whether he said that on account of their fellowship in one body. Rather, he spoke quite distinctly, as if stressing this distinction and strongly emphasizing it; he said, *My sins and the sins of my people* (Dn 9:20). Who is going to deny this evidence except persons who find more pleasure in defending what they think than in discovering what they should think?

Even Job Was Not Completely Sinless

14. But let us see what Job himself said after such a great testimony from God to his righteousness. He said, *In the truth I know that it is so. For how will one be righteous before the Lord? If, after all, one wants to contend with him, he will not be able to obey him* (Jb 9:2-3). And a little later he says, *Who will oppose his judgment? Even if I am righteous, my mouth will speak wickedness* (Jb 9:19). Again much later he says, *I know that he will not let me go unpunished. Since I am wicked, why am I not dead? Even if I shall be purer than snow and have clean hands, you have sufficiently dipped me in filth* (Jb 9:28-31). So too, he says in another discourse, *Because you have written down evils against me and wrapped me in the sins of my youth and set my foot in stocks, you have preserved all my deeds and you have examined the soles of my feet, which grow old like a bag or like a garment eaten by a moth. For a man born of a woman is short-lived and full of anger, and he passes like a flower when it blooms and fades; like a shadow he does not last. Have you not made concern for him enter into your judgment? For who will be clean from filth? No one, not even if one's life lasts only a single day* (Jb 13:26—14:5). A little later he says, *You have counted all my needs, and none of my sins has escaped your notice; you have sealed my sins in a bag, and you have noticed if I have done anything unwillingly* (Jb 14:16-17).

See, even Job confesses his sins and says that he knows in the truth that no one is righteous before the Lord. And he knows this in the truth, because, if we say that we have no sin, the truth is not in us.³² Hence, in terms of human conduct, God offers this great testimony to his righteousness. But Job himself, measuring himself by that rule of righteousness which he sees in God, as best he can, knows in the truth that it is so and adds, *For how will one be righteous before the Lord? If, after all, one wants to contend with him, he will not be able to obey him* (Jb 9:2-3). That is, if, in facing judgment, one wants to show that nothing worthy of condemnation can be found in him, he will not be able to obey God. After all, he also loses that obedience by which he could obey God who commands him to confess his sins. For this reason the Lord rebukes certain people with the words, *Why do you want to contend with me in judgment?* (Jer 2:29). To avoid this, the psalmist says, *Do not enter into judgment with your servant, because no living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2). Hence, Job also says, *Who will oppose his judgment? Even if I am righteous, my mouth will speak wickedness* (Jb 9:19-20). That means: If I shall declare myself righteous contrary to his judgment in which that perfect rule of righteousness proves me unrighteous, my mouth will certainly speak wickedness, because it will speak against God's truth.

15. He also showed the frailness or rather the damnation of the carnal generation stemming from the transgression of the original sin. When he dealt

with his own sins, he said, as if he were stating their causes, that a man born of woman is short-lived and full of anger.³³ Of what anger? Surely of that anger as a result of which all, as the apostle said, were *by nature*, that is, from their origin, *children of anger* (Eph 2:3), because they are children of the concupiscence of the flesh and of the world. He goes on to show that human death is tied to this anger. For, when he said that a man is short-lived and full of anger, he also added, *And he passes like a flower when it blooms and fades; like a shadow, he does not last* (Jb 14:1-2). But when he added, *Have you not made concern for him enter into your judgment? For who will be clean from filth? No one, not even if one's life lasts only a single day* (Jb 14:3-4), he was, of course, really saying this: You have made concern for man with his short life enter into your judgment. For however brief his life might be, even if it were only a single day, he could not be clean from filth and, therefore, it is perfectly just that he comes into your judgment. He said, *You have counted all my needs, and none of my sins has escaped your notice; you have sealed my sins in a bag, and you have noticed if I have done anything unwillingly* (Jb 14:16-17). Did he not make it quite clear by this that one is justly held accountable even for those sins which are not committed out of the enticement of pleasure, but for the sake of avoiding some trouble, pain, or even death? For we say that these sins are committed out of some necessity, although they should all be overcome by the love for and delight in righteousness. One can also view his words, *And you have noticed if I have done anything unwillingly* (Jb 14:17), as pertinent to the statement which says, *For I do not do what I want; rather, I do what I hate* (Rom 7:15).

16. Scripture, that is, the Spirit of the Lord, said that in all the things that happened to him Job did not sin with his lips before the Lord.³⁴ Why is it that the Lord, who gave such testimony to him, afterward rebuked him, when he spoke to him? Job himself bears witness to this, when he says, *Why, after having been admonished, do I still face judgment and hear the Lord's rebukes?* (Jb 39:33). But no one is justly rebuked unless there is something in that person that deserves a rebuke.

11. What sort of a rebuke is this? It is correctly understood as spoken in the person of Christ the Lord. He spells out for him the divine actions stemming from his power.³⁵ He rebukes him with the intention that it might be clear that he is saying: Can you do these great deeds which I can? What is the point but that Job should understand? After all, we believe that God inspired him so that he foreknew that Christ would come in order to suffer. Hence, the point was that he should understand how he ought to endure his sufferings with equanimity, if Christ did not refuse to be obedient in suffering, for Christ had absolutely no sin, though he become man on our account, and as God he had such great power. Job understood that with a purer intention of the heart and added to his response, *Before I heard you with the hearing of the ear, and now, behold, my eye sees*

you. Hence, *I have reproached myself, wasted away, and regarded myself as dust and ashes* (Jb 42:5-6). Why was he so displeased with himself in this great insight? After all, God's work which made him a man could not rightly displease him, since scripture also says to God, *Do not look down upon the works of your hands* (Ps 138:8). Rather, it was precisely in terms of that righteousness, by which he knew that he was righteous, that he reproached himself and wasted away and regarded himself as dust and ashes.³⁶ For with his mind he saw the righteousness of Christ; there could not be any sin, not only not in his divinity, but also not in his soul and not in his flesh. In comparison to this righteousness which comes from God, the apostle Paul regarded his own righteousness, which was beyond reproach in terms of the righteousness which comes from the law, not only as loss, but even as rubbish.³⁷

12. 17. Hence, that splendid testimony by which God praised Job does not stand in contradiction to the testimony which says, *No living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2). For it does not prove to us that there was absolutely nothing in him that he himself could truthfully or that God could correctly reprehend. And yet it was not falsely said of him that he was a righteous and true worshiper of God who refrained from every evil deed. These are, after all, God's words about him: *Have you noticed my servant, Job? For there is not a man like him upon the earth: without reproach, righteous, a true worshiper of God, refraining from every evil deed* (Jb 1:8). By the first words, he is praised in comparison with human beings who are on earth; in fact, he surpassed all who at that time were able to be righteous on earth. But it does not follow that he was absolutely without sin, merely because he went beyond the others in his progress in righteousness. Then it adds, *without reproach*: a man about whose life no one justly complains; *righteous*: one who has so developed in moral goodness that no one can equal him; *a true worshiper of God*: one who truly and humbly confesses his sins; *refraining from every evil deed*: it would be surprising if he refrained as well from every evil word and thought.

We do not know how great Job was, but we know that he was righteous. We also know that he was a great man who bore terrible trials and afflictions; we know that he endured all those things, not on account of his sins, but in order to reveal his righteousness. Nonetheless, these words by which the Lord praises him could also be said of that man who finds pleasure in the law of God according to the interior human being, but sees another law in his members resisting the law of his mind,³⁸ especially when he says, *I do not do the good that I want, but I do the evil that I hate. But if I do the evil that I hate, then it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me* (Rom 7:19-20). Note that this man is free from every evil deed in terms of the interior human being, because it is not he himself who does it, but the evil that dwells in his flesh. And yet, since his finding pleasure in the law of God³⁹ is something that he has only

from the grace of God, he still needs to be set free and cries out, *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:24-25).

13, 18. There are, then, persons on earth who are righteous, great, brave, prudent, chaste, patient, pious, merciful, and who endure all temporal evils with equanimity for the sake of righteousness. But granted that this is true, it is also true that *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves* (1 Jn 1:8) and *No living person will be found righteous in his sight* (Ps 143:2). Hence, those people are not sinless, and none of them are so insanely arrogant that they think that they have no need of the Lord's Prayer for some sins of their own.

Nor Were Zechariah and Elizabeth Completely Sinless

19. What shall we say about Zechariah and Elizabeth who are often raised as an objection to us in discussions of this question? Scripture, after all, bears witness that Zechariah was a man of outstanding righteousness among the high priests appointed to offer the sacrifices of the Old Testament.⁴⁰ But we read in the Letter to the Hebrews the testimony that I already quoted in the previous book⁴¹ that Christ alone was a high priest who, unlike those who were called high priests, had no need to offer sacrifice daily first for his own sins and then for the people. It says, *It was fitting, after all, that we have a high priest of this sort: righteous, without malice, undefiled, removed from sinners, raised above the heavens, who does not have the daily need, as the high priests did, to offer sacrifice first for his own sins* (Heb 7:26). To this series of priests there belonged Zechariah, Phinehas, and Aaron, who was the first in this order, as well as all the others who lived praiseworthy and righteous lives in that priesthood. Nonetheless, they needed to offer sacrifice first for their own sins, since Christ, whom they prefigured, was the only one who, as a spotless priest, did not need to do this.

20. What has been said in praise of Zechariah and Elizabeth that is not found in the apostle's words about himself, before he believed in Christ? After all, he said that he was without reproach in terms of the righteousness that comes from the law.⁴² We read this concerning them in these words: *But they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord without reproach* (Lk 1:6). Because whatever justice they had was not a matter of pretense before human beings, it said, *before God*. But the words of scripture about Zechariah and his wife, *in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord*, were briefly summed up by Paul as *in the law* (Phil 3:6). After all, prior to the gospel they did not have one law and he another; rather, they all had one and the same law. It was the law which, as we read, was given through Moses to their forefathers and in accord with which Zechariah was a priest and

offered sacrifice in his turn. And yet the apostle who at that time possessed a similar righteousness goes on to say, *Those things which had been my successes, I have come to regard as losses on account of Christ. And yet I consider everything to be a loss on account of the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus, our Lord. On his account I have considered all things not only as disadvantages, but even as rubbish, in order that I might gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness derived from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, a righteousness that comes from God in faith. Thus I want to know him and the power of his resurrection and the sharing in his sufferings, as one who has been conformed to his death, in order that I may somehow attain the resurrection of the dead* (Phil 3:7-11).

We are, then, so far from believing on the basis of those earlier words that Zechariah and Elizabeth possessed perfect righteousness without any sin that we do not think that even the apostle was perfect by the same lofty standard. I do not mean only in terms of that righteousness of the law which he, as well as they, possessed and which he ranked among losses and rubbish in comparison with the surpassing righteousness which lies in faith in Christ. I mean also in terms of the gospel itself where he earned the high rank of being so great an apostle. I would not dare to say this, if I did not consider it unthinkable not to believe him. For, he goes on to say, *Not that I have already grasped the goal or have already become perfect. Rather, I struggle on in the hope that I may grasp it, as I have been grasped by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I do not think that I have already grasped it. But I do one thing: having forgotten the past and stretched out toward what lies ahead, I deliberately struggle on toward the reward of God's lofty calling in Christ Jesus* (Phil 3:12-14). He himself admits that he has not yet grasped the goal, that he is not yet perfect in the full righteousness which he longs to attain in Christ, but that he still deliberately struggles on and, while forgetting the past, is stretched out to what lies ahead. He admits all this so that we may know that his words, *Though our exterior human being is being corrupted, the interior human being is being renewed from day to day* (2 Cor 4:6), hold true of him as well. For although he was a perfect wayfarer, he had not yet reached the end of the journey. Finally, he wants to take along with him the sort of companions whom he addresses, when he adds, *Let as many of us, then, as are perfect bear this in mind, and if you think differently, God will reveal this to you as well; nonetheless, let us walk in the knowledge we have already attained* (Phil 3:15-16). This walking is not done by bodily feet, but by the longings of the mind and the actions of one's life. In that way those who make progress on the straight road of faith by being renewed from day to day⁴³ become able to be perfect possessors of righteousness. They have already become perfect wayfarers toward that same righteousness.

14, 21. And so all those people whom the scriptures of God proclaimed to us

because of their good will and acts of righteousness in this life and all the people of this sort who came after them, even though they were not proclaimed and praised by those testimonies, and those who exist even now or will exist hereafter are all great, all righteous, all truly praiseworthy, but they are not completely without sin. We believe, after all, the testimonies of the scriptures concerning the praises of these persons, and by those same testimonies we also believe that no living person is found righteous in the sight of God. For this reason, we pray that he may not enter into judgment with his servants,⁴⁴ and we believe that the Lord's Prayer, which he gave to his disciples, is necessary for all the faithful, not only in general, but even for each individual.

Why We Are Commanded to Be Perfect, If No One Is Sinless

15, 22. "But," they object, "the Lord said, *Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt 5:48). He would not command this, if he knew that he is commanding what is impossible."⁴⁵ At this point the question is not whether it is possible, if they take this perfection to mean that a person can be without sin, while living this life. For we have answered above that it is possible. Our present question is rather whether anyone has actually been sinless. We have long known that there is no one who exerts his will as much as the occasion demands, as the massive testimonies of the scriptures, which I mentioned, declare.

When scripture mentions the perfection of some individual, we must see in what respect scripture speaks of it. After all, I previously cited a testimony from the apostle in which he admits that he is not yet perfect in terms of acquiring the righteousness he desires.⁴⁶ But he immediately says, *Let as many of us, then, as are perfect bear this in mind* (Phil 3:15). He would not say both of these things, unless he were perfect in one respect and not so in another. Thus, suppose that someone is a perfect student of wisdom—something that those people were not to whom he said, *I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to take it, nor are you able even now* (1 Cor 3:2). He also said to them, *We speak wisdom among the perfect* (1 Cor 2:6), where he certainly meant us to understand, "perfect students." It is possible, then, as I said, that one is already a perfect student of wisdom, but is not also a perfect teacher of it. One can have perfect knowledge of righteousness and not yet practice it perfectly. One can be perfect to the point of loving one's enemies, but not yet perfect to the point of accepting suffering from them. And with regard to one who is perfect insofar as he loves all human beings, who has even attained a love for his enemies, the question still remains whether he is already perfect in that love. That is, does he love those he loves as much as the immutable standard of truth prescribes that they should be loved? When we read in scripture about the perfection of some person, we must carefully note in what respect the person is said to be perfect,

since a person is not taken to be without sin, merely on account of being called perfect in some respect. And yet, one could say that a person is worthy of being called perfect, not because of having already arrived at the goal, but because of having advanced a good distance toward it. Accordingly, a person can be called perfect in the teaching of the law, even though he still lacks some knowledge. In that sense the apostle called those people perfect, to whom he said, *And if you think differently, God will reveal this to you as well; nonetheless, let us walk in the knowledge that we have already attained* (Phil 3:15).

16, 23. Nor ought we to deny that God commands that we should be so perfect in acting righteously that we have absolutely no sin. After all, whatever it is, it is not a sin, if God does not command that it should not be. "Why then," they ask, "does he command what he knows no human being is going to do?"⁴⁷ In the same way one can also ask why he commanded those first human beings, who were the only two, what he knew they would not do. Nor should we say that he gave the command precisely so that one of us would do it, if they did not, for God gave to them alone the command that they should not take food from that tree.⁴⁸ Just as he knew the righteousness that they were not going to observe, so he knew the righteousness that he was going to produce from them. In that way, then, he commands all human beings not to commit any sin, although he foreknows that no one will fulfill the command. Thus he himself will produce what is right by damning all those who have wickedly and damnably held his commandments in contempt. So too, he will produce what is good by purifying all those who obediently and piously make progress in his commandments, even though they do not observe all he has commanded, and who forgive the sins of others, as they want to be forgiven themselves. How, after all, can persons be forgiven by God's mercy as they forgive, if there is no sin? Or if there is a sin, how can it not be forbidden by God's righteousness?

24. "But, look," they object, "the apostle says, *I have fought the good fight; I have run the race; I have kept the faith. There remains for me the crown of righteousness* (2 Tm 4:7-8). He would not say this, if he had any sin."⁴⁹ Quite the contrary, let them explain to me how he could say this, when there still remained for him so great a battle, so great a fight, in the suffering which he said still lay ahead for him. Had he all but finished the race, when he still had not reached the point at which he was going to face a fiercer and crueler enemy? With such words he may have expressed his joy with certitude and security, because he who had revealed that this suffering still lay ahead for him had made him certain and secure regarding his victory in the great fight to come. In that case, he said these things, not because of their full attainment, but because of his firm hope. Thus he spoke of what he was confident would be, as if it had already come about. If, then, he were to add to these words, "I now have no sin," we would understand that he said this too with regard to the perfection that

lay in the future, not the perfection that has already come about. For his being sinless—something that they think was already realized in him, because he said these things—belonged to the finishing of his race, just as his triumphing over his opponent belonged to the finishing of his race. But even these people must admit that this latter still had to be realized, when he said this.

We maintain, then, that all of this still had to be realized in him, when, trusting in God's promise, he stated all this as if it had already taken place. To finishing his race there belonged, of course, his forgiving his debtors their debts and his praying that his own debts be forgiven.⁵⁰ Because of the Lord's promise he was completely certain that he would have no sin at that final moment which, though still to come, he described as already realized because of his trust. For, to omit other matters, I wonder whether, when he said those words which led them to think that he was sinless, there had already been taken from him that thorn in his flesh. He had asked the Lord three times to take it away from him,⁵¹ and he received the answer, *My grace is sufficient for you; virtue is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor 12:9). It was necessary for the perfection of this great man that the angel of Satan not be taken from him. By that angel he was struck in the face so that he might not become proud on account of the greatness of his revelations.⁵² Will, then, anyone dare to think or to say that a person subjected to the burden of this life is completely free of every sin?

25. Granted that there are outstanding human beings of such great righteousness that God spoke to them from out of the pillar of cloud.⁵³ *Moses and Aaron among his priests and Samuel among those who call upon his name* (Ps 99:6) were such men. Scripture which speaks the truth proclaims with great praise Samuel's piety and innocence from his early childhood, when his mother left him in the temple to fulfill her vow and offered him as a servant to the Lord. Scripture also says of such persons, *You were merciful to them and punished all their loves* (Ps 99:8). In anger he punishes the children of damnation, but with mercy he punishes the children of grace, since *he chastises the one whom he loves* (Prv 3:12) and *he scourges every son he acknowledges as his own* (Heb 12:6). But only sin deserves the punishment, correction, and scourge of God. I leave aside him who stood ready for the scourges,⁵⁴ so that he might experience all things like us apart from sin,⁵⁵ and be the holy priest of a holy people, making intercession even for the holy.⁵⁶ Each of them truthfully says of himself, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). Those people who argue against this are praiseworthy for their chaste life and morals, and they do not hesitate to follow the counsel that the Lord gave to the rich man who asked his advice about attaining eternal life. After he answered that he already observed all the commandments, the Lord told him that, if he wished to be perfect, he should sell all that he had and give it to the poor and transfer his treasure to heaven.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, none of these of people dare to say that they are without

sin. When they say this, we believe that they are speaking truthfully, but, if they are lying, they begin by that very fact to increase their sin or to be sinful.

The Third Question: Why No Human Being Lives a Sinless Life

17, 26. Let us now turn to the question I put in the third place. Since a human being can be without sin in this life, when God's grace helps the human will, I could easily and truthfully give as an answer to the question why no one is without sin: Because they do not will to be. But if someone asks me why they do not will to be, the question becomes a long one. I will, nonetheless, give a short answer to it, without precluding a more careful investigation. Human beings do not will to do what is right, either because they do not know whether it is right or because they find no delight in it. For we will something with greater strength in proportion to the certainty of our knowledge of its goodness and the deep delight that we find in it. Ignorance and weakness, then, are defects which hinder the will from being moved to do a good deed or to refrain from an evil deed. But it is due to God's grace helping the human will that we come to know what is hidden and find pleasing what was not attractive. The reason why human beings are not helped by his grace lies in them, not in God. They were, after all, predestined either to be damned on account of their sinful pride or to face judgment and correction for their pride, if they are children of mercy. For this reason, when Jeremiah had said, *I know, Lord, that a man's path does not lie in his own power and it is not up to a man to walk and direct his steps*, he immediately added, *Rebuke me, Lord, but in your judgment, not in your anger* (Jer 10:23-24). It is as if he said, "I know that I deserve rebuke for receiving less help from you in order that I might perfectly direct my steps. Nonetheless, do not deal with me as you would in your anger by which you have decided to damn the wicked, but as you would in your judgment by which you teach your own not to be proud." For this reason it says elsewhere, *And your judgments will help me* (Ps 119:175).

27. Consequently, do not attribute to God the cause of any human sin. The cause of all human failings is, after all, pride. It was to overcome and destroy this pride, that such a remedy came down from heaven; to human beings puffed up with pride, God came humbly out of mercy, revealing his grace with wondrous clarity in the man whom he assumed with such great love before his companions.⁵⁸ After all, he who was in that way united to the Word of God did not bring it about by any preceding merits of his will that the one Son of God also became the one Son of Man as a result of that union. It was necessary that there be just one. There would, however, have been two or three or more, if this was something that could be brought about, not by God's gift alone, but by the free choice of a human being. This point, therefore, is particularly emphasized;

this point especially, as best I can judge, is what we teach and are taught from the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ.⁵⁹

Hence, at one moment a person has the knowledge to undertake, perform, and complete a good deed; at another one does not. At one moment a person finds delight in this; at another one does not. In that way we can know that it is not due to our own ability, but to the gift of God either that we have the knowledge or that we find such delight. And in that way we can be healed of our empty pride and know how truly scripture says, not about this earth, but in a spiritual sense, *The Lord will give it loveliness, and the earth will bear its fruit* (Ps 85:13). A good act is the more delightful in proportion to our love for God, the supreme and immutable good and author of all other goods. So that we may love God, *love is poured out in our hearts*, not by us, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5).

18, 28. We human beings strive to find in our will some good that is ours and that we do not have from God, but I do not know how one can find such a good. We have heard the words of the apostle, when he was speaking about human goods,⁶⁰ *After all, what do you have that you have not received? But if you have received, why do you boast as if you have not received?* (1 Cor 4:7). But the path of reason, upon which such persons as we are can enter, presses each of us investigating this question not to defend grace in such a way that we seem to destroy free choice and not to stress free choice in such a way that we are judged ungrateful to the grace of God because of our wicked pride.

A False Solution to the Question Is Rejected

29. Some want to defend the words of the apostle I mentioned by saying that we should attribute whatever good will we have to God, because it could not exist in us, if we human beings did not exist. Why should we not attribute to God as its author whatever good will we have, since we have it from God alone that we are anything at all and that we are human beings? It would not, after all, exist, unless we existed in whom it is found? But in that way one could also say that we should also attribute to God our bad will, because it could not exist in a human being, unless the human being existed in whom it is found. God is the author of the existence of the human being. Thus, one would have to credit God with being the author of this bad will too, since it could not exist if it did not have a human being in which to exist. But it is utterly wrong to say that!

30. Hence, we must maintain not only that the choice of the will, which freely turns this way and that and which belongs to the natural goods which a bad person can misuse, but also that the good will, which already belongs to those goods which cannot be misused, can come to us only from God. Otherwise, I do not know how we are going to defend the words of scripture, *After all, what*

do you have that you have not received? (1 Cor 4:7). For, if we have from God a free will that can become either good or bad, while the good will comes from us, what comes from us is better than what comes from God. But if that is a ridiculous claim to make, we must admit that we obtain a good will from God. Moreover, I would be surprised if the will could stand in between so that it would be neither good nor bad. For, if we love righteousness, the will is good. And if we love it more, the will is better; if we love it less, the will is less good. But if we do not love it at all, the will is not good. Who is going to hesitate to say that a will that does not love righteousness at all is not only a bad will, but the very worst will? If, then, the will is either good or bad and if we certainly do not have a bad will from God, it remains that we have a good will from God. Otherwise, I do not know what other gift of his we ought to rejoice in, when we are made righteous by him. And for this reason, I believe, scripture says, *The will is prepared by the Lord* (Prv 8:35), and in the Psalms it says, *The Lord will guide a man's steps, and he will prosper his way* (Ps 37:23). The apostle also says, *It is God, after all, who produces in you the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13).

31. Our turning away from God is our own doing, and this turning is an evil will. But our turning toward God is something we cannot do unless he rouses us and helps us, and this turning is a good will. Hence, what do we have that we have not received? But if we have received, why do we boast as if we had not received?⁶¹ And for this reason, *Let him who boasts boast in the Lord* (1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17). For those to whom God wills to grant this, it is a sign of his mercy, not of their merits. But for those to whom God does not will to grant this, it is a sign of the truth. For sinners deserve just punishment, because *the Lord God loves mercy and truth* (Ps 84:12), and *Mercy and truth have met* (Ps 85:11). So too, *All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth* (Ps 25:10). Who can explain the frequency with which the divine scripture mentions these two together? At times the terms are changed so that "grace" is used in place of "mercy." Thus we have, *And we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (Jn 1:14). At times "judgment" is used instead of "truth," for example, *I will sing to you, Lord, of mercy and judgment* (Ps 101:1).

32. But why he wills to turn these persons back to himself and to punish those for turning away stems from the plan of righteousness that lies more deeply hidden in him. No one, after all, is right to find fault with someone who mercifully grants a benefit, and no one is right to find fault with someone who truthfully exacts punishment. So, in the case of those workers in the gospel no one is right to blame the man who pays some the wage they agreed to and gives to others the same wage, though they had not agreed upon it.⁶²

Why God Withholds His Grace at Times

19. To the extent that God let us bear in mind, and let us understand, if we can, that the good Lord God at times does not grant even to his holy people either the certain knowledge of or the victorious delight in some good deed in order that they may know that they do not have from themselves, but from him the light that enlightens their darkness⁶³ and the loveliness by which their earth brings forth fruit.⁶⁴

33. But when we ask him for his help to do and accomplish what is right, what else do we ask for but that he disclose what was hidden and that he make attractive what was not pleasing? By his grace we have learned that we must ask him for this, though it was previously hidden, and we have by his grace come to love it, though we did not previously find it attractive. And thus one who boasts may boast, not in himself, but in the Lord.⁶⁵ To be inflated with pride, of course, is due to the human being's own will, not to God's activity, for God neither compels nor helps one toward this. There first arises in the human will a desire for independence so that one becomes disobedient through pride. And if this desire did not exist, nothing would have been difficult, and one could have refused to be disobedient, when one wanted to. But there resulted from the punishment that was just and deserved such a defect that it was now difficult to be obedient to righteousness. And unless that defect is overcome with the help of grace, no one turns back to righteousness; unless it is healed as an effect of grace, no one enjoys the peace of righteousness. By whose grace is it overcome and healed but the grace of him to whom it was said, *Turn us to you, Lord of our salvation, and turn aside your anger from us* (Ps 85:5)? And if God does this, he does it out of mercy so that we say, *He has not treated us according to our sins, nor has he repaid us according to our wickedness* (Ps 103:10). To those for whom he does not do this, he does not do so out of judgment. And who is going to say to him, "What have you done?" since in a spirit of piety the holy sing of his mercy and judgment.⁶⁶ For that reason he heals even his holy and faithful people more slowly of some of their defects. Thus in these cases the good attracts them less than suffices for fully accomplishing what is right, whether it remains hidden from them or it is already clearly seen. As a result, in comparison with the integral rule of his truth, no living person is found righteous in his sight.⁶⁷ His purpose in all this is not that we become worthy of damnation, but that we become humble. He teaches us about his grace so that we do not suppose, because we have experienced an ease in all we do, that his gift is something that comes from us. For this error is very much opposed to religion and piety. On the other hand, we should not think that we ought to remain in those same defects. Rather, we should strive with vigilance, especially against pride on account of which we are humbled by these defects, and we should ardently plead with him, always with the understanding that we have such

striving and such prayer as his gift. Thus, in all things we will not have our gaze turned to ourselves, but our hearts raised up to the Lord our God, and we will give thanks and, when we boast, we will boast in him.⁶⁸

The Fourth Question: Can or Could There Ever Be a Completely Sinless Human Being?

20, 34. The fourth question remains. When we have explained it to the extent that the Lord gives his help, this lengthy discussion will at last come to an end. The question is not only whether there has been someone among those human beings already born who never has had or never will have any sin, but also whether there ever could or can be such a person. It is absolutely certain that there is not, was not, and will not be anyone of that sort, except the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus.⁶⁹ For this reason we have already said a great deal about the baptism of little ones. For, if they have no sin, not only are there countless human beings without sin, but there also have been and will be. But if the answer we gave to our second question is correct, namely, that there is no one without sin, then little ones are certainly not without sin. It follows from this as something beyond any doubt that, even if there could be someone in this life so perfect in virtue as to attain complete righteousness and, consequently, be without any sin, that person was, nonetheless, previously a sinner and was transformed from that state into this newness of life. For we asked one question in the second place, and we have raised another question in this fourth spot. In that earlier question we asked whether anyone in this life did by God's grace and by effort of the will attain that perfect life which is completely without sin. In this fourth question we are asking whether among human offspring there was someone or there could have been or can be someone, not who has come to absolutely perfect righteousness from sin, but who has never been bound by any sin whatsoever. Hence, if those many statements we made about little ones are true, there is not and has not been and will not be any human being of that sort, apart from the one mediator between God and human beings. In him is found our atonement and justification,⁷⁰ by which the hostilities resulting from sin have been ended and we have been reconciled to God.⁷¹ It is not, then, off the point to go over a few things concerning the beginning of the human race to the extent that seems sufficient for the present question, so that the reader's mind will be instructed by them against various arguments that could cause problems.

The Disobedience of Adam and Eve and Its Results

21, 35. Those first human beings, the one man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, who was formed from him, chose not to remain obedient, after they had received God's commandment; hence, they received the just punishment they deserved. For God had threatened that they would die on the day they ate the forbidden fruit.⁷² Moreover, they had received the right to use every tree in paradise as food, and God had also planted there the tree of life. He had forbidden them only the tree which he called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that name was meant to signify the consequences they would experience, both the good they were going to discover if they kept the commandment and the evil they were going to discover if they violated it. We are, of course, correct in thinking that they refrained from the forbidden food before the devil maliciously persuaded them and that they made use of the foods that were permitted and, hence, of the other trees and especially of the tree of life. After all, what is more absurd than to believe they took nourishment from the other trees, but not from that tree as well? It too was permitted them, and its principal benefit was that it did not permit their bodies, even though they were animal bodies, to be transformed through the corrupting influence of time and to grow old toward death. It gave this benefit to the human body from its own body, and it showed by its mystical signification what the rational soul derives from wisdom, of which it is the symbol. For, given life by its nourishment, the rational soul would in no sense turn to the corruption and death that is wickedness. After all, scripture correctly says of it, *It is the tree of life for those who embrace it* (Prv 3:18). As the former tree stands in the bodily paradise, so the latter stands in the spiritual paradise. The one provided to the senses of the exterior human being, the other to those of the interior human being vital strength so that they did not change in the course of time into something inferior. They were, therefore, serving God with the piety of obedience that was so strictly enjoined upon them, for by it alone do we worship God. How great it is in itself and how it alone suffices to keep the rational creature subordinate to the creator could not be taught in a more excellent way than by their being forbidden a tree that was not bad. The creator of good things, after all, made all things, and *behold they are very good* (Gn 1:31). Heaven forbid that he planted something bad in the fertile soil of even that bodily paradise. Rather, in order to show to human beings, for whom it was most beneficial to serve under such a lord, the great goodness of obedience alone, he demanded only obedience from his servant. And yet, it would be profitable for a human being to obey him, not merely on account of his lordship, but also on account of the benefit that comes to one who serves him. They were forbidden that tree which, if they had made use of it, when they were not forbidden, they would have suffered no evil. Thus what they suffered when using it after it was forbidden is sufficient proof that it was not a deadly tree with poisonous fruit, but only the violation of obedience that brought this upon them.

Adam and Eve before and after Their Disobedience

22, 36. Before they had gone against this obedience, they were pleasing to God, and God was pleased with them. And though they had an animal body, they felt nothing in that body stir against them in disobedience. The order of righteousness, of course, brought it about, that, because their soul had received the body as its servant, its body was obedient to it and offered a service appropriate to that life without any resistance, just as the soul was obedient to its Lord. Hence, they were naked and were not ashamed.⁷³ Now the rational soul feels shame out of a natural modesty, because by reason of a certain weakness it cannot bring about in the flesh, over which it received the power of a master over a servant, that its members are not aroused against its will and that they are aroused when it wills. On this account these members are correctly called shameful (*pudenda*), even in a chaste person, because they are aroused in opposition to their lord, the mind, as they want. It is as if they are in their own power and as if the reins of virtue have only sufficient control over them to prevent them from doing impure and forbidden actions. This disobedience of the flesh, which is now found in this stirring, even if it is not permitted to carry out the act, did not exist then in those first human beings, when they were naked and were not embarrassed. The rational soul, the lord over the flesh, had not yet emerged as disobedient to its Lord, so that it experienced the disobedience of its own servant, the flesh, with a certain sense of confusion and bother, and it certainly did not by its disobedience produce that feeling in God. After all, it is not something embarrassing or bothersome for God, if we do not obey him, for we are absolutely unable to diminish his sovereign power. But it is something embarrassing for us that the flesh does not obey our command, because this is the result of the weakness which we merited by sinning, and it is called the sin dwelling in our members.⁷⁴ It is, however, sin in the sense that it is the punishment of sin. After the transgression was committed and the disobedient soul had turned away from the law of its Lord, its servant, that is, its body, began to have the law of disobedience in opposition to it, and those human beings were ashamed of their nakedness, when they noticed the stirring which they had not previously felt. Their noticing this is what was meant by the opening of their eyes.⁷⁵ For they were certainly not wandering about in the midst of those trees with their eyes closed. It was in this sense that scripture said of Hagar, *Her eyes were opened, and she saw the well* (Gn 21:19). Then the human beings covered their genitals;⁷⁶ God made those members, but they made them something to be ashamed of.

23, 37. From this law of sin there is born the sinful flesh that needs to be purified through the sacrament of the one who came in the likeness of sinful flesh,⁷⁷ so that the body of sin might be destroyed.⁷⁸ The apostle also calls it the body of this death, and from it only the grace of God through Jesus Christ our

Lord frees pitiful human beings.⁷⁹ For this law was passed from them to their descendants as the beginning of death, just as the burden of labor by which all human beings labor on the earth was passed on, just as the pains of birth were passed on to women.⁸⁰ For, when they were found guilty of sin, they merited these punishments from the sentence of God which we see is carried out, not in them alone, but also in their descendants, in some more than in others, but in all of them. The initial righteousness of those first human beings consisted in their obeying God and not having this law of concupiscence in their members in opposition to the law of their mind.⁸¹ Now, after their sin, since our sinful flesh is born from them, it is considered something great for those who obey God not to obey the desires of the same concupiscence, but to crucify in themselves the flesh along with its passions and concupiscence in order to belong to Jesus Christ.⁸² He prefigured this on his cross, and he gave to them the power to become children of God by his grace. For he gave, not to all human beings, but to as many as welcomed him, that they who were born to this world in the flesh might be reborn for God by the Spirit. Thus scripture says of them, *But to as many as welcomed him, he gave the power to become children of God; they have been born, not from the flesh, not from the blood, not from the will of man, not from the will of the flesh, but from God* (Jn 1:12-13).

The Word Became Flesh That We Might Become Children of God

24, 38. He went on, however, to add, *And the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us* (Jn 1:14). He as much as said that something great was brought about in them: those who had first been born for the world from the flesh, even though they had been created by God, were to be born for God from God. But something far more wonderful has come about. It belonged to their nature to be born of the flesh, but it was a gift to be born of God. And in order that they might obtain this gift, he who was in his nature born from God deigned in his mercy to be born from the flesh. That is what it means that *The Word was made flesh and dwelled among us* (Jn 1:14). In this way, he says, God brought it about that we, who are born flesh from flesh, are afterward spirit by being born of the Spirit and dwell in God, because God, who was born from God, afterward also was made flesh by being born from flesh and dwelled among us. After all, the Word that was made flesh existed in the beginning and was God with God.⁸³ But his partaking of our lowliness so that we might partake of his loftiness had a certain middle point in the birth of the flesh, for we are born in sinful flesh, while he was born in the likeness of sinful flesh.⁸⁴ We are born not only from flesh and blood, but from the will of man and the will of the flesh;⁸⁵ he was born only from flesh and blood, not from the will of man or from the will of the flesh, but from God. And thus we face death on account of sin; he faced death on

account of us without any sin. But just as the lowly condition by which he came down to us is not in every respect equal to the lowly condition in which he found us here, so too the loftier condition in which we rise up to him will not be equal to the loftier condition in which we shall find him there. For we were made children of God by his grace; he was always the Son of God by nature. Having at some point turned back to God, we will cling to him, though unequal to God; never having turned away, he remains equal to God. We partake of eternal life; he is eternal life. Therefore, he alone, having become man, while remaining God, never had any sin and did not assume sinful flesh, though he assumed flesh from the sinful flesh of his mother. Whatever of the flesh he took from her, he either cleansed it to assume it or cleansed it by assuming it. And so he created his virgin mother; she did not conceive by the law of sinful flesh, that is, not by the stirring of carnal concupiscence; rather, by her pious faith she merited that the holy child come to be in her. He created her in order to choose her, from whom he chose to be created. How much more, then, does sinful flesh need to be baptized in order to escape judgment, if sinless flesh was baptized as an example to imitate.

Why Children of Baptized Parents Need to Be Baptized

25, 39. We replied above to those who say, "If a sinner gave birth to a sinner, a righteous person ought also to give birth to a righteous child."⁸⁶ We give the same answer to those who say that someone born of baptized parents ought to be regarded as having been baptized. They ask, "Why could they not, after all, be baptized in the loins of their father, if, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, Levi was able to receive tithes in the loins of Abraham?"⁸⁷ Those who say this should notice that Levi did not afterwards not receive tithes, because he had received tithes in the loins of Abraham. Rather, he received them, because he was given the honor of the priesthood so that he received tithes and did not give them. Otherwise, the rest of his brothers who gave tithes to him would not be given tithes, since they too had received tithes from Melchizedek in the loins of Abraham.⁸⁸

40. No one should argue as follows: The sons of Abraham could rightly receive tithes, even though they had already received tithes in the loins of their father, because that tithing was something to be repeatedly performed in the case of each person. Accordingly, the Israelites used to offer to the Levites many tithes from all their crops every year, even for the whole of their lives. But baptism is a sacrament that is given once, and if one had already received it when he was in his father, he must be considered as having been baptized, since he was begotten from one who had been baptized. Let me be brief; one who argues that way should consider circumcision; it is performed once, but it is performed once on each individual. Just as during the time of that sacrament one begotten

of a circumcised parent had to be circumcised, so now one who is begotten of a baptized parent has to be baptized.

41. "The apostle says, *Your children would be unclean, but now they are holy* (1 Cor 7:14). And so," they claim, "the children of believers do not now need to be baptized."⁸⁹ I am surprised that those people say this who deny that sin is derived from our origin from Adam. After all, if they interpret this statement of the apostle so that they suppose that the children of believers are born in a state of holiness, why are they convinced that they must be baptized? Why do they, moreover, refuse to admit that some sin is derived from our origin from a sinful parent, if some holiness is derived from a holy parent? And, even if holy children are produced by believing parents, it is not contrary to our statement that, if they are not baptized, they face damnation. These people exclude them from the kingdom of heaven, although they claim that they have no sin, neither personal nor original. Or, if they think it wrong that holy persons are damned, how is it right that holy persons are separated from the kingdom of God? They would do better to consider why some sin is not derived from sinful parents, if some holiness is derived from holy parents and some uncleanness from unclean parents. After all, he who said, *Your children would be unclean, but now they are holy* (1 Cor 7:14), mentioned both of these. Let them also explain how it is just that both holy children born of believing parents and unclean children born of non-believing parents are equally prevented from entering the kingdom of God, if they have not been baptized. What benefit, then, do they get from that holiness? They might have said that unclean children born of non-believing parents are damned, but that the holy children of believing parents are still not damned, because they are holy, though they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, unless they have been baptized. Then there would be some sort of distinction. But they say that holy children born of holy parents and unclean children born of unclean parents equally escape damnation, because they have no sin, and are excluded from the kingdom of God, because they were not baptized. Who is going to believe that such fine minds fail to see this absurdity?

42. The apostle said, *The one brought all to condemnation* and *The one brought all to righteousness of life* (Rom 5:16.18). Consider for a moment how it is not opposed to our view or, rather, to the apostle's own view that he says in another context, *Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy* (1 Cor 7:14).

26. Sanctification is not all of one sort. I think, in fact, that even the catechumens are sanctified in their own way by the sign of Christ and prayer along with the imposition of hands. And though what they receive is not the body of Christ, it is, nonetheless, holy and more holy than the foods by which we are nourished, because it is a sacrament. But the same apostle said that those

foods we use for the necessary sustenance of this life are sanctified by the word of God and the prayer we say,⁹⁰ when we are about to take refreshment for our bodies. The sanctification of those foods does not mean that what enters the mouth does not pass into the stomach and is not cast into the toilet because of the corruption that destroys all earthly things. It was for this reason that the Lord exhorted us to seek another food that does not corrupt. In the same way, if catechumens are not baptized, their sanctification is useless for entering the kingdom of heaven or for the forgiveness of sins. And for this reason, whatever sort of sanctification it is that the apostle says is found in the children of believers, it has nothing at all to do with this question of baptism and of the origin and forgiveness of original sin. For he says in the same passage that non-believing spouses are sanctified by their believing spouses, when he says, *For a husband who does not believe is sanctified in his wife, and a wife who does not believe is sanctified in a brother; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy* (1 Cor 7:14). None, I suspect, understand these words, however they interpret them, in so unbelieving a way that they think that a non-Christian husband does not need to be baptized, because his wife is a Christian, and that he has attained the forgiveness of sins and will enter the kingdom of God, because he was sanctified in his wife.

27, 43. If any are still disturbed over why children born of baptized parents are baptized, let them listen to this brief explanation. Just as the birth of sinful flesh through the one Adam brings to damnation all those who are born in that way, so the birth in the Spirit by grace through the one Jesus Christ leads to the justification of eternal life⁹¹ all those who have been predestined and reborn in that way. The sacrament of baptism is, of course, the sacrament of rebirth.⁹² Hence, just as a human being who has not lived cannot die and one who has not died cannot rise, so one who has not been born cannot be reborn. From this it follows that no one who has not been born could be reborn in his parent. It is necessary, then, that everyone who has been born must be reborn, because *unless one has been born again, one cannot see the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:3). Even a little one, then, must be immersed in the sacrament of rebirth to avoid departing from this life without it in an evil state. And this is done only for the forgiveness of sins.⁹³ Christ also showed this in the same passage. When he was asked how this was possible, he recalled what Moses did when he raised up the serpent.⁹⁴ Since infants, then, are conformed to the death of Christ through the sacrament of baptism, we must confess that they are set free from the bite of the serpent, if we do not want to depart from the rule of Christian faith. Yet, they did not receive that bite in their own personal life, but in the one upon whom it was first inflicted.

Baptism Brings Forgiveness of All Sins, But Not Complete Renewal

44. The fact that parents' personal sins do them no harm after their conversion should not lead to misunderstanding. They claim, "For how much more do they not harm the child!"⁹⁵ Those who think this do not notice that, just as the personal sins of the parents do them no harm, because they have been reborn by the Spirit, so the sins derived from the parents will harm the child born of them, unless it is reborn in the Spirit. After all, the parents who have been renewed beget a child in the flesh, not from the first fruits of their new state, but from the remains of their old condition, and the children, though begotten entirely in the old sinful flesh as a result of the old condition of their parents, escape the damnation that was due to the old human being by the sacrament of spiritual rebirth and renewal.⁹⁶ Here is something to which we ought to pay attention and which we ought to bear in mind, especially on account of the questions which have been and still can be raised on this subject: Baptism only brings about the full and complete forgiveness of sins, but it does not immediately transform the whole condition of the human being. Rather, in those who are making good progress, as their renewal grows from day to day,⁹⁷ the first fruits of the Spirit transform into themselves what pertains to the old flesh, until the whole is so renewed that even the weakness of the animal body attains spiritual strength and incorruption.⁹⁸

Concupiscence Remains, Though the Guilt Is Forgiven

28, 45. The apostle, however, also refers to this law of sin as "sin," when he says, *Let sin, then, not reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires* (Rom 6:12). It does not remain in the members of those who have been reborn of water and the Spirit, as though it were not forgiven, once they received the full and complete forgiveness of sins and all the hostilities were destroyed, by which we were separated from God.⁹⁹ Rather, it remains in the old condition of the flesh as something overcome and destroyed, provided it does not to some extent revive through our consenting to what is wrong and it is not recalled into its own kingdom and dominion. But the apostle sharply distinguished the life of the Spirit, in whose newness the baptized are reborn through the grace of God, from this old condition of the flesh in which this law of sin, or sin, has already been forgiven. It was not enough for him to say that such persons were not in sin; he also added that they were no longer in the flesh, even before they departed from this mortal life. He said, *But those who are in the flesh cannot please God; you, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, provided that the Spirit of God dwells in you* (Rom 8:8-9). And yet, those who apply its members to good works make good use of this flesh, corruptible as it is, though they are not in

this flesh, because they neither think nor live in accord with it. So too, those who with courage and patience offer their death for their brothers, for the faith, or for any true, holy, and just cause, make good use of death, which is the penalty of the first sin. In the same way, believing married couples make good use even of that law of sin which remains in the old condition of the flesh, though already forgiven, for, inasmuch as they are in the newness of Christ, they do not allow lust to rule over them. But inasmuch as they still bring with them the old condition of Adam, they bear children subject to death who need to be reborn for immortality. And they have that sinful heritage which does not hold subject those who have been reborn and from which those who are born are released by being reborn. The law of concupiscence, then, remains in the members,¹⁰⁰ but, despite its remaining, its guilt is removed. It is removed in one who has received the sacrament of rebirth and has begun to be renewed. But one who is born from that old condition of concupiscence that remains needs to be reborn in order to be healed, because believing parents who have been born in the flesh and reborn in the Spirit have begotten children in the flesh. But how could children in any sense be reborn before they are born?

46. Do not be surprised that I said that, although the law of sin remains in concupiscence, its guilt is removed by the grace of the sacrament. For wicked thoughts, words, and deeds have passed away and no longer exist in terms of any movement of the mind and body they involved. But though they have now passed away and no longer exist, their guilt remains, unless it has been removed by the forgiveness of sins. So, conversely, this law of concupiscence has not passed away, but still remains, though its guilt is removed and no longer exists, when the full forgiveness of sins takes place in baptism. Moreover, if departure from this life immediately follows, there will be absolutely nothing to hold the one subject to guilt, since everything that held such a one has been removed. Just as, then, it is not surprising that the guilt of past thoughts, words, and deeds remains prior to the forgiveness of sins, so it ought, conversely, to come as no surprise that after the forgiveness of sins the guilt ceases, while the concupiscence remains.

No One Is Absolutely Sinless apart from the One Mediator

29, 47. Since this is the case, from the moment that *through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings* (Rom 5:12) until the end of this carnal generation and corruptible world, the children of which are born and beget children,¹⁰¹ there is no human being present in this life whom one can truthfully call absolutely sinless, apart from the one mediator, who reconciles us to our creator through the forgiveness of sins. This same Lord denies his saving medicine during no age of the human

race prior to the last judgment, which is still to come, to those he predestined by his certain foreknowledge and just beneficence to reign with him for eternal life. After all, before the birth of his flesh, the weakness of his suffering, and the strength of his resurrection, he formed those who lived at that time by the faith in those events that were to come in order that they might inherit eternal life. By faith in those events when they were present, he formed those who were there when they took place and saw what had been foretold become reality. By faith in those events now in the past, he continues to form those who came later, as well as us and those who are still to come. Hence, there is one faith which saves all those who are saved from their birth in the flesh by being reborn spiritually; it is directed toward him who came to be judged and to die for us, the judge of the living and the dead. But the sacraments of this one faith have changed through the various ages in accord with the vantage point from which they expressed it.

48. There is, then, one and the same savior for little ones and adults. The angels said of him, *Today a savior has been born for you* (Lk 2:11). An angel also said of him to the Virgin Mary, *You shall call his name, Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* (Mt 1:21). There we have clear proof that he was given this name, "Jesus," by which he was called, on account of the salvation which he brought us. "Jesus," of course, means "savior" in Latin. Who, then, is going to dare to say that Christ, the Lord, is Jesus only for adults and not also for little ones? He came in the likeness of sinful flesh¹⁰² in order to destroy the body of sin.¹⁰³ In that weak body of sin, with its infant members neither suited for nor capable of any use, the rational soul is weighed down by wretched ignorance. I certainly do not in any sense believe that this ignorance was present in that infant in whom the Word was made flesh in order to dwell among us,¹⁰⁴ nor do I think that there was in the little Christ that weakness of mind that we observe in little ones. For as a result of this weakness, when they are disturbed by irrational emotions, they are not brought under control by any reason, by any command, but by pain at times and by fear of pain. There you can see the children of that disobedience which is aroused in the members, resisting the law of the mind,¹⁰⁵ and which does not quiet down, when reason wants. It is, rather, quieted either by bodily pain from, for example, a spanking or from fear or some such emotion, but it is not controlled by the will's command. But because there was in Christ the likeness of sinful flesh, he chose to undergo the changes in age, beginning from infancy, so that it seemed that his flesh could come to death by growing old, if he were not killed as a young man. But in the likeness of sinful flesh he willingly and obediently accepted that death which in sinful flesh is the just punishment of disobedience. As he was about to go to death and to suffer it, he said, *Behold, the prince of this world comes, and he will find nothing in me. But in order that all may know that I do the will of my Father, get up, let us*

leave here (Jn 14:30-31). After he said this, he went to the death which he did not deserve, *having become obedient even to death* (Phil 2:8).

Adam's Sin Brought About Death for All Human Beings

30, 49. These people say, "If the sin of the first man has caused us to die, Christ's coming should cause those who believe in him not to die," and they add, as if giving a reason, "For the transgression of the sinner did not do us more harm than the incarnation or redemption of the savior benefited us."¹⁰⁶ Why do they not instead pay attention to, listen to, believe without discussion what the apostle has stated without any ambiguity: *Because death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For, just as all die in Adam, so too all will be brought to life in Christ* (1 Cor 15:21-22). He was certainly not speaking of anything but the death of the body. He said, then, that one man brought about the death of all and promised that the one Christ would bring about the resurrection of everyone's body. How, then, did Adam do us more harm by sinning than Christ benefited us by redeeming us? After all, by the sin of the one we die in time, while by the redemption of the other we rise, not for a temporal life, but for an endless life. Our body, then, has died on account of sin, but Christ's body alone has died without sin so that, by the shedding of his sinless blood, he might destroy the written record of all the sins,¹⁰⁷ by which those who believe in him were once held as debtors to the devil. Hence, he said, *This is my blood which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins* (Mt 26:28).

31, 50. He could also have granted to believers that they not experience the death of this body. But if he had done that, the flesh would have acquired a felicity of sorts, but faith would have decreased in strength. Human beings, after all, are so afraid of this death that they would declare Christians fortunate merely because they could not die. And for this reason no one would hasten to the grace of Christ with the courage to despise this death on account of that life which will be truly happy after death. Rather, with an eye to their own comfort, people would believe in Christ only for the sake of removing the pain of death. Hence, he offered more grace; he undoubtedly gave more to those who believe in him. After all, what would be so great about believing that one is not going to die, when one sees that those who believe do not die? How much greater, how much more courageous, how much more praiseworthy it is to believe so that we hope that we will live without end, though we are destined to die. Moreover, some will at the end receive the gift of not experiencing this death by reason of their sudden transformation; they will rather be snatched up in the clouds, along with those who will rise, to meet Christ in the air and thus they will live forever with the Lord.¹⁰⁸ And it is right that they receive this gift, since they will not have any coming after them, who would believe, not because they hope for what they

do not see, but because they love what they see. Such faith is weak and feeble, and we should not call it faith at all, since faith has been defined in this way: *Faith is the foundation of those who hope, the conviction of things which are not seen* (Heb 11:1). Hence, in the same Letter to the Hebrews where this is written, after he has gone on to enumerate those who pleased God by faith, he adds, *In accord with faith all these have died, though they had not received the promises. Rather, they saw them from afar and greeted them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth* (Heb 11:13). And shortly after this encomium of faith, he concludes in this way. He says, *And all who had accepted the testimony through faith did not have the promises, but they foresaw better things for us so they should not attain full perfection without us* (Heb 11:39). There would not be this encomium of faith, nor would there be faith at all, as I have already said, if human beings attained visible rewards for believing, that is, if in this world the reward of immortality were given to those who believed.

51. For this reason the Lord himself chose to die so that, as scripture says, *he might by death remove from power the one who had rule over death, that is, the devil, and might set free those who out of fear of death were through the whole of life subject to slavery* (Heb 2:14-15). This testimony shows clearly enough that this death of the body came about under the leadership and at the instigation of the devil, that is, as a result of the sin resulting from his persuasion. He would not, after all, truly be said to have the power of death for any other reason. Hence, he who died without any sin, whether original or personal, stated those words which I cited just before, *Behold, the prince of the world will come*, that is, the devil who has the power of death, *and he will find nothing in me*, that is, nothing of the sin by which he brought it about that human beings die. And as if someone asked him, "Why then are you going to die?" he said, *But in order that all may know that I do the will of my Father, get up, let us leave here* (Jn 14:30-31), that is, in order that I may die, though I do not have a cause for my death from sin under the power of the author of sin, but from the righteousness of obedience, *having become obedient even to death* (Phil 2:8). This testimony, then, has shown that the fact that believers conquer the fear of death belongs to the combat of faith, which would, of course, not occur, if immortality immediately followed upon the act of faith.

32. 52. The Lord performed many visible miracles as a result of which the faith began to sprout up from its infancy and grow from its tender beginnings to full strength. But it is stronger to the extent that it no longer looks for such things. Thus he willed that we look forward, without seeing it, to the promised state we hope for so that the righteous might live from faith.¹⁰⁹ In fact, though he rose on the third day, he did not want to remain among human beings. Rather, after he had in his flesh provided an example of the resurrection for those whom he chose to have as witnesses of its reality, he ascended into heaven. Thus, he

removed himself even from their sight and gave to the flesh of none of them anything like what he showed them in his own flesh. Accordingly, they too could live from faith and could in the meanwhile look forward in patience to the reward of that righteousness by which one lives from faith—a reward which they did not then see, but which they would later see. We should, I believe, interpret in this sense his words concerning the Holy Spirit, *He cannot come, unless I leave* (Jn 16:7). For this amounts to saying, “You cannot live in righteousness from faith—which you will have from my gift, that is, from the Holy Spirit—unless I take from your sight what you are looking at so that your heart may develop spiritually by believing what you do not see.” He again and again praises this righteousness based on faith,¹¹⁰ when he speaks of the Holy Spirit. He says, *He will convict the world regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment. Regarding sin, because they did not believe in me; regarding righteousness, because I go to the Father and you will see me no more* (Jn 16:8-10). What does this righteousness on the basis of which they would not see him mean but that the righteous live from faith?¹¹¹ Thus, we do not look back to things that are seen, but to those which are not seen, and by the Spirit we look forward to the hope of righteousness based on faith.

33, 53. They say, “If this death of the body came from sin, we surely would not die after the forgiveness of sins which the redeemer has given us.”¹¹² They do not understand that, though God has destroyed the guilt of those things so that they do us no harm after this life, he has allowed them to remain for the contest of faith so that we learn from them and are exercised as we advance in the struggle for righteousness. After all, someone else who does not understand this point could say, “If on account of sin God said to the man, *In the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread, and the earth will bring forth thorns and thistles for you* (Gn 3:19.18), why does this toil continue even after the forgiveness of sins, and why does the earth bring forth these harsh and troublesome plants for believers? So too, if the woman was told on account of sin, *You will bear children with groaning* (Gn 3:16), why do believing women suffer those same pains in childbirth, even after the forgiveness of sins?” And yet it is certain that it was on account of the sin that they committed that those first human beings heard these words and deserved these punishments from God. No one rejects these words of God’s book which I cited concerning the man’s toil and the woman’s childbirth except someone who is fully separated from the Catholic faith and is opposed to these same writings.

Once Punishments, Now Challenges for the Righteous

34, 54. But there are such people, and we answer them, once the question has been raised, by saying that before the forgiveness of sins those things were

punishments, but after the forgiveness of sins they provide challenges and exercise for the righteous. And so, we must say to the people who are similarly disturbed over the death of the body that we admit that it came about as a result of sin and that we do not deny that after the forgiveness of sins it was left as a challenge for us so that, as we grow in strength, we might conquer our great fear of it. If faith that works through love¹¹³ demanded only a small amount of virtue, then it would not be so great a glory for the martyrs to conquer the fear of death, nor would the Lord say, *No one has greater love than that one gives his life for his friends* (Jn 15:13). In his Letter John puts it this way, *As he gave his life for us, so we too ought to give our life for our brothers* (1 Jn 3:16). We would never, then, have special praise for the suffering involved in enduring death or for making light of it for the sake of righteousness, if death did not entail very great and fierce pain. One who conquers the fear of it out of faith gains the great glory and just reward of that faith. Hence, we should not be surprised that death would not have been the lot of human beings, if they had not committed a sin which entailed such a punishment, and that death is now the lot of believers so that their righteousness might be strengthened by conquering the fear of it.

55. The flesh that was originally created was not the sinful flesh in which human beings refused to remain in righteousness amid the delights of paradise. As a result God decreed that after their sin the sinful flesh that was propagated had to struggle in labors and difficulties to attain righteousness. For this reason too, after he was dismissed from paradise, Adam dwelled opposite Eden,¹¹⁴ that is, opposite the place of delights. This was to signify that sinful flesh, which, before it was sinful flesh, did not observe obedience amid delights, has to be taught obedience amid labors, which are opposite to delights. Those first human beings afterward lived righteously, and for that reason we are right to believe that they were set free from final punishment by the blood of the Lord. But they still did not in that life merit to be called back into paradise. In the same way, even if one lives righteously in it after receiving the forgiveness of sins, sinful flesh does not immediately merit not to suffer the death which it derived from the propagation of sin.

56. We are taught something of the sort in the Book of Kings with regard to the patriarch, David. When the prophet was sent to him and threatened him that he would suffer disasters as a result of God's anger because of the sin he had committed, he merited pardon by confessing his sin, and the prophet told him that his outrageous crime was forgiven.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, those disasters which God had threatened took place so that he suffered humiliation from his son. Why do they not say with regard to this passage, "If God made that threat on account of the sin, why did he carry out what he threatened, once the sin was forgiven?" If they said that, would we not be perfectly correct in replying, "The sin was forgiven so that he would not be prevented from gaining eternal life, but the

threat was carried out so that his piety could be tried and tested in that humiliation"? So too, God imposed upon human beings bodily death on account of sin, and after the forgiveness of sin he did not take bodily death away in order to test their righteousness.

The Middle Path of the Savior

35, 57. Let us, then, hold to the unwavering rule of faith. There is only one person who has been born without sin in the likeness of sinful flesh, who lived without sin in the midst of others' sins, and who died without sin on account of our sins. Let us turn neither to the right nor to the left.¹¹⁶ For to turn to the right means to deceive oneself by claiming to be without sin, but to turn to the left means to surrender oneself to sins out of some perverse and depraved carefreeness, as if there were no punishment. *For the Lord knows the ways that are to the right*; he alone is without sin and can destroy our sins. *But those to the left are perverse* (Prv 4:27), namely, friendships with sin. In this way those twenty-year-old youths prefigured the new people; when they entered the promised land,¹¹⁷ they turned, it is said, neither to the right nor to the left.¹¹⁸ We should, of course, not compare the age of twenty to the innocence of little ones, but, unless I am mistaken, this number foreshadows and echoes something mystical. For the five books of Moses are preeminent in the Old Testament, while the authority of the four Gospels shines forth brilliantly in the New. These numbers multiplied by each other amount to twenty, for four times five or five times four are twenty. Such a people, as I said, instructed in the kingdom of heaven through the two Testaments, the Old and the New, will enter into the promised land, neither turning to the right in a proud claim to righteousness nor turning to the left in a carefree love of sin. There we will no longer pray for the forgiveness of our sins, nor will we have any fear of suffering their punishment in ourselves, once we have been set free by that redeemer who was not sold into slavery to sin¹¹⁹ and has redeemed Israel from all her iniquities, whether those committed in the life of each individual or those derived from our origin.

36, 58. It was, after all, not a small concession that they made to the authority and truth of the scriptures of God, when they admitted that little ones needed redemption, even if they refused to state clearly in their writings that they needed the forgiveness of sins.¹²⁰ They used a different word, a word also drawn from Christian doctrine, but they said exactly the same thing. Those who read with faith, hear with faith, and embrace with faith the divine scripture should have no doubt about this point: The flesh first became sinful flesh by the will to sin, and then through succeeding generations sin and death were transferred to all. From that flesh only sinful flesh has been begotten with one exception: the likeness of sinful flesh, and that would not, of course, exist, if there were no sinful flesh.

59. With regard to the soul, one can ask whether it is propagated in the same way and is subject to the guilt which it needs to have forgiven. For we cannot claim that only the child's flesh, and not also its soul, needs the help of the savior and redeemer and that its soul has nothing to do with the expression of thanksgiving we find in the Psalms. We read there, *Bless the Lord, my soul, and do not forget all his recompenses. He is forgiving toward all your sins; he heals all your ills; he redeems your life from corruption* (Ps 103:2-4). One can also ask whether, if the soul is not propagated, it still needs the forgiveness of the sin and redemption by reason of the fact that it is weighed down and mingled with the flesh of sin, so that God judges by his sovereign foreknowledge which little ones do not merit to be absolved of that guilt, even though, when not yet born, they nowhere did anything either good or bad in their own life.¹²¹ And one could ask how, if he does not produce souls by propagation, God is not, nonetheless, the author of that guilt on account of which the soul of the little one needs redemption through the sacrament. That is an immense question and requires another treatise, but one, as I see it, tempered by such moderation that it would be praised for its careful investigation rather than blamed for hasty assertions. After all, when one is debating about a very obscure matter without the help of certain and clear proofs from the divine authorities, human presumption ought to hold itself in check, doing nothing to favor one side or the other. For, even if I am ignorant of how any one of these theories can be proved and explained, I still believe that the authority of the words of God would also be perfectly clear on this point, if human beings could not be ignorant of it without loss of the salvation promised them.

Here you have this work composed to the best of my abilities. I hope that it is as helpful as it is long. I am tempted to defend its lengthiness, but I fear to make it even longer by such a defense.

Notes

1. See Mt 26:41.
2. Augustine's Latin has *inferas* instead of the more usual *inducas*. In *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount* II, 9, 30, he says, "Some manuscripts have 'And lead us not,' which I think amounts to the same thing. For the one Greek term, εἰσενέγκησ, can be translated in both ways."
3. Probably a quotation from the Pelagian work mentioned in I, 34, 64.
4. Augustine does not mention the sacrament of penance, because in the practice of the ancient Church there was only the public form of penance that was imposed for grave sins and only once in a person's life.
5. See Rom 7:23-24.
6. See Eph 2:3.
7. See 1 Cor 15:54.
8. See Heb 7:24-25.
9. See 2 Cor 5:4.
10. See Rom 8:5.

11. Augustine repeatedly claims that these texts of scripture say no more than "Grant what you command." In *Confessions* X, 29, 40, he had said, "Grant what you command, and command what you will," a formula which shocked Pelagius when he heard it quoted by a bishop. In *The Gift of Perseverance* 20, 53, Augustine says, "When at Rome these words of mine were quoted in the presence of Pelagius by a brother and fellow bishop of mine, he could not bear them; rather, he was quite upset and contradicted them, almost entering into a fight with the person who cited them."

12. See Wis 8:21.

13. See Lk 18:10-14.

14. See Ps 62:9.

15. See 1 Cor 4:7.

16. See Jn 1:12.

17. See Jas 2:13.

18. See Rv 14:3-5.

19. See Prv 18:17.

20. See Rom 7:6.

21. See Col 3:10.

22. See Rom 8:5.

23. See Rom 8:5.

24. See Jn 3:5.

25. See Ps 37:10.

26. Probably another citation from the Pelagian work mentioned in I, 34, 64.

27. See Jn 3:6.

28. See Ez 14:14.

29. See Gn 9:21.

30. Again apparently a quotation from the previously mentioned Pelagian work.

31. See Dn 9:20.

32. See 1 Jn 1:8.

33. See Jb 14:1.

34. See Jb 1:22.

35. See Jb 38—39.

36. See Jb 42:6.

37. See Phil 3:6-8.

38. See Rom 7:22-23.

39. See Rom 7:22.

40. See Lk 1:6—7.

41. See above I, 27, 50.

42. See Phil 3:6.

43. See 2 Cor 4:16.

44. See Ps 143:2.

45. Once again, probably a citation from the Pelagian work mentioned in I, 34, 64.

46. See Phil 3:12, which Augustine cited in II, 13, 20.

47. A citation from the same Pelagian source as above.

48. See Gn 2:17.

49. A citation from the same Pelagian source as above.

50. See Mt 6:12.

51. See 2 Cor 12:7-8.

52. See 2 Cor 12:7-8.

53. See Ps 99:7.

54. See Ps 38:18.

55. See Heb 4:15.

56. See Heb 7:26-27.

57. See Mt 19:20-21.

58. See Ps 45:8.

59. See Col 2:3.

60. See 1 Cor 4:1-3.

61. See 1 Cor 4:7.
62. See Mt 20:9-10.
63. See Lk 1:79.
64. See Ps 85:13.
65. See 1 Cor 1:31.
66. See Ps 101:1.
67. See Ps 143:2.
68. See 1 Cor 1:31.
69. See 1 Tm 2:5.
70. See Rom 3:25.
71. See Rom 5:10.
72. See Gn 2:17.
73. See Gn 2:25.
74. See Rom 7:17,23.
75. See Gn 3:7.
76. See Gn 3:7.
77. See Rom 8:3.
78. See Rom 6:6.
79. See Rom 7:24-25.
80. See Gn 3:17,16.
81. See Rom 7:23.
82. See Gal 5:24.
83. See Jn 1:14,1.
84. See Rom 8:3.
85. See Jn 1:13.
86. See above II, 11, 11.
87. See Heb 7:9-10; another citation from the same Pelagian work mentioned in I, 34, 64.
88. See Heb 7:10.
89. Another citation from the Pelagian work cited above.
90. See 1 Tm 4:5.
91. See Rom 5:18.
92. See Ti 3:5.
93. See Acts 2:38.
94. See Jn 3:14.
95. Another quotation from the Pelagian work cited above.
96. See Ti 3:5.
97. See 2 Cor 4:16.
98. See 1 Cor 15:44.
99. See Eph 2:16.
100. See Rom 7:23.
101. See Lk 20:34.
102. See Rom 8:3.
103. See Rom 6:6.
104. See Jn 1:14.
105. See Rom 7:23.
106. Another citation from the Pelagian work cited above.
107. See Col 2:14.
108. See 1 Thes 4:16.
109. See Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11.
110. See Phil 3:9.
111. See Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11.
112. Another quotation from the previously mentioned Pelagian work.
113. See Gal 5:6.
114. See Gn 3:23.
115. See 2 Sm 12:13.

116. See Prv 4:27.

117. See Nm 14:29-31.

118. See Jos 23:6.

119. See Rom 7:14.

120. Augustine apparently is referring to the author of the "brief memo: *libellus brevissimus*" which he mentioned in I, 34, 63.

121. See Rom 9:11.

Book Three

The Occasion for the Addition of the Third Book

Bishop Augustine, the servant of Christ and of Christ's servants, sends his greetings to his dear son, Marcellinus.

1. I have already completed two long books on the questions you presented to me. It was especially on account of the baptism of little ones, which the universal Church administers in the manner of a loving mother, that you asked that I write a response for you against those people who claim that, even if he had not sinned, Adam would have died and that nothing passed to his descendants as a result of his sin by the process of generation. They also claim that in this life there are and have been and will be human beings who have absolutely no sin. In those books I did not think that I had dealt with all the ideas in everyone's mind on this topic. I do not know whether I or anyone could do that; in fact, I am convinced that no one could. But I thought that I had produced a work such that the defenders of the faith which our predecessors have handed down on these matters would not stand utterly defenseless against the innovations of those who hold other ideas. But only a few days later I read certain writings of Pelagius,¹ a holy man, as I hear, and a Christian of considerable religious development; they contained brief explanations of the letters of the apostle Paul.² I came to the passage where the apostle says that through one man sin entered the world and, through sin, death and thus it was passed on to all human beings.³ There I found a new line of argument from those people who deny that little ones have original sin. I admit that I did not refute it in those long volumes of mine, because it never entered my mind that anyone could think or say such things. Accordingly, since I did not want to add anything to that work which I had brought to a definitive close, I thought that I should incorporate in this letter both that argument in the very words in which I read it and my own thoughts in opposition to it.

The New Argument against the Transmission of Sin

2. That argument is set forth as follows. He says, "But those who are opposed to the transmission of sin by generation try to attack it in this way. They say, 'If the sin of Adam did harm even to those who are not sinners, then the righteousness of Christ also benefits those who are not believers, because he says that human beings are saved through the one man in a similar way and in

fact to a greater extent than they perished through the other.'"⁴ As I said, I made no answer to this argument in those two books which I wrote for you, nor did I propose to refute it. Now then, take note of this, first of all. When they say, "If the sin of Adam harmed even those who were not sinners, then the righteousness of Christ also benefits those who are not believers,"⁵ they take it to be obviously absurd and false that the righteousness of Christ also benefits those who are not believers. From this they think that they can infer that the sin of the first human being could not have done harm to little ones, just as the righteousness of Christ cannot benefit any who are not believers.

Let them tell us, then, what benefit the righteousness of Christ brings to baptized little ones; let them state whatever it is that they mean. After all, if they have not forgotten that they are Christians, they surely have no doubt that it brings them some benefit. Whatever benefit, then, it brings them, it cannot bring it to those who are not believers, as these people themselves state. Hence, they are forced to include baptized little ones in the number of believers and agree with the authority of the holy Church present throughout the world. The Church does not consider those unworthy to be called believers, whom the righteousness of Christ, even according to the view of these people, could benefit, only if they were believers. Just as by the responses of those through whom they are reborn the Spirit of righteousness gives them a faith which they could not yet have by their own will, so the sinful flesh of those through whom they are born gives them a guilt which they have not yet contracted in their own life. And just as the Spirit of life gives them rebirth in Christ as believers, the body of death gave them birth in Adam as sinners. For the former birth is carnal; the latter is spiritual. The former produces children of the flesh; the latter children of the Spirit; the former children destined to die, the latter children destined for resurrection. The former brings forth children of the world, the latter children of God; the former children of anger, the latter children of mercy. And, accordingly, the former brings forth children subject to original sin; the latter children set free from every bond of sin.

3. Finally, we are compelled by God's authority to assent to what we are unable to grasp even with the keenest of minds. As they admonish us to do, they correctly admit that the righteousness of Christ can benefit only believers and does in some way benefit the little ones. Hence, as we have said, they must without any equivocation include them in the number of believers after they have been baptized. It follows, then, that if they are not baptized, they will be among those who do not believe. And, hence, they will not have life, but the anger of God remains over them. For *one who does not believe in the Son will not have life. Rather, the anger of God remains over him* (Jn 3:36). Moreover, they have been judged, for *one who does not believe has already been judged* (Jn 3:18), and they will be condemned, for *those who believe and are baptized*

will be saved, but those who do not believe will be condemned (Mk 16:16). Let them now consider with what sort of justice they attempt or try to claim that sinless human beings are destined, not for life, but for God's anger, and are judged and condemned by God, if they have no original sin, just as they have no personal sin.

4. In the other two books of my long work I have, I believe, already given a sufficient and clear answer to the other points which, as Pelagius tells us, are mentioned by those who argue against original sin. If some people find it either too short or obscure, I ask them to pardon this and to come to some agreement with those who perhaps find fault with it, not because it is too short, but because it is too long. And I ask those who still do not understand those points, which I think I stated quite clearly, given the nature of questions, not to criticize me unfairly for negligence or for my lack of ability. I ask them, rather, to beg God that they may receive understanding.

Other Arguments Reported by Pelagius

3, 5. We must, nonetheless, carefully note that this man—a fine and praiseworthy man, as those who know him say—did not introduce this argument against the transmission of sin in his own name. Rather, he reported what those people say who do not accept the transmission of sin. This holds not only for the point I just stated and answered, but also for the other points which I recall having answered in those other books. For he said, “They say, ‘If the sin of Adam harmed even those who were not sinners, then the righteousness of Christ also benefits those who are not believers.’”⁶ From my response you see that he not merely does not attack what we say, but he even admonishes us as to what we should say. He goes on to add, “They say next, ‘If baptism washes away that ancient transgression, those who have been born of two baptized parents ought to be free from this sin. For they could not pass on to their offspring what they themselves did not have.’” He adds, “They make the further point that, if the soul does not come by generation, but only the flesh, only the flesh has the transmitted sin, and it alone deserves punishment. They claim that it is unjust that a new-born soul that is not made from the mass of Adam bears so ancient a sin of another. “They also say,” he reports, “that there is no reason to grant that God who forgives personal sins holds one responsible for the sins of another.”⁷

6. Do you see, then, I ask you, how Pelagius introduced all this into his writings, not in his own name, but in the name of others? He knew full well that this was some sort of innovation that had already begun to sound contrary to the ancient view of the Church. And as a result, he was either ashamed or afraid to make it his own. Perhaps he himself does not hold that human beings are born

without sin, since he admits that they need baptism in which sins are forgiven. Perhaps he does not hold that sinless human beings are condemned, for we must count those who have not been baptized among non-believers, and the text of the gospel, which certainly cannot deceive us, states with utter clarity, *Those who do not believe will be condemned* (Mk 16:16). Finally, perhaps he does not hold that the sinless image of God is excluded from the kingdom of God, since *unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:5). In that case, it would either be plunged into eternal death without sin, or—what is even more absurd—it would have eternal life outside the kingdom of God. For, when the Lord foretold that he would say to his own people in the end, *Come, blessed ones of my Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world* (Mt 25:34), he also made it clear what kingdom he was speaking about. He concluded, *As the others will enter eternal fire, the righteous will enter eternal life* (Mt 25:46). These opinions and others like them that go with this error are so perverse and opposed to the Christian truth that I do not believe that this exemplary Christian holds them.⁸ It could be that he is so moved by the arguments of those opposed to the transmission of sin that he wants to hear or to know what one might say in reply to them. And for this reason he did not want to pass over in silence the claims of those opposed to the transmission of sin. In that way he could point out that the question needed to be discussed, while dissociating himself from it so that no one would think that he himself held these views.

We Must Cling to the Perfectly Clear Teaching of Scripture

4, 7. But even if I am not able to refute the arguments of these people, I see that we must, nonetheless, hold onto the points which are perfectly clear in the scriptures. Then, on the basis of these points one might clarify those which are obscure, or one might believe them without any hesitation, if the mind still cannot see them, once they have been pointed out, or cannot investigate them, if they remain hidden. What is more obvious than the many great testimonies from the words of God which make it perfectly clear that, apart from community with Christ, no one can attain eternal life and salvation and that no one can by God's judgment be unjustly condemned, that is, excluded from that life and salvation? Nothing else is accomplished by the baptism of little ones but that they are incorporated into the Church, that is, that they are joined to the body and members of Christ. Hence, it clearly follows that they would be subject to condemnation, if baptism were not conferred upon them. But they could not be condemned, if they had no sin whatsoever. Since at their age they could not contract any sin in their personal life, we are left to understand or, if we cannot yet understand it, at least to believe that little ones bring with them original sin.

8. And thus, if there is something ambiguous about the words of the apostle where he says, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12), and if they can be interpreted and given another meaning, are these words also ambiguous: *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:5)? Are these words also ambiguous: *You shall call his name, Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* (Mt 1:21)? Is it also ambiguous that *it is not those who are in good health who need a physician, but those who are sick* (Mt 9:12)? That is, it is not those who have no sin who need Jesus, but those who must be healed from sin. Is it also ambiguous that, unless human beings eat his flesh, that is, become partakers of his body, they will not have life?⁹ These testimonies are brilliantly clear by the divine light and utterly certain by the divine authority. In them, as well as in others of the sort that I pass over at the moment, does not the truth proclaim without any ambiguity that unbaptized little ones not only cannot enter the kingdom of God, but cannot possess eternal life apart from the body of Christ and that, in order to be incorporated in this body, they are given the sacrament of baptism? Does not the truth bear witness beyond any doubt that they are carried in the arms of their believing sponsors to Jesus, that is, to the savior and to Christ the physician, for no other reason than that they may be healed by the medicine of the sacraments from the plague of sin? Why, then, do we hesitate to understand the words of the apostle, about which we may have been in doubt, so that they agree with those testimonies about which we can have no doubt?

9. Nonetheless, in this whole passage in which the apostle speaks of the condemnation of many through the sin of one person and of the justification of many through the righteousness of one person,¹⁰ I do not find anything ambiguous apart from his calling Adam the pattern of what is to come.¹¹ For, as a matter of fact, this not only fits the view in accord with which we understand that his offspring to come were born with sin after that same pattern, but these words can be interpreted in various other senses. After all, we ourselves have interpreted it differently in the past,¹² and we will perhaps interpret it differently in the future.¹³ Pelagius too has not explained it in just one way.¹⁴ One must pay careful attention and consider the remaining things which are said there, as I certainly tried to do in the first of those two books. If one does so, even if they lead to a statement that is not completely clear by reason of the difficulty of the subject matter, they still could not have another sense than that which has caused the universal Church from its earliest days to maintain that believing little ones have received the forgiveness of original sin through Christ's baptism.

Two Witnesses from the Tradition of the Church

5, 10. Hence, blessed Cyprian has rightly made it quite clear how the Church has from the beginning preserved this in her faith and understanding. He stated that little ones fresh from the wombs of their mothers are already suited to receive Christ's baptism, when he was asked whether this might take place before the eighth day. He tried as best he could to show that they were ready, so that no one would think that they still had to be made ready over eight days, because infants were formerly circumcised on the eighth day.¹⁵ But although he offered them the strong protection of his defense, he did not admit that they were free from original sin. For, if he denied this sin, he would have removed the reason for baptism itself, and it was for the sake of receiving it that he was defending them. You can read the letter of the aforementioned martyr on the baptism of little ones, if you wish, for there must be a copy in Carthage. But I believe that a few items should be also copied into this letter of ours to the extent that seems sufficient for the present question. Pay wise attention to this quotation: "Regarding infants," he said, "you claimed that they ought not to be baptized within a day or two after they have been born and that one should bear in mind the law regarding the circumcision of old. Thus you thought that the newborn should not be baptized and sanctified before the eighth day. Our episcopal council decided the matter in a far different way, for no one agreed with what you thought should be done. Rather, we all judged that no human child should be denied God's mercy and grace. Since, after all, the Lord says in his gospel, *The Son of Man did not come to destroy, but to save human souls* (Lk 9:56), insofar as it is up to us, no soul should be lost, if at all possible."¹⁶ Do you see what he says? Do you see how he thinks that to depart from this life without that saving sacrament is deadly and lethal, not merely to the flesh, but also to the soul of the infant? Hence, if he said nothing more, we would have every right to conclude that a soul cannot be lost without sin. But notice what he says about them in all clarity, when he is defending the innocence of little ones a bit later. He says, "But if anything can prevent human beings from attaining grace, it is especially serious sins that can prevent adults, mature, and elderly persons. But even the most serious transgressors and those who formerly sinned much against God receive the forgiveness of sins, when they later believe, and we hold no one back from baptism and grace. How much the more, then, should we not hold back a newly born infant who has committed no sin apart from having contracted by the first birth the contagion of the ancient death by being born in the flesh as a child of Adam. The infant comes to receive the forgiveness of sins with greater ease by reason of the fact that it receives forgiveness, not for its own sins, but for those of another."¹⁷

11. You see with what immense confidence this great man speaks on the basis of the ancient and undoubted faith. He offered these most certain proofs so that

he might bolster what was uncertain by means of their strength. For the person to whom he is replying had consulted him about what was uncertain, and the council, as he mentions, drew up its degree, namely, that no one should hesitate to baptize an infant, even before the eighth day after its birth, if the infant is brought for baptism. After all, the council did not then establish as something new, or confirm as something under attack from some opponent, the teaching that infants are held subject to original sin. Rather, because of the law regarding circumcision of the flesh, the council raised and debated the question whether they might baptize children even before the eighth day. And none agreed with the person who said that one may not, because they already held it, not as a point for inquiry or discussion, but as something solid and certain, that a soul will be lost for eternal salvation, if it ends this life without the reception of that sacrament, even if little ones fresh from the womb are subject only to the guilt of original sin. For this reason, though it is much easier in their case, since it is the sins of others that are forgiven, they still need the forgiveness of sins. These certitudes resolved that uncertain question about the eighth day, and the council decided that one may provide help to human beings on any day after their birth so that they may not perish for eternity. The council also explained that the circumcision of the flesh foreshadowed what was to come, not in the sense that baptism should be administered on the eighth day after birth, but in the sense that we are spiritually circumcised in the resurrection of Christ. He rose from the dead on the third day after he suffered, but on the eighth day, that is, on the first day after the Sabbath in terms of the days of the week by which time passes.

Jerome's Testimony to the Presence of Original Sin

6, 12. And now, with the boldness typical of a new theory, some persons are trying to make us uncertain about principles that our predecessors appealed to as utterly certain in order to resolve points that people found uncertain. I do not know when this present discussion began, but I do know that even the saintly Jerome, a man who is presently occupied with ecclesiastical writings and enjoys an excellent reputation for his teaching, unhesitatingly used this most certain proof for resolving various questions in his books. In his commentary on the prophet Jonah, when he came to the passage where it mentions that even little ones were punished with fasting, he says, "Those who are older begin, but even the younger are included. For no one is without sin, even if his life has but a single day and the years of his life can be counted."¹⁸ For if the stars are unclean in the sight of God, how much more are a worm and corruption¹⁹ and those who are held subject to the sin of Adam the transgressor!"²⁰ If we could easily question this highly learned man, how many commentators on the divine scriptures in both languages and how many authors of Christian treatises could

he mention who have held this same doctrine from the time Christ's Church was founded, who have received this same doctrine from their predecessors, and who have handed this same doctrine on to their successors! Though I have read far fewer works, I do not recall having heard any different teaching from Christians who accept both testaments, not only from those in the Catholic Church, but even from those in some heresy or schism. I do not recall that I have read any different doctrine in the authors I was able to read from among those who wrote on these topics and who followed the canonical scriptures or believed they did or wanted others to believe they did.

I do not know the source from which this problem has so suddenly come upon us. A short time ago when we were in Carthage, I heard in passing from certain persons, who were casually conversing, that little ones are not baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins, but in order to be sanctified in Christ. I was disturbed by this new idea, but since it was not the right moment for me to say something against it and since they were not the kind of persons about whose authority I was concerned, I readily considered the matter over and done with. And now look, it is being defended with burning zeal. See for yourself, it is being preserved in writing; see, the matter has reached a crisis so that we are asked about it by our brethren. See, we are being forced to argue and write against it.

7, 13. A few years ago in Rome there emerged a certain Jovinian²¹ who is supposed to have persuaded nuns, even those of an advanced age, to marry. He did this, not by seduction, because he wanted to take one of them as his wife, but by the argument that virgins with vows of virginity have no more merit before God than married believers. The idea, nonetheless, never entered his mind that he should try to maintain that human children are born without original sin. And certainly, if he had developed this argument, women would be much more readily inclined to marry, if they were going to bear children who were perfectly innocent. The brothers sent this man's writings to Jerome in order to be refuted, for he was so bold as to put his views in writing. Jerome not only did not find any argument of this sort in them, but for the refutation of certain of his foolish ideas he even asserted, among his many proofs, the following point as utterly certain. It concerned the original human sin, about which he believed that Jovinian also had no doubt. Here are Jerome's words. He said, "*Those who claim to abide in Christ ought themselves to live as he lived*" (1 Jn 2:6). Let my opponent choose which of the two he prefers; we are giving him the option. Does he or does he not abide in Christ? If he abides in Christ, let him then live as Christ did. But if he finds it rash to promise to be like the Lord in the virtues, he does not abide in Christ, because he does not live as Christ. He *committed no sin, and no deception was found on his lips; when they spoke ill of him, he did not speak ill of them in return* (1 Pt 2:22-23). And like a lamb before the shearer,

he did not open his mouth.²² The prince of this world approached him and found nothing in him.²³ Though he committed no sin, God made him sin on our behalf.²⁴ But according to the Letter of James, *we all sin in many ways* (Jas 3:2), and *no one is clean from sin, even if one's life lasts only a single day* (Jb 14:4-5). *For who is going to boast of having a chaste heart? Or who is going to presume to be clean from sins* (Prv 20:9). We are held guilty in the likeness of Adam's transgression.²⁵ For this reason David too says, *See, I was conceived in iniquities, and my mother conceived me in transgressions*" (Ps 51:7).²⁶

14. I have not quoted these words, because we rely upon the views of certain writers as if they were a canonical authority. I did this, rather, so that it would be evident that, from the beginning up to the present time when this new opinion arose, this teaching on original sin was preserved in the faith of the Church. And it was preserved with such great constancy that, in order to refute other false ideas, the commentators on God's words appealed to it as utterly certain rather than that anyone tried to refute it as false.

Moreover, the holy canonical books support this position with their perfectly clear and full authority. The apostle cries out, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). Hence, one cannot simply say that Adam's sin did not harm those who did not sin, since scripture says, *in whom all have sinned*. And these sins are not called those of another, as if they did not belong to the little ones. For they all sinned then in Adam, when they were all still that one man in virtue of that power implanted in his nature by which he was able to beget them. They are, rather, called the sins of another, because the little ones themselves were not yet living their own lives, but the life of one human being contained whatever was in his future posterity.

Refutation of the Individual Arguments of the Pelagians

8, 15. They say, "There is no reason to grant that God who forgives personal sins holds one responsible for the sins of another."²⁷ He forgives sins, but for those reborn of the Spirit, not for those born of the flesh. Now he does not hold them responsible for the sins of another, but for their own. They were, of course, the sins of another, when these people did not yet exist who were going to have them through generation. But now they belong by reason of birth in the flesh to those who have not yet had them forgiven by spiritual rebirth.

16. They argue, "If baptism washes away that ancient transgression, those who have been born of two baptized parents ought to be free from this sin. For they could not pass on to their offspring what they themselves did not have."²⁸ Notice the source from which an error all too often draws its strength: human beings are capable of raising questions about matters which they are not capable

of understanding. For to whom or with what words am I to explain this? Corrupt mortal beginnings do no harm to those who have begun again from new immortal beginnings, and they, nonetheless, harm the children whom those very persons, who are no longer harmed by them, have generated from those same corrupt beginnings. How are people to understand that, if prejudice in favor of their own view and the heavy chain of stubbornness further prevent their lazy mind? But suppose I had undertaken this argument against people who absolutely forbade infants to be baptized or maintained that there was no need to baptize them, claiming that children born of believers necessarily receive the reward of their parents. In that case, I ought perhaps to have been roused to defeat this view with greater toil and effort. In that case, if on account of the obscure nature of the matter, I ran into difficulty with dense and stubborn persons in refuting what is false and in convincing them of what is true, I would perhaps have recourse to these examples that are in use and at hand. I would ask them this in turn: Since it bothers them that a sin which is washed away in baptism is present in those whom the baptized parents generate, how do they themselves explain that the foreskin that is removed by circumcision is present in those whom circumcised parents generate? How too is the chaff which is so carefully removed by human labor still found in grain which grows from wheat that has been threshed?

9, 17. By these and similar examples I would try somehow or other to persuade the people who believe that it is not necessary to administer the sacraments of cleansing to children of those who have been cleansed that to baptize the children of baptized parents is the correct thing to do. I would try to show them how it is possible that persons reborn through the Spirit, who have both the seed of death in the flesh and the seed of immortality in the spirit, are not harmed by what harms their child born in the flesh. I would try to persuade them that in them forgiveness has washed away what in the child needs to be washed away by a similar forgiveness, just as in case of circumcision or of threshing and winnowing. But since we are now dealing with those who admit that children of baptized parents must be baptized, we do much better to say to them: You claim that children of parents who have been cleansed from the stain of sin ought to have been born without sin. Why do you fail to notice that one can by the same argument say to you that children of Christian parents ought to have been born Christian? Why, then, do you think they must become Christian? Did their parents lack Christian bodies, even though scripture said of them, *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?* (1 Cor 6:15).

Or was the body born from Christian parents perhaps Christian, but it did not receive a Christian soul? This would be much more surprising. For you may hold one of these two views regarding the soul. After all, you certainly believe with the apostle that, before it was born, the soul had done nothing good or bad.²⁹

Hence, the soul either came to be through generation, and then, just as a body of Christian parents would be Christian, so the soul ought also to be Christian. Or, as created by Christ, either in a Christian body or for the sake of a Christian body, it ought to have been created or sent as Christian.

Perhaps you are going to say that Christian parents could beget a Christian body and that Christ himself could not create a Christian soul. And so, yield to the truth and see this: As you yourselves admit, a non-Christian can be born of Christians, and one who is not a member of Christ can be born of members of Christ. And to include as well all those who belong to any religion, even if a false one, one not initiated can be born to initiated parents. In the same way, one not cleansed can be born from parents who have been cleansed. How are you going to explain why a non-Christian is born of Christians, unless it is not birth, but rebirth that produces Christians? Give yourselves the same explanation, because in the same way no one is cleansed from sins by being born, but all are cleansed by being reborn. And so, a human being born from human beings who have been cleansed, because they have been reborn, must be reborn in order to be cleansed. The parents were able to pass on to their offspring what they themselves did not have, not only as grain passes on chaff and a circumcised person passes on a foreskin, but also as—a point you yourselves admit—believers pass on to their offspring unbelief. This defect no longer belongs to those who have been reborn through the Spirit; it belongs, rather, to the mortal seed from which they were generated in the flesh. For you certainly do not deny that those little ones, who in your judgment need to be made into believers through the sacrament of believers, were born non-believers from believing parents.

Pelagius and the Difficult Question of the Soul

10, 18. They also hold this, “If it is not the soul, but only the flesh that comes by generation, only the flesh has the transmitted sin, and it alone deserves punishment. They claim that it is unjust that a newly born soul that is not made from the mass of Adam bears so ancient a sin of another.”³⁰ I have copied those words which I just cited from Pelagius’ book. I beg you, please pay attention to how, as a man of circumspection, he is well aware that he is in the midst of the difficult question of the soul. After all, he does not say that the soul does not come from generation, but: “If it is not the soul that comes from generation.” He is, after all, right to speak with hesitation rather than with confidence regarding a matter so obscure, about which we cannot find, or can find only with difficulty, any certain and clear testimonies in the holy scriptures.

Hence, I too will reply to the present question with a statement that is equally cautious: If the soul does not come from generation, then what sort of justice is it that a soul recently created, certainly free from every transgression, and

completely pure from all contamination with sin, is forced in little ones to undergo the sufferings and various torments of the flesh and—what is worse—the attacks of demons? After all, the flesh does not suffer any of these without the living and sentient soul suffering these penalties even more. For if one shows that this is just, then one can also show by what sort of justice the soul is subject in sinful flesh to original sin, which must be washed away by the sacrament of baptism and the mercy of grace. But if one cannot show the former, I do not think that we can show the latter either. Let us, then, put up with the fact that both of these are hidden from us and remember that we are human beings, or, if it seems necessary, let us at some other time undertake another work on the soul in which we discuss the matter with sobriety and caution.

Conclusion and Summary of the Work

11, 19. The apostle said, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). Let us now interpret those words so that we are not judged to contradict, with great folly and to our own misfortune, so many, great and clear testimonies of the divine scriptures. They teach us that no one can attain eternal life and salvation apart from the community with Christ, which we have in him and with him, when we receive his sacraments and are made members of his body. For he did not say to the Romans, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings* (Rom 5:12) in any other sense than he said to the Corinthians, *Death came through a man, and the resurrection of the dead came through a man. For, just as all die in Adam, so too all will be brought to life in Christ* (1 Cor 15:21-22). No one, of course, can fail to see that these last words refer to the death of the body, since the question of the resurrection of the body was the focus of the apostle's attention. And so, we see that he made no mention of sin there, since the question did not concern righteousness. But in writing to the Romans, he mentioned both of them and taught at great length about both of these: sin in Adam along with righteousness in Christ and death in Adam along with life in Christ. I examined and explained, as I said, all these words of the apostle to the extent of my ability and to the extent that seemed sufficient in the first of the previous two books.³¹

20. And yet, even in the Letter to the Corinthians, at the end he concluded the passage that we have discussed at length concerning the resurrection in such a way that he left us no doubt that the death of the body came about as a punishment for sin. For he said, *The corruptible body must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal body must put on immortality. But when this corruptible body has put on incorruptibility and this mortal body has put on immortality, then the words of scripture will be fulfilled: Death has been swallowed up in*

victory. *Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?* Then he added, *But the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law* (1 Cor 15:53-56). As the clear words of the apostle reveal, death will be swallowed up in victory when this corruptible and mortal body will put on incorruptibility and immortality, that is, when God will bring to life even our mortal bodies on account of his Spirit dwelling in us.³² Hence, it is clear that sin is the sting of even this death of the body, which is the opposite of the resurrection of the body. It is the sting by which death came to be, not the sting which death has caused. For we die as a result of sin; we do not sin as a result of death. Therefore, scripture spoke of *the sting of death* in the way it spoke of *the tree of life* (Gn 2:9); it was not the tree which human life made, but the tree from which human life might come to be. It also spoke of it in the way it spoke of *the tree of knowledge* (Gn 2:9); it was the tree which would produce human knowledge, not a tree which human beings might produce by their knowledge.³³ And so, it is *the sting of death* by which death came to be, not the sting which death made. After all, we call a cup of death one from which someone has died or could die, not one that a dead or dying person has made. Sin, then, is the sting of death; pierced by sin, the human race has been put to death.

Why do we still ask whether it is the death of the soul or of the body? Or whether it is the first death by which we all now die or the second by which the wicked will die later?³⁴ There is no reason to raise the question; there is no room for escape. The words of the apostle, by which he deals with this, give the answer. He says, *When this mortal body has put on immortality, then the words of scripture will be fulfilled: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?* (1 Cor 15:54-56). He was dealing with the resurrection of the body, because death will be swallowed up in victory, when this mortal body has put on immortality. Then we will laugh in the face of death, which will be swallowed up in victory by the resurrection of the body. Then we will say to it, *Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?* We will say this to the death of the body. For victorious immortality will swallow this up, when this mortal body will have put on immortality. Then, we will say to the death of the body, *Where, o death, is your victory?* by which you conquered all human beings so that even the Son of God did battle with you and overcame you, not by avoiding you, but by taking you on. You conquered in those who die; you have been conquered in those who rise. Your victory by which you swallowed up the bodies of the dying was temporal; our victory by which you are swallowed up in the bodies of those who rise will last eternally.

Where is your sting? that is, the sin by which we were pierced and poisoned so that you came to be even in our bodies and owned them for so long a time? *But the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* We all sinned in

the one man so that we all died in the one man; we received the law, not so that we might bring sin to an end by our becoming better, but so that we might increase it by our transgression. *But the law entered in so that sin might abound* (Rom 5:20) and *Scripture has enclosed all things under sin* (Gal 3:22). *But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ* (1 Cor 15:57). And so, where sin was abundant, grace might be even more abundant,³⁵ and *on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe* (Gal 3:22). Thus we might also conquer death through deathless resurrection and conquer sin, its sting, through the free gift of justification.

12. 21. Let no one, then, be mistaken about this matter and mislead others. This clear meaning of the holy scripture banishes and removes all ambiguity. Just as death in the body of this death comes from our origin,³⁶ so too sin in this sinful flesh has come from our origin. To heal this sinfulness contracted by birth and increased by our will and to raise up this flesh, the physician came in the likeness of sinful flesh. It is not those who are in good health who need him, but those who are sick,³⁷ and he did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.³⁸ Moreover, when the apostle advised the faithful not to separate from unbelieving spouses, he said, *For a husband who does not believe is sanctified in his wife, and a wife who does not believe is sanctified in a brother; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy* (1 Cor 7:14). We must either interpret these words as we have explained them elsewhere³⁹ and as Pelagius explained them when he was commenting on this same letter to the Corinthians.⁴⁰ The explanation is that there had already been examples of husbands who won their wives and of wives who won their husbands for Christ, as well as examples of little ones in whose case the Christian desire of the one parent prevailed to make them Christians. Or perhaps, as the words of the apostle seem rather to suggest and in some sense even to demand, we should understand in this passage some other sanctification by which a non-believing husband or a wife is sanctified through the spouse who believes or by which the children of believers are born holy. Perhaps they refrained from intercourse at the time of the wife's period, because either the husband or the wife read this in the law. Ezekiel, after all, lists this among the commandments which are not to be interpreted figuratively.⁴¹ Or it may have been on account of some other conferral of sanctity that is not clearly stated, coming from the union of spouses and their children. But, whatever that sanctification may be, we must hold it as beyond any doubt that it is unable to make them Christians and to forgive sins, unless they become believers by the teaching and sacraments of Christ and the Church. For, no matter how holy and righteous their spouses are, non-believers are not cleansed from the sinfulness which compels those who have been excluded from the kingdom of God to enter into condemnation. And no matter

how holy and righteous the parents are who begot them, little ones are released from the guilt of original sin, only if they have been baptized in Christ. For these we must speak more unstintingly, the more they are unable to speak for themselves.

13, 22. The point of that discussion, after all, was that some people think that infants have no need to be baptized, and we must oppose that novel idea with the ancient truth. They do not state this point in plain words for fear that the well-established and salutary custom of the Church would be unable to tolerate those who violate it. If we are commanded to help orphans, how much more ought we to labor for these children who, even with their parents, will remain more destitute and more wretched than orphans, if they are denied the grace of Christ for which they themselves are unable to ask.

23. These people claim, however, that some human beings, who already have the use of their own reason, will live, have lived, or are now living without any sin. We should hope that this will be the case; we should strive to make it so; we should pray that it will be so. We should not, however, presume that it is already the case. After all, for those who hope for and strive after and pray for this with suitable prayers, whatever is left of their sins is daily removed by the words we truthfully say in the prayer, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). Whoever claims that this prayer is not necessary in this life for anyone, even for a holy person who knows and does God's will, except for the Holy of Holies,⁴² is greatly mistaken and is utterly unable to please the very one whom he praises. If persons believe that they are such, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them,⁴³ for no other reason than that they believe what is false. That physician, then, whom those in good health do not need, though the sick do,⁴⁴ knows full well how, by his healing, to bring us to perfection for eternal salvation. Although it was imposed as a punishment for sin, he does not in this age take death itself away from those whose sins he forgives so that, through having to overcome the fear of death, they might take up the struggle out of pure faith. And in certain cases he does not help even his righteous ones to bring their righteousness to perfection, because they can still become proud. Thus, as long as no living person is found righteous in his sight,⁴⁵ we will always owe a debt of gratitude to his mercy, and by holy humility we will be healed from that first cause of all sins, that is, from the swelling of pride. Though my intent here was to produce a short letter, I have given birth to a long book. I wish it had not merely at last come to an end, but had attained as well a comparable completeness.

Notes

1. Augustine mentions Pelagius here by name for the first time; he speaks of him in a quite complimentary fashion, though he qualifies his praise with "as I hear."

2. The works in question are Pelagius' *Expositiones XIII epistularum Pauli*, ed. A. Souter (Cambridge, 1926); reprinted in PLS I, 1110-1374.

3. See Rom 5:12.

4. Pelagius, *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* 5, 15: PLS I, 1137.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. Augustine continues to interpret Pelagius' views in the best light, though one senses that he is finding it difficult to do so.

9. See Jn 6:54. The force of this text depends upon the practice in the early Church of giving communion to the little ones at baptism.

10. See Rom 5:18.

11. See Rom 5:14.

12. In his *Commentary on Some Statements in the Letter to the Romans* 29, Augustine offered the interpretation that Adam was the figure of Christ in the reverse sense that Christ benefited us more than Adam harmed us.

13. Augustine does, in fact, offer a wide variety of interpretations of this phrase. For example, Adam prefigured Christ, because as Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam's rib, so the Church was formed from the side of the crucified Christ (*Answer to Julian* I, 659). Or, as Adam left father and mother, so Christ left his Father in taking the form of the servant and left his mother, the synagogue, and clung to the Church (*Answer to Faustus, a Manichean* 13, 8). Or Adam was the form of what was to come, since all the nations arose from him; indeed, in Greek the letters of his name are an anagram for the four directions (*Homilies on the Gospel of John* 9, 14). Or Adam was the form of the future, because he inflicted the form of death upon his posterity (Letter 157, 4).

14. See Pelagius, *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* 5, 14: PLS I, 1137, where Pelagius says, "Either Adam was the pattern of Christ, because, just as Adam was created by God without intercourse, so Christ came forth from the Virgin by the working of Holy Spirit. Or he was, as some suppose, the pattern of Christ in a reverse sense, that is, as the former was the origin of sin, so the latter is the origin of righteousness."

15. See Cyprian, *Epistola* 64: CSEL 2, II, 717-721.

16. Cyprian, *Epistola* 64, 2: CSEL 3, II, 718.

17. Cyprian, *Epistola* 64, 5: CSEL 3, II, 720-21.

18. See Jb 14:4-5.

19. See Jb 25:5-6.

20. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Jonam prophetam* III, 5: PL 25, 1140-41.

21. For Jovinian, see *Heresies* 82, where Augustine reports that the Jovinianists also taught that all sins are equal, that one cannot sin after baptism, and that fasting and abstinence from certain foods was without benefit.

22. See Is 53:7.

23. See Jn 14:30.

24. See 2 Cor 5:21.

25. See Rom 5:14.

26. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 2, 2: PL 23, 296.

27. Pelagius, *Exposition in epistolam ad Romanos* 5, 15: PLS I, 1137.

28. *Ibid.*

29. See Rom 9:11.

30. Pelagius, *loc. cit.*

31. See I, 8, 8-9, 10.

32. See Rom 8:11.

33. See Gn 2:9.

34. See Rv 2:11; 20:6.14.
35. See Rom 5:20.
36. See Rom 7:24.
37. See Mt 9:12.
38. See Mk 2:17 and Lk 5:32.
39. *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount* I, 16, 45.
40. Pelagius, *Expositio in epistolam primam ad Corinthios* 7, 14: PLS I, 1201.
41. See Ez 18:6.
42. See Dn 9:24.
43. See 1 Jn 1:8.
44. See Mt 9:12.
45. See Ps 143:2.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER

Revisions II, 63 (37)

The Spirit and the Letter, A Single Book For Marcellinus

I had written for Marcellinus three books with the title: *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*, in which I carefully discussed the baptism of little ones. He wrote back to me that he was disturbed because I said that it was possible that human beings be without sin if their will does not lack God's assistance as a help, although no one has had or has or will have such perfect righteousness in this life. He asked how I could say that it is possible if there is no example of it. On account of this question of his, I wrote the book whose title is: *The Spirit and the Letter*. In it I examined the statement of the apostle where he says, *The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6). In that book, I fiercely argued, to the extent of God's help, against the enemies of the grace of God by which the sinner is justified. When I dealt with the observances of the Jews who abstain from certain foods in accord with the old law, I said, "the ceremonies regarding certain foods" (21, 36), a term which is not used in the sacred writings. It seemed, nonetheless, appropriate to me, because I had it in mind that ceremonies took their name from "lacking: *carendo*," as if the word were "*carimoniae*," since those who follow this observance lack those things from which they abstain. But if this word which is foreign to the true religion has another origin, I did not speak in accord with it, but in accord with the one I mentioned above. This book begins: *Lectis opusculis quae ad te nuper elaboravi, fili carissime Marcelline*.

Introduction

The Spirit and the Letter is Augustine's second major work in the Pelagian controversy.¹ It was written in the last months of 412, or at latest in the spring of 413, and was occasioned by a letter from Augustine's friend, the tribune Marcellinus, for whom he had recently written *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* (paragraph 1). In the second book of the previous work Augustine had maintained two theses which Marcellinus found contradictory: that human beings could be sinless in this life by God's grace and their free choice, and that, apart from the one mediator, there never has been or will be such a human being. To Marcellinus it seemed absurd to maintain that something is possible and yet never has and never will occur. Augustine appeals to a series of examples from scripture for events which are certainly possible for God, though we have no example of their occurring, for example, a camel passing through the eye of a needle, the protection of Christ at his Passion by angels, and the immediate rather than the gradual destruction of the nations occupying the land promised to Israel.²

One might, of course, dismiss such scripturally guaranteed possibilities as irrelevant on the grounds that such events are ones that are up to God to do or not to do, while righteousness is the work or function—indeed, the finest work or function—of a human being. To this Augustine replies that, though becoming righteous is the task of a human being, it is also God's gift and God's work (paragraph 2). Augustine at this point finds no difficulty with those people who claim that, as a matter of fact, there are, have been, or will be some sinless human beings, though he is personally convinced by the testimonies of scripture that no mere human being ever has been or will be perfectly sinless (paragraph 3).³

What Augustine does find wholly unacceptable is the idea that the power of the human will is able by itself without the help of God to attain righteousness or to make progress in it. However, the unnamed people who are the cause of Augustine's concern do not simply deny the need for God's help; rather, they locate his help in the free choice with which human beings are created and the instruction provided them through the commandments (paragraph 4). Against this view Augustine insists that we also need to receive the Holy Spirit who pours out the love of God in our hearts so that we find delight in and love the good (paragraph 5).

Having set forth the issue, Augustine proceeds to the body of the work. It has four main sections; of these the first two present his principal theses and the latter two answer objections that they are likely to evoke. In the first section

(paragraphs 6-20), he explains the Pauline doctrine that *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6). Without the presence of the life-giving Spirit, the instruction received from the commandments is the letter that kills. Augustine admits that 2 Corinthians 3:6 can be legitimately taken in the sense that a literal interpretation of a figurative passage of scripture can be fatal, for example, if one takes the Song of Songs as speaking of carnal love. It was, in fact, Ambrose's preaching that led Augustine to interpret spiritually passages of scripture that had proved deadly to him during his Manichean years.⁴ He insists, however, that in its literal interpretation the text, *The letter kills*, refers to the law that commands, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17), claiming with St. Paul that without that law he would not have known desire and that sin killed him through the commandment. The law is itself good, but unless the Holy Spirit provides help, "substituting good desire for evil desire, that is, pouring out love in our hearts" (paragraph 6), the law increases evil desire by its prohibition, just as an obstacle in a stream increases the force of the water that flows around it. "Somehow or other, the very object of desire," Augustine observes, "grows more attractive when it is forbidden."

Turning to a detailed examination of the context of 2 Corinthians 3:6, Augustine sets out to show that the letter that kills is the law forbidding evil. He claims that, when he has made this point, it will be clear that living a good life is a gift of God, not merely because God has given human beings free choice and the commandments teaching them how to live, but because he has poured out love in their hearts through the Holy Spirit. Once these points have been established, Augustine is confident that Marcellinus will see that the attainment of human righteousness "must be attributed to God, though it is not attained without the human will" (paragraph 7). Hence, human righteousness is possible in this life, since all things are possible for God, even though there is no example of anyone's having attained such perfect righteousness in this life.

Augustine appeals to Paul's Letter to the Romans to show that the law that teaches that we should not sin kills without the presence of the life-giving Spirit; without the Spirit it leads us to know sin rather than avoid it, increases it rather than lessens it (paragraph 8). Though, according to Romans 5:20, the law entered in so that sin might abound and though where sin abounded, there grace was even more abundant, it is wrong, Augustine warns, to suppose that one ought to sin so that grace may abound. Human beings needed, rather, to be shown that the holy and good commandments were of no use against the disease of sin and merely increased their sinfulness. Thus they would come to realize that they needed God, not merely as a teacher, but as a helper, and would have recourse to his mercy (paragraph 9).

Augustine appeals to Romans 6:3-11 to show that the medicine by which human beings could be healed was revealed in the suffering and resurrection of

Christ. The abolition of sinfulness and the renewal of righteousness began not from the letter of the law, but from faith in Jesus Christ (paragraph 10). This realization preserves human beings against the pride of attributing to themselves what belongs to God. Though they themselves do the works of righteousness, they do them only to the extent they draw from the fountain of life and share in the true light (paragraph 11). Paul, whose very name means "little," vigorously opposed the proud in his defense of the grace of God. His own life and his letters stress God's grace; his Letter to the Romans almost wearies his readers with this question of grace (paragraph 12). There is, for example, Romans 2:17-29, in which Paul accuses the Jews of boasting over their own righteousness. Augustine draws the comparison between them and those who would have God praised insofar as they are human beings, "but want themselves to be praised because they are righteous" (paragraph 13).

These unnamed persons "praise God as the source of our justification inasmuch as he gave the law so that, by considering it, we know how we ought to live" (paragraph 14). Against them Augustine insists with Paul that no human being is justified before God on the basis of the law; rather, knowledge of sin came through the law. And Paul meant here by the law the commandment, *You shall not desire*,⁵ which Augustine takes as the summary prohibition of all sin. At this point Augustine suggests that his unnamed opponents might argue that one is not justified on the basis of the law which only provides knowledge of what is to be done, but on the basis of free choice by which one observes the law. In reply Augustine points to Romans 3:21 where Paul stresses that it is not our righteousness, but the righteousness of God that has been revealed through faith in Jesus Christ. All boasting in our own righteousness is ruled out by the fact that we have been *gratuitously justified by his grace* (Rom 3:24). Though our justification does not come about without our will, "the law shows that our will is weak so that grace may heal our will and so that a healthy will may fulfill the law, without being subject to the law or in need of the law" (paragraph 15).

Augustine turns to 1 Timothy 1:8-9, which presents the paradox of claiming that the law is good, if used rightly, though it was not established for the righteous. He argues that, though the law is good and leads to grace like a schoolmaster, we are justified gratuitously by grace, not because we have done good works, but so that we may do them. The unrighteous use the law correctly insofar as it leads them to grace by revealing their helplessness; the righteous use the law correctly by fulfilling it with the help of grace, and the righteous one, namely, God, uses the law correctly by imposing it upon the unrighteous to terrify them and bring them to grace (paragraph 16). Hence, all proud boasting is excluded, though boasting in the Lord need not be excluded (paragraph 17). Augustine points out that these thoughts lead to true piety, the worship of God, whose chief purpose is thanksgiving. "For this reason, in the truest and only

sacrifice we are admonished to give thanks to the Lord, our God" (paragraph 18). But the soul that attributes to itself what it has from God is filled with pride, as if it were wise. By pride even "great men"—he surely means the greatest of the Neoplatonists—fell into idolatry. Paul, for his part, declared his readiness to preach the gospel to both wise and foolish, Jew and Greek, for *it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes and the righteousness of God is revealed in it* (Rom 1:16.17). This is the salvation by which God saves us and the righteousness by which he makes us righteous. Hence, in paragraph 19, Augustine turns to what Paul says of the punishment of those great minds who searched for him and found him, but in their pride did not glorify God or give him thanks.⁶ The application to the Pelagians is clear: knowledge of God and of his law is simply not enough. With this Augustine draws the first section of the work to a close, having shown from Romans that God helps us to act with righteousness, not through the law with its holy and good commandments, but by helping our will, without which we can do nothing good, and by raising it up through the gift of his grace. Without such help the teaching of the law is simply the letter that kills (paragraph 20).

The second major section of the work (paragraphs 21-42) spells out the distinction between the law of works and the law of faith. Augustine immediately mentions that to say that the law of works is found in Judaism and the law of faith in Christianity is simply mistaken. Though confident that Marcellinus is sharp enough to have seen this point, Augustine returns to the texts from Paul in an endeavor to make it clear to others. He points out that it is the law of works which commands, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17 and Rom 7:7), but insists that the law of faith has the same commandment. If, then, the law of faith has the same commandment, why is it not the law of works? Once again, the works of the law in question are not the rites of the Old Testament, such as circumcision, but the observance of the Ten Commandments, which are summed up in Exodus 20:17. Again, since the law of faith has the same commandment that brought death, why is it not the law of works? In paragraph 22, Augustine answers, "What the law of works commands by its threats the law of faith obtains by its faith." Or, to put it another way which echoes Augustine's famous words in his *Confessions*, by the law of works, God says, "Do what I command," while by the law of faith, we say, "Give what you command."

Augustine acknowledges that in Romans 2:25-29 Paul did refer to circumcision and other Jewish observances as the law. He explains that Christians do not now observe such prescriptions which, as symbols, foreshadowed the reality of the New Testament. Nonetheless, when Paul spoke of the works of the law by which no one is justified, he meant the observance of the Ten Commandments, all of which—with the exception of the observance of the Sabbath—Christians are obliged to keep (paragraph 23). Paul makes this point even more clearly in

2 Corinthians 3:3-9 (paragraph 24), and Augustine finds it further confirmed in Romans 7:6-25 (paragraph 25). Hence, without the new condition brought about by the Spirit, the letter of the law makes people guilty insofar as it makes the commandment known without helping them to fulfill it. If one observes the commandment servilely out of fear of punishment, not out of a love of righteousness, one does not really observe it. Only faith which works through love enables one "to find delight in the law of God in the interior human being" (paragraph 26), and such delight is a gift of the Spirit, which increases as the interior human being is renewed from day to day, as one is being set free *from the body of this death by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:24).

The grace unveiled in the New Testament remained veiled in the Old. To that hiddenness belonged the commandment about the Sabbath observance, which the Jews observed carnally; it was the only one of the ten to be concealed in a symbol. Augustine sees the abstinence from servile work it commands as signifying the avoidance of sin, noting that God made the seventh day holy and that holiness lies in not sinning (paragraph 27). Those who have the Spirit of freedom observe the Sabbath spiritually, finding delight in not sinning because of the love that is poured out in their hearts. Augustine points out the remarkable agreement between the two testaments insofar as the commandments were written by the finger of God and the finger of God is the Holy Spirit and insofar as there were fifty days between the celebration of the first Passover and the reception of the Mosaic law, just as there were fifty days between Christ's death and resurrection and the reception of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (paragraph 28).

Despite such striking similarities, Augustine points to their differences, especially to the fact that the finger of God formerly wrote on stone tablets, but now writes the law on human hearts by pouring out in our hearts the love of God which is the fulfillment of the law (paragraph 29). Hence, the works of love, when they are written on stone tablets to strike fear, are the law of works and the letter that kills. But when love is poured out in the hearts of believers, those works are the law of faith and of the Spirit. And this accords perfectly with 2 Corinthians 3:3, Augustine points out (paragraph 30). The old law was written outside human beings to strike fear from the outside; the new law is written within to justify them within. So too, *the law was given for the sake of transgression* (Gal 3:19) and is called the ministry of death and of condemnation, while the law of the New Testament is the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness,⁷ because through the gift of the Spirit we do the works of righteousness and are set free from the condemnation owing to the transgression (paragraph 31).

Augustine applies all this to his unnamed Pelagian opponents (paragraph 32).

He notes that they may shrink from the intolerable claim that we become righteous without the grace of God, but warns that they should also not equate the grace of God with the law, with teaching, or with the commandments, for these are the letter that kills, if the Spirit is not present, making us “love the very same thing, now written within, which the law made us fear, when it was written exteriorly” (paragraph 32). In the following paragraphs (paragraphs 33-40), Augustine uses Jeremiah’s prophecy of the New Testament as a confirmation of his distinction between the Old and the New Testaments. Jeremiah 31:31-34 is, he points out, the sole text in the Old Testament that refers to the new by name (paragraph 33). His explanation of Jeremiah’s prophecy in the light of Paul’s teaching as partially fulfilled in the present age and as still to be fulfilled in the kingdom of heaven to come is better read than summarized.

The third section of the work (paragraphs 43-51) takes up a possible objection to Augustine’s position. Having used the text of Jeremiah 31:31-34 to confirm the distinction between the Old and the New Testaments, Augustine must confront the difficulty posed by Romans 2:14-15 in which Paul says that the Gentiles have the law written in their hearts. He offers two solutions. First, in paragraphs 44-46, he presents the easiest solution, though not one that fits best the context in the Letter to the Romans. It identifies these Gentiles as believing Christians from the non-Jewish world; as believers they belong to the New Testament and, consequently, have the law written in their hearts. But since Paul says that they do by nature what the law commands, he is faced with a further difficulty. Hence, in paragraph 47, Augustine explains how these believers from the Gentile world do by nature what the law commands, appealing to his doctrine that the image of God in human nature was not completely destroyed by sin and is being restored in believers through the Holy Spirit.

In paragraphs 48-49, Augustine offers a second interpretation which accords better with the context. On this view the Gentiles Paul mentions are neither Jews nor Christians, but non-believers who fulfill some of the prescriptions of the law, since the image of God in which they were created has not been completely effaced by sin. He notes, however, that though their external actions may be beyond reproach, their motive is seldom found to be praiseworthy. In any case, without the grace of God a few good works can no more bring an unbeliever to eternal life than a few venial sins can keep a righteous person from eternal life. But however we understand those who do by nature what pertains to the law, it is certain that Jeremiah promised the grace of God to the people of the New Testament so that God’s laws are written in their hearts and so that they all know him through the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out in their hearts (paragraphs 49). Hence, we should not boast as if we have not received, and what we have received is more than the letter of the law set before our eyes. In paragraphs 50-51, Augustine again summarizes his position that no one is justified by reason of the works of the law,

but through faith by the grace of God which pours out the Holy Spirit in our hearts so that we observe the law, not out of fear, but with delight.

In the fourth section of the work (paragraphs 52-60), Augustine turns to a second possible objection to his doctrine of grace, namely, that it destroys free choice. He draws an analogy: As faith does not do away with the law, so grace does not do away with free choice. In fact, instead of doing away with free choice, grace strengthens the will, heals its wounds, restores its health, so that we love righteousness and fulfill the law (paragraph 52). Augustine examines whether faith itself lies in our power; for this purpose he distinguishes having the power (*posse*) from willing (*velle*) and concludes that we are said to have in our power what we do if we will it and what we do not do if we do not will it (paragraph 53). Hence, Augustine concludes that faith is surely in our power, since faith is an act of assent, and we assent willingly when we assent to something. Furthermore, our power is from God, since Romans 13:1 maintains that there is no power except from God; on the other hand, the gift of the power does not impose necessity (paragraph 54).

The faith which the apostle commends is not just any faith, but the faith by which we believe God (paragraph 55). Those under the law, however, believe God in the sense that they try to achieve their own righteousness out of a servile fear of punishment, while those who are children of God—both Jew and Greek—live from faith, a faith that works through love. That love is poured out in their hearts by the gift of the Holy Spirit and excludes on their part all boasting, as if they had not received it as a gift (paragraph 56). Though not every act of the will comes from God, as all power does, the will to believe is itself a gift of God. We cannot say to God that in the will to believe we have something we have not received; yet, Augustine immediately adds that those who do not believe are not thereby excused (paragraph 57).

Why, then, does everyone not have this will to believe, since the same God created every nature and, according to 1 Timothy 2:4, wills that all be saved? Augustine proposes as a somewhat tentative answer that the free choice we have received from the creator is a neutral power that can turn either to believing or not believing at God's call. God wills that all be saved, but not so that he deprives anyone of free choice. Whether one believes or refuses to believe, the will of God remains undefeated, since unbelievers do not escape God's just punishment (paragraph 58). At this point in the development of his thinking on grace, Augustine seems to take God's universal salvific will as found in 1 Timothy 2:4 without any restriction and to situate the will to believe or not to believe in the free choice of the individual, given God's call. In paragraph 59 Augustine uses Psalm 102 as an illustration and confirmation of the way God transforms by his grace our old deformity so that we live from the faith that works through love.

Augustine warns that we should not think that sin which is committed by free

choice is to be attributed to God, even though we attribute to God as his gift the will by which we believe, because it arises from the free choice with which we are created. The will to believe is to be attributed to God not only because it arises from the free choice which is part of our nature, "but also because God brings it about by the enticements of our perceptions that we will and that we believe" (paragraph 60). In order to believe by free choice, the soul needs God's enticement or invitation which he produces either externally through exhortations and commandments or internally through acting upon the mind. Hence, God "certainly produces in human beings the will to believe. . . . But to assent to God's invitation or dissent from it is . . . in the power of one's will" (paragraph 60). To the further question of why one person is stirred to the point of believing and another is not, Augustine can only offer in reply Paul's cry, *O the depth!* or his question, *Is there injustice in God?* (Rom 11:33 and 9:14).

Augustine then turns to the conclusion of the work, pointing out that the unnamed Pelagians do not merely stand in opposition to Augustine's views, but stand in opposition to those of Paul and even to those of him who spoke through his apostles (paragraph 61). Returning to Marcellinus' specific problem with how something can be possible, though it never has and never will occur, Augustine sums up his answer and confirms it with an appeal to Christ's words that, with faith like a grain of mustard seed, one can command that the mountain be thrown into the sea and it will happen, though it never has (paragraphs 62-63). We fail to attain complete righteousness in this life, because our knowledge and love of God is incomplete compared to the knowledge and love we shall have when we see him face to face (paragraph 64). Augustine, nonetheless, allows for an incomplete righteousness in this life that is compatible with the righteous needing to pray for the forgiveness of their sins. In any case, whatever righteousness they have, they have received (paragraph 65). Finally, Augustine challenges his unnamed opponents to find someone who does not have any sin needing God's pardon. He insists that, if there are such persons, they are helped by God's grace which consists not in the teaching of the law, but in the Spirit of grace poured out in their hearts. He is convinced that scripture precludes their finding any such sinless persons, though he cannot deny that God has the power to bring about in this life the perfection of righteousness that he will bring about in his saints in the next life (paragraph 66).

Texts and Translations

The text translated is that edited by C. F. Urba and J. Zycha in CSEL 60 (Vienna, 1913), 155-229. I have also profited on occasion from variant readings adopted by the editors of the ALG text. The work has been translated many times. Apart from the English translations, only the most recent are noted. It has

been translated into English by P. Holmes in NPNF 5/1 (New York, 1887; reprinted in 1971), 83-114; his translation is found in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine* (New York, 1948) I, 459-518. The work has also been translated into English by J. Burnaby in LCC 8 (Philadelphia, 1955). In the present century it has also been translated into French by J. D. Burger (Neuchâtel, 1951); into Spanish by E. López in BAC 50 (Madrid, 1956), 686-810; into German by S. Kopp in ALG I (Würzburg, 1971), 301-434; and into Italian by I. Volpi in NBA 17/1 (Rome, 1981), 253-363.

The Spirit and the Letter

The Occasion of the Work: Marcellinus' Question

1, 1. You have read the works, my dear son, Marcellinus, that I recently composed for you concerning the baptism of little ones and the perfection of human righteousness.⁸ In this life it seems that no one either has attained or will attain that perfection, except for the one mediator, who endured the human condition in the likeness of sinful flesh without any sin whatsoever. You wrote back that you were disturbed by my statement in the second of the two books. I had said that it was possible for a human being to be sinless,⁹ if with the aid of God's power the will is not lacking, but that apart from the one in whom all are brought to life,¹⁰ there has been no one and will be no one in whom this perfection is to be found while in this life. It strikes you as absurd to say that something is possible when we have no example of it. And yet, I suspect, you are certain that a camel has never passed through the eye of a needle, though the Lord said that this was possible for God.¹¹ You can also read that twelve thousand legions of angels could have fought for Christ to prevent his suffering,¹² and yet it did not happen. You can read in scripture that the nations could all have been wiped out at one time from the land which God gave to the children of Israel,¹³ but that God willed that this take place gradually.¹⁴ A thousand other things come to mind which we admit either could have taken place or can take place, though we cannot offer examples of their having taken place. Consequently, we ought not to deny that a human being can be without sin, on the grounds that we can produce no human being in whom this has been realized, apart from the one who was not only a human being, but also God by nature.

Human Sinlessness Is Possible with God's Help, Even Though Christ Is the Only Example

2, 2. You might reply as follows: These events, which I said did not occur, but were possible, are works of God, but that being a sinless human being is the work of a human being. Indeed, you might say that it is the finest work of a human being to realize a righteousness that is full and perfect and absolute in every respect. And hence, one should not suppose that there was not and is not and will not be anyone in this life who accomplishes this work, if it can be accomplished by a human being. But you ought to bear in mind that, though it pertains to a human being to do this, it is also the gift of God and, hence, you

ought not to doubt that it is a work of God. *It is God, after all, who produces in you*, says the apostle, *both the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13).

3. Hence, those people who claim that a human being is living or has lived on earth without any sin at all pose no great problem, and we should insist with them that they show, if they can, that it is really so. For the testimonies of the scriptures have, I think, determined that no human being living in this life, despite the use of free choice, is found without sin. For example, we find, *Do not enter into judgment with your servant, because no living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2), as well as other such passages. If anyone can show that they should be interpreted otherwise than they sound and proves that someone has or some people have lived here without any sin whatsoever, we should not merely not be opposed, but should be deeply grateful. Otherwise, we would seem to be motivated by no small amount of jealousy. I personally tend to believe that there neither has been nor is nor will be anyone of such perfect purity. But even if one claims that there has been or is or will be, that is no great error in my judgment, nor is it harmful when one is misled because of such good will, provided that people who think this do not think that they themselves are such, unless they really and clearly see that they are.

God's Help Is Not Just Free Choice and the Commandments

4. But we must fiercely and strongly oppose those who think that the power of the human will can by itself, without the help of God, either attain righteousness or make progress in tending toward it. When these people begin to be pressed as to how they presume to claim that this is possible without God's help, they hold themselves in check and do not dare to make this claim, because they see that it is godless and intolerable. Rather, they say that these things are not done without God's help, because God created human beings with free choice and, by giving the commandments, he teaches them how they should live. Moreover, they say that he certainly helps them, insofar as by his teaching he removes ignorance so that human beings know what they should avoid and what they should pursue in their actions. Thus, by following the path he pointed out to them, they may by the free choice implanted in their nature live chaste, righteous, and pious lives and merit to attain to the blessed and eternal life.

3, 5. We, on the other hand, say that the human will is helped to achieve righteousness in this way: Besides the fact that human beings are created with free choice of the will¹⁵ and besides the teaching by which they are commanded how they ought to live, they receive the Holy Spirit so that there arises in their minds a delight in and a love for that highest and immutable good that is God, even now while they walk by faith, not yet by vision.¹⁶ By this [love] given to

them like the pledge of a gratuitous gift, they are set afire with the desire to cling to the creator and burn to come to a participation in that true light,¹⁷ so that they have their well-being from him from whom they have their being. For free choice is capable only of sinning, if the way of truth remains hidden. And when what we should do and the goal we should strive for begins to be clear, unless we find delight in it and love it, we do not act, do not begin, do not live good lives. But so that we may love it, *the love of God is poured out in our hearts*, not by free choice which comes from ourselves, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5).

Without the Spirit's Presence the Law Is the Letter That Kills

4, 6. That teaching from which we receive the commandment to live in continence and rectitude is the letter that kills, unless the life-giving Spirit is present. We read in scripture, *The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6). We ought not to understand this merely in this sense: that we should not interpret literally something that scripture expresses figuratively, when its proper sense is absurd, and that we should consider what else it signifies and nourish the interior human being with its spiritual interpretation. After all, *to be wise according to the flesh is death, but to be wise according to the Spirit is life and peace* (Rom 8:6). For example, someone might interpret in a carnal sense many of the things which are said in the Song of Songs, not as referring to the fruit of bright love, but to the longing of lustful desire. We should not, then, interpret in this sense alone the apostle's words, *The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6); rather, we should interpret them in the sense—and especially in the sense—that he expresses in another passage with perfect clarity: *I would not have known desire, if the law had not said, "You shall not desire"* (Rom 7:7 with Ex 20:17). And a little later he said, *Having seized the opportunity, sin deceived me by the commandment and killed me through it* (Rom 7:11). See what *The letter kills* means! And the commandment, *You shall not desire*, is certainly not some figurative expression that is to be interpreted otherwise than in the literal sense. It is, rather, a perfectly clear commandment highly useful toward salvation. Whoever observes it will be completely without sin. After all, the apostle chose this general, all-inclusive expression,¹⁸ as if it were the voice of the law forbidding every sin, precisely because it says, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17). For no sin is committed without desire. Hence, the law that commands this is good and praiseworthy. But if the Holy Spirit does not provide help, substituting good desire for evil desire, that is, pouring out love in our hearts,¹⁹ though the law is good, it increases the evil desire by its prohibition. In the same way, if a stream of water does not stop flowing in that direction, when an obstacle is placed in its path, it becomes stronger. And when it surmounts the

obstacle, rushing on in greater quantity, it flows with more force on its downward path. Somehow or other, the very object of desire grows more attractive when it is forbidden. And this is what it means that sin misleads by the commandment and by it brings death,²⁰ when transgression is added, which does not exist, where there is no law.²¹

A Detailed Examination of Paul's Teaching

5, 7. But let us consider the whole passage from the letter of the apostle, if it is all right with you, and let us study it as God gives us his help. I want, if I can, to show that the statement of the apostle, *The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6), was not speaking of figurative expressions, though it can be taken in that sense as well. Rather, in plain language it referred to the law that forbids what is evil. When I have made that point, it will, of course, be more obviously apparent that to live a good life is a gift of God. This is the case, not merely because God gave human beings free choice, without which one lives neither a good life nor a bad life, and not merely because he gave the commandment by which he teaches them how they should live, but because by the Holy Spirit he has poured out love in their hearts.²² He foreknew them in order that he might predestine them; he predestined them in order that he might call them; he called them in order that he might justify them, and he justified them in order that he might glorify them.²³ When this has been made clear, you will see, I believe, that it is wrong to say that only the things that God does are possible if there is no example. We have, for instance, mentioned the camel's passing through the eye of a needle and other such things that are impossible for us, but easy for God. You will see, then, that it is wrong to say that human righteousness ought not to be included among these, since it ought not to be counted as a work of God, but as the work of human beings. After all, one might argue that, if the perfection of righteousness is possible in this life, there is no reason why one should believe that there is no example of it. It will become quite clear that it is wrong to say this, when it has been shown that human righteousness itself must be attributed to the action of God, though it is not attained without the human will. Hence, we cannot deny that the perfection of righteousness is possible even in this life, since all things are possible for God.²⁴ This holds for those things he does by his will alone and for those which he has determined can be done by him with the cooperation of the will of his creature. And so, any of those things that he does not do remain without an example in the works he has done, but with God they have a cause both in his power by which they can be done and in his wisdom why they have not been done. Although this cause is not known to human beings, they should not forget that they are human and should not, for that reason, think God foolish, because they cannot fully grasp his wisdom.

8. Pay attention then to the apostle as he explains to the Romans his words to the Corinthians, *The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6). He shows clearly enough that one should rather interpret it as we said above, namely, that the letter of the law, which teaches that we should not sin, kills, if the life-giving Spirit is not present. After all, it leads us to know sin rather than to avoid it and increases sin rather than lessens it, because the transgression of the law is added to the evil desire.

6, 9. The apostle, then, wanted to praise the grace which came to all peoples through Jesus Christ so that the Jews would not consider themselves better than other peoples because they had received the law. He said that sin and death entered the human race through one man and through one man there came righteousness and eternal life,²⁵ indicating with perfect clarity that the former was Adam, the latter Christ. Then he said, *The law entered in so that sin might abound, but where sin abounded, there grace was even more abundant so that, as the reign of sin led to death, so the reign of grace might through righteousness lead to eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 5:20-21). Then he posed a question for himself and asked, *What then shall we say? Shall we remain in sin so that grace might abound? Heaven forbid!* (Rom 6:1-2). For he saw that perverted people could perversely interpret his statement that *the law entered in so that sin might abound, but where sin abounded, there grace was even more abundant* (Rom 5:20), as if he said that it was good to sin so that grace might abound. To dispose of this idea, he said, *Heaven forbid!* and added, *How shall we who have died to sin continue to live in it?* (Rom 6:2). That is, since grace has given us the gift of dying to sin, what else will we be doing, if we continue to live in sin, but being ungrateful for grace? After all, one who praises the benefit of a medicine does not say that it is good to have the diseases and wounds which it cures. Rather, the greater the praises one heaps upon a medicine, the more one criticizes and fears the wounds and diseases from which the highly praised medicine sets one free. Thus the praise and proclamation of grace is the censure and condemnation of sins. After all, human beings had to be shown the foulness of their disease; against their sinfulness the holy and good commandment was of no use. It increased sinfulness rather than lessened it when the law entered in so that sin might abound. Then, when they had in that way been found guilty and were put to shame, human beings would see that they needed God not only as a teacher, but as a helper who would direct their journeys so that all sinfulness might not lord it over them.²⁶ And then by having recourse to the help of his mercy they would be healed, and thus, where sin abounded, there grace might be even more abundant,²⁷ not because of the merit of the sinners, but because of the assistance of their rescuer.

10. In what follows, the apostle pointed out that the same medicine was mystically revealed in the suffering and resurrection of Christ. He said, *Do you*

not know that those of us who have been baptized in Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were, then, buried with him through baptism into death so that, as Christ has risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we might also walk in the newness of life. For, if we have been united to the likeness of his death, we will also be united to the likeness of his resurrection. We know that our old human self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died is justified from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will live together with him. We know that Christ rising from the dead dies no more and death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died to sin he died once, but the life he lives he lives for God. And so you too must consider yourselves dead to sin, but living for God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:3-11). It is quite clear that the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection symbolized the end of our old life and the beginning of our new life and has revealed the abolition of sinfulness and the renewal of righteousness. And so, did such a great benefit come to human beings through the letter of the law? No, it came through faith in Jesus Christ.

7, 11. This holy thought guards human beings under the protection of God's wings. They hope to be inebriated by the richness of his house and to drink at the torrent of his pleasure. For with him is the source of life, and in his light we shall see the light. He extends his mercy to those who know him and his righteousness to those who are upright of heart.²⁸ After all, he extends his mercy, not because they know him, but in order that they may know him, and he extends his righteousness, by which he justifies the sinner,²⁹ not because they are upright of heart, but in order that they may be upright of heart. This thought does not lead to pride, a vice which arises when we rely on ourselves and make ourselves our own source of life. Through that stirring of pride one withdraws from the fountain of life from which alone one can draw and drink righteousness, namely, the good life. One also withdraws from that unchangeable light by participation in which the rational soul is in a sense set alight so that it is itself a light that has been made and created. In that sense John was *a lamp burning and bright* (Jn 5:35). He, nonetheless, acknowledged the source of his brightness and said, *We have received from his fullness* (Jn 1:16).³⁰ Whose fullness was this but the fullness of him in comparison to whom John was not the light? After all, that *was the true light that enlightens every human being that comes into this world* (Jn 1:9). Hence, after the psalmist had said in the same psalm, *Extend your mercy to those who know you and your righteousness to those who are upright of heart*, he added, *Let not the foot of pride come near me or the hands of sinners move me. There have fallen all whose works are wicked; they are cast out and cannot stand up* (Ps 36:11-13). By this godlessness people attribute to themselves what belongs to God, and by it they are driven into their own darkness, namely, the works of sin. They themselves, after all, clearly do these works, and they are

themselves capable of carrying them out. But they only do the works of righteousness to the extent that they draw from that fountain and share in that light. There life lacks nothing, and there is found no variation or shadow of change.³¹

12. The apostle Paul, who was previously called Saul,³² had no other reason, it seems to me, for choosing this name but to point out his own smallness as the least of the apostles.³³ Hence, in order to praise this grace of God, he frequently fought courageously and vigorously against the proud and the arrogant and those who relied on their own works. After all, the grace of God was really seen more clearly and more obviously in him. Although in persecuting the Church of God he did the sort of deeds for which he deserved to be punished most severely, he received mercy instead of condemnation and obtained grace instead of punishment. For good reason he cries out and struggles more than others in its defense and does not heed the hatred of those who in this profound and mysterious matter do not understand and who twist his sound statements to a distorted meaning. Despite that, he preaches the gift of God which alone brings salvation to the children of the promise, the children of God's beneficence, the children of grace and mercy, the children of the New Testament. Evidence of this is, first, that each of his letters begins as follows: *Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom 1:7). Then, in the Letter to the Romans he examines this question almost exclusively and with such persistence and in so many ways that he wearies the attention of the reader. It is, nonetheless, a weariness that is useful and salutary, for he provides exercise to members of the interior human being rather than exhausts them.

8, 13. Among these are the passages I cited above; among them is his complaint against the Jews. He says that they call themselves Jews, but do not fulfill what they profess. He says, *If you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and boast of God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law, if you are confident that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in darkness, an educator of those who are foolish, a teacher of infants, one who has the standard of knowledge and truth in the law, you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege? You who boast of the law, do you dishonor God by transgressing the law? As scripture says, The name of God suffers blasphemy among the Gentiles because of you.*³⁴ *Circumcision is valuable, if you observe the law, but if you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become the lack of circumcision. If then the uncircumcised observe the precepts of the law, will not the lack of circumcision be counted as circumcision? And those who physically lack circumcision, but fulfill the law, will condemn you who are a transgressor of*

the law because of the letter of the law and circumcision. For one who is a Jew only externally is not a real Jew, and the circumcision that is only external in the flesh is not real circumcision. The real Jew is one who is a Jew interiorly and by the circumcision of the heart, spiritually, not literally. Such a person's praise comes from God, not from human beings (Rom 2:17-29). Here he showed the sense in which he said, *You boast of God* (Rom 2:17). For if Jews who were truly Jews boasted of God in the way demanded by grace which is given gratuitously, not on account of meritorious works, they would have praise from God, not from human beings.³⁵ But they boasted of God as if they alone had merited to receive his law, in accord with the words of the psalm in which it says, *He did not do this for any other nation, and he did not reveal his judgments to them* (Ps 148:20). Nonetheless, they thought that they fulfilled this law of God by their own righteousness, though they were rather transgressors of it. For this reason it brought God's anger upon them,³⁶ and sin, which was being committed by people with knowledge, became more abundant, because those who did what the law commanded without the help of the Spirit of grace did so out of a fear of punishment, not out of a love of righteousness. And for this reason God did not see in their will what human beings saw in their action; rather, they were held guilty as a result of what God knew that they preferred to do, if only they could have done so with impunity. He calls circumcision of the heart a will that is free from every forbidden desire. This is not the result of the teaching and threat of the letter, but of the help and healing of the Spirit. For this reason the praise of such persons comes not from human beings, but from God who by his grace gives them the basis on which they are praised. Scripture says of him, *In the Lord will my soul be praised* (Ps 34:3), and says to him, *With you is my praise* (Ps 22:26). These people are not like those who want God to be praised because they themselves are human beings, but want themselves to be praised because they are righteous.

Further Pelagian Attempts to Circumvent the Scriptures

14. They say, "But we also praise God as the source of our justification inasmuch as he gave the law so that, by considering it, we know how we ought to live."³⁷ They do not listen to the words of scripture, *No flesh will be justified before God on the basis of the law* (Rom 3:20). It is, after all, possible [to be justified] before human beings, but not before him who sees the heart itself and the inner act of the will.³⁸ There he sees what one would prefer to do, if it were permitted, even if one who fears the law does something else. And no one should imagine that the apostle said that no one was justified on the basis of that law which contains many symbolic commandments among the old sacraments, including the circumcision of the flesh which the law commanded that little ones

receive on the eighth day.³⁹ For, he immediately indicated the law he meant and said, *The knowledge of sin came through the law* (Rom 3:20). That is the law of which he later says, *I knew sin only through the law, for I would not have known desire, if the law had not said, "You shall not desire"* (Rom 7:7; Ex 20:17). For what else does this mean but: *The knowledge of sin came through the law* (Rom 3:20).

9. 15. At this point the human presumption that does not know the righteousness of God and wants to establish its own⁴⁰ might say that the apostle was correct in saying that *no one will be justified on the basis of the law* (Rom 3:20). After all, the law only revealed what one should do or what one should avoid so that what the law revealed the will might carry out. And in that way one is not justified through the command of the law, but through free choice. But notice, people, what follows; he said, *But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law, though the law and the prophets have borne witness to it* (Rom 3:21). Is that not loud enough for deaf ears? He says, *The righteousness of God has been revealed*. This is the righteousness that those who want to establish their own do not know; this is the righteousness to which they refuse to be subject.⁴¹ He said, *The righteousness of God has been revealed*. He did not say: The righteousness of human beings or of our own will. He said: *The righteousness of God*, not that by which God is righteous, but that with which he clothes a human being when he justifies a sinner. This is testified to by the law and the prophets; to this the law and the prophets bear witness. The law bears witness, because by commanding and threatening and yet justifying no one it indicates clearly enough that human beings are justified by the gift of God through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The prophets bear witness, because the coming of Christ has fulfilled what they foretold. He goes on from this point and adds, *But the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ* (Rom 3:22), that is, through the faith by which we believe in Christ. Just as this faith mentioned is not the faith of Christ by which Christ believes, so that righteousness of God was not the righteousness by which God is righteous. Each of these, after all, is ours, but they are said to be God's and Christ's, because they are given to us by God's generosity. The righteousness of God, then, is apart from the law, but was not revealed apart from the law. After all, how did the law bear witness to it, if it was revealed apart from the law? But the righteousness of God is apart from the law, and God bestows this righteousness upon the believer through the Spirit of grace without the help of the law. That is, the believer is not helped by the law, since God shows human beings their weakness through the law in order that they might take refuge in his mercy through faith and be healed. Scripture said of his wisdom that it bears on its tongue the law and mercy,⁴² the law, that is, by which he makes the proud guilty, but mercy by which he justifies those who have been humbled. *The righteousness of God, then,*

through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe; for there is no distinction. All have, after all, sinned and lack the glory of God (Rom 3:22-23), not their own glory. For what do they have that they have not received? But if they have received, why do they boast, as if they have not received?⁴³ They lack, then, the glory of God. And note what comes next: *They have been gratuitously justified by his grace* (Rom 3:24). They were not, then, justified by the law; they were not justified by their own will, but *gratuitously justified by his grace*. It is not that this comes about without our will; rather, the law shows that our will is weak so that grace may heal our will and so that a healthy will may fulfill the law, without being subject to the law or in need of the law.

The Resolution of a Pauline Paradox

10, 16. *For the law was not established for the righteous; yet it is good, if one uses it correctly* (1 Tm 1:9.8). When the apostle joins these two apparently contradictory ideas together, he warns and stirs the reader to look into and solve the question. After all, how can it be true that *the law is good, if one uses it correctly*, if what follows is also true, *We know that the law was not established for the righteous?* (1 Tm 1:8-9). For who but the righteous use the law correctly? Yet it was not established for such persons, but for the unrighteous. Or ought the unrighteous use the law correctly in order to be justified, that is, in order to become righteous, since the law like a schoolmaster leads them to grace,⁴⁴ and by grace alone they can fulfill what the law commands? By grace they are, of course, justified gratuitously, that is, without any preceding merits from their own works. *Otherwise, grace is no longer grace* (Rom 11:6). It is given, not because we have done good works, but so that we might be able to do them, that is, not because we have fulfilled the law, but in order that we might be able to fulfill the law. After all, he said, *I have come not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it* (Mt 5:17). Scripture said of him, *We have seen his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (Jn 1:14). This is the glory of which scripture said, *All have, after all, sinned and lack the glory of God*, and this is the grace of which it immediately adds, *They have been gratuitously justified by his grace* (Rom 3:23-24). The unrighteous, then, correctly use the law in order to become righteous, but once they have become righteous, they no longer use it as a vehicle, since they have arrived, or—to use instead the comparison just mentioned—they no longer use it as a schoolmaster, since they have already been educated.⁴⁵ How then can it be that the law was not established for the righteous? For the righteous also need it, not in the way it brings the unrighteous to justifying grace, but certainly in the way those who are already righteous use it correctly.⁴⁶ Does not the righteous one perhaps—no, not perhaps—rather does not the righteous one certainly use the law correctly,

when he imposes it upon the unrighteous to terrify them? As a result, when the disease of concupiscence that has taken root in them begins to grow because of the stimulus of the commandment and the increase of transgression, they may take flight through faith to justifying grace. There, delighted by the sweetness of righteousness through the gift of the Spirit, they may escape the punishment that the letter threatens. In that way the two statements will not be contradictory, nor will there be a conflict between them. Rather, the righteous use the good law correctly, and yet the law was not established for the righteous. After all, they were not justified as a result of it, but as a result of the law of faith; by that faith they believed that only God's grace can help their weakness to fulfill what the law of works commands.

17. Therefore, he says, *Where is your boasting? It has been excluded. By what law? By the law of works? No, but by the law of faith* (Rom 3:27). Perhaps he meant the praiseworthy boasting which one does in the Lord and that it is excluded, that is, not beaten so that it departs, but hammered so that it stands out. In that sense artisans who work with silver are called smiths.⁴⁷ Hence, we have in the Psalms, *That those who have been tested may be excluded like silver* (Ps 68:31), that is, that those who have been tested may stand out like the word of God. For elsewhere scripture says, *The words of the Lord are pure words, silver tested by the fire* (Ps 12:7). Perhaps he wanted to mention the wrongful boasting that comes from pride, the boasting of those who, when in their own eyes they live righteously, boast as if they had not received this.⁴⁸ Then he meant that it was excluded, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith, that is, cast out and thrown away, because by the law of faith people know that, if they live a good life, they have this from the grace of God and that they will attain perfection in the love of righteousness from no other source.

11, 18. Such thoughts make them pious, because piety is true wisdom. I mean the piety which the Greeks call *θεοσέβειαν*. The words we read in the Book of Job commend it to us, *See, piety is wisdom* (Jb 28:28). Moreover, if *θεοσέβεια* is translated into Latin according to its etymology, it can be called the worship of God, which was principally established so that the soul might not be ungrateful to God. For this reason, in the truest and only sacrifice we are admonished to give thanks to the Lord, our God.⁴⁹ But the soul will be ungrateful, if it attributes to itself what it has from God, especially its righteousness. Then the soul is filled with pride over works of righteousness as if they were its own and as if it produced them for itself by itself. That soul is not filled with pride, as is commonly the case, over wealth or bodily beauty or eloquence or other external [or internal]⁵⁰ goods of either the body or the soul, which even bad persons have. Rather, it is filled with pride, as if it were wise, over these goods which are in the true sense the goods of good people. By this vice even great men were driven back from the unchangeableness of the divine substance and

fell into the disgrace of idolatry. Hence, the same apostle in the same letter in which he vigorously defended grace said that he was under obligation to both Greeks and barbarians, to both the wise and the foolish, and that, therefore, for his part, he was ready to preach the gospel even to those who were in Rome.⁵¹ He adds, For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and then for the Greek. For the righteousness of God is revealed in it from faith to faith, as scripture says, "The righteous live from faith" (Rom 1:16-17 with Hb 2:4). This is the righteousness of God which, though veiled in the Old Testament, is revealed in the New. It is called the righteousness of God, because by bestowing it God makes us righteous. So too, With the Lord there is salvation (Ps 3:9), the salvation by which he makes us saved. And this is the faith from which and to which it is revealed, namely, from the faith of those foretelling it to the faith of those who accept it. By that faith of Jesus Christ, that is, which he bestowed upon us, we believe that we now have from God and will have more fully from him the righteous life we live. Hence, we offer him our thanks with the piety by which he alone is to be worshiped.

The Punishment of Pride and Ingratitude

12, 19. With good reason the apostle turned from this section to mentioning with horror those who by that vice I mentioned above became empty and puffed up and who were raised up by their own efforts as if through the empty air. They did not come to rest there, but were broken and plunged downward, falling upon the statues of idols as upon rocks. After all, since he was praising the piety of the faith for which we ought to be thankful to God, since we are gratuitously justified by it, he introduced its opposite at which we should be horrified. He said, God's anger is being revealed from heaven upon all godlessness and unrighteousness of human beings who suppress the truth in their wickedness. For what can be known of God is obvious to them, because God has shown it to them. From the creation of the world his invisible reality, namely, his everlasting power and divinity, is seen and understood through the things that have been made. Hence, they are without excuse, because, though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks. Rather, they became vain in their thoughts. And their foolish heart was darkened. Though they said they were wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of the image of a corruptible human being and birds and animals and reptiles (Rom 1:18-23). See how he said that they were not ignorant of the truth, but that they suppressed the truth in their wickedness. And it occurred to him that someone might ask the source from which they could have this knowledge of the truth, since God had not given them the law. Hence, he stated

the source from which they could have it. For he said that through the visible things of creation they came to an understanding of the invisible reality of the creator. For great minds truly persisted in the search, and they were able to find him. Where then is their godlessness? It is, of course, that, *though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks. Rather, they became vain in their thoughts* (Rom 1:21). Their vanity is really a disease; they mislead themselves, when they suppose they are something, though they are nothing.⁵² Then they cast a shadow over themselves by this swelling of pride. The holy psalmist prays that pride's foot may not come to him;⁵³ he said, *In your light we will see light* (Ps 36:10). They are turned away from the light of the immutable truth, *and their foolish heart was darkened* (Rom 1:21). Though they had known God, their heart was not wise, but rather foolish, because they did not glorify him as God or give thanks. *For he said to man, "See, piety is wisdom"* (Jb 28:28). And, for this reason, *though they said they were wise*, which is not to be understood in any other sense than that they attributed this to themselves, *they became fools* (Rom 1:22).

20. What need is there to mention the following paragraphs of this letter? God resists the proud,⁵⁴ and the depths to which those human beings have fallen through this godlessness and in which they lie submerged—I mean those human beings who were able to know the creator through the creature—teach us better than the remainder of this letter which we are citing here.⁵⁵ Nor have we undertaken a commentary on this letter in this work; rather, we are striving, as best we can, to show, especially by testimony from it, that we are helped by God to act with righteousness, not insofar as God gave us a law full of good and holy commandments, but insofar as our own will, without which we can do nothing good, is helped and raised up through the gift of the Spirit of grace. Without this help that teaching is the letter that kills, because it holds persons guilty of transgression rather than justifies the sinner. Those who knew the creator through his creation received from that knowledge no benefit toward salvation, *because, though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks, though they said they were wise* (Rom 1:21.22). In the same way, those who know through the law of God how they should live are not justified by that knowledge, because *wanting to establish their own righteousness, they were not subject to the righteousness of God* (Rom 10:3).

The Distinction between the Law of Works and the Law of Faith

13, 21. It is worth the effort to consider how the law of actions, that is, of works, which does not exclude that boasting, and the law of faith, which does exclude it, differ from each other, if only we can grasp the distinction. After all, one might say right off that the law of works is found in Judaism and the law of

faith in Christianity, because circumcision and other such works belong to the law and Christian practice does not observe them anymore. But we have for a long time been trying to show how mistaken that distinction is. We may have already shown this to sharper minds and especially to you and others like you. But since the point is important, it is not inappropriate for us to return to the testimonies again and again in making it clear to more people. For he said that no one is justified by the law and that the law entered in so that sin might abound,⁵⁶ but he defended the law so that no uneducated person would blame it and no sacrilegious person would attack it on that account. He said, *What then shall we say? That the law is sin? Heaven forbid! But I knew sin only through the law, for I would not have known desire if the law had not said, "You shall not desire" (Ex 20:17). And so, having seized the opportunity, sin produced in me through the commandment every desire (Rom 7:7-8).* He also says, *The law is indeed holy and the commandment holy, righteous, and good. But in order that sin might be seen as sin, it produced death for me through what is good (Rom 7:12-13).* It is, then, the letter that kills which says, *You shall not desire.* He likewise says of it the words I cited just before, *For knowledge of sin came through the law. But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law, though the law and the prophets have borne witness to it. The righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe; for there is no distinction. All have, after all, sinned and lack the glory of God, but they have been gratuitously justified by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus. For God has made him the sacrifice of atonement in his blood through faith. This was to reveal his righteousness in overlooking past sins in the time of God's patience in order to reveal his righteousness in the present time that he is righteous and justifies those who have faith in Jesus.* Then he added the passage we are now discussing, *Where is your boasting? It has been excluded. By what law? By the law of works? No, but by the law of faith (Rom 3:20-27).* It is, then, this law of actions which says, *You shall not desire (Ex 20:17 and Rom 7:7),* because the knowledge of sin comes through it. I want to know, then, if anyone would dare to ask to me whether the law of faith does not say, *You shall not desire.* After all, if it does not say that, what reason is there why we who live under it do not sin without a care and with impunity? For those people thought that the apostle said this, and he said of them, *And some people whose judgment is not right claim that we say, "Let us do evil that good may come of it" (Rom 3:8).* But if it also says, *You shall not desire,* as so many commandments from the gospel and the apostle unceasingly cry out their testimony, why is it also not called the law of works? The fact that it does not have the works of the old sacraments, namely, circumcision and the rest, does not mean that there are no works which it has in its own sacraments that are appropriate to its own time. But was there any question of the works of such sacraments when the

apostle said of the law that knowledge of sin came through it and, for that reason, no one is justified by it?⁵⁷ Why then is boasting not excluded by it, but by the law of faith,⁵⁸ from which the righteous live?⁵⁹ Does not knowledge of sin come through this law of faith, since it also says, *You shall not desire*?

22. What then is the difference? I will explain it briefly. What the law of works commands by its threats the law of faith obtains by its faith. The former says, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17); the latter says, *Since I knew that no one can be continent unless God grants this and to know from whom this gift comes was itself the mark of wisdom, I went to the Lord and pleaded with him* (Wis 8:21). This is the wisdom that is called piety; by it one worships the Father of lights from whom there comes *every best gift and every perfect gift* (Jas 1:17). He is worshiped by the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving so that those who worship him do not boast in themselves, but in him.⁶⁰ Accordingly, by the law of works God says: Do what I command! By the law of faith we say to God: Give what you command! After all, the law commands in order to remind us of what faith should do. It commands, that is, so that, if those to whom the command is given are not as yet able to observe it, they may know what to ask for. But if they are immediately able to do what is commanded and do it in obedience, they ought to know by whose gift they are able to do it. *After all, we have not received the spirit of this world*, said that same steadfast preacher of grace, *but the Spirit that comes from God so that we may know what God has given us* (1 Cor 2:12). What is the spirit of this world but the spirit of pride which darkened the foolish heart of those people, who, though they knew God, did not glorify him as God by giving thanks?⁶¹ It is the same spirit who deceives those who, *not knowing the righteousness of God and wanting to establish their own righteousness, were not subject to the righteousness of God* (Rom 10:3). Hence, they seem to me to be more children of faith who know from whom they should hope for what they do not yet have than those who give themselves credit for what they have. And yet we ought to prefer to both these kinds of people, those who both have these gifts and know from whom they have them, provided that they do not believe that they already are what they are not yet. Otherwise, they would fall into the sin of the Pharisee; though he thanked God for the gifts he had, he did not ask to receive anything, as if he had no need to increase and perfect his righteousness.⁶² Having then weighed and considered these points in accord with the ability that God is pleased to give us, we conclude that human beings are not justified by the commandments that teach us to live well, but only through faith in Jesus Christ, that is, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith, not by the letter, but by the Spirit, not by the merits of actions, but gratuitously by grace.

The Letter That Kills Is the Ten Commandments

14, 23. The apostle seems to rebuke and correct those who were persuaded to receive circumcision in that by the term "law" he refers to circumcision and other such observances of the law.⁶³ Christians do not now observe them, since they were foreshadowings of what was to come.⁶⁴ And they now actually possess what was promised symbolically through those foreshadowings. The apostle, nonetheless, wanted us to understand that the law, by which he says that no one is justified, is found not only in those sacraments which they had as symbols of what was promised, but also in those works which amount to a righteous life for whoever does them. Among them we also find the commandment, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17). And so that what we are saying may be made more clear, let us look at the Ten Commandments. For on the mountain Moses certainly received the law that was to be given to the people written on stone tablets by the finger of God.⁶⁵ This law is limited to the Ten Commandments in which there is no commandment about circumcision and nothing about the animal victims which Christian do not now offer in sacrifice. Apart from the observance of the Sabbath, what is there in those Ten Commandments that a Christian is not to observe, whether about not making and not worshiping idols and other gods besides the one true God or about not taking the name of God in vain or about honoring parents or about avoiding fornication, murder, theft, false witness, adultery, and desiring another's possessions?⁶⁶ Which of these has anyone claimed that a Christian need not observe? Was it perhaps not this law written on those two tablets that the apostle called the letter that kills, but that law about circumcision and the other sacred rites that have now been abolished? But how are we to think that, when we find in it, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17); by that commandment, though it was holy and righteous and good,⁶⁷ *sin deceived me and killed me through it* (Rom 7:11)? What else does that mean but that *the letter kills* (2 Cor 3:6)?

24. It is even clearer in the same passage to the Corinthians, where he says, *The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6) that he wants us to understand the letter as the Ten Commandments written on those two tablets. After all, he speaks as follows: *You are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets, but on tablets of flesh, your hearts. Such confidence do we have through Christ before God, not that we are sufficient to have a single thought as our own, but our sufficiency comes from God. He has made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death carved in letters of stone was inaugurated in glory so that the people of Israel could not look upon the face of Moses on account of the glory of his face, though it was a passing glory, will not the ministry of the Spirit be in greater glory? For if the ministry of condemnation was glorious, the ministry*

of righteousness will abound much more in glory (2 Cor 3:3-9). One could say a great deal about these words, but perhaps there will be a better occasion later. For the moment note what he calls the letter that kills, to which he contrasts as its opposite the Spirit that gives life.⁶⁸ It is certainly the ministry of death carved in stone letters and the ministry of condemnation,⁶⁹ because *the law entered in so that sin might abound* (Rom 5:20). But the commandments themselves are for one who observes them so useful and conducive to salvation that one can possess life only by observing them. Or are the Ten Commandments called the letter that kills on account of the one commandment it contains concerning the Sabbath? For anyone who up to the present observes that day in the literal sense of the commandment is wise according to the flesh, but *to be wise according to the flesh is death* (Rom 8:6). And are we to suppose that those nine commandments which it is right to observe in their literal sense do not pertain to the law of works by which no one is justified,⁷⁰ but to the law of faith by which the righteous live?⁷¹ Who would be so foolish as to think that it was called the ministry of death carved in letters of stone not on account of all ten commandments, but on account of that one commandment that has to do with the Sabbath? What then are we to do with the words, *The law produced anger, for where there is no law, there is no transgression* (Rom 4:15)? Or with the words, *Before the law there was sin in the world, but sin was not imputed, when the law did not exist* (Rom 5:13)? Or with these words, which we have mentioned so many times, *Knowledge of sin came through the law* (Rom 3:20)? Or especially with this statement in which he quite clearly expresses the point at issue, *I would not have known desire, if the law had not said, "You shall not desire"* (Rom 7:7 with Ex 20:17)?

25. Consider the whole passage and see whether he says anything on account of circumcision or the Sabbath or any other foreshadowing sacred rite and does not rather say everything for the following reason. The letter forbidding sin does not give life to human beings, but rather kills them by increasing desire and augmenting sinfulness because of transgression, unless through the law of faith in Christ Jesus grace sets them free, when love is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.⁷² For when he said, *That we may serve in the new condition of the Spirit and not under the old condition of the letter* (Rom 7:6), he said, *What then shall we say? That the law is sin? Heaven forbid! But I knew sin only through the law, for I would not have known desire if the law had not said, "You shall not desire"* (Ex 20:17). *But having seized the opportunity, sin produced in me through the commandment every desire. After all, without the law sin lay dead. I was once living without the law, but with the arrival of the commandment sin came back to life. I died, and the commandment which was meant for life was found in my case to spell death. For, having seized the opportunity, sin deceived me by the commandment and killed me through it.*

Hence, the law is indeed holy and the commandment holy and righteous and good. Did what was good become death for me? Heaven forbid! But in order that sin might be seen as sin, it produced death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment sin might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under the power of sin. I do not know what I do, for I do not do what I want; rather, I do what I hate. But if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. Now it is not I who do that, but the sin that dwells in me. For I know that the good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. I can will the good, but I cannot do it. I do not do the good that I want, but I do the evil that I do not want. But if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me. I find, therefore, a law that, when I want to do good, evil lies at hand for me. For I delight in the law of God in the interior human being, but I see another law in my members that resists the law of my mind and holds me captive in the law of sin which lies in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Therefore, I serve the law of God with my mind, but the law of sin with my flesh (Rom 7:7-25).

Delight in the Law of the Lord Is a Gift of the Spirit

26. It is clear, then, that, if the new condition of the Spirit is lacking, the old condition of the letter makes people guilty by reason of the knowledge of sin rather than sets them free from sin. For this reason scripture says elsewhere, *One who adds knowledge adds pain* (Eccl 1:18), not because the law itself is evil, but because the good of the commandment lies in the letter that makes it known, not in the Spirit who helps to fulfill it. If that commandment is observed out of fear of punishment, not out of the love of righteousness, it is observed in the manner of a slave, not in the manner of someone free, and for that reason it is not observed. For there is lacking the good fruit that springs up from the root of love. But if *faith that works through love* is present (Gal 5:6), one begins to find delight in the law of God in the interior human being. This delight is a gift, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, even if another law in one's members resists the law of the mind,⁷³ until the whole old condition has passed over into the new condition. This new condition is being increased in the interior human being from day to day,⁷⁴ as we are set free *from the body of this death by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:24).

15, 27. This grace remained veiled in the Old Testament; it has been unveiled in the gospel of Christ in accord with the perfect temporal order of providence, for God knows how to arrange all things. And perhaps it is a part of that hiddenness that in the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai only what pertains to the Sabbath was concealed in a symbolic commandment. The

Sabbath is the day of sanctification. And there is good reason that among all the works which God made, sanctification is first mentioned at the point where he rested from all his works;⁷⁵ this is not the place to discuss that point. Nonetheless, I think that it suffices for the matter we are dealing with that there was a reason that the people received the commandment to abstain from all servile work on that day.⁷⁶ Servile work signified sin, for not to sin pertains to sanctification, that is, to the gift of God through the Holy Spirit. In the law written on the two tablets of stone this commandment alone among the others was expressed in the shadow of a symbol. The Jews observe the Sabbath in that shadow. This very fact signifies that it was then the time for concealing the grace which was to be unveiled in the New Testament through Christ's passion, as if by the tearing of the temple veil.⁷⁷ He says, *When you have gone over to Christ, the veil will be removed* (2 Cor 3:16).

16, 28. *The Lord is the Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3:17). This is the Spirit of God by whose gift we are justified; by his gift there comes to be in us a delight in not sinning so that we have freedom. So too, without this Spirit we find delight in sinning so that we are enslaved. We must abstain from the works of such slavery; that is, we must observe the Sabbath in a spiritual way. This is the Holy Spirit by whom love is poured out in our hearts,⁷⁸ and love is the fulfillment of the law.⁷⁹ In the gospel this Holy Spirit is also called the finger of God.⁸⁰ Those tablets were written by the finger of God,⁸¹ and the finger of God is the Spirit of God by whom we are sanctified so that we live from faith and do good works through love.⁸² Who can fail to be struck by the agreement as well as the difference? Through Moses God commanded that the Passover be observed with the killing of a lamb as a symbol,⁸³ in order to signify the future passion of the Lord. And we count fifty days from the celebration of Passover up to the day on which Moses received the law that the finger of God had written on those tablets. So too, when fifty days had passed from the killing and rising of him who *was led off like a sheep for sacrifice* (Is 53:7), the finger of God, that is, the Holy Spirit, filled the faithful who were gathered in one place.⁸⁴

The Law of Faith Is the Love Poured Out in Our Hearts

17, 29. Despite this remarkable agreement there surely remains a very great difference. In the former case the people were prevented from approaching the place where the law was given by terrifying fear,⁸⁵ but in the latter case the Holy Spirit came over those who were gathered together in one place and were waiting for him.⁸⁶ In the former case the finger of God wrote on stone tablets; in the latter upon human hearts. In the former case, then, the law by which the unrighteous were terrified was given outwardly; in the latter case the law by which they are

justified was given inwardly. For “*You shall not commit adultery,*” “*You shall not kill,*” “*You shall not desire,*” and any other commandment there is—that has been written in those tablets—has been, he said, *summed up in these words: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love of the neighbor does no evil. Rather, love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom 13:9-10). This love is not written on stone tablets, but *has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). The law of God, then, is love. To this love *the wisdom of the flesh is not subject, and it cannot be* (Rom 8:7). When the works of love are written on tablets in order to strike fear in this wisdom of the flesh, it is the law of works and the letter that kills their transgressor. But when love itself is poured out in the hearts of those who believe,⁸⁷ it is the law of faith and the Spirit who gives life to their lovers.

30. Consider now how this distinction agrees with the words of the apostle which I mentioned a little earlier for another reason, though I postponed until later a more careful examination of them. He says, *You have shown that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not by ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets, but on tablets of flesh, your hearts* (2 Cor 3:3). See how he shows that the former law was written outside human beings in order to strike fear into them from the outside, while the latter law is written in the human beings so that it justifies them within. By *tablets of flesh, your hearts*, he did not mean tablets of the wisdom of the flesh; rather, he meant tablets that were alive and had minds in comparison with stone which has no mind. And a little later he says that the people of Israel were not able to gaze upon the face of Moses and so he spoke to them through a veil.⁸⁸ This means that the letter of the law justifies no one, but a veil has been drawn in their reading of the Old Testament, until they pass over to Christ and the veil is removed,⁸⁹ that is, until they pass over to grace and understand that our justification, by which we do what he commands, comes from him. He gives us the commandments precisely so that, when we ourselves fail, we may take refuge in him. And so he said with the utmost carefulness, *Such confidence do we have through Christ before God*, and so that we would not attribute this to ourselves, he immediately instructed us on the point at issue. He said, *Not that we are sufficient to have a single thought as our own, but our sufficiency comes from God. He has made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:4-6).

18, 31. Elsewhere he said, *the law*, that is, this letter written outside human beings, *was given for the sake of transgression* (Gal 3:19). Hence, he also called it the ministry of death and the ministry of condemnation. But this law, that is, the law of the New Testament, he calls the ministry of the Spirit and the ministry of righteousness,⁹⁰ because through the gift of the Spirit we do the works of righteousness and we are set free from the condemnation owing to transgression.

And so, the former is being done away with, while the latter continues, since the schoolmaster who strikes terror is done away with,⁹¹ as love takes the place of fear, *for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3:17). He says that this ministry does not come from our merits, but from his mercy: *Therefore, since we have this ministry because we have obtained mercy, let us not grow weak; rather, let us cast aside hidden shameful practices, not walking in cunningness or mixing the word of God with deceit* (2 Cor 4:1-2). He means for us to understand by this cunningness and deceit the hypocrisy by which the proud want to be seen as righteous. Hence, in that psalm which the same apostle mentioned as testimony to this very grace, it says, *Blessed are they to whom God has not imputed sin and on whose lips there is no deceit* (Ps 32:2).⁹² This is the confession of those who are humble and holy, not of those who boast of being what they are not. A little later he adds, *For it is not ourselves that we preach, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as servants through Jesus, because God who commanded that light shine forth from the darkness has shone in our hearts to illumine the knowledge of his glory upon the face of Christ* (2 Cor 4:5-6). This is the knowledge of his glory by which we know that he is the light which enlightens our darkness. Pay attention to how he teaches this. He says, *We have this treasure in vessels of clay to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and does not come from us* (2 Cor 4:7). And a little later he praised this same grace even more extensively and came to that cloak of righteousness, that is, to faith. Clothed with it, we will not be found naked, and for this reason we groan, weighed down by our mortality, while we long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.⁹³ Notice what he adds, *But the one who has brought this about in us is God who has given us the pledge of the Spirit* (2 Cor 5:5). And after this he added, *So that in him we might be the righteousness of God* (2 Cor 5:21). This is not the righteousness of God by which he himself is righteous, but that by which he makes us righteous.

19, 32. Let no Christian then depart from this faith, for it alone is the Christian faith. Some may be ashamed to claim that we become righteous by ourselves without the grace of God producing this in us, for they see that the pious faithful cannot tolerate such a statement. But they should not resort to saying that the reason we cannot be righteous without the grace of God is that he gave us the law, that he provided us with teaching, that he imposed the good commandments. For all that is undoubtedly the letter that kills, if the Spirit does not provide help. But when the life-giving Spirit is present, he makes us love the very same thing, now written within, which the law made us fear, when it was written exteriorly.

Jeremiah Foretold the Coming of the New Testament

33. Examine this teaching for a little while in the testimony which the prophet stated with perfect clarity on this point: *Behold, the days will come, says the Lord, and I will complete a New Testament with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the testament I made with their fathers on the day on which I took their hand in order to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they had not kept to my testament and I did not trouble myself over them, says the Lord. This is the testament that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws in their heart and I will write them upon their minds, and I will be their God and they will be my people. And individuals will no longer teach their fellow citizens or kinfolk, saying: "Know the Lord," because they will all know me from the littlest to the greatest of them, for I will forgive their wickedness and I will no longer remember their sins* (Jer 31:31-34). What shall we say to that? Apart from this passage in the prophet we find no mention at all of the New Testament in the old books, or only with difficulty do we find in them any mention of it where it is called by this very name. There are many passages that refer to it and foretell its coming, but not so that we also find its name expressed. Consider, then, with care the difference between these two testaments, that is, the Old and the New, to which God has borne witness.

34. When he said, *Not like the testament I made with their fathers on the day on which I took their hand in order to bring them out of the land of Egypt, see what he added, for they had not kept to my testament* (Jer 31:32). He attributes it to their sins that they did not keep to his testament so that they would not think that the law which they then received deserved the blame. It is, after all, the law which Christ came, not to destroy, but to fulfill,⁹⁴ and yet the wicked are not justified by that same law, but by grace. The life-giving Spirit, without whom the letter kills, does this. *For, if a law had been given which could give life, righteousness would, of course, come from the law. But scripture has enclosed all things under sin so that on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe* (Gal 3:21-22). Because of this promise, that is, because of this gift of God, the law is being fulfilled; without that promise the law produces transgressors. At times it even leads to doing the evil actions, if the flame of concupiscence leaps over the restraints of fear. At times it remains in the will alone, if the fear of punishment conquers the sweetness of lust. The words, *Scripture has enclosed all things under sin so that on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe* (Gal 3:22), express the usefulness of this act of enclosing. After all, for what purposes did scripture do this enclosing, if not for the purpose it goes on to state: *Before faith came, we were guarded and enclosed under the law for the faith that was later revealed* (Gal 3:23). The law, then, was given in order that we would seek after grace; grace was given so that we might fulfill the law. After all, it is not because

of some failure of its own that the law is not fulfilled, but because of the failure of the wisdom of the flesh. That failure had to be revealed by the law, but it had to be healed by grace. *For what the law could not do inasmuch as it was weakened by the flesh God has done; he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by sin he condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit* (Rom 8:3-4). Hence, in that testimony of the prophet it says, *I will complete a New Testament with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah*. What does *I will complete* mean but: I will fulfill it, but *not in accord with the testament I made with their fathers on the day on which I took their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt* (Jer 31:31-32)?⁹⁵

20, 35. The former, then, was old, because the latter was new. But why was the former old and the latter new, though the same law is fulfilled by the New Testament which in the Old commanded, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17)? He says, *For they had not kept to my testament and I did not trouble myself over them, says the Lord* (Jer 31:32). Therefore, the former is called the Old Testament on account of the human injury which is not healed by the command and threat of the letter; the latter is called the New Testament on account of the new condition of the Spirit which heals the new human being from the wound of the old condition. Then notice what follows and see how brilliantly clear it makes the point which those who trust in themselves refuse to see. He says, *This is the testament that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws in their heart and I will write them upon their minds* (Jer 31:33). There you have the reason why the apostle says what I quoted above: *not on stone tablets, but on the tablets of your hearts*, because it is written *not by ink, but by the Spirit of the living God* (2 Cor 3:3). In that Letter he said, *He has made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit* (2 Cor 3:6). I do not think the apostle had any other reason to mention the New Testament in that passage, except that he had that prophecy in mind, when he said, *not on stone tablets, but on tablets of flesh, your hearts* (2 Cor 3:3). For that prophecy, in which the New Testament was promised by name, said, *I will write them in their hearts* (Jer 31:33).

The Laws of God in Our Hearts Are the Presence of the Spirit

21, 36. What then are the laws of God that are written by God himself on our hearts but the very presence of the Holy Spirit? He is the finger of God;⁹⁶ by his presence love is poured out in our hearts,⁹⁷ the love which is the fulfillment of the law and the goal of the commandment.⁹⁸ For the promises of the Old Testament were earthly. I leave aside the sacraments rites which were foreshadowings of what was to come,⁹⁹ such as circumcision, the Sabbath, the other feast

days, the ceremonies regarding certain foods, and the many rites of the sacred sacrifices, which were all appropriate to the old condition with its carnal law and servile yoke. Yet the Old Testament contained the sort of commandments of righteousness that we are even now commanded to obey; these were, above all, those found on those two tablets and were not wrapped in the shadows of some symbolic expression. For example, *You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not desire; and any other commandment there is has been summed up in these words: You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Rom 13:9). And yet, the Old Testament lists earthly and temporal promises which are goods of this corruptible flesh, even though they symbolize everlasting and heavenly goods which, of course, pertain to the New Testament. Now we are promised the good of the heart, the good of the mind, the good of the Spirit, that is, the intelligible good, when it says, *Putting my laws in their mind, I will also write them in their hearts* (Jer 31:33). By this he signified that they would not fear the law that strikes terror from the outside, but that they would love the righteousness of the law that dwells within.

22, 37. Then he added the reward, *And I will be their God, and they will be my people* (Jer 31:33). This is what the psalmist said to God, *It is good for me to cling to God* (Ps 73:28). He said, *I will be their God, and they will be my people*. What could be better than this good, what could be happier than this happiness of living for God,¹⁰⁰ and of living from God? For with him there is the source of light and in his light we shall see the light.¹⁰¹ Of this life the Lord said, *This is eternal life, that they know you, the one true God and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ* (Jn 17:3), that is, you and Jesus Christ whom you have sent, the one true God. This is what he promises to those who love him; he says, *Those who love me keep my commandments, and those who love me are loved by my Father. I too will love them, and I shall show myself to them* (Jn 14:21). He will, that is, show himself to them in the form of God in which he is equal to the Father, not in the form of the servant in which he showed himself even to sinners.¹⁰² Then there will be fulfilled the words of scripture, *The godless will be taken away so that they do not see the glory of the Lord* (Is 26:10), when those on the left will enter eternal fire, but the righteous will enter eternal life.¹⁰³ This eternal life, as I mentioned, has been declared to consist in their knowing the one true God.¹⁰⁴ For this reason John too says, *Beloved, we are now children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2). This likeness to him is now beginning to be formed again as human beings are interiorly renewed from day to day¹⁰⁵ according to the image of him who created them (Col 3:10).

23, 38. But in comparison to the perfection of that excellent state that will then exist, what does this present state amount to? Using an example drawn from

familiar things to speak of those ineffable ones, the apostle used a comparison with childhood and adulthood. He said, *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child, but when I became a man, I set aside what belonged to the child.* He went on to show why he said this with the words, *We see now through a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know as I am known* (1 Cor 13:11-12).

24, 39. Moreover, this prophet whose testimony we are examining also made the point that the reward, the goal, the perfect state of happiness, the pinnacle of the blessed and eternal life, is found in God. For when he said, *And I will be their God, and they will be my people*, he immediately added, *and individuals will no longer teach their fellow citizens and their kinfolk, saying: "Know the Lord," because they will all know me from the littlest to the greatest of them* (Jer 31:33-34). Now is certainly the time of the New Testament which the prophet promised by these words which we have quoted. Why then do individuals still say to their fellow citizens and kinfolk, *Know the Lord*? They do say this, don't they, when the gospel is preached, and doesn't its being preached mean precisely that this is said everywhere? After all, why did the apostle say that he was the teacher of the Gentiles,¹⁰⁶ except that his words were being fulfilled: *How will they call upon him in whom they have not believed? Or how will they believe in him of whom they have not heard? But how will they hear of him without someone to preach?* (Rom 10:14). Now, since this preaching is spreading everywhere, how can it be the time of the New Testament? For the prophet said of the New Testament, *And individuals will no longer teach their fellow citizens and their kinfolk, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me from the littlest to the greatest of them* (Jer 31:34). It can only be that he included in his promise the eternal reward of the same New Testament, that is, the fully blessed contemplation of God himself.

40. What do the words, *all from the littlest to the greatest of them*, mean but all who spiritually belong to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, that is, to the children of Isaac, to the offspring of Abraham? For this is the promise made to him, *Your offspring will be named after Isaac. After all, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. This is the wording of the promise: "I will return at this season, and Sarah will have a son"* (Gn 18:14). *Not only this, but Rebecca too bore children from having relations once with our father, Isaac. They were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, but in order that God's plan might remain in accord with his choice, scripture said, "The older will serve the younger"* (Gn 25:23), *not because of any works, but because of the one who calls* (Rom 9:7-13). It is the house of Israel or the house of Judah on account of Christ who came from the house of Judah. It is the house of the children of the promise, that is, children not because of their own works, but

because of God's kindness. God promises only what he himself does; after all, it is not he who makes the promise while someone else carries it out. That would not be promising, but predicting. Hence, it says: *not because of works, but because of the one who calls* (Rom 9:12), so that the attainment is not due to them, but to God, so that the reward is not regarded as something owed them, but as grace.¹⁰⁷ Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.¹⁰⁸ Its vigorous defender and preacher is the least of the apostles, who worked harder than all of them, though it was not he himself, but the grace of God that worked with him.¹⁰⁹ It says, *All will know me* (Jer 31:34), that is, all of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah. After all, it is not all who are from Israel who are Israel, but those to whom the psalm says, *To welcome the morning*, that is, the new light coming from, of course, the New Testament, *all you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; let every offspring of Israel fear him* (Ps 22:1.24-25). Absolutely all the offspring, that is, all the offspring that received the promise and were called, but those who were called by his choice.¹¹⁰ *But those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified* (Rom 8:30). *Therefore, it was on the basis of faith so that the promise might be assured as grace for all the offspring, not merely to the offspring which comes from the law*, that is, the offspring that comes from the Old Testament to the New, *but also to that which comes from faith*, not because the law was promised them, *but from the faith of Abraham*. I mean those who imitate the faith of Abraham, *who is the father of us all*. As scripture says, *"I will make you the father of the nations"* (Rom 4:16-17 with Gn 17:5). All these, then, who have been predestined, called, justified, and glorified know God by the grace of the New Testament from the littlest to the greatest of them.

The Difference between the Old and New Testaments Summed Up

41. The law of works written on stone tablets and its reward, that promised land which the carnal house of Israel received when it was set free from Egypt, pertains to the Old Testament. So too, the law of faith written in our hearts and its reward, the beauty of contemplation which the spiritual house of Israel will perceive once it has been set free from this world, pertains to the New Testament. Then the words of the apostle will be fulfilled: *Prophecies will be done away with; tongues will cease; knowledge will be done away with* (1 Cor 13:8). He means that knowledge of little ones with which we live in this life; it is partial, in a mirror, and dim.¹¹¹ After all, prophecy is necessary for this life, in which the future still takes the place of the past. For this life tongues are necessary, that is, the multiplicity of meanings; in it we receive now this, now that admonition from different persons, since we do not as yet contemplate the eternal light of the clear truth with a mind that has been fully purified. *But when that which is*

perfect has come (1 Cor 13:10), and all this which is partial shall have been done away with, then the Word who was revealed to flesh, because he assumed flesh, will disclose himself to those who love him; then there will be the eternal life in which we will know the one true God.¹¹² Then *we shall be like him* (1 Jn 3:2), because we shall know him then as we are known.¹¹³ Then *individuals will not teach their fellow citizens or kinfolk, saying, "Know the Lord"; for all will know him from the littlest to the greatest of them* (Jer 31:34). This can be interpreted in many ways. For example, it can mean that even there each of the saints will differ in glory as one star differs from another.¹¹⁴ It makes no difference whether one says, *from the littlest to the greatest of them*, as scripture has it, or "from the greatest to the littlest of them." So too, it makes no difference if we understand the little ones to be those who can only believe and the greatest to be those who can also understand the incorporeal and immutable light, to the extent that is possible in this life. Or he may have intended us to take the littlest as those who came later in time and the greatest as those who came earlier, for all will receive at one time the promised contemplation of God. Those who came earlier foresaw better things for us in such a way that they did not attain perfection without us.¹¹⁵ And, therefore, the littlest ones are found to be like those who came earlier, since they waited less. It is just as we find in the parable about the day's wage in the gospel. Those who came to the vineyard later received their pay first.¹¹⁶ There may be still another way of interpreting the littlest and the greatest, but it escapes me at present.

25, 42. Pay as careful attention as you can to the point that I am making such a great effort to show. When the prophet promised the New Testament, he did not do so in accord with the testament that was earlier made with the people of Israel, when they were set free from Egypt. He said nothing about changing the sacrifices or any sacred rites, although that change was undoubtedly going to come, as we see that it has come. The same prophetic scripture bears witness to this in many other passages. But the prophet instructed us about only this difference, namely, that God would place his laws in the minds of those who belonged to this testament and would write it in their hearts. From this idea the apostle drew his words, *not by ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not upon stone tablets, but upon tablets of flesh, your hearts* (2 Cor 3:3). And as the eternal reward of this justification he promised, not the land from which were driven the Amorites and the Hittites and the other nations, which are mentioned there,¹¹⁷ but God himself. It is good to cling to him,¹¹⁸ since the goodness of God that they love is the very God whom they love. Only sins separate God and human beings, and sins are removed only by the same grace. Hence, after he had said, *For all will know me from the littlest to the greatest of them*, he immediately added, *because I will forgive their sinfulness and I will not remember their sins any more* (Jer 31:34). By the law of works, then, the Lord says, *You shall not*

desire (Ex 20:17); by the law of faith the Lord says, *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5). He was, after all, speaking about good works, that is, about the fruits of the branches.¹¹⁹ The difference, then, between the Old and the New Testament is seen to be this: in the former the law is written on tablets, in the latter upon hearts, so that what in the former struck fear from without might in the latter produce delight within. In the former one became a transgressor because of the letter that kills; in the latter one becomes a lover because of the Spirit that gives life. Hence, we should not say that God helps us to do works of righteousness and produces in us *both the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13), because he externally produces sounds in our ears with the commandments of righteousness, but because he internally gives the increase,¹²⁰ by pouring out love *in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5).

How the Gentiles Have the Law Written in Their Hearts

26, 43. We must see what the apostle meant when he said, *When the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what belongs to the law, these people, who do not have the law, are themselves the law for themselves. They reveal the work of the law written in their hearts* (Rom 2:14-15). Otherwise, it might seem that the distinctiveness of the New Testament disappears, since the Lord promised to write his laws in the hearts of his people, but the Gentiles possessed this as part of their nature. We must, therefore, examine this question of no minor import which has arisen. After all, someone will say: If God distinguishes the New from the Old Testament inasmuch as in the Old Testament he wrote his law upon tablets, while in the New he wrote it upon hearts, how are the faithful of the New Testament distinguished from the Gentiles? The latter, after all, have the work of the law written in their hearts as a result of which they do by nature what belongs to the law. They seem to be better off than the old people of God who received the law on tablets, and they seem to have anticipated the new people who received through the New Testament what nature gave to them.

44. Did the apostle perhaps mean to say that those Gentiles who belong to the New Testament have the law written in their hearts? We must see how he came to this point in the letter. First, he said in praise of the gospel, *It is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and then for the Greek. For the righteousness of God is revealed in it from faith to faith, as scripture says, "The righteous live from faith"* (Rom 1:16-17 with Hb 2:4). Next he speaks of those godless people whom even the knowledge of God did not benefit because of their pride, since *they did not glorify him as God or give thanks* (Rom 1:21). Then he turns to those who judge others, while doing the sort of things they condemn.¹²¹ He says this especially on account of the Jews

who boasted over the law of God, although he still does not mention them by name. On this point he says, *Anger and indignation, tribulation and distress for every human soul that does evil, Jew first and then Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, Jew first and then Greek. For there is no partiality on God's part. Those who have sinned without the law will perish without the law, and those who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God; rather, those who observe the law will be justified* (Rom 2:8-14). He immediately adds to these words the statement in question and says, *When the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what belongs to the law* (Rom 2:14) and the rest which I cited above. Hence, he seems here to use the term "Gentiles" to refer to those whom he called Greeks above, where he said, *Jew first and then Greek*. Moreover, the gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, *for the Jew first and then for the Greek* (Rom 1:16), and *anger and indignation, tribulation and distress for every human soul that does evil, Jew first and then Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, Jew first and then Greek* (Rom 2:8-10). Paul referred to these Greeks as the Gentiles who do by nature what pertains to the law and who have the work of the law written in their hearts. The Gentiles who have the law written in their hearts surely belong to the gospel; for these people who believe, it is the power of God for salvation. But to which Gentiles, despite their good actions, would he promise glory, honor, and peace, if they stood apart from the grace of the gospel? After all, there is no partiality on God's part, and it is not those who hear the law, but those who observe it who are justified.¹²² Therefore, whether it is a Jew or it is a Greek, that is, a believing Gentile, they will equally obtain salvation in the gospel; *for there is no distinction*. So too, he later says, *All have, after all, sinned and lack the glory of God, but they have been gratuitously justified by his grace* (Rom 3:22-24). How then could Paul have said that the Greek, who observes the law, is justified without the grace of the Savior?

45. After all, he would not contradict himself with the words, *Those who observe the law will be justified* (Rom 2:13), as if people were justified by works and not by grace. For he says that it is *gratuitously* that *human beings are justified by faith without the works of the law* (Rom 3:24, 28). He meant nothing else to be understood by his term *gratuitously*, but that works do not precede justification. Elsewhere he says plainly, *If it is by grace, it is not on the basis of works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace* (Rom 11:6). We must rather understand, *Those who observe the law will be justified* (Rom 2:13) so that we realize that they fulfilled the law only because they are justified. Thus justification does not follow upon the observance of the law; rather, justification precedes the observance of the law. What else, after all, does *justified* (Rom 3:24) mean but: made righteous by the one, of course, *who justifies sinners* (Rom

4:5), so that from sinners they become righteous? After all, if we were to express ourselves with the words, "Human beings will be set free," one would understand by this that freedom is given to those who were already human beings. But if we were to say, "Human beings will be created," one would certainly not understand that those who already were human beings are created, but that they became human beings by being created. So too, if it were said, "Those who observe the law will be honored," we would correctly interpret it only in the sense that honor is given to those who were already observing the law. But when it said, *Those who observe the law will be justified* (Rom 2:13), what else did it say but that the righteous will be made such? After all, those who observe the law are certainly righteous. Accordingly, it is the same as if one were to say, "Those who observe the law will be created," not because they already existed, but so that they might exist. Then the Jews, who were hearers of the law, would understand that they need the grace of the God who justifies so that they could be observers of the law. Or it is certainly true that they *will be justified* in the sense that they will be regarded as righteous, that they will be counted as righteous. In that sense scripture says of a certain man, *But he wanting to justify himself* (Lk 10:29), that is, wanting to be regarded and counted as righteous. For this reason we say in one sense that God sanctifies his holy ones, and we say in another sense, *May your name be sanctified* (Mt 6:9). We use the former expression because he sanctifies those who were not holy, but we use the latter so that what is always holy in itself might be regarded as holy by human beings, that is, that they might have a holy fear of it.

46. In mentioning the Gentiles, then, who do by nature what pertains to the law and have the work of the law written in their hearts,¹²³ he wanted us to understand those who believe in Christ. They do not come to the faith, as the Jews do, by having the law given to them. Hence, there is no reason why we should try to distinguish them from those to whom the Lord promised the New Testament through the prophet, when he said that he would write his laws in their hearts.¹²⁴ For through the wild olive tree's having received the gift of being grafted on, as he says,¹²⁵ they belong to the same natural olive tree, that is, to the same people of God. Moreover, the testimony of the apostle is in better agreement with the statement of the prophet that belonging to the New Testament means that they have the law of God written, not on tablets, but in their hearts, that is, that they embrace the righteousness of the law with an interior love. There faith works through love,¹²⁶ because God justifies the nations on the basis of faith. Scripture foresaw this and foretold it to Abraham with the words, *All nations will be blessed in your offspring* (Gn 22:18).¹²⁷ By the grace of this promise the wild olive tree was grafted onto the natural olive tree,¹²⁸ and the nations who believed became children of Abraham in the offspring of Abraham, that is, in Christ,¹²⁹ through imitating Abraham's faith. Although he had not

received the law on the tablets and did not yet have even circumcision, *he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness* (Gn 15:6).¹³⁰ And so what the apostle said about Gentiles of this sort, namely, that they have the law written in their hearts,¹³¹ will be much the same as what he said to the Corinthians, *Not upon tablets of stone, but in tablets of flesh, your hearts* (2 Cor 3:3). After all, in that way they become members of the house of Israel, since their foreskin is counted as circumcision, because they do not reveal the righteousness of the law by a cutting away of the flesh, but guard it by the love of their heart. For, *if the uncircumcised observe the precepts of the law*, he says, *will not the lack of circumcision be counted as circumcision?* (Rom 2:26). And, for this reason, in the house of the true Israel, *in whom there is no guile* (Jn 1:47), they share in the New Testament, because God puts the laws into their minds and writes them on their hearts¹³² by his finger, the Holy Spirit, who pours out in their hearts the love¹³³ which is the fulfillment of the law.¹³⁴

27, 47. Do not be concerned that he said that they do what pertains to the law by nature, not by the Spirit of God, not by faith, not by grace. After all, the Spirit of grace acts to restore in us the image of God, the image in which we were created in terms of our nature. An injury that grace heals is surely against nature; because of this grace we say to God, *Have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against you* (Ps 41:5). Hence, human beings naturally observe what pertains to the law; those who do not do this fail to do it as a result of their woundedness. By that woundedness the law of God has been removed from their hearts, and so, once that wound has been healed, the law is written there, and they naturally do what pertains to the law. This does not mean that grace has been denied through nature, but rather that nature has been repaired through grace. *Through one human being sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). And for that reason there is no distinction; they lack the glory of God, though they have been gratuitously justified by his grace.¹³⁵ By that grace there is written in the renewed interior human being the righteousness that sin had removed, and this mercy came upon the human race through Jesus Christ our Lord. *For God is one; one too is the mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Tm 2:5).

A Second Interpretation of What Paul Meant

48. But these who by nature do what pertains to the law are not immediately to be considered as belonging to the number of those whom the grace of Christ justifies. They may even belong to the number of those who are unbelievers and who do not worship the true God in truth and righteousness. We may read or come to know or hear of some actions of theirs which we not only cannot blame

by the standard of righteousness, but which we rightly and deservedly praise. And yet, if we carefully examine the motive out of which they are done, we seldom find any that deserve the praise and defense that belongs to righteousness.

28. Nonetheless, the image of God has not been removed from the human soul by the stain of earthly loves to such a point that not even the faintest outlines of it remain. Hence, the soul can be correctly said to observe or know some elements of the law even amid the godlessness of its life. Perhaps this is what the apostle meant when he said that the Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature what pertains to the law and that such human beings are themselves a law for themselves and have the work of the law written in their hearts.¹³⁶ That is, what was impressed upon the soul by the image of God, when it was created, has not been entirely removed. In this way too, the distinction is preserved by which the New Testament differs from the Old. That is, the law of God, which through the Old Testament was written on tablets, is written on the hearts of the faithful through the New. For by their renewal there is written in those hearts what was not entirely destroyed by their old condition. The very image of God, which godlessness had not completely wiped out, is renewed in the mind of those who believe through the New Testament—for it had remained true that the soul of a human being could not exist without being rational. In the same way the law of God, which unrighteousness had not entirely wiped out, is surely written in the soul, when it is renewed by grace. The law written on tablets could not bring about for the Jews this writing of the law upon hearts, which is justification, but could only bring about transgression. For they were human beings, and that power of nature was present in them by which a rational animal both knows and observes some part of the law. But the piety which brings us to another life that is happy and eternal has a spotless law that transforms souls.¹³⁷ They are renewed by that light, and there is fulfilled in them the words, *The light of your countenance has shone upon us, O Lord* (Ps 4:7). They turned away from it and merited to grow old, but they cannot be renewed except by Christ's grace, that is, except by the intercession of the mediator. *For God is one; one too is the mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself up as redemption for all* (1 Tm 2:5-6). If those about whom we are speaking, namely, those who by nature do what pertains to the law,¹³⁸ in the manner we amply discussed above, are separated from this grace, what benefit will they derive from thoughts that excuse them *on the day on which God will judge the secrets of human beings* (Rom 2:16), except that they may receive a milder punishment? Just as a few venial sins, without which no one lives this life, do not keep a righteous person from eternal life, so too a few good works, which are almost always to be found even in the lives of the worst human beings, are of no value to an unbeliever for eternal salvation. Nonetheless, as in the

kingdom of God the saints differ in glory as one star from another,¹³⁹ so in the condemnation to eternal punishment it will be easier for Sodom than for some other city,¹⁴⁰ and some will be twice as much the children of hell as certain others.¹⁴¹ So too, God's judgment will not overlook the fact that one person has sinned more or less than another in this godlessness that merits condemnation.

49. In order to restrain the boastfulness of the Jews, the apostle said, *It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God; rather, those who observe the law will be justified* (Rom 2:13)? He immediately went on to speak of those who, though they do not have the law, do by nature what pertains to the law.¹⁴² What then did the apostle have in mind? Are we supposed to understand by those people not ones who have a share in the grace of the mediator, but rather those who, though they do not worship the true God with true piety, do nonetheless have some good deeds in their godless life? Did he perhaps think that this was supposed to prove his previous statement that *there is no partiality on God's part* (Rom 2:11) as well as his later claim that he is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles as well.¹⁴³ For even the least works of the law would not be found implanted by nature in those who have not received the law, if it were not for the remains of the image of God. And God does not hold that image in contempt, when they believe in him who shows no partiality.¹⁴⁴ But whichever of these views one accepts, it is certain that the grace of God was promised to the New Testament even by the prophet and that the same grace was described as follows: The laws of God will be written in human hearts,¹⁴⁵ and they will come to that knowledge of God in which *individuals will no longer teach their fellow citizens or kinfolk, saying: "Know the Lord," because they will all know him from the littlest to the greatest of them* (Jer 31:34). This is the gift of the Holy Spirit by which love is poured out in our hearts,¹⁴⁶ not just any love, but *the love of God from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith* (1 Tm 1:5). From that faith the righteous live during this pilgrimage, and they are also brought from it to vision after this state in which we see through a mirror, dimly, and only in part. Then they will know him face to face, as they are also known by him.¹⁴⁷ For they ask but one thing from the Lord and plead for it, namely, that they may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their lives so that they may contemplate the delights of the Lord.¹⁴⁸

29. 50. People should, then, not boast because of what they supposedly have, as if they had not received it.¹⁴⁹ And they should not suppose that they have received it because the letter of the law is externally set before their eyes to be read or is recited to be heard. *For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). But if he has not died in vain, *he has ascended on high, taken captivity captive, and given gifts to human beings* (Eph 4:8).¹⁵⁰ Whoever has anything has received it from him, but any who claim that they have not received what they have from him either have nothing or will have

what they have taken from them.¹⁵¹ *For there is one God who justifies the circumcised from faith and the uncircumcised through faith* (Rom 3:30). It was not said this way to indicate a difference, as if *from faith* meant one thing and *through faith* another, but simply to vary the expression. In another passage when he was speaking about the Gentiles, that is, about the uncircumcised, he said, *Scripture foresaw that God justifies the Gentiles from faith* (Gal 3:8). So too, in speaking of the circumcised to which he himself belonged, he says, *We are Jews by birth, not sinners from the Gentiles. We know that human beings are not justified from the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, and we believe in Christ Jesus* (Gal 2:15-16). See, he said that the uncircumcised are justified from faith and the circumcised through faith, if only the circumcised hold onto the righteousness of faith. After all, in that way *the Gentiles who were not pursuing righteousness have obtained righteousness, but a righteousness that comes from faith*. They have received it from God; they have not presumed to have it from themselves. *But Israel, though pursuing the law of righteousness, did not arrive at the law. Why is that? Because it was pursuing it not from faith, but as if from works* (Rom 9:30-32). That is, they were pursuing it as though they were producing it by themselves, not believing that God produced it in them. *It is God, after all, who produces in us the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13). And for this reason *they have tripped over the stumbling block* (Rom 9:32). For he explained his words, *Because [Israel] was pursuing it not from faith, but as if from works* (Rom 9:32), when he said, *For not knowing the righteousness of God and wanting to establish their own righteousness, they were not subject to the righteousness of God. For the end of the law is Christ for righteousness for everyone who believes* (Rom 10:3-4). Are we still in doubt about which are the works of the law which do not justify human beings, if they believe them to be their own without the help and gift of God that comes from faith in Jesus Christ? Do we have in mind circumcision and other works of that sort, because in other passages we read some statements like this about these sacraments as well? But in this passage they certainly did not want to establish circumcision as their own righteousness, for God had by his command established it. Nor can this statement be understood in reference to those works of which the Lord says to them, *You set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your traditions* (Mt 7:9). For Paul said, *Israel, though pursuing the law of righteousness, did not arrive at the law* (Rom 9:31); he did not say, "Pursuing, that is, following their own traditions." Here is the only difference: they themselves took credit for the commandment, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17), and the other holy and righteous commandments.¹⁵² In order that human beings may be able to observe them, God works in human beings through faith in Jesus Christ who is the end [of the law] for righteousness for everyone who believes.¹⁵³ That is, when they have been incorporated in him

through the Spirit and have become his members, they can, because he gives the increase interiorly,¹⁵⁴ do the works of righteousness. Of these works the Lord himself said, *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5).

51. Therefore, the righteousness of the law is set before them, because those who observe it will have life in it.¹⁵⁵ When they recognize their own weakness, they attain righteousness, not by their own strength or through the letter of the law—that is not possible. Rather, by winning favor through faith with the one who justifies, they attain righteousness, observe it, and live in it. For a work that brings life to the one who does it is only done by a person who has been justified. But justification is obtained through faith; scripture says of it, *Do you say in your heart, "Who will go up to heaven?" That is, to bring Christ down. Or "Who will go down to the depth?" That is, to bring Christ back from the dead. But what does it say? "The word is near to you, on your lips and in your heart"* (Dt 30:12-14). *This is the word of faith that we preach. For, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved* (Rom 10:6-9). We are righteous to the extent that we are saved. After all, through this faith we believe that God will also raise us from the dead, for the time being, in the spirit so that in the newness of his grace *we may live with temperance, righteousness, and piety in this world* (Ti 2:12), but afterward our flesh will rise for immortality. The spirit earns this for the flesh, because it preceded it in a resurrection suited to it, namely, in justification. *For we were buried with Christ through baptism into death so that, as Christ has risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we might also walk in the newness of life* (Rom 6:4). By faith, then, in Jesus Christ we obtain salvation both to the slight extent that its reality has begun for us and to the extent that we await its perfection with hope. *For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved* (Jl 2:32 and Rom 10:13). The psalm says, *How great is your sweetness, Lord, which you have hidden from those who fear you, but have made perfect for those who hope in you* (Ps 31:20). Because of the law we fear God; because of faith we hope in God. But for those who fear punishment grace remains hidden. The soul struggles under that fear when it does not conquer evil desire, and that fear, like a stern guard, does not go away. Let the soul take refuge through faith in the mercy of God so that he may give what he commands. By the inspiration of the sweetness of grace through the Holy Spirit, he will make what he commands more delightful than the delight of what he forbids. Thus the great abundance of his sweetness, that is, the law of faith, his love written and poured out in hearts, is made perfect in those who hope in him so that the soul, healed not by the fear of punishment, but by the love of righteousness, performs good works.

Grace Does Not Destroy Free Choice, But Strengthens It

30, 52. Are we then doing away with free choice through grace? Heaven forbid! Rather, we make free choice stronger. After all, as the law is not done away with through faith, so free choice is not done away with, but strengthened by grace.¹⁵⁶ For the law is not fulfilled without free choice. But *knowledge of sin came through the law* (Rom 3:20); through faith we obtain grace to struggle against sin; through grace the soul is healed from the wound of sin; through the good health of the soul we have freedom of choice; through free choice we have the love of righteousness; through the love of righteousness we fulfill the law. The law is not done away with, but strengthened by faith, because faith obtains the grace by which we fulfill the law. In the same way, free choice is not done away with by grace, but strengthened, because grace heals the will by which we freely love righteousness. All these items which I linked together like a chain have their own expression in scripture. The law says, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17); faith says, *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you* (Ps 41:5); grace says, *See, you have been healed; now sin no more so that nothing worse happens to you* (Jn 5:14); good health says, *Lord, my God, I have cried out to you, and you have healed me* (Ps 30:3); free choice says, *I will willingly offer you sacrifice* (Ps 54:8). The love of righteousness says, *Sinners described pleasures to me, but none like your law, Lord* (Ps 119:85). Why then do wretched human beings dare to be proud of their free choice, before they are set free, or of their own powers, if they have already been set free? They do not notice that in the very name for free choice we hear freedom; *but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3:17). If then they are slaves of sin, why do they boast of free choice? *For one has become a slave to that by which one has been defeated* (2 Pt 2:19). But if they have been set free, why do they glory as if it was their own doing and boast as if they had not received?¹⁵⁷ Or are they so free that they do not want to have as their Lord even him who says to them, *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5), and *If the Son sets you free, then you will truly be free* (Jn 8:36)?

Faith Lies in Our Power

31, 53. Someone will ask whether faith itself, which seems to be the beginning of salvation or of this chain leading to salvation, which I mentioned, lies in our power. We will see this more easily, if we first examine somewhat more carefully what power is. For there are two things: willing and being able. As a result, one who wills is not immediately able, nor does one who is able immediately will. After all, just as at times we will what we cannot do, so we also at times can do what we do not will to do. It is quite clear, and the sound

of the words indicates that will (*voluntas*) takes its name from willing (*velle*) and power (*potestas*) from being able (*posse*). Hence, as one who wills has the will, so one who is able has the power. But in order that something be done by one's power, the will must be there. After all, people are not usually said to have done something with their power, if they did it unwillingly. And yet, if we pay more careful attention, even what people are forced to do against their will, they do with their will, if they do it. But because they would prefer to do something else, they are said to do it against their will, that is, unwillingly. They are compelled by some evil to do it; willing to avoid this evil or to remove it from themselves, they do what they are forced to do. After all, if, the will is so great that they prefer not to do this rather than to suffer the alternative, they undoubtedly resist the compulsion and do not do the action. And so, if they do it, they do not do it with a complete and free will, and yet they only do it with the will. And since the result follows upon this will, we cannot say that the power was lacking to the agent. After all, if, yielding to the compulsion, they were willing to do it and could not, we would say that the will was there, though coerced, but that the power was lacking. But when they did not do it, because they were unwilling, there was certainly the power, but the will was lacking, as long as they did not do it out of resistance to the compulsion. For this reason, those who use force or persuasion often say, "Since you have it in your power, why do you not free yourself from this evil?" And those who simply cannot do something they are being forced to do, because they are believed to be able to do it, often reply by excusing themselves and say, "I would do it, if it were in my power." What more then are we looking for? We call it power when the will has the ability to act. Hence, people are said to have in their power what they do, if they will, and what they do not do, if they do not will.

54. Turn your attention to the point which we set out to discuss, namely, whether faith lies in our power. We are now speaking of this faith which we use when we believe something, not of the faith which we pledge when we make a promise, for this latter is also called *fides*.¹⁵⁸ In the one sense we say, "He had no faith in me"; in the other sense we say, "He did not keep faith with me." The first means: He did not believe what I said; the latter means: He did not do what he said. In accord with this faith by which we believe, we are faithful to God; in accord with the faith by which one does what one promises, God himself is faithful toward us. The apostle, after all, says this, *God is faithful; he does not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability* (1 Cor 10:13). We are asking whether that faith by which we believe God or believe in God is in our power. On this point scripture says, *Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness* (Gn 15:6; Rom 4:3), and *For one who believes in him who justifies the sinner his faith is counted as righteousness* (Rom 4:5). Look now! Do people believe if they are unwilling to or do they fail to believe if they will

to believe? Isn't that absurd? After all, what is it to believe but to assent that what is said is true? Assent is certainly an act of someone who wills. Hence, faith is surely in our power. But, as the apostle says, *There is no power except from God* (Rom 13:1). What reason is there why scripture should not say to us about this power as well, *After all, what do you have that you have not received?* (1 Cor 4:7). That we believe is God's gift. But we never read in the holy scriptures: There is no will except from God. And it is right that scripture does not say that, because it is not true. Otherwise, if there were no will except from God, God would be—heaven forbid!—the author even of sins. For an evil will by itself is already a sin, even if the execution is lacking, that is, if the will lacks the power. Moreover, when an evil will receives the power to carry out its intention, it comes from the judgment of God with whom there is no injustice.¹⁵⁹ For he punishes in this way, and he does not do so unjustly, because he punishes in a hidden way. Sinners only realize that they are being punished when through an obvious punishment they unwillingly perceive the greatness of the evil that they have willingly committed. This is the point that the apostle makes with regard to some of them: *God handed them over to the desires of their heart so that they would do what is improper* (Rom 1:24.28). And for this reason the Lord said to Pilate, *You would not have power over me, if it were not given to you from above* (Jn 19:11). But when the power is given, necessity is certainly not imposed. Hence, when David received the power to kill Saul, he preferred to spare him rather than strike him.¹⁶⁰ Hence, we understand that evil persons receive power leading to the condemnation of their evil will, but that good persons receive power for the purpose of proving their good will.

The Faith That the Apostle Praises

32, 55. Faith, then, is in our power, because we believe when we will, and when we believe, we believe willingly. Next we must investigate or rather recall what sort of faith it is that the apostle recommends with such great emphasis. After all, it is not good to believe just anything, for there is the passage: *Brothers and sisters, do not believe every spirit, but test whether the spirit is from God* (1 Jn 4:1). Nor should we interpret the words spoken in praise of love, *It believes everything* (1 Cor 13:7), in that sense that we discredit anyone's love, if the person does not immediately believe what he or she hears. Does not the same love admonish us that we should not readily believe something bad about a brother or sister? And, when something of the sort is said, does this love not judge that its duty is not to believe it? Finally, the love which believes everything does not believe every spirit, and thus it believes everything, but believes God. Scripture did not say: It believes everyone. Therefore, no one has any doubt that the faith which the apostle commends is the faith by which we believe God.

56. But we still need to make another distinction. For those people who are under the law try to achieve their own righteousness out of fear of punishment and do not, for this reason, achieve the righteousness of God. Only love does that, love which only finds pleasing what is permitted, not fear which is forced to do what is permitted, while it has something else in its will by which it would prefer, if it were possible, that what is not permitted be permitted. These people, then, believe God, for if they did not believe at all, they would surely not fear the punishment of the law. But this is not the faith that the apostle commends when he says, *You have not, after all, received the spirit of servitude so as to live in fear again; rather, you have received the Spirit of adoption as children. In it we cry out, Abba, Father* (Rom 8:15). That fear is servile and, though one believes the Lord in it, one does not love righteousness, but fears condemnation. But the children cry out, *Abba, Father*; of these two words the one comes from the circumcised, the other from the uncircumcised, *Jew first and then Greek* (Rom 2:9), because *there is one God who justifies the circumcised from faith and the uncircumcised through faith* (Rom 3:30). But when they cry out, they ask for something, and what do they ask for but that for which they hunger and thirst? And what is this but what scripture says of them, *Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness, because they will be satisfied* (Mt 5:6)? Let those who are under the law, then, pass over to this side so that from servants they may become children, but not so that they cease to be servants. Rather, let them serve their Lord and Father freely as children, because they have received this too. After all, that only Son gave the power *to become children of God to those who believe in his name* (Jn 1:12). And he admonished them to seek, to ask, to knock so that they might receive and find and have the door opened for them.¹⁶¹ He adds a rebuke and says, *If you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him!* (Mt 7:11). Therefore, the power of sin, the law, kindled the sting of death¹⁶² so that sin seized the opportunity and roused every desire through the commandment.¹⁶³ From whom, then, ought one to ask for continence but from him who knows how to give good gifts to his children?¹⁶⁴ Are foolish persons perhaps unaware that no one can be continent without God's gift?¹⁶⁵ In order to know this, then, such persons need wisdom. And so, why do they not listen to the Spirit of their Father speaking through the apostle of Christ or Christ himself who says in his gospel, *Ask and you will receive* (Mt 7:7; Lk 11:9)? He also speaks through the lips of his apostle, *If any of you lack wisdom, let them ask it from God who gives to all abundantly without rebuking them, and it will be given to them, but let them ask with faith, without any hesitation* (Jas 1:5-6). This is the faith from which the righteous live;¹⁶⁶ this is the faith by which we believe in him who justifies the sinner;¹⁶⁷ this is the faith that excludes boasting,¹⁶⁸ whether in the sense that our proud boasting is removed, or in the

sense that our boasting in the Lord is emphasized.¹⁶⁹ *For by the Spirit we await the hope of righteousness from faith* (Gal 5:5). Here we can still ask whether by *the hope of righteousness* he meant that which righteousness hopes for or the righteousness by which one has hope, since the righteous who live from faith¹⁷⁰ certainly hope for eternal life. And the same faith which hungers and thirsts for righteousness makes progress in it by the renewal of the interior human being from day to day¹⁷¹ and hopes to be satisfied with it in eternal life when there will be realized what the psalm says about God, *He satisfies your desire with good things* (Ps 103:5). This is the faith by which they are saved to whom it is said, *You have been saved by grace through faith. This does not come from you; rather, it is God's gift. It is not the result of works so that no one may be filled with pride. We are, after all, his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God prepared so that we might live our lives in them* (Eph 2:8-10). Finally, this is the faith which works through love,¹⁷² not through fear, not fearing punishment, but loving righteousness. What is the source of this love, that is, of this charity, through which faith works,¹⁷³ if not the source from which faith obtained it? For it would not be in us, however much there is in us, if it were not poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.¹⁷⁴ The love of God said to be poured out in our hearts is not that by which he loves us, but that by which he makes us love him. In the same way, the righteousness of God is that by which we are made righteous by his gift and the salvation of God is that by which he makes us saved, and the faith of Jesus Christ is that by which he makes us believers. This is the righteousness of God which he not only teaches through the commandment of the law, but also gives through the gift of the Spirit.

The Very Will to Believe Is God's Gift

33, 57. It follows that we should investigate a little whether the will by which we believe is itself a gift of God or arises from the free choice belonging to our nature. After all, if we say that it is not a gift of God, we must fear that we think that we have found an answer we can make to the apostle when he chides us and says, *What do you have, after all, that you have not received?* (1 Cor 4:7). We could say: Look, we have the will to believe which we have not received; look, there is the reason for our boasting that we have not received. But if we say that even this sort of will is only the gift of God, we have once again to be afraid that unbelievers and sinners may not unreasonably think that they have a just excuse for not having believed, because God refused to give them this will. Scripture says, *It is God, after all, who produces in us the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13). It is already a sign of the grace which faith obtains that human beings can perform good works. Faith performs them through the

love¹⁷⁵ which is poured out in the heart by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.¹⁷⁶ But we believe in order that we may obtain this grace, and we certainly believe with the will. The question concerns the source from which we get this will. If we get it from nature, why does everyone not have it, since the same God is the creator of all? If we get it as God's gift, again why does everyone not have it, since he wills that all human beings be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth?¹⁷⁷

58. Let us, then, first set forth this idea and see whether it provides a satisfactory answer to our question. The free choice which the creator has given to the rational soul as part of its nature is a neutral power that can either turn to faith or fall into unbelief. Therefore, human beings cannot be said to have this will by which they believe God unless they have received it, when at God's call it arises from the free choice which they received as part of their nature when they were created. God wills that all human beings be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,¹⁷⁸ but not so that he deprives them of free choice, since they will be judged with perfect justice according to their good or bad use of it. Consequently, unbelievers act against the will of God when they do not believe his gospel, but they do not on that account defeat his will. Rather, they deprive themselves of the great and supreme good and plunge themselves into evils which are punishments. They are destined to experience in punishment the power of the God whose mercy they held in contempt in his gifts. Thus the will of God is never defeated, but it would be defeated, if it could not find something to do with those who hold him in contempt or if they could somehow escape what he has appointed for them. He says, for example, I will that all these servants of mine work in the vineyard and that, after their labor, they rest and feast. But if any of them refuse to do this, they will forever grind grain at the millstone. Any who held him in contempt would seem to act against the will of their lord, but they would defeat it if they took flight from the millstone out of contempt—something that could never happen under God's power. Hence, scripture said, *God has spoken once*, that is, immutably—though one could also understand this with regard to the only Word. Then, adding what he spoke immutably, it says, *These two things have I heard: that power belongs to God and to you, Lord, belongs mercy; you repay all according to their works* (Ps 62:12-13). Therefore, they will be liable to condemnation under his power who, with regard to believing, have held his mercy in contempt. But those who believe and entrust themselves to God to be forgiven all their sins and to be healed from all their wounds and to be enkindled and enlightened by warmth and light will have good works as a result of his grace. By them they will be redeemed from the corruption of bodily death; they will be crowned and satisfied with goods—not temporal ones, but eternal ones, beyond what we ask for and understand.¹⁷⁹

59. The psalm follows this order where it says, *Bless the Lord, my soul, and*

do not forget all his recompenses; he is forgiving toward all your sins; he heals all your ills; he redeems your life from corruption; he crowns you with kindness and mercy; he satisfies your desire with good things. And so that the deformity of our old condition, that is, of our mortality, might not despair of these great goods, he says, *Your youth will be renewed like an eagle's* (Ps 103:2-5), as if to say, "These things you heard belong to the new human being and to the New Testament."

Recall these with me for a bit, I beg you, and gaze with delight upon the praise of mercy, that is, of the grace of God. It says, *Bless the Lord, my soul, and do not forget all his recompenses.* It does not say: gifts, but recompenses.¹⁸⁰ because he repays evil with good. *He is forgiving toward all your sins;* he does this in the sacrament of baptism. *He heals all your ills;* he does this in the life of one who believes. For the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh so that we do not do what we will,¹⁸¹ and another law in the members resists the law of the mind. We can will the good, but cannot carry it out.¹⁸² If we make progress with a steady intention, these ills of our old condition are healed, as our new condition increases from day to day, by the faith that works through love.¹⁸³ *He redeems your life from corruption;* he does this in the final resurrection of the dead. *He crowns you with kindness and mercy;* he does this in the judgment, when the righteous judge will sit upon his throne and repay all according to their works. Who will then boast of having a pure heart? Or who will boast of being free of sin?¹⁸⁴ It was, then, necessary to mention the gentleness and mercy of the Lord in that passage where it could seem that debts are being called in and wages are being paid in such a way that there seemed no room for mercy. He crowns us, then, with gentleness and mercy, but he also does so according to our works.¹⁸⁵ After all, they will be placed on his right to whom he says, *I was hungry and you gave me to eat* (Mt 25:35), for *judgment will be without mercy for one who does not show mercy* (Jas 2:13). *But blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy* (Mt 5:7). When those on the left enter into eternal fire, the righteous will enter eternal life,¹⁸⁶ for *this*, he said, *is eternal life, that they know you, the one true God and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ* (Jn 17:3). By that knowledge, by that vision, by that contemplation, the desire of their soul will be filled with good things.¹⁸⁷ After all, this alone is enough for them; they have nothing beyond this to desire, to long for, or to seek. That man was ablaze with the desire for this fullness who said to the Lord, *Show us the Father, and it is enough for us* (Jn 14:8). He received the answer, *One who has seen me has seen the Father* (Jn 14:9), because *this is eternal life, that they know the one true God and him who you sent, Jesus Christ* (Jn 17:3). But if one who has seen the Son has also seen the Father, certainly one who sees the Father and the Son also sees the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son. And so, we do not destroy free choice, and our soul blesses the Lord, not forgetting all

his recompenses,¹⁸⁸ and it does not want to establish its own righteousness in ignorance of God's righteousness,¹⁸⁹ but believes in him who justifies the sinner.¹⁹⁰ And so the soul lives from faith,¹⁹¹ until it is brought to vision; it lives, of course, from that faith which works through love.¹⁹² This love is being poured out in our hearts neither by the sufficiency of our own will nor by the letter of the law, but by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.¹⁹³

34, 60. If this discussion is enough to resolve the question, let it suffice. But someone might answer that we must be careful that no one thinks that sin which is committed by free choice is to be attributed to God. For one might think that, if the words of scripture, *What do you have that you have not received?* (1 Cor 4:7), attribute the will by which we believe to the gift of God, because it arises from the free choice that we received when we were created. Let that person pay attention and see that this will is to be attributed to God's gift, not only because it arises from the free choice which is created in us as part of our nature, but also because God brings it about by the enticements of our perceptions that we will and that we believe. He does this either externally through the exhortations of the gospel, where the commandments of the law also have a role to play. For they can remind human beings of their weakness so that by believing they take refuge in justifying grace. Or he does this internally where none have control over what comes into their minds, though to assent or dissent is in the power of their will. God, then, works in these ways with the rational soul so that it believes him. For it cannot so much as believe anything by free choice, if there is no enticement or invitation which it can believe. God, then, certainly produces in human beings the will to believe, and his mercy anticipates us in every respect.¹⁹⁴ But to assent to God's invitation or to dissent from it is, as I said, in the power of one's will. This fact not only does not weaken the words, *What do you have that you have not received?* (1 Cor 4:7), but rather confirms them. The soul can, of course, receive and have the gifts about which it hears this only by assenting. Accordingly, what it has and what it receives come from God, but the receiving and the having certainly come from the one who receives and has them. Now if someone should press us to examine the profound question of why one person is stirred to the point of being convinced, while another is not, there occur to me at the moment only two answers that I would want to make, *O the depth of the riches!* (Rom 11:33) and *Is there injustice in God?* (Rom 9:14). Those who are displeased with this reply should look for people who are more learned, but they should beware that they do not find someone more presumptuous.

Summary and Conclusion of the Work

35, 61. Let us, then, at last bring the book to a close; I do not know whether we have accomplished anything with all its length. I do not mean in your regard,

for I know your faith, but with the minds of those on account of whom you wanted me to write. They are not doing battle against our views, but they are certainly doing battle against views that the great apostle Paul stated more than once and against his vigorous, intense, and watchful efforts. I am using gentler language and do not say that they are doing battle against the view of him who has spoken in his apostles. They prefer to defend their own views rather than to listen to Paul entreating them by God's mercy and saying by the grace of God which has been given to him,¹⁹⁵ *Not to be more wise than one ought to be, but to be wise in moderation, as God has given to each one the measure of faith* (Rom 12:3).

62. Turn your attention to the question you proposed for me and to the results of this long discussion. You were, of course, concerned about my having said that it is possible that human beings be without sin, if with God's help the will was not lacking, even though no one had or has or will have such perfect righteousness in this life. For in those books which I earlier wrote for you, I made this point as follows: "If someone asks me," I said, "whether a human being can be without sin in this life, I admit that one can be by the grace of God and free choice. I have no doubt that free choice itself belongs to the grace of God, that is, to God's gifts, not only insofar as it exists, but insofar as it is good, that is, insofar as it turns to carrying out God's commandments. In that way God's grace not merely shows us what we are to do, but also helps us so that we are able to do what God has shown us."¹⁹⁶ You thought it absurd that something that is possible should be without an example. That gave rise to the topic of this book, and it was, accordingly, our task to show that something is possible, even though it is without an example. For this reason we quoted certain passages at the beginning of this book from the law and from the gospel, such as the passing of a camel through the eye of a needle,¹⁹⁷ the twelve thousand legions of angels who could have fought for Christ, if he had willed,¹⁹⁸ and those peoples whom God says he could at one time have wiped out before his people.¹⁹⁹ None of these things happened. To these could be added the things we read about in the Book of Wisdom: the many unheard of torments God could inflict upon sinners, since creation stands ready to serve at his least indication, and yet he did not inflict them.²⁰⁰ One could also mention that mountain which faith could move into the sea,²⁰¹ though we have never read or heard that this occurred. If any persons say that one of these things is impossible for God, you see how foolish they are and how they contradict the reliability of his scripture. Many other things of this sort can occur to one who reads or thinks of them, and we cannot deny that they are possible for God, though we have no example of them.

63. Those things can be said to be God's works, while to live righteously belongs among our works. Hence, I undertook to show that this too is God's work, and I did this in this book with perhaps more words than were needed.

But against the enemies of God's grace I have, as I see it, said too little. And I find pleasure in speaking at such length only where his scripture is very much on my side and where the goal is that one *who boasts should boast in the Lord* (2 Cor 10:17) and that in all things we give thanks to the Lord, our God, lifting our hearts on high, from where every best gift and every perfect gift is given by the Father of lights.²⁰² For, if it is not the work of God, because it is done by us or because we do it with his gift, then it is not God's work that the mountain is moved into the sea, because the Lord said that it was possible through the faith of human beings. He attributed this to their work, when he said, *If you have in yourselves faith like a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, "Be lifted up and thrown into the sea," and it will happen, and nothing will be impossible for you* (Mt 17:19 and Mk 11:23). It is certain that he said, *for you*, not: "for me" or "for the Father," and yet a human being certainly does not do this unless God grants it and does it. There you see how perfect righteousness can be without an example in human beings and yet not be impossible. For it would come to be, if as much will were brought to bear as was sufficient for something that great. But our will would be that great, if none of those things which have to do with righteousness were unknown to us and if they so delighted our mind that the delight would overcome whatever other pleasure or pain might interfere. The fact that it is not the case is due, not to its impossibility, but to God's judgment. After all, who is unaware that what human beings know is not in their power? And yet it does not follow that they pursue what they know they should pursue, unless it delights them to the point that they cannot but love it? But that is the mark of a soul in good health.

36, 64. Someone might suppose that we lack nothing with regard to the knowledge of righteousness, since the Lord summed up and shortened his word upon the earth²⁰³ and said that the whole law and the prophets depended on two commandments. He did not fail to state them and did so in plain language. He said, *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul and your whole mind and You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Mt 22:37,39). What could be truer than that, when we have fulfilled these, we have fulfilled all righteousness? And yet one who hears this should also bear in mind the passage about how we all sin in many ways,²⁰⁴ while we think that what we do pleases or at least does not displease the God whom we love. And then afterward, having been admonished by his scripture or by clear and certain reason, we learn that it did not please him, and we repent and pray for his forgiveness. Human life is full of such examples. But why do we fail to know what pleases him? Is it not that we do not know God himself well enough? *For we see now through a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face* (1 Cor 13:12). But who will dare to think that, when we have reached that point of which scripture says, *Then I shall know, as I am known* (1 Cor 13:12), those

who contemplate God will have only as much love of God as his faithful now have or that this present love should be in any sense almost equated with that love of theirs? Moreover, if our love will be greater in proportion to the greatness of our knowledge, we must believe that we now lack perfect righteousness in proportion to our lack of love. After all, we can know or believe something and not love it, but we cannot love what we neither know nor believe. Through believing, the saints were able to attain so great a love that the Lord himself bore witness that there cannot be a greater love in this life than they had, for they laid down their lives for the faith or for their brothers and sisters.²⁰⁵ But when from this wayfaring in which we now walk by faith we have come to the vision,²⁰⁶ which we do not yet see but hope for and await in patience,²⁰⁷ this love will undoubtedly be not only greater than what we now have, but far greater than what we now ask for and understand.²⁰⁸ And yet it cannot be greater than with the whole heart, the whole soul, and the whole mind.²⁰⁹ After all, there remains nothing in us that could be added to the whole, because, if anything will remain, the former state will not be whole. Hence, the first commandment of righteousness by which we are ordered to love God with the whole heart and the whole soul and the whole mind,²¹⁰ upon which there follows the second about loving the neighbor, we will fulfill in that life, when we shall see face to face.²¹¹ But this commandment has been given to us now in order to admonish us about what we ought to ask for in faith, about where we ought to place our hope, and about how we ought to forget what lies behind and stretch ourselves out toward what lies ahead.²¹² Accordingly, so far as I can judge, they who know how far they are, despite their progress, from the perfection of righteousness have made much progress in the righteousness which still needs to be made perfect.

65. One can speak of a lesser righteousness appropriate to this life in which the righteous live from faith.²¹³ Although they are on a journey away from the Lord and, therefore, walk by faith, not yet by vision,²¹⁴ it is not incorrect to say that this righteousness entails that the righteous do not sin. After all, even if the love of God cannot yet be as great as that full and perfect knowledge deserves, it should not be counted as sin. After all, it is one thing not yet to attain total love; it is another not to go after one's lust. Hence, though human beings love God far less than they can love him when he is seen, they ought pursue nothing forbidden. Similarly, in these objects present to the senses of the body the eye cannot find pleasure in darkness; on the other hand, it cannot be fixed upon brilliant light. But look, this is the way we should picture the human soul in this corruptible body. Though it has not yet swallowed up and destroyed all those stirrings of earthly lust by that supereminent perfection of love, it does not, nonetheless, in this lesser righteousness assent to the same lust out of any inclination to do something forbidden. Hence, the commandment, *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with*

your whole strength (Mt 22:37), pertains to that immortal life, but *Let sin not reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires* (Rom 6:12) pertains to this life. *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17) pertains to that life, but *you shall not go after your desires* (Sir 18:30) pertains to this life. To seek nothing more than to remain in that perfection pertains to that immortal life; it pertains to this life to do one's task and to hope for the perfection of that life as a reward. In that life the righteous will live forever in the vision which they desired in this life, but the righteous live from faith in this life,²¹⁵ in which they desire that life as their certain goal. Under these circumstances, it will be a sin for someone living from faith to consent at times to some forbidden pleasure, not merely in perpetrating terrible crimes and outrages, but even in those slight offenses, such as listening to some word that one should not listen to, or uttering something that one should not say or thinking something in the heart so that one wishes that something were permissible that gives evil pleasure, though it is known to be forbidden by a commandment. And one would have given consent to the sin, if the punishment did not cause fear.²¹⁶ Do such righteous persons living from faith have no need to say, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12)? Do they prove false the words of scripture, *No living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2)? Or the words, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8)? Or the words, *There is not a human being who will not sin* (1 Kgs 8:46)? Or the words, *There is not a righteous person on earth who will do good and will not sin* (Eccl 7:21)? These last two passages offer testimony, not about the past so that they say, "sinned," but about the future so that they say, "will sin." Do such righteous persons prove false any other statements that holy scripture mentions in this vein? Since these statements cannot be false, I see that it follows that, no matter what kind or how great may be the righteousness we decide is found in this life, there is no human being in this life who has absolutely no sin. Moreover, it is necessary for every human being to give in order to receive and to forgive in order to be forgiven.²¹⁷ And if persons have some righteousness, they must not presume to have it from themselves, but from the grace of God who justifies, and they must still hunger and thirst for righteousness from him,²¹⁸ who is *the bread of life* (Jn 6:51) and with whom is *the fountain of life* (Ps 36:10). He produces justification in his saints as they labor amid the temptations of this life. But in this life there remains something for him to add with generosity as they ask and to forgive with mercy as they make confession.

66. But let these people find, if they can, somebody living under the burden of this corruption who does not now have anything for God to pardon. Unless they admit that such a person was helped to be such, not by the teaching given in the law, but by the pouring out of the Spirit of grace, they incur the guilt of not just any sin, but of godlessness. If they interpret those divine testimonies in

a proper manner, they cannot, of course, find someone of that sort; on the other hand, one should not say that God lacks the power to help the human will to bring to full perfection in a human being not only that righteousness which comes from faith,²¹⁹ but even that righteousness with which we are later to live for eternity in the contemplation of him. God could will that this corruptibility should now in some individual don incorruptibility,²²⁰ and he could command that person, who would not be destined to die, to live here among human beings who are going to die. Then, with the old condition completely destroyed, no law in the members would resist the law of the mind,²²¹ and that person would know the omnipresent God as the saints will know him hereafter. Who would be insane enough to say that God cannot do this? But human beings ask why God does not do this, and those who ask this do not bear in mind their own humanity. I know that with God there is no injustice,²²² just as there is nothing impossible, and I know that he *resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (Jas 4:6). I also know that the apostle who was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan who would strike him so that he would not become filled with pride, prayed once, twice, three times and was told, *My grace is sufficient for you, for virtue is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor 12:9). Hence, there always remains something in the hidden depths of God's judgments so that the mouths of everyone, even of the righteous, are closed for their own praise,²²³ and are only opened for the praise of God. But who is able to examine this, who is able to search it out, who is able to come to know it? So *inscrutable are his judgments, and unsearchable his ways! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who first gave something to him so that he will be repaid? For all things are from him and through him and in him. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen* (Rom 11:33-36).

Notes

1. Shortly after *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones*, probably early in 412, Augustine wrote Letter 140, which is also known as *The Grace of the New Testament* (*De gratia novi testamenti ad Honoratum liber unus*). In it he answered five quite diverse questions from scripture proposed to him by his friend, Honoratus; the questions dealt with Christ's words from Psalm 21 spoken on the cross, the meaning of a passage in Paul, the identity of the wise and foolish virgins and of the outer darkness, and the meaning of the Word's becoming flesh. Then, with a view to "the new heresy opposed to God's grace," he added, he tells us in the *Revisions* II, 62 (36), a sixth question on the grace of the New Testament. Though Letter 140 is at times classed as an anti-Pelagian work, the present series includes it among the Letters.

2. To maintain that only those things are possible which are actual at some time in the past, present, or future would limit God's power to the actual course of events so that God could not be said to be able to do anything other than what he has done, is doing, and will do.

3. Despite the clear statements of scripture regarding universal human sinfulness, Augustine remained open for a time to the view that some human beings led sinless lives with, of course, the help of God's grace. In *Nature and Grace* 60, 70, he referred to the position that some persons led

a sinless life on earth as "a legitimate question among true and pious believers." On this point, see also *The Spirit and the Letter* 36, 66 and *Nature and Grace* 42, 49; 44, 51; and 68, 82. In his notes to the present work in ALG I, p. 654, A. Zumkeller claims that the reason for Augustine's tolerant attitude toward this position was Ambrose's statement in his *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke* (*Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*) I, 17-18, that Zechariah and Elizabeth led sinless lives. See also *Nature and Grace* 36, 42 for Augustine's refusal to discuss any sin on Mary's part. As late as 417 Augustine regarded the question as matter for discussion among Catholics rather than between Catholic and heretics; see *The Deeds of Pelagius* 30, 55. Nonetheless, the Council of Carthage in 418 declared the universality of human sinfulness a matter of Christian faith; see DS 228-230, so that in 419 Augustine rejected as against the faith the view that human beings could, even with the help of grace, be without sin; see his *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians* IV, 10, 27.

4. See *Confessions* V, 14, 24 and VI, 4, 6.

5. See Rom 3:20 and 7:7.

6. See Rom 1:18-23.

7. See 2 Cor 3:7-9.

8. Augustine refers to *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones*.

9. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* II, 6, 7 and 20, 34; the letter of Marcellinus referred to is not extant.

10. See 1 Cor 15:22.

11. See Mt 19:24, 26.

12. See Mt 26:53. The word "thousand" is not found in Matthew, though it is found in other citations of the passage by Augustine and other fathers.

13. See Dt 31:3.

14. See Jgs 2:3.

15. Following some of the oldest manuscripts, the CSEL edition omits "of the will."

16. See 2 Cor 5:7.

17. See Jn 1:9.

18. See Rom 7:7.

19. See Rom 5:5.

20. See Rom 7:11.

21. See Rom 4:15.

22. See Rom 5:5.

23. See Rom 8:29-30.

24. See Mt 19:26.

25. See Rom 5:12, 21.

26. See Ps 119:133.

27. See Rom 5:20.

28. See Ps 35:8-11.

29. See Rom 4:5.

30. Augustine takes Jn 1:16 with the preceding verse so that it is part of the testimony given by John the Baptist, though most modern translations take it as a statement of the evangelist.

31. See Jas 1:17.

32. See Acts 13:9.

33. See 1 Cor 15:9. The Latin word "*paulus*" means "small" or "little."

34. See Is 52:5.

35. See Rom 2:29.

36. See Rom 4:15.

37. A Pelagian statement for which Augustine gives no source.

38. See Prv 24:12.

39. See Lv 12:3.

40. See Rom 10:3.

41. See Rom 10:3.

42. See Prv 3:16.

43. See 1 Cor 4:7.
44. See Gal 3:24.
45. See Gal 3:24.
46. See 1 Tm 1:8.
47. The Latin *exclusores* can mean smiths, those who hammer silver.
48. See 1 Cor 4:7.
49. Augustine alludes to the introduction to the Preface of the Mass.
50. The Maurist adds *sive internis*, which seems required, though it has no basis in the manuscripts.
51. See Rom 1:14.
52. See Gal 6:3.
53. See Ps 36:12.
54. See Jas 4:6; 1 Pt 5:5.
55. See Rom 1:26-27.
56. See Rom 5:20.
57. See Rom 3:20.
58. See Rom 3:27.
59. See Rom 1:17.
60. See 2 Cor 10:17.
61. See Rom 1:21.
62. See Lk 18:11-12.
63. See Rom 2:25-29.
64. See Col 2:17.
65. See Ex 31:18.
66. See Ex 20:2-17.
67. See Rom 7:12.
68. See 2 Cor 3:6.
69. See 2 Cor 3:7-9.
70. See Rom 3:20.
71. See Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11.
72. See Rom 5:5.
73. See Rom 7:22.
74. See 2 Cor 4:16.
75. See Ex 20:11.
76. See Ex 20:10.
77. See Mt 27:51.
78. See Rom 5:5.
79. See Rom 13:10.
80. See Lk 11:20.
81. See Dt 9:10.
82. See Gal 5:6.
83. See Ex 12:3-10.
84. See Acts 2:1-4.
85. See Ex 19:12-13.19.
86. See Acts 2:1.
87. See Rom 5:5.
88. See 2 Cor 3:7.13.
89. See 2 Cor 3:16.
90. See 2 Cor 3:7-9.
91. See Gal 3:24.
92. See Rom 4:8.
93. See 2 Cor 5:2-4.
94. See Mt 5:17.
95. The Maurists and the ALG editors punctuate the previous sentence somewhat differently; I have followed the CSEL edition.

96. See Lk 11:20.
97. See Rom 5:5.
98. See Rom 13:10 and 1 Tm 1:5.
99. See 2 Cor 2:17.
100. See Rom 6:11.
101. See Ps 36:10.
102. See Phil 2:6-7.
103. See Mt 25:46.
104. See Jn 17:3.
105. See 2 Cor 4:16.
106. See 1 Tm 2:7.
107. See Rom 4:4.
108. See Rom 11:6.
109. See 1 Cor 15:9-10.
110. See Rom 8:28.
111. See 1 Cor 13:12.
112. See Jn 17:3.
113. See 1 Cor 13:12.
114. See 1 Cor 15:41.
115. See Heb 11:40.
116. See Mt 20:8-12.
117. See Jos 12:2,8.
118. See Ps 73:28.
119. See Jn 15:1-5.
120. See 1 Cor 3:7.
121. See Rom 2:3.
122. See Rom 2:11-13.
123. See Rom 2:14-15.
124. See Jer 31:33.
125. See Rom 11:24.
126. See Gal 5:6.
127. See Gal 3:8.
128. See Rom 11:24.
129. See Gal 3:16.
130. See Rom 4:3.
131. See Rom 2:15.
132. See Jer 31:33 and Heb 10:16.
133. See Rom 5:5.
134. See Rom 13:10.
135. See Rom 3:23-24.
136. See Rom 2:14-15.
137. See Ps 19:8.
138. See Rom 2:14.
139. See 1 Cor 15:41.
140. See Lk 10:12.
141. See Mt 23:15.
142. See Rom 2:14.
143. See Rom 3:29.
144. See Rom 2:11.
145. See Jer 31:33.
146. See Rom 5:5.
147. See 1 Cor 13;12.
148. See Ps 27:4.
149. See 1 Cor 4:7.
150. See Ps 67:19.

151. See Lk 8:18 and 19:26.
152. See Rom 7:12.
153. See Rom 10:4.
154. See 1 Cor 3:7.
155. See Lv 18:5 and Rom 10:5.
156. See Rom 3:31.
157. See 1 Cor 4:7.
158. The Latin *fides* has various meanings: faith or belief, a pledge, a sign of good faith, a downpayment, or bail.
159. See Rom 9:14.
160. See 1 Sm 24:5-6.
161. See Mt 7:7.
162. See 1 Cor 15:56.
163. See Rom 7:8.
164. See Mt 7:11.
165. See Wis 8:21.
166. See Rom 1:17.
167. See Rom 4:5.
168. See Rom 4:5.
169. See above, 10. 17, where Augustine explains the two senses of *excluditur*. It can mean that its subject is removed or is brought into relief as when silver is hammered by a smith.
170. See Rom 1:17.
171. See 2 Cor 4:16.
172. See Gal 5:6.
173. See Gal 5:6.
174. See Rom 5:5.
175. See Gal 5:6.
176. See Rom 5:5.
177. See 1 Tm 2:4.
178. See 1 Tm 2:4.
179. See Eph 3:20.
180. The Latin has: *non attributiones, sed retributiones*.
181. See Gal 5:17.
182. See Rom 7:23.18.
183. See Gal 5:6.
184. See Prv 20:8-9; Mt 16:27.
185. See Ps 62:13.
186. See Mt 25:46.
187. See Ps 103:5.
188. See Ps 103:2.
189. See Rom 10:3.
190. See Rom 4:5.
191. See Rom 1:17.
192. See Gal 5:6.
193. See Rom 5:5.
194. See Ps 59:11.
195. See Rom 12:1.3.
196. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* II, 6, 7.
197. See Mt 19:24.
198. See Mt 26:53.
199. See Dt 31:3; Jgs 2:3.
200. See Wis 16:24.
201. See Mk 11:23.
202. See Jas 1:17.
203. See Rom 9:28.

204. See Jas 3:2.

205. See Jn 15:13.

206. See 2 Cor 5:6-7.

207. See Rom 8:25.

208. See Eph 3:20.

209. See Mt 22:37.

210. See Mt 22:37.

211. See 1 Cor 13:12.

212. See Phil 3:13.

213. See Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11.

214. See 2 Cor 5:6-7.

215. See Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11.

216. The Maurists regard the text at this point as corrupt and believe that the preceding two sentences should follow "fixed upon the brilliant light" (on the previous page). I have followed the reading in CSEL.

217. See Lk 6:38.37.

218. See Mt 5:6.

219. See Rom 10:6.

220. See 1 Cor 15:53.

221. See Rom 7:23.

222. See Rom 9:14.

223. See Rom 3:19.

NATURE AND GRACE

Revisions II, 68 (42)

Nature and Grace, A Single Book.

There also came into my hands at that time a book of Pelagius in which he defended human nature, with as much argumentation as he could, in opposition to the grace of God by which the sinner is justified and by which we are Christians. I, therefore, called the book by which I answered him, *Nature and Grace*. In it I did not defend grace in opposition to nature, but the grace by which nature is set free and ruled. In it I defended some words which Pelagius cited as those of Xyxtus, the Roman bishop and martyr, as if they really were the words of that Xyxtus. But I later read that they were the words of Sextus the philosopher, not of Xystus the Christian. This book begins: *Librum quem misistis*.

Introduction

The Date and Place of Composition

At the Synod of Jerusalem at the end of July, 415, Orosius reported to the assembled clergy that “blessed Augustine was in the process of writing a full answer to a book of Pelagius, which the disciples of Pelagius handed over to him with the request for a response.”¹ The book which Pelagius’ disciples handed over to Augustine can only be Pelagius’ *Nature*, and the response to it was Augustine’s *Nature and Grace*. The latter work, then, was not completed by the time of Orosius’ departure from Africa for Palestine, though it was under way. The fact that Orosius did produce at the synod Augustine’s Letter 157, but did not produce either Pelagius’ *Nature* or Augustine’s *Nature and Grace*, confirms the view that Augustine had not completed the latter by the time of Orosius’ departure from Hippo in late winter or spring of 415.² Unfortunately, it is not possible to pinpoint Orosius’ date of departure more closely than “between January and April 415, with the possibility of going back as far as December and coming down to May 415.”³ In any case, by 416, when Augustine wrote *The Deeds of Pelagius*, he had completed the work, sent it to Pelagius’ former disciples, Timasius and James, and received their letter of gratitude in return.⁴

Of more importance for our knowledge of the development of Pelagius’ thought is the date of the composition of his *Nature*. Two dates and places of composition have been traditionally suggested. A smaller number of scholars has claimed that it was written in Sicily in 410–411, while the majority opinion has maintained that the work was written in Palestine in 413 or 414.⁵ Recently Y.-M. Duval has argued that the work was written in Rome “not only prior to 411, but . . . between 406 and 410, closer, as I see it, to the first date than the second. . . .”⁶ Hence, he links the work to the controversy that arose in Rome shortly after 400.⁷ Such an early dating of Pelagius’ *Nature* rests, as Duval admits, on a “bundle of probabilities.”⁸ It is, however, a bundle of probabilities that I find quite convincing. If his argument is sound, a number of important consequences follow for our understanding of the Pelagian controversy. As Duval himself points, “First of all, far from having to wait until 413 or 414 to present a coherent defense of his system, Pelagius was brought to state his ideas with precision between 405 and 410, and did this at Rome and to the scandal of the Romans in his regard.”⁹ Such an early date for the composition of *Nature* would also confirm the already well accepted position that Augustine was not

the origin of the doctrine of original sin. After all, Pelagius' denial that all sinned in Adam "on account of a sin contracted by reason of their origin through being born, but on account of the imitation of Adam's sin,"¹⁰ presupposes that the transmission of sin by generation was being taught and taught in Rome.¹¹

The earlier dating of this work also helps to account for the fact that the heresy came to be called Pelagianism rather than Caelestianism. Rees, who gives the date of the composition of *Nature* as 414 or 415,¹² claims that

Pelagius became, *faute de mieux*, the eponymous founder of a heresy for which he was both then and for ever after to be held responsible. Once he had written his two treatises *Free Will* and *Nature* the die was cast: it was only a matter of time before the mills of the Church would grind him out of existence.¹³

Though the earlier dating of *Nature* does not mean that Augustine or Jerome, who first attacked the Pelagians, knew the work before it came into Augustine's hands in 414 or 415, it does explain how rumors could have spread concerning Pelagius' opposition to the grace of Christ. Augustine reports, for example, in *The Deeds of Pelagius* 22, 46, "I first heard people mention the name of Pelagius with great praise, when he was far off and residing in Rome. Later, I began to hear by rumor that he was arguing against the grace of God." If Pelagius had written a systematic defense of his position while still at Rome, as Duval's thesis maintains, then it becomes understandable that Augustine could already hear rumors of him as an enemy of grace and that he was, nonetheless, hesitant to attack him by name in the absence of hard evidence in the form of a work that he could be certain was that of Pelagius.¹⁴

The Disciples of Pelagius

Any hesitation Augustine had regarding the orthodoxy of Pelagius was removed when he received from Timasius and James a copy of *Nature* and examined it with care. "Then," that is, upon reading the book, "it became clear to me beyond any doubt how dangerous the poison of that perverse error was to salvation in Christ."¹⁵ Augustine describes Timasius and James as "servants of God, . . . good and honest men."¹⁶ In his Letter 179 to John of Jerusalem, he says that these disciples of Pelagius, "young men of excellent birth and trained in liberal pursuits, at his [that is, Pelagius'] exhortation abandoned their worldly hopes and dedicated themselves to the service of God."¹⁷ As Duval has pointed out this letter distinguishes several stages. Augustine tells John that "they were found to be arguing against the grace of God on account of which we are Christians and in which by the Spirit we look for the hope of righteousness from faith." Augustine goes on to say that, "when they began to be corrected by our admonitions, they gave me the book which they said was that of this same

Pelagius, asking that I reply rather to him.” When Augustine came to see that he should answer Pelagius, “so that the wicked error might be more completely removed from their hearts,” he read and answered it.¹⁸

Duval has argued that the two disciples were not in Palestine, as is commonly supposed. A careful reading of Augustine’s account of how he came to have Pelagius’ book in his possession seems to imply their presence in Africa, where they were admonished by him, perhaps orally, perhaps in writing, and where they gave him the book of their former master. These points are confirmed by Letter 168, the letter of gratitude sent by Timasius and James to Augustine. The pair distinguish their earlier abandonment of the errors of Pelagius under Augustine’s instruction from the effect of their reading Augustine’s *Nature and Grace*. “As for ourselves, we earlier cast off our subjection to this error, after having been instructed by the spirit of love which is present in you. We now also give thanks that we have learned to teach to others what we have come to believe, since the rich explanation of Your Holiness makes the path more easy.” With regard to their reading of the book Augustine sent them, they say, “We find that Your Holiness has opened up the text of that small book with such care that we are stunned by the answers given to the individual points, whether in those matters which a Christian should refute and detest and flee from, or in those in which Pelagius is not clearly shown to have been in error, although by some form of craftiness he believed that he should eliminate the grace of God in them as well.” They have one regret: “that this splendid gift of the grace of God has shone forth somewhat late. For, as it is, there are no longer present certain people whose blindness needed to be illumined by the brilliance of this pure truth.” These persons who have come to be absent and cannot benefit from Augustine’s book include, as Augustine tells us, Pelagius. “For they had him especially in mind, when they said that they regretted that I had written that book so late.”¹⁹ They do not, however, “give up hope that this same grace will, by God’s goodness, reach them, even if it is somewhat later, for *he wills all human beings to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tm 2:4).” As Duval has pointed out, the letter implies that Pelagius has become absent from the place in which his two former disciples are now present. Since Pelagius left Africa for Palestine, it would seem obvious that Timasius and James remained in Africa. Furthermore, it would seem that they received a copy of *Nature* from Pelagius before he left Africa, hence, before 411.

The handing over of Pelagius’ book by the two young men to Augustine has been characterized as “a betrayal.”²⁰ The case for calling it treason is, of course, strengthened if one thinks of the pair as having been summoned to Palestine by Pelagius who made known to them and other disciples “the more secret mysteries of the heresy.”²¹ If, on the other hand, one holds that they remained in Africa when Pelagius left and that, after teaching Pelagius’ doctrine for a time,

they were corrected by the admonitions of Augustine and that they then gave him the copy of *Nature* in order that Pelagius might benefit from Augustine's response to it as they had benefited by his admonitions, the picture is quite changed. They regretted that Pelagius who had so strong an influence for good upon their lives had left Africa too soon, and they wanted him to share in the benefit that they had received from Augustine.

The Contents of the Work

Nature and Grace is a pivotal work in terms of Augustine's attitude toward Pelagius. In a letter he tells Paulinus of Nola that his love for Pelagius changed as a result of reading it.²² Having loved him as someone who held the true faith, Augustine came to love him, as a result of reading *Nature*, as one who needed to be freed from views hostile to the grace of God. Augustine, nonetheless, never mentions Pelagius by name in the work—much less the Pelagians—in the hopes that Pelagius will be corrected rather than offended.²³

The work is divisible into an introduction (paragraphs 1-7), five parts dealing with different kinds of objections from Pelagius' work, and a conclusion. The first part (paragraphs 8-20) focuses upon Pelagius' claim that human beings can be without sin. The second part (paragraphs 21-36) answers the claim of Pelagius that human nature has not suffered any weakening or change due to sin, especially due to the sin of Adam. The third part (paragraphs 37-51) returns to Pelagius' doctrine of human sinlessness. The fourth part (paragraphs 52-70) confronts Pelagius' claim that human nature received from its creator the inamissible ability not to sin. The fifth part (paragraphs 71-81) takes up Pelagius' appeal to various ecclesiastical writers in support of his position. Finally, the work ends with a summary and conclusion (paragraphs 82-84).

In the opening paragraph Augustine tells Timasius and James that in reading the book they sent him, he found a man burning with zeal against those who blame their sins on human nature rather than on their own will. Though Pelagius is filled with zeal, he is one of those who do not know the righteousness of God and desire to establish their own.²⁴ Those who understand that righteousness does not come from the law, but from the grace of Christ, understand why they are Christians. After all, if there are some people who have no sin, they certainly have no need to become Christians.

Human nature born from Adam's flesh cannot fulfill the law or attain righteousness on its own (paragraph 2). Augustine introduces a long quotation from Pelagius' *Nature* that indicates Pelagius' concern for the salvation of those who have not been able to hear the preaching of the gospel, either because they lived before Christ or because they are now living in some remote part of the world where the gospel has not yet been proclaimed. The passage clearly indicates that he believes that such people can attain salvation by believing in

God the creator of heaven and earth and by fulfilling his will through living good lives, even without any faith in the suffering and resurrection of Christ. To this Augustine replies that, if that is possible, *Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). If Paul was correct in saying this with regard to the mosaic law, then it is correct to say, "If righteousness comes about through nature, then Christ has died in vain!"

Though human nature was originally created blameless and without defect, the human nature in which we are now born is not in good health and needs a physician (paragraph 3). Its intellectual darkness and moral weakness came from the original sin committed by free choice so that we were born as children of anger, even if we have now been brought to life with Christ by whose grace we have been saved.²⁵ This grace without which neither infants nor adults can be saved is not the recompense of our merits, but a free gift (paragraph 4). Those who are not set free by that grace—no matter what the reason—are rightly condemned. The whole mass of humanity owes a debt of punishment such that, if all suffered damnation, the penalty would be just (paragraph 5). Hence, those who are set free are not called vessels of their own merits, but vessels of mercy²⁶—of the mercy of Christ. If one holds this position in accord with the scriptures, one is not forced to argue against the grace of Christ, claiming that human nature in little ones is healthy and in no need of a physician and that in adults it is self-sufficient for attaining righteousness. Such claims are the wordy wisdom that does away with the cross of Christ.²⁷

As he draws the introduction to a close, Augustine insists that, as Pelagius burned with zeal against those who blamed the weakness of human nature for their sins, we ought to burn with greater zeal that the cross of Christ is not done away with. For it is being done away with by those who maintain that righteousness and eternal life can be attained in any other way than "by the sacrament of Christ" (paragraph 7). Augustine is willing to admit that Pelagius does not realize what he is doing, though he presents a great danger because of his persuasive power.

The first set arguments from Pelagius to which Augustine replies rests upon the distinction between what is (*esse*) and what is possible (*posse*). Pelagius concedes that the scriptures say that no one has been or is sinless, but points out that they do not address the question of whether one can be sinless. He argues that, if persons could not avoid sin, they would not be blameworthy (paragraph 8). In reply Augustine points out (paragraph 9) that little ones who die unbaptized, because they were born in a place where they could not receive baptism, could not be without sin. And he challenges the Pelagians to declare them innocent and admit them to the kingdom of heaven contrary to the words of the Lord in John 3:5. Nor did the apostle declare them innocent, Augustine adds, citing Romans 5:12.

The Pelagians admit that all sinned in Adam, not “on account of a sin contracted by reason of their origin through being born, but on account of the imitation of Adam’s sin” (paragraph 10). But if Adam were the source of all subsequent sinners for that reason, then Abel rather than Christ should be called the head of all the righteous. Augustine sets aside the question of infants and asks whether or not people living where they could not hear the name of Christ could become righteous by nature and free choice. If they can, *then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). To an objector who says that one can be righteous, but by the grace of God, Pelagius had replied that one who says this not merely concedes that one can be righteous, but goes on to show how one can be. The objector still complains that, in not mentioning the grace of God, Pelagius seems to deny it. Augustine insists that Pelagius must admit that “without God’s help human beings cannot be without sin, for it is wicked and godless to deny this” (paragraph 11). Pelagius maintained that, in admitting the actuality of righteousness, he surely admits any means or helps necessary to its attainment. Though Augustine’s initial reaction to reading this was joy that Pelagius did not deny the grace of God, he soon became suspicious (paragraph 12), since the examples he used to illustrate the sort of helps he meant were all elements of nature as it was created rather than means toward its healing.

To the claim that certain venial sins cannot be avoided because they overwhelm people by reason of their great number, Pelagius had maintained that, if such sins are unavoidable, they should not receive the slightest correction (paragraph 13). Pelagius has failed to understand, Augustine replies, the purpose of the law, namely, to accuse one of wrongdoing and to lead one, like a schoolmaster, to take refuge in the grace of the merciful Lord. Some ask the Pelagians whether they are themselves without sin; Pelagius dismisses the question as irrelevant and admits that it is due to his negligence, if he is not without sin (paragraph 14). Here Augustine adds that he should also ask for the help of the Lord and not merely rely on his own efforts to attain righteousness.

Although scripture never explicitly says that people can be without sin, as some objectors pointed out, Pelagius insists that the precise words are not important (paragraph 15). Augustine suggests that the precise words may not be insignificant, since, though some people, for example, Job, Zechariah, and Elizabeth, are said to be without reproach, only Christ is said to have been without sin.²⁸ John’s statement that *those who have been born of God do not sin and cannot sin* (1 Jn 3:9) needs to be interpreted in the light of 1 John 1:8, and Augustine refers the reader to his interpretation on these passages in *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*, while accepting another interpretation, possibly from Pelagius.

Pelagius had interpreted James 3:8, not as a statement, but as a question and a reprimand: Can then no human beings tame their tongues? Augustine argues

that the context shows that James was not saying that it was easy to tame the tongue; rather, he said this so that we would beg the help of divine grace to tame the tongue (paragraph 16). In fact, James emphasizes the great evil of the tongue (paragraph 17), and he shows that it is the wisdom that comes from above that can tame it, adding that, if one lacks such wisdom, one should ask for it from God.²⁹ Augustine also points out that no one should use as an objection to the Pelagians Paul's words, *But those who are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom 8:8). What he wants to hear from them is: Do those who live according to the Spirit and are in that sense not in the flesh live according to the Spirit by the grace of God? Or do they do this by the ability of nature and by their own will that they received when they were created? (paragraph 18). Pelagius warns that we should be on guard against culpable ignorance, but he does not warn that we should ask for wisdom from God (paragraph 19). According to Pelagius, we must pray to God for the forgiveness of sins, since only the power of God can "make undone what has been done" (paragraph 20).³⁰ But Pelagius is silent about the need to pray for help not to sin, though the Lord's Prayer clearly teaches otherwise.

In paragraph 21, as he begins the second part of the work, Augustine accuses the author of *Nature* of portraying human nature as if it were completely free from any defect and of indulging in the wordy wisdom that does away with the cross of Christ. In fact, Augustine states, the cross of Christ will prevail, and he prays that Pelagius may repent of what he has said. In order to show that human nature has not been weakened and changed by sin, Pelagius had argued that sin is not a substance or a thing, but an act of wrongdoing and that, as lacking substance, sin could not harm our nature. Augustine points to the psalmist's prayer, *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you* (Ps 40:5), and suggests that the wounded sinner would send Pelagius to continue his debate with the one who did not come to call those in good health, but the sick, not the righteous, but sinners.³¹ Augustine claims that Pelagius' aim is that we think that the words, *You shall call his name, Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* (Mt 1:21), were uttered with absolutely no point (paragraph 22). He admonishes Pelagius that it would be enough to believe, but Pelagius wants to argue. First believe the scriptures that human nature can be harmed by sin, Augustine advises; then investigate how this is possible. To show how it is possible, Augustine points out that the act of abstaining from food can harm the substance of the body; so too, the soul's withdrawing from God, "the only true food of the rational creature," can injure it. Despite the clear words of scripture that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tm 1:15), Pelagius argues that sins should not have caused any illness; "otherwise, this punishment would lead to more sins being committed" (paragraph 23). As Augustine reads him, Pelagius would not have Adam condemned to death for his sin and would not

have Adam's descendants born any weaker than Adam himself was at his creation, though he can see, Augustine notes, the actual helpless state of newborn infants. Pelagius even declares these infants to be in good health and in no need of Christ the physician.³²

Pelagius finds that punishment is the source of sin, if the sinner is weakened to the point of sinning more (paragraph 24). On the contrary, Augustine argues that it is only just that the light of truth abandon sinners so that they fall, injure themselves, and cannot get up. He appeals to Romans 1:21-31 to show how sins led to the darkening of the hearts of sinners so that they fell into worse sins as a penalty for their wickedness. Pelagius may correctly claim that God does not force them to commit these sins, when he abandons sinners (paragraph 25). But Augustine maintains that, deprived of the light of righteousness, sinners have become darkness and bring forth the works of darkness, until they obey the command, *Get up, you sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you* (Eph 4:14). While the truth declares sinners dead, Pelagius claims that they cannot be injured or harmed by sin, since sin is not a substance. He not merely "says nothing at all about this grace and help and mercy without which we cannot live a good life. In fact he even speaks quite openly against the grace of Christ by which we are justified, when he defends nature as if it were sufficient unto itself for righteousness."

Pelagius points out that the Lord was able to die, though he was without sin, obviously aiming to show that death is not the result of sin (paragraph 26). Augustine replies that Christ's birth also reveals the power of his mercy rather than the condition of his nature and that his death redeemed us from death—precisely the point these people try to do away with in their defense of human nature. Christ died, not by the necessity of nature, but by reason of the will to obey.

Another argument of Pelagius rests on the premise that no evil is the cause of any good. Yet, Augustine notes that, though punishment is not a good, many people have by the mercy of God been corrected by punishments; hence, there are evils that do lead to good (paragraph 27). Augustine uses Psalm 29:7-8 to illustrate this point, though he concedes in paragraph 28 that the proud heart does not understand it. Hence, we would do better to pray for them, as we do for ourselves, than to debate them. Pelagius claims that sin was necessary in order for God to have reason to show mercy—a point which Augustine denies. Yet he does admit that the wickedness of the first sin was greater insofar as it was more easily avoided. As a result of that sin of disobedience to God, human beings to some extent lost the obedience of their own bodies so that they are now born with the law of sin in their members resisting the law of the mind.³³ Pelagius grants that God's mercy helps human beings after sin, but does not admit that his mercy is needed so that we do not sin (paragraph 29). The heavenly

physician, Augustine insists, not merely heals the wounds of our nature so that they no longer exist, but helps us to live righteously afterward. Unlike a human physician, God does not heal the sinner and then abandon him, but continues to provide the means of avoiding sin.

The objection was made to the Pelagians that it was necessary that human beings not be sinless in order to remove the occasion for pride and boasting. Pelagius had declared it absurd that one should think that sin had to exist in order that sin might not exist (paragraph 30). Augustine points out that at times pain is necessary to relieve pain, for example, when a boil is lanced. Though God can heal everything, he acts as he knows best and does not allow the sick person to prescribe the cure (paragraph 31). Paul prayed repeatedly for God to remove the thorn in his flesh, but God left it there so Paul would not be filled with pride. While the other vices are found only in wrong actions, pride is found even in good actions and serves to warn us not to attribute our good actions to our own power. We need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling on account of our will, which so easily succumbs to pride. Hence, though it is not necessary to sin to avoid sin, God does at times abandon one in something over which one is proud so that we may learn not to be proud (paragraph 32).

Pelagius tries to show that every sin is a sin of pride, presumably to eliminate sins of ignorance and weakness (paragraph 33). Augustine, on the other hand, admits that many sins are committed out of pride, but "not every wrong action is done with pride. Many are done by the ignorant, by the weak, and often by persons weeping and groaning." But he also maintains that there is a distinct sin of pride of the sort by which the devil fell and by which Adam fell.

Again Pelagius asks, "How could persons be responsible to God for the guilt of that sin which they do not recognize as their own? . . . Or, if it is theirs, then it is voluntary, and if it is voluntary, it can be avoided" (paragraph 34). Augustine, though somewhat puzzled over what Pelagius meant, replies that the sin is theirs and that their injured and as yet unhealed nature led them to commit it. The Pelagians should pray for God's healing grace and not suppose that they can be healed by the same power by which they were injured. Augustine warns in paragraph 35 that pride lies in ambush to attack the human spirit even in good actions, leading us to suppose that we make ourselves righteous by our own power. Though we do not make ourselves righteous, we do something along with God whose mercy goes before us to heal us and comes after us to strengthen us further.³⁴ God's words strike fear even in those who walk in his way so that they do not become proud (paragraph 36). Hence, Paul tells Christians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling,³⁵ and the psalmist warns us to serve the Lord in fear so that we do not perish from the righteous way.³⁶

In paragraphs 37-51, Augustine turns to a series of objections raised against Pelagius which Pelagius reports and answers in his book. Some, for example,

have argued that, if human beings were sinless, they would be equal to God.³⁷ Augustine insists that the creature will not be equal to the creator, even if the creature has attained the highest degree of righteousness. Though some suppose that human beings can make such progress in righteousness that they will be changed into the divine substance, Augustine remains unconvinced (paragraphs 37). Others object to Pelagius that his claim that human beings can be sinless is pride; Augustine agrees with Pelagius' reply that it is wrong to link the truth with pride and humility with falsity (paragraph 38). John, after all, spoke the truth, not something false, when he said, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). Pelagius, however, defends human nature in such a way that he rejects the mercy and healing of the physician, which he locates only in the pardon of past sins, not in the help to avoid future ones (paragraph 39). Thus, he praises the creator, Augustine argues, to the point of making the savior unnecessary.

Again Augustine concedes that Pelagius is correct in holding that scriptural examples of holy and righteous persons who sinned are not meant to make us despair of avoiding sin so that, convinced of our damnation, we give ourselves to sin without a worry; they are meant, rather, to bring us to repent humbly and not to give up hope, even amid our failures (paragraph 40). Pelagius poses a dilemma regarding the death of these holy persons, asking whether they left this life with sin or without sin. If one holds that they died with sin, their damnation would seem to follow; if one holds that they died without sin, then one has to admit that some human beings were sinless in this life, at least toward death. Augustine argues in paragraph 41 that Pelagius overlooks the Christian's daily prayer for forgiveness which obtains pardon so that one is able to die without sin, even if one cannot live without sin.³⁸

Pelagius adds a long list of biblical women and men who, he claims, did not sin and lived righteously. Of Mary, Pelagius says, "Piety demands that we admit that she had no sin." Augustine does not concede that Mary was sinless, though he refuses to discuss her in the context of sin "on account of the honor due to the Lord" (paragraph 42). He adds, "After all, how do we know what wealth of grace was given to her in order to conquer sin completely, since she merited to conceive and bear the one who obviously had no sin?"³⁹ Of all the other righteous people Pelagius mentioned, Augustine asks whether or not they would have cried out with John, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8), arguing that, if the truth is in them, they would have had sin and admitted it.

Another objection to Pelagius claims that scripture could not mention the sins of everyone, a point which Augustine takes to be true. Pelagius, however, presents the rather feeble argument that, while the objection might hold for those about whom scripture reports neither good nor bad actions, it does not hold for

those whose righteousness is mentioned. In response, Augustine asks Pelagius whether in the crowd of people who welcomed Jesus with great faith on his entry into Jerusalem there was no one who had any sin whatsoever, just because scripture does not mention any sin (paragraph 43). Pelagius perhaps saw this line of reply, since he went on to exclude cases in which scripture dealt with large numbers, but he tries to maintain the truth of his principle with regard to the beginnings of the race, inferring that, if Abel had sinned, scripture would have mentioned it (paragraph 44). Augustine replies that Pelagius has overlooked the large number of venial sins committed even by a single human being. He notes, moreover, that, unless one admits that there are many facts that scripture does not mention, even in the beginning, one would be obliged to infer that Cain had intercourse with his mother. Hence, scripture had no need to recount all the venial sins of Abel—the sort of sins against which we all must fight a daily battle (paragraph 45).

Pelagius had appealed to the fundamentalist hermeneutical principle that one should believe what one reads and add nothing to what one reads.⁴⁰ In paragraph 46, Augustine first notes that we should not believe everything we read and that we can surely add what we have ourselves experienced, even if we have not found it in writing. Even if the principle is limited to what we read in scripture, what we should not add is something contrary to what we read there, not merely something other than what we read there. Augustine also points out that Pelagius should believe what he reads, for example, in Romans 5:12. He adds, “How I wish that, as a Christian, he would read that apart from Jesus Christ there is no name under heaven in which we can be saved.”⁴¹ Perhaps, Augustine suggests, Pelagius thinks that we need the name of Christ in order to learn from his gospel how we ought to live, but not in order to be helped by his grace to live as we ought (paragraph 47). If so, Pelagius ought at least to admit the great darkness of the human mind that knows how to tame wild animals, but does not know how it ought to live. If Pelagius means that free choice and the natural law suffice, this is, Augustine cries, “the wordy wisdom that does away with the cross of Christ.”⁴²

Another objection which Pelagius’ opponents raise is that the apostle said, *All have, after all, sinned* (Rom 3:23) with regard to people in the past. Somewhat puzzled over why Pelagius mentioned this objection, Augustine points out that Romans 5:12 includes all people, those in the past and those in more recent times (paragraph 48). Pelagius also uses Romans 5:18 in support of his taking “all” in a less than all-inclusive sense, since the righteousness of Christ did not justify everyone. Augustine replies that Paul used “all” in the sense that no one is justified “without believing in him and being washed by his baptism.” Pelagius retreats even further, conceding that scripture does say that all were sinners, but insists that his thesis concerns not what human beings

have been or are, but what they can be (paragraph 49). At this point, Augustine notes that Pelagius does admit that no one is righteous in God's sight,⁴³ and with regard to the possibility of not sinning, Augustine adds that he is not very concerned about whether or not some people have attained or will attain a perfect love of God in this life, provided one admits that the human will is healed and helped by God's grace. Augustine warns that Pelagius would do better to acknowledge both the creator and the savior rather than to destroy the help of the savior in defending the creature.

Pelagius is correct that God made human beings such that they could be free from sin, if they wanted to be (paragraph 50). We are now, however, "dealing with that man whom robbers left half-dead on the road," Augustine points out, alluding to his interpretation of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho as the human race and the Good Samaritan as Christ. God does not command the impossible; rather, by his commandment he warns us to do what we can and to ask for what we cannot. While Pelagius maintained, "Natural ability does not depend on the will," Augustine claimed that, given the wound-*edness of our nature*, "one will be able to be as a result of medication what one cannot be because of one's injury." Hence, Augustine brings this section to a close by insisting "on the sole or almost the sole point of contention we have with these people" (paragraph 51). That point is not whether there have been or are sinless people or whether there can be people without sin, but whether there are people without sin who have not been justified *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25).

Pelagius himself raises the crucial issue as an objection to himself, "You maintain that a human being can be free from sin without the grace of God" (paragraph 52). Augustine agrees that this is the intolerable point. Pelagius responds with outrage at the ignorance that supposes that he defends without the grace of God what must be attributed to God alone. Thus far Augustine is in perfect agreement. But Pelagius contends that the ability to be without sin does not come from human choice, but from nature and, in that sense, from the author of nature (paragraph 53). That is, Pelagius locates the ability for an action in the necessity of one's God-given nature, but he locates the action itself in human choice. For example, that I can speak is part of my nature, while the fact that I do speak is due to my choice. Augustine points out that we can in fact lose an ability through an injury inflicted upon ourselves and in other ways. Pelagius goes on to imply that natural necessity is incompatible with the will, and Augustine points out that our willing to be happy belongs to the will, despite our inability to will to be unhappy, and that inability to will to sin does not imply that God does not will to be righteous (paragraph 54).

Pelagius claims that actions lie in our power, but that the ability to do the actions does not lie in our power, but in a natural necessity (paragraph 55). In

opposition to that, Augustine insists that the ability to see does lie in our power, since we have it in our power to blind ourselves, that is, we have it in our power to deprive ourselves of the ability to see. Furthermore, when we are in the dark, it is not in our power to see, and we often see and hear things we could not avoid seeing or hearing. Augustine notes that Pelagius' comparisons do not hold up to scrutiny and that the point he used to make them fails as well. Pelagius claimed that "not sinning is up to us, but the ability not to sin is not up to us" (paragraph 56). Augustine points out that, even if our nature were whole and healthy, we would still need God's help not to sin. But since the question concerns our nature as it is at present, Augustine is astonished at the claims that "not sinning is up to us, even without the help of our savior . . . [and] the ability not to sin comes from our nature." Pelagius held, "Because not sinning is up to us, we can both sin and not sin" (paragraph 57). Augustine points out that not willing unhappiness is up to us, but that it does not follow that we can will it as well as not will it. Moreover, not sinning lies in God's power, and it does not follow that he can sin. Pelagius is, of course, trying to show that we cannot lose the natural ability not to sin. As Augustine rephrases it, Pelagius maintains that, "whether we will it or not, we have the ability not to sin . . . and this is implanted in our nature." Augustine concedes that this might hold of a nature that was not wounded, just as human beings with healthy feet have the ability to walk, whether they will to or not. But our present nature is wounded and needs a physician and savior. We are like someone with a broken foot who first needs to be healed before he can walk again. Against Pelagius' claim that "no will can remove something inseparably implanted in nature" (paragraph 58), Augustine appeals to Paul's complaint that he does not do the good that he wants, but does the evil that he hates.⁴⁴ He asks, "Where is the ability that is found to be inseparably implanted in nature?"

In order to avoid the hostility of Christians, Augustine notes, Pelagius locates the ability not to sin in the necessity of nature rather than in the power of choice and adds the claim that whatever lies in the necessity of nature surely pertains to the author of nature (paragraph 59). He then asks how one can suppose "that what is shown to pertain to God as his very own is said to exist apart from God's grace?" That is, Pelagius has identified the grace of God with the God-given nature with its inseparable ability not to sin. He has ruled out any weakness of the will such that human beings can will the good, but cannot do the good they will, despite Paul's statement to the contrary in Romans 7:18. Augustine again concedes that Pelagius' claim would be somewhat acceptable, if he were speaking of an innocent and healthy nature, though even that nature did not have an ability not to sin that could not be lost.

Pelagius then turns to objections which he raises against his own position (paragraph 60). For example, he mentions Paul's statement that the flesh is

opposed to us.⁴⁵ In reply, he claims that the flesh is not opposed to one who has been baptized, since the baptized are not in the flesh, according to Romans 8:9. Here Augustine notes that Pelagius implies that human nature is injured and wounded in those who are not baptized. Again appealing to the parable of the Samaritan, he says, "He surely grants that at least in them nature was injured, if that wounded man, now among the baptized, emerged from the inn in good health or is in good health in the inn where the merciful Samaritan brought him to be cared for." Augustine argues that human flesh and spirit are God's creation and are good because he is good; hence, the injury to human nature, as a result of which all need the help of the savior, must have been inflicted by the human will.

Paul, however, said that the flesh is opposed to the spirit and the spirit to the flesh in the baptized as well as in the unbaptized (paragraph 61). Even the baptized do not have the ability not to sin, which Pelagius claimed was inseparably implanted in human nature. It is not the nature of the flesh, but the defects of the flesh which are opposed to the spirit. In any case, the flesh is opposed to the spirit, even in the baptized, so that they do not do the good that they want.

The grace we need in order to avoid sin, Augustine argues, is not "the grace by which human beings were created, but the grace by which they are saved through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (paragraph 62). The petition, *Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13), asks for the latter grace. We do not ask to be freed from substance of the flesh, but from its defects. Our nature "is wounded, injured, beaten, ruined; it is in need of a true confession, not of a false defense." Pelagius declares the grace by which we are healed, restored, and saved unnecessary, when he does not mention it.

Pelagius then shows by many citations from St. Paul that the latter uses "flesh" to refer to the works of the flesh, not the substance of the flesh. He also argues that the flesh and the spirit, along with the God who created them both, are good and infers that flesh and spirit cannot, therefore, be opposed to each other (paragraph 63). Augustine counters that hot and cold are also created by God and are surely opposed to each other; though hot and cold are qualities, not substances, substances are only opposed by reason of their qualities. But the flesh's being opposed to the spirit so that we do not do what we want is not our nature, but a defect from which we need to be healed. Moreover, having admitted that the flesh and the spirit are opposed to each other in the unbaptized, Pelagius has to explain how this can be, since their flesh and spirit were made by the same good creator (paragraph 64). If Pelagius takes back what he implied about the unbaptized, he cannot take Paul's question, *Who will set me free from the body of this death?* (Rom 7:24), as words placed in the mouth of someone unbaptized. But if he grants that nature is injured at least in the unbaptized, he should grant that it needs Christ the physician.

Paul asked to be set free from the just punishment of sin and could not set himself free. Wherever freedom was lost, the ability Pelagius assigned to nature was surely separated from it (paragraph 65). If Pelagius would only cry out with Paul's words, he would realize that he needed not only baptism for the forgiveness of past sins, but help and strength not to sin in the future. Paul saw another law in his members, not merely resisting him, but holding him captive. Pelagius would prevent him from demanding the help and the mercy of Christ the physician. If the Pelagians would allow at least the unbaptized to implore the help of the savior, we would have won no small victory (paragraph 66), but they should also see that the opposition between the flesh and the spirit is present in the baptized. Augustine points to Galatians 5:17 as proof that even in the baptized there is the opposition between the flesh and the spirit (paragraph 67); he notes that Paul added, *If you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under the law* (Gal 5:18), for those led by the Spirit have the love of God poured out in their hearts. Our present condition is mixed: insofar as we are led by the Spirit, we find delight in the law of God; insofar as we find another law in our members, we stand under the law in fear like slaves.

As we ought to be grateful for the past healing we have received, so we ought to pray for continued healing so that we are brought to full health (paragraph 68). Pelagius, on the other hand, Augustine claims, attributes such power to the will that he would even have us resist the devil without praying for God's help. Augustine grants that Pelagius correctly infers from the fact that many want to be without sin that it is possible to be without sin, but points out that he overlooks the grace of God which makes this possible (paragraph 69). Pelagius does not want us to pray for help not to sin. In his defense of the nature with which we are created, he refuses to acknowledge that our nature was injured so that it needs healing or is not self-sufficient so that it needs help.

Augustine concedes that it is a "legitimate question among true and pious Christians" whether anyone has attained or will attain a righteous life completely free from sin (paragraph 70). Though he finds such passages as Psalm 142:2 to be convincing proofs that no one has attained or will attain such perfect righteousness in this life, he is well aware that Ambrose of Milan had clearly attributed such righteousness to Zechariah and Elizabeth.⁴⁶ There are, however, many more persons who know that they need to pray daily for the forgiveness of their sins, and no Christian can claim to make progress in true righteousness in any other way than by the grace of Christ crucified and by the gift of the Spirit.

In *Nature* Pelagius had appealed to a number of ecclesiastical writers as supportive of his views on human sinlessness. In paragraph 71 Augustine turns to the statements of these men whom Pelagius had cited and claims that these texts are neutral, neither against Pelagius' view nor against his own. Pelagius did not mention the name of the first author he cited, and Augustine was unable

to identify him. The author is Lactantius, and Augustine merely cautions Pelagius about the need to understand correctly the sense in which Christ conquered sin and overcame the desires of the flesh, since he had in himself no sin to conquer and no concupiscence of the flesh. In paragraphs 72-73, Augustine points out that the citations from Hilary of Poitiers do not support Pelagius' claim that some human beings, such as Job, have attained perfect righteousness in this world and cites another passage from Hilary to show that he held that there is no one without sin.

Turning to Ambrose of Milan, Augustine concedes that "Saint Ambrose is really opposed to those who say that human beings cannot be without sin in this life" (paragraph 74). But though Ambrose appealed to Zechariah and Elizabeth as examples of such sinlessness, he certainly did not deny, Augustine argues, that they attained such sinlessness by the grace of God. Augustine, moreover, cites another passage from Ambrose's *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* in which the bishop of Milan cited Proverbs 8:35: *The will of human beings is prepared by God*, and he points out that Pelagius omitted a line from Ambrose's work in which the bishop had said that it was not possible for the Church to be spotless from the beginning (paragraph 75).

Pelagius had cited John Chrysostom, though the citation has not been found in his works, as saying that sin is not a substance, but an action and that it is not natural, but arises from free choice. Augustine concedes both points as harmless, if properly understood, but points out that Pelagius defends nature and free choice as if they were sufficient to avoid sin without the aid of grace (paragraph 76).

Pelagius attributed to Xystus II, bishop of Rome and martyr, three quotations, which, according to Jerome, stemmed from Sextus the Pythagorean philosopher. At the time of writing *Nature and Grace*, Augustine did not question the attribution of the quotations to Pope Xystus, though he adopted Jerome's view of their authorship by the time he wrote his *Revisions*.⁴⁷ Hence, in paragraph 77, he takes the texts from Sextus in a Christian sense; in doing so, he notes that the question about the attainment of sinlessness in this life is one properly raised among pious people.

Jerome was the source of two statements that Pelagius had cited in support of his position (paragraphs 78-79). In neither of them does Augustine find anything with which to disagree, though he admits "there is a certain necessity of sinning due to the defects of nature, not to the way nature was created," so that we need to pray, *Deliver me from my necessities* (Ps 24:17), until grace brings us full freedom.

Pelagius had also taken a quotation from Augustine's *Free Choice*, parts of which—most of the first two books—were written soon after his conversion, while much of the third book was completed almost ten years later. In the

passage in question Augustine had stated that sin was avoidable; here he acknowledges the statement as his own, insisting that sin can be avoided by the help of grace (paragraph 80). Then, in paragraph 81 Augustine points out that, if Pelagius had attended to the words immediately following those he quoted, he would have seen that Augustine had gone on to speak of the ignorance and weakness resulting from sin and to claim that the free will to do what is right belonged to the nature with which human beings were created, not to the nature with which we are now born. Augustine adds, "The whole dispute with these people turns on this point: that we do not render meaningless the grace of God, which is found in Christ Jesus, our Lord, by a misguided defense of nature."

Twelve years later, in his *Revisions*,⁴⁸ Augustine reviewed a long series of statements he made in *Free Choice* that might seem to favor the Pelagian position. He again insisted that he had in his earlier work stated the need for grace, though in a work directed against the Manichees, such as *Free Choice*, he was not engaged in a defense of God's grace. He did, on the other hand, admit the absence in the earlier work of any discussion of the grace of predestination:

There was no discussion in those books of the grace of God by which he has predestined his elect so that he prepares the wills of those who use their free choice, since the question was raised on account of the latter. But when the occasion allowed the mention of grace, it was mentioned in passing. It is, after all, one thing to investigate the origin of evil, and it is something quite different to investigate how one returns to the original good or attains a greater good."⁴⁹

There was, as Augustine himself acknowledged in *The Predestination of the Saints*, a marked change in his thought on grace that dated from the time of his writing the second book of his *Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician* in 396.⁵⁰

In drawing the work to a close, Augustine agrees with Pelagius' exhorting "cold and sluggish minds to live good lives," but adds that one should first exhort them to faith or, if they already have the faith, one should use the fear of punishment and praise of the rewards of a good life, without forgetting to exhort them to prayer. Once people have begun to live good lives, they will be thankful for being able to do so without difficulty or, if they find difficulty, they will pray to be able to act with ease. Again, Augustine leaves open the question of when people will attain the perfection of righteousness, probably out of respect for the position of Ambrose. But whenever perfection is attained, it is attained only by the grace of God (paragraph 82). While Pelagius had maintained that it was possible to avoid sin, Augustine in a sense goes beyond this, claiming that it is not merely possible, but easy to do what God commands. "Everything is, of course, easy for love; for love alone Christ's burden is light" (paragraph 83). Thus, Augustine sums up his position, "the beginning of love is the beginning

of righteousness; progress in love is progress in righteousness; great love is great righteousness; perfect love is perfect righteousness" (paragraph 84). On the other hand, Augustine himself holds that such perfect love is probably not attained in this life. In any case, such love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The Text and Translations

The text translated is that of the CSEL edition by C. F. Urba and J. Zycha (Vienna, 1913), 233-299. I have adopted some modifications and suggestions from the texts in the ALG and BA editions. The work has been translated into English by P. Holmes in NPNF 5/1 (New York, 1887; reprinted 1971); his translation has been reprinted in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine* (New York, 1948), I, 519-579. The work has also been more recently translated by J. Mourant and W. Collinge in FC 86 (Washington, 1992), 22-90. In the present century it has also been translated into Spanish by V. Capanaga in BAC 50 (Madrid, 1956), 245-423; into French by J. de La Tullaye in BA 21 (Paris, 1966), 245-412; into German by A. Maxsein in ALG I (Würzburg, 1971), 519-579; and into Italian by I. Volpi in NBA 17/1 (Rome, 1981), 379-487.

Notes

1. Orosius, *Defense against the Pelagians (Liber apologeticus contra Pelagianos)* 3:3-4; CSEL 5, 606-607.

2. For the dating of Augustine's work and for Pelagius' *Nature*, I rely on the conclusions of Yves-Marie Duval's article, "La date du 'De natura' de Pélage. Les premières étapes de la controverse sur la nature de la grâce," REA 36 (1990) 257-283, here 258-259.

3. Duval, *art. cit.*, 259; the translation here and elsewhere from this article are my own.

4. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 24, 48, where Augustine quotes the whole of Letter 168, the letter of Timasius and James.

5. Duval, *art. cit.*, 261. For the earlier dating and Sicilian place of composition, Duval gives, among the moderns, E. Amann and R. Hedde (DTC 12, c. 680), and G. de Plinval (BA 21, p. 224); for the later dating and Palestinian place of composition, he gives A. Zumkeller (ALG I, pp. 45-46). B. R. Rees implies a date for *Nature* subsequent to the Synod of Diospolis! See B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988), p. 2.

6. Duval, *art. cit.*, 274.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Duval, *art. cit.*, 278.

9. Duval, *art. cit.*, 278.

10. *Nature and Grace* 9, 10, citing Pelagius' *Nature*.

11. F. Refoulé's article, "Datation du premier concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus fidei* de Rufin," REA 9 (1963) 41-49, showed that Rufinus' work was written prior to Augustine's *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones*. The fact that Rufinus' work was a source of Augustine's "nous oblige à penser que la conception dite augustinienne du péché originel et du sort des petits enfants morts sans baptême constituait une 'theologoumenon', non seulement en Afrique, mais aussi en Italie (puisque Rufin dut écrire son

traité à Rome, où il résida de 399 jusqu'à au moins 410) avant même les débuts de la crise pélagienne en 411" (p. 49). So too, in "Les origines africaines de la doctrine augustinienne sur la chute et le péché originel," *Augustinus* 12 (1967) 97-116, G. Bonner has pointed out, "La première attaque sur le Pélagianisme en Afrique fut déclenché par le diacre milanais Paulin, le biographe de saint Ambroise . . ." (p. 100) and says, "il reste significatif que le premier adversaire du Pélagianisme en Afrique était un milanais, comme plus tard les dénonciateurs de Pélagie même en Palestine étaient un prêtre espagnol, Orose, et deux anciens évêques provençaux, Héros d'Arles et Lazare d'Aix" (p. 102).

12. See Rees, *op. cit.*, 140, where he dates it circa 414, and 2, where he implies that it was written in response to his acquittal by the Synod of Diospolis.

13. Rees, *op. cit.*, 90.

14. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 22, 46. Caelestius' inability or perhaps refusal at the Council of Carthage to name anyone besides Rufinus who denied the transmission of sin by generation is perhaps explicable by the fact that Rufinus was probably already dead, while Pelagius was not; see *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 3, 3.

15. *The Deeds of Pelagius* 23, 47.

16. *Ibid.* In 411 Timasius was part of the entourage of Pinianus, one of the recipients of Augustine's *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*; see Duval, *art. cit.*, 265, for the evidence.

17. Augustine, Letter 179, 2.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *The Deeds of Pelagius* 25, 49.

20. Duval, *art. cit.*, 265-266, where he cites O. Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius* (Stuttgart, 1975) 39.

21. The phrase is that of H. de Noris in *Historia pelagiana et dissertatio de Synodo V oecumenica* (Louvain, 1702), I, 6, p. 26 (cited from Duval, *art. cit.*, 262).

22. See Letter 186, 1.

23. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 23, 47. Following Augustine, I have avoided using Pelagius' name in the translation, though I have used "Pelagius" and "Pelagians" in the introduction.

24. See Rom 10:2-3.

25. See Eph 2:3-5.

26. See Rom 9:23.

27. See 1 Cor 1:17.

28. See 2 Cor 5:21 and Heb 4:15.

29. See Jas 3:17 and 1:5-6.

30. Pelagius' expression seems to indicate that, in pardoning sins, God makes the past action of sinning such that it never occurred! Given this view, it is easy to see why he would reject any consequences of a sin remaining after the forgiveness of the sin.

31. See Mt 9:12-13.

32. If Pelagius' *Nature* was written while he was still in Rome, as Duval has argued, and if Augustine is reporting what Pelagius said in that work, then it would seem that Pelagius had taught at Rome several of the propositions of Caelestius that were condemned in Carthage in 411 or 412.

33. See Rom 7:23.

34. See Ps 59:11 and 23:6.

35. See Phil 2:12.

36. See Ps 2:11-13.

37. See the note on the translation at this point. If Duval's dating of *Nature* is correct, the objection cannot be drawn from Jerome's Letter 133 to Ctesiphon, as some have suggested. See Duval, *art. cit.*, 262-263.

38. Pelagius seems to have held the view that all sins are serious in the sense that they lead to damnation.

39. The passage obviously is an important one for the question of what Augustine held regarding Mary's freedom from original and actual sin. Unfortunately, it would seem that it at most does not deny Mary's sinlessness and leaves the question open.

40. See *Nature and Grace* 37, 44, for the principle. See *Answer to Maximinus* for an Arian appeal to the same principle and Augustine's reply to it.

41. See Acts 4:12.
42. See 1 Cor 1:17.
43. See Ps 143:2.
44. See Rom 7:9.
45. See Gal 5:17.
46. See Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Expositio evangelii Lucae)* I, 17: CCL 14, 14-15.
47. See Henry Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus. A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), for the Greek text along with Rufinus of Aquileia's Latin translation. Through a careful examination of the external and internal evidence, Chadwick concludes that the sentences are the work of a Christian; he does not rule out the possibility that they are the work of Xystus II. He regards Jerome's ascription of the sentence to a Pythagorean author as simply another attempt on Jerome's part to discredit his former friend, Rufinus.
48. See *Revisions* I, 8 (9), 3-6.
49. *Revisions* I, 8 (9), 2.
50. See *The Predestination of the Saints* 4, 8, where Augustine corrects his own earlier interpretation of various statements in the Letter to the Romans.

Nature and Grace

Pelagius' Basic Teaching on Human Nature

1, 1. My dear sons, Timasius and James, I left aside for the moment other work in progress, and I rapidly, but with considerable attention, read through the book you sent me.¹ I found in it a man aflame with ardent zeal against those people who ought to lay the blame for their sins upon the human will, but try to excuse themselves by laying the blame on human nature instead. He is far too incensed at this evil, which authors of worldly literature have also strongly denounced, crying out, "The human race unfairly complains about its nature."² This author has certainly stressed this idea with all the powers of mind that he could muster. But I am afraid that he sides with those *who have zeal for God, but not in accord with knowledge. For, not knowing the righteousness of God and wanting to establish their own, they were not subject to the righteousness of God* (Rom 10:2-3). The apostle goes on to explain the meaning of the righteousness of God, of which he is speaking, when he adds, *For the end of the law is Christ for righteousness for everyone who believes* (Rom 10:4). Therefore, this righteousness is not to be found in the frightening commandment of the law, but in the help of Christ's grace. The fear produced by the law, like a schoolmaster, is useful only in leading one to his grace.³ Those who understand this understand why they are Christians. *For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). But if he did not die in vain, the sinner is justified only in him, and *for one who believes in him who justifies the sinner faith is counted as righteousness* (Rom 4:5). *All have, after all, sinned and lack the glory of God, but they have been gratuitously justified by his blood* (Rom 3:23-24).⁴ If we suppose that there are some who do not belong among all those who have sinned and lack the glory of God, they certainly have no need to become Christians. After all, it is not those who are in good health who need a physician, but those who are ill. This is the reason he did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.⁵

2, 2. And so, if this nature of the human race born from the flesh of that one transgressor can be capable by itself of fulfilling the law and attaining perfect righteousness, it ought to be sure of its reward, that is, of eternal life, "even if among a certain people, or in an earlier time, faith in the blood of Christ remained hidden. For God is not unjust so that he cheats the righteous out of the reward of their righteousness, if the mystery of the divinity and humanity of Christ, that was revealed in the flesh,⁶ has not been preached to them. For how were they to

believe what they had not heard? Or how were they to hear without someone to preach to them?⁷ After all, as scripture says, *faith comes from hearing, but hearing comes from the word of Christ. 'I ask,' Paul says, 'Have they not heard? Their voice has gone forth to the whole earth, and their words have reached the ends of the earth'* (Rom 10:17-18, with Ps 19:5). But what about before this began to happen, and before this preaching finally reaches to the ends of the whole earth? After all, there are still remote peoples, though very few, it is said, to whom the word has not yet been preached. What is human nature to do, or what did it do? For it either previously had not heard that this event would take place or has still not found out that it has taken place. What is human nature to do but believe in the God who made heaven and earth, the God whom it naturally perceives as its maker, and, by living correctly, fulfill his will, though it has not received any instruction in the faith concerning the suffering and resurrection of Christ?"⁸ But if that was possible or is possible, then I too say what the apostle said with regard to the law, *Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). After all, if that man said this with regard to the law received by a single people, the Jews, it is by far more just to say with regard to the law of nature received by the whole human race, "If righteousness comes about through nature, then Christ has died in vain!" But if Christ has not died in vain, then the whole of human nature can be justified and redeemed from the perfectly just anger of God, that is, from punishment, in no other way than by faith and the mystery of Christ's blood.

Augustine's Basic Teachings on Nature and Grace

3. 3. Human nature was in the beginning created blameless and without any defect. But that human nature, in which each of us is born of Adam, now needs a physician, because it is not in good health. All the goods which it has in its constitution: life, the senses, and the mind, it has from the sovereign God, its creator and maker. But the defect which darkens and weakens those natural goods so that there is need for enlightenment and healing did not come from its blameless maker. It came from the original sin which was committed by free choice. And thus a nature subject to punishment is part of a punishment that is completely just. After all, if we are now a new creature in Christ,⁹ *we were, nonetheless, by nature children of anger, just as the others. But God who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead by sins, brought us to life with Christ, by whose grace we have been saved* (Eph 2:3-5).

4. 4. This grace of Christ without which neither infants nor adults can be saved is not a recompense for our merits, but a free gift. This is the reason it is called grace. Paul says that they *have been gratuitously justified by his blood* (Rom 3:24). Hence, those who are not set free by it are rightly condemned. It

makes no difference whether it is due to the fact that they are still unwilling to hear the word or that they are unwilling to obey or even that, though they could not hear the word by reason of their age, they did not receive the bath of regeneration which they could receive and by which they might be saved.¹⁰ They are rightly condemned because they are not free from sin, either that which they contracted from their origin or that which they have added to it by their evil lives. *All have, after all, sinned*—whether in Adam or in their own persons—and *lack the glory of God* (Rom 3:23).

5. 5. The whole mass of humanity owes a debt of punishment, and if all suffered the penalty of damnation they deserved, they certainly would not be paying an unjust penalty. Those then who are set free from it by grace are not called vessels of their own merits, but vessels of mercy.¹¹ Of whose mercy, if not the mercy of him who sent Christ Jesus into this world to save the sinners?¹² He foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified them.¹³ Who then is going to be so wildly insane as not to offer inexpressible thanks to the mercy of God, if he sets free those whom he wills, since one could in no way find fault with his justice, if he condemned absolutely everyone?

6. 6. If we hold this in accord with the scriptures, we are not forced to argue against the grace of Christ and to say things by which we try to prove that in little ones human nature has no need of a physician, because it is healthy, and that in adults it is able to be self-sufficient for righteousness, if it wants. These claims have the semblance of cleverness, but they are spoken with that wordy wisdom that does away with the cross of Christ.¹⁴ *Such wisdom does not come down from above* (Jas 3:15). I do not want to mention what follows¹⁵ for fear of being thought to do an injustice to our friends,¹⁶ for we want their vigorous and quick minds to move in the right direction, not in the wrong one.

The Point by Point Refutation of Pelagius' Book

7. 7. The author of this book which you sent me was burning with great zeal against those who look for an excuse for their sins in the weakness of human nature. We ought to be afire with a much more ardent zeal that the cross of Christ not be done away with.¹⁷ But it is done away with, if one says that it is possible to attain righteousness and eternal life in some other way than by the sacrament of Christ. I do not want to say that what he does in this book¹⁸ he does knowingly, because I want to avoid the judgment that its author should not be regarded even as a Christian.¹⁹ Rather, I believe that he does this without knowledge, but with great strength. But I want that strength to be healthy, not the sort often found in lunatics.

Against the View That Human Beings Can Be Sinless in This Life

8. Now he first makes this distinction: "It is one thing to ask whether something can be—this pertains only to its possibility; it is something else to ask whether it is."²⁰ No one has any doubt about the correctness of this distinction. After all, it follows that what is can be, but it does not follow that what can be also is. Since the Lord raised up Lazarus,²¹ he was undoubtedly able to do this, but because he did not raise up Judas, are we to say that he could not? He could, then, but he did not will to. For, if he had willed to, he would have done this with the same power, since *the Son also gives life to those he wills* (Jn 5:21). But notice where he is going and what he is trying to accomplish with this correct and clear distinction. He says, "We are speaking about the possibility alone. For unless something is established as certain in its regard, we consider it a very serious disorder to go on to something else."²² He turns this idea around in many ways and with a long discussion in order that no one would think that he is asking about anything but the possibility of not sinning. As a result, among the many points he makes, he also says this: "I repeat the same thing again: I say that a person is able to be without sin. What do you say? That a person is unable to be without sin. I do not say," he says, "that there is a human being without sin, and you do not say that there is no human being without sin. We are arguing about what is possible and what is not possible, not about what is and what is not."²³

Next, he mentions that some of those passages from the scriptures which are often cited against them are not relevant to the question of whether people can or cannot be without sin. He cites: "*For no one is clean from filth* (Jb 14:4), and, *There is not a human being who does not sin* (1 Kgs 8:46), and *There is not a righteous person on the earth* (Eccl 7:21), and *There is not a single person who does good* (Ps 14:1.3). And other passages like these," he says, "reveal what is not the case, not what cannot be. Examples of this sort show the kind of human beings there once were; they do not show that they could not be anything else. Accordingly, they were rightly found to be blameworthy. After all, if they were such persons, because they could not be anything else, they would not have any guilt."²⁴

Pelagius' Teaching on Human Sinlessness Ignores Original Sin

8, 9. You see what he said. I say, on the other hand, that little ones who are born in a place where they could not be helped by Christ's baptism and are overtaken by death are in that situation, that is, of having died without the bath of regeneration, because they could not be anything else. Let this fellow, then, declare them innocent, and let him open to them the kingdom of heaven contrary

to the decision of the Lord.²⁵ But the apostle did not declare them innocent; he says, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). It is right, then, that they are not admitted into the kingdom of heaven because of that condemnation that pervades the whole mass of humanity, even though they not only were not, but also could not be Christian.

9, 10. But these people say, "They are not condemned, because the statement that all have sinned in Adam was not uttered on account of a sin contracted by reason of their origin through being born, but on account of the imitation of Adam's sin."²⁶ If then Adam is called the source of all the sinners who came after him, because he was the first sinner in the human race, why is not Abel rather than Christ declared the head of all the righteous, since he was the first righteous man in the human race? I will leave aside the case of infants. Young or old persons have died in regions where they could not hear the name of Christ. Could they become righteous by nature and free choice or could they not? If these people say that they could, then you see what it means to do away with the cross of Christ;²⁷ it is to maintain that without the cross of Christ a person can become righteous by the natural law and the choice of the will. Here too we should say, *Then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). For all human beings could be righteous, even if he had not died. And if they were unrighteous, they were such, because they wanted to be, not because they could not be righteous. But if they absolutely could not be justified without the grace of Christ, let this man, if he dares, also declare such persons innocent in accord with his words, for "if they were such persons, because they could not be anything else, they would not have any guilt."²⁸

10, 11. He raises an objection for himself as if someone else had stated it and says, "You will say, 'One can [be righteous], but by the grace of God.'" Then, as if he were replying, he adds, "I thank you for your kindness. You had long attacked my statement, but now you are not satisfied merely with not attacking or with²⁹ admitting my statement, but you even go on to give it your approval. For what else does saying, 'One can, but by this means or that,' amount to but that one not only agrees that one can, but also shows how and in what sense one can? No one grants the possibility of something more than the person who also admits a condition of the thing, because a condition cannot exist without the thing."³⁰

Having said this, he again raises an objection for himself, "But since you do not mention the grace of God in that passage, you seem to deny it." Then he answers, "Is it I who deny it, for in admitting the reality, it is necessary that I also admit the means by which it can be attained, or is it you, for in denying the reality you undoubtedly deny whatever it is by which it is brought about?"³¹ He has already forgotten that he is replying to one who does not deny the reality.

He had a little before stated the objection of that person who said, "One can, but by the grace of God." How does one deny that possibility for which this man has struggled so much by saying to him, "One can, but by the grace of God"? Nonetheless, having dismissed the one who already admitted the reality, he moves against those who deny that it is possible that a human being be without sin. How does this concern us? Let him attack whom he will, provided that he admits that without God's grace human beings cannot be without sin, for it is wicked and godless to deny this. Therefore, he says, "Whether it is by grace or by a help or by mercy or whatever it is by which a human being can be without sin, whoever admits the reality also admits the means to it as well."³²

11, 12. I admit to you, my friends, that, when I read those words, I was suddenly flooded with joy, because he did not deny the grace of God which is the only means by which a human being can be justified. After all, that is what I especially detest and abhor in the discussions of these people. But as I went on to read the rest, I first began to have suspicions on the basis of the comparisons he used. For he says, "Now, if I say that a human being can argue, a bird can fly, a rabbit can run and if I do not mention as well the means by which these actions can be done, that is, the tongue, wings, feet, have I who have admitted the activities themselves denied the conditions of these activities?"³³ He seems, in any case, to have mentioned things that nature can do, for these members, namely, the tongue, wings, and feet, were created for natures of this sort. He has not said the sort of thing that we want to be understood in the case of the grace without which a human being cannot be justified, where there is question of healing, not of creating natures. Already uneasy for this reason, I began to read the rest, and I found that my suspicions were not mistaken.

Pelagius' Doctrine of Sinlessness Ignores Prayer and Grace

12, 13. Before I come to point this out, look at what he said. When he was treating the question of differences among sins, he raised for himself the objection that some people claim that certain venial sins cannot all be avoided by reason of their very multitude, for they often overwhelm people. He denied that such sins should receive even a slight correction, if they are entirely unavoidable.³⁴ He failed to note the passages of the New Testament where we have learned what the purpose of the law is: It makes accusations so that on account of the wrong things that are done one might take refuge in the grace of the merciful Lord, for the law like a schoolmaster encloses us in the same faith which was later revealed.³⁵ In that faith wrong actions are both forgiven and, by the help of grace, avoided. This is the path of those who are making progress, and those who are making good progress are called perfect travelers. But the highest perfection is that to which nothing can be added, when we have begun to possess the goal toward which we are moving.

13, 14. The question which is addressed to them, "Are you yourself without sin?"³⁶ is not really relevant to the matter of our investigation. He says that it should rather be attributed to his negligence that he is not without sin, and he is correct. But he should for that reason be willing to ask the Lord that this sinful negligence not lord it over him. We ask this of the Lord, when we say, *Guide my journeys according to your word, and let not sinfulness lord it over me* (Ps 119:133). He should ask this of the Lord for fear that, in relying upon his own diligence as if upon his own resources, he may fail to attain true righteousness either in this life or in the life to come, where we should undoubtedly desire and hope for its perfection.

Pelagius' Appeal to Scripture and Augustine's Reply

14, 15. He easily refutes the objection which certain people raise against them that scripture nowhere says in these very words that a person can be without sin. He says, "The question at issue does not concern the words by which a view is expressed."³⁷ The objection is, nonetheless, perhaps not without grounds, since we find that the scriptures several times say that human beings are beyond reproach.³⁸ But we find no one said to be without sin except that one person alone of whom scripture clearly says, *Him who did not know sin* (2 Cor 5:21). And in the passage dealing with the holy priests, it says, *He has, in fact, experienced everything, just like us, apart from sin* (Heb 4:15), that is, in that flesh which was like sinful flesh, though it was not sinful flesh.³⁹ He would not bear this likeness, if the other flesh of every human being were not sinful flesh. Now then, how are we to interpret the words, *All those who have been born of God do not sin and cannot sin, because his seed remains in them* (1 Jn 3:9)? After all, as if he were not born of God or as if he were speaking to those who were not born of God, the same apostle John clearly stated, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). In the books I wrote on this topic for Marcellinus, I was careful to explain this point as best I could.⁴⁰ That the words, *cannot sin*, were said in the sense that one ought not to sin⁴¹ seems to me to be a claim of this man of which we should not disapprove. After all, who would be insane enough to say that sin should be committed, when something is a sin precisely because it should not be committed?

15, 16. But I certainly do not think that the words of the apostle James, *No human beings can tame their tongues* (Jas 3:8), should be interpreted as he wanted to explain them, "as if they were words of reproach, as much as to say, 'Can then no human beings tame their tongues?' It amounts then to a reprimand: 'You can tame wild animals; can you not tame your tongue?'"⁴² I do not think that this is the meaning of that passage. After all, if James meant us to think that

it was easy to tame our tongue, the rest of the passage would continue the comparison with animals. But it goes on, *It is a restless evil; it is full of deadly venom* (Jas 3:8), certainly more harmful than that of animals and snakes. For that venom kills the flesh, but this kills the soul. After all, *the mouth that lies kills the soul* (Wis 1:11). Therefore, Saint James did not make that statement in the sense that it was easier than taming animals, nor did he want it to be interpreted in that sense. Rather, he wanted to show that the human tongue is so great an evil that it cannot be tamed by any human being, though even wild animals are tamed by humans. Nor did he say this so that we would allow this evil to continue to lord it over us because of our negligence, but so that we would beg the help of divine grace to tame the tongue. He did not say that no one can tame the tongue, but that no human beings can do so. Hence, when it is tamed, we would admit that this is done by God's mercy, by God's help, by God's grace. The soul should, then, try to tame the tongue and, while it tries, it should beg for help. Let the tongue pray that the tongue may be tamed by the gift of him who said to his own disciples, *It is not you who speak; rather, it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you* (Mt 10:20). Hence, the command reminds us to do something for which we should beg God's help, since, despite our trying, our own strength is not sufficient.

16, 17. James emphasized the great evil of the tongue, saying among other things, *These things should not be done, my brothers and sisters* (Jas 3:10). Then, he immediately pointed out, as soon as he finished what he was saying on that topic, the help by which we might avoid those things which he said should not be done. *Are there then any who are wise and disciplined among you? Let them display their action through their good manner of living in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and quarrels in your hearts, do not be boastful and do not speak lies against the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above; rather, it is earthly, animal, diabolical. For where there is jealousy and quarreling, there is disorder and every evil deed. But the wisdom that comes from above is, first of all, pure, then peaceful, modest, open to persuasion, full of mercy and good works, impartial, and without pretense* (Jas 3:13-17). This is the wisdom that tames the tongue; it comes down from above and does not arise from the human heart. Or will someone dare to remove it too from God's grace and in pride and vanity locate it in the power of a human being? Why then do human beings pray that they may receive it, if having it depends upon them? Is someone going to oppose this prayer to avoid harm to free choice, because it is sufficient unto itself by its natural ability to observe all the commandments pertaining to righteousness? Let them oppose the apostle James himself, who warns with the words, *If any of you lack wisdom, let them ask it from God who gives to all abundantly without rebuking them, and it will be given to them, but let them ask with faith, without any hesitation* (Jas 1:5-6). This is

the faith to which the commandments drive us so that the law commands and faith obtains what we ask. By the tongue, which no human being can tame, but the wisdom coming down from above can tame, *we all offend in many ways* (Jas 3:2). This apostle, after all, did not state this in any other sense than his words, *No human beings can tame their tongues* (Jas 3:8).

17, 18. Nor should anyone raise the following text as an objection to them in order to show the impossibility of not sinning: *The wisdom of the flesh is an enemy of God, for it is not subject to the law and it cannot be. But those who are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom 8:7-8). The apostle was speaking of the wisdom of the flesh, not the wisdom that comes down from above.⁴³ It is clear that he did not mean by those who are in the flesh people who had not yet left the body, but those who lived according to the flesh.⁴⁴ But that is not the question with which we are dealing. What I am waiting to hear from him, if I can, is this: Do those who live according to the Spirit and are, for this reason, in a sense not in the flesh, even though they are still living here, live according to the Spirit by the grace of God? Or are they able to do this by themselves by the ability of nature and by their own will which they received when they were created? For the fulfillment of the law is nothing but love,⁴⁵ and *love is poured out in our hearts*, not by us, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5).

19. This fellow also discusses sins of ignorance and says that we should be on guard to avoid ignorance and that ignorance is, therefore, blameworthy, because through our negligence we do not know something that we should have known, if we had taken care. Meanwhile, he argues every point rather than praying with the words, *Give me understanding, and I will learn your commandments* (Ps 119:73). After all, it is one thing not to care to know, and we see that such sins of negligence were expiated even by certain sacrifices of the law.⁴⁶ It is something quite different to want to understand, without being able to, and to act against the law by not understanding what it wants us to do. For this reason we are warned to ask for wisdom from God, *who gives to all abundantly* (Jas 1:5), at least to all those who ask as one should and as much as one should for something so important.

18, 20. He admits, nonetheless, that the sins we have committed must be wiped away by God and that we must pray to God over them, that is, in order to earn pardon, because that power of nature, which he has praised so much, and the will of a human being cannot, by his own admission, make undone what has been done.⁴⁷ Hence, one is left with this necessity of praying for pardon. But that one should pray so as to be helped not to sin, that is something he never said, something I have not found here. His silence on this point is utterly astounding, since the Lord's Prayer teaches that we should ask for both of these: both that our debts be forgiven and that we not be led into temptation,⁴⁸ the

former so that past sins be wiped away, the latter so that future sins be avoided. Although this does not happen without our willing it, the will alone is not enough to accomplish it. Hence, the prayer offered to the Lord for this purpose is neither superfluous nor shameless. After all, what is more foolish than to pray that you may do what lies in your power to do?

Against Pelagius' Doctrine That Human Nature Suffered No Weakening or Injury from Adam's Sin

19, 21. Consider now a point quite pertinent to our topic, namely, how he tries to portray human nature as if it were completely free of any defect and how, in opposition to perfectly clear passages of scripture, he takes delight in a wordy wisdom which does away with the cross of Christ.⁴⁹ It will, of course, not do away with the cross; rather, such wisdom will be overthrown. For, when we have explained this point, God's mercy will perhaps intervene so that even this man repents of having said these things. "First of all," he says, "we must debate the claim that nature is said to be weakened and changed by sin. For this reason, I think we must investigate before all else," he says, "what sin is. Is it a substance, or is it a word completely lacking substance which expresses not some thing, not an existence, not some body, but an act of wrongdoing?" Then he adds, "I believe that it is the latter. And if it is, how can that which lacks substance weaken or change human nature?"⁵⁰

Consider, please, how in his ignorance he strives to destroy the highly salutary words of those scriptures meant for our healing: *I said, Lord, have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against you* (Ps 41:5). What is there to heal, if nothing is wounded, nothing injured, nothing weakened and harmed? On the other hand, if there is something to heal, what harmed it? You hear the psalmist's admission; why do you desire someone to debate? He says, *Heal my soul* (Ps 41:5). Ask him what harmed that which he asked to be healed, and listen to what comes next: *for I have sinned against you* (Ps 41:5). Let this fellow question the psalmist; let him ask him what he thinks we should ask for. Let him say, "You who cry out, *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you* (Ps 41:5), what is sin? A substance, or a word completely lacking substance which expresses not a thing, not an existence, not some body, but an act of wrongdoing?" The psalmist answers, "You are right; sin is not some substance; rather, this word expresses an act of wrongdoing." This fellow then objects, "Why then do you cry out, *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you* (Ps 41:5)? How could what lacks substance harm your soul?" Consumed with grief over his wound, would that man not reply very briefly in order not to be distracted from prayer by an argument, saying, "Leave me alone, please"? Would he not say, "Rather debate, if you can, with him who says, *It is not those who are in good*

health who need a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:12-13)? For in that passage he referred to the righteous as those in good health and to the sinners as those who are ill.

20, 22. Do you see where his argument is headed and what it is after? Its aim is that we think that these words were uttered with absolutely no point: *You shall call his name, Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* (Mt 1:21). How will he save them if there is no illness? The sins from which the gospel says the people of Christ must be saved are, of course, not substances and cannot, in this man's opinion, do any harm?

My brother, it is good to bear in mind that you are a Christian. To believe these points would perhaps be enough, but you want to argue. There is nothing against that; in fact, it can even be of benefit, if solid faith comes first and we do not suppose that human nature cannot be harmed by sin. Rather, believing the divine scriptures that it can be harmed by sin, let us investigate how this could have happened. We have already said that sin is not a substance. Is it not obvious—to omit other examples—that not eating is also not a substance? One abstains, of course, from a substance, since food is a substance. But abstaining from food is not a substance. And yet, if one completely abstains from food, the substance of the body wastes away; it is destroyed by an imbalance in health, is drained of strength, and is weakened and broken by exhaustion to the point that, even if one somehow continues to live, he can scarcely be enticed back to food, though by abstaining from it his health was injured. So too, sin is not a substance, but God is a substance and the highest substance and the only true food of a rational creature. Listen to what the creature says, because it has withdrawn from this food by disobedience and is unable to take, by reason of weakness, what it ought to have enjoyed, *My heart has been beaten and dried out like hay, because I have forgotten to eat my bread* (Ps 102:5).

21, 23. Notice, however, how he continues to push himself into a corner with specious arguments against the truth of holy scripture. The Lord Jesus was called Jesus precisely because he saved his people from their sins,⁵¹ and the Lord Jesus stated, *It is not those who are in good health who need a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners* (Mt 9:12-13). For this reason the apostle too says, *It is a reliable message worthy of complete acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tm 1:15). And against this reliable message worthy of complete acceptance, this fellow says that this illness ought not to have been contracted from sins; otherwise, this punishment of sin would lead to more sins being committed.⁵²

We seek such a great physician to help even the little ones, and this fellow says, "What are you seeking? Those for whom you are seeking a physician are in good health. Even the first human being was not on this account condemned to death, for afterward he did not sin."⁵³ He says this, as if he later heard

something concerning the perfection of his righteousness besides what the Church teaches, namely, that he too was set free by the mercy of Christ the Lord. This fellow says that Adam's descendants were also not only not weaker than he, but even observed many commandments, while he had neglected to observe one. He sees that Adam's descendants are born in a way in which Adam certainly was not created. They are, after all, not only incapable of obeying a commandment which they cannot be aware of at all, but are barely capable of finding a breast, when they are hungry. When he who saves his people from their sins⁵⁴ wants to save these infants from their sins in the bosom of their mother, the Church, human beings oppose this and with their unhealthy words pronounce them to be in good health, as if they knew better than he how to examine the creature he made.

22, 24. He says that punishment is the source of sin, if the sinner was weakened to the point that he sinned more.⁵⁵ He does not consider how fitting it is that the light of the truth abandons the transgressor. Deprived of that light and, therefore, blind, he will necessarily stumble more, and in falling, he will be injured, and once injured, he will not get up. And so, for that reason alone he hears the word of the law by which he is admonished to implore the grace of the savior. Or is that no punishment for those people? The apostle says of them, *Though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks. Rather, they became vain in their thoughts. And their foolish heart was darkened* (Rom 1:21). Certainly, this darkening of their heart was punishment and penalty, and yet through this penalty, that is, through the blindness of their heart, which is caused by the light of wisdom abandoning them, they fell into many serious sins. *Though they said they were wise, they become fools* (Rom 1:22). This penalty is severe, if one understands it. And see where they go as a result of this penalty. They exchanged, Paul says, *the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of the image of a corruptible human being and birds and animals and reptiles* (Rom 1:23). They did these things as the result of the penalty of sin by which *their foolish heart was darkened* (Rom 1:21). On account of these sins—for they were sins, though they were part of the penalty—he went on to say, *God handed them over to the desires of their heart, to impurity* (Rom 1:24). Observe how God punished them more severely in handing them over to the desires of their heart, to impurity. See what they do as a result of this punishment, he says, *so that among themselves they treat their own bodies shamefully* (Rom 1:24). And he teaches more clearly that this is the penalty of wickedness, though it is itself wickedness, when he says, *They transformed God's truth into a lie and worshiped and served a creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason, he says, God handed them over to shameful passions* (Rom 1:25-26). See how many times God inflicts punishment, and from the same punishment many more serious sins arise. *For their women exchanged*

natural intercourse for that which is against nature. Likewise, the men too abandoned natural relations with women and burned with desire for one another, men committing perversities upon men (Rom 1:26-27). And to show that these are sins, though they are also penalties for sins, he added to these words, They received in themselves the mutual recompense of their error, as they deserved (Rom 1:27). See how often he punishes, and he punishes with the same punishment that brings forth and breeds sins. Notice further; he says, And as they did not judge it good to bear God in their mind, God handed them over to an evil mind so that they would do what is improper, filled with every wickedness, with trickery, malice, greed, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil; grumblers, slanderers, enemies of God, shameless, proud, puffed up, plotters of evil, disobedient to their parents, foolish, disorderly, without love and mercy (Rom 1:28-31). At this point let this fellow now say, "Sin should not have been punished in such a way that the sinner commits more sins by reason of the punishment." ⁵⁶

The Consequences of Adam's Sin

23, 25. He might perhaps reply that God does not force them to these sins, but merely abandons persons who deserve to be abandoned. If he says this, he speaks the truth. They are bereft, as I said, of the light of righteousness and, for this reason, have become darkness. What else are they going to bring forth but all these works of darkness which I have mentioned, until someone says to them, if only they would obey the command, *Get up, you sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you* (Eph 5:14)? The truth declares them dead; in the same sense another passage says, *Let the dead bury their dead* (Mt 8:22; Lk 9:60). The truth, then, declares those people dead whom this fellow claims cannot be injured and harmed by sin, because he has, it seems, learned that sin is not a substance. No one says that human beings were made so that they could pass from righteousness to sin, but could not return from sin to righteousness. But in order to pass to sin, the free choice by which they harmed themselves is sufficient. To return to righteousness, however, they need a physician because they are not well; they need someone to bring them to life, because they are dead. This fellow says nothing at all about grace, as if they could heal themselves by their own wills alone, because they were able to harm themselves by the will alone. We are not telling him that the death of the body leads to sin, since it is merely punishment. After all, no one sins by dying the death of the body. But death of the soul leads to sin, since its life, that is, its God, abandons it, and it necessarily produces dead works until the grace of Christ brings it back to life. Heaven forbid that we should say that hunger and thirst and the other bodily afflictions entail the necessity of sinning. The life of the righteous shines forth

more gloriously when it is tried by such afflictions, and by overcoming them through patience it stores up for itself a greater glory. But it does so helped by the grace of God, helped by the Spirit of God, helped by the mercy of God, not raising itself up by its proud will, but earning strength by its humble confession. It knew, after all, how to say to God, *You are my patience* (Ps 71:5). I do not know why this fellow says nothing at all about this grace and help and mercy without which we cannot live a good life. In fact, he even speaks quite openly against the grace of Christ by which we are justified, when he defends nature as if it were sufficient unto itself for righteousness, if only the will is there. I have already explained as best I could, in those books to Marcellinus of blessed memory, why, even though bodily death came from sin, it still remains to test our faith, after the guilt of sin has been removed by grace.

24, 26. He says that the Lord was able to die, though he was without sin.⁵⁷ But that he was born also reveals the power of his mercy, not the condition of his nature. So too, he died by that power, and that is our price by which he redeemed us from death. And this is what the argument of these people strives to do away with, when they defend human nature in such a way that free choice has no need of this price in order to bring them from the power of darkness and of the prince of death into the kingdom of Christ. And yet when the Lord came to his Passion, he said, *Behold, the prince of this world will come, and he will find nothing in me* (Jn 14:30). He will certainly find no sin, on the basis of which the prince of death might exercise his right to kill him. *But in order that all may know*, he continues, *that I do the will of my Father, get up, let us leave this place* (Jn 14:31). That is, I do not die by reason of the necessity of sin, but by reason of the will to obey.

Further Arguments of Pelagius against the Woundedness of Human Nature

27. He says that no evil is the cause of any good.⁵⁸ He implies that punishment is something good. And yet, many have been corrected by it. There are, then, evils which, by the marvelous mercy of God, lead to good. Did the psalmist suffer something good when he said, *You turned your face away from me, and I became confused* (Ps 30:8)? Certainly not! And yet this confusion was in some sense a remedy against his pride. He had, after all, said in his prosperity, *I will not be shaken ever* (Ps 30:7) and attributed to himself what he had from the Lord. After all, what did he have that he had not received?⁵⁹ Hence, he had to be shown the source of what he had so that he might receive in humility what he had lost through pride. Thus he says, *Lord, in your good will you have given strength to my glory* (Ps 30:8). And by reason of that strength I said amid my prosperity, *I will not be shaken* (Ps 30:7), though I had this from you, not from myself.

Thereupon, *you turned your face away from me, and I became confused* (Ps 30:8).

25, 28. A proud heart⁶⁰ completely fails to grasp this, but the Lord is great, and he can convince one of this, as he himself knows how. For we are more inclined to look for answers to make to the objections raised against our error than to keep before our mind how salutary they are in keeping us from error. As a result, we should not so much carry on debates with these people as pray for them as we do for ourselves. After all, we do not say to them what this man said to himself as an objection: Sin was necessary so that there would be a reason for God's mercy.⁶¹ How I wish that such misery did not exist so that this mercy would not be necessary!⁶² Rather, we say that the wickedness of sin was greater to the extent that human beings could more easily avoid sin, since they were as yet not prevented by any weakness. There followed a perfectly just punishment so that they received in themselves the fitting recompense for their sin, since to some extent they lost the obedience of their own bodies that had been placed under them. It was, after all, obedience under their Lord for which in particular they showed their contempt. And since we are now born with that law of sin which in our members resists the law of the mind,⁶³ we ought not to grumble against God or argue against an evident fact, but seek and implore his mercy with regard to our punishment.

26, 29. Consider carefully the meaning of his words: "God shows his mercy on this side too, if it is ever necessary, for it is necessary to help human beings in this way after sin, not because God wanted the cause of this necessity."⁶⁴ Do you see how he does not say that the mercy of God is necessary so that we do not sin, but because we have sinned? Then he adds, "A physician ought to be prepared to cure someone already wounded, but he ought not to want someone in good health to be wounded."⁶⁵ If this comparison fits the matter under discussion, human nature, after all, cannot be wounded by sin, because sin is not a substance!⁶⁶ Just as, for example, someone limping due to a wound is treated so that, once the past injury is healed, the person walks correctly in the future, so the heavenly physician heals our injuries not only so that they no longer exist, but so that we can thereafter walk correctly—something we could not do, even in good health, without his help. After all, when a human physician heals someone, he entrusts the person to God to be sustained thereafter by bodily elements and nourishment; in that way the person's health becomes strong by suitable help and continues. For God provides such things to persons living in the flesh, and those things which the physician employed in healing also come from God. A physician certainly does not heal anyone by means of things he has created, but from the riches of the one who creates everything necessary for those who are in good health and those who are sick. But God himself spiritually heals the sick and restores the dead to life, that is, justifies the sinner, through

the mediator between God and human beings, the man Jesus Christ.⁶⁷ And he brings them to perfect health, that is, to perfect life and righteousness; unless they abandon him, he does not abandon them, so that they may always live piously and righteously. For, just as the eye of the body, even if fully healthy, cannot see unless it is helped by the brightness of light, so even if human beings have been fully justified, they cannot live correctly unless they are divinely helped by the eternal light of righteousness. God, then, heals us not only to destroy the sins we have committed, but also to provide us with the means of not sinning.

27, 30. The author cleverly examines and turns this way and that the objection made to them; in his own opinion he refutes and rebuts this objection, namely, that, in order to remove the occasion of pride and boasting, it was necessary that human beings be unable to be without sin. He believes that it is utterly absurd and foolish that sin should exist in order that sin might not exist, since pride itself is also certainly a sin.⁶⁸ He says this as if it were not true that a boil is painful and that lancing it produces pain so that the pain is removed by pain. If we had not experienced this and heard of it in some areas where such things have never been done, we would undoubtedly use this man's words and say with mockery that it is completely absurd that pain was necessary in order that the pain of the boil might not exist.

31. "But God," these people say, "can heal everything."⁶⁹ He certainly acts with the aim of healing everything, but he acts according to his own judgment and does not take from the sick person the prescription for the cure. He undoubtedly wanted to make that man the strongest of apostles to whom he said, *Virtue is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor 12:9), and despite his frequent prayers, he did not remove from him the thorn in his flesh—whatever that was. He says that it was given him, so that he would not become filled with pride amid the greatness of his revelations.⁷⁰ The other vices, after all, are found only in wrong actions, but pride must be avoided even in actions that are right. By it people are warned so that they do not boast and attribute God's gifts to their own power and perish in a worse manner than if they did nothing good. They are told, *With fear and trembling work out your own salvation; it is God, after all, who produces in you the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:12-13).⁷¹ Why should we act with fear and trembling instead of with calm security, if God does this, unless it is on account of our will? Without it we cannot do what is right, and so the idea can easily enter the human mind that our good actions are ours alone. And thus we might say in the midst of prosperity, *I will not be shaken ever* (Ps 30:7). And so, he who in his good will gives strength to our glory turns his face slightly away so that the one who said this might become confused,⁷² for this is the swelling that must be healed by pain.

28, 32. Hence, human beings are not told, "It is necessary to sin so that you

do not sin." Rather, they are told, "God at times abandons you in the matter over which you are proud so that you may know that it does not come from you but from him and you may learn not to be proud." Consider what the words of the apostle mean! Are they not so amazing that they would not⁷³ be credible, if it were not for the fact that we dare not contradict the one who says them, because he speaks the truth? After all, who of the faithful does not know that the first enticement to sin came from Satan⁷⁴ and that he is the first author of all sins? And nonetheless, certain persons are handed over to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme.⁷⁵ How then does the work of Satan exclude the work of Satan? Let him look at these passages and others like them so that he does not regard as overly paradoxical those passages which sound paradoxical, but which do not turn out to be such, once they have been examined. Why is it that he uses comparisons which actually present us with the replies we should make to him? "What more shall I say," he says, "but that one can believe that fires are put out by fires, if one can believe that sins are healed by sins?"⁷⁶ What difference does it make, if no one can put out fires with fires? But pains can, as I have shown, be healed by pains. Poisons too can, if one is willing to investigate and learn, be expelled by poisons. Moreover, if he also takes note that the heat of fevers is at times broken by the warmth of certain medicines, he will perhaps also grant that fires are put out by fires.

Not Every Sin Is a Sin of Pride

29, 33. "How," he asks, "are we going to distinguish pride itself from sin?"⁷⁷ Now, why does he press this point, since it is obvious that pride is itself a sin? He says, "As to sin is to be proud, so to be proud is to sin. Examine what any sin involves and see whether you find any sin that cannot be called pride."⁷⁸ But he follows up this idea and tries to prove it in this way: "Unless I am mistaken," he says, "every sin is contempt for God, and all contempt for God is pride. After all, what is so proud as to have contempt for God? Sin then is precisely pride, as scripture also says, *The beginning of all sin is pride*" (Sir 10:15). Let him investigate carefully, and he will find that the sin of pride was sharply distinguished in the law from other sins. Many sins are, after all, committed out of pride, but not every wrong action is done with pride. Many wrong actions are done by the ignorant, by the weak, and often by persons weeping and groaning. There is also a certain pride, which is itself a great sin and exists by itself without other sins. With swiftness and stealth, it quite often overtakes one, as I said, not in one's sins, but in one's good actions. Though this man understood it in a different way, scripture said with perfect truth, *The beginning of all sin is pride* (Sir 10:15), for it cast down the devil with whom sin originated, and by his subsequent envy he brought down the man who stood in the place from which the devil had fallen. For that serpent certainly sought a doorway for pride by

which he might enter, when he said, *You will be like gods* (Gn 3:5). For this reason scripture said, *The beginning of all sin is pride* (Sir 10:15) and *The beginning of pride in a human being is to withdraw from God* (Sir 10:15.14).

30, 34. But what does he mean when he says, "Moreover, how could persons be responsible to God for the guilt of that sin which they do not recognize as their own? For it is not theirs," he says, "if it is necessary. Or, if it is theirs, then it is voluntary, and if it is voluntary, it can be avoided."⁷⁹ We reply: It is certainly theirs, but the injury that leads them to commit it has not been completely healed. Its increase has come from an abuse of their healthy state. Now, as a result of this injury, they are in poor shape and commit many sins either out of weakness or out of blindness. Hence, they should pray that they may be healed and live thereafter in continuous good health. They should not be filled with pride, as though human beings could be healed by the same power by which they are injured.

31, 35. I want to say this; I admit that I do not know God's higher judgment, the reason why he does not also immediately heal pride itself which lies in ambush for the human spirit, even in good actions. For its healing, pious souls entreat him with tears and mighty groans to stretch forth his right hand to those who are trying to overcome it and in a sense to trample it under foot and destroy it. For at the moment a human being rejoices to have also overcome pride in some good work, pride raises its head as a result of this joy and says, "See, I am still alive. Why are you triumphant? And I am alive precisely because you are triumphant." It is perhaps premature to take delight in triumphing over pride as if it were defeated, since its last shadow will, I believe, be blotted out by that noonday brightness of which scripture speaks. It says, *He will bring forth your righteousness like a light and your judgment like the noon* (Ps 37:6). It promises this noonday brightness, if one does what the psalm previously said, *Reveal to the Lord your way; hope in him, and he will do it* (Ps 37:5); it is not, as some suppose, that they themselves will do it. For the psalmist seems to have had in mind, when he said, *And he will do it* (Ps 37:6), precisely those who say, "It is we who do it," that is, it is we who make ourselves righteous. We too, of course, do something, but we do something along with God who also does it, because his mercy goes before us.⁸⁰ But it goes before so that we might be healed, because it also comes after so that, once we are healed, we might also grow strong. It goes before so that we might be called; it comes after so that we might be glorified. It goes before so that we might live in piety; it comes after so that we might live with him forever, since we can do nothing without him.⁸¹ After all, scripture says both of these: *My God will go before me with his mercy* (Ps 59:11) and *Your mercy will come after me all the days of my life* (Ps 23:6). Let us, then, reveal to him our way⁸² in confession rather than praise it in self-defense. After all, if the way is not his, but ours, it is certainly not the right one. Let us reveal

it by confessing, since it is not hidden from him, even if we try to hide it. However, *It is good to confess to the Lord* (Ps 92:2).

32, 36. Then he will give us what pleases him, if we too are displeased with what displeases him in us. As scripture says, he will turn our paths from his way,⁸³ and he will make his way ours, for to those who believe in him and hope in him it is granted that he will do it himself.⁸⁴ This is, after all, the righteous way which they do not know *who have zeal for God, but not in accord with knowledge, and wanting to establish their own, they were not subject to the righteousness of God. For the end of the law is Christ for righteousness for everyone who believes* (Rom 10:2-4). He said, *I am the way* (Jn 14:6). God's word fills with fear even those who walk in this way so that they do not become proud, as if they walked by their own powers. For this reason the apostle says to them, *With fear and trembling work out your own salvation; it is God, after all, who produces in you the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:12-13). For this same reason the psalm also says to them, *Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice with trembling. Learn discipline for fear that the Lord one day may become angry and you may perish from the righteous way, when his wrath suddenly blazes forth upon you* (Ps 2:11-13).

It does not say, "*for fear that the Lord one day may become angry* and not show you the righteous way or not lead you to the righteous way." Rather, it meant to frighten those who were already walking on it, and so it said, *For fear that you may perish from the righteous way* (Ps 2:12). Why is that, if not that pride—as I have said so often and as it should often be said—must be avoided even in good actions, that is, in the righteous way? Otherwise, when people take credit for what comes from God, they lose what comes from God and wind up with what is their own? Hence, let us act in accord with what the psalm says at the end, *Blessed are all who trust in him* (Ps 2:13), who trust that he will do it. Let us trust that he will show his way, since we say to him, *Show us, Lord, your mercy* (Ps 85:8). Let us trust that he will give us good health so that we can walk, for we say to him, *Give us, Lord, your salvation* (Ps 85:8). Let us trust that he will lead us along the same way, for we say to him, *Lead me, Lord, along your way, and I will walk in your truth* (Ps 86:11). Let us trust that he will guide us to those promises to which the way leads, for we say to him, *Your hand will guide me, and your right hand lead me there* (Ps 139:10). Let us trust that he will feed those who recline there with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, since scripture said of him, *He will make them recline and will come and serve them* (Lk 12:37). After all, when we say such things, we do not take away the choice of the will, but we proclaim the grace of God. Who benefit from all these things, unless they are willing? But they must be willing with humility and not raise themselves up with pride over the powers of the will, as if it alone were sufficient for the perfection of righteousness.

Pelagius Fields a Series of Objections to Sinlessness

33, 37. Heaven forbid that we should say to him what he says some have raised as an objection to him, namely, that human beings are placed on a par with God, if they are said to be without sin.⁸⁵ That would imply that an angel who is without sin is on a par with God. For my part I hold that, even when we shall have such great righteousness that absolutely no addition could be made to it, the creature will not be equal to the creator. But if some suppose that our progress will be so great that we will be changed into the divine substance and become exactly what he is, let them see how they may support their view. I confess that I myself am not convinced of it.

34, 38. Now I do, of course, side with the author of this book in his response to those people who say, "What you claim seems to be reasonable, but it is proud to say that human beings can be without sin." He replies that one should absolutely not say that it is proud, if it is true. For he says with both cleverness and truth, "On what side, then, are we to place humility? Certainly, on the side of falsity, if we agree that pride is on the side of truth."⁸⁶ And for this reason he holds, and he is correct to hold, that humility should rather be placed on the side of truth, not on the side of falsity. From this it follows that we should not have the least doubt that the apostle spoke the truth when he said, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). We should not think that he said something false out of humility. This was the reason he added, *And the truth is not in us*. It would probably have been sufficient to say, *We deceive ourselves*, if he had not seen that some might suppose that he said, *We deceive ourselves*, because people who praise themselves even for a true good are filled with pride. Therefore, by adding, *and the truth is not in us*, he clearly showed, as our author has decided in complete correctness, that it is not at all true, *if we say that we have no sin*. Otherwise, if humility were placed on the side of falsity, it should lose the reward of truth.

39. Moreover, though he thinks that he is pleading God's case in defending nature, he fails to notice that, in declaring this same nature healthy, he rejects the mercy of the physician. The God who is his creator is also his savior. Hence, we should not praise the creator so that we are forced to say, indeed so that we are found guilty of saying, that the savior is unnecessary. We should, then, honor human nature with the praises it deserves, and we should refer those praises to the glory of the creator. But we should be grateful that he created us in such a way that we are not ungrateful that he heals us. We should attribute our defects which he heals, not to God's work, but to the human will and his just punishment. As we admit that it was within our power that they not occur, so we should admit that it lies in his mercy rather than in own power that they be healed. Our author locates this mercy and healing help of the savior in this alone, "that he pardons sins committed in the past, not that he helps to avoid future ones."⁸⁷ Here he is

under the influence of a very dangerous error. Here, though without realizing it, he holds us back from watching and praying so that we do not enter into temptation,⁸⁸ since he insists that it lies in our power alone that this does not happen to us.

35, 40. This man is correct on the following point. He says that the examples of certain persons who sinned, as we read in scripture, have not been recorded in order to make us despair of avoiding sin and to think that we may in some sense sin without a worry. Rather, they were recorded so that we might learn either to be humbly repentant or not to give up hope of salvation, even in the midst of such failures.⁸⁹ For certain people, who have fallen into sin, perish more by reason of despair; they not only neglect the remedy of penance, but become the slaves of passions and wicked inclinations in order to carry out their shameful and sinful desires. They act as if they suffer a loss, if they fail to do what lust prompts them to do, since certain damnation already awaits them. Against this highly dangerous and deadly disease, it helps to recall the sins into which even holy and righteous people have fallen.

41. Our author seems to ask a clever question: How we are to believe those holy persons departed from this life? With sin or without sin? For, if one answers that they departed with sin, their damnation is supposed to follow, and that is wrong to believe. But if one says that they left this life without sin, one admits that some human beings were without sin in this life, at least at the approach of death. Here, though he is very clever, he does not sufficiently note that even the righteous pray, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12), and that, when Christ the Lord taught and explained this prayer, he added, *For if you forgive others their sins, your Father will forgive you your sins* (Mt 6:14). We offer this daily prayer like spiritual incense before God on the altar of our heart, which we are taught to lift up to the Lord.⁹⁰ By means of it we are able to die without sin, even if we cannot live this life without sin, since pardon immediately wipes away the sins we repeatedly commit out of ignorance or weakness.

The Righteous Persons in Scripture Were Not Sinless

36, 42. Next our author mentions those "who, as scripture reports, not only did not sin, but lived righteously: Abel, Henoah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua the son of Nun, Phinehas, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Micah, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishaël, Ezekiel, Mordecai, Simeon, Joseph, to whom the Virgin Mary was betrothed, and John." He also includes women: "Deborah, Anna the mother of Samuel, Judith, Esther, another Anna the daughter of Phanuel, Elizabeth, and also the mother of our Lord and Savior. Piety demands, he says, that we admit that she was without sin."⁹¹ Let us then

leave aside the holy Virgin Mary; on account of the honor due to the Lord, I do not want to raise here any question about her when we are dealing with sins. After all, how do we know what wealth of grace was given to her in order to conquer sin completely, since she merited to conceive and bear the one who certainly had no sin? Apart then from this virgin, if we could gather together all those holy men and women when they were living this life and could ask whether they were without sin, what are we to suppose that they would have answered? Would they answer what this fellow says or what the apostle John says? No matter how great was the excellence of their holiness when they lived in this body, if we could have asked them this question, they would have all cried out together, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). Would they give this answer out of humility rather than out of the truth? But he holds, and he is correct to hold, that one should not locate praise for humility on the side of falsity.⁹² Hence, if they spoke the truth, they would have sin, and because they confessed this with humility, the truth would be in them. But if they lied about this, they would still have sin, because the truth would not be in them.

37, 43. "Some will perhaps say," this man remarks, "scripture could not recount the sins of all, could it?"⁹³ And those who say this speak the truth to them. I do not see that this man has made a valid response to this point, although I see that he did not want to remain silent. Please, notice what he said. He says, "This can be correctly said with regard to those of whom scripture records neither good nor bad actions. But with regard to those whose righteousness it recalls, it would also undoubtedly have recalled their sins, if it was aware that they sinned in any way."⁹⁴ Let him, then, claim that the great faith of those people had nothing to do with righteousness, who in large numbers accompanied the Lord's donkey; they cried out, *Hosanna, Son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* (Mt 21:9), even in the midst of those who were furious because they did this. Let him dare to say, if he can, that there was no one in that multitude who had any sin at all. But if it is absurd to say this, why did scripture not mention any of their sins, though it was careful to mention the great goodness of their faith?

44. Yet this fellow may have seen this himself and, therefore, went on to say, "Granted, in other times, because of the large number of people, scripture refrained from mentioning the sins of all. But right at the very beginning of the world, when there were only four human beings, how are we going to explain," he asks, "why scripture refused to mention the sins of everyone? Was it on account of the very numerous population? It did not yet exist. Or was it because it remembered only those who had committed sins, but could not remember the one who had committed none."⁹⁵ He goes on to add more words to support this view more fully and clearly. "Certainly," he says, "in the first age scripture

tells us of only four human beings: Adam and Eve and their sons, Cain and Abel. Eve sinned. Scripture tells us that. Adam also fell. The same scripture does not omit that fact. Moreover, scripture has likewise testified that Cain sinned. It not merely indicates the sins, but also the nature of these sins.⁹⁶ If Abel had sinned, scripture would certainly have said so, but it did not. Hence, he did not sin; indeed scripture even describes him as a righteous person. Let us then believe what we read, and let us believe that it is wrong to add what we do not read.”⁹⁷

38, 45. In saying this, he has not paid sufficient attention to the statement he had made a bit earlier that, once a great multitude of human beings were born, because of the large number of people, scripture could have refrained from recounting the sins of all.⁹⁸ For, if he had paid sufficient attention to this point, he would have seen that scripture could not mention the great crowd or multitude of venial sins even in a single human being. Or, if it could, it should not mention them. A limit had to be set for those sins which were recorded, and by a few examples the reader was to be instructed on many necessary points. For example, scripture declined to mention how many human beings there were at that time, even though they were few, or to give their names, that is, how many sons and daughters Adam and Eve brought forth and the names they gave them. Hence, some people, who fail to consider how many facts scripture passes over with no mention, have thought that Cain had intercourse with his mother and from her fathered the child which scripture mentioned.⁹⁹ They supposed that Adam's sons did not have sisters, because scripture did not mention them at that point, though later by way of summary it brings in what it had omitted, namely, that Adam had fathered sons and daughters,¹⁰⁰ though it does not give the time of their birth, their number, or their names. Thus there was no need for scripture to mention it, if Abel, though he was deservedly called righteous,¹⁰¹ at some time laughed or joked too much in a moment of relaxation or if he looked upon something with desire or picked some fruit a bit intemperately or slightly overindulged in food or if he thought of something else, while he was praying, so that his attention was drawn to that other topic. How often such things and many others like them must have crept up on him! Or are they perhaps not sins, even though we are warned in a general manner by the apostle's commandment to avoid them or refrain from them? He says, *Let sin, then, not reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires* (Rom 6:12). Certainly, we have to wage a daily and constant battle so that we do not obey these desires with regard to things which are wrong or less proper. For as the result of this defect our eye turns or is allowed to turn where it should not. If this defect grows strong and assumes control, it leads to the commission of adultery even with the body. But adultery is committed with greater quickness with the heart inasmuch as thought is faster and permits no obstacle to delay it. Some have to a large extent held in check this sin, that is, this inclination toward sinful love, so that they do not obey its

desires and do not offer to it their members as the weapons of sin.¹⁰² They too have merited to be called righteous, and this is due to the help of God's grace. But because sin often sneaks up upon people in slight matters and occasionally in unforeseen ones, they were both righteous and yet not without sin. Finally, if the love of God by which alone a righteous person is truly righteous was present in the righteous Abel, it was still such that it could and ought to grow, for whatever was lacking in it stemmed from a defect. And whose love is not lacking, until one attains that degree of love in which all human weakness is swallowed up?

*Pelagius Should Heed His Own Admonition
and Listen to the Scriptures*

39, 46. Our author concludes this passage with an obviously important idea, when he says, "Let us then believe what we read, and let us believe that it is wrong to add what we do not read, and let it suffice to have said this on all topics."¹⁰³ On the contrary, I say that we ought not to believe everything we read because of the apostle's words, *Read everything; hold onto what is good* (1 Thes 5:21), and I also say that it is not wrong to add something which we do not read. After all, we can, as reliable witnesses, add something that we have experienced, even if we may not have read it. He may reply to this, "When I said this, I was speaking of the holy scriptures." How I wish that he would add nothing—I will not say: other than he reads in these writings, but contrary to what he reads there! Let him with faith and obedience listen to what scripture says, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). Let him not weaken the grace of such a great physician by refusing to admit that human nature was corrupted! How I wish that, as a Christian, he would read that apart from Jesus Christ there is no name under heaven in which we can be saved¹⁰⁴ and that he would not defend the ability of human nature so that human beings believe that they can be saved through free choice even without that name.

40, 47. Perhaps he thinks that the name of Christ is needed so that we may learn through his gospel how we ought to live, but not so that we may also be helped by his grace to live a good life. On such grounds he should at least admit that there is a terrible darkness in the human mind that knows how to tame a lion, but does not know how it ought to live. Or does free choice and the natural law suffice for one to know this as well? This is the wordy wisdom that does away with the cross of Christ.¹⁰⁵ But the apostle said, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise* (1 Cor 1:19), because this cross cannot be done away with. This wisdom is, of course, overthrown by the foolishness of the preaching which

brings salvation to those who believe.¹⁰⁶ After all, if one's natural ability through free choice is sufficient for knowing how one ought to live and for living a good life, *then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21); *then the scandal of the cross has been done away with* (Gal 5:11). Why should I too not cry out? Indeed, I will cry out and scold these people because of the pain I feel as a Christian, *You have been removed from Christ; you who are justified by nature have fallen away from grace* (Gal 5:4). For not knowing the righteousness of God and wanting to establish your own, you are not subject to the righteousness of God.¹⁰⁷ For, just as Christ is the end of the law, so he is the savior of corrupt human nature for righteousness for everyone who believes.¹⁰⁸

41, 48. But why did he raise the objection for himself that his opponents say, "The apostle obviously made the statement, *All have, after all, sinned* (Rom 3:23)? with regard to the people of that time, that is, about the Jews and the Gentiles."¹⁰⁹ But the statement I quoted, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12), clearly includes under that formula both persons of old and more recent ones, both us and those who will come after us. He also cites another text to prove that, when it says "all," it is not necessary to understand absolutely everyone with no exception. He says, "Just as the sin of one led to condemnation of all human beings, so the righteousness of one led to the justification of life for all human beings" (Rom 5:18). But there is no doubt," he adds, "that Christ's righteousness did not sanctify all, but only those who were willing to obey him and were cleansed by the bath of his baptism."¹¹⁰ He clearly does not prove what he wants by that text. For, as scripture said, *Just as the sin of one led to the condemnation of all human beings*, without omitting anyone, so in the words, *the righteousness of one led to the justification of life for all human beings* (Rom 5:18), no one is omitted. It does not mean that all believe in him and are washed by his baptism, but that no one is justified without believing him and being washed by his baptism. It says, "all," then, so that we do not believe that anyone can be saved in some other way apart from him. For example, when there is a single teacher of literature appointed in a city, we correctly say, "This person teaches literature to everyone here." We do not mean that all the citizens learn literature, but that none learn it unless he teaches them. In the same way, none are justified unless Christ makes them righteous.

42, 49. "All right," he says, "I will agree that scripture testifies that all were sinners. After all, it states what people were, not that they could not be different. Hence, even if it could be proved that all human beings are sinners, that would present no problem for our thesis, since we are defending, not so much what human beings are, but what they can be."¹¹¹ Here he is right in finally agreeing that no living person will be found righteous in God's sight.¹¹² He maintains that the question does not concern that point, but the very possibility of not sinning,

and there is no need for us to oppose him on that point either. For I am not terribly concerned about whether in this life there were or are or can be some people who had or have or will have so perfect a love of God that nothing could be added to it. That love is, after all, the truest, most complete, most perfect righteousness. For, since I admit and maintain that it is possible, if the human will is helped by God's grace, I do not need to argue too much about when or where or in whom it is realized. Nor am I opposed to the very possibility. For, once the human will has been healed and helped, the possibility emerges at the same time as the actuality in those who are holy, provided that *the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5), to the fullest extent that our nature, now healed and cleansed, can receive it. And so, one pleads God's case—the case which this fellow claims to plead in defending nature—better when one acknowledges both the creator and the savior than when one destroys the help of the savior by defending the creature, as if it were healthy and at full strength.

43, 50. His statement, however, is true that God, who is both good and righteous, made human beings such that they were able to be without the evil of sin, at least if they had wanted to be.¹¹³ After all, who does not know that they were created healthy and innocent and endowed with free choice and the free ability to live righteously? But we are now dealing with that man whom robbers left half-dead on the road.¹¹⁴ Injured and seriously wounded, he cannot rise up to the peak of righteousness as he was able to come down from there, and if he is already in the inn, he is still undergoing treatment. God, then, does not command what is impossible; rather, by his commandment, he warns you to do what you can and to ask for what you cannot. Let us now examine the reason why one has the ability and the reason why one does not. This man says, "Natural ability does not depend upon the will."¹¹⁵ I say, "A human being certainly is not righteous as a result of the will, if one can be by nature, but one will be able to be as a result of medication what one cannot be because of one's injury."

44, 51. What need is there, then, to delay over many points? Let us come to the heart of the matter which in this question is the sole or almost the sole point of contention we have with these people. After all, he says that it is not relevant to the point under discussion that we ask whether there were or are some human beings in this life without sin, but whether there could be or can be.¹¹⁶ And even if I agree that there have been or are such human beings, I still in no sense maintain that there have been or are such human beings unless they have been justified by *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25), and *him crucified* (1 Cor 2:3). That faith, of course, healed the righteous people of old, and it now heals us, that is, faith in the mediator between God and human beings, the man Jesus Christ,¹¹⁷ faith in his blood, faith in his cross, faith in his

death and resurrection. *Having, then, the same spirit of faith, we too believe, and for this reason we speak out* (2 Cor 4:13).

Pelagius' Basic Error That Every Christian Must Oppose: The Ability to Avoid Sin Is Inseparable from Our Nature

52. Let us pay attention to his response, when he raises for himself the issue on which the hearts of Christians find him truly intolerable. He says, after all, "But this is, you say, the point that upsets many people: you maintain that a human being can be free from sin without the grace of God."¹¹⁸ This is, of course, the point that upsets many people; this is what we object to. He states the very point; this is what we endure with deepest displeasure. Because of the love we have for others and for these people, we do not tolerate the discussion of such things by Christians. Let us then listen to how he frees himself from the objection on this issue. He says, "Oh, the blindness of ignorance! Oh, the sluggishness of the uncultivated mind, that thinks that I defend without the grace of God what he hears must be attributed to God alone."¹¹⁹ If we did not know what follows, we would think, from hearing just these words, that we had believed false reports about these people. Rumor spreads them about, and certain of our brothers, who are suitable witnesses, have borne witness to them. After all, what could be said with greater brevity and greater truth than that the possibility of not sinning, to whatever extent it exists or will exist in human beings, ought to be attributed to God alone? We too say this; let us shake hands on it.

45, 53. Or must we listen to the other points? Clearly we must listen, and we must certainly correct or at least avoid them. He goes on, "After all, one says that this ability does not come from human choice, but from nature, from the author of nature, namely, from God. Is it, then, possible that what is regarded as properly pertaining to God can be understood to exist without God's grace?"¹²⁰ What he means already begins to be obvious, but he explains it more extensively and clearly so that we cannot be mistaken. He adds, "But to make this clearer, we must discuss it a little more at length. For we say that the ability for anything lies not so much in the power of human choice as in the necessity of nature."¹²¹ He illustrates what he means by examples or comparisons. "For example," he says, "I can speak. That I can speak is not up to me. But that I do speak is up to me, that is, it is due to my own will. And since that I do speak is up to me, I can both speak and not speak. But since that I can speak is not up to me, that is, is not due to my choice and will, it is necessary that I always be able to speak. And even if I will not to be able to speak, I cannot be unable to speak, unless I should perhaps remove the member by which I can carry out the function of speaking."¹²² We could, of course, mention many ways in which a person

could, if one wanted to, remove the ability to speak, without removing the member by which we speak. For example, if something happens which destroys the voice itself, one could not speak, even though the members remain intact. For the voice is not a member of a human being, and this can, of course, happen if some inner organ is injured, though not removed. But I do not want to appear to put too much weight on a word and have someone stubbornly reply, "To injure is the same as to remove." We can achieve the same result, if the mouth is closed and sealed by some clamps so that we cannot open it even slightly. Then, though it was in our power to close it, it will not be in our power to open it, despite the fact that the members remain whole and healthy.

46, 54. But how does this concern us? Let us see what he makes of this point. He says, "Whatever is bound by natural necessity, after all, lacks the choice of the will and deliberation."¹²³ There is a problem here. For it is utterly absurd for us to claim that our willing to be happy does not pertain to the will, on the grounds that we absolutely cannot not will it, because of some constraint of nature, and a good constraint at that.¹²⁴ Nor do we dare to say that God does not have the will, but the necessity to be righteous, on the grounds that he cannot will to sin.

47, 55. Notice also what comes next. He adds, "This same point can also be seen in the case of hearing, smell, or sight, since to hear or to smell or to see lies in our power, but to be able to hear or to smell or to see does not lie in our power, but in a natural necessity."¹²⁵ Either I do not understand what he is saying, or he doesn't. After all, how do we not have in our power the ability to see, if we have in our power the necessity of not seeing? For we have blindness in our power, and we can by it deprive ourselves of the ability to see, if we want. But how do we have it in our power to see, if we want, when we cannot see, if we want, either at night when the outdoor sources of light are not present or when someone locks us in a dark place, even though the nature of our bodily eyes is sound and unimpaired? So too, if our ability to hear or inability to hear lies not in our power, but in the constraint of nature, while that we do hear or do not hear lies in our own will, why does he not notice how many things we hear against our will? Many sounds penetrate our awareness, even when our ears are plugged, such as the nearby screeching of a saw or the squealing of pigs? The plugging of our ears shows that it is not in our power not to hear when our ears are open, and yet a plugging of our ears that destroys our sense itself also proves that not being able to hear is also in our power. As for what he says about smell, he pays insufficient attention to his statement that the ability to smell or the inability to smell is not in our power, but it is in our power, that is, in our free will, to smell or not to smell.¹²⁶ Suppose that we were placed in the midst of strong and foul odors and that someone put us there with our hands tied, though our members were whole and healthy; we would want not to smell those odors, but would be

unable not to. For, when we are forced to take a breath, we at the same time draw in the odor that we do not want.

Pelagius Presupposes That Our Nature Has Suffered No Injury

48, 56. Just as these comparisons are false, so the point for which he wanted to use them is also false. For he goes on to say, "In a like manner, then, with regard to the possibility of not sinning, we must understand that not sinning is up to us, but that the ability not to sin is not up to us."¹²⁷ Even if he were speaking about a whole and healthy human nature, he would not be correct. But that is not the sort of nature we have at present, *For we are saved in hope, but a hope for what is seen is not hope. But if we hope for what we do not see, we look forward to it with patience* (Rom 8:24.25). He would not be correct in saying that not sinning depends only upon us, even though sinning would depend upon us. For even then there would be God's help, and it would offer¹²⁸ itself to those who want it, like a light to help healthy eyes to see. But we are discussing the present life in which *the body which is being corrupted weighs down the soul, and the earthly dwelling presses down the mind that thinks many thoughts* (Wis 9:15). And so, I am astonished at the disposition of his heart that allows him to think that not sinning is up to us, even without the help of the medicine of our savior, and to maintain that the ability not to sin comes from our nature. And yet, it is so obvious that our nature has been corrupted that the failure to see this is a mark of a still greater corruption.

49, 57. "Because not sinning is up to us," he says, "we can both sin and not sin."¹²⁹ What will he say, if someone else says, "Because not willing unhappiness is up to us, we can both will it and not will it?" And yet we absolutely cannot will it. After all, who could in any sense will to be unhappy, even if one wills something else that leads to one's unhappiness against one's will. Moreover, since not sinning lies in God's power far more than in ours, are we going to dare to say that he can both sin and not sin? Heaven forbid that we should say that God can sin! It is not true, after all, that he will not be omnipotent, as some foolish people suppose, because he cannot die and *cannot deny himself* (2 Tm 2:13). What, then, is it that he is saying, and by what rules of logic is he trying to convince us of what he refuses to consider with care? He goes on to say, "But since the ability not to sin does not come from us, even if we will not to be able not to sin, we cannot fail to have the ability not to sin."¹³⁰ He stated this in a convoluted manner and, for that reason, it is somewhat obscure. But it could be stated more clearly as follows: "Because the ability not to sin does not come from us, we have the ability not to sin, whether we will to or not." After all, he does not say, "We do not sin, whether we will to or not." For we undoubtedly do sin, if we will to. Nonetheless, he maintains that, whether we will it or not,

we have the ability not to sin, and he says this is implanted in our nature. But one can without any problem say of human beings with healthy feet: whether they will to or not, they have the ability to walk. But if their feet are broken, they do not have that ability, even if they will to walk. That nature has been injured of which scripture says, *Why are earth and ashes filled with pride?* (Sir 10:9). It has been injured; it begs the physician; it cries out, *Save me, Lord* (Ps 12:2); it cries out, *Heal my soul* (Ps 41:5). Why does he cut off these cries so that, in defending the allegedly present ability, he prevents future good health?

50, 58. See what he adds to this as what he takes to be a confirmation of it. He says, "For no will can remove something that is proved to be inseparably implanted in nature."¹³¹ What is the reason, then, for that cry, *So that you do not do those things which you will* (Gal 5:17)? What is the reason for this one as well, *For I do not do the good that I want, but I do the evil that I hate* (Rom 7:19)? Where is the ability that is found to be inseparably implanted in nature? You see, human beings do not do the things that they want. And the apostle was talking about not sinning, not about flying, since they were human beings, not birds. You see, human beings do not do the good that they want, but they do the evil that they do not want. Willing the good is in their power, but doing it is not.¹³² Where is the ability that is found to be inseparably implanted in nature? For in whosoever's name the apostle is speaking, if he is not saying these things about himself, he is certainly speaking in the name of a human being.¹³³ But this man maintains that human nature itself has the inseparable ability not to sin. This is expressed with these words by one who speaks without knowledge, but it is not expressed without the knowledge of the one who suggests these statements to people who are not on guard, though they fear God. And thus, the grace of Christ is done away with, as though human nature sufficed for its own righteousness.

For Pelagius Grace Amounts to the Nature Given by the Creator

51, 59. He wants to avoid the hostility of Christians who cry out on behalf of their salvation and say, "Why do you say that human beings are able not to sin without the help of God's grace?" And so he says, "The ability not to sin lies not so much in the power of choice as in the necessity of nature. Whatever lies in the necessity of nature undoubtedly pertains to the author of nature, namely, God. How, then, can one suppose," he asks, "that what is shown to pertain to God as his very own is said to exist apart from God's grace?"¹³⁴ The idea which was hidden has been expressed; there is no way that it can be concealed. He has attributed the ability not to sin to God's grace, precisely because God is the author of the nature in which he claims that the ability not to sin is inseparably implanted. When human beings will to, they do the action;¹³⁵ because they do

not will it, they do not do it. After all, if they have an inseparable ability, they cannot have a weakness of will, or rather the presence of the will along with the lack of its accomplishment. If, then, that is the case, why do we have the words, *I can will the good, but I cannot do it* (Rom 7:18). For if the author of this book was speaking of that human nature which was in the beginning created innocent and healthy, his statement would be in some sense acceptable. And yet that nature should not have been said to have an inseparable ability, that is, one that cannot be lost. After all, it could be injured and need to seek a physician who would heal its eyes and restore its ability to see which was lost through blindness. For I think that a blind person wants to see, but cannot. But if one wants to and cannot, the will is present, but the ability has been lost.

52, 60. Also look at the obstacles which he tries to overcome, if he can, to advance his idea. For he raises an objection to himself with these words, "But you must admit that the flesh is opposed to us, as the apostle says."¹³⁶ Then he asks, "How is it possible that the flesh is opposed to anyone who has been baptized, since, following the same apostle, we understand that such a person is not in the flesh? After all, he says, *You, however, are not in the flesh*" (Rom 8:9).¹³⁷ Well, then, he says that the flesh cannot be opposed to those who have been baptized; later we will see whether this is true. But now, since he could not completely forget that he is a Christian, but remembered it, though only slightly, he pulled back from his defense of nature. Where, then, is this inseparable ability? Are those who are not yet baptized not included in human nature? It is on this point, right on this point that he could have been alert and, if he pays attention, he still can be. He says, "How is it possible that the flesh is opposed to anyone who has been baptized?"¹³⁸ The flesh can, then, be opposed to those who have not been baptized. Let him explain how this is possible, since these people also have that nature he has defended so much. He surely grants that at least in them nature was injured, if that wounded man, now among the baptized, emerged from the inn in good health or is in good health in the inn where the merciful Samaritan brought him to be cared for.¹³⁹ Now, if he grants that the flesh is opposed at least to these, let him state what has happened. After all, each of them, that is, both the flesh and the spirit, is the creation of one and the same creator, and undoubtedly good, because he is good. It must be that this is an injury which was inflicted by their own will. And precisely so that this injury in their nature might be healed, there is need of the savior who, as its creator, established the nature. If we admit that the small and the great, that is, wailing infants and old grey heads, need this savior and that medicine of his, namely, that the Word become flesh in order to dwell among us,¹⁴⁰ the entire question under dispute between us has been resolved.

Paul Saw the Opposition of the Flesh Even in the Baptized

53, 61. Let us now see whether scripture says that the flesh is opposed to the baptized as well. Where and to whom did the apostle speak these words? *The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other so that you do not do those things which you will* (Gal 5:17). He wrote them to the Galatians, I believe, the same people to whom he said, *Did he who gave you the Spirit and worked miracles among you do this because of the works of the law or because of the acceptance of the faith?* (Gal 3:5). From these passages it is clear that he is speaking to Christians and to people to whom God has given the Spirit; he is speaking, then, to those who have been baptized. See, we have discovered that the flesh is opposed even to the baptized and they do not have that ability which he says is inseparably implanted in nature. What has happened to his question, "How is it possible that the flesh is opposed to anyone who has been baptized?"¹⁴¹ The term "flesh" in this passage, in fact, refers not to the nature of the flesh, which is good, but to its defects. But no matter how he might understand "flesh," notice that the flesh is, nonetheless, opposed even to the baptized. How is it opposed? So that they do not do what they will. See, the will is present in the human being; where is that ability of nature? Let us admit that grace is necessary; let us cry out, *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?* And our answer is: *The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:24-25).

62. After all, when one asks these people, as it is perfectly correct to do, "Why do you claim that apart from the help of God's grace a human being can be without sin?" the question does not have to do with the grace by which human beings were created, but with the grace by which they are saved through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Moreover, in prayer the faithful say, *Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13). If they have the ability, why do they make this prayer? Or from what evil do they ask to be set free if not especially *from the body of this death* (Rom 7:24), from which they are set free only by *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). They do not ask to be set free from the substance of the flesh which is good, but from the defects of the flesh from which human beings are not set free without the grace of the savior, not even when they leave the body through the body's death. In order to make this point, what did the apostle previously say? *I see another law in my members that resists the law of my mind and holds me captive in the law of sin which lies in my members* (Rom 7:23). See the injury which the will's disobedience has inflicted upon human nature. Let him pray to be healed! Why does he expect so much from the ability of nature? It is wounded, injured, beaten, ruined; it is in need of a true confession, not of a false defense. Let it ask, then, for the grace of God, not that by which it is created, but that by which it is restored. This grace alone is what this man declares unnecessary when he does

not mention it. If he said nothing at all about God's grace and if, in order to avoid hostility toward himself on this point, he did not bring up and try to solve this question, one could have thought that he held the truth, but did not state it. After all, one does not have to say everything all the time. But he brought up the question about grace, and he answered with what he had in his heart. The question has been clarified; it was not a question of our choosing, but one in which we were in doubt about what he held.

54, 63. Next he tries to show by many citations from the apostle a point about which there is no dispute, namely, that he calls the flesh by that name with the intention that we understand not the substance, but the works of the flesh.¹⁴² How is this relevant? The injuries of the flesh are opposed to the human will. It is not nature that is accused; rather, a physician is sought for its injuries. Why does he ask, "Who made for human beings their spirit?" And he answers, "It was certainly God." So too, he asks, "Who created the flesh?" Again he answers, "The same God, I believe." Thirdly, he asks, "Is the God who created both of them good?" He answers, "No one doubts this." Again he asks, "Is each of those things which God created good?" To this he answers, "We must admit this." Finally, he concludes, "If then both the spirit is good and the flesh is good, since they were created by the good creator, how is it possible that two good things be opposed to each other?"¹⁴³

I am not going to mention the fact that this whole argument would be destroyed, if someone asked him, "Who created heat and cold?" He would undoubtedly answer, "God." I am not going to ask many questions. He can himself decide whether these elements can be said not to be good or whether they are not clearly opposed to each other. He might say, "These are qualities of substances, not substances." So they are; that is true. But they are natural qualities, and they undoubtedly belong to God's creation. In any case, substances are said to be opposed to one another, not by reason of themselves, but by reason of their qualities. What if flesh and spirit are like that? We are not claiming that they are; rather, we said this to show that his argument did not arrive at its conclusion by a necessary inference. After all, there can also be opposing elements that struggle against one another, but are balanced by each other and produce good health. For example, bodily health consists in the balancing of dryness and moistness, cold and warmth in the body. But the fact that the flesh is opposed to the spirit so that we do not do what we want is a defect, not nature. Let us ask for healing grace, and let us bring the dispute to an end.

64. How then can these two goods created by the good God be opposed to each other in those who have not been baptized, contrary to this man's argument? Or is he also going to regret having made that statement he uttered with a touch of Christian faith? After all, when he said, "How is it possible that the flesh is

opposed to anyone who has already been baptized?"¹⁴⁴ he implied that the flesh can be opposed to those who have not been baptized. For why did he add, "who has already been baptized," when he could have said, without that addition, "How is it possible that the flesh is opposed to anyone?" And he could have used that argument of his to prove this point, for each of them is a good created by the good God and, therefore, they cannot be opposed to each other. If the unbaptized, then, to whom he certainly admits the flesh is opposed, press him with his questions and ask, "Who made the human spirit?" he will answer, "God." Likewise, they will ask, "Who created the flesh?" And he will answer, "The same God, I believe." Thirdly, they will ask, "Is the God who created them both good?" And he will reply, "No one doubts this." And they will ask him the remaining question, "And are both of these things which the good creator made good?" And he will admit that they are. Then they will slay him with his own sword by drawing his conclusion and saying, "If then the spirit is good and the flesh is good inasmuch as they were created by the good creator, how is it possible that two good elements can be opposed to each other?" At this point he may answer, "Pardon me; I should not have said that the flesh cannot be opposed to anyone who has been baptized so that I implied that it is opposed in this way to you who have not been baptized. I should, rather, have said that the flesh is opposed to no one without any exception." See what a corner he has got himself into. See what this man says who does not want to cry out with the apostle, *Who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:24-25). "But why," he asks, "should I cry out in this way, since I have already been baptized in Christ? Let those cry out like that who have not yet received this benefit. It is the words of those people which the apostle makes his own, if they do in fact say such a thing."¹⁴⁵ But this defense of nature does not allow even those people to utter this cry. After all, it is not true that nature is found in the baptized, but is not found in the unbaptized. Or if one grants that nature is injured at least in the unbaptized so that they cry out, *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?* (Rom 7:24) and that they find help in the next verse, *The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25), one should at long last grant that human nature needs Christ as a physician.

55, 65. I ask, however, where nature lost this freedom which it longs to receive when it says, *Who will set me free?* (Rom 7:24). After all, the apostle does not blame the substance of the flesh, when he says that he desires to be set free *from the body of this death* (Rom 7:24), since the nature of the body as well as that of the soul should be attributed to God, the good creator. Rather, he is surely speaking about the body's defects. For the death of the body separates one from the body, but there cling to one the defects contracted from it. To them the just punishment is due, as that rich man found out in hell.¹⁴⁶ From this punishment

the man who said, *Who will set me free from the body of this death?* (Rom 7:24), could, of course, not set himself free. But wherever he may have lost this freedom, that ability of nature is certainly inseparable; he has the ability as a natural help; he has the will from free choice. Why does he seek the sacrament of baptism? Is it on account of sins committed in the past so that only those sins are forgiven whose occurrence cannot be undone? Leave the man alone; let him cry out what the apostle was crying out. For he does not desire merely that through forgiveness he may not be punished for past sins, but also that he may be strong and robust so as not to sin in the future. After all, he finds delight in the law of God in the interior human being, but he sees another law in his members resisting the law of his mind. He sees that it is so; he is not recalling that it had been the case. He is under pressure at the present; he is not recalling the past. He sees that it is not merely resisting him, but holding him captive to the law of sin.¹⁴⁷ That law is now in his members; it is not merely something in the past. This is the reason that he cries out, *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?* (Rom 7:24). Allow him to pray; allow him to demand the help of a most powerful physician. Why oppose him? Why shout him down? Why prevent the wretch from seeking the mercy of Christ? At least, why should Christians do this? There were, after all, companions of Christ who tried to prevent the blind man from crying out and begging to see the light, but even amid the uproar of those who were stopping him, Christ heard his cry.¹⁴⁸ Hence, this apostle heard the answer, *The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25).

66. If we get these people to grant that those who have not yet been baptized should implore the help of the grace of the savior, this is no small victory against that false defense of nature and the power of free choice, on the grounds that they are self-sufficient. After all, he was not self-sufficient who said, *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?* (Rom 7:24). Or are we to say that one has full freedom while still begging to be set free?

56. Nonetheless, let us also see whether those who have been baptized do the good actions they will to do without any opposition from the concupiscence of the flesh. This fellow reminds us what we should say on this point where he brings this passage to a conclusion. He states, "As we have said, we should understand the passage containing, *The flesh lusts against the spirit* (Gal 5:17), not with reference to the substance of the flesh, but with reference to its works."¹⁴⁹ We too say that the passage refers not to the substance of the flesh, but to its works which arise from concupiscence of the flesh, namely, from the sin about which the apostle commands that it not reign in our mortal body so that we obey its desires.¹⁵⁰

57, 67. But this fellow should also note that scripture said to those who had already been baptized, *The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against*

the flesh, so that you do not do those things which you will (Gal 5:17). And so that he does not make us give up the fight and is not thought to open the door to sinning through this statement, he adds, *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under the law* (Gal 5:18). After all, they are under the law who see that they hold back from sinful actions out of a fear of the punishment which the law threatens, not out of a love of righteousness. Such persons are not yet free from nor strangers to the will to sin. They are blameworthy by the very will by which they would prefer, if it were possible, that there would not be what they fear so that they could freely do what they secretly desire. Hence, he says, *If you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under the law* (Gal 5:18), that is, under the law which strikes fear, not that which bestows love. For *the love of God is poured out in our hearts*, not by the letter of the law, but by *the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). This is the law of freedom, not of servitude, because it is the law of love, not of fear. Of it the apostle James said, *One who looks into the perfect law of freedom* (Jas 1:25). Hence, the apostle Paul is not now terrified by the law of God like a slave, but finds delight in it in the interior human being.¹⁵¹ Nonetheless, he sees another law in his members resisting the law of his mind.¹⁵² So too, he says, *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under the law* (Gal 5:18). Insofar as one is led by the Spirit, one is not under the law, because insofar as one finds delight in the law of God, one is not under fear of the law, because fear produces pain, not delight.

58, 68. Hence, if we are thinking correctly, just as we ought to give thanks for the healing our members have received, we ought to pray for the future healing of our members so that we may enjoy an absolute good health to which nothing can be added, the perfect sweetness of God, and complete freedom. After all, we do not deny that human nature can be without sin, nor ought we in any sense to deny that it can be made perfect, as we do not deny that it is making progress, provided it is by *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). We say that it is being justified and blessed by the help of him who created it so that it exists. It is easy, then, to refute the statement this fellow claims some people raise as an objection to him, "The devil is our adversary."¹⁵³ We, of course, answer this objection with the same words which he uses, "Let us resist him, and he will flee. The blessed apostle says, *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you* (Jas 4:7). Here we should mark well the sort of harm he can do to people from whom he flees, and we should understand the amount of power he has who can prevail only against those who do not resist."¹⁵⁴ These are my words as well; it cannot be stated more correctly.

But there is this difference between these people and us. We not merely do not deny, but even proclaim that we should demand God's help, even when we resist the devil. These people, however, attribute such power to the will that they remove prayer from a life of piety. For, precisely in order that we may resist the

devil and that he may flee from us, we say in prayer, *Bring us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13). Precisely for this reason we have been warned, like soldiers, by our commander who exhorts us with the words, *Watch and pray so that you do not enter into temptation* (Mk 14:38).

59, 69. He makes a point in arguing against those who say, "And who would not want to be without sin, if this lay in the power of a human being?" He argues correctly that they admit that it is not impossible by the very fact that many or all people want this.¹⁵⁵ If he would also admit what makes this possible, there would be peace. It is, after all, *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25); this fellow never wanted to admit that we are helped by it, when we pray that we may not sin. If he perhaps holds this in secret, he must pardon us for suspecting otherwise. He, after all, is the one responsible for the fact that, though he meets with so much hostility over this question, he chooses to hold this view, but refuses openly to admit or profess it. Why was it so difficult for him to say this, especially since he undertook to discuss and explain this point as an objection raised against him by some opponents? Why did he want at that point to defend nature alone? He claimed that human beings were created so that they were able not to sin, if they did not will to sin. He declared that, by the very fact that they were created in that way, this ability pertained to the grace of God, that is, the ability by which they do not sin, if they do not will to. But he was unwilling to say anything about the fact that nature itself is either healed, because it was injured, or helped, because it is not self-sufficient, by *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25)?

Augustine Is Willing to Admit the Fact of Sinlessness, Provided the Grace of God Is Not Denied

60, 70. After all, whether there has been or is or can be someone who lives so righteously in this world that he has no sin at all is a legitimate question among true and pious Christians. Anyone who doubts that people can be such after this life is certainly foolish. But I do not want to argue even about this life. I do not think that the passage, *No living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2), and others of the sort, should be interpreted in any other sense. Yet I wish that one could show that these passages can be better interpreted in another sense or that perfect and complete righteousness, to which no addition whatsoever can be made, was found in some persons in the past, while they lived in this body, or that it is present there now or will be in the future. There are, in any case, many more persons who have no doubt that it is necessary for them to say in all truth right up to the last day of this life, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12), while they trust that their hope in Christ and his promises is true, certain, and solid. But if someone claims that any can attain

to complete perfection or that anyone can make some progress in true and godly righteousness in any other way than by the help of the grace of the savior, Christ crucified, and by the gift of his Spirit, I do not know whether such a person can correctly be counted among Christians of any sort whatever.

Arguments Drawn from Various Christian Writers: From Lactantius

61, 71. For this reason the passages he cited are neutral, neither against our view nor against his. He cited them, not from the canonical scriptures, but from some writings of Catholic commentators, in order to answer those who said that he was the only one who held these views. He chose also to include some statements from my books among these, with the idea that I was also someone who seemed worthy of being mentioned with them. Hence, I ought not to be ungrateful, and out of a feeling of friendship I do not want the man who paid me this honor to be in error.

I did not find there the name of the author of the first passage he cited, either because he did not mention it or because the manuscript which you sent me lacked it due to some faultiness. Hence, why should we discuss it, especially since I am not bound by the writings of any mere human beings? For I owe assent without any reserve only to the canonical scriptures. But something bothers me in what he quoted from the writings of that man whose name I did not find. He stated, "The master and teacher of virtue had to become so like human beings that, by conquering sin, he might teach human beings to conquer sin."¹⁵⁶ The author of this opinion should consider how he might explain the sense of that statement, for we have absolutely no doubt that Christ had in himself no sin to conquer.¹⁵⁷ He was born in the likeness of sinful flesh,¹⁵⁸ not in sinful flesh.

Our author cited another passage from the same man, "Again 'that by overcoming the desires of the flesh he might teach that sinning does not stem from necessity, but from choice and will.'"¹⁵⁹ Provided that the desires mentioned here are not those of illicit concupiscences, I accept the desires of the flesh, such as hunger, thirst, the need for rest when tired, and things like that. For, even though they are not blameworthy, some people fall into sins through these desires. This was not the case with the savior, although we see, according to the testimony of the gospel, that these desires were found in him because of the likeness of sinful flesh.

From Hilary of Poitiers

62, 72. He cited the following words from blessed Hilary, "For only when we have been made perfect in the Spirit and transformed by immortality will we see what is immortal in God, something which is prepared for the clean of heart

alone.”¹⁶⁰ I do not see how what he said is in opposition to what we said or how it helps this fellow, except that it bears witness that there can be a human being with a clean heart. But who is going to deny that point, provided that it is brought about by *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25) and not by the freedom of choice alone? So too, he mentions that Hilary asked, “What books had Job read that he refrained from everything evil?”¹⁶¹ For he reveres God with the mind alone that is free from vices, but to worship God is the proper function of righteousness.”¹⁶² Hilary mentions what Job did; he does not say that he attained perfection in this world or that he acted well or attained perfection without the grace of the savior whom he foretold. After all, even persons who have sin but do not allow it to reign over them¹⁶³ refrain from everything evil, and if a bad thought takes them by surprise, they do not allow it to lead to action. In any case, it is one thing not to have sin and quite another not to obey its desires.¹⁶⁴ It is one thing to fulfill the commandment, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17), and it is quite another, by an effort at self-control, at least to do what we also find in scripture: *You shall not go after your desires* (Sir 18:30). It is still another to know that one can do neither of these as one should without the grace of the savior. Hence, to act with righteousness means to fight an interior battle with the interior evil of concupiscence in the true worship of God, but to have attained perfect righteousness means having no opponent at all. For one who is fighting is still at risk and at times is wounded, even if not laid low. But one who has no opponent enjoys perfect peace. And that person is said in complete truth to be without sin in whom no sin dwells, not the one who, by refraining from the evil action, says, *It is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me* (Rom 7:20).

73. Job himself is not silent about his own sins, and our friend is certainly correct that humility should in no sense be placed on the side of falsehood.¹⁶⁵ Hence, what Job confesses, since he is a true worshiper of God,¹⁶⁶ he undoubtedly confesses truthfully. And when explaining the passage of the psalm where it says, *You have rejected all those who depart from your decrees* (Ps 119:118), Hilary himself says, “After all, if God were to reject sinners, he would, of course, reject all human beings, because there is no one without sin. But he rejects those departing from him, whom he calls apostates.”¹⁶⁷ You see how he did not say that there was no one without sin, as if he were speaking about the past, but said that there is no one without sin. As I said, I am not arguing about this point; after all, if one does not yield to the apostle John who said, *If we say that we have no sin* (1 Jn 1:8)—not that we had no sin—how is the person going to yield to bishop Hilary? I cry out on behalf of the grace of Christ; no one is justified without it, as if the free choice of our nature were sufficient. Indeed Christ himself cries out on its behalf; let us yield to him as he says, *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5).

From Ambrose of Milan

63, 74. In the passage which this man cites, Saint Ambrose is really is opposed to those who say that human beings cannot be without sin in this life.¹⁶⁸ In order to make this point, he chose the examples of Zachary and Elizabeth, since the gospel mentions that they walked in all the decrees of the law without reproach.¹⁶⁹ But does he deny that they did this by *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25)? There is no doubt that, even before his Passion, the righteous lived by faith in him who gives the Holy Spirit through whom that love is poured out in our hearts.¹⁷⁰ That love alone justifies all those who are righteous. The aforementioned bishop advises us to beg for this Spirit with prayers in his hymn where he says,

He grants to constant prayers
That one merits the Holy Spirit.¹⁷¹

So convinced is he that without God's aid the will is not enough!

75. I too will mention a passage from this same work of Saint Ambrose from which he cited the passage he thought worth citing. He says, "*It seemed good to me* (Lk 1:3). That which he says seemed good to him cannot have seemed good to him alone. After all, it did not seem good to him on the basis of the human will. Rather, it seemed good to him *who speaks in me, Christ* (2 Cor 13:3), for he brings it about that what is good can also seem good to us. After all, he also calls those on whom he has mercy. And for this reason one who follows Christ can answer, when asked why he wanted to be a Christian, *It seemed good to me*. When he says this, he does not deny that it seemed good to God. After all, *the will of human beings is prepared by God* (Prv 8:35 LXX), for it is due to God's grace that God is honored by the saint."¹⁷² See what our author should think, if the words of Ambrose please him; he holds that *the will of human beings is prepared by God* (Prv 8:35 LXX), and there is little or no dispute about who will attain perfection or when, provided there is no doubt that this cannot be achieved without the grace of Christ. Moreover, how important it would have been for him to pay attention to one verse from the words of Ambrose which he cited. For when he said, "Since the Church has been gathered together from the Gentiles, that is, from sinners, how could she become spotless from members who were not spotless, unless she, first, was cleansed from sin by the grace of Christ and, second, refrained from sins by reason of the ability not to sin?"¹⁷³ Then Ambrose added a line, and it is clear why this man refused to add it. For Ambrose says, "Nor was the Church spotless from the beginning—this is impossible for human nature. Rather, by God's grace and by its own condition, since it does not now sin, it is being transformed so that it may be seen as spotless."¹⁷⁴ Who can fail to see why this man does not add these words? This transformation is, of course, now being carried out in this world in order that the holy Church may attain that spotless purity, which all the saints desire,

so that it may in the world to come live an absolutely pure life in God's eternity without any evil persons mixed in with it and without any law of sin in it resisting the law of the mind.¹⁷⁵ Let this man, nonetheless, note what bishop Ambrose said in accord with the scriptures, "Nor was the Church spotless from the beginning—this is impossible for human nature."¹⁷⁶ He means, of course, the beginning in which we are born of Adam. For Adam himself was undoubtedly created spotless, but in those people who are by nature children of anger,¹⁷⁷ who derive from him what was corrupted in him, he declared that it was impossible for human nature that they be spotless.

From John of Constantinople

64, 76. He also cites the position of John, the bishop of Constantinople, who says that sin is not a substance, but an evil action. Who would deny this? He also says that it is not natural—and thus a law was established against it—and that it stems from the freedom of choice.¹⁷⁸ Who would deny this either? But our question is not about human nature as it is found in this life; our question is rather about God's grace by which it is healed through Christ the physician, whom it would not need if it were healthy. And yet this man defends nature as if it were healthy and as if the choice of the will were self-sufficient for being able not to sin.

From Xystus

77. So too, what Christian does not know the statement of blessed Xystus, the bishop of the church of Rome and martyr of the Lord, which he mentions, namely, that "God entrusted to human beings the freedom of their choice in order that, by living purely and without sin, they might become like God."¹⁷⁹ But it pertains to choice to listen to and to believe him who calls and to beg from him in whom one believes the help not to sin. He says "that they might become like God," and they will, of course, be like God through the love of God. That love has been poured out in our hearts, not by the ability of nature or by the free choice we have, but by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.¹⁸⁰

The same martyr said, "A pure mind is a holy temple for God, and a pure and sinless heart is for him the best altar."¹⁸¹ Who does not know that a pure heart must be brought to that perfection, as the interior human being is renewed from day to day,¹⁸² but not without *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). He also says, "A chaste and sinless human being has received from God the power to be a child of God."¹⁸³ He, of course, mentioned this for fear that, when one has become so chaste and sinless—and there is some

question about where and when this will be accomplished, for this question is properly raised among pious people; they are, nonetheless, agreed that it is possible and that it is only possible with the mediator of God and human beings, the man Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, as I began to say, Xystus wisely mentioned this for fear that, when persons have become such and have, for this reason, been rightly numbered among the children of God, they might suppose that this power which they received from God through grace came from themselves. They did not, after all, have it in their nature that had already been corrupted and destroyed. Thus we read in the gospel, *But to as many as welcomed him, he gave the power to become children of God* (Jn 1:12). They certainly were not such by nature nor would they be such in any sense, unless by welcoming him they received such a power through his grace. This is the power that the strength of love claims as its own, a love that is present in us only *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5).

From Jerome, the Priest

65, 78. What was it, moreover, that the venerable priest, Jerome, said in the passage which this man cites? He was explaining the passage, *Blessed are the pure of heart, because they will see God* (Mt 5:8). He said, "No awareness of sin makes accusation against them," and he adds, "The pure [God] is seen by a pure heart; the temple of God cannot be defiled."¹⁸⁵ It is surely being brought about in us by our efforts, labor, prayers, and pleas that by his grace we are being brought through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to that perfection in which we can see God with a pure heart. Similarly, he states that the aforementioned priest said, "God created us with free choice, and we are drawn neither to virtue nor to vice by necessity. Otherwise, if necessity holds sway, there is no crown of victory."¹⁸⁶ Who would not accept this? Who would not welcome it with their whole heart? Who would deny it [and claim] that human nature was created in some other way? But there is no chain of necessity when we act correctly, precisely because there is the freedom of love.

66, 79. Return then to the statement of the apostle: *The love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). Who has given the Spirit but he who *has ascended on high, taken captivity captive, and given gifts to human beings* (Eph 4:8). But let human beings hear that there is a certain necessity of sinning due to the defects of nature, not to the way nature was created, and let them learn to say to God, in order to escape that same necessity, *Deliver me from my necessities* (Ps 25:17). For in this sort of prayer one does battle against the tempter who fights against us out of this necessity. In that way with the help of grace through our Lord, Jesus Christ,¹⁸⁷ the evil necessity will be removed, and full freedom will be given us.

From Augustine's Own Work, Free Choice

67, 80. Let us turn to ourselves. He says, "So too, bishop Augustine says in his books on *Free Choice*, 'Whatever this cause of the will is, if one cannot resist it, one yields to it without sin. But if one can resist it, let one not yield to it, and one will not sin. Does it perhaps deceive those who are not careful? Let them be careful then so that they are not deceived. Or is the deception so great that it cannot be avoided at all? Then there are no sins. For who sins in a matter that can in no way be avoided? But sin is committed; hence, it can be avoided.' " ¹⁸⁸ I acknowledge them; they are my words. But let him now be so kind as to acknowledge everything which I have said above. We are, after all, dealing with the grace of God which comes to our help as medicine through the mediator; we are not dealing with the impossibility of righteousness. One can then resist that cause [of the will], whatever it is; one clearly can. After all, we beg help for this, when we say, *Bring us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13). We would not demand this help, if we believed that we could not resist. Sin can be avoided, but it is avoided with the help of him who cannot be deceived. If we truthfully say, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12), this too is helpful for avoiding sin. Even in the body there are two ways of avoiding the evil of disease: both by preventing its occurrence and, if it has occurred, by quickly healing it. Let us avoid the occurrence of sin by saying, *Bring us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13); let us avoid sin through its quick healing by saying, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). Whether sin threatens or is already present, it can, then, be avoided.

81. But I want my views on this matter to be sufficiently clear not only to this man, but also to the others. These others may not read those books of mine on *Free Choice* which he read, and they may read this man without having read my books. Hence, I must mention some passages from these books. If he were to hold such views and put them in his writings, there would remain no dispute between us. Immediately after those words of mine which he cited, I myself added what could have presented a problem and commented on it, as best I could, saying, "And yet certain things, even though done out of ignorance, are blamed and judged to be in need of correction, as we read in the authoritative scriptures of God." ¹⁸⁹ Then, using examples, I also spoke of weakness, saying, "There are some things done with necessity that should be blamed, in a case where a person wills to do the right action and cannot. Otherwise, what do these words mean: *I do not do the good that I want, but I do the evil that I hate*" (Rom 7:19)? ¹⁹⁰ Then, after mentioning other passages from the words of God in support of this idea, I said, "But all of these are words of human beings who come from that condemnation to death. For, if this is not a punishment of human beings, but their nature, these are not sins." ¹⁹¹ A little later I said, "There remains, then, that this just punishment comes from the condemnation of human beings. And

we should not be surprised at it. For either, because of ignorance, they do not have free choice of the will to choose the right thing to do or, because of the resistance of carnal habit, which has grown almost into a nature through the power of mortal propagation, they see what is the right thing to do and will to do it, but cannot carry it out. After all, it is a perfectly just punishment of sin that people lose what they refused to use well, though they could have done so without any difficulty, if they willed to. But that means: those who knowingly do not do the right thing lose the knowledge of what is right, and those who refuse to do the right thing, though they could, lose the ability to do it, though they will to do it. Every¹⁹² soul that sins really has as its punishment these two things: ignorance and difficulty. As a result of ignorance it suffers the shame of error; as a result of difficulty it is afflicted with pain. But to take what is false for what is true so that one errs against one's will, and not to be able refrain from acts of passion, because of the resistance and the biting pain of the flesh's chain, is not the nature of human beings as they were created, but their punishment after they were condemned. When we speak of the free will to do what is right, we are, of course, speaking about the free will with which human beings were created.”¹⁹³ Since some people raise a complaint in the name of justice over the defects of this ignorance and difficulty that have been passed on and transmitted to the offspring of the first human beings, we reply as follows: “Our answer to them is brief. They should quiet down and stop muttering against God. They might have a just complaint if there were no human conqueror of error and desire. But he is present everywhere; in many ways through the creation that serves him as Lord, he calls those who are turned away; he teaches those who believe, consoles those who hope, exhorts those who love, helps those who try, hears those who pray. Hence, it is not counted against you as sin that you lack knowledge against your will, but that you neglect to seek out what you do not know. Nor is it counted against you that you do not bandage your wounded members, but that you hold in contempt the one who wants to heal you.”¹⁹⁴ And so, I both exhorted them, as much as I could, to live good lives, and I did not destroy the grace of God without which human nature cannot be enlightened and healed, once it has been plunged into darkness and injured. The whole dispute with these people turns on this point: that we do not render meaningless the grace of God, which is found in Christ Jesus, our Lord, by a misguided defense of nature. I said of this nature a little later, “We understand this nature in one sense when we are speaking properly of the human nature in which human beings were first created blameless in their kind; we understand it in another sense in that nature in which we are born condemned and mortal,¹⁹⁵ ignorant and subject to the flesh, as the result of the punishment of those first human beings. In accord with this sense, the apostle says, *We were by nature children of anger, just as the others*” (Eph 2:3).¹⁹⁶

Summation and Conclusion: Righteousness Is the Love Poured Out in Our Hearts, Not by the Choice of the Will, But by the Holy Spirit

68, 82. If, then, we want “by Christian exhortations to arouse and set afire cold and sluggish minds to live good lives,”¹⁹⁷ let us, first of all, exhort them to the faith by which they might become Christians and be subject to the name of him without whom they cannot be saved. But if they are already Christians and are neglecting to live properly, we should beat them down with the fear of punishment and raise them up by praise for the rewards. We should remember to exhort them not only to good actions, but also to pious prayers and to instruct them with this sound doctrine. Thus, once they have begun to live good lives, they will be thankful for having done something without difficulty, and when they do experience some difficulty, they will persist in asking the Lord with faith-filled and persevering prayers and with eager works of mercy that they may act with ease.

As for those who are making progress in this way, I am not very concerned about where and when they will attain the perfection of complete righteousness; whenever and wherever they will become perfect, I insist that they cannot become perfect except *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). In any case, when they clearly see that they have no sin, they will not say that they have sin, lest the truth not be in them, just as the truth is not in those who say they have no sin, when they do.¹⁹⁸

69, 83. Certainly, “the commandments are good,” if we use them as the law prescribes.¹⁹⁹ By our firm belief that “the good and just God could not command what is impossible,”²⁰⁰ we are taught both what we should do in easy cases and what we should ask for in difficult ones. Everything is, of course, easy for love; for love alone Christ’s burden is light, or rather it alone is the burden which is itself light.²⁰¹ In this sense scripture says, *And his commandments are not burdensome* (1 Jn 5:3). Hence, people who find them burdensome should consider that God could only say that they are not burdensome, because there can be a disposition of the heart for which they are not a burden, and such persons should beg for what they lack so that they may fulfill what is commanded. If the words addressed to Israel in Deuteronomy are understood in a pious, a holy, and a spiritual sense, they mean the same thing. For, the apostle recalled the passage, *The word is near to you on your lips and in your heart* (Dt 30:14; Rom 10:8), and Deuteronomy has here *in your hands* (Dt 30:14 LXX), for the heart has spiritual hands.²⁰² The apostle adds, *This is the word of faith that we preach* (Rom 10:8). Whoever then have turned to the Lord their God, as they are commanded in that passage, with their whole heart and their whole soul will not find God’s commandment heavy. After all, how can it be heavy when it commands love? For either one does not love, and then it is heavy, or one loves, and it cannot be heavy. But people love if, as Israel was instructed in that

passage, they turn to the Lord their God with their whole heart and their whole soul. He says, *I give you a new commandment, that you love one another* (Jn 13:34), and *One who loves the neighbor has fulfilled the law* (Rom 13:8), and *Love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom 13:10). In this sense scripture also said, *If they walked the paths of goodness, they would surely have found the paths of righteousness easy* (Prv 2:20). How then could scripture say, *On account of the words of your lips I have kept your difficult ways* (Ps 17:4), unless both are true? They are difficult for fear, but easy for love.

70, 84. Hence, the beginning of love is the beginning of righteousness; progress in love is progress in righteousness; great love is great righteousness; perfect love is perfect righteousness. But it is *love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith* (1 Tm 1:5), and it is at its greatest in this life when for its sake one holds this life in contempt.²⁰³ I would be surprised if it did not have room to grow, when one has departed from this mortal life. But wherever or whenever it is so complete that no addition to it is possible, it is, nonetheless, not *poured out in our hearts* by the powers of nature or of the will which are found in us, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). He comes to the aid of our weakness and along with us restores our good health. For this love is *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25), who with the Father and the Holy Spirit has eternity and goodness forever and ever. Amen.

Notes

1. The book is Pelagius' *Nature* (*De natura*), which has been lost, except for various citations. In PL 48, 599-606, J. Garnier offers a reconstruction of the work.
2. Sallust, *The War against Jugurtha* (*Bellum Iugurthinum*) I, 1.
3. See Gal 3:24.
4. Both the Greek and the Vulgate have "grace" where Augustine's translation has "blood."
5. See Mt 9:12-13.
6. See 1 Tm 3:16.
7. See Rom 10:14.
8. G. de Plinval has convincingly argued that this long section is a quotation from Pelagius' lost work, *Nature*; see BA 21, p. 600.
9. See 2 Cor 5:17.
10. See Ti 3:5.
11. See Rom 9:23.
12. See 1 Tm 1:15.
13. See Rom 8:29-30.
14. See 1 Cor 1:17.
15. James adds that this wisdom is *earthly, animal, diabolical*.
16. To whom is Augustine referring? To Timasius and James who were earlier loyal disciples of Pelagius? Or perhaps to others who still remained followers of Pelagius in Africa.
17. See 1 Cor 1:17.
18. The book is Pelagius' *Nature*.
19. R. B. Rees has given the subtitle: *A Reluctant Heretic* to his book on Pelagius; again and again Augustine indicates that he was a reluctant anti-Pelagian.
20. Pelagius, *Nature*.

21. See Jn 11:43-44.
22. Pelagius, *Nature*.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. See Jn 3:5.
26. Pelagius, *Nature*.
27. See 1 Cor 1:17.
28. Pelagius, *Nature*; see above 7, 8.
29. On the basis of some of the oldest manuscripts, the CSEL edition has a "not: *non*" here too. Along with the BA and ALG editions, I have followed the Maurists in omitting it.
30. Pelagius, *Nature*.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
35. Gal 3:24.23.
36. Pelagius, *Nature*.
37. *Ibid.*
38. See Jb 1:8 and Lk 1:6.
39. See Rom 8:3.
40. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* II, 6, 9-8, 10.
41. Perhaps a citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
42. Pelagius, *Nature*.
43. See Jas 3:15.
44. See Rom 8:12.
45. See Rom 13:10.
46. See Lv 4:2-3.
47. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
48. See Mt 6:12-13.
49. See 1 Cor 1:17.
50. Pelagius, *Nature*.
51. See Mt 1:21.
52. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
53. Pelagius, *Nature*.
54. See Mt 1:21.
55. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
56. Pelagius, *Nature*; see the beginning of 22, 24.
57. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
58. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
59. See 1 Cor 4:7.
60. The CSEL edition has "*amicus*: friend," on the basis of 72, 73, where Augustine refers to Pelagius as "*huic amico nostro*: this friend of ours." Yet the majority of the manuscripts and the Maurists have "*animus*: mind or heart." I have followed the BA and ALG editions which have given the preference to the Maurist reading. See also G. de Plinval in REA 11 (1965), 295.
61. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
62. Augustine plays upon "*misery: miseria*" and "*mercy: misericordia*."
63. See Rom 7:23.
64. Pelagius, *Nature*.
65. *Ibid.*
66. This sentence, it seems to me, could well be taken as a continuation of Pelagius' statement, though I have followed the recent German, French and Italian translations, all of which treat it as Augustine's ironic comment on the preceding statement of Pelagius.
67. See 1 Tm 2:5.
68. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.

69. Pelagius, *Nature*.
70. See 2 Cor 12:8.7.
71. Here Augustine seems clearly to understand the good will as God's, since he links Phil 2:13 with Ps 30:8.
72. See Ps 30:8.
73. The editors of the CSEL edition omit the negative; following the BA and ALG editions and the majority of the older manuscripts, I have retained it.
74. See Gn 3:1-6.
75. See 1 Tm 1:20.
76. Pelagius, *Nature*.
77. *Ibid*.
78. *Ibid*.
79. *Ibid*.
80. See Ps 59:11.
81. See Jn 15:5.
82. See Ps 37:5.
83. See Ps 44:19.
84. See Ps 37:5.
85. Pelagius, *Nature*. Both the BA and the NBA editions give a reference to Jerome, Letter 133, 8: CSEL LVI, 253, for this objection. If it was Pelagius' source, he has certainly given it a different spin. In arguing that God does not command what is impossible, Jerome says, "Did God command me to be what God is so that there would be nothing between me and the Lord, the creator . . . ?" He clearly expected the answer: No, God did not command something impossible. Jerome goes on to add, "Scripture said of him as something proper to him: *He committed no sin, and no deception was found on his lips* (1 Pt 2:22). If I had this in common with Christ, what will he have as proper to him?" See Duval, *art. cit.*, pp. 262-263, for discussion of whether Pelagius cited Jerome's letter here.
86. Pelagius, *Nature*.
87. *Ibid*.
88. See Mk 14:38.
89. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
90. Augustine alludes to introduction to the Preface at Mass, which already at his time included, "Lift up your hearts: *Sursum corda*."
91. Pelagius, *Nature*.
92. See above 34, 38.
93. Pelagius, *Nature*.
94. *Ibid*.
95. *Ibid*.
96. See Gn 3:6 and 4:8.
97. Pelagius, *Nature*.
98. See above 37, 44.
99. See Gn 4:17.
100. See Gn 5:4.
101. See Mt 23:35 and Heb 11:4.
102. See Rom 6:12-13.
103. Pelagius, *Nature*; see also above 37, 44 end.
104. See Acts 4:12.
105. See 1 Cor 1:17.
106. See 1 Cor 1:21.
107. See Rom 10:3.
108. See Rom 10:4.
109. Pelagius, *Nature*.
110. *Ibid*.
111. *Ibid*.

112. See Ps 143:2.
113. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
114. See Lk 10:30-34.
115. Pelagius, *Nature*.
116. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
117. See 1 Tm 2:5.
118. Pelagius, *Nature*.
119. *Ibid*.
120. *Ibid*.
121. *Ibid*.
122. *Ibid*.
123. *Ibid*.
124. The editors of the ALG edition place a major punctuation here, though the CSEL editors link this sentence with the following.
125. Pelagius, *Nature*.
126. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
127. Pelagius, *Nature*.
128. The CSEL edition has *praebere* which the ALG editors has changed to *praeberet*; see de Plinval, REA 11 (1965) 292.
129. Pelagius, *Nature*.
130. *Ibid*.
131. *Ibid*.
132. See Rom 7:18.
133. See 2 Cor 11:13-15.
134. Pelagius, *Nature*.
135. I follow Migne and the text in BA rather than CSEL which has: *faciat* instead of *facit*.
136. See Gal 5:17.
137. Pelagius, *Nature*.
138. *Ibid*.
139. See Lk 10:30-35.
140. See Jn 1:14.
141. Pelagius, *Natura*; see above 52, 60.
142. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
143. Pelagius, *Nature*.
144. See above 54, 63.
145. The translators of the ALG edition regard this as a citation from Pelagius' *Nature*. I take it rather as words Augustine put in the mouth of Pelagius like the previous sentences in quotation marks which are introduced with: "At this point he may (*forte*) answer."
146. See Lk 16:22-26.
147. See Rom 7:23.
148. See Mk 10:47-49.
149. Pelagius, *Nature*.
150. See Rom 6:12.
151. See Rom 7:22.
152. See Rom 7:23.
153. Pelagius, *Nature*.
154. *Ibid*.
155. A less than literal citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.
156. Firmianus Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes (Divinarum Institutionum)* IV, 24: CSEL 19, 373.
157. See 2 Cor 5:21.
158. See Rom 8:3.
159. Firmianus Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes (Divinarum Institutionum)* IV, 25: CSEL 19, 377.

160. Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentary on Matthew (In Matthaeum commentarius)* IV, 7: PL 9, 933.
161. See Jb 1:1.
162. Hilary, *Commentary on Job (Tractatus in Iob)*, fragment 2: CSEL 65, 230.
163. See Rom 6:12.
164. See Rom 6:12.
165. A reference to the words of Pelagius; see above 34, 38.
166. See Jb 1:1.
167. Hilary, *Commentary on the Psalms (Tractatus super Psalmos)*, On Psalm 118 (*In Psalmum CXVIII*), xv, 10: CSEL 22, 493. See Jb 34:18.
168. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Expositio evangelii Lucae)* I, 17: CCL 14, 14-15. After citing Lk 1:6, Ambrose said, "What reply do those people make to this who, in looking for solace in their sins, think that human beings cannot be without frequent sins and use the verse found in Job, *No one is clean from filth, not even if this life last but a single day . . . ?* (Jb 14:4). One must answer them that they must first define what it means to be without sin: does it mean that they never sinned at all or that they ceased sinning. For if they think that to be without sin means to have ceased sinning, I myself agree. . . ."
169. See Lk 1:6.
170. See Rom 5:5.
171. Ambrose, *Hymn III*, 7-8: PL 16, 1473.
172. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Expositio evangelii Lucae)* I, 10: CCL 14, 11-12.
173. *Ibid.*, I, 17: CCL 14, 15.
174. *Ibid.*
175. See Rom 7:23.
176. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Expositio evangelii Lucae)* I, 10: CCL 14, 11-12.
177. See Eph 2:3.
178. The reference to the works of John Chrysostom has not been found.
179. Pelagius, following Rufinus of Aquileia, attributed this and the next two quotations to Pope Xystus II (d. 258). In his *Revisions* II, 68 (42), Augustine says that he later learned, probably from Jerome, that these were the words of Sextus the Pythagorean philosopher. See H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus* (Cambridge, 1959), 36, pp. 16-17. Chadwick rejects Jerome's view and defends the Christian character of the maxims, not ruling out the possibility that Xystus II was their author.
180. See Rom 5:5.
181. H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus*, 46, pp. 16-17.
182. See 2 Cor 4:16.
183. H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus*, 60, pp. 18-19.
184. See 1 Tm 2:5.
185. Jerome, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (Commentariorum in evangelium Matthaei)* I, v, 8: PL 26, 35.
186. Jerome, *Against Jovinian (Contra Jovinianum)* II, 3: PL 23, 299.
187. See Rom 7:25.
188. *Free Choice (De libero arbitrio)* III, 18, 50: CCL 29, 304.
189. *Ibid.* III, 18, 51: CCL 29, 305.
190. *Ibid.*
191. *Ibid.*
192. The CSEL edition has *omnia* instead of *omni*, which is found in the Maurist edition. The latter reading seems clearly preferable. See G. de Plinval, "Corrections au De natura et gratia," REA 11 (1965) 292.
193. *Free Choice (De libero arbitrio)* III, 18, 51: CCL 29, 305.
194. *Ibid.*
195. The CSEL edition of this work omits *et mortales*, which is found in the edition of the Maurists and in Green's edition of *De libero arbitrio* in CSEL 74, p. 134.

196. *Free Choice (De libero arbitrio)* III, xix, 54: CCL 29, 307.

197. Probably a citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.

198. See 1 Jn 1:8.

199. See 1 Tm 1:8.

200. Probably a citation from Pelagius' *Nature*.

201. See Mt 11:30.

202. Augustine's Old Latin version follows the Septuagint at Dt 30:14. See his *Observations on the Heptateuch (Quaestionum in Heptateuchum)* V, 54: CCL 33, 307, where the text reads: *Prope est verbum hoc valde in ore tuo et in corde tuo et in manibus tuis facere illud*. As Augustine indicates there, he knew that the addition was lacking in the Hebrew.

203. See Jn 15:13.

THE PERFECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Introduction

The Date and the Occasion of the Work

Augustine's work, *The Perfection of Human Righteousness*, is not mentioned in his *Revisions*, though it was mentioned in the *Indiculum*, the list of Augustine's writings composed by his friend, Possidius, who listed it after *Nature and Grace* and before *The Deeds of Pelagius*.¹ The work was known by Prosper of Aquitaine and Fulgentius of Ruspe and was cited in the *Excerpta* made from Augustine's works by Eugippius.² The reason for its omission from the *Revisions* is undoubtedly due to its author's having regarded it as a letter rather than a book. For though Augustine had intended to make a revision of his letters after completing the revision of his books, he was prevented from doing so by his death in 430.

The present work is addressed to two bishops, Eutropius and Paul, who gave to Augustine the tract (*chartula*) allegedly written by Caelestius, the disciple of Pelagius. Practically nothing else is known about them, though a tenth century manuscript refers to them as Spaniards.³ It is highly probable that they were the two bishops mentioned by Orosius in his *Consultation or Memorandum to Augustine on the Errors of the Priscillianists and Origenists*. In this latter work written in the winter of 414-415, Orosius reminds Augustine that his lords, Eutropius and Paul, had already given to Augustine a memorandum about certain heresies. It would seem highly probable that the memorandum mentioned by Orosius contained the request that Augustine refute the *Definitions* attributed to Caelestius. Orosius' awareness of their request coupled with the fact that Orosius had recently arrived from Spain suggests that the two bishops may also have come from Orosius' homeland. On the other hand, Augustine tells us in paragraph 1 that the *Definitions* and another unnamed work, which was clearly the work of Caelestius, were brought from Sicily by some brethren who had heard that Caelestius taught such doctrines.⁴ Hence, it seems that certain unnamed brethren brought this work and another work of Caelestius from Sicily, while the bishops Eutropius and Paul gave it to Augustine accompanied by a memorandum on certain heresies in which they asked that he reply to it. The fact that Augustine says that Eutropius and Paul "gave" the tract to Augustine, though others brought it from Sicily, suggests that the two bishops were present in Africa, perhaps having fled Spain along with Orosius. Augustine's response, *The Perfection of Human Righteousness*, was, therefore, probably written in 415. That Augustine was in this work still willing to admit that after baptism

some human beings actually led sinless lives argues against dating the letter after the Council of Carthage of 418 which rejected that view in strong terms.⁵

Caelestius' Tract and Augustine's Reply

Caelestius' *Definitions* survive only in the parts cited by Augustine in this work. The quotations from Caelestius' work are fairly extensive, since Augustine saw that his reply to them would not be intelligible to his readers unless he incorporated lengthy citations into his text (paragraph 1). It is, in fact, possible that we have in *The Perfection of Human Righteousness* the whole or the nearly the whole of Caelestius' work.

The plan of the tract can be inferred from the structure of Augustine's response. It probably consisted of two parts: a philosophical part containing a series of syllogistic arguments that worked out the implications of the concept of sin, of its prohibition, and of the possibility of sinlessness corresponding to paragraphs 1-16 of Augustine's work and a scriptural part containing a series of testimonies from scripture corresponding to paragraphs 17-42 in Augustine's work. The second part of Caelestius' tract was divided into two sections. The first contained scripture passages which the Pelagians cited in favor of their position, to which Augustine replies in paragraphs 17-22, and the second contained passages which were raised as objections to the Pelagian position and which Caelestius attempted to neutralize by juxtaposing to them other passages from scripture that seemed to say just the opposite. On these Augustine comments in paragraphs 23-42. Caelestius apparently ended his tract with one last philosophical argument to which Augustine replies in paragraph 43. And in the final paragraph 44 of his reply Augustine sums up his conclusion in a series of theses.

Caelestius' work took its name from the first part which contained the "definitions, or arguments" (paragraph 1) that attempted to show by syllogistic arguments that it is both possible and obligatory for a Christian to lead a sinless life. For example, the very concept of sin entails that it can be avoided, for neither reason nor justice allows one to call something unavoidable a sin. To this Augustine answers that sin can be avoided, provided our injured nature is healed *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25)—a text which Augustine cites ten times in the course of the work. So too, Caelestius argues that sin arises either from necessity or from will, but that, if it arises from necessity, it is not sin, while, if it arises from will, it can be avoided (paragraph 2). Augustine again grants that sin can be avoided, if we are healed by God who delivers us from our necessities.⁶ Caelestius proposes a third dilemma: either sin is something natural or something added to nature. If it is natural, it is not sin, but if it is added to nature, it can be removed and avoided (paragraph 3). In

reply Augustine insists that our injured nature is useless for avoiding sin without the grace of God.

Caelestius again poses a dilemma: sin is either a thing or an action. If it is a thing, it cannot have God as its author; hence, an author other than God would be needed for that thing. But if it is an action, it can be avoided (paragraph 4). Augustine concedes that sin is an action, but points out that it is a defective action, like limping, which is caused by a defect, that is, by a bad quality of a thing. So too, the mind is a thing and theft is an action, but greed is a bad quality of the mind, from which one needs to be healed and renewed from day to day by the grace of God.

In another series of syllogisms Caelestius argues that sin must be avoidable, if human beings have a duty not to sin (paragraph 5). Augustine continues his appeal to the example of limping. The statement that someone who can be healed ought not to limp implies that he can be freed from his limp, but not that he can be healed by his own will and without the care of a doctor. In the same way, sinners can be healed and set free from sin, but only through the grace of Christ who came to call sinners and to heal those who are sick.⁷ Caelestius appeals to the fact that we are commanded not to sin and argues that such a command implies that it is possible to be without sin (paragraph 6). Augustine replies that we are commanded to walk correctly so that, when we see that we cannot do so on our own, we look to be healed of the limping that is sin through the grace of God. So too, Caelestius argues that the fact that God wills that we be without sin implies that it is possible that we be without sin (paragraph 7). Augustine agrees that God wills that we be without sin and points out that it was precisely for this reason that he sent his Son to heal us from our sins and restore us to full health. In still another dilemma Caelestius asks whether God wills that human beings be sinful or sinless and argues that, since he certainly wills that they be sinless, they must be able to be without sin (paragraph 8). After noting that he has already replied to this above, Augustine adds that we are now saved in hope and that our righteousness will be perfect only when in the next life we shall see God as he is.⁸

Caelestius turns to the cause of human sinfulness and asks whether it is the necessity of nature or the freedom of choice. On the first alternative, there is nothing to blame. But if freedom of choice is the cause of sin, since God has given this freedom to us, it must be good and must not be more inclined to evil than to good. But it would be more inclined to evil than to good, if we cannot avoid sin by it (paragraph 9). Augustine replies that our present defective state is a punishment for sin and has subjected us to the necessities either of not knowing what to will or of being unable to do what we will, and he points out that through Christ we are promised freedom from such necessities and restoration to full health. Again Caelestius argues that God made human beings good

and commanded them to do good, but that one declares them to be evil in denying that they can be good (paragraph 10). Augustine answers that, as God made human beings good, so by his grace he restores them to goodness from the evil they brought upon themselves by sin.

Caelestius argues that sin can take one of two forms: either we do what is forbidden, or we do not do what is commanded. But we can avoid doing whatever we are forbidden to do, and we can do whatever we are commanded to do. Hence, we can be without sin (paragraph 11). In reply Augustine points out that everything that we are commanded to do is summed up in the twofold commandment to love God and neighbor and that everything we are forbidden to do is contained in the general prohibition, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17). But we can do neither of these by our own power, for scripture also warns that no one can control his desire *unless God grants this* (Wis 8:21) and assures us that *the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit* (Rom 5:5), not by ourselves.

Caelestius again poses a dilemma, asking why a human being cannot be without sin. The reason must be either nature or will. But it cannot be nature, and if it is will, the will can easily be changed by willing (paragraph 12). Augustine concedes that the will can be changed by the grace of God, but points to texts from Paul to show that the will cannot easily change itself. After all, the opposition of the flesh and the spirit means that we do not do the things that we will,⁹ and Paul's warning that we should not allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies clearly indicates its presence in them.¹⁰ Caelestius asks whose fault it is, if a human being cannot be without sin, and argues that it cannot be the fault of a human being unless it is something that need not be (paragraph 13). Augustine replies that it is the fault of a human being that we have come to this necessity that the human will cannot overcome.

Caelestius asks whether human nature is good, while pointing out that only Marcion or Mani would deny that it is. But, if it is good, then it ought to be able to be free from evil (paragraph 14). Augustine agrees that human nature is good and that it can be free from evil, pointing out that for this very reason we pray, *Deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13), but that our complete freedom from evil remains unattained as long as the corruptible body weighs down the soul.¹¹ Again, Caelestius argues that, since God is righteous and imputes to human beings every sin, every sin must be avoidable (paragraph 15). Augustine points to the psalm which declares blessed those to whom God has not imputed sin and claims that he does not impute sin to those who pray for the forgiveness of their sins, as they forgive others.¹² In not imputing sin to them, God is being righteous, for he measures out to them with the same measure they themselves use toward others.¹³

Caelestius then portrays himself as if he were in a discussion with a pretended

questioner to whom he concedes that he himself can be without sin and that, if he is not, it is his own fault (paragraph 16). Augustine points out that he has not claimed that anyone actually is without sin, but has only claimed that one can be—a point on which there is no dispute. The whole question, Augustine insists, concerns when one can be and through whom one can be free from all sin. If one were free from all sin in the present life, there would be no need to say, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12), and if one can be free from all sin by one's own power, *then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). But Christ has not died in vain, and we are gradually being set free from sin by the grace of God.

The Arguments from Scripture

The second part of Augustine's work (paragraphs 17-42) turns to Caelestius' arguments drawn from scripture. Caelestius had apparently divided the scriptural part of this work into two subdivisions and given separate titles to each of them. The title of the first subdivision, which corresponds to paragraphs 17-23 in Augustine's work, is: "The testimonies by which it is proved that human beings were commanded to be without sin" (paragraph 17). Augustine concedes that there clearly is such a commandment and points out that the real question is whether it can be fulfilled while we are in the body of this death from which we are set free only by the grace of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ Paragraphs 17 to 19 form a preface to the discussion of the texts of scripture; in it Augustine describes the life of the righteous who live by faith while they are journeying away from the Lord as they move toward the perfection of righteousness that is to be attained in the vision of God. In this life we move toward that perfect righteousness, but there is a righteousness of this present life in which we live from faith—a righteousness characterized by fasting, by almsgiving, and by prayer (paragraph 18). In the Lord's Prayer, Augustine adds, we have "a glass held before us in which we can see the life of the righteous who live by faith and run perfectly, though they are not without sin" (paragraph 19). Hence, they pray for forgiveness, as they run with faith, hope, and desire toward the goal of the fullness of love. Though no one attains that fullness in this life, God quite reasonably commands us to strive for perfection, so that we do not neglect to run toward that goal through chastising the body, through almsgiving, and through prayer.

Having set the context, Augustine then turns to the passages of scripture which Caelestius cited to prove that we are commanded to be perfect. Caelestius had provided a series of texts—fifteen in all—in which we are commanded to be perfect, beyond reproach, pure, holy, spotless, or righteous (paragraph 20). Augustine simply explains that some of these passages urge us to run perfectly and others remind us of the goal toward which we are running. Those who are not already perfect can still be said to walk perfectly toward the goal, if they

lack serious sins and take care to remove even venial sins by almsgiving and by truthfully praying, *Forgive us, as we also forgive* (Mt 6:12).

Caelestius next added proofs, Augustine tells us, to show that God's commandments are not burdensome. Before citing the texts to which Caelestius appealed, Augustine explains that the general commandment is love and that one who fulfills the commandments out of love does not find them burdensome. But he points out that the choice of the will is of little use for this, unless we are helped by the grace of God and the Holy Spirit pours out love in our hearts (paragraph 21).¹⁵ Indeed, Augustine explains that scripture says that God's commands are not burdensome precisely so that the soul who does find them burdensome may pray for the gift of strength that makes them easy and light. As for our will, Augustine points out that we would not be commanded to observe the commandments, if our will did nothing at all, and we would have no need for prayer, if our will were sufficient by itself. Then Augustine gives the texts from Deuteronomy, Matthew, and John which Caelestius cited to show that "God's commandments are not merely not impossible, but not even burdensome" (paragraph 22). After citing them, Augustine tells us that they ought to instruct us regarding the grace which is not understood by those who try to establish their own righteousness.¹⁶ He points out that the Pelagians ought to interpret the passage from Deuteronomy as Paul interpreted it in Romans 10, but that they should certainly understand that John said that God's commandments are not burdensome for the love of God which is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

The second scriptural section, which corresponds to paragraphs 23-42 in Augustine's reply, represents Caelestius' attempt to neutralize a series of texts which were raised as objections against the Pelagian position. Like the previous section, it bears a title: "The testimonies from the scriptures which must be cited in opposition to those who in their ignorance think that they can by the authority of the scriptures destroy the freedom of choice or the possibility of not sinning" (paragraph 23). Augustine points out that Caelestius does not provide an explanation of these texts, but merely juxtaposes other texts which seem to contradict them. Thus the words of Job, *Who is free from sin? Not even an infant who has lived a single day on earth* (Jb 14:4), are simply countered with other words from Job, *Though a righteous man and beyond reproach, I have become a mockery* (Jb 12:4). By way of explanation Augustine notes that scripture calls people righteous who have come very close to perfect righteousness and admits that many have attained righteousness in that sense. Augustine finds confirmation in Job's claim that he is close to his judgment and knows that he will be found righteous,¹⁸ for sinners will be found righteous at the last judgment because they have wiped away their sins through forgiving others and through almsgiving. But scripture says of the Only-Begotten alone that he was without

sin in this life (paragraph 24). Augustine briefly explains two more of Job's claims (paragraphs 25-26). Job's prayer was pure because he begged pardon of God, and Job's sufferings were made many to test his patience, not merely to punish his sins. So too, Job kept to God's paths, making progress in them, even if he stumbled at times.¹⁹ Augustine explains that it is apostates who turn away from the Lord's commandments, not those who, though they have sins, continue to struggle against their sins and accuse themselves of them (paragraph 27). With regard to Job's claim that his heart has not reproached him in all his life,²⁰ Augustine comments that our heart does not reproach us in this life, if the faith, by which we believe in the heart unto righteousness, does not fail to reproach us for our sins (paragraph 28). Job's heart did not reproach him in his whole life, that is, in his faith, for the righteous live from faith and faith is their life. Even though sin dwells in their flesh, they do not allow sin to reign over them. Hence, one whose heart does not reproach him in his whole life is not shown to be free from all sin. Finally, having shown how the citations from Job should be interpreted, Augustine points out that Caelestius did not explain the initial text he cited, namely, *For who is free from sin? Not even an infant who has lived a single day on earth* (Jb 14:4).

Caelestius had pointed out that the verse, *Every human being is a liar* (Ps 115:2), was often cited as an objection against the Pelagians (paragraph 29). Without offering any explanation of this text, Caelestius merely cited other passages, such as *Human beings are truthful* (Nm 24:3) or the description of Job as a man who *held himself back from every evil thing* (Jb 1:1). Augustine notes that he left the words of scripture in conflict in the minds of the untrained and expresses surprise that Caelestius, who had insisted that sin was not a thing, takes *every evil thing* to mean "every sin." He interprets Job's holding himself back to mean that he either never fully consented to sin or was not overcome by it, despite being tempted.

Caelestius had cited further texts to show that human beings are not liars, but truthful (paragraph 30), and Augustine replies to them that human beings are of themselves liars, though they are called truthful by God's grace, just as Paul wrote to the Ephesians that they were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord.²¹ But scripture says of some people that *no lie had been found on their lips* (Rv 14:5), precisely because they did not say that they had no sin.²² Again Augustine points out that he has interpreted the texts that Caelestius cited, but Caelestius has not offered any interpretation of the verse, *Every human being is a liar* (Ps 115:2). In fact, Caelestius increased the problem by citing against himself the verse, *There is not a single person who does good, not even one* (Ps 13:1), and supposedly contrary texts to show that there are persons who do good (paragraph 31). Augustine concedes that Caelestius has shown that there are people who do good, but insists that it is one thing to do good and quite another

to be without sin. Hence, Caelestius' texts are not opposed to the statement that there is no one in this life without sin.²³

Caelestius had cited Tobit's words that we have many good things, if we *withdraw from every sin* (Tb 4:21). Augustine concedes that those who are making progress withdraw from every sin, but insists that it is one thing to withdraw from every sin as one makes progress and that it is something else to have withdrawn from every sin, for that will be attained only in the perfection to come. Again, Augustine points out that Caelestius has not explained the meaning of Psalm 13:1 and suggests that the psalmist blames a people who want to remain merely human and do not want to become children of God.

Caelestius reported that Jesus' words, *No one is good except God alone* (Mk 10:18), had been used as an objection against them. Again, without any explanation of the text, he cited other passages that speak of human beings as good (paragraph 32). Augustine replies with several explanations of the gospel verse. One is that, though God made all creatures very good, in comparison with God they are not good, just as in comparison with God they do not exist at all. Another explanation is that, in comparison to the perfection they will attain, human beings are now, though good, still evil. Here Augustine cites the words of the Lord who called people evil at the same time he called God their father.²⁴

Caelestius listed the verse, *Who will boast of having a chaste heart?* (Prv 20:9), as an objection raised against him, once again without offering any interpretation of it (paragraph 33). From the preceding verse Augustine shows that the passage refers to the last judgment at which even the righteous ought to be concerned that the judge may find in them something blameworthy that they themselves do not see. As for Caelestius' battery of texts mustered to show that there are human beings with a pure heart, Augustine concedes their truth, but insists that in the present life people still need to pray that their sins may be forgiven and that they may be delivered from evil.²⁵ Then, at the judgment the Church will exist *without stain or wrinkle or anything of the sort*, when it will also be *glorious* (Eph 5:27). As Christ was not glorified before his resurrection, so the Church will not be glorious before the resurrection of the dead (paragraph 35). Augustine distinguishes between the upright of heart and the pure of heart; the former are making progress with the correct faith and intention so that they may arrive where the latter dwell (paragraph 36). This distinction is then applied to further texts.

Another passage that Caelestius mentioned as having been used against the Pelagians are the words of Sirach, *There is not a righteous human being on earth who does good and avoids sin* (Sir 7:27). Again, Augustine notes, Caelestius had merely juxtaposed another text that seemed to say the opposite without offering any resolution of the conflict (paragraph 37). Caelestius also mentioned the objection based on the words of the psalmist, *No living person will be found*

righteous in your sight (Ps 142:2), which he countered with an appeal to Luke's description of Zechariah and Elizabeth.²⁶ Again, while Caelestius had offered no interpretation of the first text, Augustine interprets both so that the apparent conflict is resolved (paragraph 38). So too, Caelestius mentioned John's words, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8), and juxtaposed to them a series of texts which seem to say just the opposite (paragraph 39). Augustine interprets the texts which ascribe sinlessness to human beings as either referring to our future state when we shall see God face to face or as referring to our present life in a qualified sense, for example, insofar as we are born of God or insofar as we remain in Christ.²⁷

Caelestius had pointed out the anti-Pelagian objection resting upon Paul's words, *It does not depend upon the one who wills or runs, but upon God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16) and in his characteristic manner cited a series of texts that seem to contradict Paul's words (paragraph 40). Augustine again returns to the Our Father and points out that the Christian's prayer that God's will be done and that one not be led into temptation is inexplicable, if everything depends upon the one who wills. Though Caelestius had offered no interpretation of Romans 9:16, Augustine offers an interpretation of each of the texts which Caelestius had used to counter it (paragraphs 41-42).

At the end of his tract Caelestius returned to one last non-scriptural argument, namely that a human being can be without sin, even in words and in thought, if God wills it, but God does will it (paragraph 43). Augustine notes that Caelestius did not say that one can, if God helps, and again points to the need to pray for help and healing *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25).

In conclusion, Augustine sums up his position. He insists that anyone who thinks that there has been or is a human being—apart from the one mediator between God and human beings—who did not need the forgiveness of sins stands in opposition to the words of Paul in Romans 5:12. He also insists that one who maintains that, after receiving the forgiveness of sins, human beings have lived or are living completely sinless lives contradicts the words of John in 1 John 1:8. He rejects the claim that John merely meant that we have concupiscence, for we need to ask for forgiveness and would only need to ask not to be brought into temptation, if that were the case.²⁸ Moreover, if we had sin only in the sense of concupiscence, James would not have said, *We all offend in many ways* (Jas 3:2). Finally, Augustine is willing to concede that one may hold that, besides Christ, some human beings are or have been without sin, because they have never consented to sin or because we should not consider a sin something so slight that God does not impute it to them. He says, "I do not believe that one should resist this idea too much. For I know that such is the view of some whose position on this matter I dare not reprehend, though I cannot defend it either" (paragraph 44). Here, as we know from *Nature and Grace* 63,

74, Augustine had in mind Saint Ambrose, whose commentary on Luke he cited in that work. But even such persons, Augustine insists, would need to pray that they not enter into temptation. If someone denies that they need God's help to avoid sin, such persons, Augustine has no doubt, should be condemned.

Text and Translations

The translation is based on the edition of C. F. Urba and J. Zycha in CSEL 42 (Vienna, 1902), 3-48. The work has been previously translated into English by P. Holmes in NPNF 5/1 (New York, 1887; repr. 1971), 151-176. In the present century it has also been translated into German by A. Fingerle in ALG 2 (1964), 129-197; into French by J. de la Tullaye in BA 21 (1966), 127-219; and Italian by I. Volpi in NBA 17/1 (1981), 501-563.

Notes

1. Possidius, *Librorum omnium et tractatum vel epistolarum sancti Augustini episcopi indiculum* VII, 4, ed. A. Wilmart, *Miscellanea agostiniana* (Rome, 1931) II, 149-233; here 172.
2. See A. Zumkeller's introduction to the translation of the work in ALG II, p. 17.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
4. Letter 156 from Hilary of Syracuse and Letter 157, Augustine's reply to Hilary, which dates from the same period as the letter to Eutropius and Paul, give further indication of the presence of Caelestius' doctrine in Sicily at the time.
5. Compare *The Perfection of Human Righteousness* 21, 44, with Canons 6-8 of the Council of Carthage.
6. See Ps 25:17.
7. See Mt 9:12-13.
8. See 1 Jn 3:2.
9. See Gal 5:17.
10. See Rom 6:12.
11. See Wis 9:15.
12. See Ps 31:2 and Mt 6:12.
13. See Mt 7:2.
14. See Rom 7:24-25.
15. See Rom 7:25 and 5:5.
16. See Rom 10:3.
17. See 1 Jn 5:3 and Rom 5:5.
18. See Jb 13:18.
19. See Jb 23:11-2.
20. See Jb 27:6.
21. See Eph 5:8.
22. See 1 Jn 1:8.
23. See Jb 14:4 and 1 Jn 1:8.
24. See Mt 7:11.
25. See Mt 6:12-3.
26. See Lk 1:6.
27. See 1 Jn 2:1; 3:9; and 3:5-6.
28. See Mt 6:12.

The Perfection of Human Righteousness

Augustine's Purpose: To Refute Caelestius' Definitions

Augustine sends his greetings to his holy brothers and fellow bishops, Eutropius and Paul.

1. Your love is something so great and so holy that it is a delight to comply with your request. You have asked that I reply to *The Definitions*, which are attributed to Caelestius. After all, the tract that you gave me bears the title: *The Definitions Attributed to Caelestius*. That heading does not, I believe, originate with him, but with those who brought it from Sicily where, it is said, Caelestius himself is not to be found. There are, however, many there who voice such ideas and, as the apostle says, *are themselves in error and cast others into error* (2 Tm 3:13). We can, nonetheless, take it as fact that these definitions stem from his teaching or from that of some of his companions as well. These brief definitions, or rather arguments, are, after all, not foreign to his way of thinking, which I encountered in another work, of which he is definitively the author.¹ I also believe that there was good reason why these brethren who brought this work from Sicily had heard that Caelestius either taught or wrote such things. I would like, if I could, to comply with your brotherly love in such a way that I also make my reply equally brief. But unless I mention the points I am answering, who will be able to evaluate my response? I will, nonetheless, try as best I can, with the help of your prayers to the merciful Lord, to keep my discussion from running on more than is necessary.

Caelestius' Arguments from the Concept of Sin

2, 1. "Before all else," he says, "one who denies that a human being can be without sin must be asked what a sin is: Is it something that can be avoided or something that cannot be avoided? If it is something that cannot be avoided, it is not a sin; if it is something that can be avoided, a human being can be without sin, because it can be avoided. After all, neither reason nor justice will allow us to call something completely unavoidable a sin." We answer that sin can be avoided, if our injured nature is healed *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25).² It is, after all, not in good health to the extent that it either fails to see because of blindness or fails to carry out because of weakness what it should do, while *the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh* (Gal 5:17) so that one does not do what one wills to do.

2. "Again we must ask," he says, "whether sin arises from necessity or from will. If from necessity, it is not sin; if from will, it can be avoided." We answer as above, and in order that we may be healed, we call upon him to whom we say in the psalm, *Deliver me from my necessities* (Ps 25:17).

3. "Again," he says, "we must ask what sin is, whether it is something natural or an addition to nature.³ If it is something natural, it is not a sin, but if it is an addition to nature, it can be removed as well. And what can be removed can be avoided, and a human being can be without what can be avoided, because it can be avoided." My answer is that sin is not something natural. But we have become *by nature children of anger* (Eph 2:3), and for nature, especially for injured nature, the choice of the will is of little use for avoiding sin, unless it is helped and healed *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25).

4. "Again," he says, "we must ask what sin is: Is it a thing or an action? If a thing, it must have an author, and if one says that it has an author, it will be obvious that one is introducing another author for something besides God. But if it is wrong to say that, we must admit that every sin is an action, not a thing. If then it is an action, in fact, precisely because it is an action, it can be avoided." We answer that a sin is said to be and really is an action, not a thing. But in the body limping is also an action, not a thing, for the same reason. After all, the foot itself is a thing, and so is the body or the human being who limps because of a defective foot. And one cannot avoid limping, unless the foot has been healed. The same healing can be brought about in the interior human being, but *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). The defect which causes the person to limp is not the foot or the body or the person or the limping itself. The limping is not present when one does not walk, even though the defect is present which causes the limping when one walks. Let him ask, then, what he is going to call this defect. Does he want to call it a thing or an action? Is it not rather a bad quality of a thing which produces the deformed action? So too, in the interior human being the mind is a thing, theft is an action, and greed is a defect, that is, a quality which makes the mind bad, even when it performs no action. But as a result of this quality, it may be a slave to its greed, even when it hears, *You shall not desire* (Rom 7:7 and 13:9; Ex 20:17). Even though it blames itself, it remains greedy. But through faith it is *renewed*, that is, healed, *from day to day* (2 Cor 4:16), but only *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25).

Caelestius' Arguments from the Duty to Be without Sin

3. 5. "Again," he says, "we must ask whether a person ought to be without sin. One undoubtedly ought to be. If one ought to be, one can; if one cannot,

then one ought not to be either. And if one ought not to be without sin, then one ought to be sinful. But then there will not be any sin, if it has been shown that one ought to be sinful. On the other hand, if it is absurd to say that, then we must admit that one ought to be without sin, and it is obvious that one is not obliged to do what one cannot." I answer with the same comparison with which I answered above. After all, when we see a lame person who can be healed, we correctly say that such a person ought to be without a limp, and if one ought to be, one can be. Persons cannot, nonetheless, be immediately free from their limp, when they want to, but only when they have been healed under the care of a doctor and when some treatment has helped their will. This is done in the interior person with regard to sin, which is analogous to limping, through the grace of the one who came not to call the righteous, but sinners (Mt 9:13), because it is not those who are in good health who need a physician, but those who are sick (Mt 9:12).

6. "Again," he says, "we must ask whether or not there is a commandment that one be without sin. For either one cannot be without sin and there is no such commandment, or one can be without sin, because there is a commandment. After all, why should one be commanded to do what is impossible?" I answer that we are quite purposely commanded to walk with straight steps so that, when we see that we cannot, we look for medical treatment, and this treatment of the interior person to heal the limping that is sin is *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25).

7. "Again," he says, "we must ask whether God wills that one to be without sin. God undoubtedly wills this, and one can undoubtedly be such. After all, who is so insane as to doubt that something is possible, if one has no doubt that God wills it." I answer as follows: If God did not will that human beings be without sin, he would not send his Son who was without sin in order to heal human beings from their sins. This is being done in those who believe and are making progress *from day to day* (2 Cor 4:16) through the renewal of the interior human being until perfect righteousness, which is like full health, is achieved.

8. "Again," he says, "we must ask in what state God wills that human beings be—sinful or sinless. He undoubtedly does not will that they be sinful. We should reflect on the great blasphemy involved in the godlessness of saying that human beings can be sinful, though God does not will that, and of denying that they can be sinless, though God wills this. This implies that God created human beings so that they could be what God does not want and could not be what God wants and so that they live in opposition to God's will rather than in accord with his will." We have already replied to this above, but I see that I should add that *we are saved in hope, but a hope that is seen is not hope. After all, why should one hope for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we look forward to it with patience* (Rom 8:24-25). Righteousness will then be

complete, when health is complete; health will be complete, when love is complete, for *love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom 13:10). But love will be complete, when *we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2). For there will be nothing to add to love, when faith has attained vision.

Further Arguments for the Possibility of Sinlessness

4, 9. "Again we must ask," he said, "what makes a human being sinful. Is it the necessity of nature or the freedom of choice? If it is the necessity of nature, there is nothing to blame. If it is the freedom of choice, we must ask from whom human beings received freedom of choice. It was undoubtedly from God. But what God has given is surely good; that, after all, is undeniable. What sort of argument, then, can prove that freedom of choice is good, if it is inclined more to evil than to good? But it is inclined more to evil than to good, if by it human beings can be sinful, but cannot be sinless." We answer that freedom of choice has brought it about that human beings are sinful. But this defective state that is a punishment and has arisen from freedom has produced a necessity. As a result, faith cries out to God, *Deliver me from my necessities* (Ps 25:17). Having become subject to these necessities, either we cannot know what we are to will or, despite our willing, we are unable to do what we know. Freedom, after all, is promised to those who believe by him who sets them free. He says, *If the Son sets you free, then you will truly be free* (Jn 8:36). For conquered by the vice into which it has fallen by its will, our nature lacks freedom. Hence, another scripture passage says, *For one has become a slave to that by which one has been defeated* (2 Pt 2:19). Just as it is not those who are in good health who need a physician, but those who are sick (Mt 9:12), so it is not the free, but slaves who need one to set them free. Thus gratitude for freedom says to him, *You have saved my soul from necessities* (Ps 31:8). For that healthiness is the true freedom that would not have been lost, if the will had remained good. But because the will sinned, there came upon the sinner the hard necessity of having sin until its illness is wholly healed and it has received freedom. That freedom will be so great that, just as there necessarily remains the will to live happily, so there will exist the voluntary and blessed necessity of living well and never sinning.

10. "Moreover," he says, "God made human beings good and, besides having made them good, he also commanded them to do good. Since human beings were neither made evil nor commanded to do evil, how wicked it would be to declare that they are evil, by denying that they can be good, since they were made good and were ordered to do good!" We answer: Since it was not human beings, but God who made human beings good, it is God, not human beings, who restores human beings so that they are good. He sets them free from the evil that they brought upon themselves, if they will it, believe, and call upon him. This is being done while *the interior human being is being renewed from*

day to day (2 Cor 4:16) by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom 7:25) so that on the last day the exterior human being might rise up, not to endless punishment, but to everlasting life.

5, 11. "Again," he says, "we must ask how many forms any sin can take. Two, if I am not mistaken. Either we do those things which are forbidden, or we do not do those which are commanded. All those things which are forbidden can just as certainly be avoided as all those things which are commanded can be carried out. For it would have been pointless either to forbid or to command what could be neither avoided nor carried out. And how are we going to deny that human beings can be without sin, when we must admit that they can avoid everything that is forbidden and carry out everything that is commanded?" We answer that there are many commandments of God in the sacred scriptures, and it would be a lot of trouble to mention them all. But the Lord brought *his word to the earth, summing it up and shortening it* (Rom 9:28);⁴ he said that the law and the prophets depend upon two commandments so that we would understand that whatever else God has commanded has its goal in these two and should be referred to these two: *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind* (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37) and *You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Upon these two commandments*, he said, *depend the whole law and the prophets* (Mt 22:39-40).⁵ Whatever, then, we are forbidden by the law of God and whatever we are commanded to do, we are forbidden and commanded for the purpose of fulfilling these two commandments. There is perhaps a general prohibition: *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17) and a general command: *You shall love* (Dt 6:5). For this reason, the apostle Paul has combined both of them in one brief passage. For the prohibition is: *Do not be conformed to this world*, and the command is: *but be reformed in the newness of your mind* (Rom 12:2). The first has to do with not desiring; the second with loving. The first has to do with self-control; the second with righteousness. The first has to do with turning away from evil; the second with doing good. After all, by not desiring, we are stripped of our old selves, and by loving we are clothed with our new selves. But no one can be *continent unless God grants this* (Wis 8:21), and *the love of God is poured out in our hearts* not by ourselves, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). And this is being brought about from day to day in those who make progress by willing and believing and calling upon God and who, having forgotten the past, are stretched out toward what lies ahead.⁶ After all, the law commands these things in order that, when human beings fail in carrying them out, they do not become swollen with pride and exalt themselves, but take refuge in grace in their weariness. By striking fear into them in that way, the law leads them in its function as a schoolmaster⁷ to love Christ.

6, 12. "Again we must ask," he says, "why a human being cannot be without

sin. Is it because of will or because of nature? If it is because of nature, there is no sin; if it is because of will, the will can quite easily be changed by the will itself." We answer and admonish them that they should consider their great presumption in saying not only that the will can be changed—as it undeniably can be by the help of God's grace—but also that the will can be quite easily changed by the will itself. The apostle says, *The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other so that you do not do those things which you will* (Gal 5:17). He does not say, *These are opposed to each other* so that you do not will to do what you can, but *so that you do not do those things which you will*. The concupiscence of the flesh is indeed blameworthy and defective and is nothing but the desire for sin, and the same apostle commands that it *not reign in our mortal body* (Rom 6:12). There he shows clearly enough that, though it is present in our mortal body, we should not permit it to reign there. Why then is this concupiscence not changed by that will—I mean that will of which the apostle spoke quite clearly when he said, *so that you do not do those things which you will*—if the will can easily be changed by the will itself? We do not, of course, in this way blame the nature, whether of the soul or the body. God created it, and it is entirely good. But we do say that, once having been injured by its own will, it cannot be healed without the grace of God.

13. "Again," he says, "we must ask whose fault it is, if a human being cannot be without sin. Is it the fault of a human being or of someone else? If the fault of a human being, how can it be the fault of a human being, unless it is something that need not be?" We answer that it is the fault of a human being that one cannot be without sin, because it was brought about by the human will alone that one came to this necessity which the human will alone cannot overcome.

14. "Again," he says, "we must ask whether human nature is good. No one, except Marcion or Mani, would dare to deny that it is. How, then, is it good, if it is not possible for it to be free from evil? After all, who can doubt that every sin is evil?" We answer that human nature is good and that it can be free from evil. For that very reason we cry out, *Deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13). This is not fully achieved as long as *the body which is being corrupted weighs down the soul* (Wis 9:15). But it is being brought about by grace through faith so that we may at some point say, *Where, O death, is your strength? Where, O death, is your sting? Death's sting is sin, but the power of sin is the law* (1 Cor 15:55-56). For by its prohibitions the law increases the desire to sin, unless the Spirit pours forth the love which will be full and perfect when we will see him *face to face* (1 Cor 13:12).

15. "We must also," he says, "say this: God is certainly righteous; no one can deny that. But God also imputes to human beings every sin. I think that we must admit this too, for whatever will not be imputed as sin is not a sin. And if

there is a sin that cannot be avoided, how is God said to be righteous, if he is thought to impute to anyone what cannot be avoided?" We answer that it was long ago proclaimed against the proud, *Blessed are they to whom God has not imputed sin* (Ps 32:2). For he does not impute sin to those who say to him in faith, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). And he is righteous in not imputing sin to them, because his words are righteous, *With the measure you measure out, with the same measure it will be measured out to you* (Mt 7:2). But there is sin either where there is not the love that ought to exist or where it is less than it ought to be, whether or not this can be avoided by the will. For if it can, the present will does this; if it cannot, the past will has done this. And yet it can be avoided, not when the proud will is praised, but when the humble will is helped.

7, 16. After these arguments the man who composed them presents himself as if he were holding a discussion with someone else and lets himself be questioned as if the questioner said to him, "Will you show me a human being without sin?" He answers, "I will show you one who can be." The questioner again says to him, "Who is this?" He answers, "You yourself. And if," he says, "you say, 'I cannot be [without sin],' one must reply, 'Whose fault is that?' If he says, 'Mine,' one should say, 'And how can it be yours, if you cannot be [without sin]?' " Again he lets himself be questioned and is asked, "Are you yourself without sin, you who say that a human being can be without sin?" He answers, "Whose fault is it that I am not without sin?" He continues, "But if [the questioner] says, 'It is yours,' I must answer, 'How is it my fault, if I cannot be without sin?'"

We answer that there ought to be no quarrel with them about these words, for he has not dared to say that anyone—either he himself or someone else—is without sin, but has only answered that one can be—a point that we do not deny either. The question is when one can be and through whom one can be. After all, if one is such at present, then not every believing soul that dwells in *the body of this death* (Rom 7:24) needs to say, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12), since all past sins were already forgiven in holy baptism. But whoever tries to convince all the believing members of Christ that they need not say this prayer does nothing but declare that he himself is not a Christian. Moreover, if persons can be without sin through their own resources, *then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). But Christ has not died in vain; therefore, persons cannot be without sin, even if they want, unless they are helped *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). The perfection of this work of grace is even now being realized in those who are making progress, and it will attain total fulfillment, when death's strength has been destroyed⁸ and when the love that is nourished by faith and hope has been made perfect by vision and possession.

*Caelestius' Proofs from Scripture That
God Has Commanded That We Be without Sin*

8, 17. Then he began to carry out his aim by means of the word of God. Let us pay careful attention to what he was up to. He says, "The testimonies by which it is proved that human beings were commanded to be without sin." To that we answer: The question is not whether there is such a commandment; it is quite clear that there is. The question is whether what clearly has been commanded can be fulfilled in the body of this death in which *the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh* (Gal 5:17), so that we do not do what we want to do. From the body of this death not everyone is set free who finishes this life, but those who received grace in this life and performed good deeds so that they did not receive grace in vain. After all, it is one thing to leave this body, which the last day of this life compels every human being to do; it is something else to be set free *from the body of this death* (Rom 7:24), which only *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25) grants to his holy and faithful people. After this life the reward of perfection is given, but only to those who in this life earn the merit of that reward. Not all will attain their fill of righteousness, when they have left this life, but only those who have run their race in this life, hungering and thirsting for it. *Blessed, after all, are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be satisfied* (Mt 5:6)

18. As long, then, as we are journeying away from the Lord, we walk by faith and not by vision. For this reason scripture said, *The righteous live from faith* (Hb 2:4).⁹ This is our righteousness on this journey: that we now move by the correctness and perfection of our life toward that perfection and fullness of righteousness in which love will be full and perfect in the vision of his beauty. We are now moving toward that perfection by chastising our body and holding it in servitude,¹⁰ by almsgiving through doing good deeds and forgiving sins committed against us cheerfully and sincerely, by persisting in prayer without ceasing,¹¹ and by doing all these things with sound doctrine¹² which builds up correct faith, solid hope, and pure love. This is our righteousness at present by which we run our race, hungering and thirsting for the perfection and fullness of righteousness so that we may later be filled with it.¹³ For this reason, the Lord said in the gospel, *Do not display your righteousness before men in order that they might see you* (Mt 6:1), so that we would not measure our life by the goal of human glory. In his explanation of this righteousness, he included but three elements: fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. By fasting he meant, of course, the whole chastisement of the body. By almsgiving he meant every instance of good will and every good deed, whether in giving or in forgiving, and by prayer he suggested all the forms of holy desire. The chastisement of the body holds in check that concupiscence which ought to be not merely held in check, but ought not to exist at all and will not exist in that perfection of righteousness in which

there will be no sin whatsoever. Now in the use of things which are permitted and licit, it often introduces its lack of moderation. In the very beneficence by which the righteous show concern for their neighbor, there occur some things which are harmful, though they were thought to be helpful. At times through weakness when one's efforts at doing good and in labor fail to meet the needs of others or benefit them little, there creeps in a weariness that dulls the cheerfulness that God loves in a giver.¹⁴ It creeps in more if one is making less progress, and it creeps in less if one is making more progress. For these and similar reasons we do right to say in prayer, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12), provided that we do what we say. Then, either we would love even our enemies or if, being still little ones in Christ, we do not yet do this, we would pardon from the depth of our heart one who repents over having sinned against us and asks forgiveness, if we want our heavenly Father to hear our prayer.

19. If we do not want to be argumentative, we have in that prayer a glass held before us in which we can see the life of the righteous who live from faith¹⁵ and run perfectly, though they are not without sin. Hence, they say, *Forgive us* (Mt 6:12), since they have not yet arrived at the end of their race. For this reason the apostle says, *Not that I have already grasped the goal or have already become perfect. Brothers and sisters, I do not think that I have already grasped it. But I do one thing: having forgotten the past and stretched out toward what lies ahead, I deliberately struggle on toward the reward of God's lofty calling in Christ Jesus. Let as many of us as run perfectly bear this in mind* (Phil 3:12-13-15). That is, let as many of us as run perfectly bear in mind that we are not yet perfect in order that we may become perfect in that place toward which we are running perfectly. Thus, *when that which is perfect has come, that which is partial will be destroyed* (1 Cor 13:10). That is, it will not be partial, but whole, because faith and hope will be replaced by the reality itself, not something which we believe and for which we hope, but something which we see and embrace. Love which is the greatest of these three¹⁶ will not be destroyed; rather, it will be increased and attain perfection, when it contemplates what it believed and attains what it hoped for. In that fullness of love, this commandment will attain its perfection, *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind* (Dt 6:5 and Mt 22:37). For, as long as there is still some element of carnal concupiscence, even though it is held in check by continence, God is not completely loved with one's whole soul. After all, the flesh does not desire without the soul, though we say that the flesh desires, because the soul desires in a carnal manner. Then righteous persons will be without any sin at all, because there will be no law in their members rebelling against the law of their mind.¹⁷ Rather, with their whole heart, whole soul, and whole mind, they will love God, and that is the first and highest commandment.¹⁸

Why then should this perfection not be commanded for human beings, although no one attains it in this life? After all, no one runs in the right way unless one knows the direction one should run. But how is one to know this, if there are no commands to point it out? Let us, then, run to attain the goal. For all who run in the right way will reach it; it is not as happens in a public competition where all do indeed run, but only one receives the prize.¹⁹ Let us run with faith, hope, and desire; let us run by chastising the body, by almsgiving in doing good and in pardoning injuries cheerfully and from the heart, and by praying that God may give strength to the runners. And thus let us listen to the commands enjoining perfection so that we do not neglect to run toward the fullness of love.

Caelestius' List of Scripture Texts Enjoining Perfection

9, 20. Having made this statement by way of a preface, let us carefully listen to those testimonies which this person whom we are answering has brought forth, as if we ourselves had brought them forth. In Deuteronomy, it says, *But you shall be perfect before the Lord, your God* (Dt 18:13). In the same book, it also says, *There shall not be anyone imperfect among the children of Israel* (Dt 23:17). So too, the savior says in the gospel, *Be perfect, because your Father who is in heaven is perfect* (Mt 5:48). Likewise, the apostle says in the Second Letter to the Corinthians, *Moreover, sisters and brothers, rejoice; be perfect* (2 Cor 13:11). So too, he says to the Colossians, *Rebuking and teaching everyone in all wisdom so that we present everyone perfect in Christ* (Col 1:28). Likewise, he says to the Philippians, *Do everything without murmuring or hesitation so that you may be beyond reproach and pure, like spotless children of God* (Phil 2:14-15). He also says to the Ephesians, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly things in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the creation of the world so that we might be holy and spotless in his sight* (Eph 1:3-4). He also says to the Colossians, *And though you were once strangers and enemies to his mind in your evil actions, now that you have been reconciled in the body of his flesh through his death, show yourselves to be holy and spotless and beyond reproach* (Col 1:21-22). So too, he says to the Ephesians, *That he might present to himself a glorious church without stain or wrinkle or anything of that sort, so that it might be holy and spotless* (Eph 5:27). Likewise, he says in the First Letter to the Corinthians, *Be sober and righteous, and do not sin* (1 Cor 15:34). In the Letter of Saint Peter, he says, *Therefore, having girded the loins of your mind, be sober; have perfect hope in the grace which is being offered to you, as obedient children. Do not be conformed to your former desires²⁰ stemming from your ignorance. Rather, in accord with the holy one who has called you, you yourselves be holy in your whole lives, for scripture says, You shall be holy,*

because I am holy (1 Pt 1:13-16). Hence, blessed David says, *Lord, who will dwell in your tent? Or who will rest upon your holy mountain? They who walk spotlessly and act righteously* (Ps 15:1-2). Elsewhere he says, *I shall be spotless with him* (Ps 18:24). Again he says, *Blessed are the spotless in their path, those who walk in the law of the Lord* (Ps 119:1). So too, in Solomon we find, *The Lord loves holy hearts; he welcomes all those who are spotless* (Prv 22:11).

Some of these passages urge on those who are running to run perfectly; others remind them of the goal toward which they move by running. But those people are not unreasonably said to walk spotlessly who are not already perfect, but irreproachably run toward this perfection, not having offenses that deserve condemnation and taking care to remove even venial sins by almsgiving. This walking, that is, our journey by which we move toward that perfection, is made pure by pure prayer, but prayer is pure when we truthfully say, *Forgive us, as we also forgive* (Mt 6:12). Thus, since we are not reproached for what is not counted against us, our running toward perfection is without reproach, that is, spotless, and when we have come to that perfection, there will be nothing at all to be purified through forgiveness.

In What Sense God's Commandments Are Not Burdensome

10, 21. Next this fellow added proofs to show that God's commandments are not burdensome. But the general commandment is love, for *the goal of the commandment is love* (1 Tm 1:5) and *love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom 13:10). And who does not know that what one does through love and not through fear is not burdensome? Those who try to fulfill the commandments out of fear labor under God's commandments, but *perfect love casts out fear* (1 Jn 4:18) and makes the burden of the commandment light, not merely not pressing one down by its heavy load, but raising one up as if upon wings. But that we might have as much love as we can have in the body of this death, the choice of our will is of little use, if *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25) does not add its help. It, of course, is *poured out in our hearts*, not by ourselves, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5)—a point that we must often repeat. Scripture mentions that God's commandments are not burdensome precisely so that the soul that finds them burdensome may understand that it has not yet received the strength that makes the Lord's commandments what he taught us they are, namely, light and sweet. Thus such a soul might pray with a groaning of the will to obtain the gift that makes them easy. After all, we pray, *May my heart become spotless* (Ps 119:80), and *Guide my journeys according to your word, and let not sinfulness lord it over me* (Ps 119:133), and *May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Mt 6:10), and *Bring us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13), and other prayers of this sort, which it

would take a long time to mention. By these, we pray for precisely this: that we might carry out God's commandments. We would not be commanded to do them, if our will did nothing at all, and we would not need prayer, if our will alone was sufficient. We are taught, then, that the commandments are not burdensome so that those who find them burdensome might understand that they have not yet received the gift that keeps them from being burdensome and so that they might not suppose that they fulfill them perfectly, when they observe them in such a way that they are burdensome. After all, *God loves a cheerful giver* (2 Cor 9:7). Nor, when they find them burdensome, should they be broken by despair; they should, rather, be driven to seek, to beg, and to knock.²¹

22. In those testimonies which this fellow sets forth next, let us also listen to God as he teaches us that his commandments are not burdensome. He says, "God's commandments are not merely not impossible, but not even burdensome. In Deuteronomy it says, *The Lord, your God, will turn to you and celebrate a feast in your midst over the good, just as he celebrated a feast over your fathers, if you listen to the voice of the Lord, your God, to keep and perform all his commandments and decrees and judgments which are written in the book of this law. And if you turn to the Lord, your God, with your whole heart and your whole soul. The commandment that I command you today is not burdensome or far from you. It is not in the heavens so that you might say, Who will go up to heaven and get it for us so that we may hear and obey it? It is not across the sea so that you might say, Who will cross the sea and get it for us so that we may hear and obey it? For the word is near to you on your lips and in your heart and in your hands for you to carry it out* (Dt 30:9-14). So too, the Lord says in the gospel, *Come to me, you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon yourselves, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light* (Mt 11:28-30). Likewise, it says in the Letter of Saint John, *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome*" (1 Jn 5:3).

Having heard these testimonies from the law, the gospel, and the apostle, let us be instructed regarding the grace which those do not understand who, *not knowing the righteousness of God and wanting to establish their own, are not subject to the righteousness of God* (Rom 10:3). Perhaps they do not understand that passage from Deuteronomy in the sense that the apostle Paul commended it to us,²² so that they believe *in the heart unto righteousness* and make *confession with the lips unto salvation* (Rom 10:10). After all, *it is not those who are in good health who need a physician, but those who are sick* (Mt 9:12). But they certainly ought to be admonished by the testimony from the apostle John which Caelestius²³ cited last in support of his statement. He said, *This is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are*

not burdensome (1 Jn 5:3). They ought to be admonished by it that the commandment of God is not burdensome for the love of God, which is only *poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit* (Rom 5:5), not by the choice of the human will. By attributing more than they ought to the human will, they fail to know the righteousness of God. But this love will be perfect when all fear of punishment is gone.

Scripture Texts Often Cited against the Pelagians

11, 23. Next, he sets forth the testimonies which are often cited against them. He did not offer an explanation of them; rather, by mentioning others apparently opposed to these, he compounded the difficulties. For he calls them, "The testimonies from the scriptures which must be cited in opposition to those who in their ignorance think that they can by the authority of the scriptures destroy the freedom of choice or the possibility of not sinning." He says, "They often raise as an objection the words of the holy man, Job, *Who is free from sin? Not even an infant who has lived a single day on earth*" (Jb 14:4). Then, he pretends to answer this testimony with other testimonies, for Job said, *Though a righteous man and beyond reproach, I have become a mockery* (Jb 12:4). He fails to understand that people can be called righteous who draw so close to the perfection of righteousness that they are right next to it, and we do not deny that many persons have been able to do this, even in this life in which we live from faith.²⁴

24. This is confirmed by the testimony that this fellow adds next. The same Job said, *Look, I am close to my judgment, and I know that I will be found righteous* (Jb 13:18). This is, after all, the judgment of which scripture elsewhere says, *He will bring forth your righteousness like a light and your judgment like the noon* (Ps 37:6). Moreover, he did not say, "I am there," but *I am close*. He may have meant for us to understand by his judgment, not that by which he will judge, but that by which he is going to be judged at the end of the world. In that judgment all will be found righteous who have truthfully said, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). For they will be found righteous as a result of this forgiveness and because they have wiped away by almsgiving those sins which they had in this life. For this reason the Lord said, *Give alms, and see, everything is pure for you* (Lk 11:41). Furthermore, the righteous will be told as they are about to enter into the kingdom promised them, *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat* (Mt 25:35), and other things of this sort. But it is one thing to be without sin; scripture said this exclusively of the Only-Begotten in this life. It is something else to be without reproach; that could be said of many righteous persons even in this life. For there is a kind of virtuous living about which there can be no just reproach even in this present life of human beings.

After all, who can have a just complaint against people who have bad will toward no one and faithfully take care of those whom they can and do not harbor the desire for revenge for injuries done by another? Such people can truthfully say, *As we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). And yet, since they truthfully say, *Forgive us, as we also forgive*, they declare that they are not without sin.

25. There is also Job's statement, *There was no injustice in my hands; rather, my prayer was pure* (Jb 16:17). His prayer was pure, precisely because he justly begged pardon of God who truly granted it.

26. Job said of the Lord, *After all, he made my sufferings many without a reason* (Jb 9:17). He did not say, "He made none of them with a reason," but *many without a reason*. For his sufferings were made many, not because of his many sins, but in order to test his patience. Because of the sins which he had, as he elsewhere admits,²⁵ he judges that he ought to have undergone fewer sufferings.

27. He also says, *I have kept to his paths, and I have not turned aside from his commandments, and I will not depart from them* (Jb 23:11-12). They keep to God's paths who do not wander away so as to leave them, but by running in them make progress, even if at times they stumble through infirmity and totter. They make progress by lessening their sins until they come to the point where they are free of sin. They cannot, after all, make progress in any other way than by keeping to his paths. It is apostates who turn aside from the Lord's commandments and depart from them, not those who, though they have sins, still persevere in their fight against them until they arrive at that point where no struggle with death will remain.²⁶ In this battle, then, we are clothed with that righteousness by which we live this life from faith,²⁷ and we wear it as armor.²⁸ We also take up that judgment which we pronounce against ourselves for our own good, when we accuse and condemn our sins. For this reason scripture says, *The righteous accuse themselves as they begin to speak* (Prv 18:17). For this reason it also says, *I was clothed with righteousness, and I donned judgment as a soldier's cloak* (Jb 29:14). That is, after all, a garment for war rather than for peace, for the time when we still do battle against concupiscence, and not for the time when righteousness will be complete and no enemy remains, after the last enemy, namely, death, has been destroyed.

28. The holy man, Job, also said, *My heart has not reproached me in all my life* (Jb 27:6). In this life in which we live from faith,²⁹ our heart does not reproach us, if that same faith, by which we believe *in the heart unto righteousness* (Rom 10:10), does not fail to reproach us for our sins. For this reason the apostle says, *For I do not do the good that I want, but I do the evil that I hate* (Rom 7:15). After all, it is good not to desire, and the righteous who *live from faith* (Hb 2:4) want this good, and yet such people do what they hate, because they are filled with desire, even though they do not follow their desires.³⁰ But if they do follow

them, then they really yield, consent, and obey the desire of sin. Then their heart reproaches them, for it is their heart that reproaches them, not the sin which dwells in their members. But when they do not allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies so as to obey its desires and do not offer their members to sin as weapons of wickedness,³¹ there is indeed sin in their members, but it does not reign, because its desires are not obeyed. Thus, while they do what they do not want, that is, they do not want to be filled with desire, and yet they are, they agree that the law is good.³² They want the same thing as the law, because they want to be free from desire, and the law says, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17). Inasmuch as they want what the law wants, they certainly agree with the law; and yet they are filled with desire, since they are not free from sin. But it is not they who do this, but that sin which dwells in them.³³ And thus Job's heart did not reproach him in his whole life, that is, in his faith, for *the righteous live from faith* (Hb 2:4). Thus their faith is their life. For they know that goodness does not dwell in their flesh where sin dwells.³⁴ But by not consenting to it, they live from faith, because they call upon God in order to receive his help in the fight against sin. To will that such sin not exist at all lies in their power, but completely to achieve the good does not lie in their power.³⁵ They do not lack the power to do good, but to realize it completely. Insofar as they do not consent to desire, they do good, and insofar as they hate their concupiscence, they do good. Insofar as they do not cease to give alms, they do good, and insofar as they forgive those who sin against them, they do good. Insofar as they ask that their debts be forgiven and truthfully say that they forgive their debtors and pray not to be brought into temptation, but to be delivered from evil,³⁶ they do good. Nonetheless, they do not have the power to realize the good completely, because that will come about when the concupiscence which dwells in their members no longer exists. Therefore, their heart does not reproach them, when it reproaches the sin which dwells in their members and when their heart does not have any infidelity to reproach. Thus they are not reproached by their heart in their life, that is, in their faith, but they are not proved to be free from sin. Job himself admits this about himself, when he says, *None of my sins had escaped your notice; you have sealed my iniquities in a bag, and you have noticed if I have unwillingly transgressed in any way* (Jb 14:16-17). We have, then, shown, as best we can, how the testimonies Caelestius cited from the words of the holy man, Job, should be interpreted. But he did not explain the passage which he cited from this same Job: *For who is free from sin? Not even an infant who has lived a single day on earth* (Jb 14:4 LXX).

In What Sense Every Human Being Is a Liar

12, 29. "So too they often bring forth," he says, "the passage, *Every human being is a liar*" (Ps 116:2). He does not offer a solution for this objection raised

by him against their position. Rather, by mentioning other passages as though they were in opposition to this one, he leaves the words of God in conflict in the minds of those who do not understand the holy scripture. For he says, "We must say in answer to these people that in the Book of Numbers it says, *Human beings are truthful* (Nm 24:3 and 15). And we read about the holy man, Job, *There was a man dwelling in the land of Uz by the name of Job, true, without offense, and righteous, who worshiped God and held himself back from every evil thing*" (Jb 1:1). I am surprised that he has dared to cite this passage where it has, *held himself back from every evil thing*. He wants us to understand this to mean that he held himself back from every sin, though he has previously said that sin is an evil action, not a thing.³⁷ Let him recall, then, that, even though it is an action, it can be called a thing. But people hold themselves back from every evil thing who either never fully consent to sin, though they are not exempt from it, or are not overcome by it, even if they are at times tempted. So too, even if a stronger wrestler is at times caught in a hold, he does not lose what makes him come out the winner. Of course, we find in scripture human beings without offense; of course, we find there human beings without reproach. But we do not find in scripture human beings without sin, except for the Son of Man, who is at the same time the Son of God.

30. He says, "Likewise we read in Job, *And he preserved the miracle of a truthful man* (Jb 17:8).³⁸ So too, Solomon wrote of wisdom, *Deceitful men will not keep it in mind, but in it men will be found to be truthful* (Sir 15:8). And in Revelation we read, *And no lie has been found on their lips; they are free from stain*" (Rv 14:5). We reply to these passages as well, by calling to mind in what sense human beings, who are of themselves undoubtedly liars, are to be called truthful by God's grace and truth. For scripture said, *Every human being is a liar* (Ps 116:2). That is also the sense of the testimony which he cited concerning wisdom, *But in it men will be found to be truthful* (Sir 15:8), for they are not found to be liars in it, but in themselves. So too, *You were once darkness, but you are now light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8). When he said, *darkness*, he did not add, *in the Lord*, but when he said, *light*, he, of course, added, *in the Lord*, because in themselves they could not be light. And so, *Let one who boasts boast in the Lord* (1 Cor 1:31). But those in Revelation were called free from stain, precisely because *no lie had been found on their lips* (Rv 14:5), since they did not say that they had no sin. But if they were to say this, they would deceive themselves and the truth would not be in them.³⁹ Moreover, if the truth were not in them, a lie would be found on their lips. But if to avoid hostility, they said that they were not without sin, though they were without sin, this itself would be a lie, and the statement about them would be false that *no lie had been found on their lips*. Therefore, *they are without stain* (Rv 14:5), because, as they have forgiven their debtors, so they have been cleansed by God who forgives them.⁴⁰ Thus, you see,

we have explained as well as we can how to interpret the passages which he cited in favor of his position. But he has not explained how one should interpret the scripture text, *Every human being is a liar* (Ps 116:2), and he cannot explain this unless he corrects the error of believing that without the help of God's grace human beings can be truthful by their own wills alone.

In What Sense There Is Not a Single Person Who Does Good

13, 31. So too, he raised another question which follows, and he did not resolve it either. In fact, he increased the problem and made it more difficult by citing against himself as solid evidence the testimony, *There is not a single person who does good, not even one* (Ps 14:1.3), and by mentioning other supposedly contrary testimonies to show that there are persons who do good. He did show this. But it is one thing to do good; it is quite another thing to be without sin, even if one does many good actions.⁴¹ Hence, those testimonies which he cited are not opposed to the statement that in this life there is no one who is without sin. He did not, however, explain the meaning of the words, *There is not a single person who does good, not even one* (Ps 14:1.3). He says, "The holy man, David, said, *Hope in the Lord, and do good*" (Ps 37:3). This is a command, not a fact. Those of whom scripture said, *There is not a single person who does good, not even one* (Ps 14:1.3), certainly did not carry out that command. He also reports that the holy man, Tobit, said, *Do not be afraid, my son; we have led a poor life, but we have many good things, if we fear God and withdraw from every sin and act well* (Tb 4:21). It is perfectly true that people will then have many good things when they withdraw from every sin; they will then have no evils so that there will be no need to say, *Deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13). Even now all who make progress with the right intention withdraw from every sin as they make progress, and the farther they are from sin, the closer they are to the fullness and perfection of righteousness. For though concupiscence, that is, the sin dwelling in our flesh,⁴² still remains in our mortal members, it continues to decrease in those who are making progress. It is, then, one thing to withdraw from every sin, for that is going on at present; it is something else to have withdrawn from every sin, for that will be attained in that perfection to come. But we should not deny that those who have already withdrawn and who are still withdrawing are doing good.

What then is the meaning of the passage which he cited and left unexplained, *There is not a single person who does good, not even one* (Ps 14:1.3)? Is it not that the psalm blames a people in whom *there is not a single person who does good, not even one* (Ps 14:1.3), as long as they want to remain children of men and do not want to be children of God, for by his grace human beings become good so that they do good? After all, we ought to interpret as referring to this good action the words of the psalmist, *God has looked down from heaven upon*

the children of men to see if there is someone who has understanding or who seeks God (Ps 14:2). There was, then, no person, not even one, who did this good action of seeking God, in that group of human beings predestined for destruction. The foreknowledge of God has, after all, looked down upon them and has passed sentence.

14. 32. "So too, they cite," Caelestius adds, "the words of the savior, *Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone*" (Lk 18:19; Mk 10:18). He likewise offers absolutely no explanation of this statement, but cites other testimonies, as if they were in opposition to it, in order to prove that there are also good human beings. He says that one should answer with what the same Lord said elsewhere, *Good persons bring forth good things from the good treasure of their hearts* (Mt 12:35). Similarly, he spoke of God, *who makes the sun rise over the good and the bad* (Mt 5:45). "And scripture elsewhere says," he notes, "*Good things have been created for good people from the beginning* (Sir 39:25), and also, *The good will dwell on the land*" (Prv 2:21).

We must reply to him so that the meaning of the words, *No one is good except God alone* (Lk 18:19 and Mk 10:18), may also be understood. One reason is that, though God made all creatures very good,⁴³ in comparison with God they are not good, for in comparison with God they do not even exist. For he said of himself in a most profound sense and in a manner proper to himself, *I am who am* (Ex 3:14). Thus scripture said, *No one is good except God alone* in the same sense as it said of John, *He was not the light* (Jn 1:8), although the Lord called him as well as his disciples a lamp.⁴⁴ He said to them, *You are the light of the world; no one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket* (Mt 5:14-15). But in comparison with the light which is *the true light that enlightens every human being that comes into this world* (Jn 1:9), he was not the light.

Another reason is that, in comparison to what they themselves will be in their eternal perfection, the children of God are good in such a way that they are still evil. I would not be so bold as to say that of them—after all, who would dare to call those people evil who have God as their father?—if the Lord himself did not say, *If you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him!* (Mt 7:11). When he said, *your Father*, he surely showed that they were children of God, but he did not omit saying that they were still evil.

Nonetheless, Caelestius did not explain how these people are good, though *no one is good except God alone*. By that statement the man who had asked him what good action he should do was advised that he should seek God. Thus he might be good by the grace of God, for whom to be good is the same as to be, because one who is immutably good cannot be evil in any way.

15. 33. "So too, they say," Caelestius says, "*Who will boast of having a chaste heart?*" (Prv 20:9). To this he replied with many testimonies, wanting to

show that human beings can have a chaste heart. But he does not say how the passage which he cited against his view should be interpreted, namely, *Who will boast of having a chaste heart?* so that the divine scripture does not seem to contradict itself in this passage and those by which he replies.

In answer we say to him that *Who will boast of having a chaste heart?* followed upon the preceding words, *When the righteous king shall sit upon his throne* (Prv 20:8). For however much righteousness human beings may have, they ought to be concerned that something blameworthy that they themselves do not see may be found in them, when *the righteous king shall sit upon his throne*. Sin cannot escape his awareness, not even those of which scripture says, *Who knows of these sins?* (Ps 19:13). Therefore, *when the righteous king shall sit upon his throne, who will boast of having a chaste heart? Or who will boast of being clean from sin?* (Prv 20:8-9), unless perhaps those persons who want to boast over their own righteousness and not over the mercy of the judge.

34. In any case, those texts which he added in response are true. After all, the Lord says in the gospel, *Blessed are the pure of heart, because they will see God* (Mt 5:8), and David says, *Who will go up the mountain of the Lord? Or who will stand in his holy place? One whose hands are innocent and whose heart is clean* (Ps 24:3-4). In another psalm it says, *Do good, Lord, to those who are good and upright of heart* (Ps 125:4). So too, Solomon says, *Riches are good for those who have no sin on their conscience* (Sir 13:24), and he also says, *Turn aside from sin, guide your hands, and cleanse your heart of every sin* (Sir 38:10). So too, we read in the Letter of John, *If our heart does not reproach us, we have confidence before God, and we will receive from him whatever we ask* (1 Jn 3:21-22). We do this, after all, by the will, when we believe, hope, love, chastise the body, give alms, pardon injuries, pray constantly, beg for strength to make progress, and truthfully say, *Forgive us, as we also forgive* (Mt 6:12) and *Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13). We do this, moreover, so that the heart might be cleansed and every sin taken away and so that, whatever the righteous judge may find hidden and less pure, when he *shall sit upon his throne* (Prv 20:8), might be forgiven by his mercy so that in God's sight everything may be healthy and pure. *For judgment will be without mercy for one who does not show mercy, but mercy triumphs over judgment* (Jas 2:13). If that were not the case, what hope would we have? For *when the righteous king shall sit upon his throne, who will boast of having a pure heart? Or who will boast of being clean from sin?* (Prv 20:8-9). At that moment, then, having been cleansed fully and perfectly by his mercy, *the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father* (Mt 13:43).

35. Then the Church will exist fully and perfectly *without stain or wrinkle or anything of that sort* (Eph 5:27), because it will then be truly glorious. The apostle said not only, *That he might present to himself a church without stain*

or wrinkle, but added, *glorious*. Hence, he made it clear enough that it will be without spot or wrinkle or anything of the sort when it will be glorious. After all, in the midst of such evils, in the midst of such scandals, while mingled with such evil persons, while enduring the insults of the wicked, we should not say that it is now glorious because there are kings who obey it. Indeed, that makes temptation greater and more dangerous. Rather, it will then be glorious when there comes about what the same apostle foretold: *When Christ, your life, shall be revealed, then you will be revealed with him in glory* (Col 3:4). After all, the Lord himself in accord with the form of the servant,⁴⁵ by which, as mediator, he united himself to the Church, was only glorified by the glory of the resurrection. This is the reason that scripture says, *The Spirit had not been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified* (Jn 7:39). Hence, how could one say that his Church was glorious before the resurrection? He now cleanses it *by the bath of water with the word* (Eph 5:26), washing away past sins and driving from it the dominion of evil angels. Moreover, by bringing its health to perfection, he makes it become that glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, for *those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified* (Rom 8:30). It was with regard to this mystery, I believe, that he said, *Behold, I cast out demons and I produce healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will come to the end* (Lk 13:32), that is, I will be made perfect. He said this, after all, in the person of his body which is the Church, letting the days stand for distinct and ordered ages. He signified the same thing by the three days at his resurrection.

36. But I think there is a difference between one who is upright of heart and one who is pure of heart. For those who have an upright heart are *stretched out toward what lies ahead* and have *forgotten the past* (Phil 3:13), so that by the correct path, that is, with the correct faith and intention, they may arrive at that place where the pure of heart dwell. So too, where scripture said, *Who will go up the mountain of the Lord? Or who will stand in his holy place? One whose hands are innocent and whose heart is clean* (Ps 24:3-4), the individual replies must go with the individual questions. One whose hands are innocent will go up, and one whose heart is pure will stand. The one is making progress; the other has arrived at the goal. In that sense we should understand the words, *Riches are good for those who have no sin on their conscience* (Sir 13:30). For then riches, that is, true wealth, will be truly good, when all poverty will have passed away, that is, when all infirmity will be done away with.

But for now let human beings turn aside from sin, for as they make progress, they leave sin and are renewed from day to day,⁴⁶ and let them direct their hands to works of mercy, and let them cleanse their hearts from every sin.⁴⁷ Let them show mercy so that any remnant of sin may be removed through pardon. After all, this is the salutary and sound interpretation free from vain and empty

boasting of the words of Saint John, *If our heart does not reproach us, we have confidence before God, and we will receive from him whatever we ask* (1 Jn 3:21-22). For, in that passage he seems to warn us so that our heart does not reproach us in our prayer and our petition, that is, so that, when we begin to say, *Forgive us, as we also forgive* (Mt 6:12), we are not pierced with guilt for not doing what we say or so that we even lack the courage to say what we do not do and lose the confidence to ask.

Reconciliation of Seemingly Contradictory Texts

16, 37. Caelestius also raised against himself the passage from the scriptures that is often cited against them, namely, *There is not a righteous human being on earth who does good and avoids sin* (Sir 7:27). He pretended to reply with other passages, since the Lord says of the holy man, Job, *Have you noticed my servant, Job? For there is no one like him upon the earth: without reproach, true, a worshiper of God, refraining from every evil* (Jb 1:8). We have already discussed this passage above. But Caelestius has not shown us how Job could live on the earth without any sin—if these words are to be understood in that sense—and that the statement he cited is true, namely, that *there is not a righteous human being on earth who does what is right and avoids sin* (Sir 7:21).

17, 38. “They likewise claim,” Caelestius says, “that *no living person will be found righteous in your sight*” (Ps 143:2). And his reply to this passage amounted to no more than that the holy scriptures seem to be in conflict and that we ought to show how they agree. He says, “We must answer them that the evangelist bears witness to the holy man, Zechariah, with the words, *But Zechariah and Elizabeth, his wife, were both righteous in the sight of the Lord and lived in accord with all his commandments and laws beyond reproach*” (Lk 1:6). Now this righteous couple certainly read in the commandments how they should wash away their sins. For Zechariah certainly offered sacrifices for his own sins too, as the Letter to the Hebrews says of every priest taken from among men.⁴⁸ We have already, I believe, sufficiently explained above how the words, *beyond reproach*, should be interpreted.⁴⁹

He goes on to say, “The blessed apostle says, *That we might be holy and spotless in his sight* (Eph 1:4). That is what we are in the process of becoming, if the spotless are to be understood as those who are completely without sin. But if the spotless are those who are without serious offense, we cannot deny that there have been and are persons even in this life who are free from the taint of serious offense. After all, persons are not completely sinless because they do not have the taint of serious offense. Hence, when the apostle was choosing ministers to ordain, he did not say, “If anyone is without sin,” for he could not find such. Rather, he said, *If there is anyone without serious offense* (Ti 1:6), since that is possible.

Nor did this fellow explain how we ought to interpret, in accord with his position, the text, *Because no living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2). The plain meaning is more clearly revealed from the previous verse which says, *Do not enter into judgment with your servant, because no living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2). The psalmist fears judgment, because he desires mercy which *triumphs over judgment* (Jas 2:13). After all, the words, *Do not enter into judgment with your servant* mean: Do not judge me in comparison to you who are without sin, *because no living being will be found righteous in your sight*. This statement is readily understood as referring to this life. And he took the words, *will not be found righteous*, in comparison to that perfect righteousness which is not to be found in this life.

18, 39. "So too," he adds, "they say, *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 Jn 1:8). He tries to respond to this perfectly clear text with other texts that seem opposed to it. For the same Saint John says in the same letter, *Now I tell you, brothers and sisters, not to sin. All those who have been born of God do not commit sin, because his seed remains in them and they cannot sin* (1 Jn 2:1 and 3:9). Again he says, *Those who have been born of God do not sin, because their birth from God preserves them, and the evil one does not touch them* (1 Jn 5:18).

Caelestius says, "In the same work, when he speaks of the savior, he says, *He appeared in order to take sins away. Everyone who remains in him does not sin; all those who sin have neither seen him nor known him* (1 Jn 3:5-6). So too, he says there, *Beloved, we are now children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him make themselves holy, as he is holy*" (1 Jn 3:2-3). Though all these statements are true, the text which he cited and did not explain is also true, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). And so, insofar as we have been born of God, we remain in the one who appeared in order to take sins away, that is, in Christ, and we do not sin. This means that *the interior human being is being renewed from day to day* (2 Cor 4:16). But insofar as we have been born of that man through whom *sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings* (Rom 5:12), we are not without sin. For we are not free of the infirmity of that man, until all that infirmity is healed by the renewal which takes place *from day to day*, even though we have been born of God in accord with that renewal. In that infirmity we were born as a result of the first man, and in that infirmity we are not without sin. The remnants of it remain in the interior human being, and although from day to day they are diminished in those who make progress, *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). How then can it be true that *all those who sin have neither seen him nor known him* (1 Jn 3:6)? In

this life, after all, no one sees and knows him with that vision and knowledge which we shall have when we see him face to face. Despite the sort of vision and knowledge which exists in faith, there are many who sin, certainly the apostates who at one time believed in him. Hence, we cannot say of any of them, *they have neither seen him nor known him* with the sort of vision and knowledge which exists in faith. But we should, I think, understand that the renewal which is yet to be completed sees and knows him, while the infirmity which is still to be removed neither sees nor knows him. Because of the remnants of this infirmity that lie within us, however great or small they may be, *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). Though we are, therefore, *children of God* (Mt 5:9) by the grace of renewal, *it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. We know that we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2). Then there will be no sin, because there will remain no interior or exterior infirmity. *And all who have this hope in him make themselves holy, as he is holy* (1 Jn 3:3). After all, they do not make themselves holy on their own, but by believing in and by calling upon the one who makes his saints holy. The completion of this sanctification which is now in progress and increased from day to day will destroy all the remnants of infirmity.

Responses to the Scripture Texts Cited by Caelestius

19, 40. Caelestius notes, “So too, they say, *it does not depend upon the one who wills or runs, but upon God who shows mercy*” (Rom 9:16). He says that one should reply to them that the same apostle elsewhere said, *Let him do what he wills* (1 Cor 7:36). He also says, “He wrote to Philemon about Onesimus, *I had wanted to keep him with me so that he might serve me in your stead. But I did not want to do anything without your consent so that this favor of yours would not be in some way forced upon you, but voluntary* (Phlm 13-14). So too it says in Deuteronomy, *He set life and death, good and evil, before you. Choose life that you may live!* (Dt 30:15, 19). We find in Solomon, *From the beginning God created human beings and left them in the power of their own choice. He gave them commandments and precepts. If you will to keep the precepts, they will preserve you and make your fidelity pleasing for posterity. He set before you water and fire. Stretch out your hand to what you will. Before human beings there lies good and evil, life and death. Poverty and honors are from the Lord God* (Sir 15:14-17). So too we read in Isaiah, *If you are willing and obey me, you will eat the good things of the earth, but if you are unwilling and do not obey me, the sword will devour you. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken these words*” (Is 1:19-20).

However much these people try to hide, here they are exposed. For they reveal that they are arguing against the grace and mercy of God for which we pray

when we say, *May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Mt 6:10) or *Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13). After all, why do we make these petitions in prayer with such groans, if it depends upon the one who wills and runs, not *upon God who shows mercy*? (Rom 9:16). It is not that this is done without our will, but that our will does not accomplish what it does unless it is helped by God. This is the sound faith that leads us to pray: to seek in order that we may find, to beg in order that we may receive, to knock in order that the door may be opened for us.⁵⁰ One who argues against this faith closes in his own face the door of God's mercy. I do not intend to say anything more on a matter of such importance, because I am better off to entrust it to the prayerful groans of the faithful than to my writings.

41. Nonetheless, I beg you, see how odd it is to say that the mercy of God, which first made them able to run, is not necessary for those who will and run, because the apostle said of someone, *Let him do what he wills*, in the passage where he goes on to say, *He does not sin; let her get married* (1 Cor 7:36). Caelestius seems to think that willing to arrange a marriage should be considered something important, when the topic about which we are arguing so strenuously is the help of God's mercy. But even in such a case, of what use is it to will something, if God does not unite the husband and wife by that providence with which he governs everything? The apostle wrote to Philemon, *So that this favor on his part would not be in some way forced upon him, but voluntary* (Phlm 14). Caelestius takes this to imply that the favor could be voluntary in some other way than if *God produces in us the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13). In Deuteronomy it says, *He set life and death, good and evil, before* (Dt 30:15) human beings, and he warns them to choose life. Caelestius supposes that this warning did not come from God's mercy or that there is some benefit in choosing life, if God should not inspire the love of what should be chosen and bestow its possession once we have chosen it, for scripture says of God, *Anger lies in his indignation and life in his will* (Ps 30:6). Caelestius thinks that scripture said, *If you will to keep the commandments, they will keep you* (Sir 15:15), as if one does not owe thanks to God for wanting to keep the commandments. After all, one who is bereft of all light of the truth could not will this. When fire and water have been set before human beings, they stretch forth their hands where they will, but above them is the one who calls in a way that surpasses every human thought, since the beginning of the correction of their heart is faith. Scripture says, *You will come and pass from the beginning of faith* (Sg 4:5 LXX), and every person chooses the good *as God imparts to each one the measure of faith* (Rom 12:3). And *no one can come to me*, says the source of faith, *unless the Father who sent me draws him* (Jn 6:44). This was said in reference to the faith by which one believes in him, as he later explained quite clearly, when he said, *The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life*,

but there are some among you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who would believe and who would betray him. And he said, For this reason I told you that no one can come to me, unless this gift has been given to him by my Father (Jn 6:63-65).

42. Caelestius thought that he had found an important argument for his position in the prophet Isaiah, since God said, *If you are willing and obey me, you will eat of the good things of the earth, but if you are unwilling and do not obey me, the sword will devour you. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken these words (Is 1:19-20).* He acts as if the whole law were not full of such conditions or as if such precepts were given to the proud for any other reason than that *the law was given for the sake of transgression until the offspring should come to whom the promise pertains (Gal 3:19).* Hence, *the law entered in so that sin might abound, but where sin abounded, there grace was even more abundant (Rom 5:20).* That is, human beings received the law with proud confidence in their own strength, and their strength failed them. Thus they became transgressors so that they would seek the one who would set them free and save them. In that way, once they had been humbled, fear of the law, like a schoolmaster, might lead them to faith and grace.⁵¹ Thus, when their failings increased, *afterward they made haste (Ps 16:4),* and Christ arrived to heal them at the opportune moment.

The righteous of old also believed in his grace, having been helped by that very same grace, so that with joy they knew of him in advance and some even foretold that he would come. There were, for instance, in the people of Israel: Moses; Josuah, the son of Nun; Samuel; David, and other such persons; apart from that people, there was, for instance, Job, and prior to that people there were, for example, Abraham, Noah, and the others which scripture mentions or passes over. *For God is one; one too is the mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself up as redemption for all (1 Tm 2:5).* Without his grace none are freed from condemnation, whether the condemnation which they contracted from that man in whom all sinned or the condemnation which they have later added by their own wickedness.

20, 43. But what sort of an argument is it that he set forth in the last place? "If someone asks, 'Is it possible that a human being not sin even in words?' we should," he says, "answer: 'If God wills it, it is possible, and God does will it; therefore, it is possible.'" So too he says, "If someone asks, 'Is it possible that a human being not sin in thought?' we should reply: 'If God wills it, it is possible, and God does will it; therefore, it is possible.'" Notice how he was unwilling to say, "If God helps, it is possible," though we say to God, *Be my helper; do not abandon me (Ps 27:9).* We ask his help not for attaining bodily goods and avoiding bodily evils, but for practicing and attaining righteousness. Hence, we say, *Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (Mt 6:13).* Moreover,

people are not helped unless they themselves do something. But they are helped if they call upon God, if they believe, if they have been called in accord with God's plan. After all, *those whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. But those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified* (Rom 8:29-30). We run, then, when we make progress, while our health also comes along in us as we make progress. In the same way a scar is said to "come along" ⁵² when the wound is well and properly cared for. We make progress in order that we might be perfect in every respect without any infirmity of sin. God not only wills this healing, but even causes it and provides his help to complete it. And this healing is produced with our cooperation *by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25), not merely by commandments, sacraments, and examples, but also by the Holy Spirit, by whom in a hidden manner *love is poured out in our hearts* (Rom 5:5). That love *makes intercession with ineffable groans* (Rom 8:26), until our health has been fully restored and God is revealed as he is, to be seen by us in the eternal truth.⁵³

Concluding Summary of Augustine's Position

21, 44. Whoever thinks that there has been or is one or more human beings—apart from the one mediator between God and human beings—who did not need the forgiveness of sins stands in opposition to the divine scripture. For the apostle says, *Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). Such persons must claim in their godless argument that there can be human beings who are free and safe from sin without Christ the mediator setting them free and saving them, even though he says, *It is not those who are in good health who need a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners* (Mt 9:12-13). Whoever says that, after receiving the forgiveness of sins, any human beings have lived or are living so righteously in this flesh that they have no sin at all contradicts the apostle John who says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). After all, he did not say, "we had," but *we have*.

Someone might claim that these words refer to that sin which resides *in our mortal flesh* (Rom 6:12) in accord with the defect contracted by the will of the first human being when he sinned. After all, the apostle Paul commands us not to obey the desires of this sin.⁵⁴ One might go on to say that, though it resides in our flesh, one does not sin who does not consent in the slightest to that sin so as to do any evil, whether in action or word or thought, although one is aroused by concupiscence. This concupiscence is called sin in a different sense, because

it would be a sin to consent to it, and its stirrings are against our will. Such persons draw these subtle distinctions, but they should bear in mind what we are praying in the Lord's Prayer when we say, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12). Unless I am mistaken, there would be no need to say this, if we never consented at all to the desires of this same sin by a failing in words or by taking pleasure in some thought; rather, we would only have to say, *Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* (Mt 6:13). Nor would the apostle James say, *We all offend in many ways* (Jas 3:2), if evil concupiscence, by arousing desire or aversion contrary to the standard of righteousness, did not persuade one, whether by deception or by force, to do or say or think something that one should not. Finally, one might claim that, apart from our head, the savior of his body, there have been or are some righteous human beings without any sin, whether because they never consented to its desires or because we should not consider a sin something so slight that God does not count it against their holiness. And yet, it is one thing to be a blessed person without sin and another to be a blessed person to whom God does not impute any sin.⁵⁵ In any case, I do not believe that one should resist this idea too much. For I know that such is the view of some whose position on this matter I dare not reprehend, though I cannot defend it either. But clearly, if someone denies that we ought to pray so that we do not enter into temptation—and one denies this who maintains that the help of God's grace is not needed for a human being to avoid sin, but that the human will is sufficient, once the law has been received—I have no doubt that such a person should be banished from everyone's hearing and should be condemned by everyone's lips.

Notes

1. Augustine is probably referring to the book of Caelestius from which he cites various statements in *The Deeds of Pelagius* 13, 29-14, 32 and 18, 42-19, 43.

2. Augustine repeats this phrase ten times in this work; at times he takes the Latin "*gratia*" as ablative and at times as nominative.

3. Caelestius uses the philosophical term, "*accidens*: accident," which I have translated as "an addition to nature." From the context it is clear that "an accident" is something extrinsic to a nature that can be added on or lost.

4. See also Is 10:23. Augustine apparently takes the Latin "*consummans et abbrevians*" in the sense in which I have translated it, though in the context of Romans the expression refers to speedy destruction.

5. See also Lv 19:18.

6. See Phil 3:14.

7. See Gal 3:24.

8. See 1 Cor 15:54.

9. See also Rom 1:17.

10. See 1 Cor 9:27.

11. See Rom 12:12 and Col 4:2.

12. See 1 Tm 1:10, 2 Tm 4:3, and Ti 2:1.

13. See Mt 5:6.
14. See 2 Cor 9:7.
15. See Hb 2:4.
16. See 1 Cor 13:13.
17. See Rom 7:23.
18. See Mt 22:37-38.
19. See 1 Cor 9:24.
20. Here the ALG text adds, with the Maurists, "desires: *concupiscentiis*," in conformity with the text of scripture.
21. See Lk 9:9.
22. See Rom 10:6-8.
23. Augustine does not mention Caelestius by name after the initial paragraph of the work. I have here and later mentioned Caelestius by name for clarity's sake.
24. See Hb 2:4.
25. See Jb 6:2-3.
26. See 1 Cor 15:54.
27. See Hb 2:4.
28. See Is 59:17 and Eph 6:14.
29. See Hb 2:4.
30. See Sir 18:30.
31. See Rom 6:12-13.
32. See Rom 7:16.
33. See Rom 7:17.
34. See Rom 7:17.
35. See Rom 7:18.
36. See Mt 6:12-13.
37. See above 2, 4.
38. The version of Job that Caelestius cites is different from either the Vulgate or the Septuagint.
39. See 1 Jn 1:8.
40. See Mt 6:12.
41. The Latin texts includes two negatives so that it literally reads: "But it is one thing not to do good; it is something else not to be without sin. . . ." The logic of the text, it seems to me, demands their omission in translation.
42. See Rom 6:12.
43. See Gn 1:31.
44. See Jn 5:35.
45. See Phil 2:6.
46. See 2 Cor 4:16.
47. See Sir 38:10.
48. See Heb 5:1-3.
49. See above 11, 23-24.
50. See Lk 11:9.
51. See Gal 3:24.
52. Augustine uses the verb, "*currit*: runs" with "scar." The expression, which is rare in Latin, obviously is meant to indicate an improvement in the scar.
53. See 1 Jn 3:2.
54. See Gal 5:16.
55. See Ps 32:2.

THE DEEDS OF PELAGIUS

Revisions II, 47 (74)

The Deeds of Pelagius, A Single Book

During the same time, in the East, that is, in Palestinian Syria, Pelagius was brought by certain Catholic brothers before an episcopal court. Those who lodged the charge against him were absent, because they could not be present for the day of the synod, but his case was heard by fourteen bishops. In this trial they declared him Catholic, since he condemned the teachings opposed to the grace of Christ which were read out against him from the indictment. When the proceedings came into our hands, I wrote a book on them. I was, after all, concerned that, since he was apparently acquitted, some would think that the judges had approved those teachings. And yet, if he himself had not condemned them, he would under no circumstance have escaped their condemnation. This book begins: *Postquam in manus nostras.*

Introduction

Augustine's fifth book against the Pelagians published an annotated account of the proceedings of the Synod of Diospolis, which met in late December of 415, along with the indictment brought against Pelagius by the Gallic bishops, Heros of Arles and Lazarus of Aix.¹ Augustine's chief concern in this work was to show that, though the bishops meeting at Diospolis acquitted Pelagius of any charge of heresy, the bishops were themselves not merely not heretics, but even condemned the chief propositions of the Pelagian heresy. In fact, Augustine insisted that the bishops would have condemned Pelagius himself, had he not disowned some and condemned others of the propositions brought as objections against him in the indictment. Furthermore, the Greek-speaking bishops were hampered in dealing with the Latin of Pelagius' works and, in the absence of the bishops who accused him, they were forced to restrict their investigation to Pelagius' oral responses.

The Historical Background

Pelagius had arrived in Africa, landing in Hippo, shortly after Rome fell to Alaric's Goths. He wrote a flattering letter to Augustine and received a friendly reply, which he produced at the Synod of Diospolis along with other letters testifying to his good character.² Pelagius soon moved on to Carthage, where Augustine, busy with the organization of the conference with the Donatists, saw him several times at a distance, though the two apparently never met. In any case, after a short while Pelagius left Africa and moved on to Palestine where he settled in Jerusalem and took up residence in the former monastery of Rufinus of Aquileia. It was there that he composed his *Letter to Demetrias* in 413.³ Pelagius allied himself with the opponents of Jerome, such as John of Jerusalem, from the time of the recent Origenist controversy, and he himself criticized Jerome's *Answer to Jovinian* (*Contra Iovinianum*) and his *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*.⁴

In 414 Paul Orosius, a young and talented Spanish priest, arrived in Hippo to consult Augustine about various theological problems posed for the Spanish church by the heresies of Origenism and Priscillianism. In his *Memorandum to Augustine on the Error of the Priscillianists and Origenists*, Orosius mentioned that his bishops, Eutropius and Paul, had already sent Augustine a memorandum on some heresies. It seems most likely that these are the same bishops who gave Augustine a work allegedly written by Caelestius to which Augustine responded

in *The Perfection of Human Righteousness*. If that is the case, the teachings of Caelestius were disturbing the church in Spain well before Augustine became involved in the controversy. Furthermore, if that were the case, Orosius himself was probably at least familiar with Pelagian teachings by the time he arrived in Africa. In any case, he was sent on to Palestine by Augustine in order to consult Jerome, and he arrived in the Holy Land early in 415.⁵ Orosius carried with him from Augustine to Jerome Letters 166 and 167, details of the condemnation of Caelestius at Carthage in 411 or 412, and Letters 156 and 157 containing the correspondence between Hilary of Syracuse and Augustine.

Meanwhile, Pelagius had become the center of considerable controversy so that in late June of 415 John of Jerusalem convoked a diocesan synod at Jerusalem occasioned by the unrest produced by Pelagius' teachings in the Holy Land.⁶ Most of our knowledge of this synod comes from Orosius' *Liber apologeticus*, a book written both to defend himself against the charges brought against him by John of Jerusalem and to attack Pelagianism. Orosius recounts that he was in Bethlehem "sent there by Father Augustine to learn the fear of God, sitting at the feet of Jerome,"⁷ and that he was summoned to the synod. He was asked to report faithfully and simply what had been done in Africa regarding the teaching of Pelagius and Caelestius. Orosius told the synod "that Caelestius, who was seeking the honor of the priesthood, came before a court at Carthage and was tried and convicted by the judgment of many bishops. After confessing, he fled from Africa, a man hated by the Church."⁸ Orosius went on to explain that "Augustine is presently writing a complete answer to the book of Pelagius which his disciples handed over to Augustine with the request that he answer it."⁹ Orosius had with him Augustine's letter to Hilary of Syracuse which he read to the synod at the request of its members.

At that point Pelagius was brought before the synod and was asked whether he taught the views to which Augustine had replied—a question which led, if we can believe Orosius, to some of the most memorable lines of the whole controversy. Pelagius brazenly answered, "And who is Augustine to me?"¹⁰ Orosius reports that the members of the synod cried out in protest and wanted Pelagius driven, not merely from the synod, but from the whole Church. Bishop John, however, ordered him seated, "a layman in a meeting of priests, a man guilty of clear heresy in the midst of Catholics,"¹¹ as Orosius comments in horror. John assured Pelagius, "For you I am Augustine." Not to be outdone, Orosius snapped back to John, "If you are taking the place of Augustine, follow Augustine's teaching."¹²

The bishop dismissed the previous accusations against Pelagius on the grounds that they were not directed against Pelagius, but against others. When asked whether he had anything to say against Pelagius, Orosius said, "Pelagius told me that he teaches that human beings can be without sin and easily keep

God's commandments, if they want." Pelagius replied, "I cannot deny that I said and do say this."¹³ Orosius pointed out that the African synod found this doctrine utterly unacceptable in Caelestius, that Augustine had condemned and continued to condemn it in the writings of Pelagius, and that Jerome had also condemned it in his letter to Ctesiphon and was even now writing a work against it.¹⁴

Though Orosius reported to the synod the results of the Council of Carthage with its condemnation of Caelestius, Pelagius admitted the need of God's grace for the attainment of perfection and was acquitted.¹⁵ Orosius prudently refused to accuse Pelagius of heresy or to reopen the questions upon which the Council of Carthage had pronounced judgment. Frustrated by John's bias and the difficulties with the translators, Orosius reports that his side claimed that the heresy was a Latin problem and should be dealt with by Latin judges. At that point John agreed to have the matter referred to Pope Innocent and to abide by his decision.

The Synod of Jerusalem did not bring about peace. Neither side abandoned the struggle. Jerome completed and published his long work against the Pelagians, *Dialogues against the Pelagians*. In November Orosius was brought before John of Jerusalem on a charge of blasphemy, accused of maintaining that a human being cannot be without sin even with the help of God.¹⁶ In response he wrote his *Liber apologeticus* in which he continued his attack on Pelagianism and defended himself against John's charges. Though Orosius was still present in Jerusalem in December at the time of the discovery of the relics of Saint Stephen, he left Jerusalem—perhaps quite prudently, given the opposition he had aroused—to return to Africa prior to the opening of the synod.¹⁷

The Synod of Diospolis

The two deposed Gallic bishops, Heros of Arles and Lazarus of Aix, prepared their indictment of Pelagius (*Liber accusationis*) with the help of Jerome and Orosius and presented it to Eulogius of Caesarea, the primate of Palestine.¹⁸ Pelagius was summoned before the Synod of Diospolis (the present Lydda) on approximately 20 December 415. A total of fourteen bishops were present.¹⁹ The two bishops who brought the accusation against Pelagius were not present, allegedly because of the serious illness of one of them. Moreover, with neither Orosius nor Jerome present, the assembled bishops were forced to rely for their decision on the written indictment and Pelagius' word.²⁰

The indictment against Pelagius contained a series of propositions: six from *The Book of Chapters* by Pelagius,²¹ two from a letter of Pelagius to an unnamed widow and a third from another work for the same widow.²² To these were added the six propositions of Caelestius that were condemned by the Council of

Carthage in 411 or 412.²³ There followed three propositions sent to Augustine by Hilary of Syracuse and answered by Augustine in Letter 157 to Hilary.²⁴ Finally, there was a statement from Pelagius and ten or eleven propositions taken from a book of Caelestius.²⁵

Pelagius reacted to the battery of accusations with a shrewd deftness. He denied that he was the author of the passages in the works for the widow.²⁶ He explained the propositions he admitted were his own in a sense acceptable to the bishops. Finally, he dissociated himself from the propositions of Caelestius. In fact, Pelagius declared anathema those who hold or have held the propositions of Caelestius which were condemned at Carthage.²⁷ The synod, accordingly, pronounced its judgment, "Since we are satisfied with the replies of the monk Pelagius here present, who has agreed with sound doctrine and has rejected and condemned teachings contrary to the faith of the Church, we acknowledge that he is in communion with the Catholic Church."²⁸

Pelagius' acquittal by the Synod of Diospolis stunned the opponents of Pelagius. Pelagius soon sent both to Augustine and to Rome his own account of his defense of himself at the Synod of Diospolis (*Chartula defensionsis suae*). He also wrote in reply to a priest friend a letter in which he boasted that his teachings had received the approval of the fourteen bishops. As long as he had only Pelagius' account of the synod, Augustine was reluctant to write anything on the synod. Hence, he wrote to John of Jerusalem, Eulogius of Caesarea, and the priest, Passerius, to obtain an official account of the proceedings; he eventually received a copy of the *Acta* of the synod from Cyril of Alexandria in 417. Hence, it was only late in 417, after he had finally come into possession of the official proceedings, that Augustine was in position to provide his interpretation of what had occurred at Diospolis.

The Contents of the Work

With the official records of the Synod of Diospolis in hand, Augustine undertook for his own primate, Aurelius of Carthage, an evaluation of Pelagius' defense of himself against the charges brought against him (paragraph 1). The first six charges against Pelagius drawn from his *Book of Chapters* or *Book of Testimonies* are the following: "Only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin." "All are governed by their own will." "On the day of judgment the wicked and sinners are not to be spared; rather, they are to be burned with eternal fire." "Evil does not even enter one's thoughts." "The kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament." "Human beings can be without sin, if they want."

When asked whether he had published the first statement, Pelagius conceded that he had, but not in the sense which his accusers gave to it. He did not mean

that a person with knowledge of the law cannot sin, but that such a person is helped by such knowledge not to sin (paragraph 2). Augustine notes that Pelagius' answer is clearly not against the Church's teaching and that the Greek bishops acquitted him on this point, relying on his oral statement, not upon what he said in his book.

Augustine points out that it is one thing to say that a person is helped by a knowledge of the law not to sin and that it is something quite different to say that only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin (paragraph 3). He distinguishes between helps that are merely useful for a certain purpose and those which are indispensable. In his book Pelagius had claimed that knowledge of the law was an indispensable help for being without sin, while in court he had indicated that it was merely useful for avoiding sin. Augustine excuses the judges, who were unfamiliar with Latin and content with Pelagius' oral statement, for not having explored this point, especially since there was no one present to explain the grounds on which others found Pelagius' statements troubling. There are, after all, few trained in the law, but many people of simple faith, firm hope, and sincere love who trust that they can be cleansed from sin by the grace of Christ.

Augustine suggests that Pelagius might have countered that by knowledge of the law he meant the instruction in the faith given to the newly baptized or the instruction in the Creed given to those preparing for baptism, though that is not the usual meaning of knowledge of the law (paragraph 4). But if that is what he meant, he would have to face the multitude of baptized infants who are without sin, though they have no knowledge of the law. These sinless infants with no knowledge of the law ought to bring him to correct his view or at least to admit that he expressed himself carelessly.

To the second statement read out against him, namely, that "all are governed by their own will," Pelagius said that he said this "on account of the free choice which God assists when it chooses what is good, but sinners are themselves at fault because of their free choice" (paragraph 5). Again Augustine admits that the bishops were right in being satisfied with Pelagius' oral reply, though in his book he made this statement "as if God governs no one" and as if the psalmist's prayer that God govern his people was pointless.²⁹ Moreover, Augustine points out that "to be driven" is more than "to be governed" and cites Paul's statement that those who are driven by the Spirit of God are the children of God.³⁰

Pelagius' third proposition, "On the day of judgment the wicked and sinners are not to be spared; rather, they are to be burned with eternal fire," seemed to imply that all sinners will suffer eternal punishment. Pelagius answered that he had said this in the sense in which Jesus said that those on his left will enter eternal punishment, while the righteous will enter eternal life.³¹ Augustine excuses the bishops for finding no fault with Pelagius' explanation, since no one

was present to press him regarding his failure to distinguish between sinners guilty of serious sins and sinners guilty of lesser sins who will be saved through fire (paragraph 9).³² Pelagius added to his response, "And anyone who believes differently is an Origenist," thus raising the specter of the recently condemned Origenist doctrine that even the devil and his angels will eventually be purified and enter the kingdom of the blessed.³³ Augustine concedes that Pelagius is correct in calling an Origenist one who claims that serious sinners whom Christ condemns to eternal fire will at some point be set free, but he also points out that one who holds that no sinner deserves mercy in God's judgment is also in error (paragraph 10). Scripture portrays the last judgment, Augustine indicates, in many forms and images so that it is difficult to determine the one way in which it will take place. For the present question, however, it is sufficient to maintain that rewards and punishment will differ at least to the extent that all sinners are not going to suffer eternal punishment (paragraph 11).

In the episcopal court Pelagius claimed that the fourth proposition, "Evil does not even enter one's thoughts," was quoted incorrectly and stated that he had said that "a Christian ought to strive not to think evil." The bishops, of course, gave their approval to that statement, though Augustine points out that the more accurate reading in his book is: "Evil is not even to be thought." Augustine suggests that those who raised this point as an objection against Pelagius may have had a faulty text and points out that merely to have evil in one's thoughts is not necessarily wrong, if one does not consent to the evil. One cannot, after all, blame something evil unless one has it in one's thoughts (paragraph 12).

Pelagius defended his fifth proposition that "the kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament" with a passage from the Book of Daniel,³⁴ and the synod gave its approval (paragraph 13). Augustine distinguishes between two senses of "Old Testament." In the first sense, which rests upon the authority of the scriptures, the New Testament implies the servitude of the children of the flesh under the law of Moses, while the New Testament implies the freedom of the children of the promise under the grace of God. In the second sense all the writings of the law and the prophets are called the New Testament, and in that sense the New Testament, of course, contains promises of the kingdom of heaven.³⁵ But in the first sense the New Testament offers promises of only temporal felicity and, like Hagar, brings forth children into slavery, while the New Testament promises heavenly felicity and, like Sarah, brings forth children of the promise.³⁶ Hence, those who belong to the New Testament symbolized by Hagar are children of the flesh, not children of the promise (paragraph 14). Consequently, Augustine argues that the children of the promise were rightly upset when they saw that Pelagius' words destroyed the distinction between the two testaments drawn by the apostle and by the Catholic Church,

for the removal of that distinction made Hagar Sarah's equal. On the other hand, the bishops were right in giving Pelagius' response their approval, since it was not against the Catholic faith in either sense of the New Testament (paragraph 15).

To the sixth objection, namely, that "human beings can be without sin, if they want," there were added quotations from a letter of Pelagius to a widow, Livanian or Livianna,³⁷ and from his letter, *The Christian Life*, both of which emphasize the sinlessness that a Christian ought to have or does have in this life. Pelagius replied that he did say that "human beings can be without sin and observe God's commandments, if they want. For God gave them this ability." But he denied saying that "there is anyone who never sinned from infancy to old age." Furthermore, he admitted that "they who have turned away from sin can by their own effort and by the grace of God be without sin." He also pointed out that this does not preclude their returning to sin in the future. Then he denied the other statements raised as objections against him that were found in his books and denied that he made them (paragraph 16). When the synod heard Pelagius deny having written such things, the bishops asked whether he declared those who hold such views anathema. Pelagius answered by condemning them "as fools, but not as heretics, since it is not a matter of dogma." At this point bishops pronounced their judgment that "Pelagius has declared anathema by his own lips the foolish statement that had been introduced, and he has correctly answered that one can be without sin by God's help and grace."

Augustine argues that the episcopal judges did the best they could, given their lack of factual information about what Pelagius had said, since there was no one present who could prove Pelagius had written the statements contained in the letters to the widow (paragraph 17). Given the evidence that Pelagius did write at least the passage taken from *The Christian Life*, it remains difficult to see that Pelagius did not lie to the synod of bishops, though various other explanations have been proposed.³⁸ Augustine also concedes (paragraph 18) that the bishops were right in avoiding the difficult question of determining whether the points of doctrine which Pelagius condemned were foolishness or heresy, for the definition of heresy is a question that Augustine himself did not resolve even in his late work, *Heresies*. Augustine does, however, tentatively conclude that Pelagius lied in disowning the work containing the words written to the widow, since certain brethren produced a copy of Pelagius' book and found the very words which he claimed he had not written, though even here Augustine seems to leave open the possibility that the work was circulating under Pelagius' name, despite its not having been written by him.

Augustine returns to the statement that Pelagius acknowledged as his own and notes that it is not at all clear what he meant by grace, though he foresees that it will become clear later in the proceedings (paragraph 20). The bishops,

who absolved Pelagius, took him to mean the grace by which we hope to be set free *from the body of this death through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 7:24). This grace, Augustine notes, is not nature and is not knowledge of the law. Nature that has been wounded by corruption does not long for a savior and redeemer, nor does knowledge of the law set us free from the body of this death (paragraph 21). Arguing from Paul's words in chapter seven of the Letter to the Romans, Augustine shows that it is neither the choice of the will nor knowledge of the law that can set one free from the body of this death. The bishops took Pelagius to be referring to grace in the Pauline sense, but from Pelagius' *Nature* Augustine knows that Pelagius had meant by grace "the fact that our nature received the ability not to sin, when it was created, since it was created with free choice" (paragraph 22). Hence, he is concerned that in his statement to the bishops Pelagius presupposed that grace was simply the nature in which we are created by God with free choice, while the bishops took him to mean the grace by which we are adopted as the new creation. Augustine also points out that Pelagius had said in *Nature* that "the righteous Abel never sinned in the slightest," even though he told the bishops that he did not say that "there is anyone who never sinned from infancy to old age." Augustine does not, nonetheless, accuse him of lying, but suggests that he may have forgotten what he wrote.

The Statements of Caelestius and Other Pelagian Propositions

There were next read out as objections against Pelagius the charges that had been brought against Caelestius at Carthage in 411 or 412 and that were condemned by the Council of Carthage, as well as three propositions which were reported to Augustine by Hilary of Syracuse and to which Augustine replied in Letter 157 (paragraph 23). In his response Pelagius acknowledged as his own the statement that "human beings can be without sin, if they want," claiming that he had responded to it above. He also acknowledged as his own the view that there were some human beings without sin before the coming of Christ in accord with what scripture says. However, he disowned the remaining five propositions of Caelestius and the other two from the letter of Hilary. Though he claimed that he had no need to account for them, he declared anathema "those who hold those views or have at some time held them" (paragraph 24). On the basis of his condemnation of these propositions Pelagius was acquitted. Hence, Augustine argues that not merely Pelagius, but also the bishops condemned the remaining seven propositions. These were, Augustine emphasizes, the errors that had been disturbing the African church and that had brought him to write *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* at the request of Marcellinus and to preach at Carthage on the baptism of little ones.³⁹ More recently some Pelagians have tried to convince the faithful of Africa that they must hold these proposi-

tions or be subject to the condemnation of the Eastern churches. In fact, Augustine insists that the fourteen bishops acquitted Pelagius only on the condition that he condemned them as opposed to the Catholic faith (paragraph 25).

Augustine returns to the two propositions that Pelagius acknowledged as his own and notes that Pelagius had in the presence of the bishops softened his claim that "human beings can be without sin" by the addition of "by the grace of God," though there was no mention of this in his book. With regard to the second proposition, Pelagius did not acknowledge as his own the condemned formula of Caelestius that "there were human beings without sin before the coming of Christ," but the weaker and quite acceptable formula that "before the coming of Christ some people lived holy and righteous lives" (paragraph 26).

Another objection was raised against Pelagius that he claimed that "the Church on earth is without stain or wrinkle." Augustine notes that the Donatists also held this view and that he had pressed them hard with the gospel saying about the wheat mixed with the chaff (paragraph 27). If, like the Donatists, the Pelagians want to maintain that the Church consists of only good people, Augustine asks how members of the Church cry out in humility that, *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8) or pray as the Lord taught, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12). Pelagius replied that he had said this in the sense that "by the baptismal bath the Church is cleansed from every spot and wrinkle and that the Lord wants her to remain that way" (paragraph 28). The episcopal synod found his response acceptable, and Augustine agrees that baptism wipes away all sins and that the Lord wants his Church to remain without stain or wrinkle in the future. However, at present the Church is being led to that perfection, and in the present time there is still need to pray for forgiveness of sins. With regard to this present time between baptism and the future state without sin the bishops neither discussed nor decided anything.

Next objections were raised against Pelagius from Caelestius' *Book of Definitions*, though not in the precise words that Caelestius had used. The first objection was that Caelestius had said that "we do more than is prescribed in the law and the gospel" (paragraph 29). In the presence of the bishops Pelagius claimed that he had said this in the sense in which Saint Paul counseled virginity, though he did not have a command from the Lord.⁴⁰ Augustine, however, had read the statement in the context of Caelestius' book where it has the sense that the power of free choice is so great that we do more than we are commanded. Here Augustine notes that the bishops accepted Pelagius' response only in the sense that to observe virginity is more than to observe marital chastity, not in the sense that we can do either of them without the grace of God.

Further chapters from Caelestius were then raised as objections to Pelagius,

for example, that “God’s grace and help is not given for individual actions, but consists in free choice or in the law and teaching” and that God’s grace is given in accord with our merits, since it would be obviously unjust to give it to sinners (paragraph 30). An argument from Caelestius was presented that concluded that the grace of God lies in the will, regardless of whether one is worthy or not; otherwise, the grace of God would be overcome, when we are overcome by sin. In reply Pelagius claimed that it was not his problem to decide whether or not the propositions stemmed from Caelestius, but that he himself never held them and declared anathema anyone who holds them. Hence, it is clear, Augustine insists, that the episcopal court condemned these propositions so that, in arguing against these teachings, one is now arguing against a condemned heresy.

Problems with What Pelagius Meant by Grace

At this point Augustine returns to those propositions which led him to express the concern that Pelagius meant by grace “an ability of nature created by God with free choice” (paragraph 31). At the synod Pelagius condemned those who claimed that grace consists in free choice or in the law and teaching. Hence, Augustine concludes that he must mean the grace which is preached in the Church of Christ and which Holy Spirit pours out in our hearts as a help for each of our actions. There is, however, another objection taken from Caelestius’ book which still troubles Augustine. By his claim that everyone can have all the virtues and graces, Caelestius seemed to do away with Paul’s teaching that different graces are given to different people (paragraph 32). In his reply Pelagius said that “God gives all the graces to one who is worthy to receive them, as he gave them to the apostle Paul.” The bishops gave their approval to Pelagius’ answer, but Augustine points to the ambiguity it contained. It is true that Paul had all the graces or charisms mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28, but there are other graces and greater graces than these. Paul, for example, was not the equal of Christ in the graces he received, and not every member of Christ’s body has all the graces of the head of the body.

What particularly troubles Augustine, however, is that Pelagius answered that God gives all the graces “to one who is worthy to receive them,” for, if grace is not given gratuitously, it is not grace (paragraph 33). Pelagius may try to claim that the apostle was worthy of the graces he received, not by reason of works, but by reason of faith (paragraph 34), but Augustine counters with the claim that faith involves work, since it works through love.⁴¹ Moreover, one cannot come to faith by the merit of good works, since faith is the beginning from which good works arise, and we do not merit to have faith by any faith. Paul speaks of the crown of righteousness which the just judge will repay to him on the last day,⁴² but Augustine explains that “the crown would not be given to

someone worthy of it, unless grace had been given to someone who was unworthy of it" (paragraph 35). Thus Paul's crown is recompense for his merits, but his merits are God's gifts. Though Paul received the reward owed to him, he received the grace of apostleship as someone unworthy of it, as he himself testified. One does not honor Paul, Augustine warns, by believing what Pelagius says about Paul rather than what Paul says about himself (paragraph 36). Paul said that he was not worthy to be called an apostle, because he persecuted the Church, but that he was what he was by the grace of God.⁴³ For, if Paul labored more than the others, it was not he, but the grace of God in him that did so.⁴⁴

Augustine notes that, when in the Synod of Diospolis John of Jerusalem was asked about the Synod of Jerusalem, John reported that he himself had appealed to the same passage from Paul against the statement attributed to Pelagius, namely, that human beings attain sinlessness without the grace of God (paragraph 37). John also cited Paul's words, *It does not depend upon the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16). And when some of his disciples refused to accept these scripture texts and continued to murmur, Pelagius said, "That is what I believe as well," and declared anathema those who say that "human beings can develop in all the virtues without the grace of God." Augustine notes that, when John gave this report to the bishops at Diospolis, Pelagius could have respectfully responded that John had not correctly recalled what he said (paragraph 38). Pelagius could have said that he did not understand the texts cited to mean that God's grace works along with a human being so that one's not sinning *does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16).

After all, in commentaries on Paul's Letter to the Romans attributed to Pelagius, one reads that Paul had not said these words in his own person, but had put them in the mouth of someone posing a question (paragraph 39). Since John of Jerusalem clearly stated that Romans 9:16 represented Paul's own view and since Pelagius said, "This is what I believe as well," Pelagius either must deny that the interpretation given in the commentaries on Paul is his own or must change and correct it. Moreover, John's words against the bishops Heros and Lazarus and the priest Orosius do not, Augustine argues, invalidate their complaint against Pelagius. Had they been present, misunderstanding would have been avoided. In any case, the proceedings are clear, and in the future, Augustine promises, apparently apologizing for the non-appearance of the two bishops and Orosius, that Catholic brethren will answer a summons before an episcopal court.

Augustine argues that Pelagius was present to hear these testimonies from scripture at the Synod of Diospolis; by his silence he acknowledged that he had said that they expressed his faith (paragraph 40). Hence, Augustine asks how Pelagius could have failed to see that he should not have said that Paul was

worthy to receive all the graces. At least he should have recalled that he had just condemned the propositions of Caelestius that "God's grace is given in accord with our merits" and "grace itself lies in my will, whether I am worthy or unworthy." ⁴⁵ Hence, if Pelagius sincerely and correctly condemned these views of Caelestius, he should not hold that God gave all the graces to Paul as to one worthy of them.

Why then did the bishops give their approval to Pelagius? Augustine confesses that he is still puzzled over this. He suggests that these few words of his may have escaped their attention or that the bishops may have thought that his words admitted a correct interpretation or that they should not stir up a controversy over a single word (paragraph 41). After all, if Pelagius had said "predestined" instead of "worthy," there would be no problem. If Augustine did not have Pelagius' *Nature* in which the grace of God is taken to mean "our nature gratuitously created with free choice," he would be inclined to attribute Pelagius' expression to a careless use of language.

In any case, the bishops condemned the remaining propositions even prior to any response from Pelagius. Augustine lists five propositions taken from Caelestius' book along with, in some cases, argumentation in support of them (paragraph 42). The synod condemned them, and Pelagius insisted that these propositions were not his and that he did not need to account for them (paragraph 43). Hence, the synod expressed its satisfaction with the replies of Pelagius "who has agreed with sound doctrine and has rejected and condemned teachings contrary to the faith" (paragraph 44).

Reasons for Continued Concern over Pelagius' Teachings

Reflecting on the synod's acquittal of Pelagius, Augustine argues that, though the bishops were not negligent in their judgment and did not condone heresy, the judgment of the synod has not proved Pelagius innocent in the eyes of those who have better knowledge of him (paragraph 45). In fact, those who know his teaching cannot fail to hold him suspect, since he did not confess his past errors, but defended himself, claiming that he never held views other than those the court approved. Augustine recalls Pelagius' arrival in Africa, the first rumors about his teachings, Caelestius' condemnation at Carthage, and his own early opposition to the error when he did not mention anyone's name (paragraph 46). But when Augustine received a copy of *Nature* from Timasius and James, he found that Pelagius equated the grace of God with nature created with free choice, along with the help of the law and the forgiveness of sins. Then the danger of Pelagianism became clear to Augustine, though even then he did not mention Pelagius by name in order to preserve their friendship and spare him embarrassment. Hence, Augustine explains his unease over Pelagius' having

declared anathema, not merely those who now hold such views, but those who have at some time held them. After all, it was not right for him to condemn men, such as Timasius and James, who had once held such views and were now free from those errors. Moreover, those who know what Pelagius himself held must realize that he condemned himself (paragraph 47). Augustine includes the letter from Timasius and James in which they express their gratitude for the benefit they derived from Augustine's *Nature and Grace* and their regret that "certain people" are no longer present to benefit from it.⁴⁶ In their letter to Augustine the two former disciples of Pelagius admit that they had held those same errors which Pelagius himself held (paragraph 48). Pelagius, then, should follow the lead of his disciples and admit his error rather than condemn those who once held the same views that he held and even now holds (paragraph 49). Augustine argues that Pelagius should recognize the mercy of God that brought him to the episcopal court precisely so that he would abandon the propositions the court condemned (paragraph 50). During the trial he had admitted the necessity of God's grace for each of our actions. Augustine urges Pelagius to pray for that grace in order to conquer any anger that Pelagius might harbor against him.

The Letters of Reference Introduced by Pelagius

Pelagius had introduced into the proceedings letters from various bishops, including a letter from Augustine, dating from the time of Pelagius' stay in Africa.⁴⁷ Since Pelagius used the letters as proof of his good standing in the eyes of the bishops who had written him, Augustine offers an explanation of the respectful and friendly tone of his own letter (paragraph 51) and then cites the letter in full (paragraph 52). Augustine had closed his letter with the prayer that Pelagius might be pleasing to the Lord; in retrospect, he claims to have been subtly indicating to Pelagius that to become pleasing to the Lord was a matter of grace rather than free choice (paragraph 53). In any case, Augustine insists that such letters as Pelagius introduced at his trial are irrelevant; he must confess his errors and condemn his statements against the grace of God. As he has written against grace, so he must now write against his errors.

The Aftermath of the Synod of Diospolis

Augustine turns to events following the synod. In a letter to a priest friend, which came into Augustine's hands, Pelagius claimed that the fourteen bishops had approved his statement that "human beings can be without sin and easily keep the commandments of God." Moreover, he bragged that he had won a victory that threw his opponents into confusion (paragraph 54). Augustine notes that Pelagius cited the statement which was condemned by the synod as it is

found in Caelestius' *Book of Chapters* where the word "easily" is added. In fact, Augustine points out, Pelagius had mentioned in his reply to John of Jerusalem the need for "labor and struggle" in order to be without sin and to live by the commandments.⁴⁸ Augustine insists that every sensible person will see that, if it takes labor and struggle, it cannot be easy to keep the commandments (paragraph 55). Since the official account of the proceedings was delayed, Pelagius' letter announcing that fourteen bishops had approved his teaching has been able to do its damage among the faithful. In fact, bishop John had stated that he found Pelagius in error and cited three scriptural texts against his view, which Augustine describes as bolts of lightning. Moreover, the bishops of the synod had not understood that, when Pelagius qualified his statement that "people can be without sin and keep God's commandments, if they want," with the acknowledgment that "God gave them this ability," he was referring to nature and not to the grace of God. Though the synod did agree that a person can be sinless with the help of God's grace, it did not, Augustine insists, decide whether in this life anyone has attained or will attain such sinlessness that there is no need to ask for any forgiveness. All of this leads to the conclusion, Augustine argues, that Pelagius did not truthfully acknowledge the grace of God which is needed for each of our actions (paragraph 56).

Furthermore, there is Pelagius' own account of the synod which Augustine received from Pelagius long before the official account (paragraph 57). With regard to some of Caelestius' statements, Pelagius omitted from his own account the crucial part of his reply to the bishops, namely, "But to satisfy the holy synod, I declare anathema those who hold these views or have at some time held them." Hence, Augustine had taken Pelagius as reserving the right to defend the statements which he had in fact condemned. Augustine points out that later in his own account Pelagius lists many propositions that were taken from Caelestius' book and raised as objections against him, but that Pelagius did not include the two replies in which he had declared them anathema at the synod (paragraph 58). In his own account Pelagius added to the anathema he declared against those who oppose and contradict the teachings of the holy Catholic Church: "along with those who have made up lies and stirred up slander against us." Furthermore, Pelagius suppressed in his own account the fact that the fourteen bishops had already condemned the propositions of Caelestius. Hence, Augustine wrote this account of the proceedings against Pelagius for Aurelius of Carthage in order to destroy the belief that the Eastern bishops accepted those teachings which are against the Catholic faith (paragraph 59). The fourteen bishops would, in fact, have condemned Pelagius if he had himself not condemned these teachings.

Augustine cites the final verdict of the fourteen bishops and points out that it includes two points: one, that Pelagius is in agreement with sound doctrine,

and two, that he rejects and condemns views contrary to the faith of the Church (paragraph 60). Hence, Augustine turns to a summation of the whole case, first stating the principal teachings of this new heresy (paragraph 61). Though the fourteen bishops declared Pelagius free with this heresy, they clearly condemned the heresy itself. Though they approved his replies, they gave their approval to Pelagius' own statements only in the sense in which Pelagius explained them (paragraph 62). From among the statements of Caelestius Pelagius acknowledged that he held some of them, but in a different sense from that in which his objectors understood them (paragraph 63). Hence, the bishops gave their approval to these statements of Caelestius in the sense in which Pelagius explained that he held them (paragraph 64). There are, moreover, the propositions which Pelagius rejected and condemned as opposed to the truth. Augustine lists the series of fifteen propositions which were clearly condemned by the synod and notes that the whole of this heresy is found in them (paragraph 65). Finally, Augustine mentions the violence that was allegedly brought against Jerome's monastery by some partisans of the Pelagian cause, and with that he brings his work to a close (paragraph 66).

The Text and Previous Translations

The text translated is that of C. F. Urba and J. Zycha in CSEL 42 (Vienna, 1902), 51-122. I have also examined and at times used the variant readings in the Latin text adopted by B. Altaner who translated the work into German in ALG II (Würzburg, 1964), 199-319, and by G. de Plinval who contributed the introduction and notes to the French translation by J. de la Tullaye in BA 21 (Paris, 1966), 432-478. De Plinval's corrections of the readings of the Latin text were especially helpful. The work has been previously translated into English by P. Holmes in NPNF 5/1 (New York, 1887; reprinted 1971), 217-236; it has also been more recently translated by J. A. Mourant and W. J. Collinge, in FC 86 (Washington, 1992), 111-177. Aside from the German and French translations mentioned above, the work has been translated into Spanish by G. E. Osaba in BAC 79 (Madrid, 1952), 305-459, and into Italian by A. Trapè in NBA 17/2 (Rome, 1981), 23-121.

Notes

1. Both of these bishops were living in Palestine after having been deposed from their sees and sent into exile for having supported the usurper, Constantine III. Neither was present at the Synod of Diospolis, on the somewhat suspicious grounds that one of them was seriously ill. Rees suggests that their absence may indicate that they were merely front-men for Jerome and Orosius and claims that they were certainly out of their theological depths. He also sees them as discredited by their

excommunication and expulsion from Gaul (B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* [Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988], p. 8, n. 32). In defending Pelagius and Caelestius, Pope Zosimus spoke very harshly of the two bishops, pointing out that they had been excommunicated by the Apostolic See and alleging that they had histories of accusing the innocent. (See Zosimus, Letters I and II: CSEL 25/1, 99-108).

2. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 27-28, 52 for Augustine's Letter 146. In this introduction subsequent references to this work will be shortened to: *Deeds*.

3. See R. B. Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 29-70, for an English translation.

4. According to some, he also wrote at this time his *Nature* (*De natura*), which Timasius and James, his disciples, shipped off to Augustine and which Augustine refuted in his *Nature and Grace* (*De natura et gratia*), though Y.-M. Duval has recently and persuasively argued for a earlier dating of this work. See the introduction to *Nature and Grace* for Duval's argument.

5. On Orosius, see the Introduction to Augustine's *To Orosius in Refutation of the Priscillianists and Origenists* in volume I, 18.

6. In ALG II, p. 28, A. Zumkeller gives the date of the synod as June 30th, while in "Pélage et Pélagianisme," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* XI, c. 2896, F. G. Nuvolone gives the dates as the 28th and 29th of June.

7. Orosius, *Liber apologeticus* 3: CSEL 5, 606.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 607.

9. *Ibid.* The work referred to is Augustine's *Nature and Grace*, which must not have been completed by the time Orosius left Hippo for Palestine, since Orosius reports that he is presently working on it.

10. Orosius, *op. cit.* 4, p. 607.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 607-608.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 608.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Orosius refers to Jerome's *Dialogues against the Pelagians*.

15. See Orosius, *op. cit.* 6, 610.

16. See *ibid.* 7, p. 611-612.

17. After a brief stay with Alypius at Uzalis, Orosius returned to Hippo where he wrote his *History against the Pagans* (*Historiarum adversus paganos libri VII*), a work of great popularity in the Middle Ages. For the Latin text see CSEL 5, 1-600; for a recent English translation, see that by R. J. Deferrari, FC 50 (1960).

18. See ALG II, pp. 45-47, where A. Zumkeller shows the often verbatim dependence of the indictment upon Jerome's works.

19. Augustine lists them in the *Answer to Julian* 1, 5, 19 and 7, 32.

20. See *Deeds* 1, 2.

21. See *Deeds* 1, 2; 3, 5; 3, 9; 4, 12; 5, 13; and 6, 16.

22. See *Deeds* 6, 16.

23. See *Deeds* 11, 23.

24. See *Deeds* 11, 23.

25. See *Deeds* 12, 27; 13, 29; 14, 30-32; and 18, 42.

26. In the light of the evidence that he was the author of *De vita christiana* from which the third passage is taken, it is difficult to see how Pelagius did not lie, unless one supposes that he used a mental reservation, e.g., claiming that they were not his "books," since they were "letters."

27. See *Deeds* 11, 24.

28. See *Deeds* 20, 44.

29. See Ps 27:9.

30. See Rom 8:14.

31. See Mt 25:46.

32. See 1 Cor 3:15.

33. See Augustine's *To Orosius in Refutation of the Origenists and Priscillianists* for a discussion of this doctrine attributed to Origen in the first Origenist controversy.

34. See Dn 7:18.
35. See especially Jer 31:31-32, where the prophet explicitly foretells a New Testament.
36. See Gal 4:21-26.
37. See Marius Mercator, *Commonitorium de Caelestio* 4, 3: PL 48, 104.
38. See BA 21, pp. 631-632, where de Plinval discusses why Pelagius disowned such passages which, he claims, contain nothing deserving of censure.
39. Augustine preached Sermon 294 in Carthage in 413 at the bidding of Aurelius for whom he is writing the present work.
40. See 1 Cor 7:25.
41. See Gal 5:6.
42. See 2 Tm 4:8.
43. See 1 Cor 15:9-10.
44. See 1 Cor 15:9-10.
45. See *Deeds* 14, 30.
46. Augustine indicates that these people no longer present include Pelagius himself. Y.-M. Duval argues that Timasius and James are themselves still presumably in Africa and that Pelagius' *Nature* must have been written before Pelagius left Africa. On this point see the Introduction to *Nature and Grace*.
47. Augustine's Letter 146, which is cited in full in 27-28, 52.
48. See *Deeds* 14, 37.

The Deeds of Pelagius

Augustine Has at Last Obtained the Official Account of the Synod of Diospolis

1. The records of the ecclesiastical trial at which fourteen bishops of the Province of Palestine¹ declared Pelagius a Catholic have come into our hands, holy Father Aurelius, and my doubt has come to an end. I had previously doubted that I could write a more complete and more reliable account of his defense. After all, I had read about his defense in a report he had sent me, but since I had not received with it any letter written by him, I was afraid that my words would be found to contain something other than was to be read in the episcopal proceedings. Thus, if Pelagius denied that he had sent me that report, since he could not be easily proved wrong by one witness, I myself might be accused of deliberate falsification or, to put it more mildly, of rash gullibility by those who sided with him in his denial. Now, then, as I comment on what the records reveal, you will see whether he really defended himself in the way I had thought,² since all doubt has certainly been removed, and Your Holiness and every reader will more easily and more certainly evaluate his defense of himself and this work of ours.

1, 2. First of all, then, I offer more thanks than I can express to the Lord God, our ruler and protector, that I have not been mistaken in my opinion concerning our holy brothers and fellow bishops who sat in judgment upon this case. After all, they were right to approve the answers of this man, since they were not concerned with the sense of the objectionable propositions he stated in his works, but with his answers concerning them in the present trial. An instance of unsound faith is one thing; an instance of careless speech is something quite different. Moreover, these propositions included the objections raised against Pelagius drawn from the indictment submitted by our holy brothers and fellow bishops, Heros and Lazarus, both from Gaul. These men were unable to be present on account of the grave illness of one of them, as we later learned from reliable sources.

Pelagius' Statement That Only One with Knowledge of the Law Can Be without Sin

The first objection is that he writes in one of his books,³ "Only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin." When this had been read out, the

synod asked, "Did you publish that, Pelagius?" He answered, "I did say that, but not in the sense my accusers interpret it. I did not say that one who has knowledge of the law is not able to sin, but that such a person is helped through knowledge of the law not to sin. As scripture says, *He gave the law to them as a help*" (Is 8:20 LXX). When the synod heard this, they said, "Pelagius' statements are not against the teaching of the Church."

Clearly, the answer he gave is not against the teaching of the Church, but the statement drawn from his book says something else. The bishops, however, who were Greeks and listened to those words with the help of a translator, were not concerned to clarify this point. They only attended to what he said he held, when he was questioned, not to the words by which he supposedly expressed the same view in his book.

3. It is, however, one thing to say that a person is helped by knowledge of the law not to sin, and it is something else to say that only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin. For example, we see that grain can be threshed without paddles, though their presence is helpful. So too, boys can go to school without a guide to accompany them, though the assistance of such persons is not useless. Many recover from illnesses without physicians, though the help of physicians is obvious. Also, people can live on other foods without bread, though this is not to deny that bread is extremely helpful. There are many other examples which readily come to mind without our mentioning them. We are clearly reminded that there are two sorts of helps. There are some helps without which that for which they are helpful cannot be accomplished. For instance, no one travels by sea without a ship, no one speaks without a voice, no one walks without feet, no one sees without light, and many other examples of this sort. Among them there is also the fact that no one lives rightly without the grace of God. But there are other helps by which we are aided in such a way that, even if they are lacking, that for which we require them can be done in another way. Such are the things I mentioned above: paddles for threshing grain, a guide for accompanying a child, a medicine devised by human skill for recovering health, and other things of that sort.

We must, then, investigate to which of these two kinds of helps knowledge of the law belongs, that is, how it helps one not to sin. If it helps in such a way that without it one cannot be without sin, Pelagius not only answered correctly in court, but he also stated the truth in his book. But if it helps in such a way that, if it is present, it is a help, but even if it is absent, one can accomplish that for which it is helpful in some other way, he answered correctly in court that a person is helped by knowledge of the law not to sin. In this case the bishops were right to be satisfied with this answer, but then he did not state the truth in his book, when he said that only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin. His judges, unfamiliar with the Latin language and content with the

deposition of the man who was pleading his case, left this point unexamined. They did so, especially since there was no one on the opposite side to force the interpreter clearly to explain the words of his book and to show that our brethren were not groundlessly troubled by it. There are very few who are well trained in the law, and the majority of the members of Christ spread throughout the world are unskilled in the law which is both profound and complex. Their piety filled with simple faith, their firm hope in God, and their sincere love commend these people to us. For, endowed with these gifts by the grace of God, they are confident that they can be cleansed from sins through Jesus Christ, our Lord.⁴

2, 4. To all this, Pelagius might perhaps answer that, when he spoke of this knowledge of the law without which a person cannot be free from sins, he meant the knowledge that is handed on through instruction in the faith to the newly baptized and to the little ones in Christ, the knowledge by which those about to be baptized are instructed so that they know the Creed. But people do not usually mean this when they say someone has knowledge of the law; rather, they mean the knowledge which makes people legal experts.

He may, nonetheless, want to call the knowledge of the law these few, but very important, truths taught to those about to be baptized according to the tradition of all the churches. And he may state that he said of those truths, "Only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin," and meant that this knowledge must be handed on to believers before they attain the remission of sins. Even if that were what he meant, a countless multitude of baptized infants would surround him. They would not argue, but cry out; they would not shout with words, but with the truth of their innocence. They would ask, "What do you mean by having written, 'Only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin'? Look, we are a huge flock of lambs without sin, and we do not have knowledge of the law!" Surely, without saying anything, they would at least force him to be silent. Perhaps they would even force him to admit that he has now been corrected from this perverse view. Or they might at least make him admit that he had earlier held the view which he just stated in the ecclesiastical inquest, but that he had not expressed this idea with sufficient care. Hence, while his faith would deserve approval, his book should be corrected. After all, there are, as scripture says, persons *who slip in their words, but not in their heart* (Sir 19:16). If he has said or would say that, who would not readily excuse those words which were written carelessly or negligently? After all, he would not be defending the view which those words contain, but would be claiming as his own the view which the truth approves. We should believe that those good judges would also have thought this, if a careful translation had provided them with a sufficient grasp of what he said in his Latin book, just as they judged that his answer that was stated in Greek and, hence, easily understood was not opposed to the Church. But let us look at the other points.

Pelagius' Statement That All Are Governed by Their Own Will

3, 5. The synod of bishops went on to say, "Let another chapter be read," and it was read that Pelagius had set down in the same book that "all are governed by their own will." When this had been read out, Pelagius answered, "I said that on account of the free choice, which God assists when it chooses what is good, but sinners are themselves at fault because of their free choice." When they heard this, the bishops said, "This point too is not opposed to the teaching of the Church." After all, who would condemn or reject free choice, when God's help is proclaimed along with it? Hence, the bishops were right to be satisfied with his answer. And yet, the statement he expressed in his book that all are governed by their own will should certainly have troubled our brothers who know the arguments these people often raise against the grace of God. After all, he stated that all are governed by their own will, as if God governs no one and as if there was no point in scripture saying, *Save your people and bless your heritage; govern them and raise them up forever* (Ps 28:9). Otherwise, if they are governed by their own will without God, they would remain *as sheep without a shepherd* (Mk 6:34). God spare us that!

Certainly, to be driven is more than to be governed. After all, one who is governed does something and is governed so that he acts correctly, but one who is driven is understood to do hardly anything. Nonetheless, the grace of the savior acts upon our wills to such an extent that the apostle has no hesitation in saying, *All those who are driven by the Spirit of God are the children of God* (Rom 8:14). Nor can our free will do anything better than to offer itself to be driven by that Spirit who cannot act wrongly. And when it has done so, it will have no doubt that it has been helped to do this by him to whom the psalm says, *My God will go before me with his mercy* (Ps 59:11).

6. Next, in that book in which Pelagius wrote those chapters, to the passage in which he said that "all are governed by their own will, and each one is left to his desire," he added a testimony from scripture. This passage makes it quite clear that human beings should not trust themselves to govern themselves. For it says on this point in the Wisdom of Solomon, *I am indeed a mortal man, like all the rest, of the earthly lineage of that man who was first formed* (Wis 7:1), and so on up to the end of the chapter where we read, *For all, then, there is one way to enter life, and likewise one way to depart. Hence, I have asked, and intelligence has been given me. I cried out, and the Spirit of wisdom came to me* (Wis 7:6-7). Does it not become clearer than light how, in view of the wretchedness of human frailty, this man did not dare to trust himself to govern himself, but asked and intelligence was given to him?⁵ Of this intelligence the apostle says, *But we have the mind of the Lord* (1 Cor 2:16). And he cried out, and the Spirit of wisdom came to him.⁶ After all, those who are children of God are governed and driven by this Spirit, not by the powers of their own will.

7. He set down in that same *Book of Chapters*, as if to prove that “all are governed by their own will,” the words from the psalm, *He loved the curse and it will come upon him, and he refused the blessing and it will be taken from him* (Ps 109:17). Who does not know that this failing does not stem from nature as God created it, but from the human will that has withdrawn from God? Suppose, nonetheless, that he had not loved the curse and had wanted the blessing and had yet denied that his will was helped to do this by the grace of God. Surely, he would be dismissed as ungrateful and impious to govern himself. Thus cast headlong, without God as his ruler, he would learn through experience from punishments that he was not able to govern himself.

So too, Pelagius added to the same chapter of this same book, *He set before you water and fire; stretch forth your hand to whichever you want. Before human beings there stand good and evil, life and death. What they choose will be given to them* (Sir 15:16-17). This text makes it clear that, if they put their hand to the fire and choose evil and death, it is the human will that does this. But if they love goodness and life, the will does not do that alone; rather, it is helped by God. For the eye is sufficient by itself for not seeing, that is, for the dark, but for seeing it is not sufficient by itself with its own light, unless the assistance of a bright light is offered it from elsewhere. Heaven forbid, however, that *those who have been called according to his purpose, whom he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son* (Rom 8:28-29), should be left to their own desire so that they perish. That is the lot of *the vessels of anger which were made for destruction*. In their destruction God makes known the riches of his glory toward the vessels of mercy (Rom 9:22-23). For this reason, after the psalmist said, *My God will go before me with his mercy* (Ps 59:11), he immediately added, *My God will show me this in the case of my enemies* (Ps 59:12). They experience, then, what scripture says, *God handed them over to the desires of their heart* (Rom 1:24). The predestined whom the Spirit of God governs do not experience this, because they do not cry out in vain, when they say, *Do not hand me over, Lord, to the sinner according to my desire* (Ps 140:9). After all, they pray against those desires and say, *Take from me the lusts of my body, and let not sexual desire take hold of me* (Sir 23:6). God grants this to those whom he governs as his subjects, but not to those who think that they are capable of governing themselves and refuse to have him as their ruler because of a proud confidence in their own will.

8. Since that is the case, the children of God who know this and are grateful that they are governed and driven by the Spirit of God were right to be upset when they heard or read what Pelagius wrote. He said that “all are governed by their own will, and each is left to his own desire!” And yet, when he was questioned by the bishops, he realized that those words sounded bad. He replied that he said this “on account of free choice,” immediately adding, “which God

assists when it chooses what is good, but sinners are themselves at fault because of their free choice.”⁷ The good judges also gave their approval to this statement and refused to consider or investigate how carelessly or in what sense he expressed those words in that book of his. They thought it sufficient that he had admitted free choice in such a way that God assists it when it chooses what is good, while sinners are themselves at fault, since their own will is sufficient for this. Accordingly, God governs those whom he assists in choosing what is good, and they, therefore, govern well whatever they govern, because they themselves are governed by God who is good.

Pelagius' Claim That Sinners Will Not Be Spared

9. There was also read out the proposition that Pelagius set down in his book, “On the day of judgment the wicked and sinners are not to be spared; rather, they are to be burned with eternal fire.” This disturbed our brothers to the point that they thought that they must object, because it implied that all sinners were to undergo eternal punishment, including those who have Christ as their foundation, although they have built upon it only with wood, hay, and straw.⁸ The apostle says of them, *If the work of anyone shall be burned, he will suffer a loss; but he himself will be saved, nonetheless, as if through fire* (1 Cor 3:15). But when Pelagius answered that he had said this in the sense of the gospel where it says of sinners, *They will enter eternal punishment, but the righteous eternal life* (Mt 25:46), the Christian judges could in no way be displeased by the statement of the Lord in the gospel. After all, they did not know what it was in the words taken from Pelagius' book that troubled the brethren who frequently listened to his arguments and those of his disciples. For in the absence of those who presented the list of charges against Pelagius to the holy bishop, Eulogius, no one pressed him to qualify his statement and distinguish between those sinners who will be saved through fire and those who will undergo eternal punishment. Had this happened, the judges would have understood why the objection had been raised, and he would have been rightly blamed, if he refused to make that distinction.

10. Pelagius added, “And anyone who believes differently is an Origenist.” The judges accepted this, because the Church really does despise that view of Origen, as it deserves. He held that those whom the Lord says are to be punished by eternal fire, even the devil and his angels, after having been purified for a long time, will be set free from punishment and join the saints reigning with God in the society of the blessed. The synod, then, said that this statement—not taken in Pelagius' sense, but in the sense of the gospel—was not against the teaching of the Church. For the wicked and the sinners who will burn with eternal fire are those whom the gospel judges worthy of such punishment. And whoever

says that there can at some time be an end to that punishment, which the Lord called eternal, agrees with Origen's detestable view. But since no objection was raised against Pelagius with regard to those sinners whom the apostle says will be saved, once their work has been burned away as through fire,⁹ the bishops passed no judgment. Hence, Pelagius quite appropriately calls an Origenist anyone who says that wicked sinners whom the truth condemns to eternal fire can at some point be set free from it. Let him, however, give whatever name he wants to one who thinks that no sinner deserves mercy in God's judgment, provided that he understands that this error is also not accepted by the true teaching of the Church. *For judgment will be without mercy for one who does not show mercy* (Jas 2:13).

11. It is not easy to grasp from the scriptures how this judgment will take place.¹⁰ For what will occur in a single way is described in many ways. At times the Lord says that he will close the door in the face of those whom he does not admit into his kingdom. And though they cry out and say, *Open up for us; we ate and drank in your name* (Lk 13:25.26) and the other things which scripture has them say, he will answer, *I do not know you, you workers of iniquity* (Lk 13:27). At times he mentions that he will order that those who did not want him to be king be brought to him and killed in his presence.¹¹ At times he says that he will come with his angels in all his majesty and that all the nations will be gathered before him and that he will divide them. He will place some on his right; he will recall their good deeds and usher them into eternal life. He will place others on his left; he will blame them for failing to bring forth good works and condemn them to eternal fire.¹² At times he orders the bad and lazy servant who failed to invest his money or even the man found at the banquet without a wedding garment to be bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness.¹³ At times, after having welcomed the five wise virgins, he closes the door against the other five who were foolish. These things and whatever else there is that slips my mind at the moment are said about the judgment to come, which will certainly not be brought against one or five persons, but against many. For if there were only one who was ordered to be sent from the banquet into the darkness, because he did not have a wedding garment, he would not immediately go on to say, *Many have been called, but few have been chosen* (Mt 22:14), since we see that many remained in the house, while one was thrown out and condemned. It would take a very long time to discuss all these points now in a sufficient manner. Still I can state briefly without precluding—as one says in financial accounts—a better examination that the sacred scriptures portray in many ways the single form the judgment will take. The form of that judgment remains inaccessible to us, but the diversity of what people deserve in terms of rewards and punishments will be preserved. For the question with which we are now dealing, this is sufficient. If Pelagius had said that absolutely all sinners

will endure eternal fire and eternal punishment, any of the judges who approved that statement would have first of all passed sentence against himself. After all, *who will boast of being clean from sins?* (Prv 20:9). But because he did not say all or some, but spoke indefinitely and answered that he said this in the sense of the gospel, the opinion was approved as true by the judgment of the bishops. Thus far it is not clear that Pelagius held any other view, and even after this episcopal judgment it is not impudent for someone to try to find this out.

Pelagius' Statement That Evil Does Not Even Enter One's Thoughts

4. 12. An objection was also raised against Pelagius on the grounds that he wrote in his book, "Evil does not even enter one's thoughts." He answered, "We did not state it in that way; rather, we said that a Christian ought to strive not to think evil." The bishops gave their approval to this, as was right. After all, who has any doubt that one should not think evil? And, as a matter of fact, the more accurate reading¹⁴ in his book is: "Evil is not even to be thought," and this is usually understood to mean, "One ought not even to think evil." What does one who denies this say but that one ought to think evil? But if that were true, scripture would not say in praise of love, *It thinks no evil* (1 Cor 13:5). Nonetheless, it is not so terrible¹⁵ to say that evil enters the thoughts of righteous and holy persons, since we usually speak of a thought when something comes to mind, even if it is not followed by consent. But a thought which produces guilt and is rightly forbidden involves consent. Hence, it is possible that those who thought that they should object to this had a faulty text, as if Pelagius had said, "Evil does not even enter one's thoughts," that is, what is evil does not enter the mind of righteous and holy persons. That opinion is, of course, quite absurd. After all, when we blame sins, we can only express in words what we have thought. But, as we said, the thought of something evil is called blameworthy when it involves consent.

Pelagius' Statement That the Kingdom of Heaven Was Promised in the Old Testament

5. 13. After the judges had approved this answer of Pelagius, there was read out another proposition which he wrote in his short book, "The kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament." To this Pelagius said, "It is possible to prove this point from the scriptures. Heretics, on the other hand, deny it to disparage the Old Testament. I said this, relying on the authority of the scriptures, since in the prophet Daniel we read, *And the saints will receive the kingdom of the Most High*" (Dn 7:18). Having heard his response, the synod said, "This point is also not at odds with the faith of the Church."

14. Was there, then, no reason that these words moved our brethren to raise this objection along with the others? There certainly was! We are accustomed to use the expression "Old Testament" in two ways: in one way in accord with the authority of the divine scriptures, in another in accord with our common manner of speaking. After all, the apostle Paul says to the Galatians, *Tell me, he says, you who want to be subject to the law, have you not heard the law? Scripture says that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave, the other by a free woman. This is stated in an allegory. For these women are the two testaments, the one bringing forth children in servitude, that is, Hagar. Mount Sinai, which is in Arabia, is compared to the Jerusalem which presently exists; it is enslaved, along with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free and is our mother* (Gal 4:21-22.24-26). The Old Testament, then, implies servitude. Accordingly, scripture also said, *Cast out the slave girl and her son, for the son of the slave girl will not be an heir along with my son, Isaac* (Gn 21:10). But the kingdom of heaven implies freedom. How then can the kingdom of heaven also belong to the Old Testament?

But, as I said, we are also accustomed to speak in such a way that we call the Old Testament all those writings of the law and the prophets which were given us before the incarnation of the Lord and are recognized by canonical authority. Is anyone who is even somewhat trained in the writings of the Church unaware that the kingdom of heaven could be promised in those scriptures, just as the New Testament, to which the kingdom of heaven belongs, has been promised? After all, it is certainly stated with utter clarity in those writings, *Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will establish a New Testament with the house of Israel and with the house of Jacob, not like the testament I made with their fathers on the day I took their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt* (Jer 31:31-32). This latter was ratified on Mount Sinai. At that time, the prophet Daniel who said that *the saints will receive the kingdom of the Most High* (Dn 7:18) did not yet exist. With these words he did not foretell the reward of the Old Testament, but that of the New, just as those same prophets certainly foretold that Christ would come. By his blood the New Testament was ratified, and the apostles were made ministers of this testament, as blessed Paul says, *He made us able ministers of the New Testament, not by the letter, but by the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6). But in that testament which is called old in the proper sense and was given on Mount Sinai, we find a clear promise of only temporal felicity. Hence, the land into which the people were brought after having been led through the desert is called the promised land; in it they enjoyed peace, kingship, victories over their enemies, abundant offspring and fruits of the land, and other things of this sort. These are the promises of the Old Testament. Even if they prefigure spiritual things which belong to the New Testament, one who accepts the law of God on account of such earthly things

is an heir of the Old Testament. The Old Testament promises and gives the sorts of things that the old human being desires. The things in it that prefigure what pertains to the New Testament demand new human beings. That great apostle, after all, knew what he was saying; he said that in an allegorical sense the two testaments were distinguished in the slave girl and the free woman, and he assigned children of the flesh to the Old and children of the promise to the New. He says, *It is not children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring* (Rom 9:8). The children of the flesh, then, belong to the earthly Jerusalem which is enslaved along with her children, but the children of the promise belong to the Jerusalem above, our free eternal mother in heaven. From this we see who belongs to the earthly kingdom and who belongs to the kingdom of heaven. Those people who even during that time understood the distinction and were made children of the promise by the grace of God were counted as heirs of the New Testament in God's hidden plan, even though they fittingly observed the Old Testament given to the old people in accord with God's arrangement of the times.

15. How, then, could the children of the promise, the children of the free and eternal Jerusalem in heaven, fail to be upset and rightly upset, when it seemed that Pelagius' words destroyed the distinction drawn by the apostle and the Catholic Church and that Hagar was believed to be in a sense Sarah's equal? With such heretical godlessness he does no less injury¹⁶ to the scripture of the Old Testament than one who denies that it has come from the good, sovereign, and true God, as Marcion did, as Mani did and any other such pest there may be. Hence, let me sum up my views on this matter as briefly as I can. Just as one does injury to the Old Testament if he denies that it comes from the good and sovereign God, so one does injury to the New, if it is made equal to the Old. But when Pelagius explained why he had said that the kingdom of heaven is also promised in the Old Testament, he cited the text of the prophet Daniel who clearly prophesied that the saints would receive the kingdom of the Most High.¹⁷ The bishops correctly judged that this idea is not against the Catholic faith. It is not against the Catholic faith in terms of that distinction which views the earthly promises made on Mount Sinai as properly pertaining to the Old Testament, nor is it incorrect in terms of the usual manner of speaking which groups all the canonical scriptures given before the incarnation of the Lord under the name of the Old Testament. After all, the kingdom of the Most High is the same as the kingdom of God. Or will anyone dare to argue that the kingdom of God is other than the kingdom of heaven?

*Pelagius' Statement That Human Beings Can Be without Sin,
If They Want*

6. 16. After this the objection was raised that Pelagius said in the same book that "human beings can be without sin, if they want." The objection was also raised that, when writing a flattering letter to a widow,¹⁸ he said, "May piety, which has nowhere found a home, find a home with you; may righteousness, which is everywhere a wayfarer, find its abode in you; may truth, which no one now recognizes, become a member of your household and your friend, and let the law of God, which is overlooked by almost all, be honored by you." Again it was objected that he wrote to her, "O happy and blessed are you, if the righteousness, which one should believe exists only in heaven, is found with you alone on earth!" In another book to the same person,¹⁹ following the prayer of our Lord and savior, he said, in teaching how the saints ought to pray, "They raise their hands to God in a worthy manner; they pour forth a prayer in good conscience, if they can say, 'You know, O Lord, how holy and innocent and clean of all malice, wickedness, and greed are the hands I extend to you. You know how righteous and clean and free from every lie are the lips by which I offer my prayer to you that you may have mercy on me.'" To this Pelagius said in reply, "We said that human beings can be without sin and observe God's commandments, if they want. For God gave them this ability. We did not, however, say that there is anyone who never sinned from infancy to old age, but that those who have turned away from sin can by their own effort and by the grace of God be without sin. But that does not mean that they cannot return to sin in the future. The other objections they raised are not found in our books, nor did we ever say such things."²⁰ After hearing this, the synod said, "Since you deny having written such things, do you declare anathema those who hold such a position?" Pelagius answered, "I condemn them as fools, but not as heretics, since it is not a matter of dogma." Then the bishops passed judgment as follows, "Pelagius has declared anathema by his own lips the foolish statement that had been introduced, and he has correctly answered that one can be without sin by God's help and grace. Now let him reply to the other charges."

17. Could the judges have condemned matters that were unknown or uncertain? Or should they have done so, when no one on the other side was present to prove that it was Pelagius who wrote those reprehensible statements which were said to have been written to the widow? In such a case it would not have been enough to produce a copy of the text and to read these statements from what is written in it, unless witnesses were also available, if he denied that those were his writings when they were read out. In the present case, however, the judges did what they could. They asked Pelagius whether he condemned those who hold views of the sort that he denied that he wrote or stated. When he replied that he condemned them as fools, what more should the judges have asked for in this matter in the absence of anyone on the other side?

18. Perhaps one ought to discuss whether it was correct to say that those who held such views were to be condemned, not as heretics, but as fools, because it was not a matter of dogma. But in the case before them, the judges correctly refrained from this difficult question which asks how one should define a heretic.²¹ After all, suppose someone said, for example, that eaglets are raised on high by the claws of their father and exposed to the sun's rays and that, if they blink, they are cast down to the earth as illegitimate, as if the sunlight proved this.²² Even if this is false, should that person be judged a heretic? Since this story is found in the writings of learned men and has been repeated again and again, one should not suppose that it is a foolish statement, even if it is not true. Moreover, if it is believed, it does not harm the faith because of which we are called believers, nor does it help that faith, if it is believed. But if one should argue on the basis of this idea that these birds have rational souls, because human souls are reincarnated in them, then we must drive this from our ears and our hearts like the plague of heresy. And we must take action and prove that, even if this is true of eagles, just as there are many true things about bees that we find marvelous, reason is far different from the senses of such irrational animals, however amazing such sensory powers might be. For reason is not something common to human beings and the animals, but to human beings and the angels.

Unlearned and ignorant people say many foolish things, but they are still not heretics. For example, people make rash judgments about unfamiliar arts which they have not studied, either praising those they like out of an immoderate and blind love or blaming those they dislike. The same holds for whatever else in our ordinary human language is uttered aloud or even committed to writing, not as a firm conviction, but as an occasional bit of levity or foolishness, as it strikes one at the moment. Moreover, once having been warned a bit about them, many soon regret having said such things. Thus they did not hold these views with a firm commitment, but poured out ideas that they picked up somewhere or other and had not really considered. It is hardly possible to avoid these faults, and who is there who does not slip with the tongue and does not offend with words?²³ But it matters how much one slips or offends; it matters why one does; it matters, finally, whether, once having been warned, one corrects the opinion or stubbornly defends it and even makes into a dogma something that was said in levity and not as a fixed opinion.

Since, then, every heretic is inevitably also a fool, though not every fool should be immediately labelled a heretic, the judges said that Pelagius had correctly declared anathema by his own lips the foolish statement that had been introduced, because, even if it was not heresy,²⁴ it was certainly foolish. Hence, whatever it was, they classified it under the general term of reproach. But they did not think that they should at that time investigate whether these words were uttered as a matter of doctrine or as an opinion that was neither settled nor

accepted, but as a bit of easily corrected foolishness, since the man whose case they were hearing denied that the statements were his, however they were said.

19. When we read this defense of Pelagius in that report which we received earlier, some holy brothers were present, and they said that they had some books of Pelagius written to exhort or to console a certain unnamed widow. They suggested that we should investigate whether the words which he disowned were perhaps contained in them, since they themselves stated that they did not know whether they were. When those books were read from the beginning, the words were looked for and were found. Those who had brought forth the copy stated that they had for almost four years regarded them as Pelagius' books and that they had never heard anyone raise a doubt about whether they were his. When we consider, then, that these servants of God, whose trustworthiness is very well known to us, could not be lying about this matter, we seem to be left with believing that it was rather Pelagius who lied in the episcopal court, unless we suppose that something could have been produced under his name so many years ago, but was not written by him. These brothers did not, after all, claim that they received those same books from him or that they heard him say that they were his. So too, certain brothers told me that there had arrived in Spain under my name some small works which those who had read our other works did not recognize, though others thought I had written them.

The Lack of Clarity about What Pelagius Meant by Grace

20. The passage which Pelagius admitted was his own is still far from clear. But I think that it will become clear in the following parts of these proceedings. He said, "Human beings can be free from sin and keep the commandments of God, if they want. We said: 'For God gave them this ability. We did not, however, say that there is anyone who never sinned from infancy to old age, but that those who have turned away from sin can by their own effort and the grace of God be free from sin. This does not mean that they cannot return to sin in the future.'"²⁵ It is still not clear from these words what he means by the grace of God. The Catholic judges could understand no other grace than that which the teaching of the apostle often presents to us. After all, this is the grace by which we hope to be able to be set free *from the body of this death through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 7:24), 7. and to obtain it we pray that we may not enter into temptation.²⁶ This grace is not nature, but a help to our fragile and weakened nature. This grace is not the knowledge of the law, but that of which the apostle says, *I will not render void the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21). Hence, it is not the letter that kills, but the Spirit that gives life.²⁷ The knowledge of the law without the grace of the Spirit produces every desire in human beings. Paul says, *I knew sin only*

through the law, for I would not have known desire if the law had not said, "You shall not desire." But having seized the opportunity, sin produced in me through the commandment every desire (Rom 7:7-8). In saying that, he does not blame the law; in fact, he praises it, when he says, *The law is indeed holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did what was good, he asks, become death for me? Heaven forbid! But in order that sin might be seen as sin, it produced death in me through what was good (Rom 7:12-13).* Again he praises the law when he says, *We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under the power of sin. I do not know what I do, for I do not do what I want; rather, I do what I hate. But if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good (Rom 7:14-16).* See, he already knows and praises the law and agrees with it, that is, he agrees that it is good, because he wants what it commands and he hates what it forbids and condemns, and yet he does what he hates. There is, then, in him a knowledge of the law, but his sinful desire is not healed. There is good will in him, but his evil action prevails. The result is that there are two laws fighting each other. The law in the members resists the law of the mind and holds it captive under the law of sin, and the apostle shouts out in confession, *Unhappy man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom 7:24-25).*

8, 21. The nature, then, that has been sold under the power of sin and wounded by corruption, does not long for a savior and redeemer. Nor does the knowledge of the law, through which we have knowledge of desire, but not its conquest, set us free *from the body of this death, but the grace of the Lord through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 7:24.25).*

9. This grace is neither the nature that is dying nor the letter that kills, but the Spirit that gives life. The apostle, after all, already had a nature with the choice of the will, but he did not have a nature with health free from defect. For he said, *I know that the good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh (Rom 7:18).* He already had knowledge of the holy law, for he said, *I knew sin only through the law (Rom 7:7).* But he did not have the strength to act righteously and attain its perfection, for he said, *I do not do what I want; rather, I do what I hate, and I am unable to do the good (Rom 7:15.18).* Hence, it is neither the choice of the will nor the commandment of the law by which he is set free *from the body of this death (Rom 7:24)*, since he already had both of these, the one by nature, the other in teaching. Rather, he was asking for the help of God's grace *through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 7:25).*

10, 22. The bishops then believed that Pelagius had admitted this grace, which they knew was quite well known in the Catholic Church, when they heard him say, "Those who have turned away from sin can by their own effort and the grace of God be without sin." But there is the book which the servants of God gave me to refute.²⁸ They were his disciples, and though they were very fond of

the same Pelagius, they said that it was his. In this work he posed this question for himself, because very many were offended by the fact that he spoke against the grace of God. He stated with utter clarity that "he understood by God's grace the fact that our nature received the ability not to sin, when it was created, since it was created with free choice." On account of this book, then, I am concerned about the ambiguity of his language, just as many brothers are concerned about this same point on account of his discussions which they claim are quite well known to them. We are concerned that there may be something hidden in that ambiguity and that he will later explain to his disciples that he stated this point without conceding anything against his own doctrine. He might say something of this sort: "I said that by their own effort and by the grace of God human beings can be without sin, but you know quite well what I mean by the grace of God and you can refresh your memory by reading my book. It is the grace in which we are created by God with free choice." And thus, the bishops failed to recognize the heretic and acquitted him as Catholic, because they did not think that he meant the grace by which we human beings were created, but the grace by which we have been adopted as the new creation. The divine scripture, after all, commends this latter grace with utmost clarity.

That statement, which he made quite openly in that book which I answered, also made him suspect in my eyes. He said, "The righteous Abel never sinned in the slightest." Now he says, "But we did not say that there is anyone who never sinned from infancy to old age, but that those who have turned away from sin can be free from sin by their own effort and the grace of God." He did not, of course, say that the righteous Abel turned away from sin and remained without sin for the rest of his life; he said that he never committed any sin. Hence, if that is his book, it should certainly be corrected in accord with his answer. I do not, after all, want to say that he has lied here, for he might say that he had forgotten what he wrote in that book.

Let us, then, look at what comes next. There follow in the ecclesiastical proceedings points by which we can show, with the Lord's help, that this heresy, which we do not want to spread farther and become worse, was condemned beyond any doubt, even if Pelagius was, in the view of some, found innocent in that inquest and was certainly acquitted by his judges, who were only human.

The Statements of Caelestius Condemned at Carthage

11, 23. There follow the objections raised against Pelagius which are reported to have been found in the teaching of Caelestius, his disciple, namely, "Adam was created mortal so that he would die whether he sinned or did not sin." "The sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race." "The law leads to the kingdom just as the gospel does." "Before the coming of Christ there were

human beings without sin." "Newly born infants are in the same state in which Adam was before his transgression." "The whole human race does not die through the death or transgression of Adam, nor does the whole human race rise through the resurrection of Christ." These objections were presented with the statement that they had already been given a hearing and condemned at Carthage by your holiness and by the other bishops with you.²⁹ As you recall, I was not present, but later, when I had come to Carthage, I reviewed the proceedings, and I remember some of them. I do not know whether all of these points were included in them. But what does it matter whether some were perhaps not mentioned at that council and thus not condemned, when it is clear that they should be condemned?

Then certain other propositions were brought forth as objections which were linked to my name. These had been sent to me from Sicily, since the Catholic brethren there were upset by questions of this sort. I replied to them quite sufficiently, I believe, in the book written for Hilary;³⁰ he had sent them to me in a letter in which he asked my advice.³¹ These are the propositions: "Human beings can be without sin if they want." "Infants attain eternal life, even if they are not baptized." "If wealthy persons who have been baptized do not renounce all their possessions, they have no merit, even if they seem to do something good, and they cannot possess the kingdom of God."

24. As the proceedings bear witness, Pelagius responded as follows to these objections: "That human beings can be without sin," he stated, "has been discussed above."³² With regard to the claim that there were human beings without sin before the coming of Christ, we also declare that before the coming of Christ some people lived holy and righteous lives according to the account handed down in the holy scriptures. But even according to the testimony of these people I did not state the remaining propositions, and I do not need to account for them. But to satisfy the holy synod I declare anathema those who hold those views or have at some time held them." After this answer of his, the synod said, "Pelagius, who is present here, has given a sufficient and correct account with regard to the previously mentioned propositions, for he has condemned the propositions that were not his."

We see, therefore, and we maintain that not only Pelagius, but also the holy bishops, who presided over that court, condemned the following highly destructive evils of this heresy: "That Adam was created mortal." To explain more fully its sense, there was added: "So that he would die, whether he sinned or did not sin." "That his sin harmed him alone and not the human race." "That the law leads to the kingdom just as the gospel does." "That newly born infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression." "That the whole human race does not die through the death or transgression of Adam, and the whole human race does not rise through the resurrection of Christ." "That

infants have eternal life, even if they are not baptized.” “ That if wealthy persons who have been baptized do not renounce all their possessions, they have no merit, even if they seem to do something good, and they cannot possess the kingdom of heaven.” It is clear that all these propositions were condemned by that ecclesiastical court, with Pelagius himself condemning them along with the participating bishops.

25. Many of our weak brothers were being disturbed by these questions and by the statement of these views which were being fiercely argued and heatedly debated everywhere. Hence, we were compelled by loving concern, which by the grace of Christ we ought to have toward the Church of Christ, to write to Marcellinus of blessed memory about certain of these questions and especially about the baptism of infants.³³ For he was daily enduring their troublesome arguments and consulted me by letter. Later, at your bidding, and helped by your prayers, I preached with as much energy as I could on the question of infant baptism in the Basilica of the Ancients.³⁴ I held in my hands a letter of the glorious martyr, Cyprian;³⁵ I quoted his words on this subject and commented on them in order to remove this wicked error from the hearts of some people who had been convinced of those ideas which we see were condemned in these proceedings. These are the ideas which certain of their proponents were trying to instill in some of our brothers and sisters; they threatened that, unless they held them, they could be condemned by the judgment of the Eastern churches. Look, fourteen bishops of the Eastern church in the very land, in which our Lord revealed the presence of his flesh,³⁶ acquitted Pelagius only on the condition that he condemned these propositions as opposed to the Catholic faith. Hence, if he was acquitted because he condemned such propositions, they were certainly condemned, as will be seen at greater length and more clearly in what follows.

26. Let us, then, look at those two propositions which Pelagius refused to condemn, since he knew they were his own. To remove the source of the offense in them, he explained how he understood them. He said, “ That human beings can be without sin has been discussed above.”³⁷ We too certainly recall its having been discussed, but its sense was softened and it was approved by the judges, because there was added “ by the grace of God,” of which no mention was made in those chapters. But we must examine more carefully how he replied with regard to the second proposition. He said, “ With regard to the claim that there were human beings without sin before the coming of Christ, we also declare that before the coming of Christ some people lived holy and righteous lives according to the account handed down in the holy scriptures.” He did not dare to say, “ We also say that there were human beings without sin before the coming of Christ,” since that point was raised as an objection to him from the statements of Caelestius. He realized, after all, how dangerous and difficult a point it was. Rather, he said, “ We also declare that before the coming of Christ

some people lived holy and righteous lives." Who would deny that? But this is one thing; it is quite another to say that they were without sin. After all, those people lived holy and righteous lives who, nonetheless, said in all truth, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8). Even today many people lead holy and righteous lives, and yet they do not lie when they say in prayer, *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* (Mt 6:12). The judges were satisfied with this proposition in the sense that Pelagius claimed that he said it, not in the sense in which the objection maintained that Caelestius had said it. Now let us examine the points which remain as well as we can.

Pelagius' Teaching That the Church on Earth Is Spotless

12. 27. The objection was made to Pelagius that he said, "The Church on earth is without stain or wrinkle."³⁸ On this point the Donatists also had a long debate with us in a conference we held.³⁹ But we pressed them hard regarding bad people being mixed with the good, like straw with the grain, on account of the comparison with a threshing floor.⁴⁰ With that same comparison we can also answer these people, unless they perhaps want us to think that the Church consists of only good people, people who, they claim, have no sin at all so that the Church can be without stain or wrinkle. But if that is so, I repeat the words I mentioned just before:⁴¹ How are they members of the Church, when true humility cries out about them, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8)? Or how will the Church pray the prayer which the Lord taught her, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12), if the Church exists in this world without stain or wrinkle? Finally, we must ask them about themselves whether or not they admit that they have sins. If they say that they do not, we must say to them that they deceive themselves and that the truth is not in them. But if they admit that they have sin, what else do they admit but that they have stains and wrinkles? Therefore, these people are not members of the Church, because she is without stain and wrinkle, while they have stains and wrinkles.

28. To this objection he replied with a cautious alertness, which the Catholic judges doubtlessly approved. He said, "We said this, but we said it in the sense that by the baptismal bath the Church is cleansed from every spot and wrinkle and that the Lord wants her to remain that way." To this the synod said, "We are satisfied with this too." After all, who of us denies that the sins of all are forgiven in baptism and that all the faithful arise from the bath of rebirth without spot or wrinkle? And does any Catholic Christian not agree with what the Lord also wants, namely, that in the future the Church will remain without stain or wrinkle? But at present by God's mercy and truth the holy Church is being

guided to that perfection in which it will remain for eternity without stain or wrinkle.

Between baptism in which all past stains and wrinkles are removed and the kingdom in which the Church will remain forever without stain and wrinkle, there is the present intervening time of prayer. In this present time the Church must say, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12). Here is the reason why their statement that the Church is in this world without stain and wrinkle is raised as an objection to them. It sounds as if they would dare to exclude the prayer by which day and night the Church asks for itself the pardon of sins even after baptism. About this intermediate time between the remission of sins that takes place in baptism and the permanent state without sin which will be found in the kingdom, nothing was discussed, nothing was decided by the bishops. They merely recorded this brief point which he thought he should make, namely, that he did not say it in the sense in which the objection was made. For when he said, "We said this, but we said it in the sense," what did he want them to think but that he did not say it in the sense in which those who raised the objection believed he had said it. Nonetheless, it is sufficiently clear, I believe, what the judges referred to, when they said that they were satisfied, namely, the baptism by which sins are washed away and the kingdom in which the holy Church, which is now being purified, will remain without sin.

Caelestius' Claim That We Do More Than We Are Commanded

13, 29. Then objections were raised from Caelestius' book⁴² regarding the contents of each chapter more in terms of their sense than in terms of the words themselves. Caelestius certainly developed them more fully, but at that time those who had brought the charges against Pelagius said that they could not add all the details. Hence, they said that it was stated in the first chapter of Caelestius' book that "we do more than is prescribed in the law and the gospel." To this Pelagius answered, "They set that forth as if it were our statement, but we said it in the sense of the apostle speaking on virginity. He says of it, *I do not have a command of the Lord*" (1 Cor 7:25). The synod answered, "The Church recognizes this too."

I have read for myself the sense in which Caelestius set it down in his book, if he is not going to disown it. After all, he said this in order to persuade us that we have through the nature of free choice so great an ability not to sin that we do even more than has been commanded. For many observe perpetual virginity which has not been commanded, though in order not to sin it is sufficient to keep the commandments.

The judges did not accept and approve Pelagius' response in the sense that those who also observe virginity, which goes beyond what is commanded, keep

all the commandments of the law and the gospel. They only accepted it in the sense that virginity, which goes beyond what is commanded, is superior to marital chastity which is commanded and that to observe the former is more than to observe the latter, though we can do neither of them without the grace of God. After all, the apostle said in speaking of this matter, *I wish all were as I am, but each person has his or her own gift from God, one this gift, another that* (1 Cor 7:7). Moreover, when the disciples said to the Lord, *If this is the condition of a man with a wife, it is better not to marry*, or in better Latin, *it is better not to take a wife*, he said, *Not everyone understands this statement, but those who have received the gift* (Mt 19:10-11). It was, therefore, this point that the bishops declared that the Church accepts, namely, that permanent virginity, which is beyond what is commanded, is more than marital chastity, which is commanded. But the judges did not know the sense in which Pelagius or Caelestius had made that statement.

Caelestius' Errors on Grace and the Human Will

14, 30. After this there were also raised as objections to Pelagius other important chapters of Caelestius which certainly ought to have been condemned. If Pelagius had not declared them anathema, he would himself undoubtedly have been condemned. It was read out that Caelestius wrote in the third chapter, "God's grace and help is not given for individual actions, but consists in free choice or in the law and teaching." He also taught that the grace of God is given in accord with our merits, because, if God gives it to sinners, he is obviously unjust. He drew the following conclusion: "Hence, the grace of God lies in my will, whether I am worthy or unworthy. For, if we do everything by the grace of God, when we are overcome by sin, it is not we who are overcome, but the grace of God which wanted to help us in every way, but could not." Again he said, "If it is the grace of God when we overcome sin, then God is at fault when we are overcome by sin, because he either could not or would not protect us completely." Pelagius replied to these charges, "Let those who say that these are Caelestius' statements see whether they are Caelestius' or not. I, however, have never held them, and I declare anathema one who holds them." The synod said, "The holy synod accepts your condemnation of these statements."

On all these points at least, the answer of Pelagius in condemning them is clear, and the judgment of the bishops in condemning them is unequivocal. It may still be doubtful or unclear whether Pelagius or Caelestius, or both of them, or neither of them, or others either with them or in their name, held or still hold such propositions. It has, nonetheless, been made quite clear by this court that they were condemned and that Pelagius would have been condemned along with them, if he had not himself condemned them. Now after this judgment, when

we argue against opinions of this sort, we are certainly arguing against a condemned heresy.

31. I also want to explain a point at greater length.⁴³ Earlier, when Pelagius said that "one can be without sin by the help of the grace of God,"⁴⁴ I was afraid that he meant by this grace an ability of nature created by God with free choice. That idea is found in the book which I accepted as his and to which I replied.⁴⁵ Moreover, I was afraid that he would in this fashion mislead his judges who were not well informed on the question. But now when he condemns those who say that the grace and help of God is not given for each action, but consists in free choice or in the law and teaching, it becomes quite clear that he means the grace that is preached in the Church of Christ and that is bestowed through the ministry of the Holy Spirit so that we are helped for each of our actions. Hence, we always pray for this timely help so that we may not be brought into temptation.⁴⁶ Earlier he had said that "only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin,"⁴⁷ and he explained that he located the help not to sin in the knowledge of the law. Now I no longer fear that, when he says this, he would want us to understand that this same knowledge of the law is God's grace. For, look, he condemns those who hold this position; see, he wants us to understand that neither the nature of free choice nor the law and teaching is the grace of God by which we are helped for each action. What alternative does he have but to understand that it is the grace of God which the apostle says is given by the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Of that grace the Lord says, *Do not worry about how or what you will say, for what you should say will be given to you at that moment by the Holy Spirit. After all, it is not you who speak; rather, it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you* (Mt 10:19-20). Earlier he said, "All are governed by their own will," and he explained that "he had said this on account of free choice which God assists when it chooses what is good."⁴⁸ Now we need not fear that, when he says this, he meant in this passage too that God helps us through the nature of free choice and through the teaching of the law. He correctly condemned those who say that God's grace and help is not given for each action, but consists in free choice or in the law and teaching. Hence, the grace or help of God is given for each action, and it is something apart from free choice or from the law and teaching. Accordingly, we are governed by God in each action, when we act correctly. And our prayer is not in vain, when we say, *Guide my journeys according to your word so that all sinfulness may not lord it over me* (Ps 119:133).

Caelestius' Claim That Everyone Can Have All the Graces

32. What comes after this also troubles me. The objection was made to him from the fifth chapter of Caelestius' book that they claim that everyone can have

all the virtues and graces and that they destroy the diversity of graces which the apostle teaches. Pelagius answered, "We said this, but they have found fault with it out of ill will and ignorance. We do not, after all, destroy the diversity of graces; rather, we say that God gives all the graces to one who is worthy to receive them, as he gave them to the apostle Paul." To this the synod said, "Your views on the gift of the graces found in the holy apostle are reasonable and in accord with the mind of the Church." At this point someone will say, "What troubles you then? Are you going to deny that the apostle had all the virtues and graces?" If one understands all the gifts which the apostle mentioned in the one passage—and I think that the bishops understood these, when they gave their approval and declared that he spoke in accord with the mind of the Church—then I myself have no doubt that the apostle Paul had them all. He says, *God appointed in the Church certain people, first apostles, secondly prophets, third teachers, then those with the gift of miracles, next those with gifts of healing, helping, governing, and speaking different languages* (1 Cor 12:28). Well then, are we going to say that the apostle Paul did not have all these gifts? Who would dare to say that? After all, by the very fact that he was an apostle, he had the gift of apostleship. But he also had the gift of prophecy. Was this not his prophecy: *The Spirit clearly says that in the last days some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceiving spirits, to the teaching of demons* (1 Tm 6:1), and so on? He was also *the teacher of the nations in the faith and in the truth* (1 Tm 2:7), and he worked miracles and produced healings. For he shook off a viper that bit him with no injury to his hand,⁴⁹ and the paralytic immediately got up when his health was restored at Paul's word.⁵⁰ It is not clear what he means by the gift of helping, since the meaning of the word is very broad. But who would say that he was lacking this grace, when by his labor he clearly helped the salvation of men and women? What is better known than his gift of governing, since the Lord then governed so many churches through him and now governs them through his letters? What sorts of languages could he have lacked, since he himself said, *I give thanks to God that I speak the language of all of you* (1 Cor 14:18)?

Since we must believe that the apostle Paul lacked none of these gifts, the judges correctly approved the answer of Pelagius when he said that all graces had been given to him. But there are other graces which were not mentioned here. After all, although the apostle Paul was a truly eminent member of the body of Christ,⁵¹ he received no more and no greater graces than⁵² the head of the whole body, whether in his human flesh or in his human soul. For the Word of God assumed his own creature into the unity of his person so that he might be our head and we might be his body. And indeed, if all of these gifts were found in each individual, the comparison drawn between the body of Christ and the members of our body would seem pointless. After all, there are certain things

common to all the members, such as health or life, but there are other things which are proper to individual members. Thus, the ear does not perceive colors, and the eye does not perceive sounds. For this reason scripture says, *If the whole body were an eye, how would we hear? If the whole body were hearing, how would we smell?* (1 Cor 12:17). Scripture does not say this, as if it were impossible for God to give the sense of seeing to the ears and the sense of hearing to the eyes. It is certain, nonetheless, that the apostle was referring to what God does in the body of Christ which is the Church⁵³ and to the different churches which, like different members, each have their own gifts as well. It is now clear on what grounds and for what reason those who made this objection did not want the diversity of graces to be done away with. It is also clear for what reason the bishops were able to approve Pelagius' response on account of the apostle Paul in whom we recognize all the gifts which he mentioned in the one passage.

33. What then are the grounds for my having earlier said that I was troubled by this proposition? It is precisely the fact that Pelagius said, "God gives to one who is worthy to receive them all the graces, just as he gave them to the apostle Paul." I would not be concerned at all about his response, if it did not touch upon this question about which the utmost care must be taken that the grace of God is not attacked, while we remain silent and overlook such a great evil. He did not say that God gives to one to whom he wills, but says, "God gives to one who is worthy to receive them all the graces." Hence, I could not, in reading this, fail to be filled with suspicion. The word "grace" itself and the meaning of this word is done away with, if it is not given gratuitously, but is received by one who is worthy of it.

Perhaps someone will say that I do the apostle an injustice in saying that he was not worthy of grace. Quite the contrary, I do him an injustice and do harm to myself, if I do not believe what he says. Did he not define grace so that he showed that it is called grace, because it is given gratuitously? After all, he said, *If it is by grace, it is not on the basis of works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace* (Rom 11:6). Hence, he also says, *For one who works recompense is not counted as a grace, but as something owed* (Rom 4:4). It is owed, then, to whoever is worthy of it. But if it is owed, it is not grace; a grace is given, but a debt is paid. A grace, then, is given to those who are not worthy of it so that what is owed may be paid to those who are worthy of it. But God brings it about that people have that for which he is going to repay them, when they are worthy, by giving to them what they did not have, when they were unworthy.

34. Pelagius will perhaps say, "I did not say that the apostle, to whom those great graces were given, was worthy of them on the basis of works, but on the basis of faith. After all, it was not the good works which he did not previously have, but his faith that merited them." Well then, are we to suppose that faith does not involve work? On the contrary, it truly works, for it works through

love.⁵⁴ However much the works of unbelievers are praised, we know that the statement of the apostle is true and irrefutable, *Everything that does not come from faith is sin* (Rom 14:23).⁵⁵ He often says that righteousness is credited to us, not on the basis of works, but on the basis of faith, since faith works through love.⁵⁶ For he does not want anyone to think that one can come to faith by the merits of works, since faith is the beginning from which good works arise. After all, as was just said, what does not come from faith is sin.⁵⁷ Hence, in the Song of Songs it is said to the Church, *You will come and pass from the beginning of faith* (Sg 4:8 LXX).

Thus, although faith obtains the grace to do good works, we have not merited to have this faith by any faith. Rather, in giving to us the faith to follow the Lord, his mercy has gone before us.⁵⁸ Have we given it to ourselves and made ourselves believers? Here too, I will, of course, cry out, *He made us; we did not make ourselves* (Ps 100:9); the teaching of the apostle presents us with nothing⁵⁹ else. He says, *Through the grace of God which has been given to me, I say to all who are among you not to be more wise than one ought to be, but to be wise in moderation, as God has given to each one the measure of faith* (Rom 12:3). From him we also have this text, *After all, what do you have that you have not received?* (1 Cor 4:7). And so, we have received even that from which there begins whatever good we have in our actions.

Paul's Claim to the Crown of Righteousness

35. If then these are not a recompense for those who are worthy, but gifts to the unworthy, what do these words of the same apostle mean? *I have fought the good fight; I have run the race; I have kept the faith. There remains for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will repay me on that day* (2 Tm 4:7-8). One who asks this fails to realize that the crown could not have been given to someone worthy of it, unless grace had been given to someone who was unworthy of it. After all, he said, *I have fought the good fight* (2 Tm 4:7), but the same man also said, *Thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ* (1 Cor 15:57). He said, *I have run the race* (2 Tm 4:7), but the same man said, *It does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16). He said, *I have kept the faith* (2 Tm 4:7), but the same man said, *I know in whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to preserve for that day what I have deposited with him* (2 Tm 1:12), that is, what I have entrusted to him. For some manuscripts do not have "what I have deposited," but "what I have entrusted," which is clearer. But what do we entrust to God except those things which we pray that he will keep. These include our faith itself. The Lord said, *I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail* (Lk 22:32). What else did he teach the apostle Peter

by his prayer, but that God would preserve his faith so that he would not fail by yielding to temptation? And so, blessed Paul, you great preacher of grace, I will speak without fear—after all, who will be less angry with me for saying these things than you who said that we should say them and taught that we should teach them! I will speak, I say, without fear: Your crown is a recompense for your merits, but your merits are God's gifts.

36. The apostle, then, received the reward owed to him as someone worthy of it, but grace bestowed on him as someone unworthy of it the very apostleship which was not owed to him. Am I going to regret having said this? Heaven forbid! After all, I will be defended by his testimony from any such hostility, and no one will call me brazen except one who would be brazen enough to call him a liar. He cries out; he testifies. In order to remind us of God's gifts to him and to boast not in himself, but in the Lord,⁶⁰ he says not only that he had nothing to his credit by which he merited to become an apostle, but even that he had much to his discredit so that he might make manifest and preach the grace of God. He says, *I am not fit to be called an apostle* (1 Cor 15:9). What does that mean but "I am not worthy of this." In fact, many manuscripts have this latter reading. This is the point we are after, for all the graces are contained in that gift of the office of apostle. After all, it was neither fitting nor proper that an apostle lack prophecy or not be a teacher or that he not be resplendent with miracles and gifts of healing or that he not offer help or not govern churches or not be outstanding in different kinds of languages. The single word "apostleship" embraces all these.

Let us, then, consult him, or rather let us listen to him. Let us say to him, "Holy apostle Paul, the monk Pelagius says that you were worthy to receive all the graces of your apostleship. What do you yourself have to say to us?" He answers, *I am not worthy to be called an apostle* (1 Cor 15:9). And so, in order to show honor to Paul, shall I dare to believe Pelagius about Paul rather than Paul himself? I will not do so. For I will bring trouble upon myself rather than honor to him, if I do so.⁶¹ Let us also listen to why he is not worthy to be called an apostle. He says, *Because I have persecuted the Church of God* (1 Cor 15:9). If we follow what he is saying, who would not think that he should be condemned rather than called by Christ? Who could love Paul the preacher without despising Paul the persecutor? Hence, he said very well and in all truth, *I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I have persecuted the Church of God*. How did you merit so great a good when you were committing so great an evil? Let all the nations hear his response, *But by the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor 15:10). Can we be taught that it is grace in any other way than by its being given to someone unworthy of it? He says, *And his grace has not been without results in my case* (1 Cor 15:10). In order to reveal the choice of the will, he also gives this command to others; he says, *But while commanding you, we also pray that*

you do not receive God's grace without results (2 Cor 6:1).⁶² How does he prove that God's grace was not without results in him but from the following statement: *Rather, I have labored more than all of them* (1 Cor 15:10)? Hence, he did not labor in order that he might receive grace,⁶³ but he received grace in order that he might labor. And thus, as someone unworthy he received grace gratuitously so that he might be worthy to receive the rewards owed to him. He did not dare to claim the labor as his own. After all, when he said, *I have labored more than all of them*, he immediately added, *Not I, but the grace of God that was with me* (1 Cor 15:10). What a great teacher, confessor, and preacher of grace! What does he mean by saying: *I have labored more. Not I?* When his will shows a bit of pride, his piety is immediately alert, and his humility trembles, because he recognizes his own weakness.

John of Jerusalem's Appeal to Saint Paul

37. As the records show, John, the holy bishop of the church of Jerusalem, wisely appealed to this testimony.⁶⁴ When asked about the conference that had been held in his presence before the trial,⁶⁵ he gave an account to our fellow bishops who presided together with him at the trial. He said that some people were then murmuring and claiming that Pelagius said, "This can be attained without the grace of God," that is, what he previously claimed, namely, that "human beings can be without sin." John said, "I found him in error on this point and brought out the fact that even the apostle Paul, who labored much, not by his own strength, but by the grace of God, said, *I have labored more than all of them. Not I, but the grace of God that was with me* (1 Cor 15:10). Again Paul said, *It does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16). There is also the text, *Unless the Lord has built the house, the builders have labored in vain* (Ps 127:1), and many similar passages from the holy scriptures. But Pelagius said to those who did not accept the passages which we quoted from the holy scriptures, but continued to murmur, 'That is what I believe as well. Let him be anathema who says that human beings can develop in all the virtues without the grace of God.'

15. 38. Bishop John reported this in the hearing of Pelagius who could, of course, have said respectfully: "Your Holiness is mistaken; you have not remembered correctly. I did not say with regard to the passages that you quoted from the scriptures, 'That is what I believe as well,' because I do not understand them to mean that the grace of God works along with a human being so that one's not sinning *does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16)."

16. 39. There are, after all, certain commentaries on the Letter of Paul written to the Romans which are said to be the work of Pelagius himself. In them he

states that the words, *It does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16), were not stated as Paul's own view. Rather, when he said this, he had put them in the mouth of someone posing questions and answering them, with the implication that one should, of course, not say this.⁶⁶ And yet, bishop John clearly acknowledged that this represented the view of the apostle and cited it so that Pelagius would not suppose that anyone can avoid sin without the grace of God. Moreover, he said that Pelagius answered, "That is what I believe as well." Although Pelagius was present to hear this report, he did not reply, "This is not what I believe." He must either deny that this perverse interpretation is his own, or he must not hesitate to change and correct it. By that interpretation he wanted us to understand that the apostle had not held this view, but rather had rejected it. For whatever bishop John said concerning our absent brothers, whether his fellow bishops, Heros and Lazarus, or the priest Orosius, or others whose names are not mentioned there,⁶⁷ I believe that he understands that it did not count against their complaint. For, if they were present, I will not say that they could have proved him a liar, but they could have reminded him of what he had perhaps forgotten or pointed out how the Latin translator had misled him—not, of course, because he wanted to deceive, but because he had some difficulty with a foreign language that he did not understand well. There is, however, certainly no question of this in the proceedings. They have been established precisely so that the dishonest could not lie and so that good people would not forget anything. But if someone hereafter raises some question against our brethren whom we have mentioned and summons them before an episcopal court, they will answer the summons as soon as possible. What need is there for us to belabor this point, when not even the judges themselves wanted to add any further explanation to the report of our fellow bishop?

17, 40. Pelagius was present for those testimonies from the scriptures, and by his silence he acknowledged that he had said that such was his belief. Recalling then that testimony of the apostle from a little before and finding that he said, *I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I have persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor 15:9-10), how could he have failed to see that he should not have said, in dealing with the abundance of graces that this apostle had received, that he was worthy to receive them? After all, he not only said that he was unworthy, but he proved it by giving another reason. In that way he showed that grace is truly grace. But if he could not think of or recall that statement made a while back by the holy bishop John, he should have recalled his own recent response; he should have paid attention to the propositions from Caelestius he condemned just before, when they had been raised as objections to him. For among them there is the objection that Caelestius had said, "God's grace is given in accord with our merits."⁶⁸ If

Pelagius, then, truthfully condemned this point, why is it that he says that all the graces were given to the apostle in accord with his merit? Or is it one thing to be worthy to receive and something else to receive in accord with merit? Can he by some subtle argument show that someone is worthy, but does not merit? Nonetheless, Caelestius—or whoever else it was who is the source of all those propositions he had condemned above—will not allow him to wrap this point in clouds and hide in them. After all, he presses the point and says, “And grace itself lies in my will, whether I am worthy or unworthy.”⁶⁹ If then Pelagius correctly and truthfully condemned this view that holds that the grace of God is given in accord with merit and to those who were worthy, how did he hold in his heart or utter with his lips his statement, “We say that God gives all the graces to one who is worthy to receive them”? If one pays careful attention to this, who would not be troubled by his answer or defense?

41. Why then, someone will say, did the judges give their approval? I admit I am myself still puzzled. But these few words could, I suppose, easily have escaped their hearing or their attention. Or they may have thought that his statement could somehow admit a correct interpretation. Hence, they may have thought that they ought not to stir up a controversy over what is almost a single word with a man from whom they thought they had clear statements on this point. The same thing might also have happened to us, if we sat with them in that courtroom. After all, if instead of where he said, “worthy,” he had said “predestined” or something of the sort, no worry would touch and trouble our heart at all. And yet someone might say that one who is justified by the election of grace, not because of any antecedent merits, but by God’s decision, is called “worthy,” just as that person is called “one of the elect.” In that case it would be hard to judge whether one may certainly say this or may say it with only slight harm to the meaning.

As far as I am concerned, I would readily pass over this word, if that book to which I replied did not cause me to be concerned about what Pelagius himself meant.⁷⁰ After all, in that book he says that the grace of God is precisely our nature gratuitously created with free choice.⁷¹ My concern is that he omitted the term, not out of carelessness about language, but as a point of doctrine. Moreover, the last propositions which remain to be examined so upset the judges that they thought that they ought to be condemned even before Pelagius’ answer.

18, 42. The statement in the sixth chapter of Caelestius’ book was raised as an objection, “Only those who have become completely without sin can be called children of God.” That statement implied that even the apostle Paul was not a child of God, since he said, *Not that I have already grasped the goal or already have become perfect* (Phil 3:12). In chapter seven one finds, “Forgetfulness and ignorance are not included under sin, since they do not come about voluntarily, but necessarily.” And yet, David says, *Do not bear in mind the sins*

of my youth and of my ignorance (Ps 25:7), and in the law sacrifices are offered⁷² for ignorance as if it were a sin.⁷³ In the tenth chapter it says, "Free choice does not exist, if one needs the help of God, because each person has in his own will the power to do or not to do something." In the twelfth chapter it says, "Our victory comes not from the help of God, but from free choice," a conclusion which he was said to infer as follows: "Ours is the victory, because we have by our own will taken up arms; so too, it is ours, on the other hand, when we are defeated, because we have refused to arm ourselves with our own will." He cited the testimony from the apostle Peter that *we are sharers in the divine nature* (2 Pt 1:4), and he is said to have formulated the syllogism that "if the soul is not able to be without sin, then God too is subject to sin, since a part of him, namely, our soul, is subject to sin." In the thirteenth chapter, he says, "Pardon is not given to penitents in accord with God's grace and mercy, but in accord with their merit and labor, since they were worthy of mercy because of their penance."

19, 43. When these had been read out, the synod said, "What response does the monk Pelagius here present make to these propositions that have been read? For the holy synod and the holy Catholic Church of God reject them." Pelagius answered, "Again I state that these propositions are not mine, as even these men testify. As I said, I do not need to account for them. But the statements which I have admitted are my own, I claim are correct.⁷⁴ Those which I have said are not mine I reject in accord with the judgment of the holy Church, and I declare anathema everyone who opposes and contradicts the teachings of the holy Catholic Church. For I myself believe in the Trinity of a single substance and in everything according to the teaching of the holy Catholic Church. But if any hold different views, let them be anathema."

The Judgment of the Synod on Pelagius' Orthodoxy

20, 44. The synod stated, "Since we are satisfied with the replies of the monk Pelagius here present, who has agreed with sound doctrine and has rejected and condemned teachings contrary to the faith of the Church, we acknowledge that he is in communion with the Catholic Church."

21, 45. These are the proceedings over which Pelagius' friends rejoice, because he has been acquitted. We too desire and hope for his salvation in Christ. After all, he took considerable care to prove our friendship toward him, even by our private correspondence which was produced, read in this court, and included in the proceedings.⁷⁵ But with regard to his being found innocent, which is presumed rather than clearly proved, we ought not to be overly hasty to rejoice. In saying this, I do not accuse the court of either negligence or connivance or—what is certainly far from the case—of assenting to godless teachings. Nonetheless, I do not believe that their judgment, though it has been deservedly

approved and praised, has proved Pelagius innocent in the eyes of those who have more extensive and certain knowledge of him. After all, especially in the absence of those who had lodged the charge against him, the judges were hearing the case of someone who was all but unknown, and they could hardly subject the man to a more rigorous examination. But they completely destroyed the heresy itself, provided that the proponents of his error only follow their judgment. How can those who know well what Pelagius usually taught, whether people who opposed his arguments or those who are grateful that they have been set free from this error, fail to hold him suspect, when they read not a simple confession condemning his past errors, but a defense in which he as much as claims that he never held other views than those which this court approved in his answers?

Augustine's Gradual Awareness of Pelagius' Teachings

22, 46. For, to speak of my own case, I first heard people mention the name of Pelagius with great praise, when he was far off and residing in Rome. Later, I began to hear by rumor that he was arguing against the grace of God. Though I was saddened by this and heard it from people I believed, I wanted to know something of the sort from the man himself or from a book of his so that he could not deny it, if I undertook to refute it. After he came to Africa, that is, to the shores of Hippos, he was welcomed in my absence, and nothing of the sort was heard from him, as I learned from our friends, since he departed from there more quickly than one might have expected. Later, I saw his face in Carthage once or twice, as I recall, when I was very busy with preparations for the conference which we were about to hold with the Donatists.⁷⁶ But he quickly left there for abroad. Meanwhile, these teachings were warmly expounded on the lips of those who were reputed to be his disciples to the point that Caelestius was brought before an ecclesiastical court and received a sentence worthy of his perversity.⁷⁷ We thought that one proceeded against them in a better manner, if their errors were refuted and opposed without mentioning anyone's name, while the persons themselves were corrected by fear of an ecclesiastical court rather than punished by the court itself. Hence, we did not cease from speaking against those evils in books and in homilies to the people.

23, 47. But then the servants of God, Timasius and James, good and honest men, gave me that book.⁷⁸ In it Pelagius openly addressed to himself, as if it were coming from an opponent, the objection which was a source of the great hostility which he encountered. He thought that he could not solve the question concerning God's grace otherwise than by saying that God's grace is nature created with free choice. At times, he added to this nature—though tenuously and unclearly—either the help of the law or even the forgiveness of sins.⁷⁹ Then

there became clear to me beyond any doubt the great danger that the poison of that perverse error presented to salvation in Christ. Nonetheless, I did not put Pelagius' name into the work by which I refuted that book,⁸⁰ believing that I would more easily attain my goal if I preserved our friendship and spared him embarrassment, though I could not spare his writings.

Hence, I am uneasy about his having said at some point in that trial, "I declare anathema those who hold those views or have at some time held them."⁸¹ It would have been enough for him to say, "those who hold those views," for us to believe that he had corrected his position. But when he added, "or have at some time held them," he was, first of all, so bold as unjustly to condemn those who did not deserve it, namely, those who were already free from the error which they had learned either from other teachers or from Pelagius himself. Secondly, who among those who knew that he formerly not only held, but also taught these doctrines, would not rightly suspect that he had pretended to condemn those who hold them? After all, he did not hesitate to condemn in the same manner those who had once held them, and they will recall that he was counted among them as a teacher of these doctrines. For example, to pass over the others, how will he look Timasius and James in the eye? How will he face them, his friends and former disciples, for whom I wrote the book in answer to his book? I certainly do not think that I should pass over in silence their reply to me. Rather, I have appended a copy of their letter.⁸²

24, 48. "To our truly blessed lord and rightly venerable father, bishop Augustine, Timasius and James send greetings in the Lord. The grace of God brought to us by your word has so restored and refreshed us, blessed lord and rightly venerable father, that we say in all truth, *He sent his word and he has healed us* (Ps 107:20). We find that Your Holiness has opened up the text of that small book with such care that we are stunned by the answers given to the individual points, whether in those matters which a Christian should refute and detest and flee from, or in those in which Pelagius is not clearly shown to have been in error, although by some form of craftiness he believed that he should eliminate the grace of God in them as well. There is, however, one thing that strikes us in this great benefit, namely, that this splendid gift of the grace of God has shone forth somewhat late. For, as it is, there are no longer present certain people whose blindness needed to be illumined by the brilliance of this pure truth. Still, we do not give up hope that this same grace will, by God's goodness, reach them, even if it is somewhat later, for *he wills all human beings to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tm 2:4). As for ourselves, we earlier cast off our subjection to this error, after having been instructed by the spirit of love which is present in you. We now also give thanks that we have learned to teach to others what we earlier came to believe, since the rich explanation of Your Holiness makes the path more easy." And in another hand there is written,

“May the mercy of our God preserve Your Beatitude, keep you mindful of us, and bring you to eternal glory.”

25, 49. If Pelagius, then, would admit that he had at one time, as is only human, been involved in this error and would now declare anathema those who hold such doctrines, anyone who would not congratulate him for having embraced the path of truth would himself lose the very core of Christian love. But it is not bad enough that he has not admitted that he has been set free from that plague; he even condemns those who have been set free, though they love him so much that they desire him to be set free as well. Among these people are those who have indicated their good will toward him by this letter sent to me. For they had him especially in mind, when they said that they regretted that I had written that book so late. They said, “For, as it is, there are no longer present certain people whose blindness needed to be illumined by the brilliance of this pure truth. Still, we do not give up hope,” they continue, “that this same grace will, by God’s goodness, reach them, even if it is somewhat later.”⁸³ They thought that they should pass over in silence the name or names of these people, so that friendship might survive and the error of their friends might die instead.

50. But if Pelagius now has God in mind, if he is not ungrateful to the mercy of God who brought him to that episcopal court precisely so that he would not dare to defend these condemned propositions, but would recognize that he should hate them and cast them aside, he will welcome our writings with gratitude. After all, by having mentioned his name, we open up the wound which needs to be healed. He would welcome these writings more gratefully than those in which, while we feared to cause pain, we increased the swelling—something we now regret. But if he is angry at me, he should consider how wrong his anger is, and he should at long last beg for God’s grace in order to conquer his anger. After all, during the trial he admitted that this grace was necessary for each of our actions. And thus, with God’s help, he will attain a true victory. For what benefit does he derive from the extensive praise for him in those letters of the bishops? He thought that they should be mentioned and even read and entered as evidence in his favor, as if all those who listened to his vigorous and even burning exhortations toward moral goodness could easily know that he held these erroneous doctrines!

Augustine’s Letter to Pelagius

26, 51. In the letter of mine which he introduced,⁸⁴ I not only held myself back from praising him; I even admonished him to hold sound doctrines, as much as I could, without raising any question about the grace of God. I, of course, addressed him as, “lord,” in the salutation of the letter, for in accord with the practice in letter writing we generally write that way even to certain

people who are not Christians. Nor did I do this insincerely, for in some sense we have an obligation freely to be of service to all that they may attain salvation in Christ. I addressed him as, "beloved," and I repeat it now. And if he is angry at me, I will still say it, since, if I do not maintain my love for him despite his anger, I will do harm to myself instead. I spoke of him as someone I longed for very much, because I strongly desired to converse with him face to face. After all, I had already heard that, as soon as there was some mention made of it, he tried in open argument to oppose the grace by which we are justified. Moreover, the shortness of my letter indicates that. I thanked him for having brought me joy with his letter by assuring me of his health and that of his friends. After all, we should want those people also to enjoy good bodily health whom we want to have the correct faith. Then I expressed my hope that the Lord would reward him, not with goods pertaining to bodily health, but rather with those which he thought or perhaps still thinks are found only in the choice of the will and in our own power. At the same time and for the same reason I wished him eternal life. Then, because in his letter which I was answering he had extensively and kindly praised certain goods of that sort in me, I also asked him to pray for me so that the Lord might make me the sort of person that he already believed me to be. In that way I meant to admonish him—quite contrary to his views—that the very righteousness which he thought praiseworthy in me *does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16). This is everything that my short letter contains, and that was the intention with which I dictated it. It reads as follows.

27-28, 52. "To Pelagius, my beloved lord and brother for whom I long very much, Augustine sends greetings in the Lord. I am very grateful that you were so kind as to bring me joy by your letter and assure me of your good health. May the Lord reward you, my beloved lord and brother for whom I long very much, with the good things by which you may be good forever and live eternally with the eternal God. Though I do not find in myself the grounds for that praise for me which your kind letter contains, I cannot fail to be grateful for your good will toward the slight goodness I have. At the same time I admonish you rather to pray for me so that the Lord might make me the sort of person you think me already to be." And in another hand it says, "While keeping us in mind and enjoying good health, may you be pleasing to the Lord, my dear lord and brother for whom I long very much."

29, 53. By my prayer in the closing line, namely, that he might be pleasing to the Lord, I indicated that this lies in God's grace rather than in the human will alone, since I did not exhort or command or teach him this, but uttered a prayer. If I were to exhort or command or teach him, I would show that it is also a matter of free choice, though I would not take anything away from God's grace. So too, by uttering a prayer, I certainly called attention to God's grace, though I did not

destroy the choice of the will. Why then did he introduce this letter at the trial? If from the beginning his views had been in accord with it, he would never perhaps have been summoned to the episcopal court, at least by our brothers who are good persons, though offended by the errors of his arguments. In any case, however, just as I have given an account of my letter, so others, whose letters he introduced as evidence, might, if it were necessary, give an account of theirs, stating what they thought or what they did not know or their reason for writing. It makes it irrelevant that Pelagius boasts of his friendship with certain holy persons, or that he cites the letters of certain people in praise of himself, or that he produces various accounts of his acquittal. Pelagius must confess his errors and condemn those statements against the grace of God by which we are called and justified. The testimony of reliable witnesses has proved that he wrote them in his book. He must also write and publicly argue against those statements. Only then will he be seen as having mended his ways by those who know him well.

Pelagius' Reaction to the Judgment of the Synod

30, 54. I am not going to pass over in silence the events which followed this trial and which increase my suspicions even more. There came into our hands a letter which is said to be a letter of Pelagius himself writing to his friend, a priest, who, as the same letter shows, gently admonished him that he should not be an occasion of anyone leaving the Church.⁸⁵ In this letter, among other things, which we need not include and which would take up too much time, Pelagius says, "By the verdict of fourteen bishops, the statement of ours was approved, in which we said that human beings can be without sin and easily keep the commandments of God, if they want. This verdict," he adds, "covered the faces of our opponents with confusion and split up the whole group that was plotting evil." Whether Pelagius really wrote this letter or it was composed in his name by someone else, who can fail to see how this error boasts even of the judgment by which it was refuted and condemned, as if it had won a victory? After all, he cited these words as they are found in his book called the *Book of Chapters*, not as they were raised as objections in the court or repeated in his answer. For those who raised the objection had by some negligence omitted a word which is the subject of considerable controversy. They quoted him as having said that human beings can be without sin, if they want, and can keep the commandments of God, if they want. No mention was made of easiness. Moreover, in response he stated, "We said that human beings can be without sin and keep the commandments of God, if they want."⁸⁶ He did not say that they can "easily keep," but only that they can "keep" the commandments.

So too, in another passage among those points about which Hilary asked my opinion and about which I replied, the objection was raised that "human beings

can be without sin, if they want." To this he replied, "That human beings can be without sin, if they want, has been discussed above."⁸⁷ Here too, "easily" was not added either by those who raised the objection or by this man who replied to it. Above in the report of the holy bishop, John,⁸⁸ it was also stated as follows, "Those men," he said, "insisted and claimed that he was a heretic, for he said that human beings can be without sin, if they want, and when we questioned him on this, he answered, 'I did not say that human nature receives the gift of being unable to sin; rather, I said that those who are willing to labor and struggle for their salvation have from God this ability not to sin and to live by God's commandments.' At that point some murmured and said that Pelagius was saying that one could do this without the grace of God. Then the bishop said, 'I found him in error on this point and brought out the fact that even the apostle Paul, who labored much, not by his own strength, but by the grace of God, said, *I have labored more than all of them. Not I, but the grace of God that was with me*'" (1 Cor 15:10), and the rest which I have already mentioned.

55. What then does it mean that they have dared to make such a boast in this letter? They boast of having convinced the twelve bishops who sat in judgment not only that one can avoid sin, but also that one can do so easily. We find it expressed that way in Pelagius' *Book of Chapters*, but as this statement is included and so often repeated in the proceedings, it is never found to have this addition. Also, how can this statement fail to be in conflict with the defense and answer of Pelagius? Bishop John stated that Pelagius had answered in his presence that he meant for it to be understood that those people could be without sin who were willing to labor and struggle for their salvation,⁸⁹ and Pelagius himself acting in his own defense during the proceedings said that by their labor and by the grace of God people can be without sin.⁹⁰ How can it be done easily if one has to labor to do it? In any case, I think that every sensible person will agree with us that, where one has to labor, it is not easy.

And yet, a letter bloated with carnal windiness and pride flies about. Having gained speed by reason of the delay of the proceedings, it comes first into people's hands. It announces that fourteen Eastern bishops have approved the statement that people not only can be without sin and keep the commandments of God, but also can easily keep them. And it makes no mention of God's help, but only says, "if they want." Thus, God's grace, which was the whole point of the fierce battle, was passed over in silence, so in that letter there is found only human pride in all its sad self-deception, as if it had triumphed. But, in fact, bishop John stated that he had found him in error. And he struck the mountains raised up like giants against the surpassing excellence of heavenly grace with three lightning bolts of divine testimonies.⁹¹ Moreover, along with him, the other bishops at the trial could not bear to think or even to hear Pelagius' stating, "We said that people can be without sin and keep God's commandments, if they

want," unless there immediately followed, "For God gave them this ability."⁹² They did not, nonetheless, know that he said this, referring to nature and not to that grace which they knew from the preaching of the apostles. After this, he added, "But we did not say that anyone is found who never committed sin from infancy to old age, but that those who have turned away from sin can by their own labor and by the grace of God be without sin." By their decision the bishops upheld the same point; they said that Pelagius had answered correctly that a person can be without sin with the help and grace of God. What else did they fear but that, by denying this, they would seem to do injury not to human ability, but to the very grace of God?

It was not, nonetheless, decided when human beings will become sinless, though it was declared to be possible with the help of the grace of God. It was not, I repeat, decided whether in this flesh lusting against the spirit there has been, is, or will be someone with the use of reason and the choice of the will, whether in human society or in monastic solitude, who will not have to say, not because of others, but because of himself, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12). It was not decided whether this gift will be perfectly attained only at that point when *we shall be like him*, when *we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3:2), when those carrying on the fight will not say, *I see another law in my members that resists the law of my mind* (Rom 7:23), but will say in triumph, *Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?* (1 Cor 15:55). That is perhaps a question to be peacefully investigated, not among Catholics and heretics, but among Catholics.

31, 56. How then can anyone believe that Pelagius—if this letter is in fact his—truthfully acknowledged the grace of God? I do not mean the grace which is equivalent either to nature along with free choice, or to knowledge of the law, or merely to the forgiveness of sins, but that grace which is necessary for each of our actions. How can anyone believe that he truthfully declared anathema anyone who held an opinion in opposition to this, when in his letter he mentioned the easiness of avoiding sin? He acts as if the judges had accepted this term, though there was no question about it in this trial. And in the letter he did not mention the grace of God, though he escaped the penalty of ecclesiastical condemnation only by acknowledging and adding it.

Pelagius' Erroneous Report concerning the Proceedings

32, 57. There is another point which I ought not to pass over. In the report containing his defense,⁹³ which he sent to me by a certain Charus, a citizen of our city of Hippo, though a deacon in the East, he produced something that is different from what we find contained in the episcopal proceedings. What the proceedings contain is by far better and is more solidly and in every way more

explicitly in favor of the Catholic truth in opposition to the plague of this heresy. For, when I read the same report, before the proceedings reached us, I did not know that he had not used⁹⁴ the same words which he used when he was present in this court. A few of them are, after all, not very different, and I am not too concerned about them.

33. But I could hardly tolerate that he could be thought to have reserved for himself the defense of some statements of Caelestius which he clearly condemned in the proceedings. Regarding some of them he denied that they were his own, merely stating that he did not have to account for them, but he refused to declare them anathema in his report. These statements are:⁹⁵ "Adam was created mortal so that he would die, whether he sinned or did not sin." "The sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race." "The law leads to the kingdom of heaven just as the gospel does." "Newly born infants are in the same state in which Adam was before his transgression." "The whole human race does not die through the death or the transgression of Adam, nor does the whole human race rise through the resurrection of Christ." "Infants have eternal life, even if they are not baptized." "If wealthy persons who have been baptized do not renounce all their possessions, they have no merit, even if they seem to do something good, and they will not possess the kingdom of heaven." Now in that report he replied to these propositions in this way, "According to the testimony of those persons, I did not state any of these, and I do not need to account for them." In the proceedings, however, he said with regard to them the following, "According to the testimony of these persons, I did not state them, and I do not need to account for them. But to satisfy the holy synod, I declare anathema those who hold these views or have at some time held them."⁹⁶ Why then did he not write it that way in his report? I do not think that it would have taken much ink or writing or time or paper, if he had done so. But who is not going to believe that he did this so that this report might circulate everywhere as a summary of those proceedings? Thus, one could suppose that the freedom of defending any of those propositions had not been taken away, since they were only raised as objections against him, without being proved to be his, and were not declared anathema and condemned.

58. Later in that same report he gathered together from Caelestius' book many propositions that were raised as objections against him. But he did not give the two responses found at the different places in the proceedings in which he declared anathema those same propositions; rather, he appended only one response to them all. I would think that he did this out of a desire for brevity, if I did not see that it is highly pertinent to the point which troubles us. For he concludes his answer as follows,⁹⁷ "Again I state that these propositions are not mine, as even these men testify. As I said, I do not need to account for them. But the statements which I have admitted are my own, I claim are correct. Those

which I have said are not mine I reject in accord with the judgment of the holy Church, and I declare anathema everyone who opposes and contradicts the teachings of the holy Catholic Church, along with those who have made up lies and stirred up slander against us." The proceedings do not have this last line, but it has nothing to do with the matter over which we ought to be concerned. After all, those who have made up lies and stirred up slander against them should also be condemned. But when I first read, "Those which I have said are not mine (I reject) in accord with the judgment of the holy Church," I did not know (that such was indeed the judgment of the Church), since it is not mentioned at this point, and I had not read the proceedings. Hence, I thought that he promised to hold with regard to these propositions not the judgment that the Church had already made, but the judgment that the Church might at some point make. And I thought that he promised to reject not those propositions which the Church had already rejected, but those which she might at some time reject. In the same way his addition, "And I declare anathema everyone who opposes and contradicts the teachings of the holy Catholic Church," would also have the same sense.

In fact, as the proceedings testify, the judgment of the Church has already been made regarding these propositions by the fourteen bishops; he said that he rejects all these propositions in accord with that judgment and declares anathema those who, by holding contrary views, contravene the judgment which the proceedings show has already been made. For the judges said, "What response does the monk Pelagius here present make to these propositions that have been read? For the holy synod and the holy Catholic Church of God reject them." But those who do not know this and read this report suppose that it is permissible to defend some of those propositions, as if they were not already judged to be opposed to Catholic teaching and as if Pelagius had said that he was ready to hold on these matters, not the judgment that the Church has already made, but the judgment it would make. Hence, in the report which we are presently discussing, he did not write in such a way that one could know the genuine contents of the proceedings. One could not know from it that all those doctrines by which this heresy advances and grows stronger in its bold contentions were condemned by fourteen bishops presiding over the ecclesiastical court. If he was afraid that the matter become known, as it has, let him correct himself rather than become angry at our vigilance, late as it is. But if it is false that he was afraid of this and if we, as is human, are just being suspicious, let him pardon us, provided that from here on he combats those doctrines which were condemned and rejected by the proceedings at which his case was heard. In not combatting them, he would give the impression that he not only held such beliefs earlier, but holds them at present.

34, 59. For these reasons I wanted to write this book for Your Reverence.⁹⁸ It is perhaps not unnecessarily long, in view of the seriousness and importance

of the topic. Thus, if it meets with your approval, it might by your authority, which is far greater than what little we have attained, be brought to the attention of those who in your opinion need it. For it destroys the foolish arguments of those who think that, because Pelagius was acquitted, the Eastern bishops who sat in judgment accepted those teachings which are against the Christian faith and the grace of God by which we are called and justified. The Christian truth always condemns these teachings as they spread far and wide in all their destructiveness, and it has condemned them by the authority of these fourteen bishops. It would have condemned Pelagius at the same time, if he had not declared those teachings anathema. Now, since we have in turn shown that man the concern of brotherly love and have manifested our uneasiness both about him and on his behalf, let us see how in a few words it can be shown that, even if Pelagius was acquitted by human judges, as he clearly was, the heresy itself, which is always deserving of condemnation by the judgment of God, was also condemned by the judgment of the fourteen Eastern bishops.

*Points of Doctrine on Which Pelagius Is in Agreement
with the Catholic Church*

35, 60. Here is the final verdict of that court. The synod said, "Now, since we are satisfied with the explanations of the monk, Pelagius, here present, who is in agreement with sound doctrines and rejects and condemns views contrary to the faith of the Church, we recognize that he is in communion with the Catholic Church." The holy bishops who sat in judgment included in their brief decision two points that are quite clear. The first is that he is in agreement with sound doctrines; the second is that he rejects and condemns views contrary to the faith of the Church. On account of these two points, Pelagius was declared to be in communion with the Catholic Church. Let us, then, sum up everything briefly and see whether his words actually did contain each of these points to the extent that human beings could determine at the time from the evidence. After all, regarding the objections raised against him, he is reported to have rejected and condemned those propositions which he said were not his own. Let us, then, briefly pull together, if we can, this whole case.

61. The apostle Paul's prediction had to be fulfilled, *It is necessary that there be heresies so that the tried and true persons in your midst may be revealed* (1 Cor 11:19). Hence, after the heresies of old, a heresy has now been invented,⁹⁹ not by bishops or priests or by any¹⁰⁰ clerics, but by certain monks. As if it were defending free choice, it argues against the grace of God which we have *through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25). It tries to undermine the foundation of the Christian faith of which scripture says, *Death came through one man, and the resurrection of the dead came through one man. For, just as all die in Adam, so*

too all will be brought to life in Christ (1 Cor 15:21). It rejects God's help in our actions, saying that human nature, which is created with free choice, can suffice for our not sinning and for our attaining righteousness. It says that it is God's grace, that we have been created so that we can do this by our will and that he has given us the help of the law and his commandments and that he pardons the past sins of those who return to him. It holds that we should acknowledge the grace of God only in these areas, but not as in a help for our individual actions, for people can be without sin and easily keep God's commandments, if they want.

62. This heresy deceived very many persons and disturbed brothers whom it had not deceived. Hence, a man by the name of Caelestius, who held such views, was summoned before the court of the church of Carthage and was condemned by the decision of the bishops.¹⁰¹ Several years later, Pelagius, who is reputed to be his teacher, was charged with this heresy and was himself brought before an episcopal court.¹⁰² All the charges were read out which the Gallic bishops, Heros and Lazarus, had set down in their indictment submitted against him, though those two were absent, excusing themselves on the grounds of the ill health of one of them. Fourteen bishops of the province of Palestine declared that Pelagius, who replied to all these points, was free from the wickedness of this heresy in accord with his responses; they, nonetheless, undoubtedly condemned the heresy. For they gave their approval to what he replied to the charges. He said, "A person is helped through knowledge of the law not to sin. As scripture says, *He gave the law to them as a help*"¹⁰³ (Is 8:20 LXX). It does not, however, follow from this that they declared that this same knowledge of the law is the grace of God of which scripture says, *Who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:24-25). Nor did they approve Pelagius' having said, "All are governed by their own will," in the sense that God does not govern them. After all, he answered that he had said this "on account of the free choice which God assists when it chooses what is good, but that human beings are themselves at fault because of their free choice."¹⁰⁴ They also approved the statement that "wicked and sinful persons will not be pardoned on the day of judgment, but will be punished by eternal fire," because he answered that he had said this in the sense of the gospel where we read, *These will enter eternal punishment, but the righteous will enter eternal life* (Mt 25:46).¹⁰⁵ He did not, however, state that all sinners are destined for eternal punishment; he did not want to give the impression—and it would have been a correct one—that he contradicted the apostle who said that some would be saved, *but as if through fire* (1 Cor 3:15).¹⁰⁶ The bishops approved the statement that "the kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament," because he produced the passage from Daniel, where it says, *And the saints will receive the kingdom of the Most High* (Dn

7:18). Here they took him to mean by the Old Testament, not merely that testament established on Mount Sinai, but all the canonical scriptures given before the coming of Christ.¹⁰⁷ The statement that "human beings can be without sin, if they want," was not approved in the sense in which he is seen to have expressed it in his book, as if this consisted merely in the power of a human being with free choice. This is what he was accused of thinking, because he said, "if they want." They approved this statement, rather, in the sense in which he had just answered or—better yet—in the sense in which the episcopal judges put it more concisely and more clearly in their intervention, namely, "Human beings can be without sin by God's help and grace." It was, nonetheless, not decided when holy men and women will attain this perfection, whether it will be in the body of this death¹⁰⁸ or when death will be swallowed up in victory.¹⁰⁹

63. From among those propositions which Caelestius had spoken or written and which were raised as objections against Pelagius as teachings of his disciple, Pelagius acknowledged some as his own, but he answered that he held them in a different sense from that in which they were raised as objections. Among these is the statement that "before the coming of Christ certain people lived holy and righteous lives." Caelestius, however, is reported to have said that "they were without sin."¹¹⁰ Likewise, Caelestius was charged with having said, "The Church is without spot or wrinkle." Pelagius, on the other hand, admitted that "he said this, but in the sense that the Church is cleansed by baptism from every spot and wrinkle, and the Lord wants it to remain that way."¹¹¹ So too, Caelestius said that "we do more than we are commanded in the law and in the gospel," but Pelagius answered that he had said this with reference to virginity, of which Paul says, *I do not have a command of the Lord* (1 Cor 7:25).¹¹² Likewise, the accusation was made that Caelestius stated that "every human being can have all the virtues and graces," and thus the diversity of graces which the apostle taught is done away with. Pelagius, however, answered that he did not do away with the diversity of graces, but teaches that "God gives all the graces to one who is worthy to receive them, as he gave them to the apostle Paul."¹¹³

64. The episcopal judges did not give their approval to these four propositions attributed to Caelestius in the sense in which Caelestius was said to have held them, but in the sense in which Pelagius gave his answer regarding them. After all, they saw that it is one thing to be without sin and quite another to live holy and righteous lives, as scripture testifies that some people lived before the coming of Christ. They saw that, although the Church is not here and now without spot and wrinkle, it is cleansed by the bath of rebirth from every spot and wrinkle and that the Lord wants it to remain such. And it will remain such, because it will certainly reign without spot and wrinkle in eternal blessedness. They also saw that perpetual virginity, which is not commanded, is undoubtedly something more than marital chastity, which is commanded, although virginity

is preserved by many who are not without sin. They also saw that the apostle Paul possessed all the graces which he mentions in a single passage, but they were somehow able to understand that he was worthy to receive them, not by reason of his merits, but rather by reason of his having been predestined. He says, after all, *I am not worthy or I am not fit to be called an apostle* (1 Cor 15:9). Or perhaps the expression simply escaped their attention. Let Pelagius himself see to the sense in which he made this statement. These are the points on which the bishops declared that Pelagius was in agreement with sound doctrine.

The Pelagian Errors Condemned by the Synod

65. Now let us likewise sum up and look a little more attentively at those propositions which the bishops said that Pelagius rejected and condemned as opposed to the truth. The whole of this heresy, after all, is found here. Let us leave aside those propositions which he was said to have put in his books to flatter some widow. He replied that they were not in his books and that he had never said such things, and he condemned those who held such views, not as heretics, but as fools.¹¹⁴ The following are the propositions by which the thornbush of this heresy has daily grown larger; indeed, it is becoming a veritable forest, much to our sorrow. "Adam was created mortal so that he was going to die, whether he sinned or did not sin." "The sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the whole human race." "The law leads to heaven just as much as the gospel." "Newly born infants are in the same state as Adam before his transgression." "The whole human race does not die through the death or transgression of Adam, and the whole human race does not rise through the resurrection of Christ." "Even if they are not baptized, infants possess eternal life." "If wealthy persons who have been baptized do not renounce all their possessions, they have no merit, even if they seem to do something good, and they will not possess the kingdom of heaven." "God's grace and help is not given for individual actions, but consists in free choice and in the law and teaching." "God's grace is given in accord with our merits, and for this reason grace itself is located in the human will, whether one becomes worthy or unworthy."¹¹⁵ "Only those people can be called children of God who have become entirely without sin." "Forgetfulness and ignorance are not sinful, because they do not come about willingly, but necessarily." "A choice is not free, if it needs the help of God, since persons have their own will either to do something or not to do it." "Our victory is not the result of God's help, but of free choice." "From Peter's statement that we are *sharers in the divine nature* (2 Pt 1:4), it follows that the soul can be as sinless as God."¹¹⁶ For in chapter eleven of a book which lacks the name of its author, but which is said to be that of Caelestius, I myself have read this point stated in these words. He says, "How

can anyone receive a share in some reality, if one is definitely excluded from its condition and quality?" The brothers who raised these objections understood him to mean that the soul and God have the same nature and that the soul is a part of God. For they understood him to hold that the soul had the same condition and quality as God. The last of the objections states, "Pardon is not given to those who repent in accord with God's grace and mercy, but in accord with the merit and labor of those who will be worthy of mercy through penance."¹¹⁷ The judges gave their approval to Pelagius because he disowned and declared anathema all these propositions, along with any arguments included to support them. Thus they declared that, in rejecting and declaring them anathema, he condemned propositions opposed to the faith of the Church. Accordingly, regardless of the sense in which Caelestius may or may not have published them, regardless of the sense in which Pelagius may or may not have held them, let us rejoice and give thanks and praise to God that these evil statements of this newest heresy have been condemned by an ecclesiastical court.

The Violence Committed against Jerome's Monastery

66. Some crimes are reported to have been perpetrated there with incredible boldness after this trial by a band of depraved persons who are reputed to side with Pelagius in this evil. For instance, women and men servants of God under the care of the holy priest, Jerome, were criminally slaughtered, a deacon was killed, and their monastic buildings were burned. By God's mercy, a better fortified tower was just able to protect Jerome himself from the attack and assault of these godless persons. Concerning these matters, I see that we should rather hold our silence and await the course of action that our brother bishops think they should take with regard to such great evils. Who, after all, would believe that they could simply ignore them? The wicked doctrines of this sort of people should be refuted by all Catholics, even by those who live far from those lands, so that they may not be able to do harm in any place to which they might come. But the wicked deeds, whose repression is matter for the discipline of the bishops where they are committed, should be punished there with pastoral care and pious severity by bishops who are in that place or are located nearby. We then who are located at such a distance ought to pray that these cases are there brought to such an outcome that it will not be necessary to pass further judgment on them elsewhere. Rather, it will be proper for us to make that outcome known so that the minds of all who have been seriously wounded by the rumor of these crimes spreading everywhere might be healed by God's mercy in the future. Hence, let this book come to an end. I hope that, if it has earned your approval, it will, with God's help, be useful to the readers, better recommended by your name than by mine and better known to many by reason of your efforts.

Notes

1. The names of the bishops are listed in the *Answer to Julian* I, 5, 19 and 7, 32. See note 1, above.
2. I have followed G. de Plinval's suggested emendation of the text: *iam quantum mihi est, videbar*; the CSEL edition has: *iam quantum mihi videbar*.
3. Pelagius, *Liber eclogarum* (also known as *Liber capitulorum* or *testimoniorum*); the extant fragments of the work are found in PL 48, 593-596.
4. See Rom 7:25.
5. See Wis 7:7.
6. See Wis 7:7.
7. See above 3, 5.
8. See 1 Cor 3:11-12.
9. See 1 Cor 3:15.
10. The ALG text has the future tense: *fiet*; I have followed CSEL which has the subjunctive: *fiat*.
11. See Lk 19:27.
12. See Mt 25:31-46.
13. See Mt 22:11-13.
14. Here I have followed with BA the reading, "*accuratius*," suggested by G. de Plinval; the CSEL text has "*cautius*: more cautious."
15. Migne has "*tam probe*," whereas CSEL suggests "*tam improbe*."
16. Here I have followed G. de Plinval's suggested correction which adds: "no less . . . than one; *non minorem . . . quam*." The CSEL reading which lacks that correction, though based on the manuscripts, seems irrelevant to the issue.
17. See Dn 7:18.
18. The letter to a widow, probably Livanian or Liviana, is not extant.
19. The work is *The Christian Life* (*Liber de vita christiana*) 11, 2; the Latin text can be found in PL 40—in an appendix to Augustine's works! For an English translation, see B. R. Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), pp. 119-120. For the attribution of the work to Pelagius rather than Fastidius, to whom the work has also been attributed in PL 50, see Rees, *The Letters*, pp. 105-106.
20. De Plinval has suggested that, in denying that the passages are found in his books, Pelagius may have, strictly speaking, avoided a lie by not considering the works in question as books. He is in any case careful not to condemn those who held such views as heretics, but only as fools.
21. See *Heresies*, Preface 7, for Augustine's hesitation about producing a definition of heresy.
22. See Pliny, *Historiarum naturalium libri* 10.3.3 and Lucan, *Pharsalia* 9.902.
23. See Sir 19:16 and Jas 3:2.
24. I have followed de Plinval's addition of the negative, though Migne and CSEL omit it.
25. See above 6, 16.
26. See Mt 6:13.
27. See 2 Cor 3:6.
28. The book is Pelagius' *Nature* (*De natura*), which Timasius and James sent to Augustine and to which he replied in *Nature and Grace*.
29. Augustine refers to the Council of Carthage held in 411 or 412 and presided over by Aurelius of Carthage for whom he wrote the present work.
30. See Letter 157 to Hilary of Syracuse, a person otherwise unknown.
31. See Hilary, Letter 156 among the Letters of Augustine.
32. See above 6, 16-20.
33. Augustine refers to his *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones*.
34. He is referring to Sermon 294 preached in the *Basilica Maiorum* on June 27, 413.
35. Cyprian, Letter 64.
36. CSEL has "incarnation: *incarnationis*" in place of "flesh: *carnis*"; I have followed ALG and the Maurists.

37. See above 11, 23.
38. See Eph 5:27. Also see Hilary, Letter 156 among the Letters of Augustine.
39. Augustine refers to the three-day conference of the North African bishops with the Donatists held in Carthage in June of 411. See the *Summary of the Conference with the Donatists*.
40. See Mt 3:12.
41. See above 11, 26.
42. This work of Caelestius has not been preserved, though the teachings in it square with the doctrine of Caelestius as it is known from Augustine's citations from the *Book of Definitions (Liber definitionum)* in *The Perfection of Human Righteousness*.
43. I have followed CSEL and BA in reading of "*latius*," instead of the Maurists and ALG who have "*laetius*: more joyful."
44. See above 6, 20.
45. Augustine refers to Pelagius' *Nature*.
46. See Mt 6:13.
47. See above 1, 1.
48. See above 3, 5.
49. See Acts 28:3.
50. See Acts 23:3 and 14:10.
51. See 1 Cor 6:15.
52. I have followed de Plinval's correction which adds: "*quam*: than."
53. See Col 1:18.
54. See Gal 5:6.
55. See *Answer to Adimantus* 14, 2, for the explanation of this text, as well as *Answer to Julian* 4, 3, 24.
56. See Gal 5:6.
57. See Rom 14:23.
58. See Ps 58:1.
59. I have followed the ALG and the Maurist editions which have *nihil* in place of *nisi*, which is found in CSEL.
60. See 1 Cor 1:31.
61. Augustine plays upon the Latin words *onerabo* and *honorabo*.
62. Augustine's text has "*praecipientes*," while the Vulgate has "*adjuvantes*."
63. The Maurists and ALG have a different word order from that in CSEL, which has: *Proinde gratiam non laboravit, ut acciperet*.
64. The official proceedings of the Synod of Diospolis record John's appeal to these scripture texts, though Orosius does not mention them in his *Liber apologeticus*.
65. The Conference of Jerusalem on July 30, 415.
66. See Pelagius, *Expositio in Romanos*, in A. Souter, *Pelagius' Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul II* (Cambridge, 1926); repr. in PLS I, 1153ff. "Does it, then, not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy? On the contrary, the following are the words of a Jew: *Therefore, it does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy, along with, Therefore, he shows mercy to whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills*. After all, the apostle does not remove what we have in our own will. . . . If it does not depend on the one who wills or runs, as some suppose, why did he himself run? He says, *I have run the race*. And why did he exhort others with the words, *Run so that you may all attain the goal*? Hence, it is understood that he is putting this in the mouth of one posing questions and answering them rather making a denial."
67. See Orosius' account of the Council of Jerusalem in *Liber apologeticus* 6.
68. See above 14, 30.
69. See above 14, 30.
70. Augustine refers to his *Nature and Grace*, which he wrote in response to Pelagius' *Nature*.
71. The Latin text has *gratiam creaturam*, which is difficult to construe. Perhaps one could say: "the grace which is creation." I have followed the conjectured reading *gratis creatam*, which is easier to translate and is followed by the translators in the NPNF, NBA, and BA series.

72. ALG has the subjunctive "*offerantur*" instead of the indicative "*offeruntur*." This difference is lost in translation.
73. See Lv 4:2-3, 13-14, 22-23, and 27-28.
74. I have followed the reading of the Maurists and of ALG: "*recta*" rather than "*recte*" with CSEL.
75. Augustine refers to his Letter 147.
76. The conference with the Donatists took place at Carthage in June of 411.
77. This Council of Carthage was held in 411 or 412.
78. The book was Pelagius' *Nature*.
79. See *Nature and Grace* 44, 52; 51, 59; and 26, 29.
80. Augustine's *Nature and Grace*.
81. See above 11, 24.
82. Letter 168 among the Letters of Saint Augustine.
83. See above 26, 48, where Augustine gives the text of their letter to him.
84. Augustine's Letter 146; see below 27-28, 52.
85. The letter has not been preserved.
86. See above 4, 16.
87. See above 11, 23-24.
88. See above 14, 37, for John's report about the Conference of Jerusalem, though only the final sentence of the present passage is found in the earlier citation from the report.
89. See above 30, 54.
90. See above 6, 16.
91. See above 14, 37. The three scriptural lightning bolts are 1 Cor 15:10, Rom 9:16, and Ps 146:1.
92. See above 6, 16.
93. See above 1, 1.
94. I have followed G. de Plinval's suggested correction of the CSEL text which adds a negative.
95. See above 11, 23.
96. See 11, 24.
97. See 19, 43.
98. Bishop Aurelius of Carthage; see above 1, 1.
99. I have followed the conjecture of CSEL which has: "*illata*," while the Maurists have: "*invecta*: introduced."
100. I have followed the Maurist reading: "*quibuscumque*," while the CSEL has "*quibusque*."
101. The Council of Carthage of 411 or 412.
102. The Council of Diospolis in December of 415.
103. See above 1, 2.
104. See above 3, 5.
105. See above 3, 5.
106. See above 3, 9-10.
107. See above 5, 13-15.
108. See Rom 7:24.
109. See 1 Cor 15:54.
110. See above 11, 23-24.
111. See above 12, 27-28.
112. See above 13, 29.
113. See above 14, 32.
114. See above 4, 16.
115. See above 14, 30.
116. See above 18, 42.
117. See above 18, 42.

**THE GRACE OF CHRIST
AND ORIGINAL SIN**

Revisions II, 50 (77)

The Grace of Christ and Original Sin, Two Books against Pelagius and Caelestius for Albina, Pinianus, and Melania

After the Pelagian heresy was denounced and condemned along with its founders by the bishops of the Church of Rome, first by Innocent and then by Zosimus, with the support of letters from the councils of Africa, I wrote two books against them, one on the grace of Christ, the other on original sin.

This work begins: *Quantum de uestra corporali et maxime spirituali salute gaudeamus.*

Introduction

The Date and Occasion of the Work

The sixth work in the first series of Augustine's anti-Pelagian works, *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, was written in Carthage during the summer of 418. From the *Revisions* II, 50 (77), we know that Augustine wrote this work after the condemnation of the Pelagian heresy, along with its authors, by the two bishops of Rome, Innocent and Zosimus. Zosimus first condemned Pelagianism in his letter, *Tractoria*, which was probably issued on 28 June 418.¹ Hence, given the requisite time for its arrival in Africa, it would seem that *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* was written in late July or August of 418.² Moreover, the work must have been completed by the time of the conference with the Donatist bishop, Emeritus, which took place on 18-20 September 418, at Caesarea in Mauretania.³ Hence, the work was written in Carthage sometime between late July and early September of 418.⁴

Augustine wrote *The Deeds of Pelagius* late in 417; it was almost a year later that he undertook his reply to Albina, Pinianus, and Melania, the three aristocratic exiles and former supporters of Pelagius. Their letter, which had reached Augustine in the early summer of 418 while he was in Carthage, is lost; however, its contents can to some extent be established from what Augustine tells us of it. Its senders were friends of Augustine's, members of the Valeria family. Albina was the widow of Senator Publicola; Melania (the younger) was their only daughter, and Pinianus was the husband of Melania. Married in 395, Pinianus and Melania devoted themselves to pious works after the death of their two young children. When Rome fell to Alaric, the trio came to Africa and settled in Augustine's hometown, Thagaste, where Augustine's long-time friend, Alypius, was bishop. The young couple and Albina remained in Thagaste until 417, when they traveled via Alexandria to Jerusalem, where they met Pelagius, who was then staying with Praylius, the bishop of Jerusalem. Since Pelagius had during his years in Rome been welcomed by many of the Roman nobility, it is likely that they had previously met.⁵

In their letter the trio reported to Augustine that they had got Pelagius to state in their presence,

I declare anathema anyone who thinks or says that the grace of God by which *Christ came into this world to save sinners* (1 Tm 1:15) is not necessary, not only at every hour and at every moment, but also for every act of ours. And those who attempt to do away with this doctrine deserve eternal punishment.⁶

Moreover, they report that Pelagius had read to them from his *Profession of Faith*⁷ the following statement: "And we hold one baptism, and we maintain that it should be celebrated with the same words of the sacrament in the case of infants as that of adults."⁸ Also, when questioned by the three, he answered them that "infants receive baptism for the forgiveness of sins."⁹ Hence, the three wrote Augustine to consult him, perhaps convinced that Pelagius had finally stated his position in a way that conformed to the Catholic faith, or possibly disturbed over the ambiguity that still seemed present in Pelagius' language.

Historical Background

At the Synod of Diospolis in late December, 415, Pelagius was acquitted by fourteen bishops of the church of Palestine. Soon after the synod he circulated his own account of the proceedings of the synod and boasted that he had been acquitted.¹⁰ In the months that followed Pelagius wrote his four books, *In Defense of Free Choice*, but then Pelagius' fortunes began to change.

Early in 416 Orosius, who had left Palestine before the Synod of Diospolis, arrived back in Africa, carrying with him two letters, one from Jerome to Augustine¹¹ and another from Heros and Lazarus. The latter was read to a synod of bishops gathered at Carthage in the summer of 416. The bishops of Africa then wrote to Pope Innocent, recounting the errors of Caelestius and Pelagius and asking that the authority of the Apostolic See be added to the decrees of the African synod for the protection of the faith.¹² Soon afterward, the bishops of Numidia gathered at Milevis and wrote another letter on the errors of Pelagius to Innocent.¹³ A formidable five, Aurelius, Augustine, Alypius, Evodius, and Possidius, sent a third and longer letter to Innocent in which they clarified what Pelagius meant by grace and enclosed a copy of his book, *Nature*.¹⁴

Innocent was not quick to answer. He was apparently unaware of any Pelagians in Rome,¹⁵ but found Pelagius' treatise quite horrifying. By his letters of 27 January 417,¹⁶ Pope Innocent finally replied; he excommunicated Pelagius and Caelestius until such time as they repented. Almost immediately afterward Innocent learned of the attack upon Jerome's monastery¹⁷ and wrote angry letters to Jerome, complaining that he had not accused Pelagius.¹⁸ John of Jerusalem, Pelagius' protector, had died on 10 January 417, though his successor, Praylius, continued to support the Pelagian side. In response to Innocent's excommunication, Pelagius wrote his *Profession of Faith* and his *Letter to Pope Innocent* and sent them to the pope, though they arrived in Rome after the death of Innocent on 12 March 417 and were received by Zosimus, who succeeded him on 18 March 418.

In the intervening years since his condemnation by the Council of Carthage

in 411 or 412, Caelestius had been ordained a priest at Ephesus and was later expelled from Constantinople by the Patriarch Atticus. Perhaps sensing the more favorable atmosphere in Rome, he presented himself to Zosimus along with his *Profession of Faith* in which he declared himself ready to be corrected if he had erred in any respect.¹⁹ Before a Roman synod, Caelestius' appeal was heard. As Zosimus wrote to Aurelius and the bishops of Africa on 21 September 417, the Council of Carthage in 411 or 412 had, as Zosimus saw it, come to no clear decision about Caelestius, and in 416 the African bishops had used in their accusation of him the memorandum of Heros and Lazarus who had no personal knowledge of Caelestius.²⁰ That is, as Zosimus saw it, the procedures used against Caelestius were irregular; hence, he postponed any decision for two months, admonished the bishops of Africa, and demanded that they appear in Rome to support their accusations against Caelestius.

On the same day, Zosimus also sent to the bishops of Africa his letter, *Posteaquam a Nobis*, in which he announced that Pelagius had been found innocent by an assembly of the Roman church. In his absence, Pelagius' *Letter to Pope Innocent* was read, along with a supporting letter from Praylius, bishop of Jerusalem. Zosimus describes the scene in his letter to Africa:

I wish anyone of you, dear brothers, could have been present for the reading of that letter. What a joy there was in the holy men who were present! What admiration each of them had! They could barely restrain themselves from weeping and tears that the reputation of such men of flawless faith could have been attacked. Is there any passage in which the grace and help of God is passed over?²¹

After a tirade against the trouble-making bishops, Heros and Lazarus, who had accused Pelagius at Diospolis, but did not appear in person, and against Timasius and James, who had handed over to Augustine Pelagius' *Nature*, but had not shown up to accuse him in Rome, he asks, "You figure out whether those things which are tossed about by evil or frivolous authors ought to be believed about these men who have made such a confession before the Apostolic See!"²² Zosimus goes on to say that "we ought to be happy to recognize that those men whom false witnesses were accusing had never been torn from our body and from Catholic love."²³ Thus Zosimus solemnly acquitted Pelagius and informed the bishops of Africa of this fact.

On Sunday, 23 September 417, two days after Zosimus sent his letters, but long before they arrived in Africa, Augustine preached at Carthage in the basilica of St. Cyprian on the Pelagian controversy. Citing the words of St. Paul, *If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ has died in vain* (Gal 2:21), Augustine went on, "What the apostle says about the law, we say to these people about nature: if righteousness comes through nature, then Christ has died in vain." He notes that the proceedings of the Councils of Carthage and of Milevis

of 416 concerning this question have already been sent to the Apostolic See, and rescripts have come back. "The question has come to an end. If only the error would come to an end as well!"²⁴

Zosimus' letter arrived in Africa on 2 November 417. Despite his strong language the African bishops remained determined to regard the matter as settled by their councils and the decisions of Pope Innocent. More letters went back and forth between the African bishops and Rome.²⁵ Jerome wrote to Augustine in support of the anti-Pelagian side.²⁶ Precisely what changed the mind of Zosimus is not clear. Bonner suggests that Zosimus' own flock may have been opposed to the Pelagian views and that violence may have tipped the scales in the eyes of the emperor.²⁷

On 21 March 418, Zosimus again wrote to the African bishops; his letter, *Quamvis Patrum*, is markedly different in tone. After greeting his "very dear brothers who were present in the Council of Carthage," he begins with an affirmation of the authority of the Apostolic See, but goes on to add,

And yet, though we have such authority that no one can revise our decision, we have done nothing that we have not also brought to your knowledge by our letters, granting this to our fraternity and consulting in common. It is not that we did not know what ought to be done or that we did something that would displease you, since it goes against the good of the Church. Rather, we wanted to consider on a par with you the case of that man who was accused before you, as you say in your letters. He came to our See to maintain that he was innocent. He did not avoid the court from the first summons, but demanded the presence of his accusers and condemned the charges which he said were brought against him falsely through rumor.²⁸

Zosimus concludes with the rather ambiguous statement that he is leaving everything as it was. In any case, his letter reached Africa on 29 April 418. On the following day from Ravenna, the emperor Honorius condemned the errors of Pelagius and Caelestius and banished them from Rome. And on 1 May 418, over two hundred African bishops assembled for the Council of Carthage which produced nine canons condemning Pelagian doctrine. The canons were sent on to the Apostolic See, while fifteen bishops, including Augustine, remained in Carthage to await the response from Rome. Zosimus replied with his letter, *Tractoria*, which is extant only in a few fragments; in it he solemnly condemned Pelagianism. The letter was sent to the universal Church, probably on 28 June 418.

By the time Augustine wrote *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, the initial phase of the Pelagian controversy had come to an end. The canons of the Council of Carthage that convened on 1 May 418 and was presided over by Aurelius of Carthage summed up the Catholic doctrine on the nature and transmission of

original sin, the necessity and character of grace, and the universality of human sinfulness. Because of the importance of the canons of that council, an English translation of them is included here.

The Canons of the Council of Carthage

[Canon 1] All assembled in the holy synod of the church of Carthage decreed that, if any say that Adam was created a mortal human being so that, whether he would sin or would not sin, he was going to die in the body, that is, he would leave the body, not as punishment for sin, but by the necessity of nature, let them be anathema.

[Canon 2] They also decreed that, if any deny that little ones fresh from their mothers' wombs must be baptized or say that they are baptized for the forgiveness of sins, but that they do not contract from Adam any original sin that is wiped away in the bath of rebirth, so that in their case the form of baptism "for the forgiveness of sins" is understood not to be true, but false, let them be anathema. The words of the apostle, *Through one human being sin came into the world, and through sin death, and so it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12), are not to be understood in any other sense than that in which the Catholic Church spread throughout the world has always understood them. On account of this rule of faith, even little ones who could not as yet commit any sin in their own persons are truly baptized for the forgiveness of sins, so that what they contracted by birth might be washed away through rebirth.

[Canon 3]²⁹ They likewise decreed that, if any say that the Lord said, *In the house of my Father there are many mansions* (Jn 14:2), precisely so that one might understand that in the kingdom of heaven there will be some intermediate place or any place anywhere in which the little ones will live happily who have left this life without the baptism without which they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, that is, eternal life, let them be anathema. For, since the Lord said, *Unless one is reborn of water and the [Holy] Spirit, one will not enter the kingdom of heaven* (Jn 3:5), will any Catholic doubt that one who has not merited to be a coheir with Christ will have a share with the devil? For one who does not stand on the right will surely be assigned to the left side?

[Canon 4] They likewise decreed that, if any say that the grace of God by which we are justified through Jesus Christ our Lord is effective for only the forgiveness of the sins which have already been committed and not also as a help so that they are not committed, let them be anathema.

[Canon 5] They likewise decreed that, if any say that the same grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord helps one not to sin for this reason alone that it reveals and discloses an understanding of the commandments so that we know

what we should desire and what we should avoid, but not so that we are also given the gift to love and to be able to do what we know we should do, let them be anathema. For since the apostle says, *Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up* (1 Cor 8:1), it is quite godless to believe that we have the grace of Christ for that which puffs up and do not have it for that which builds up. After all, each of these is a gift of God: both to know what we ought to do and to love doing it so that, with love building us up, knowledge cannot puff us up. As scripture says of God, *He teaches human beings knowledge* (Ps 94:10), so scripture says, *Love is from God* (1 Jn 4:7).

[Canon 6] They likewise decreed that, if any say that we are given the grace of justification so that we can more easily do by grace what we are commanded to do by free choice, as though, even if grace were not given, we could still fulfill the divine commandments without it, though not easily, let them be anathema. After all, when the Lord was speaking about the fruits of the commandments, he did not say, "Without me you can do it with greater difficulty," but *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5).

[Canon 7] They likewise decreed that, if any think that the statement of Saint John, the apostle, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jn 1:8), is to be interpreted in the sense that one should say that we have no sin on account of humility, not because it is the truth, let them be anathema. After all the apostle goes on and adds: *But if we shall have confessed our sins, he is faithful and just who forgives us our sins and cleanses us of all iniquity* (1 Jn 1:9), where it is quite clear that this is said not only humbly, but also truthfully. For the apostle could have said: "If we say that we have no sin, we exalt ourselves, and humility is not in us," but when he said: *We deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*, he showed that those who say that they have no sin do not say what is true, but what is false.

[Canon 8] They likewise decreed that, if any say that in the Lord's Prayer holy persons say, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12), so that they do not say this for themselves, because this petition is no longer necessary for them, but for others who are sinners in their people, and that in this way every holy person does not say, "Forgive me my debts," but: *Forgive us our debts*, so that the righteous are understood to say this for others rather than for themselves, let them be anathema. *For we all offend in many ways* (Jas 3:2). Why was "all" added, if not so that this statement would also agree with the psalm where we read, *Do not enter into judgment with your servant, because no living person will be found righteous in your sight* (Ps 143:2)? And in the prayer of Solomon, the wisest of men, it says, *There is no human being who does not sin* (1 Kgs 8:46) and in the book of holy Job, *He marked all human beings with his hand so that every human being would know his weakness* (Jb 37:7). Hence, even the holy and righteous Daniel said many times in prayer, *We have sinned; we have*

committed iniquity (Dn 9:5.15) and the other things which he likewise confessed truthfully, not out of humility. So that he would not be thought, as certain people hold, that he did not say this concerning his own sins, but concerning those of his people, he later said, *I prayed and confessed to the Lord my God my sins and the sins of my people* (Dn 9:20). He did not want to say, “our sins,” but his own sins, because, as a prophet, he foresaw that there would be these people who would understand that incorrectly.

[Canon 9] They likewise decreed that, if any claim that the words of the Lord’s Prayer where we say, *Forgive us our debts* (Mt 6:12), are said by holy persons in the sense that they say them humbly and not truthfully, let them be anathema. After all, who would tolerate persons who lie while praying, not to human beings, but to the Lord himself, saying with their lips that they want to be forgiven, but saying in their heart that they do not have any debts to be forgiven.³⁰

Caelestius returned to Rome after the death of Zosimus, but failed to convince Pope Boniface of his orthodoxy and was expelled from Italy. He later turned up in Constantinople along with Julian of Eclanum, where his association with the Patriarch Nestorius led to his condemnation by the Council of Ephesus and banishment from Constantinople. Pelagius was also condemned at Ephesus, and after 431 the two disappear from history.

The Contents of the Work

Book One: The Grace of Christ

The first book begins with Augustine’s greeting to Albina, Pinianus, and Melania to whose letter Augustine is responding. Their letter to Augustine is lost, and Augustine offers only slight indications of their intention in writing him. They had consulted him on grace and original sin (paragraph 1), and they reported having brought Pelagius to “declare anathema anyone who thinks or says that the grace of God . . . is not necessary, not only at every hour and at every moment, but also for every act of ours” (paragraph 2). Augustine warns his friends that one has to pay close attention to what Pelagius means by grace. In his response Augustine is careful to use only those works which Pelagius acknowledged as his own in his letter to Pope Innocent, and he explains that Pelagius can mean by grace merely the help not to sin which one derives from recalling that one’s sins have been forgiven or from considering the example of Christ’s life. Though Pelagius had at Diospolis condemned those who said that God’s grace consists in free choice or in the law and teaching and that God’s grace is given in accord with our merits, in his recent book, *In Defense of Free Choice* and his letter sent to the Pope, he is found to hold precisely the position he condemned (paragraph 3).

Augustine presents Pelagius' distinction between the ability, the will, and the action and states that according to Pelagius God's grace helps our natural ability, but that the will and the action are entirely ours and do not need God's help (paragraph 4). Then he cites at length Pelagius' words from his book to show that Pelagius really does hold what Augustine said he held (paragraph 5). Hence, when Pelagius claims to confess the grace of God that helps one to turn from evil and to do good, one should realize that he means that our natural ability is helped by the law and teaching (paragraph 6). He does not admit what Saint Paul taught, namely, that God produces the willing and the action.³¹ Though Pelagius seems to praise God as well as human beings for the good will and actions of human beings, the basis for such praise for God is his having given human beings the ability as part of their nature (paragraph 7).

Augustine then turns to other passages from Pelagius' work to show that Pelagius interprets the help for our natural ability as simply the law and teaching. He quotes Pelagius as saying that human beings can do more easily by grace what they are commanded to do by free choice. Though Pelagius denies that grace consists in the law alone, his long list of the ways in which God helps us really comes down to nothing more than the law and teaching (paragraph 8). He means by grace the sort of help by which we know what we should do, not the sort of help by which we do what we know we should do. Hence, the role he assigns to the law is in sharp contrast with the function of the law as Saint Paul has described it (paragraph 9). According to Paul, it is knowledge of sin that comes through the law, not the righteousness of God. The law is not fulfilled by the law, for love is the fulfillment of the law—the love which is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.³² Pelagius tries to disguise what he is really saying, namely, that the grace which helps our natural ability is merely the law and teaching, because at Diospolis he condemned those who said what he himself is saying (paragraph 10).

Pelagius had interpreted Paul's statement that God produces in us the willing and the action³³ in the sense that he reveals his wisdom to us and sets before us the promises of the glory and the reward to come; thus God's grace is reduced to the revelation of wisdom and to teaching and exhortation (paragraph 11). Augustine points out that no one had such great revelations as Paul; yet he received a thorn in his flesh, an angel of Satan, to keep him from becoming proud because of such revelations. When he prayed that it be removed, he was told that God's grace was sufficient for him.³⁴ Such grace, Augustine points out, not merely makes us know what we should do, but makes us do it, not merely makes us believe what we should love, but makes us love it (paragraph 13). There is, of course, a sense in which grace teaches. Augustine shows that God teaches us, not merely externally through offering us knowledge so that we know what we should do, but internally by the Spirit so that we love and do what we know we

should do (paragraph 14). The Lord spoke of this manner of teaching when he said that *everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned comes to me* (Jn 6:45), clearly showing that such teaching helps not merely our ability, but our willing and acting (paragraph 15).

Augustine turns to the examples that Pelagius used to illustrate the distinction between the ability, the will, and the action. He concedes that these examples make the Pelagian position clear, but they do not oblige a Catholic to hold it (paragraph 16). Augustine notes that Pelagius omits in dealing with the examples his earlier concession that God is also to be praised for our good will and action, since he gave us the ability for them (paragraph 17). The reason for this omission is, Augustine suggests, that Pelagius had explained that the willing and acting are ours alone, because we can also turn them to evil, and Pelagius wanted to avoid the implication that God should be blamed for our evil deeds, since he had given us the ability for them (paragraph 18).

Pelagius had declared that our natural ability is a single root producing both good and evil; Augustine contrasts Pelagius' teaching with the gospel statement that a good tree brings forth good fruit and a bad tree bad fruit and with Paul's claim that covetousness is the root of all evil (paragraph 19).³⁵ Human beings become good trees that bear good fruit only by the grace of God, and they need to be helped not only to become good trees, but to produce good fruits; human beings, on the other hand, can make themselves bad by turning away from the unchangeable good (paragraph 20). Instead of the Pelagian view that the ability is the single root of good and bad actions, Augustine insists that love is the root of good actions and covetousness is the root of evil actions (paragraph 21). But love comes from God; in fact, God is love, so that those who are born of God do not and, in fact, cannot sin, for love does no evil and thinks no evil.³⁶ Why then, Augustine asks, does Pelagius maintain that we have only the ability from God (paragraph 22)?

In his *Letter to Demetrias*, Pelagius had urged her to merit God's grace by doing his will; Augustine points out the incompatibility of this exhortation with Pelagius' condemnation at Diospolis of Caelestius' statement that grace is given in accord with our merits (paragraph 23). Pelagius might reply that he meant that additional grace is given to those who do God's will, but that they had previously received grace to do his will. Augustine, however, produces further texts from Pelagius' *In Defense of Free Choice* in which he maintains that one can attain great holiness "simply by the freedom of choice" (paragraph 24). How, Augustine asks, does grace remain grace if we merit it by such works?

Augustine appeals to the example of the king of Assyria to show that God changes and transforms the hearts of human beings, not merely by external teaching, but by his internal and hidden power (paragraph 25). Pelagius must acknowledge God's grace, not merely in his having given us the ability to have

a good will and action, but in the good will and actions themselves (paragraph 26). He must acknowledge the grace by which God *produces in us the willing and the action* (Phil 2:13).

Pelagius has failed to distinguish knowledge and love, though Paul warns that knowledge puffs one up with pride, but that love builds one up.³⁷ Though both knowledge and love are gifts of God, love is the greater gift, and we can love God only because he has loved us first (paragraph 27). Though some may externally fulfill God's commandments out of fear, unless they act out of love, no good work is credited to them, nor is the work correctly called a good work. In writing to Demetrias, Pelagius not merely said that we merit God's grace, but indicated that grace helps us to do more easily what we could do without such help (paragraph 28). So too, Pelagius' claim that the creator bestowed upon human nature a free choice that is strong and resolute for avoiding sin implies that grace merely helps us to do more easily what we can do without it (paragraph 29). Augustine points out that Christ's words, *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5), refute Pelagius' claim that grace merely helps us to do good more easily. Hence, Augustine calls upon Pelagius to correct all these points, for he has found nowhere in the writings of Pelagius or of Caelestius that they have confessed the grace of God by which we are justified or acknowledged the children of the promise (paragraph 31).

Leaving aside Pelagius' other writings, Augustine turns to the letter and profession of faith that he sent to Pope Innocent. In his letter he complained that people attack his good name on two grounds: one, that "he denies to little ones the sacrament of baptism and promises the kingdom of God to some people apart from Christ's redemption," and two, that he says that human beings can avoid sin so that he excludes the help of God (paragraph 32). Augustine saves the first point for his second book and turns to Pelagius' reply to the second complaint. Although Pelagius admits that "our unimpaired free choice . . . is always assisted by God's help in all good works," the question remains as to what sort of help this is (paragraph 33), and Augustine suggests that the help he admits consists in the law and teaching alone. Moreover, whatever sort of grace it is that Pelagius admits, he says that it is given to Christians in accord with their merits. Augustine again musters a battery of Pauline texts to show that the very faith by which one is a Christian is a gratuitous gift (paragraph 34).

In his *Profession of Faith* Pelagius covered many points that were not relevant to the dispute; in it he also said that baptism "should be celebrated with the same words of the sacrament in the case of infants as in that of adults" (paragraph 35). It is more significant, Augustine notes, that he admits that infants are baptized "for the forgiveness of sins," though he would contend that they have no sins to be forgiven, as one can see from Caelestius' *Profession of Faith*. Pelagius confesses "free choice in such a way that we say that we always need

God's help" (paragraph 36). Augustine again points to that ambiguity that allows Pelagius to mean that our natural ability is helped merely by the law and teaching of Christ. Having read all the works of Pelagius except for his letter to Constantius, Augustine claims that he found nowhere that Pelagius has admitted the grace that helps our will and our action by the assistance of the Holy Spirit (paragraph 37).

In his *Letter to Pope Innocent* Pelagius asked that his opponents read various of his works in which he deals with grace. Augustine says that he has read all these works—except for one of them. He states that he has found nothing clear in Pelagius' *Letter to Paulinus* (paragraph 38). He was unable to read his *Letter to Constantius* (paragraph 39). He confesses that the *Letter to Demetrias* almost convinced him that Pelagius admitted the grace in question, but came to see that Pelagius could have concealed his meaning in ambiguity (paragraph 40). Further passages from the same letter confirm that Pelagius meant by grace the forgiveness of sins and the revelation of doctrine (paragraphs 41–42). So too, in another passage from *In Defense of Free Choice* Pelagius is shown to mean by grace the example of Christ's life for Christians to imitate (paragraph 43). Again in the *Letter to Demetrias*, Pelagius is shown to mean by grace the revelation of knowledge by which we are instructed so that we can resist the evil spirit with greater ease (paragraph 44). Finally, Pelagius appealed to his books, *In Defense of Free Choice*; Augustine read them and reports that he once again found Pelagius' language ambiguous. He finds that Pelagius has not departed in the least from his clear theory that God's help to our natural ability is the law and teaching which already existed in the times of the prophets, but that grace in the proper sense is found in Christ's example (paragraph 45).

Having examined what Pelagius meant by grace in his writings and shown the distance between the Pelagian understanding of grace and that found in scripture, Augustine turns to the writings of the Catholic commentators on scripture, specifically to Saint Ambrose (paragraph 46). Pelagius had highly praised the faith of Ambrose, largely because he found in Ambrose support for the view that certain human beings, namely, Zechariah and Elizabeth, can be without sin in this life (paragraph 47). Augustine produces a series of texts from Ambrose's *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, that is, from the very work to which Pelagius had appealed, in support of the Catholic position. He first shows that Ambrose held that human beings cannot begin anything without the Lord and that love is a gift of grace (paragraph 48). He points to Ambrose's account of the look that Jesus gave Peter which made him weep after he denied Jesus to show the Lord helps our will and action (paragraph 49). He cites Ambrose's blaming Peter for presuming on his own strength (paragraph 50). Finally, he cites Ambrose's words that God calls those whom he chooses and makes devout those whom he wishes (paragraph 51). Augustine admits that the obscurity of

this question involving the will's choice and God's grace is such that Pelagius can claim to agree with the texts he has just cited from Ambrose. Hence, he returns to the three factors that Pelagius clearly distinguished, namely, the ability, the will, and the action, and demands that Pelagius admit that God helps not merely the ability, but also the will and the action (paragraph 52). Even the text of Ambrose concerning Zechariah and Elizabeth, Augustine argues (paragraph 53), does not necessarily entail that these holy people lived absolutely sinless lives. In fact, Augustine points out that a passage from Ambrose's *Commentary on Isaiah* distinguishes between the perfection possible in this world and the perfection that will be found in the kingdom of God (paragraph 54) and notes that, if Ambrose had in fact at one point attributed absolutely perfect righteousness to Zechariah and Elizabeth, he revised his opinion after a more careful examination of the evidence. Finally, Augustine cites a decisive passage in which Ambrose claimed that it is impossible for human nature to be spotless from the beginning (paragraph 55), which he takes as evidence that Ambrose held that human nature was damaged and weakened by the sin of the first human being. The mention of original sin, then, provides Augustine with a reason to bring the present book to an end and to turn to the second.

Book Two: Original Sin

Augustine begins the second book with a warning about the ambiguity of Pelagius' language about the baptism of infants (paragraph 1). At Carthage Caelestius had refused to condemn the propositions that "the sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race" and that "at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression" (paragraph 2), and in Rome in his *Profession of Faith* he denied even more explicitly that little ones are bound by original sin. Augustine cites an extensive passage from the *Acta* of the Council of Carthage (paragraph 3) to show that, though Caelestius granted baptism to little ones, he denied that they had any original sin stemming from Adam (paragraph 4). Caelestius admitted in his Roman *Profession of Faith* that he holds that infants are to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (paragraph 5), but he went on to say that this is not to be taken to mean that he holds that they have a sin derived from generation (paragraph 6). Augustine argues that Pope Zosimus treated Caelestius rather gently despite the views he held, because he admitted his willingness to be corrected (paragraph 7). Zosimus tried, Augustine explains, to bring Caelestius to condemn the objections raised against him in Paulinus' indictment. Caelestius refused to condemn them, but promised to condemn whatever the Apostolic See would condemn. Caelestius was not, however, freed from excommunication, but allowed time to come to his senses during a two-month period while a response was awaited from Africa (paragraph 8).³⁸ Augustine refers his correspondents to the reply sent to Rome after the

Council of Carthage in 418. He argues that, if Pelagius would consider himself and his writings honestly, he would have to admit that he is included under the same condemnation.

Augustine argues that Pelagius deceived the episcopal judges at Diospolis regarding the baptism of little ones, since he condemned the propositions of Caelestius despite the fact that he himself held them (paragraph 11). Augustine quotes from the proceedings of Synod of Diospolis to show the propositions that Pelagius condemned (paragraph 12). Since Pelagius declared anathema those who hold "that Adam's sin harmed him alone and not the human race, and that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression," the bishops of Palestine understood him to admit that Adam's sin was passed on to little ones. Augustine sets out to show that, like Caelestius, Pelagius held that infants are born without any inherited defect so that the only difference between the two is that Caelestius is in fact the more candid and honest (paragraph 13). From Pelagius' work, *In Defense of Free Choice*, Augustine cites a passage with the words, "as we are begotten without virtue, so we are begotten without vice," as proof that little ones are born without any defect stemming from Adam (paragraph 14). Though Augustine had initially been pleased that Pelagius had condemned at Diospolis Caelestius' proposition that "newly born infants are in the state in which Adam was before his transgression," he came to see from his *In Defense of Free Choice* that Pelagius was opposed to the transmission of Adam's sin to little ones and boasted of his acquittal at Diospolis (paragraph 15). Pelagius explained to his disciples that he meant that Adam's sin harmed the whole human race by example, not by propagation, and that infants are not in the state in which Adam was because they are as yet incapable of receiving a commandment and lack the use of rational choice (paragraph 16). Thus he gives the propositions raised as objections against him a different sense than the bishops at Diospolis thought them to have. Hence, Pelagius deceived his episcopal judges and was only acquitted because he deceived them (paragraph 17). Augustine concludes that it was perfectly just that Pelagius was condemned by Councils of Carthage and Milevis, by Popes Innocent and Zosimus, by the church of Rome, and by the Roman empire (paragraph 18).

Augustine argues that Pelagius even tried to deceive the Apostolic See because he claimed in his *Letter to Pope Innocent* that people were attacking his reputation on the grounds "that he denies the sacrament of baptism to infants and that he promises the kingdom of heaven to some apart from Christ's redemption" (paragraph 19). In fact, Augustine admits, Pelagius is innocent of those charges. But Pelagius denies that infants are born subject to original sin and holds that baptism is necessary only for the kingdom of heaven, as if one could attain eternal life without it. Augustine cites a passage from the *Letter to*

Pope Innocent that reveals the ambiguity of Pelagius' position (paragraph 20). The Pelagians have never claimed that infants could enter the kingdom of heaven without baptism, but that is not the heart of the dispute. What is at the heart of the dispute is whether infants have any original sin that must be washed away by the bath of rebirth (paragraph 21). In another passage from the same letter, Pelagius implied that baptism provides to infants born into an uncertain life a rebirth into a perpetual and certain life (paragraph 22). Augustine reports his initial conviction that Pelagius held that infants dying without baptism faced perpetual death and that God's justice could permit this only on the account of original sin. However, he later learned that Pelagius had said, "I know where little ones who die without baptism do not go; I do not know where they go" (paragraph 23). That is, he knew that such infants do not enter the kingdom of heaven, but he refused to say that they go into eternal death, since they committed no sin in this life and inherited no sin from Adam. Hence, Augustine concludes that Pelagius' statements in the *Letter to Pope Innocent* have sufficient ambiguity to conceal his heretical ideas.

In Pelagius' *Profession of Faith*, which he also sent to Pope Innocent, he said that baptism "should be celebrated by the same words of the sacrament in the case of infants as in that of adults" (paragraph 24). Augustine admits that this statement seemed in accord with the Catholic faith. However, Pelagius did not succeed in the long run in deceiving the Apostolic See; in fact, Zosimus eventually described the Pelagian teachings as detestable in his letter, *Tractoria*, for Pelagius and his teachings were sufficiently well known in Rome that he could not conceal his true thoughts. In his work, *In Defense of Free Choice*, he argued openly that in little ones human nature was in no way injured at its origin, and Augustine insists that, "by attributing good health to their nature, he denies to them the savior."

Hence, there has arisen a new heresy, and the Church is actively ridding herself of it by the condemnation of Pelagius and Caelestius (paragraph 25). The Pelagians try to claim that their doctrine is not a matter of heresy, but at most an error in questions extrinsic to the faith (paragraph 26). Augustine provides a long list of questions that are open to debate and are extrinsic to the faith (paragraph 27). But he insists that the Christian faith rests upon the two men, Adam and Christ, since, as all human beings were sold under the power of sin and brought to death by Adam, so all must be redeemed, set free, and saved by faith in the one mediator, Jesus Christ (paragraph 28). The righteous people of old—whether before the law was given to Moses or after the law or apart from the law—were saved only by faith in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There were righteous men and women under the law, but their righteousness did not come from the law, but from faith in the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Jesus Christ (paragraph 29).³⁹

The Pelagians, Augustine reports, claimed that people lived righteously first by nature, then under the law, and finally under grace. Before the law people knew their creator by reason and lived righteously by the law written in their hearts; later, after they developed the habit of sinning, they were given the law; finally, Christ came in person, like a physician to the side of one who had fallen seriously ill (paragraph 30). The implication of this division of history is that the righteous people of old had no need of Christ as the mediator to reconcile them to God. Augustine insists that, *as all die in Adam, so too all will be brought to life in Christ* (1 Cor 15:22) and that the righteous of old were members of Christ by their faith in his incarnation which was yet to come (paragraph 31). He explicitly argues that Abraham, for example, had faith in the incarnation of Christ (paragraph 32). So too, the offering of Melchizedek offered testimony to the flesh and blood of Christ who is the mediator of life, not by reason of his equality with the Father, but by reason of the form of the servant he assumed (paragraph 33).

In every age human nature needed the second Adam as physician, and those who praise the goodness of human beings before the law overlook the punishment of the flood and the destruction of Sodom (paragraph 34). Abraham received circumcision as a sacrament to be conferred on the eighth day after birth under the threat that one who was not circumcised on that day would be cut off from his people (paragraph 35). With Paul Augustine rejects any prenatal sin so that such a punishment could only be just if the infant was born subject to the condemnation of original sin, from which it could be set free only by the grace of Christ. And circumcision on the eighth day was prophetic of the grace of Christ who rose on the eighth day (paragraph 36). Hence, though the sacred signs or sacraments changed, the help of the mediator did not change. As the righteous of old were set free by faith in his incarnation to come, we are set free in Christ *by a circumcision that has not been made by the hand* (Col 2:11). On whatever day after its birth an infant is baptized, it is in a sense circumcised on the eighth day, since it is circumcised in Christ who rose on the eighth day of the week (paragraph 37).

The Pelagians found the doctrine of a sin transmitted by propagation to imply that marriage is evil and that the child produced was not the work of God. Hence, Augustine takes up a defense of the goodness of marriage and of the nature of the child begotten of marriage, while maintaining the evil of lust, which marriage puts to good use for procreating children, and the defect of original sin contracted by the child that is born (paragraph 38). He points to three goods of marriage: the orientation toward procreation, chaste fidelity, and the sacred character or sacrament. Despite his insistence upon the evil of lust (*libido*), he is equally insistent that reason makes good use of lust within marriage for the procreation of children. "On account of marriage conjugal relations are not only permissi-

ble, but even beneficial and good" (paragraph 39). Augustine claims that marriage would have existed, even if Adam and Eve had not sinned, and that the words, *Increase and multiply* (Gn 1:28), were not a prediction of future sins, but a blessing upon marital fertility (paragraph 40).

On the other hand, marriage in paradise would not have involved the arousal of sexual organs independently of reason and will; rather, those organs would have moved in obedience to the will, just as our hand or foot is now moved in obedience to the will. As a result of the disobedience of sin, human beings now experience the disobedience of their sexual organs as a source of shame (paragraph 41). But the goodness of marriage has not been destroyed by the evil of lust; rather, marriage puts to good use this evil in procreating children. God who created human beings and joined man and wife in marriage is the author of the nature of the new child, but not of the defect which came from the ruse of the devil and the consent of the human will (paragraph 42). God condemned the human being who sinned and his whole race so that human beings are now born under the condemnation of Adam's sin until spiritual rebirth sets them free (paragraph 43). Carnal concupiscence would have been harmful by its mere presence, if baptism had not washed away all sins. In those who have been reborn it is present without being able to do any harm, though it is passed on to and harms the children of baptized parents until they themselves are reborn. Its complete removal, however, must await the rebirth of the resurrection yet to come (paragraph 44). Hence, the guilt of original sin holds all who are born in its grip until they are reborn in baptism. The very rites of baptism, including exorcism and the renunciation of the power of the devil by the sponsors, indicates that little ones are set free from the slavery to the devil by the grace of Christ (paragraph 45). Hence, there are no grounds for objecting that God should not create the child which the devil claims as his own. Sin brought it about that human beings are born with original sin, but does not prevent their being born; though they are born sinful, their nature remains good. They are born subject to unclean spirits in a community of sin, but they are set free by the mediator who assumed their human weakness (paragraph 46).

As Augustine brought the first book to a close by appealing to the authority of Ambrose, so he brings the second book to a close with a series of texts from Ambrose that express the fall of the whole human race in Adam (paragraph 47). Pelagius' claims that, "as we are begotten without virtue, so we are begotten without vice" is in opposition to the teaching of Ambrose, whose faith Pelagius had praised so highly. Hence, it follows, Augustine concludes, that it is Pelagius who has strayed from the Catholic faith along with his disciple, Caelestius (paragraph 48).

The Text and Previous Translations

The text translated is that established by C. F. Urba and J. Zycha in CSEL 42 (Vienna, 1902), 125-206. I have adopted some emendations from the texts and have also benefited from the notes in the ALG and the BA editions. The work has been previously translated into English by P. Holmes in NPNF 5/1 (New York, 1887; reprinted 1971); his translation is also reprinted in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine* (New York, 1948), I, 581-654. In the present century the work has also been translated into Spanish by A. Centeno in BAC 50 (Madrid, 1956), 305-459; into German by A. Fingerle in ALG II (Würzburg, 1964), 320-467; into French by H. Chirat and J. Plagieux in BA 22 (Paris, 1975), 53-269; and into Italian by I. Volpi in NBA 17/2 (Rome, 1981), 21-121.

Notes

1. In the introduction to the work in ALG II, p. 74, A. Zumkeller says that Zosimus first condemned Pelagianism in his letter, *Quamvis Patrum*, of 21 March 418, which arrived in Africa at the end of April and was received on 1 May by the Council of African bishops assembled at Carthage. Hence, he concludes that 1 May 418 is the earliest possible date for Augustine to have begun the composition of this work. *Quamvis Patrum*, however, is hardly a clear condemnation of Pelagianism. Moreover, Augustine refers to the *Tractoria* in the present work which could not have arrived in Africa until July.

2. Both the ALG and the BA editions note that Augustine refers to the *Tractoria* of Zosimus in II, 21, 24 when he speaks of the letter Zosimus "addressed to the whole Catholic world" (see ALG II, 425 and BA 22, 201). G. de Plinval has proposed the date of 28 June 418 for the publication of the *Tractoria*; see his *Pélage, ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* (Lausanne, 1943), p. 327, n. 1. If de Plinval's date for the *Tractoria* is correct, Augustine could not have begun the work until late July.

3. See ALG II, 74.

4. B. R. Rees seems to view *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* as Augustine's response to Zosimus' letter of the fall of 417 so that the work is prior to Zosimus' letter of 21 March 418, to the condemnation by Honorius, and to the Council of Carthage—not to mention Zosimus' *Tractoria*. See his *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988), p. 141.

5. See BA 22, 25-26.

6. *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* I, 2, 2.

7. Pelagius had sent his *Profession of Faith* along with a letter to Pope Innocent. They were, however, received by Zosimus who became pope on 18 March 417 after the death of Innocent on 12 March of that year.

8. *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* I, 32, 35.

9. *Ibid.*

10. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 30, 54—31, 56, where Augustine examines this letter of Pelagius to a priest friend, as well as 32, 57—33, 58, where he discusses Pelagius' own account of the Synod of Diospolis.

11. Jerome, Letter 134 (among the Letters of Augustine, Letter 172).

12. See Letter 175, among the Letters of Augustine. The letter was signed by Aurelius of Carthage and sixty-seven other bishops.

13. See Letter 176, among the Letters of Augustine. This letter bore fifty-nine signatures.

14. See Letter 177, among the Letters of Augustine.

15. Innocent, *Fraternitatis Vestrae* 4: CSEL 35/1, 93 (among the Letters of Augustine, Letter 183).
16. See Letters 181, 182, 183, among the Letters of Augustine.
17. In *The Deeds of Pelagius* 35, 66, Augustine mentions the attack in which some of Jerome's nuns and monks and a deacon were killed and the monastery buildings were burned. Augustine does not say that Pelagius was behind the attack, though he seems to assume that he was.
18. See Letter 136, among the Letters of Jerome.
19. See *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* II, 6, 6 and 23, 26.
20. See Zosimus' *Magnum Pondus*: CSEL 35/1, 99-103.
21. Zosimus, *Posteaquam a Nobis* 3: CSEL 35/1, 103.
22. *Ibid.*, 7, p. 105.
23. *Ibid.* 15, p. 107.
24. Augustine, Sermon 131, 10, 10.
25. See *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians* II, 3, 5.
26. Jerome, Letter 141 (among the Letters of Augustine, Letter 195).
27. See Gerald Bonner, *Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 343-344.
28. Zosimus, *Posteaquam a Nobis* 4-5: CSEL 35/1, 116.
29. In DS 222-230 this canon is numbered 3', since it is omitted in many manuscripts. Accordingly, DS numbers the following canons 3 through 8.
30. Canons four to six were almost certainly expressly approved in Zosimus' *Tractoria*; they are cited in the *Indiculus* of Pseudo-Caelestine; see DS 245.
31. See Phil 2:13.
32. See Rom 13:10 and 5:5.
33. See Phil 2:13.
34. See 2 Cor 12:9.
35. See Mt 7:18 and 1 Tm 6:10.
36. See 1 Jn 4:7-8; 1 Jn 3:9, and 1 Cor 13:4-5.
37. See 1 Cor 8:1.
38. See Zosimus' letter, "Magnum Pondus," which was sent on 21 September 417.
39. See 1 Tm 2:5.

Book One: The Grace of Christ

The Occasion for Writing This Work

1, 1. I cannot tell you how happy I am over your good health in body and especially in spirit, my dear and true sisters and brother, whom God loves. I leave that for you, Albina, Pinianus, and Melania,¹ to imagine and to accept on faith so that I may instead address those matters about which you consulted me. Since the messenger was in a hurry, I dictated these answers, as best I could and to the extent that God provided his help, amid my work, which is much more pressing at Carthage than anywhere else.

2, 2. You wrote me that you brought Pelagius to the point that he condemned in writing whatever was said against him and that he said in your hearing, "I declare anathema anyone who thinks or says that the grace of God by which *Christ came into this world to save sinners* (1 Tm 1:15) is not necessary, not only at every hour and at every moment, but also for every act of ours. And those who attempt to do away with this doctrine deserve eternal punishment."²

Anyone who hears this without understanding his meaning, which he expressed quite clearly in his books, is going to think that he is in complete agreement with the truth. I do not mean those books which he claims were stolen from him before they could be corrected or which he simply disowns. I mean those which he mentioned in the letter he sent to Rome.³ Anyone, however, who pays attention to his clear statements in them ought to hold even these words of his suspect. After all, even if he locates the grace of God by which *Christ came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tm 1:15) in the forgiveness of sins alone, he can twist these words to suit his own meaning. For he can say that it is necessary for every act at every hour and at every moment precisely so that we keep in mind and recall that our sins have been forgiven and do not sin anymore. Thus we are not helped by any additional power, but by the force of our own will that recalls in each act what it has received from the forgiveness of sins. Likewise, they often say to us that Christ offered us his help not to sin inasmuch as he left us an example by living and teaching a life of righteousness. They can also twist these words to suit their meaning and say that this sort of grace is necessary for us at every moment and for every act. That is, it is necessary that in our whole life we have before us the example of the Lord's life. But with your faith you clearly see that this confession of his must be distinguished from the confession of grace that is here in question. And yet, this point can be obscured by the ambiguous terms he uses.

Pelagius' Understanding of Grace in His New Work

3, 3. But why should we be surprised? In the episcopal proceedings,⁴ Pelagius himself condemned those who say that God's grace and help are not given for individual actions, but consist in free choice or in the law and teaching. At that point we thought that he had exhausted every possible evasion on this question. He even condemned those who teach that God's grace is given in accord with our merits.⁵ But in those books which he published in defense of free choice⁶ and which he mentions in the letter he sent to Rome,⁷ he reveals that he holds precisely the position which he was thought to have condemned. For he locates the grace and help of God which helps us not to sin either in nature and in free choice or in the law and teaching. Thus, when God helps one to *turn away from evil and do good* (1 Pt 3:11),⁸ Pelagius thinks that God helps by revealing and showing us what to do, but not by cooperating with us and pouring love into us so that we do what we know we should do.

Pelagius Distinguishes the Ability, the Will, and the Action

4. He lists and distinguishes three things by which he claims we fulfill God's commandments: the ability, the will, and the action. That is, the ability by which one can be righteous, the will by which one wills to be righteous, and the action by which one is righteous. He admits that the first of these three, that is, the ability, was given to nature by the creator and is not in our power, but that we have it, even if we do not want it. But he claims that the other two, that is, the will and the action, are ours, and he attributes them to us in such a way that he maintains they come only from ourselves. Moreover, he holds that God's grace does not help those two elements which he claims are entirely ours, that is, the will and the action, but that it helps the ability which is not in our power and comes to us from God. He as much as says that those elements which are ours, that is, the will and the action, are so capable of turning away from evil and doing good that they do not need God's help, but that what we have from God, namely, the ability, is so weak that it always needs the help of grace.

4, 5. Someone might say either that we misunderstand what he says or that, out of ill will, we twist his words to a meaning they did not have. Hence, listen to what he says, "We distinguish these three elements and arrange them in a definite order. In first place, we put the ability; in the second, willing; in the third, being. Ability is found in nature; willing in choice; being in action. The first element, namely, ability, is properly due to God who conferred it upon his creature. The two other elements, namely, willing and being, should be attributed to the human person, because they proceed from choice as their source. Therefore, we praise human beings for their good will and their good action; in

fact, we praise both human beings and God who gave them the ability for this will and action and who always assists this ability by the help of his grace. That human beings can will and accomplish what is good is due to God alone. That one element, then, can exist, even if these other two do not, but these other two cannot exist without the former. I am free, therefore, to have neither my will nor my action good, but I cannot fail to have the ability for good. It is present in me, even if I do not want it, nor does nature ever take a holiday from itself in this respect. A few examples will make our meaning clearer. Our being able to see with our eyes is not due to us, but our using our sight for good or for bad is due to us. Our being able to speak we owe to God, but our saying something good or bad is due to ourselves. And to sum up everything in a general statement, our being able to do, say, or think anything good comes from him who gave us this ability and who helps this ability, but our doing or speaking or thinking anything good is due to us, since we can also turn all these toward something evil. Hence, we must often repeat the following point on account of your slanderous attacks. When we say that a human being can be without sin, we praise God who gave this to us, by acknowledging the ability we have received from him, and there is no reason to praise human beings at this point, when God is the only cause under consideration. For the discussion does not concern either willing or being, but only what can be."⁹

5, 6. There you have, in his third book in the defense of free choice, the whole doctrine of Pelagius which he carefully expressed in these very words. In that work he took care to distinguish these three elements with great subtlety; one, the ability; two, the willing; three, being. That is, the ability, the will, and the action. As a result, when we hear or read that he confesses the help of God's grace by which we turn away from what is evil and do what is good,¹⁰ whether he locates it in the law or in teaching or in anything else,¹¹ we should know what he is saying and not make the mistake of understanding him in a sense other than he holds. We should certainly realize that he does not believe that either our will or our action is aided by God's help, but only the ability for willing and for acting. For of these three he claims that we have only this ability from God. He implies that the element which God placed in our nature is weak, but that the other two, which Pelagius attributes to us, are so strong and powerful and self-sufficient that they do not need his help. And thus God does not help us to will; he does not help us to act; rather, he only helps us to be able to will and to act. But the apostle says just the opposite; he says, *With fear and trembling work out your own salvation* (Phil 2:12). Moreover, he wanted them to know that God helps them, not only so that they are able to act—for they had already received this in their nature and in teaching—but also so that they do act. Hence, he did not say, "It is God, after all, who produces in you the ability," as though they already have both the willing and acting on their own and do not need his help

for these two. Rather, he said, *It is God, after all, who produces in you the willing and the accomplishment*—or as we read in other manuscripts, especially the Greek ones: *the willing and the action* (Phil 2:13). See whether by the power of the Holy Spirit the apostle did not foresee far in advance these future opponents of God's grace. For he says that God produces in us these two elements, that is, the willing and the acting, which Pelagius insists are due to us, as if they were not helped by divine grace.

Pelagius Restricts God's Help to Our Ability

6, 7. Nor should Pelagius deceive the incautious and simple—or even himself—on this point. For, when he said, “Therefore, we praise human beings for their good will and their good action,” he seemed to correct this by adding, “in fact, we praise both human beings and God.”¹² He did not, after all, say this because he wanted us to understand, as sound doctrine has it, that God produces in us both the willing and the acting. He shows quite clearly why he said this by immediately adding, “who gave them the ability for this will and action.” It is clear from his previous statements that he locates this ability in nature. But so that we do not think that he had nothing to say about grace, he added, “who always assists this ability by the help of his grace.” He did not say, “this will or this action.” If he had said that, he would not seem to abandon the teaching of the apostle. Rather, he said, “who always assists this ability by the help of his grace,” that is, he assists that element of the three which he located in nature. Thus, the reason that he praises both human beings and God for the will and the action is not that we human beings have the will we do, because God pours into our wills the fire of love, and that we act as we do, because God cooperates with us. Without his help, after all, what is a human being? Rather, he included God in this praise, because, without the nature with which he created us so that we have the ability to will and act, we would neither will nor act.

For Pelagius Grace Consists in the Law and Teaching

8. He does, however, admit that this natural ability is helped by God's grace, but it is not clear at this point either what he means by grace or to what extent he holds that nature is helped by it. But, as we can infer from other passages in which he speaks with greater clarity, he wants us to interpret this help for our natural ability as nothing but the law and teaching.

7. For in another passage he says, “On this point people of extreme ignorance suppose that we do an injustice to divine grace, because we say that it never under any circumstances produces holiness in us apart from our will. They speak as if God gave a command to his grace instead of also supplying the help of his

grace to those to whom he gave the command. Thus, human beings are able to fulfill more easily through grace what they are ordered to do through free choice.”¹³ And as if he were going to explain what he means by grace, he goes on to add, “We do not say, as you suppose, that it consists in the law alone, but we profess that it is also found in God’s help.”¹⁴ Who would not at this point want him to disclose what he means by grace? We should expect him to tell us this, especially because he says that grace does not consist in the law alone. But look at what he adds, while we are held in suspense, waiting for this. “For God helps us,” he says, “through his teaching and revelation, in opening the eyes of our heart, in disclosing to us what is to come so that we are not absorbed with what is present, in exposing the snares of the devil, in enlightening us by the manifold and ineffable gift of his heavenly grace.”¹⁵ Then he brings his statement to a close by a sort of self-absolution. He asks, “Does one who says this seem to you to deny God’s grace, or does he seem to confess both human free choice and God’s grace?”¹⁶ On all these points he has never ceased to praise the law and teaching. He carefully inculcates that this is the grace that helps us, and he continues on with what he started, when he said, “We profess that it is found in God’s help.”¹⁷ Next, he thought that he should instruct us about the many forms of God’s help by mentioning his teaching and revelation, his opening the eyes of the heart, his disclosing what is to come, his exposing the snares of the devil, his enlightening us by the manifold and ineffable gift of his heavenly grace, so that we might learn God’s commandments and promises. This, then, is what it means to locate God’s grace in the law and teaching.

The Law Brings Only Knowledge of Sin, Not Righteousness

8, 9. From this, then, it is clear that he admits the grace by which God discloses and reveals what we ought to do, but not the grace by which he gives us his help so that we act. And yet, if the help of grace is lacking, the knowledge of the law can only bring about the transgression of the commandment. The apostle says, *For where there is no law, there is no transgression* (Rom 4:15) and *I would not have known desire if the law had not said, “You shall not desire.”* (Rom 7:7; Ex 20:17). And thus the law is so sharply distinguished from grace that the law not merely is of no benefit, but even does much harm, if grace does not provide help. The usefulness of the law is shown to be that it forces those whom it makes guilty of transgression to take refuge in grace in order to be set free and to receive help in overcoming evil desires. It commands, after all, rather than helps; it teaches us that there is a disease without healing it. In fact, it increases what it does not heal so that we seek the medicine of grace with greater attention and care. *For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6). After all, *if a law had been given which could give life, righteousness would, of course, come*

from the law (Gal 3:21). With regard to the law's also providing help, he goes on to say, *But scripture has enclosed all things under sin so that on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe. Hence, the law, he says, was our schoolmaster in Christ Jesus* (Gal 3:22-24). For the proud, then, it is beneficial that they be more tightly and obviously enclosed under sin so that they do not presume to achieve righteousness by the strength of their own free choice, but so that *every mouth might be shut and the whole world might be found guilty before God. For no flesh will be justified before him on the basis of the law. For knowledge of sin comes through the law. But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law, though the law and the prophets have borne witness to it* (Rom 3:19-21). How, then, has it been revealed apart from the law, if the law has borne witness to it? It is not, then, that it was revealed apart from the law; rather, the righteousness is apart from the law, because it is the righteousness of God, that is, the righteousness that we have, not from the law, but from God.¹⁸ It is not the righteousness that we know and fear because of his commandments, but the righteousness we love and embrace because of his gift. Thus, *Let one who boasts boast in the Lord* (1 Cor 1:31).

9, 10. How, then, does it happen that this fellow takes the law and teaching as the grace that helps us to act with righteousness? After all, for that grace to be of much help to us, it would have to help us to seek after grace. No one can fulfill the law by the law, for *love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom 13:10), but *the love of God is poured out in our hearts*, not by the law, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). Moreover, grace is revealed by the law so that the law may be fulfilled by grace. How, after all, does it help Pelagius to say the same thing in different words? He does not want to be understood as making the grace, which he claims helps the ability of nature, to consist in the law and teaching. As I see it, he is afraid of being understood in that sense, because he condemned those who say that God's grace and help are not given for individual acts, but consist in free choice or in the law and teaching.¹⁹ On the other hand, he thinks that no one sees through him, when he refers to the law and teaching by various different expressions for them.

The Grace That Pelagius Ought to Admit

10, 11. In another passage, after he had at length maintained that it is not God's help, but we ourselves who produce in ourselves a good will, he posed an objection for himself from a letter of the apostle. He asked, "How will the statement of the apostle remain true that *It is God, after all, who produces in you the willing and the accomplishment*" (Phil 2:13)? Then, as if to solve this objection which he saw was strongly opposed to his teaching, he went on to add,

“He produces in us a willing that is good, a willing that is holy, by setting us on fire with the greatness of the glory to come and with the promise of rewards, while we are given over to earthly desires and, like dumb animals, love only present things. He does this, by rousing the sluggish will to a desire for God through revealing his wisdom; he does this, by urging us toward everything that is good—another point that you are not afraid to deny!”²⁰ What could be clearer? He says that the grace by which God produces in us the willing that is good is precisely the law and teaching. For the law and teaching of the holy scriptures promise us the great glory and rewards to come. What wisdom reveals is also a matter of teaching; when we are urged on toward everything that is good, it is a matter of teaching. And if there seems to be some distinction between teaching and urging or, rather, exhorting, the latter is also included within the general scope of teaching, which includes any form of discourses or writings whatsoever. The holy scriptures too both teach and exhort, and the actions of human beings can also at times teach and exhort.

But we want the Pelagians at some point to admit not merely the grace by which we are promised the great glory to come, but that by which we believe in and hope for it; not merely the grace by which wisdom is revealed, but that by which we love it as well; not merely the grace by which we are urged on toward everything good, but that which moves us to action. *For not all have faith* (2 Thes 3:2) who hear the Lord promising the kingdom of heaven in the scriptures, and not everyone who is urged onward is moved to action so as to come to him who says, *Come to me, all you who labor* (Mt 11:28). He himself quite clearly showed which people have faith and are moved to come to him, when he said, *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him* (Jn 6:44). A bit later, when speaking of those who do not believe, he said, *I told you that no one can come to me, unless this gift has been given to him by my Father* (Jn 6:65). This is the grace that Pelagius ought to admit, if he wants not merely to be called a Christian, but to be one.

11, 12. What am I to say about the revelation of wisdom? No one, after all, can readily hope to attain in this life the great revelations that the apostle Paul had. And what else are we to believe that his revelations most often contained but wisdom? Nonetheless, he says, *So that I would not become proud over the greatness of my revelations, I received a thorn in my flesh, an angel of Satan, who struck me. On account of this, I asked the Lord that it be taken away from me. And he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for virtue is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Cor 12:7-9). Surely, if at that point the apostle already had the highest degree of love, which could neither be increased nor become puffed up with pride, the angel of Satan would not have been needed to strike him and to hold back the pride that can arise over the great revelations one receives. For what is pride but being puffed up? Scripture, of course, says of love with perfect

truth, *Love is not jealous; it is not puffed up* (1 Cor 13:4). Even in such a great apostle this love was, of course, still increasing from day to day, as long as his interior self was being renewed from day to day,²¹ and it would undoubtedly attain perfection when he could no longer be puffed up with pride. But at that time his mind was still at a point at which he could be puffed up by the great revelations he received, until he was filled with love's solid structure. He had not yet arrived and reached the goal toward which he was running as he made progress.

12, 13. And so, he did not want to put up with the difficulty, which was holding his pride in check, until he came to possess the ultimate and supreme perfection of love. And it was perfectly correct for him to be told, *My grace is sufficient for you, for virtue is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor 12:9)—not merely, as Pelagius thinks, in the weakness of the flesh,²² but in the weakness of both the flesh and the soul, for the soul was also weak in comparison with that supreme perfection. And so that he might not be filled with pride, he was given, as he was brought to understand, a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan.²³ Yet, he was a man of great strength, in comparison with the carnal and sensual persons who do not yet perceive *what pertains to the Spirit of God* (1 Cor 2:14). Hence, if virtue is made perfect in weakness, those who do not admit their weakness are not being made perfect. But this grace by which *virtue is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor 12:9) brings those who have been predestined and called according to his purpose²⁴ to the heights of perfection and glory. This grace not only makes us know what we should do, but also makes us do what we know; it not only makes us believe what we should love, but makes us love what we believe.

The Sense in Which Grace Teaches

13, 14. If we are to call this grace "teaching," we should certainly mean by it the teaching which we believe God pours out with an ineffable sweetness in the depths and interior of the soul, not merely through those who externally plant and water, but also through himself who gives the increase secretly.²⁵ In that way he not merely reveals the truth, but also imparts love. After all, that is the way God teaches those *who have been called according to his purpose* (Rom 8:28); at the same time he grants them both to know what they should do and to do what they know. For this reason the apostle says to the Thessalonians, *You have no need for me to write to you about brotherly love, for you yourselves have learned from God to love one another*. And to prove that they learned this from God, he added, *For you show that love toward all the brothers and sisters in the whole of Macedonia* (1 Thes 4:9.10), as if it were an absolutely certain sign that you have learned something from God, if you do what you have learned.

In this way all those *who have been called according to his purpose* (Rom 8:28) are *taught by God* (Is 54:13 and Jn 6:45), as we read in the prophets.

But those who know what they ought to do and do not do it have not yet learned it from God through grace, but through the law; they have not learned it through the Spirit, but through the letter. Many seem, nonetheless, to do what the law commands out of a fear of punishment, not out of a love of righteousness. Such is the righteousness that the apostle calls his own righteousness which comes from the law as a commandment, but not as a gift. If it were a gift, it would not be called our righteousness, but God's, because it only becomes ours insofar as we receive it from God. After all, he says, *That I might be found in him, not having my own righteousness derived from the law, but that which comes through faith in Jesus, a righteousness that comes from God in faith* (Phil 3:9).

The difference, then, between the law and grace is so great that, though there is no doubt that the law comes from God, the righteousness which comes from the law does not come from God. But the righteousness that is brought to perfection through grace does come from God. After all, that righteousness is said to be from the law which is produced by the curse contained in the law, but that righteousness is said to be from God which is given through the benefit of grace so that his commandment does not bring terror, but sweetness. Thus we pray in the psalm, *You are sweet, Lord, and in your sweetness teach me your righteousness* (Ps 119:68), that is, so that I am not forced to live under the law as a slave out of fear of punishment, but may find delight in the law with the love that makes me free. The person, of course, who gladly carries out the commandment does so in freedom. And those who learn in this sense do whatever they learn that they should do.

14, 15. The Lord also said with regard to this manner of teaching, *Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned comes to me* (Jn 6:45). One cannot, then, correctly say of those who do not come: They listened, of course, and learned that they were to come, but they did not will to do what they learned. One certainly cannot correctly say this of the manner in which God teaches us by grace. After all, if, as the truth says, *Everyone who has learned comes* (Jn 6:45), whoever does not come has not learned. But who can fail to see that one comes or does not come by the choice of the will? Yet this choice can exist by itself, if one does not come; it must be helped, if one comes—and helped not only so that one knows what to do, but so that one does what one knows one should do. And thus, when God teaches, not by the letter of the law, but by the grace of the Spirit, he teaches not only so that through knowledge people see what they learn, but so that they desire it with the will and accomplish it in action. In this divine manner of teaching God helps the willing itself and the acting itself, not merely the natural ability for willing and acting.

For, if our ability alone were helped by this grace, the Lord would say, "Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned can come to me." But that is not what he said. He said, *Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned comes to me* (Jn 6:45). Pelagius locates the ability to come in nature or even, as he has now begun to say, in that grace, however he may interpret it, by which, as he says, the ability itself is helped.²⁶ But coming is already a matter of willing and action. It does not follow, however, that persons who can come do come, unless they will it and do it. On the other hand, everyone who has learned from the Father not only can come, but does come. In that case there is the gain of the ability, the love of the will, and the result of the action.

An Examination of the Examples Pelagius Gave

15, 16. What, then, do his examples aim to accomplish? They do nothing but make his meaning clearer to us, as he promised. They do not oblige us to hold his views, but bring us to know more clearly and evidently what he himself holds. "Our being able to see with our eyes," he says, "is not due to us, but our using our sight for good or for bad is due to us."²⁷ Let our answer to him be the psalm in which we say to God, *Turn my eyes away so that they do not see vanity* (Ps 119:37). The psalm is speaking of the eyes of the mind, and it is from those eyes, of course, that these eyes of the flesh come to see well or badly. I do not mean this in the sense that those who look with healthy eyes are said to see well and those whose eyes are inflamed are said to see badly. Rather, I mean that one sees well in order to be helpful, and one sees badly for the purpose of lusting. After all, by these exterior eyes we see both a poor person whom we help and a woman for whom we lust, but the mercy or the lust is derived from the interior eyes so that one sees well or badly. Why, then, do we say to God, *Turn my eyes away so that they do not see vanity*? Why do we ask for what lies in our own power, if God does not help the will?

16, 17. "Our being able to speak," he says, "we owe to God, but our saying something good or bad is due to ourselves."²⁸ That is not what he teaches who speaks well. He says, *It is not you who speak; rather, it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you* (Mt 10:20). Pelagius says, "And to sum up everything in a general statement, our being able to do, say, or think anything good comes from him who gave us this ability and who helps this ability."²⁹ Notice that he also repeats here his previous idea that of these three, that is, the ability, the will and the action, only the ability is helped. Then with an addition to complete what he intended, he said, "Our doing, speaking, or thinking anything good is due to us."³⁰ He forgot what he had above more or less corrected. There, after he had said, "Therefore, we praise human beings for their good will and action," he went on to say, "in fact, we praise both human beings and God who gave the

ability for this will and action.”³¹ Why did he not also recall this in his examples? At least at the end of them he could have said, “Our being able to do, say, or think anything good comes from him who gave us this ability and who helps this ability. But our doing or speaking or thinking anything good comes from us and also from him.” He did not say this, and, unless I am mistaken, I believe I see what he was afraid of.

17, 18. When he wanted to show why it comes from us, he said, “because we can also turn all these toward something evil.”³² He was, therefore, afraid to say that it comes from God and from us; otherwise, we would reply to him: “If our doing, saying, or thinking something good comes from God and from us, because he gave us this ability, then our doing, saying, or thinking something bad comes from God and from us, because he gave us the ability for both.” Thus, as we and God are praised for our good deeds, we and—heaven forbid!—God would be blamed for our evil deeds. That ability, after all, which he gave makes us able to do both good and evil.

Love and Covetousness as Sources of Good and Evil

18, 19. Pelagius speaks about this ability in his first book in defense of free choice. He says, “We have the ability for each alternative implanted in us by God as a sort of fruitful and fertile root, if I may use this comparison. It generates and brings forth diverse products from the human will and can at the choice of its gardener either be radiant with the flowers of virtues or bristle with the thorns of vices.”³³ Here he does not see what he is saying; he makes one and the same root the source of both good and evil in opposition to the truth of the gospel and the teaching of the apostle. For the Lord said that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.³⁴ And when the apostle Paul said that covetousness is the root of all evils,³⁵ he certainly indicated that we should understand that love is the root of all good. If, then, the two trees, the good one and the bad one, are two human beings, a good one and a bad one, what is the good human being but one with good will, that is, a tree with a good root? And what is a bad human being but one with a bad will, that is, a tree with a bad root? After all, the fruits of these roots and trees are thoughts, words, and deeds; the good ones come forth from a good will, the evil ones from an evil will.

19, 20. But human beings become good trees, when they receive the grace of God. They do not, after all, by themselves change themselves from bad to good. Rather, they do this from him and through him and in him who is always good. And they need to be helped by that same grace, not only to be good trees, but also to produce good fruits, for without that grace they can do nothing good. In the case of good trees he cooperates in producing the fruit, in watering them externally and cultivating them through any minister whatsoever and also by

giving them growth internally through himself.³⁶ But human beings become bad trees, when they make themselves bad, when they fall away from the unchangeable good; to fall away from it is, of course, the origin of a bad will. But this falling away does not mark the beginning of another nature that is evil; rather, it corrupts a nature which was created good. And once the defect has been healed, no evil remains, because the defect existed in a nature, but the defect was not itself a nature.

20, 21. That ability, then, is not, as this fellow supposes, the single root of both good and bad actions. In fact, love, the root of good actions, is one thing, and covetousness, the root of bad actions, is something else. They are as different as virtue and vice. But that ability is clearly able to become each of these roots, because human beings not only can have love by which they are good trees, but also can have covetousness by which they are bad trees. Human covetousness, which is a vice, has as its source either a human being or the deceiver of human beings, not their creator. For it is *the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the ambition of the world, and it does not come from the Father, but from the world* (1 Jn 2:16). Is there anyone who does not know that scripture often calls by the term “the world” those who live in this world?

21, 22. But love, which is a virtue, comes to us from God. Scripture bears witness to this, when it says, *Love comes from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God, because God is love* (1 Jn 4:7-8). In terms of this love, one can better understand the statement, *Those who have been born of God do not sin* and³⁷ *they cannot sin* (1 Jn 3:9), because love, through which that person has been born of God, *does no evil and thinks no evil* (1 Cor 13:4.5). When human beings sin, they do not sin through love; rather, they sin through covetousness, through which they have not been born of God. For that ability, as we have said, is able to become each of these roots. Because, then, scripture says, *Love comes from God* (1 Jn 4:7) or—what is even more—*God is love* (1 Jn 4:8), the apostle John cries out in plain language, *See the sort of love the Father has given us that we are called and really are children of God* (1 Jn 3:1). Why does Pelagius, when he hears *God is love*, still go so far as to maintain that of those three elements we have only the ability from God, while we have good will and good actions from ourselves? He must think that good will is something other than the love which, as scripture cries out, comes to us from God and has been given to us by the Father so that we might be his children.

Our Good Works Cannot Merit God's Grace

22, 23. But perhaps our previous merits have brought it about that it was given to us, as this fellow maintains concerning the grace of God in that book which

he wrote to a consecrated virgin.³⁸ He also mentioned this book in the letter which he sent to Rome.³⁹ In it he first cited the testimony of the apostle James where he said, *Be subject to God, but resist the devil and he will flee from you* (Jas 4:7). Then he immediately went on to add, "He shows how we ought to resist the devil, if we are indeed subject to God and, by doing his will, merit divine grace and more easily resist the evil spirit by the help of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁰ You see how sincere of heart he was when he condemned in the ecclesiastical court in Palestine those who say that God's grace is given in accord with our merits!⁴¹ Do we have any doubt that he still holds and openly preaches the same idea? How, then, was his confession truthful in that interrogation by the bishops? Had he perhaps already written this book in which he openly states that grace is given in accord with our merits—the very position which he condemned without reservation in that Eastern synod? He should, then, have admitted that he had once held that position, but now no longer holds it. In that case we would clearly be able to rejoice over his correction. But, when among others this objection was raised against him, he answered, "Let those who say that these are Caelestius' statements see whether they are Caelestius' or not. I, however, have never held them, and I declare anathema those who hold them."⁴² How could he never have held them, if he had produced this book earlier? Or how does he declare anathema those who hold them, if he produced this book afterward?

24. Perhaps he will reply that he said in that passage that we should "by doing God's will merit divine grace," in the sense that additional grace is given to those who believe and live good lives so that they may resist the tempter with courage, for they had also received grace earlier to do God's will. But so that he may not try to reply in that way, here are some further statements of his. He says, "Those who have recourse to the Lord and desire to be ruled by him, that is, who make their will dependent upon his will, who by constantly clinging to him become, as the apostle said, one spirit with him,⁴³ achieve this simply by the freedom of choice."⁴⁴ You see what a great thing it is that he says is achieved simply by the freedom of choice. And for this reason, he thinks that we cling to God without God's help. After all, the words, "simply by the freedom of choice," mean that, after we cling to him without his help, we then also merit to be helped because we have clung to him.

23. He goes on to say, "Those who use this well," that is, those who make good use of freedom of choice, "commit their whole selves to God and mortify their own will so that they can say with the apostle, *It is no longer I who live; rather, it is Christ who lives in me* (Gal 2:20). They place their hearts in the hand of God so that he may direct them wherever he wishes."⁴⁵ It is certainly a great help from divine grace that God himself directs our heart wherever he wishes! But, as this fellow foolishly supposes, we merit this great help simply by the

freedom of choice without any help when we have recourse to the Lord, when we desire to be ruled by him, when we make our will dependent upon his will, and when we become one spirit with him, by constantly clinging to him. According to this fellow, we achieve these great goods simply by the freedom of choice. Thus we obtain his grace by these previous merits so that he directs our heart wherever he wishes. How, then, can this be grace, if it is not given gratuitously? How can it be grace, if it repays a debt? How does the apostle speak the truth, when he says, *This does not come from you; rather, it is God's gift; it is not the result of works so that no one may be filled with pride* (Eph 2:8-9). So too, he says, *If it is by grace, it is not on the basis of works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace* (Rom 11:6). How, I ask, can this be true, if we first performed works of such greatness that they merited for us the acquisition of grace so that it is not given to us as a gift, but as the repayment of a debt? Does one, then, have recourse to God without God's help so that one may attain God's help? Do we cling to God without having been helped by God so that we may be helped by God, once we cling to him? What greater gift or what gift of equal greatness could grace itself confer, if without that grace one can become one spirit with the Lord simply by the freedom of choice?

The Example of Esther and the King of Assyria

24, 25. I would like this fellow to tell me this. The holy woman, Esther, hated the bed of the king of Assyria.⁴⁶ *He was seated upon throne of his kingdom. He was clothed with every garment of his majesty, completely resplendent in gold and precious stones, and his appearance inspired great fear. He raised up his countenance ablaze with splendor, and he looked upon her, like a bull, in the throes of his anger. The queen was afraid, and her color turned pale as she grew faint, and she leaned upon the shoulder of her servant who walked before her* (Est 15:9-10).

I would like this fellow to tell us whether that king had already had recourse to the Lord. Had he already desired to be ruled by him? Had he made his will dependent upon the Lord's will, and had he by constantly clinging to him become one spirit with him⁴⁷ simply by the freedom of choice? Had he already committed himself wholly to God and mortified his own will and placed his heart in the hand of God? I think that anyone who holds all this with regard to that king, as he was at that time, is not being foolish, but is simply insane. And yet God changed and transformed his anger into gentleness.⁴⁸ Is there anyone who does not see that it is a far greater task to change and transform anger into its contrary, gentleness, than to turn in some direction a heart that is filled with neither emotion, but stands between the two? Let them read this, then, and understand it; let them see and admit that God produces in the hearts of human

beings, not merely revelations that are true, but also wills that are good. He does this not through the law and teachings that strike our ears from outside, but by his marvelous and ineffable power that is internal and hidden.

25, 26. Let Pelagius, therefore, stop deceiving both himself and others with his arguments against the grace of God. God's grace toward us should be proclaimed, not merely on account of one of those three elements, namely, on account of the ability to have a good will and good action, but also on account of having a good will and good action. As he defined it, that ability is capable of both good and evil, and yet we should not, for this reason, attribute our sins to God, as Pelagius wants to attribute our good deeds to him on account of the same ability. Accordingly, the help of divine grace is not to be praised merely because it helps our natural ability. Let him stop saying, "Our being able to do, speak, or think anything good is due to him who gave this ability and who helps this ability, but our doing or speaking or thinking anything good is due to us."⁴⁹ Let him, I repeat, stop saying these things. After all, God has given and helps not only our ability, but he also *produces in us the willing and the action* (Phil 2:13). The reason is not that we do not will or that we do not act, but that without his help we neither will nor do anything good.

How can he say, "Our being able to do anything good comes from God, but our doing it comes from us,"⁵⁰ when the apostle says that he prays to God for those to whom he was writing so that they do not do anything evil and so that they do what is good? For he did not say, "*We pray that you may be able to do nothing evil, but that you do nothing evil.*" He did not say, "That you may be able to do good, but *that you do good*" (2 Cor 13:7). Scripture says of these people, *All those who are driven by the Spirit of God are children of God* (Rom 8:14). They are, of course, driven by the one who is good so that they do what is good. How can Pelagius say, "Our being able to say anything good comes from God, but our saying something good comes from us"?⁵¹ After all, the Lord says, *It is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you* (Mt 10:20)? He did not say, "It is not you who have given yourselves the ability to speak well." He said, *It is not you who speak* (Mt 10:20). He did not say, "It is the Spirit of your Father who gives or has given you the ability to speak well." He said, *who speaks in you*. He was not referring to the acquisition of an ability, but expressing the result of God's cooperation. How can this proud defender of free choice say, "Our being able to think something good comes from God, but our thinking something good comes from us"?⁵² The humble preacher of grace answers him, *Not that we are sufficient to have a single thought as our own, but our sufficiency comes from God* (2 Cor 3:5). He did not say, after all, "to be able to have a single thought," but *to have a single thought*.

Pelagius Failed to Distinguish Knowledge and Love

26, 27. Pelagius should clearly confess this grace of God that is clearly revealed in the words of God. He should not conceal out of shameless impudence the fact that he long held views opposed to it. He should, rather, openly disclose it out of a most salutary sorrow so that the holy Church may not be troubled by his stubborn obstinacy, but may rejoice over his sincere amendment. He has to distinguish knowledge and love, as they should be distinguished, since *knowledge puffs up with pride, but love builds up* (1 Cor 8:1). And when love builds one up, then knowledge does not puff one up with pride. Moreover, each of them is a gift of God, but the one is a smaller, the other a greater gift.⁵³ He should not place our righteousness above the praise of him who makes us righteous so that he attributes the smaller of these two gifts to divine help, while he wrongly claims the greater for human choice. If he agrees that we receive love from the grace of God, he should not think that any good merits on our part preceded this. After all, what good merits could we have had, when we did not love God? For, in order that we might receive the love by which we love, we were first loved, when we did not yet have that love. The apostle John states this point with perfect clarity, *It is not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us* (1 Jn 4:10). Elsewhere he says, *Let us love, because he has first loved us* (1 Jn 4:19). His statement is excellent and perfectly true. For we would not have the wherewithal to love him, if we had not received this from him, because he loved us first. But what good would we do, if we had no love? Or how can we fail to do good, if we have love?

It may at times seem that God's commandment is not carried out by loving people, but by those driven by fear. Still, where there is no love, no good work is counted to one's credit, and it is not correctly called a good work. After all, *everything that does not come from faith is sin* (Rom 14:23), and *faith works through love* (Gal 5:6). For this reason those who want truly to confess the grace of God, by which *the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5), should confess it so that they have no doubt that without it we can do nothing good pertaining to true piety and righteousness. They should not confess it as Pelagius does. When he says that grace is given so that we may more easily fulfill what God commands,⁵⁵ he shows clearly enough his view of grace, namely, that even without it we can do what God has commanded.

Pelagius' Claim That Grace Makes It Easier to Fulfill God's Commandments

27, 28. In the book addressed to the consecrated virgin, which I mentioned above, he certainly indicates what he means, when he says that we "merit God's

grace and more easily resist the evil spirit by the help of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁵ After all, why did he add the words, “more easily”? Was the meaning incomplete, if he said, “that we may resist the evil spirit by the help of the Holy Spirit”? Who can fail to see what harm he does by this addition? He wants us to believe that the powers of nature, which he is in such a hurry to praise, are so great that, even without the help of the Holy Spirit, we can somehow resist the evil spirit, even if we do so less easily.

28, 29. So too, in the first book in defense of free choice, he says, “But though we have in ourselves a free choice which is so strong and so resolute for avoiding sin, a free choice which the creator implanted generally in human nature, we are also defended by his daily help in accord with his incalculable kindness.”⁵⁶ Why do we need this help, if our free choice is so strong and so resolute for avoiding sin? Here too he wants us to understand that this help is given so that we may do more easily by grace what he thinks we can do without grace, though not so easily.

29, 30. Likewise, in the same book, he says in another passage, “So that human beings may be able to fulfill more easily by grace what they are ordered to do by free choice.”⁵⁷ Remove “more easily,” and the meaning is not merely complete, but even correct. Then one would say: “So that human beings may be able to fulfill by grace what they are ordered to do by free choice.” But when “more easily” is added, it is tacitly suggested that, even without the grace of God, it is possible to accomplish the good work. That interpretation is refuted by him who said, *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5).⁵⁸

30, 31. Let him correct all these points so that, even if human weakness errs in these profound topics, diabolical deceitfulness or stubbornness may not attach itself to this error. This can happen either when he denies that he held a view he did hold or when he defends a view he was wrong to hold, once he knows that he should not have held it, because he has learned the clear truth. In all the writings of Pelagius and of Caelestius that I have been able to read, I have never found that they confessed, as one should confess, this grace by which we are justified, that is, by which *the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5). Moreover, I have never found that they acknowledged, as one ought to acknowledge, the children of the promise, of whom the apostle says, *It is not children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring* (Rom 9:8). After all, what God promises, we do not accomplish by choice or by nature; rather, he accomplishes it by grace.

Grace in Pelagius' Letter to Pope Innocent

32. I am not for the moment going to mention the writings of Caelestius or his books, which he presented to the ecclesiastical courts. We have been careful

to send to you all of these along with other letters which we thought necessary.⁵⁹ Once you have carefully examined all of these, you will be able to see that, apart from the natural choice of the will, he locates the grace of God that helps us either to turn away from evil or to do good⁶⁰ nowhere but in the law and teaching. He even claims that prayers are necessary only for the purpose of showing human beings what they should desire and love. I am, then, for the moment going to omit all these writings, for Pelagius himself recently sent to Rome a letter and a profession of his faith. He wrote to Pope Innocent of blessed memory, not knowing that he had died.⁶¹ In this letter, then, he says that there are two points on which people try to damage his reputation: one, that he denies to little ones the sacrament of baptism and promises the kingdom of heaven to some people apart from Christ's redemption, and two, that he says that human beings can avoid sin so that he excludes the help of God and relies so much on free choice that he rejects the help of grace.⁶² Although he grants that little ones should be baptized, this is not the place for us to discuss in more detail the perverse view he holds regarding their baptism in opposition to the Christian faith and Catholic truth. We must now, after all, complete what we have begun regarding the help of grace. Hence, let us see what answer he gave on this point to the objection he raised. I omit his hateful complaints against his enemies; when he came to the point, he spoke as follows.

31, 33. "Look," he says, "this letter should clear me in the sight of Your Beatitude. In it we purely and simply say that we have an unimpaired free choice for sinning and for not sinning and that it is always assisted by God's help in all good works."⁶³ You see, of course, in accord with the mind God has given you, that these words of his are not enough to resolve the question. For we still ask what sort of help it is by which he says that free choice is assisted, for fear that he should want us to understand, as he often does, the law and teaching. If, after all, you ask why he said, "always," he could answer that scripture says, *And he will meditate on his law day and night* (Ps 1:2). Then, after he has inserted some things about the creation of human beings and their natural ability to sin and not to sin, he went on to say, "We say that this ability of free choice is found in all people generally, in Christians, Jews, and Gentiles. Free choice is equally in all of them by nature, but it is helped by grace only in Christians."⁶⁴ Once again we ask: By what sort of grace? And he can reply: By the law and teaching of Christ.

34. Moreover, he says that grace, whatever sort of grace it is that he holds, is given to Christians in accord with their merits, although already in Palestine in his famous acquittal he condemned those who say this, as I have already mentioned.⁶⁵ These are his words: "In those people," he said, "the goodness of creation is weak and naked." He means in those who are not Christian. Then, developing the other side, he says, "But in these people who belong to Christ

it is protected by Christ's help." ⁶⁶ You see that it is still uncertain, in accord with what we said above, what sort of help this is. But he, nonetheless, goes on to say of those who are not Christian, "Those people are going to be judged and condemned, because, though they have free choice by which they could come to the faith and merit God's grace, they misuse the freedom they have received. But these people are going to be rewarded, since, by using their free choice well, they merit the grace of the Lord and keep his commandments." ⁶⁷

Obviously, he says that grace is given in accord with merits, whatever grace or whatever sort of grace it is that he means; he does not, nonetheless, express this point clearly. For, when he says that those people who use their free choice well are going to be rewarded and that, by doing so, they merit God's grace, he is saying that they receive what is owed them. What, then, happens to the words of the apostle: *Gratuitously justified by his grace* (Rom 3:24)? What about these words too: *You have been saved by grace* (Eph 2:8)? So that they would not think that they were saved through works, he added, *through faith*. Again, so that they would not think that they should give themselves credit for faith itself apart from the grace of God, he said, *And this does not come from you; rather, it is God's gift* (Eph 2:8). For that gift, namely, faith, which is the beginning of everything we are said to receive by merit, we, of course, receive without merit. Or, if one denies that it is given, what happens to the words of scripture: *As God has given to each one the measure of faith* (Rom 12:3)? But if one says that it is given as a repayment for our merits, not as a gift, what about the words of scripture, *You have been given the gift with regard to Christ, not only that you believe in him, but that you also suffer for him* (Phil 1:29)? Paul bore witness that both of these are gifts: that one believes in Christ and that one suffers for Christ. But these people attribute faith to free choice in such a way that grace seems to be a repayment for faith, not a gratuitous grace, but one that is owed, and thus it is no longer grace, since, unless it is gratuitous, it is not grace.

Baptism and Grace in Pelagius' Profession of Faith

32, 35. Pelagius would like the reader to pass from this letter to the book containing his profession of faith which he mentioned to you.⁶⁸ He discusses in it many topics about which he was not questioned. But let us look at those points over which we are at odds with them. After he ended his disquisition that ran as long as he wanted and covered everything from the unity of the Trinity to the resurrection of the flesh, about which no one asked him anything, he said, "And we hold one baptism, and we maintain that it should be celebrated with the same words of the sacrament in the case of infants as in that of adults."⁶⁹ You said that you yourselves heard this statement from his own lips. But what good does it do him to say that the sacrament of baptism is celebrated with the same words

in the case of little ones as in that of adults, when our question is about the reality and not merely about the words? It is more significant that, as you write, he answered you by his own lips, when you questioned him, that infants receive baptism for the forgiveness of sins. He did not, after all, say at this point that they are baptized "with the words for the forgiveness of sins," but confessed that they are baptized "for the forgiveness of sins." And yet, if you were to ask him what sin he believes they are forgiven, he would contend that they do not have any.

33, 36. Who would believe that under this apparently clear confession the opposite meaning lies hidden, if Caelestius had not given it away it? In his book which he presented to the ecclesiastical tribunal at Rome, he both confessed that little ones are baptized for the forgiveness of sins and denied that they have any original sin.⁷⁰ But now let us focus our attention on what Pelagius held, even in the statement of his faith that he sent to Rome, not concerning the baptism of little ones, but rather concerning the help of grace. He says, "We confess free choice in such a way that we say that we always need God's help."⁷¹ Notice, we ask once again what sort of help it is that he admits we need, and we again meet with ambiguity, since he can reply that he means that is the law and teaching of Christ by which that natural ability is helped. We, on the other hand, require that they confess that grace of which the apostle says, *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and continence* (2 Tm 1:7). It does not, however, follow that those who have the gift of knowledge, by which they know what they should do, also have the gift of love so that they do it.

Other Writings Pelagius Mentioned in the Letter to Pope Innocent

34, 37. Except for one brief letter which he says he sent to the holy bishop, Constantius,⁷² I also read those books or writings of his which he mentions in the same letter which he sent to Pope Innocent of blessed memory. But I could not find anywhere that he confessed this grace that helps by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, not only the natural ability to will and to act, which he says we have, even if we neither will nor do anything good, but also our will and action.

35, 38. "Let them read," he says, "that letter we wrote to the holy man, bishop Paulinus, almost twelve years ago. In almost three hundred lines it does nothing but confess the grace and help of God and that we can do absolutely nothing good without God."⁷³ And so, I read this letter and found that in almost the whole letter he dwells on nothing but the capacity and ability of nature and locates the grace of God almost in it alone. But he confines the grace of Christ to such a brief treatment, merely mentioning the term, that his only fear seems to have been to pass it over completely. It is simply not clear whether he wants us to understand that it consists in the forgiveness of sins or also in the teaching

of Christ, which also includes the example of his life, as he does in some passages of his works, or whether he believes that some help for acting well has been added to nature and teaching by the inspiration of a love that is ablaze and filled with light.

36, 39. "Let them also," he says, "read my letter to the bishop, Constantius, where I briefly but clearly joined God's grace and help to the free choice of human beings." ⁷⁴ I have not, as I said above, read this letter, but if it is not unlike the others which he mentions and which are known to me, it does not have what we are looking for either.

The Letter of Pelagius to Demetrias

37, 40. "Let them," he says, "read the letter we wrote in the East to Demetrias, the virgin consecrated to Christ, and they will discover that we praise the nature of a human being in such a way that we always include the help of God's grace." ⁷⁵ I did read this one, and it almost persuaded me that he admitted the grace which is in question, although he seems to contradict himself in many passages of that work. But when other things that he had written later and in greater length came into my hands, ⁷⁶ I saw how he could also use the word "grace" in that text, while he hid his real thoughts under an ambiguous general term, turned aside hostility by the word "grace," and avoided giving any offense. For, in the beginning of it, where he says, "Let us devote ourselves to the work we have undertaken, and let us not lose confidence because of our mediocre talents which we believe are helped by the faith of a mother and the merit of a virgin," ⁷⁷ I thought that he had confessed the grace that helps us to do anything good. I did not notice that he could locate this grace entirely in the revelation of doctrine.

41. So too, in the same book he says in another passage, "But if even without God human beings show the sort of beings God made them to be, see what Christians are able to do, since their nature has been restored to a better state by Christ, and they are also aided by the help of divine grace." ⁷⁸ By the restoration of nature to a better state, he wants us to understand the forgiveness of sins, as he showed in another passage in this very book, where he says, "Even those people who have become hardened, as it were, by having sinned for a long time can be restored by penance." ⁷⁹ But here too, he can locate the help of divine grace in the revelation of doctrine.

38, 42. So too, he says elsewhere in the same letter, "For, if even before the law, as we said, and long before the coming of our Lord and Savior, some people, as is reported, lived righteous and holy lives, how much more ought one to believe that we can do this after being enlightened by his coming! For we have been restored through the grace of Christ and have been reborn into a better

human being; having been reconciled and purified by his blood and roused by his example to a more perfect righteousness, we ought to be better than those people who lived before the law!"⁸⁰ See how even here, though he uses other terms, he still locates the help of grace in the forgiveness of sins and in the example of Christ. Then he goes on to add, "We ought also to be better than they were under the law, since the apostle says, *Sin will not lord it over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace* (Rom 6:14). And since," he says, "we have, I believe, spoken sufficiently on this topic, let us now instruct a perfect virgin so that, since she has been always set afire by both of these, she may bear witness by the holiness of her conduct to the goodness of both nature and grace together."⁸¹ You should note in these words that he wanted to conclude what he was saying so that we would understand by the goodness of the nature what we received when we were created and by the goodness of grace what we receive when we contemplate the example of Christ. He implies that sin was not forgiven those who are or were under the law, precisely because they either did not have or did not believe the example of Christ.

39, 43. The fact that Pelagius held this view is also shown by other statements of his, not in this book, but in the third book in defense of free choice. There he addresses the man against whom he is arguing.⁸² Because that man had quoted the words of the apostle who says, *I do not do what I want* (Rom 7:15) and *I see another law in my members that resists the law of my mind* (Rom 7:23) and the other things he said there, this fellow says in response, "You want to interpret this as referring to the apostle, but all the men of the Church claim that he said this in the name of a sinner and a person still subject to the law, one who was held in the grip of a long-standing habit of sin as though forced to sin and who, though desiring the good with the will, still fell into evil in action. In the person of a single human being," he continues, "Paul describes the people that is still sinning under the old law, and he says that this people has to be set free from this habit of sin by Christ. Through baptism he first forgives all the sins of those who believe in him, and then he rouses them to perfect holiness by imitating him and conquers the habit of the vices by the example of the virtues."⁸³

See how he wants us to understand that those who sin under the law are helped so that they are justified and are set free by the grace of Christ. He implies that on account of the long-standing habit of sinning the law alone is not enough for them, unless there is added, not the infusion of the love of Christ through the Holy Spirit, but the example of his virtue in the teaching of the gospel for them to contemplate and imitate. Here there certainly existed the strongest reason for him to explain what he meant by grace. The apostle ended the passage, about which he is replying, with these words, *Unhappy man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 7:24-25). When this fellow makes this grace consist, not in the help

from his power, but in the example for our imitation, what else ought we to hope for from him, wherever he mentions the word "grace" in some ambiguous generality.

40, 44. So too, in the same book for the consecrated virgin about which we have already spoken above, he said "that we may be subject to God and merit divine grace by doing his will and more easily resist the evil spirit by the help of the Holy Spirit."⁸⁴ From these words of his it is certainly clear in what sense he means that we are helped by the Holy Spirit. It is not that without the Holy Spirit we are unable to resist the tempter merely by nature's ability, but it is so that we may resist him with greater ease. But whatever sort of help or however slight a help it might be, it is quite plausible that it amounts to this: by the revelation of the Spirit, we are given a knowledge through instruction which we either cannot have or can have only with difficulty through nature. These are the passages I was able to find in the book which he wrote for one of Christ's virgins in which he seems to admit grace. You, of course, see what they amount to.

41, 45. He says, "Let them also read my recent work which we were forced not long ago to publish in defense of free choice, and let them acknowledge how unjustly they want to accuse us of denying grace, since we have through almost the whole text of that work made a complete and entire profession of both free choice and grace."⁸⁵ There are four books in that work. I have read them, and I have taken from them the passages I chose to treat and discuss, and I have, to the extent I could, examined them with care,⁸⁶ before coming to the letter which he sent to Rome.⁸⁷ But even in these four books whatever he seems to say on behalf of the grace by which we are helped to turn away from evil and to do good, he says in such a way that he never gives up his ambiguous language. And he can interpret it for his disciples so that they believe that the only help of grace that aids the ability of nature is found in the law and teaching. In accord with this, he thinks that even prayers should be used, as he clearly states in his writings, only so that doctrine may be disclosed to us by God's revelation, not so that the human mind might also be helped to accomplish by love and in action what it has learned it should do.

He has, in fact, not departed in the least from that perfectly clear theory of his in which he sets forth those three elements: the ability, the will, and the action. He says that only the ability is always aided by God's help, and he thinks that the will and the action have no need of God's help. But this help by which he claims our natural ability is aided he locates in the law and teaching. He says that it is disclosed to us by the Holy Spirit, and on this account he grants that we should pray. He thinks that this help of the law and teaching already existed in the times of the prophets, but that the help of grace, which is called grace in the proper sense, is found in the example of Christ. As you see, this example pertains, nonetheless, to the doctrine which is preached to us in the gospel. Thus,

since the way on which we should walk has been pointed out to us, we are now sufficient unto ourselves by the forces of our free choice and have no need of anyone else's help so that we do not collapse on the way. He claims, nonetheless, that the way itself can also be found by nature alone, but that it is found more easily, if grace helps us.

Pelagius' Appeal to the Authority of Saint Ambrose

42, 46. This, then, is what I have been able to understand, given my abilities, from the writings of Pelagius when he talks about grace. You see that those who hold these views, *not knowing the righteousness of God, want to establish their own righteousness* (Rom 10:3). They are far from that righteousness that comes to us, not from ourselves, but from God,⁸⁸ the righteousness which they ought to have found and acknowledged in the scriptures, especially in the holy and canonical scriptures. But because they read them according to their own ideas, they do not, in fact, see in them even what is obvious. I wish, then, that they would at least pay careful attention to the writings of Catholic authors. They do not doubt that these authors have correctly understood the scriptures, and in them they would find what one should hold regarding the help of divine grace. I wish that they would not simply pass it over out of an excessive love of their own opinion. Listen to how Pelagius himself praises the saintly Ambrose in this recent work of his which he mentions in his own defense, that is, in the third book in defense of free choice.

43, 47. "The blessed bishop, Ambrose," he says, "in whose books the Roman faith shines forth with special brilliance, stood out like a beautiful flower among the writers in the Latin language; not even an enemy dared to find fault with his faith and utterly flawless interpretation of the scriptures."⁸⁹ Note the sort and the amount of praise he heaps upon a holy and learned man, though he is not comparable to the authority of the canonical scripture. This fellow commends him in such a manner, precisely because on the basis of a certain passage in his books he thinks he can use him as a witness to prove that human beings can be without sin. That is not the question we are dealing with at present; rather, we are dealing with the help of grace by which we are aided not to sin and to live righteously.

44, 48. Let him, then, listen to that venerable prelate who says and teaches in the second book of his commentary on the Gospel according to Luke that the Lord cooperates even with our wills. He says, "You see, of course, that the power of the Lord everywhere cooperates with human undertakings so that no one can build anything without the Lord, no one can protect anything without the Lord, no one can begin anything without the Lord. And, for this reason, the apostle says, *Whether you eat or drink, do all for the glory of God* (1 Cor 10:31)."⁹⁰ You see how with these words the saintly Ambrose even discards

that common saying of human beings, “We make a beginning, but God brings things to an end.” He says that no one even begins anything without God. So too, in the sixth book of the same work, when he was dealing with the two men in debt to one money-lender, he said, “In human terms the one who owed more may have committed the greater offense, but by God’s mercy the situation is reversed so that the one who owed more loves more, if only he obtains grace.”⁹¹ See, this Catholic teacher openly proclaims that even the very love by which one loves more is due to the gift of grace.

45, 49. In the ninth book of the same work, blessed Ambrose says that the Lord’s mercy and help make us do the very penance, which is certainly something that the will does. He says, “Good are those tears that wash away guilt. Finally, those people upon whom Jesus looked shed tears. Peter at first denied him and did not weep, because the Lord had not looked upon him. He denied him a second time and did not weep, because the Lord had not yet looked upon him. He denied him a third time. Jesus looked upon him, and he wept most bitterly.”⁹² Let these people read the gospel and see that the Lord Jesus was indoors at that time when he was being questioned by the chief priests, but the apostle Peter was outdoors and down below in the courtyard, at one point seated, at another standing with the servants at the fire, as the perfectly true and concordant accounts of the evangelists show. Hence, one cannot say that the Lord looked upon him with bodily eyes, admonishing him in a way that Peter could see. And, for this reason, the action which scripture reports, *The Lord looked upon him* (Lk 22:61), took place interiorly; it took place in the mind; it took place in the will. By his mercy the Lord in a hidden manner helped him, touched his heart, awakened his memory, visited the interior human being with his grace, and stirred up and produced a love in the interior human being even to the point of exterior tears. See how God is present to help our wills and actions. See how he *produces in us the willing and the action* (Phil 2:13).

50. Likewise, in the same book the same saintly Ambrose says, “For if Peter fell, who said, *Even if the others are scandalized, I will not be scandalized* (Mt 26:33), do any others have the right to be confident about themselves? Moreover, David said, *I said in my abundance: I will not be shaken ever*, and he admits that his boasting proved harmful to him, when he says, *You turned your face away, and I became confused* (Ps 30:7.8).”⁹³ Let Pelagius listen to the teaching and imitate the faith of that great man whose teaching and faith he praised. Let him listen humbly and imitate him faithfully. Let him not be stubbornly self-confident so that he does not perish. Why does Pelagius want to sink in that sea from which Peter was saved by the Rock?⁹⁴

46, 51. Let him listen to the same bishop of God again in the sixth book of the same work. He says, “The evangelist recalls why they did not welcome him, when he says, *Because his face was turned toward Jerusalem* (Lk 9:53). His

disciples desired to be welcomed in Samaria. But God calls those whom he chooses to call and makes those whom he wishes devout.”⁹⁵ There you have the thought of a man of God drawn from the very fountain of God’s grace! “God,” he says, “calls those whom he chooses to call and makes those whom he wishes devout.” The prophet said: *I will show pity to those to whom I want to show pity, and I will have mercy on those on whom I want to have mercy* (Ex 33:19; Rom 9:15), and the apostle said, *Therefore, it does not depend on the one who wills or runs, but on God who shows mercy* (Rom 9:16). See whether this man of God of our own times did not say the same thing, when he said that he “calls those whom he chooses to call and makes those whom he wishes devout.” Will anyone dare to say that those people are not yet devout “who have recourse to the Lord and desire to be ruled by him and make their will dependent upon his will and who, by constantly clinging to him, become one spirit with him,”⁹⁶ as the apostle said”⁹⁷ But Pelagius says that this great work of a devout person is achieved simply by freedom of choice. Blessed Ambrose, whom Pelagius praised so highly, thought quite the contrary. He said, “The Lord calls those whom he chooses to call and makes those whom he wishes devout.” Therefore, the Lord makes those whom he wishes devout so that they have recourse to the Lord and desire to be ruled by him and make their will dependent upon his will and, by constantly clinging to him, become one spirit with him, and it is only devout persons who do all this! Hence, if God does not make them do this, who does?

47, 52. But this question, in which the dispute concerns the choice of the will and the grace of God, is so difficult to sort out that, when one defends free choice, one seems to deny God’s grace, and when one upholds God’s grace, one seems to destroy free choice. Hence, Pelagius can shroud himself in folds of this obscurity so that he says that he agrees with these texts which we have quoted from the saintly Ambrose and proclaims that he also holds and has always held those same views. Moreover, he tries to explain each of those texts so that people believe that they also are in accord with his views. Hence, with regard to this question about God’s grace and help, pay attention to those three factors which he distinguished with perfect clarity: the power, the willing, and the being, that is, the ability, the will, and the action. Let him, then, agree with us that God helps not merely the ability in human beings, even if they do not will or act well, but also the will and the action, that is, so that we will and act in the right way, which are present in human beings only when they will and act well. Let him, as I said, agree that God also helps the will and the action and helps them in such a way that we will or do nothing good without that help, and let him agree that this is the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord⁹⁸ by which he makes us righteous with his own righteousness, not with ours, so that it is our true righteousness which comes to us from him.⁹⁹ Then no point of controversy will, as far as I can see, be left between us regarding the help of God’s grace.

Ambrose on the Righteousness of Zechariah and Elizabeth

48, 53. The reason, however, why he praised the saintly Ambrose to such a degree, was that in his writings he discovered among the praises given to Zechariah and Elizabeth that human beings can be without sin in this life. One need not deny this possibility, if God, for whom everything is possible,¹⁰⁰ wills it, but one should consider with greater care the meaning of what scripture said. As far as I can see, it was speaking of a good and praiseworthy manner of human life, which no human being could justly reproach with an accusation of wrongdoing. Zechariah and his wife are reported to have had such a manner of life in the sight of God,¹⁰¹ because in their life they deceived no human beings by any pretense, but were known in God's eyes as they appeared to human beings. But scripture was not speaking of that perfection of righteousness in which we will live lives that are truly spotless and perfect in every respect. The apostle Paul also said that he was *beyond reproach in terms of the righteousness that comes from the law* (Phil 3:6), and it was in that righteousness that Zechariah also lived beyond reproach. But the apostle reckoned this righteousness as rubbish and loss¹⁰² in comparison with the righteousness for which we hope and for which we ought now to hunger and thirst so that we may eventually be satisfied¹⁰³ with that vision which is now only seen with faith, as long as *the righteous live from faith* (Rom 1:17).

49, 54. Let him, finally, listen to this venerable prelate as he comments on the prophet Isaiah; he says that no one can be without sin in this world. No one can say that Ambrose said "in this world" in the sense of "in love with this world," for he was speaking of the apostle who said, *Our life is in heaven* (Phil 3:20). In explaining the sense of this passage, the previously mentioned bishop says, "The apostle speaks of many people as perfect who are still situated along with him in this world, but they could not be perfect, if you have in mind genuine perfection, because he said, *We see now through a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know as I am known* (1 Cor 13:12). And so, they are spotless in this world, and they will be spotless in the kingdom of God, though, if you examine the matter in greater detail, no one can be spotless, since no one can be without sin."¹⁰⁴ That testimony, then, of the saintly Ambrose that Pelagius uses in defense of his opinion¹⁰⁵ was either stated in a sense that is acceptable, but that had not been subjected to a more detailed examination, or if that holy and humble man thought that Zechariah and Elizabeth possessed the highest and utterly perfect righteousness that was incapable of increase, he certainly changed his opinion after examining the matter in greater detail.¹⁰⁶

50, 55. This fellow should also note that in the same passage from which he took the testimony of Ambrose that he found to his liking, Ambrose had also said that it is impossible for human nature to be spotless from the beginning.¹⁰⁷

There the venerable Ambrose, of course, bears witness to the feebleness and weakness of that very natural ability which Pelagius praises with such arrogance, because he refuses to regard it as corrupted by sin, as the faith holds. Ambrose certainly contradicts what Pelagius wants, but he does not contradict the apostolic truth where we read, *We too were once by nature children of anger, just as the others* (Eph 2:3). This is, after all, the nature that was corrupted and condemned through the first man's sin which came from his free choice, and the grace of God has come to the aid of this nature only through the mediator between God and human beings¹⁰⁸ and through the all-powerful physician. We have already discussed at length his help toward our justification by which God cooperates in everything for the good with those who love him,¹⁰⁹ for he loved them first,¹¹⁰ granting them the grace to love him. Now, let us begin to state, to the extent that the Lord gives us his help, those ideas which will seem sufficient regarding the sin which entered the world through one man, along with death, *and thus it was passed on to all human beings* (Rom 5:12), and let us refute these people who have quite clearly fallen into an error contrary to this truth.

Notes

1. For the identity of these members of the Roman aristocracy, see the Introduction.
2. A statement of Pelagius, presumably cited from the letter to Augustine from Albina, Pinianus, and Melania.
3. Augustine is referring to Pelagius', *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)*, fragments of which survive in this work of Augustine's. Pelagius wrote the letter in the course of 417 before learning of Innocent's death on 12 March 417. The letter was delivered to his successor, Zosimus, who mentioned it in his letter to the African bishops on 12 September 417 and sent them a copy. The fragments have been collected by J. Garnier in PL 48, 610-611.
4. At the Synod of Diospolis on 20 December, 415; see *The Deeds of Pelagius* 14, 30.
5. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 14, 30, where Pelagius condemned this statement of Caelestius.
6. Augustine refers to Pelagius' *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)*, which Pelagius wrote in 416; the work is extant only in the fragments cited by Augustine in the present work. These fragments have been gathered in PL 48, 611-613 and in PLS 1, 1539-1543.
7. Augustine refers to Pelagius' *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)*.
8. See also Ps 34:15 and 37:27.
9. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 3; see below 5, 6; Pelagius is addressing Jerome and his followers in this passage.
10. See 1 Pt 3:11; also see Ps 34:15 and Ps 37:27.
11. For example, in Christ's life.
12. See above 4, 5 for these quotations from Pelagius.
13. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1; see below 28, 29 and 29, 30.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. See above in this paragraph.
18. The Latin text of the scriptures was not punctuated; one of the tasks of the lector was to divide the text into proper units of meaning. Here Augustine would have us read: *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed* rather than as I translated it above. The Latin text could have either meaning, depending upon how it was read.

19. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 14, 30, where Pelagius condemned this statement of Caelestius.
 20. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 3. In the final clause Pelagius is addressing Jerome.

21. See 2 Cor 12:9.

22. Augustine alludes to Pelagius' *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 3.

23. See 2 Cor 12:7.

24. See Rom 8:28.

25. See 1 Cor 3:7.

26. See above 4, 5.

27. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 3; see above 4, 5.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1.

34. See Mt 7:18.

35. See 1 Tm 6:10.

36. See 1 Cor 3:7.

37. The CSEL edition adds: "he wrote: *scripsit*," which the ALG editors point out is opposed to most manuscripts and to the oldest of them. The "that: *quia*," following it, is retained in both ALG and BA, though it is not expressly translated in either version.

38. That is, Pelagius' *Letter to Demetrias (Epistula ad Demetriadem)*, written in 414. For an English translation, see B. R. Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 29-60.

39. That is, in his *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)*.

40. Pelagius' *Letter to Demetrias (Epistula ad Demetriadem)* 25, 3.

41. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 14, 30.

42. Pelagius' statement in *The Deeds of Pelagius* 14, 30.

43. See 1 Cor 6:17.

44. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1.

45. *Ibid.*; also see Prv 21:1.

46. See Est 14:15.

47. See 1 Cor 6:17.

48. See Est 15:11 LXX.

49. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Will (Pro libero arbitrio)* 3; see above 4, 5.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. The fifth canon of the 16th Council of Carthage (418) makes this same point concerning the opposition between knowledge and love; see the Introduction for a translation of the canons of this Council.

54. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1; see below 29, 30.

55. Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrias (Epistula ad Demetriadem)* 25, 3; see above 22, 23.

56. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1.

57. *Ibid.*

58. On this point, see the sixth canon of the 16th Council of Carthage of 418. A translation of the canons of the Council are found in the Introduction.

59. The works of Caelestius that Augustine sent to his friends, Albina, Pinianus, and Melania, included the "memo: *libellus brevissimus*" that Caelestius had presented to the ecclesiastical tribunal of Carthage in 411 or 412, as well as his *Profession of Faith (Libellus fidei)* presented to Pope Zosimus in 417.

60. See 1 Pt 3:11.

61. Pelagius' *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)* and his *Profession*

of Faith (*Libellus fidei ad Innocentium papam*).

62. Pelagius, *Letter to Pope Innocent* (*Epistula ad Innocentium papam*).

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*

65. See above 22, 23.

66. Pelagius, *Letter to Pope Innocent* (*Epistula ad Innocentium papam*).

67. *Ibid.*

68. Pelagius, *Profession of Faith* (*Libellus fidei*).

69. *Ibid.* 7.

70. Caelestius, *Profession of Faith* (*Libellus fidei*); see *Original Sin* 5, 5 and 6, 6 for the citation. The extant fragments of this work have been gathered in PL 48, 499-505.

71. Pelagius, *Profession of Faith* (*Libellus fidei*) 13.

72. Pelagius' *Letter to Constantius* (*Epistula ad Constantium*) has not been preserved.

73. Pelagius, *Letter to Pope Innocent* (*Epistula ad Innocentium papam*); the letter to Paulinus to which Pelagius refers is lost.

74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*

76. Augustine probably refers to Pelagius' *In Defense of Free Choice* (*Pro libero arbitrio*), but he may also have in mind his *Nature* (*De natura*), which may have been written earlier than the *Letter to Demetrias* (*Epistula ad Demetriadem*).

77. Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrias* (*Epistula ad Demetriadem*) 1, 2.

78. *Ibid.* 3, 3.

79. *Ibid.* 17, 3.

80. *Ibid.* 8, 4.

81. *Ibid.* 8, 4-9, 1.

82. The man in question is St. Jerome.

83. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice* (*Pro libero arbitrio*) 3.

84. Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrias* (*Epistula ad Demetriadem*) 25, 3.

85. A citation from Pelagius' *Letter to Pope Innocent* (*Epistula ad Innocentium papam*).

86. See above 3, 3 to 30, 31.

87. See 30, 32 to 31, 34.

88. See Phil 3:9.

89. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice* (*Pro libero arbitrio*) 3.

90. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (*Expositio euangelii Lucae*) 2, 84: CSEL 32/4, 89.

91. *Ibid.* 6, 25: CSEL 32/4, 241.

92. *Ibid.* 10, 89: CSEL 32/4, 489. In modern editions the quotation is found in the tenth book rather than the ninth, as Augustine says. Also see Lk 22:58-62.

93. *Ibid.* 10, 91: CSEL 32/4, 490.

94. Augustine uses a double play on their names, tying Pelagius' name with "pelagus: sea" and Peter's name and "petra: rock," while drawing upon 1 Cor 10:4: "But the rock was Christ," as well as Mt 14:30 where Peter begins to sink into the sea for lack of faith.

95. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (*Expositio euangelii Lucae*) 7, 27: CSEL 32/4, 293.

96. See 1 Cor 6:17.

97. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice* (*Pro libero arbitrio*) 1; see above 23, 24.

98. See Rom 7:25.

99. See Phil 3:9.

100. See Mt 19:26.

101. See Lk 1:6.

102. See Phil 3:8.

103. See Mt 5:6.

104. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* (*Expositio Isaiae prophetae*); this work has been lost.

105. See Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 3; cited above in 42, 46. Pelagius is referring to Ambrose's *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Expositio euangelii Lucae)* 1, 17; see above 48, 53.

106. Augustine is mistaken in supposing that Ambrose commentary on Luke was earlier than his commentary on Isaiah, since Ambrose refers to the latter work in the commentary on Luke.

107. See Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Expositio euangelii Lucae)* 1, 17: CSEL 32/4, 21: " And [human nature] was not spotless from the beginning, for this is impossible for human nature."

108. See 1 Tm 2:5.

109. See Rom 8:28.

110. See 1 Jn 4:19.

Book Two: Original Sin

Introduction: A Warning against Pelagius' Equivocation

1, 1. Now pay careful attention. You must listen to these people with caution on the subject of the baptism of little ones. They do not dare openly to deny the bath of rebirth and of the forgiveness of sins to children of that age. Christians, after all, could not tolerate hearing such talk. And yet they persist in maintaining and defending their own view; they suppose that those born in the flesh are not held subject to the sin of the first human being, even though, as we see, they grant them baptism for the forgiveness of sins. In fact, Pelagius was present and read to you from that book, the same one which he said that he also sent to Rome. You wrote that you heard him say, "Infants must be baptized by the same words of the sacrament as adults." ¹ After such a statement who would suppose that one needs to challenge them at all on this subject? Or who would not regard one who does so as guilty of slander, if we did not read the clear statements by which they deny that infants contract original sin and claim that they are all born without any defect?

Caelestius' Denial of Original Sin at Carthage

2, 2. In this error Caelestius showed less restraint. He even went so far that in the episcopal tribunal at Carthage he refused to condemn those who say "that the sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race and that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression." ² In the city of Rome, he asserted even more explicitly in the book which he sent to the blessed Pope Zosimus that none of the little ones are bound by original sin. ³ We have, in fact, excerpted these words of his from the ecclesiastical proceedings at Carthage.

3, 3. "Bishop Aurelius said, 'Let the following be read out.' And it was read out that the sin of Adam harmed Adam alone and not the human race. After it had been read out, Caelestius said, 'I said that I was in doubt about the transmission of the sin, but that I would, nonetheless, agree with one to whom God has given the gift of knowledge, for I have heard differing views from those who have been raised to the priesthood in the Catholic Church.' The deacon Paulinus⁴ said, 'Tell us their names.' Caelestius said, 'The holy priest, Rufinus,⁵ who lived at Rome with the saintly Pammachius. I heard him say that there is no transmission of sin.' The deacon Paulinus asked, 'Is there anyone else?'

Caelestius said, 'I heard several others say this.' The deacon Paulinus said, 'State their names.' Caelestius replied, 'Is one priest not enough for you?' After a while at another point, Bishop Aurelius said, 'Let the rest of the book be read.' And it was read out that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression—and up to the end of the little book that was included above." ⁶

4. "Bishop Aurelius said, 'Have you, Caelestius, at any time taught, as the deacon Paulinus claims, that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression?' Caelestius replied, 'I would like him to explain what he means by "before his transgression." ' The deacon Paulinus said, 'You there, go on and deny that you taught this. One thing or the other: Either he has to deny that he taught this, or he has now to condemn it.' Caelestius replied, 'I already said that I would like him to explain what he means by "before his transgression." ' The deacon Paulinus said, 'Deny that you taught these things.' Bishop Aurelius said, 'Allow me, I will state what I gather to be the point of this man's objection. When first placed in paradise Adam was said to have been made imperishable. But after his transgression of the commandment he became subject to corruption. Is that what you mean, Paulinus?' The deacon Paulinus said, 'Exactly, bishop.' Bishop Aurelius said, 'What Paulinus wants to hear is whether the state of infants before baptism is today the same as Adam's was before his transgression or whether it is certain that the infant derives the guilt of the transgression from the same sinful origin from which it is born.' The deacon Paulinus said, 'Did he teach this, and does he refuse to reject it?' Caelestius replied, 'With regard to the transmission of sin, I have already said that I heard many within the Catholic Church argue against it and some others defend it, inasmuch as it is open to discussion and not a matter of heresy. I have always said the infants need baptism and must be baptized. What else is he looking for?' " ⁷

4. You see, of course, that Caelestius granted baptism to little ones, but that he refused to admit that the sin of the first human being, which is washed away by the bath of rebirth, was passed on to them. And yet he did not dare to deny this point, and on account of this hesitation he did not condemn those who say "that the sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race and that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression." ⁸

Caelestius' Denial of Original Sin at Rome

5. In his book, however, which he published at Rome and which was brought into the ecclesiastical proceedings there, he speaks of this matter. In it he reveals that he believes the point about which he had here said that he was in doubt. These are his words: "We admit that infants," he says, "ought to be

baptized for the forgiveness of sins in accord with the rule of the universal Church and in accord with the statement of the gospel, since the Lord determined that the kingdom of heaven can be granted only to those who have been baptized.⁹ Since the powers of nature are not capable of this, it must be granted by the freedom that comes from grace.”¹⁰ If he said nothing further about this, who would not believe that he admits that even infants have original sins forgiven in baptism, when he says that they must be baptized for the remission of sins? This, then, is the reason why Pelagius answered you, as you wrote to me, that infants should be baptized by the same words of the sacrament as adults.¹¹ You were happy to have heard what you wanted; nonetheless, you preferred to consult us about his statement.

6, 6. Notice, then, what Caelestius stated with complete openness, and there you will see what Pelagius was hiding from you. Caelestius went on to say, “We did not say that infants must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins in such a way that we should be thought to affirm a sin derived from generation. That is far from the Catholic view, because sin is not born along with a human being. Rather, it is something a human being commits later, for it is obviously a failing, not of nature, but of the will. It is proper, then, to admit the first point; otherwise, we would seem to introduce two kinds of baptism. And it is necessary to be on guard against the second point; otherwise, in conferring the sacrament one would do an injustice to the creator in saying that an evil is passed on to human beings by nature before they commit any evil.”¹² Pelagius was either too afraid or too embarrassed to disclose to you this view of his. But his disciple was neither afraid nor embarrassed to profess it openly before the Apostolic See without any ambiguities to obscure it.

7. The prelate of that see we just mentioned saw that Caelestius’ great presumption was carrying him over the edge, like a madman. In his great mercy he preferred gradually to tie him up with his questions and the answers Caelestius gave, in the hope that he would come to his senses, if that was possible. He did not want to drive him over the edge into the abyss into which he seemed to be headed by striking him with a severe sentence. I did not say, “into which he had clearly fallen,” but “into which he seemed to be headed,” precisely because he had earlier said in his book when he was about to deal with such questions, “If, as happens to human beings, some error may have crept in due to ignorance, I want it to be corrected by your decision.”¹³

7, 8. Having that sort of opening declaration from him, Pope Zosimus tried to bring this man, who was bloated with the wind of false doctrine, to condemn those points which the deacon Paulinus raised as objections against him and to give his assent to the writings of the Apostolic See which stemmed from his predecessor of holy memory.¹⁴ Caelestius, however, refused to condemn the points which the deacon Paulinus raised as objections; yet, he did not dare to

oppose the letters of blessed Pope Innocent.¹⁵ In fact, he promised that he would condemn everything which that See would condemn. Hence, he was treated with gentleness, like someone overwrought, so that he would calm down; on the other hand, no one at that point thought that he should be freed from the bonds of excommunication. Rather, a time of two months was allotted to receive a response from Africa,¹⁶ and he was accorded the chance to come to his senses under a mild sentence aimed at his restoration to health. For he would really be restored to health, if he put aside his foolish stubbornness and was willing to pay attention to what he had promised and read with care those writings to which he said that he would give his assent. But in order to know what took place, after the replies were sent from the council of African bishops,¹⁷ read all these documents, for we have sent them all to you. Then you will see that sentence was pronounced against him with complete justice.

Pelagius Deceived the Bishops of Palestine

8, 9. For this reason, if Pelagius considers himself and his writings honestly, he is wrong to say that he should not have been included under that same sentence. After all, he deceived the Palestinian court, and for that reason he was thought to have been found innocent by it.¹⁸ But he could not deceive the church of Rome where, as you know, he is well known, although he tried to do so in every way he could. However, as I said, he was utterly unable to do so. After all, the blessed Pope Zosimus recalled the view that his predecessor, a man worthy of imitation, took of those proceedings. He also paid attention to what the faith of the people of Rome, which is praiseworthy in the Lord, held regarding that man. He saw their concerted efforts blaze forth in defense of the Catholic faith, united against his error. Pelagius had lived in their midst for a long time, and they could not fail to be aware of his teachings. They knew quite well that Caelestius was his disciple, and they were able to bear utterly reliable and solid witness on that point. You can read the judgment of the holy Pope Innocent in his letters which he sent us as a response with regard to the proceedings of the synod of Palestine, by which Pelagius boasts that he was acquitted. It was also mentioned when the African synod replied to the venerable Pope Zosimus—all of which we sent to you, my dear friends, along with the other instructions. I do not, nonetheless, think that I should pass it over in silence in this work.

9, 10. After all, five of us bishops wrote to him, and we mentioned the same Palestinian proceedings about which rumors had reached us. We stated that, in the East where Pelagius was residing, ecclesiastical proceedings had taken place by which he is supposed to have been acquitted.¹⁹ To this the pope replied among other things, “There are in those proceedings some objections which he in part

suppressed by evasion and in part threw into total confusion by responding with many words in his own favor. He freed himself—or so it might have seemed at the time—from other objections by false rather than by true arguments, denying some things and misinterpreting others. But I wish—and this is what we ought to pray for even more—that he would now turn from that error of his to the true path of the Catholic faith. I wish that he would desire and will to be acquitted and that he would consider and recognize God's daily grace and help. Then he would really be seen to have been corrected and would be approved by all on clear grounds, not by the judgment of a court, but by conversion of the heart to the Catholic faith. For this reason we cannot either approve or blame the judgment of those bishops, since we do not know that the proceedings are correct or, if they are correct, whether it is clear that he escaped by subterfuge rather than by truly establishing his innocence." ²⁰ In these words you certainly see that the blessed Pope Innocent does not speak of him as someone unknown. You see the view he took of his acquittal. You see what his successor, the holy Pope Zosimus, ought to have recalled, as he did, so that he might uphold without any hesitation the judgment of his predecessor on this subject.

10, 11. Now pay close attention to the evidence that Pelagius deceived his Palestinian judges on this very question of the baptism of little ones for I am going to pass over in silence other matters. That way no one will regard us as indulging in slander or suspicion rather than as having got hold of something certain. For we claim that Pelagius concealed from you the view which Caelestius expressed more freely, even though Pelagius himself held the very same thing. It was, of course, quite clear above that Caelestius refused to condemn the statements that Adam's sin harmed him alone and not the human race and that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression, precisely because he saw that, if he condemned them, he was upholding the transmission of Adam's sin to infants. But these points were raised as objections against Pelagius, because he himself also held them along with Caelestius, and Pelagius condemned them without any reservation. I know that you have read this, but I am not writing this for you alone. Hence, for fear that the reader may be unwilling to return to those proceedings or, if they are not at hand, to make an effort to procure them, we are copying out the following passages.

11, 12. The synod said, "Pelagius has declared anathema the foolish statement that had been introduced, and he has correctly answered that a human being can be ἀναμάρτητον, without sin, by God's help and grace. Now let him reply to the other charges." ²¹ There is another major point in the teaching of Caelestius, the disciple of Pelagius, drawn from among those propositions which were given a hearing and condemned by the saintly Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, along with the other bishops: "That Adam was created mortal and would die

whether he sinned or did not sin. That the sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race. That the law leads to the kingdom of heaven just as the gospel does. That before Christ's coming there were human beings without sin. That newly born infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression. That the whole human race does not die through the death or transgression of Adam, nor does the whole human race rise through the resurrection of Christ." ²² [The synod said] that in his reply to the holy bishop Hilary Augustine wrote a book against the disciples of Caelestius in Sicily with regard to the points submitted to him, ²³ which included the following: "Human beings can be without sin if they want. Infants attain eternal life, even if they are not baptized. If wealthy persons who have been baptized do not renounce all their possessions, they have no merit, even if they seem to do something good, and they cannot possess the kingdom of God." ²⁴ To this Pelagius replied, "That human beings can be without sin has been discussed above. With regard to the claim that there were human beings without sin before the coming of Christ, we also declare that before the coming of Christ some people lived holy and righteous lives according to the account handed down in the holy scriptures. But even according to the testimony of these people I did not state the remaining propositions, and I do not need to account for them. But to satisfy the holy synod, I declare anathema those who hold those views or have at some time held them." ²⁵

12, 13. I will omit the other points, but you see that Pelagius declared anathema those who hold "that Adam's sin harmed him alone and not the human race, and that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression." ²⁶ What else, then, were the episcopal judges to understand but that he admitted that sin was passed on from Adam to little ones? To avoid admitting that, Caelestius refused to condemn those points which Pelagius condemned. Furthermore, if I show that Pelagius also held with regard to little ones precisely that they are born without any contamination from any defect whatsoever, what difference will remain between this man and Caelestius on this question? The only difference is that Caelestius was more open, while this man is more secretive, Caelestius was more stubborn, while this man is more dishonest, or at very least Caelestius took greater liberties, while this man is more shrewd. After all, Caelestius refused to condemn in the church of Carthage what he afterward in the church of Rome admitted that he held, and he claimed that he was ready to be corrected, if he was found to be in error, as happens to human beings. ²⁷ But Pelagius condemned that teaching as opposed to the truth so that he himself would not be condemned by Catholic judges, and yet he reserved it to himself as something to be defended later, ²⁸ either because he condemned it with a lie or because he interpreted with cunning.

Pelagius Holds the Same Position as Caelestius

13, 14. I see that it is only fair that I am now asked not to put off showing, as I promised, that Pelagius holds the same position as Caelestius. In the first book of his recent work which he wrote in defense of free choice—the work he mentioned in the letters he sent to Rome—he said, “Everything good or evil for which we deserve either praise or blame is not something with which we are born, but is something we do. For we are born capable of each of them, but not filled with either of them, and as we are begotten without virtue, so we are begotten without vice. And before the act of our own will there is in a human being only what God created.”²⁹

You see, of course, that these words of Pelagius contain the teaching of both these men regarding little ones who are born without contracting any defect stemming from Adam. It is no surprise, then, that Caelestius refused to condemn those who say that Adam’s sin harmed him alone and not the human race and that at their birth infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression.³⁰ But the effrontery of Pelagius who did condemn them is very surprising.

After all, he says, “Evil is not something with which we are born, and we are begotten without vice, and before the act of our own will there is in a human being only what God created.”³¹ It follows that the sin of Adam certainly harmed him alone, since it was not passed on to his offspring. It is, after all, impossible that sin is not evil or that sin is not vice or that God created sin. But this fellow says, “Evil is not something with which we are born, and we are begotten without vice, and in those who are born there is only what God has created.”³² And, thus, according to this statement of his, he thinks that it is perfectly true that the sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race. Why then did Pelagius condemn this, except to deceive his Catholic judges?

So too, one can argue: If “evil is not something with which we are born and we are begotten without vice and in a human being at birth there is only what God created,” infants are at birth certainly in the state in which Adam was before his transgression. For at that time there was in Adam no evil or vice, and there was only in him what God had created. Nonetheless, Pelagius declared anathema those “who hold or have at any time held that newly born infants are in the state in which Adam was before his transgression,”³³ that is, without evil, without vice, having only what God created. Why, then, did Pelagius condemn this view as well, except in order to deceive the Catholic synod, so that he would not be condemned as a new heretic?

14, 15. As you know—and I also included this point in the book which I sent to our venerable dean, Aurelius, concerning the proceedings in Palestine³⁴—I was happy that this whole question was settled by that response of Pelagius. I thought that he clearly admitted the existence of original sin in little ones. For

he declared anathema those who believed that Adam alone and not the human race was injured by his sin and who thought that little ones are in the state in which Adam was before his transgression. But afterward I read his four books, from the first of which I copied out the statements I cited a little earlier.³⁵ I found this man still holding a view about little ones in opposition to the Catholic faith. I first began to be astonished at so impudent a lie in an ecclesiastical court and on such a momentous question. For, if he had already written those same books, how could he have said that he declared anathema those who have at some time held such a position? But if he produced that work afterward, how could he have declared anathema those who now hold that position? It is possible, I suppose, that he is going to be silly and say that he condemned those who have at some time held that position and those who now hold it, but that for the future, that is, for those who were going to hold that position, he could not pass judgment in advance about himself or about others. And then he did not lie, because he was later found to hold that position. But he does not say this, not only because it is silly, but because it cannot be true. In those same books he speaks against the transmission of sin from Adam to little ones and boasts about the proceedings of the Palestinian synod at which he was thought to have truthfully condemned those who hold that position and at which he stole his acquittal by deceit.³⁶

Pelagius Cannot Escape the Charge of Deceiving the Bishops

15, 16. How, after all, is his response to his disciples relevant to the topic we are now dealing with? He answered them that he condemned those points which were raised as objections against him, because he himself holds that the first sin did not harm merely the first human being, but harmed the whole human race by example, not by propagation.³⁷ That is, it harmed the whole race, not because those who came from him by propagation contracted from him some defect, but because all those who sinned afterward imitated that first sinner. Or how is it relevant that he says that infants are not in the state in which Adam was before his transgression, because they were not yet capable of receiving a commandment, while he was, and that they cannot yet use the choice of a rational will, while he would not have been given the commandment, if he did not have use of it? How is it relevant to the topic? By explaining in that way the statements raised as objections against him, he supposes that he was correct in condemning the claims that Adam's sin harmed him alone and not the human race and that at birth infants are in the state in which Adam was before his transgression.³⁸ But, having condemned these views, he thinks he can still hold without lying what we find in his works written afterward, namely, that little ones are born without any evil, without any defect, and that there is present in them only what God created,³⁹ not the wound that the enemy inflicted?

16, 17. By these statements he gives the points raised as objections against him a different sense than those who raised the objections had. Does he do this to prove that he did not deceive his judges? He, of course, does not succeed! In fact, he deceived his judges in a more subtle manner to the extent that he explained things more deviously. When the Catholic bishops heard the man declare anathema those who say that Adam's sin harmed him alone and not the human race,⁴⁰ they thought that he held the same doctrine which the Catholic Church is accustomed to preach. On the basis of that doctrine she truthfully baptizes little ones for the forgiveness of sins, not sins that they commit through imitation on account of the example of the first sinner, but sins which they contracted through birth on account of the defect at the origin.

And when they heard him declare anathema those who say that newly born infants are in that state in which Adam was before his transgression, they believed that he meant precisely those who think that little ones inherit no sin from Adam and, for this reason, are in that state in which he was before his transgression. After all, this point gave rise to the objection against him; it was this point and none other that was the source of the question. Then he went on to explain this by saying that infants are not in the state in which Adam was before his transgression, because they did not as yet have the same strength of mind or of body, not because there was passed on to them any guilt from generation. One should offer him this reply: When these points were presented to you for condemnation, the Catholic bishops did not understand them in that sense; therefore, when you condemned them, they believed that you were a Catholic.

For that reason the position that they thought you held deserved acquittal, but what you really held deserved condemnation. Therefore, you were not acquitted, since you held views that deserved condemnation. Rather, the position that you ought to have held received acquittal. But in order that the judges might consider you acquitted, they believed that you held laudable views, since they did not realize that you were concealing views that deserved condemnation. You were correctly judged to be Caelestius' ally, since you show that you take his side. Even if you kept your books secret during the trial, you published them, nonetheless, after the trial.⁴¹

17, 18. Since this is the case, you surely perceive that it was perfectly just that the councils of bishops, the Apostolic See, the whole church of Rome, and the Roman empire, which by God's favor is Christian, rose up against the authors of such an unspeakable error,⁴² until they should come back to their senses from the snares of the devil. After all, who knows whether God may not perhaps grant them repentance so that they may know, confess, and even preach the truth and so that they may truthfully condemn that damnable error? But however these men chose to behave, we can have no doubt but that the mercy of God has shown

concern for the many who were their followers, only because they saw that they were joined to the Catholic communion.

Pelagius Even Tried to Deceive the Apostolic See

19. Take careful note of how Pelagius tried a maneuver to deceive even the episcopal court of the Apostolic See on this very question of the baptism of little ones. After all, the letter which he sent to Rome to Pope Innocent of blessed memory did not arrive when he was still living, and it was given to the holy Pope Zosimus and then forwarded to us. In it he says that people are attacking his reputation on the grounds that he denies the sacrament of baptism to little ones and that he promises the kingdom of heaven to some apart from Christ's redemption.⁴³ But these objections were not raised against them as he stated them. For they do not deny the sacrament of baptism to little ones, and they do not promise the kingdom of heaven to some apart from Christ's redemption. Hence, he presented the reasons for the attack on his reputation of which he complains in such a way that he could easily reply to the accusation made, while holding onto his own doctrine.

18. The objection made to them was this: They refuse to admit that little ones were subject to the condemnation of the first human being and that there was passed on to them original sin which must be removed by rebirth. For they contend that they need to be baptized only for the sake of attaining the kingdom of heaven, as if apart from the kingdom of heaven there could be something other than eternal death for those who, if they do not partake of the body and blood of the Lord, cannot have eternal life.⁴⁴ Here you see is the objection made to them concerning the baptism of little ones; it was not the objection he framed so that he could reply to it, as if it were the objection of an opponent, without any change in his own position.

20. Next notice how he answers and see how the loopholes of ambiguity prepare a refuge for error. He obscured the truth so that, when we first read these texts, we too almost rejoiced to find that they were correct or had been corrected. But the longer discussions in his books, where he is often forced to reveal himself, no matter how much he wants to remain hidden, made even these passages suspect for us so that, with more careful scrutiny, we found them ambiguous. For he first said that he had never heard even a wicked heretic who held concerning little ones the position as he had stated it; then he went on to say, "Who, after all, is so ignorant of the text of the gospel, not only as to try to uphold such a statement, but also to be able to let it slip from his lips or even to have it in mind? Moreover, who is so wicked as to want to keep little ones from the kingdom of heaven, by forbidding them to be baptized and to be reborn in Christ?"⁴⁵

19, 21. There is no point in his saying such things; he does not free himself from the charges by them. Even they never denied that little ones cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without baptism. But that is not what the dispute is about; the dispute is about the removal of original sin in little ones. That is the charge from which he must free himself, since he does not want to admit that the bath of rebirth has anything to wash away in little ones. Hence, let us notice the other things that he will go on to say. For, he first cited the text from the gospel, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven* (Jn 3:5) over which we have no quarrel with them, as we said. Then he went on to say, "Who is so wicked as to refuse to a little one of any age the redemption that belongs to the whole human race?"⁴⁶ Here too it is ambiguous what sort of redemption he means: whether from an evil to a good state or from a good state to a better one. For in his book⁴⁷ even Caelestius admitted at Carthage the redemption of little ones, and he, nonetheless, refused to confess that sin had been passed on from Adam to them.

20, 22. But notice what he adds next. He says, "And to forbid one who has been born into an uncertain life to be reborn into a perpetual and certain life?"⁴⁸ That is, who is so wicked as to forbid one who has been born into an uncertain life to be reborn into a perpetual and certain life? When we first read these words, we believed that he meant to call this temporal life uncertain, although we thought he should have called it mortal rather than uncertain, because death is its certain end. Nonetheless, since there is no doubt that, as long as it lasts, it is uncertain at every moment, we merely thought that he preferred to call this mortal life uncertain. And thus, though he was unwilling openly to acknowledge the eternal death of little ones who leave this life without the sacrament of baptism, our solicitude over him was, nonetheless, assuaged by an argument that was all but certain. For we said: If, as he seems to admit, only those who have been baptized can have perpetual life, perpetual death will certainly be the lot of those who die without having been baptized, and only on account of original sin could God's justice allow this to befall those who have committed no sin in this life.

21, 23. But afterwards some brothers advised us that Pelagius was able to say this precisely because on this question he was accustomed, as they reported, to answer those who questioned him as follows: "I know where little ones who die without baptism do not go; I do not know where they go."⁴⁹ That is, I know that they do not go into the kingdom of heaven. But he said or still says that he does not know where they go, because he does not dare to say that they go into perpetual death, since he holds that they did nothing evil in this life and he refuses to admit that they contracted original sin. Therefore, even these statements sent to Rome to serve as his great defense are so ambiguous that they are able to provide hiding places for their doctrine. And from those places their

heretical ideas can leap forward to the attack, when they find a weak person, like someone in the desert, without anyone who is able to offer a response.

24. Along with his letter, he sent to Rome to the same Pope Innocent, to whom he had also written the letter, a book containing the statement of his faith.⁵⁰ In it he revealed himself much more explicitly, though he was trying to cover up. He said, "We hold one baptism, and we say that it should be celebrated by the same words of the sacrament in the case of infants as in that of adults."⁵¹ He did not say, "by the same sacrament," though, even if he had said that, it would still be ambiguous. Rather he said, "by the same words of the sacrament," as if in the case of infants the forgiveness of sins was said merely for the sound of the words without the reality itself being produced. He seemed at the time, nonetheless, to say what corresponded to the Catholic faith. But he did not succeed in deceiving that See right to the end. After the written response from the council of Africa,⁵² into which province that deadly doctrine had wended its way, though it was not very widely spread or very deeply rooted, other teachings of his were made known in the city of Rome through the concern of some believing brothers. Pelagius had lived for a long time in Rome, and he first became involved there with these discussions and debates. As you can read, Pope Zosimus described them as detestable in the letter he wrote addressed to the whole Catholic world.⁵³ As though he were explaining the Letter of Paul to the Romans, Pelagius develops the following argument: "If Adam's sin harmed those who do not sin, then the righteousness of Christ also benefits those who do not believe."⁵⁴ And he says other things of that sort, all of which we have refuted and destroyed, with the Lord's help, in the books we wrote on the baptism of little ones.⁵⁵

In these so-called commentaries of his, he did not dare to raise these objections in his own name. But he said this where he was known to many people and could not conceal what he thought and said, and in his books, from the first of which I quoted above,⁵⁶ he did not disguise it, but with full openness he worked with all the forces of argumentation he could to establish the belief that in little ones human nature was in no sense damaged at its origin. Thus, by attributing good health to their nature, he denies to them the savior.

22, 25. Since this is the case, it is clear that there has arisen a deadly doctrine and heretical error. With the Lord's help the Church is already clearly ridding herself of it, since these two men, Pelagius and Caelestius, have either been brought to repentance or, if they refused this, they have been condemned. They are, after all, either reported to be or shown to be the sources of this perverse teaching. Or, if they are not its sources, but have learned it from others, they are certainly its defenders and teachers through whom it has grown and spread far and wide. And their names are bandied about by reason of their statements and writings, by reason of serious accusations, and by reason of rumor that arises and spreads from all of these. What, then, remains but that all Catholics, in

accord with the strength they have received from the Lord, refute this plague and vigilantly oppose it? In that way, when one struggles for the truth out of the necessity of making a response, not out of the spirit of contentiousness, the ignorant may be instructed, and what the enemy plotted for the destruction of the Church may be turned to its benefit, in accord with the words of the apostle, *It is necessary that there be heresies so that the tried and true persons in your midst may be revealed* (1 Cor 11:19)

The Denial of Original Sin Is a Matter of Heresy

23, 26. Hence, after the extensive arguments that we have been able to produce in writing against this error opposed to the grace of God which he gives to the small as well as to the great through Jesus Christ, our Lord, it is now necessary to examine the claim they make out of the shrewd desire to avoid being hated for heresy. They claim that question falls outside anything of danger to the faith. Thus, if they should be convicted of having stepped over the bounds in this question, their error would be regarded a matter, not for a criminal, but for a civil case. In the ecclesiastical proceedings at Carthage, after all, Caelestius did speak in that way. He said, "I have already said with regard to the transmission of sin that I have heard many within the Catholic Church attack it and others defend it, since it is a matter open to dispute, not a matter of heresy. I have always said that infants need baptism and ought to be baptized. What else does he want?"⁵⁷ He said this as if he meant to convey that it should then be judged heresy, if he were to deny that infants ought to be baptized. But now, since he admits that they should be baptized, even if he does not give as the reason for their baptism the true reason, but one foreign to the faith, he thinks that he is not in error and should not be judged a heretic.

So too, in the book he presented in Rome, he explained, to the extent he wished, his faith from the Trinity of the one godhead to the resurrection of the dead that is to come. No one had asked him about these matters, and there was no quarrel with him about them. When his discourse reached the matter in question, he said, "If some questions apart from the faith have arisen, about which there is a dispute between several persons, I have not myself determined this with definitive authority like the author of some doctrine. Rather, I have presented things which I have drawn from the source of the prophets and apostles for approbation by the judgment of your apostolic authority. Thus, if I have fallen into some error due to ignorance, as is only human, it may be corrected by your decision."⁵⁸ You see, of course, that, with these statements as a preface, he intended that, if any error turned up in his book, he would be thought to have erred, not in the faith, but in questions extrinsic to the faith. In that case, though the error should be corrected, it is not corrected as heresy, and one who has not

corrected his own error is said to be mistaken, but is not, nonetheless, judged to be a heretic.

27. But he is quite mistaken in that opinion. These questions which he considers extrinsic to the faith are far different from those in which one either does not know what is true or suspends a definite judgment, with no harm to the faith that makes us Christian. For example, one might freely investigate the nature or location of paradise in which God placed the man whom he formed from dust,⁵⁹ although the Christian faith has no doubt that such a paradise existed. Or one might investigate whether Elijah or Enoch are now in paradise or somewhere else,⁶⁰ though we have no doubt that they are alive in the bodies in which they were born. So too, one might inquire whether the apostle was taken up to the third heaven in the body or outside his body,⁶¹ although this inquiry reveals impudence on the part of those who want to know what he who was given this grace testifies that he himself does not know, without, of course, any harm to his faith. Or one might ask about the number of the heavens, since he mentions that he was taken up to the third heaven, or whether there are four or more elements in this visible world, or what causes the eclipses of the sun or moon which the astronomers are accustomed to predict at certain intervals of time. One might ask why in ages past human beings lived so long, as sacred scripture bears witness, or whether they reached maturity and began to bear children later in proportion to their longer lives. One might ask how Methuselah was able to survive,⁶² since he was not in the ark and he is found to have lived through the flood, as the years are computed in most Greek and Latin copies of the scriptures. Or one might ask whether we should believe the fewer copies, which are quite rare, in which the number of years is recorded so that he is shown to have died before the flood. After all, who can fail to see that in these questions one can lack knowledge of many things without harm to the Christian faith and one can be in error at times without being accused of heretical doctrine. And there are countless and varied other questions of this sort that have to do with God's hidden activities or with the deepest secrets of the scriptures, which it is difficult to include or define within one particular class.

The Christian Faith Rests upon These Two Men: Adam and Christ

24, 28. But take the case of these two men. By one of them we are sold under the power of sin; by the other we are redeemed from sin. By the one we were cast down to death; by the other we are set free for life. The former destroyed us in himself by doing his own will, not the will of him by whom he was created; the latter saved us in himself, not by doing his own will, but the will of him by whom he was sent.⁶³ The Christian faith, then, truly consists in the influence of these two men. *For God is one; one too is the mediator between God and human*

*beings, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tm 2:5), for there is no other name under heaven given to human beings in which we can be saved (Acts 4:12), and in him God established the faith for all, raising him from the dead (Acts 17:13). Therefore, without this faith, that is, without faith in the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Jesus Christ, without faith, I say, in his resurrection which God has established for all—which, of course, cannot be truly believed without his incarnation and death—without faith, then, in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Christian faith firmly holds that the righteous of old could not be set free from their sins and be justified by the grace of God so that they might be righteous. This holds true for those righteous persons mentioned by sacred scripture as well as for those who were not mentioned there, but who, as we should believe, lived before the flood or after it up to the time that the law was given or at the time of the law, not only among the children of Israel, but also outside this people, for instance, Job. For their hearts were cleansed by the same faith in the mediator, and charity was poured out in them by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁴ who *breathes where he wills* (Jn 3:8). He does not act in response to our merit, but he himself causes our merit. After all, the grace of God would not be grace at all, unless it was absolutely gratuitous.*

29. *Death reigned from Adam until Moses (Rom 5:14), since the law given through Moses could not overcome it. The law was not, after all, given in order to be able to bestow life.⁶⁵ Rather, the law was meant to show that the dead, for whose restoration to life grace was needed, were not only laid low by the propagation and dominion of sin, but also found guilty in addition by transgression of the law. This was not so that anyone who, even at that time, understood this in the light of God's mercy should perish; it was, rather, so that those destined for punishment through the reign of death might come to know themselves for what they are by transgressing the law and seek God's help. Thus where sin abounded, grace was even more abundant (Rom 5:20), and this grace alone sets one free from the body of this death (Rom 7:24-25).*

25. Although the law given through Moses could not remove from anyone the reign of death, there were, nonetheless, at the time of the law men and women of God, not living under the law that terrifies, convicts, and punishes, but under grace that delights, heals, and sets free. There were people who could say, *I was conceived in iniquity, and amid sins my mother fed me in the womb (Ps 51:7), and There is no peace for my bones in view of my sins (Ps 38:4). They could say, Create a clean heart in me, God, and renew an upright mind in my inner being and Strengthen me with your guiding Spirit and Do not take your holy Spirit from me (Ps 51:12.14.13). There were persons who could say, I believed, and for this reason I have spoken (Ps 115-116:10).*

They were cleansed by the same faith as we are; hence, the apostle says, *Having, then, the same spirit of faith in accord with the words of scripture, "I*

believed, and for this reason I have spoken," we too believe, and for this reason we speak out (2 Cor 4:13). Out of that faith it was said, Behold, a virgin will conceive in her womb and will bear a son, and they will call his name, Emmanuel, which means, God is with us (Is 7:14).⁶⁶ Out of that faith it was said of him, And he rejoiced like a bridegroom leaving his bridal chamber, like a giant ready to run his course. He emerged from the heights of heaven, and he will return to the heights of heaven. There is no one who can hide from his heat (Ps 19:6-7). Out of that faith it was said to him, Your throne, O God, will stand for age upon age. The scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You loved righteousness and hated iniquity; for this reason God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness before your companions (Ps 45:7-8).

They saw these events as yet to come by the same spirit of faith by which we believe that they have come to pass. After all, those who were able to foretell them for us by this faith-filled love did not themselves fail to have a share in them. For this reason the apostle Peter asked, *Why do you tempt God so that you place a yoke upon the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But by the grace of the Lord Jesus we believe that we are being saved, just as they were (Acts 15:10-11).* Why did he say this, unless they were saved through the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, not through the law of Moses? Through the law there came not healing, but the knowledge of sin, as the apostle teaches when he says, *For knowledge of sin came through the law. But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law, though the law and the prophets have borne witness to it (Rom 3:20-21).* Therefore, if it has been revealed, it existed at that time, but was hidden. The veil of the temple signified its being hidden, and that veil was torn at Christ's death to signify its revelation.⁶⁷ At that time the grace of the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Christ Jesus, existed in the people of God, but it was hidden as rain upon fleece—a rain which God bestows on his heritage,⁶⁸ not as something due, but as gratuitous. But now, with the fleece squeezed dry, that is, with the Jewish people rejected, it lies revealed in all the nations as upon the threshing floor.⁶⁹

Pelagius' Mistaken Division of Salvation History

26, 30. We do not, then, divide the ages as Pelagius and his disciples do.⁷⁰ They say that people first lived righteously by nature, then under the law, and thirdly under grace. By nature, that is, from Adam during the long period before the law had been given. They say, "Then the creator was known by the guidance of reason, and people carried how they should live inscribed on their hearts, not from the written law, but from the law of nature. But, when nature was tarnished by corrupt morals and ceased to be sufficient, the law was added to it so that

nature might be restored to its pristine brilliance with the rust scoured away as if by lime.⁷¹ But later," as they argue, "when the habit of sinning grew too strong, and the law was of little effect for healing it, Christ came and, as in the case of desperate illness, he stepped in as a physician in his own person, not through his disciples."⁷²

Christ Is the One Mediator for People of Both Testaments

31. Arguing in this way, they try to separate the righteous people of old from the grace of the mediator, as if the man Jesus Christ were not the mediator between God and those people,⁷³ because he was not yet a man, inasmuch as he had not yet assumed flesh in the womb of the virgin, when those righteous people lived. But if that were the case, the apostle would never have said. *Death came through a man, and the resurrection of the dead came through a man. For, just as all die in Adam, so too all are brought to life in Christ* (1 Cor 15:21-22). For since, in accord with the empty claims of the Pelagians, nature was enough for those righteous people of old, they had no need of the man Christ as the mediator in order to be reconciled to God. Nor will they be restored to life in him, since they do not, according to the Pelagian view, belong to his body and members as a result of his having become a man for us human beings. But the truth speaks through his apostles, *Just as all die in Adam, so too all will be brought to life in Christ*, because *death came through the former man and the resurrection of the dead came through the latter man*.

Hence, what Christian will be so bold as to doubt that those righteous people of old who pleased God during the earliest periods of the human race will attain the resurrection of eternal life, not of eternal death, precisely because they will be restored to life in Christ? But they will be restored to life in Christ, because they belong to the body of Christ, and they belong to the body of Christ, because for them *Christ is the head* (1 Cor 11:1). And Christ is their head, because he is *the one mediator between God and human beings, the man Jesus Christ* (1 Tm 2:5). He would not have been their mediator, if they had not by his grace believed in his resurrection. And how could they do that, if they did not know that he would come in the flesh? After all, if Christ's incarnation was of no benefit to them, because it had not yet come to pass, then Christ's judgment is of no benefit to us, since it has not yet come to pass. But if we stand at Christ's right by reason of faith in this judgment which has not come to pass, but is yet to come, they are certainly members of Christ by reason of their faith in his incarnation which had not yet at that time come to pass, but was yet to come.

27, 32. Nor should we suppose that the righteous of old benefited only from the divinity of Christ, which always existed, and not also from his humanity, which had not yet been revealed. The Lord Jesus said, *Abraham desired to see*

my day, and he did see it and rejoiced (Jn 8:56). If he meant us to understand by his day his time, he certainly testifies that Abraham was filled with faith in his incarnation. It was, after all, in terms of his incarnation that he entered time, for his divinity stands above all time, since all times were created through it. But someone may think that we should interpret his day as the everlasting day which is ended by no tomorrow and preceded by no yesterday, that is, as the eternity in which he is coeternal with the Father. But then how could Abraham have truly desired it, if he had not known the future mortality of him whose eternity he sought? Or someone might reduce the meaning of these words to the point of claiming that we should understand by the Lord's statement that he sought my day merely that he sought me who am the lasting day, that is, the unfailing light. In the same way when we speak of the life of the Son, of which the gospel says, *As he gave it to the Son to have life in himself* (Jn 5:26), we do not understand that he is one thing and his life another. Rather, we understand the same Son is life, for he said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (Jn 14:6). And scripture said of him, *He is true God and eternal life* (1 Jn 5:20). In this case Abraham would have longed to see his divinity equal to the Father without any foreknowledge of his incarnation, just as some philosophers have longed to see it, though they had learned nothing about his flesh. But will anyone correctly understand the fact that Abraham ordered his servant to place his hand under his thigh and swear by the God of heaven in any other sense than that Abraham knew that the flesh in which the God of heaven was going to come would be generated from that thigh.⁷⁴

28, 33. When Melchizedek blessed Abraham, he too offered to that flesh and blood the testimony which is well known to believing Christians.⁷⁵ Thus, long afterwards we say to Christ in the psalms what had not then come to pass, but was yet to come. The one faith which is the same in the patriarchs as in us sings, *You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek* (Ps 110:4). For those who find death in Adam, Christ is of benefit by the fact that he is the mediator of life. But he is not mediator because he is equal to the Father; in that respect he is as distant from us as the Father is. And how is he to be the middle ground, when he is equally distant? For this reason the apostle did not say: *The one mediator between God and human beings*, Christ Jesus, but: *the man Christ Jesus* (1 Tm 2:5). He is, then, the mediator by the fact that he is man; he is inferior to the Father in terms of that by which he is closer to us; he is superior to us in terms of that by which he is nearer to the Father. This is clearly stated as follows: He is inferior to the Father in the form of the servant;⁷⁶ he is superior to us, because he is without the stain of sin.

No One Is Set Free Except by the Grace of the Redeemer

29, 34. For this reason, whoever maintains that in any age at all human nature has no need of the second Adam as a physician, because it was not damaged in the first Adam, is proven to be an enemy of the grace of God, not on some question about which one can doubt or be in error without harm to the faith, but on the very rule of faith that makes us Christians. What sort of nonsense is it that they praise the nature of human beings that existed before the law, as though it were as yet less damaged by evil actions? They do not see that people were then plunged into such great and even intolerable sins that, apart from one man of God, his wife, their three sons, and their wives, the whole world was wiped out by the flood in accord with God's just judgment, just as afterwards the small territory of Sodom was wiped out by fire.⁷⁷ From the day, then, that *through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12), the whole mass destined for damnation became the property of the destroyer. No one, then, no one at all, has been set free or is being set free or will be set free except by the grace of the redeemer.

Circumcision and Original Sin

30, 35. Scripture does not indicate whether even before Abraham the righteous or their little ones were marked by some bodily and visible sacred sign. Abraham himself *received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith* (Rom 4:11). And he received it so that he was ordered ever afterwards to circumcise all the little ones of his household soon after they left their mothers' wombs, on the eighth day after their birth. Thus even those who could not yet believe in their heart unto righteousness⁷⁸ received the seal of the righteousness of faith. This commandment was accompanied with a great threat: God said that the one whose foreskin was not removed by circumcision on the eighth day would be cut off from his people.⁷⁹ If one examines the justice of this terrible punishment, will not all the argumentation of these people concerning free choice and the praiseworthy health and purity of nature, however subtle it may be, be refuted and crushed? What evil, I ask you, has a little one committed by his own will so that, because someone else has been negligent and has not circumcised him, he suffers so severe a condemnation that he is cut off from his people? After all, it is not the fear of temporal death that has been raised. For, at that time it was said of the righteous, when they died, *And he was gathered to his people* (Gn 25:17) or *He was gathered to his ancestors* (1 Mc 2:69), and from then on there was no temptation to fear that might separate them from their people, if their people is the people of God.

31, 36. What, then, is the meaning of this severe condemnation in the absence of any sin committed by one's own will? It is not that the soul of each infant receives the recompense for what it committed by its own will before this life, on the grounds that it had before this body the free choice to live a good or a bad life. Some have held this belief, following the Platonists.⁸⁰ But the apostle Paul makes it perfectly clear that those who have not yet been born have done nothing good or bad.⁸¹ Why, then, is an infant rightly punished with such perdition, unless the infant belongs to that mass of perdition and, as one born of Adam, it is understood to be justly condemned because of the debt that binds it from of old, unless it is set free from it, not as something owed to it, but by grace? And what grace is this but *the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom 7:25)? Among the other sacred signs of the people of old, the circumcision of the foreskin certainly foretold him. For the eighth day in the course of each week is the Lord's day, the day on which the Lord rose, and *the rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:4), and for this reason the knife used in circumcision is made of rock,⁸² and the flesh of the foreskin is *the body of sin* (Rom 6:6).

32, 37. The sacred signs were changed after he came whose future coming they signified, but the help of the mediator was not changed. Before he came in the flesh, he set free his members of old by faith in his incarnation. And *though we were dead in our sins and in our uncircumcised flesh* (Col 2:13), we were restored to life in Christ. In him we were circumcised *by a circumcision that has not been made by the hand* (Col 2:11), which was prefigured by the circumcision made by hand. Thus *the body of sin might be destroyed* (Rom 6:6), with which we were born from Adam. Our propagation from an origin subject to condemnation condemns us, unless we are cleansed by the likeness of sinful flesh in which he was sent without sin in order to condemn sin on account of sin.⁸³ He was, after all, made sin on our behalf. For this reason the apostle says, *On behalf of Christ we beg you to be reconciled to God. For him who did not know sin, he made sin on our behalf so that in him we might be the righteousness of God* (2 Cor 5:20-21). God, then, to whom we are reconciled by him, made him sin on our behalf, that is, he made him the sacrifice by which our sins might be forgiven, for sacrifices for sins are called sins. He was certainly offered as a sacrifice for our sins, though he alone among human beings was free from any defect. Such a freedom from defect was formerly required in the animals, and it signified the one without sin who would come to heal sins. On whatever day, then, after its birth an infant is baptized in Christ, it is in a sense circumcised on the eighth day, since it is circumcised in him who rose on the third day after he was crucified, but on the eighth day of the week. The infant is circumcised *in stripping off the body of the flesh* (Col 2:11), that is, so that the grace of spiritual rebirth may release it from the debt contracted by the contagion of birth in the

flesh. *For no one is clean from filth—from what filth, I ask, but that of sin?—not even an infant who has lived a single day on earth* (Jb 14:4 LXX).

Original Sin and the Goodness of Marriage

33, 38. They, however, argue as follows: “Is marriage, then, evil, and is the human being which marriage produces not the work of God?”⁸⁴ They argue as though the good of marriage is the disease of concupiscence by which men who do not know God love their wives. That is what the apostle forbids.⁸⁵ The good of marriage is, rather, marital chastity which channels carnal lust to its good use, namely, the procreation of children in an orderly manner. Could a human being, not merely one who is born of a marriage, but even one who is born of fornication or adultery, fail to be the work of God?

But in this question we are not investigating why the creator is necessary, but why the savior is necessary, and we do not have to examine the goodness found in the procreation of nature, but the evil of sin by which it is certain that nature has been damaged. Both of these, however, are propagated together, nature and nature’s defect; one of these is good, the other evil. The one is derived from the generosity of the creator; the other is contracted from the condemnation at the origin. The good will of the sovereign God is the cause of the one; the evil will of the first human being is the cause of the other. The one shows that God made the creature; the other shows that God punishes disobedience. Finally, it is the very same Christ who is the maker of human beings, because he created human nature, and who became man in order to heal its defect.

34, 39. The good of marriage, then, is found in all those things which are proper to marriage. There are three of these: its orientation toward procreation, chaste fidelity, and the sacred character of marriage. On account of the orientation toward procreation scripture says, *I want younger women to marry, to bear children, to be mothers of families* (1 Tm 4:14). On account of chaste fidelity it said, *A wife does not have power over her own body, but her husband does. So too, the husband does not have power over his own body, but his wife does* (1 Cor 7:4). On account of the sacred character of marriage it says, *What God has joined together, let no human being separate* (Mt 19:6). We recall that we have sufficiently discussed these matters, to the extent that the Lord gave us his help, in other works of ours, with which you are acquainted.⁸⁶ For all these reasons *marriage is something honorable in every respect, and the marriage bed is pure* (Heb 13:3). For, insofar as marriage is good, it produces much good even from the evil of lust, because it is not lust, but reason that makes good use of lust. Lust is found in that law of the disobedient members, as the apostle indicates, that resists the law of the mind,⁸⁷ but when reason makes good use of lust, it has its place in the law of marriage. For, if good could not be produced from evil,

even God would not produce a human being from adulterous intercourse. Adultery is an evil deserving condemnation, even when a human being is born of it, but the blame is not given to God. He, nonetheless, certainly brings about the good effect in the evil acts of human beings. Thus, whatever is shameful in that disobedience of the members, over which they were embarrassed so that after the sin they covered those members with fig leaves,⁸⁸ is not the fault of marriage. On account of marriage conjugal relations are not only permissible, but even beneficial and good. But it is the fault of the sin of disobedience from which this punishment resulted that those who disobeyed God also experience the disobedience of their own members. Embarrassed over these members, because they are aroused as if of their own accord, not by the choice of the will, but by the stirring of lust, they hastened to cover up what they considered shameful. A human being ought not to be ashamed of God's work, nor should the creature in any sense be embarrassed over what the creator thought it good to produce. And so, that mere nakedness was displeasing neither to God nor to human beings, when there was nothing to be ashamed of, since nothing had been done that deserved punishment.

Marriage before the Fall

35, 40. Marriage would undoubtedly have existed, even if sin had not been committed. For there was no other reason why God made for the man, not another man, but a woman, as a help. And the words of God, *Increase and multiply* (Gn 1:28), are not a prediction of sins worthy of condemnation, but a blessing upon marital fertility. For by these ineffable words of his, that is, by these divine reasons living in the truth of his wisdom, by which all things were made, he gave the first human beings the power to procreate. But if nature had not lost its dignity, heaven forbid that we should imagine that marriage to come in paradise would have been such that, to begin a child in it, the genital organs would be moved by the heat of passion and not by a sign from the will, as a foot is moved to walk, a hand to work, and the tongue to speak. And the integrity of a virgin would not, as it is now, be destroyed by the violence of blind passion in order to conceive a child, but it would yield to the command of peaceful love. And there would not be the pain and blood when a virgin has intercourse, just as there also would not be the groans when the mother gives birth. We do not believe these things because we have experienced them in this state of mortality. Nature that has been changed for the worse by sin offers us no example of that original purity. But we are speaking to the faithful who know how to accept with faith the words of God, even without having experienced their truth by means of examples. After all, how am I now to show that man was made from dust without any parents and was given a spouse from his side?⁸⁹ And yet faith believes what the eye does not discover.

36, 41. Thus in the first marriage the movement of the genital organs, like that of the other members, was peaceful and without the passion of lust, not at the stirring of uncontrolled ardor, but at the choice of the will. Marriage would have remained that way, if the disgrace of sin had not intervened. We cannot show you this now, but we can with good reason believe it on the basis of the written records that have God's authority. Thus, at present I do not find anyone having intercourse without the stimulus of lust, just as I do not find anyone giving birth without pain and groaning or anyone being born without death to come. And yet according to the truth contained in scripture, the groans of a woman giving birth and human death would not have existed, if sin had not first occurred. So too, there would not have existed that source of embarrassment so that they covered those members, for it is recorded in those holy writings that this also followed upon the commission of sin. Had that indecent movement not brought those members to the attention of their eyes which were, of course, not closed, but not open for this, that is, not attentive, they would not have felt that anything in their body was shameful and needed to be covered, since God had, of course, made the whole body as something worthy of praise. After all, if there had not first occurred the wrong that disobedience dared to commit, there would not have followed the disgrace that modesty wants to hide.

The Goodness of Marriage Is Not Destroyed

37, 42. It is clear, then, that we should not attribute to marriage something without which marriage would still exist. The good of marriage is not taken away by this evil; rather, marriage puts this evil to good use. But because in the present condition of mortal beings intercourse and lust are found together, it happens that, when one finds fault with lust, people unwilling or unable to distinguish them think that licit and proper marital intercourse is also to be blamed. And they do not notice that there is the good of marriage over which marriage boasts, that is, children, chastity, and sacrament, and that there is the evil that does not belong to marriage, but to the desires of the flesh over which even marriage is ashamed. But since without that evil one cannot realize the good of marriage, that is, the procreation of children, when one comes to such activity, one looks for privacy, excludes any onlookers, and even avoids the presence of one's children, if any have already been born, when they begin to be of an age at which they are aware of such things. Thus married people are permitted to practice what is licit, provided that they do not fail to conceal what is shameful. For from what is licit a nature comes to be; from what is shameful a defect. God who created human beings and joined man and wife by the bond of marriage is the author of the nature that is born, but the author of the defect is the ruse of the deceitful devil and the consent of the human will.

38, 43. Here God did nothing but condemn by his just judgment the human being who sinned and his whole race, and for that reason whatever in that race had not yet been born was rightly condemned in its sinful root. Birth in the flesh held human beings bound in that condemned lineage, and only spiritual rebirth set them free. For that reason, if parents who have been reborn persevere in that same grace, this lust certainly will do them no harm on account of the forgiveness of sins which they have received, unless they misuse it. This holds not merely for all forbidden forms of depravity, but even for married people when they do not go about producing children out of the will to procreate, but aim at the full satisfaction of their desire for sexual pleasure. The apostle permitted intercourse to husbands and wives for the sake of avoiding fornication; he did not want them to deprive one another, *except by mutual consent for a time* in order that they might devote themselves to prayer. He granted this, *not as a command, but as a concession* (1 Cor 7:5.6). Obviously, in making a concession, he shows that there is some fault. The statutes for marriage indicate that marital intercourse has as its purpose the procreation of children.⁹⁰ Such intercourse is, of course, good in its own right, not just in comparison with fornication. Though it cannot, on account of the body of death which has not yet been renewed by the resurrection, take place without a certain animal movement which human nature finds embarrassing, intercourse itself is not a sin when reason uses lust for a good purpose and is not dominated by it for a bad one.

39, 44. This carnal concupiscence would have been harmful, merely by reason of its presence, if the forgiveness of sins had not produced its benefit.⁹¹ Now, though it is present in those who have only been born and also in those who have been born again, it is both present in and harms those who have only been born, but is present in those who have been born again without being able to do them harm. It is harmful to those who have been born to the extent that, unless they are born again, they can derive no benefit from being born of parents who were born again. For the defect stemming from the origin remains in the offspring to make them guilty, even if the guilt of the same defect is washed away in the parents by the forgiveness of sins. Such is the case until all of the defect, by consent to which we sin, is destroyed in the final rebirth, that is, in the renewal of the flesh which is promised in its resurrection that is to come. Then, we will not only not commit any sin, but not have any sinful desires, by consenting to which we sin, and we will attain the blessed perfection of this sacred bath that is now administered. For this rebirth from the Spirit now brings about the forgiveness of all past sins, but it will earn for us the rebirth of the flesh for eternal life which will heal all the stirrings toward sin in the flesh as it rises free from corruption. But that salvation has at present been realized only as a matter of hope; it is not now grasped in reality. We do not possess it as present, but await it with patience.

40. And thus the bath of baptism not only washes away all those sins which are now forgiven in baptism and which make us guilty, when we sin by consenting to sinful desires. It also washes away those sinful desires which do not make us guilty, if we do not consent to them. Those desires will, however, not completely cease to exist in this present life, but only in the next life.

The Practice of Infant Baptism as a Proof of Original Sin

45. The guilt of that defect, of which we are speaking, will remain in the carnal offspring of those who have been born again, until it has been washed away in them by the bath of rebirth. Those who have been born again do not produce children of the flesh who have been born again, but ones that have been born. And thus they pass on to them, not the result of being born again, but of being born. Therefore, whether one is a guilty non-believer or a believer who has received forgiveness, one produces children who are guilty, not forgiven, just as the seeds of both wild olive trees and of domesticated olive trees produce wild olive trees, not domesticated ones. So too, the first birth holds human beings under the condemnation from which only the second birth sets them free.

The devil, then, holds them in his grip; Christ sets them free. Eve's seducer holds them; Mary's son sets them free. He who approached the man through his wife holds them; he who was born of a wife who had no contact with a man sets them free. He who brought to the woman the cause of lust holds them; he who was conceived in a woman without lust sets them free. The former was able to hold all in his grip through one man, and only the one man whom he could not hold sets them free from his dominion.

Moreover, the Pelagians themselves do not dare to reject the sacraments of the Church which she celebrates with the authority of such an ancient tradition, though they suppose that they are administered as a pretense rather than as a reality in the case of children. These sacraments of the holy Church indicate quite clearly that little ones, even those who have just been born, are freed from slavery to the devil by the grace of Christ. Even apart from the fact that they are baptized for the forgiveness of sins by a rite that is not false, but true, they are first exorcised; then, the power of the enemy is expelled, and they respond by the words of their sponsors that they renounce that power. By all these sacred and evident signs of hidden realities we see that they pass from the worst captor to the best redeemer who assumed for our sake our weakness and bound the strong one in order that he might steal his possessions.⁹² For the weakness of God⁹³ is not merely stronger than human beings, but stronger than angels.⁹⁴ God, then, sets free both the great and the small; in both of them he shows us what the truth said through the apostle, for *he has snatched from the power of darkness*, not merely adults, but also children, in order to bring them *into the kingdom of his beloved Son* (Col 1:13).

46. No one should be surprised and say, "Why does God, then, create what the wickedness of the devil claims as his possession?" After all, God grants this to the procreative powers of his creature out of that goodness by which he also *makes his sun rise over the good and the bad and rains upon the righteous and the unrighteous* (Mt 5:45). By this goodness he also blessed these powers, or he created them with his blessing. The sin that merits condemnation did not remove this blessing from nature which deserves our praise. Though by the just punishment of God that sin was able to bring it about that human beings are born with the defect of original sin, it was not able to bring it about that they were not born at all. So too, in adults no degree of sinfulness whatsoever causes human beings to cease being human beings; rather, God's good work remains amid the evil works of the wicked, no matter how grave they are. For, though human beings are created in honor, they are, when they lack understanding, comparable to animals and become like them;⁹⁵ they do not, nonetheless, become like them to the point that they become animals. They are comparable to them by reason of their defect, not by reason of their nature, not by what is a defect for an animal, but by what is a defect for their own nature. For, in comparison to animals, human beings are of such excellence that what is a defect in a human being is the nature of an animal, and yet the nature of a human being is not changed into the nature of an animal. Accordingly, God condemned human beings on account of their defect, a defect which dishonored their nature, not on account of their nature which is not destroyed by their defect. Heaven forbid that we should think that animals are subject to condemnation; it is just that, as they cannot share in beatitude, so they are free from misery.

Why, then, should we be surprised or why should it be unjust that human beings are subject to unclean spirits, not on account of their nature, but on account of their uncleanness? They contracted that uncleanness which does not come from God's activity, but from the human will in its original defilement. Even an unclean spirit is something good as a spirit, but something evil as unclean. The former is the result of God's activity; the latter comes from its own will. A more powerful nature, that is, the nature of the angels, holds the weaker nature, that is, human nature, subject in a community of sin. For that reason, the mediator, who is more powerful than the angels, became weak on account of human beings; the pride of our captor is destroyed by the humility of our redeemer so that he who gloats over the human offspring by reason of his angelic power may be conquered by the Son of God who has assumed our human weakness.

Conclusion and Confirmation from Ambrose's Works

41, 47. As I am about to bring this book to a close, I think it necessary to have the bishop of God, Ambrose, respond to the slanderous prattle of these people.

For among all the ecclesiastical writers of the Latin language, Pelagius singles out Ambrose's faith for its full integrity. I did this earlier with regard to grace;⁹⁶ I will do the same with regard to original sin, for the destruction of original sin makes grace stand out even more clearly. In the work which the saintly Ambrose wrote on the resurrection, he said, "I have fallen in Adam; I have been cast out of paradise in Adam; I have died in Adam. How will God call me back to life unless, as he finds me in Adam subject to sin and destined for death, he will find me justified in Christ?"⁹⁷ So too, in writing against the Novatians, he said, "All human beings are born subject to sin; they have their very beginning in sin, as you have read in the words of David, *See, I was conceived in iniquities, and amid sins my mother gave birth to me* (Ps 51:7). For this reason Paul's flesh was the body of death, as he himself says, *Who will set me free from the body of this death?* (Rom 7:24). But Christ's flesh has condemned sin. In being born he did not contract it, and by dying he nailed it to the cross so that through grace justification might come to be in our flesh where there had previously been the defilement of sin."⁹⁸ Likewise, in commenting on Isaiah, he says of Christ, "And so he was tempted in every respect as a human being, and in the likeness of human beings he endured everything. But inasmuch as he was born of the Spirit, he refrained from sin. *For every human being is a liar* (Ps 116:11), and no one is without sin save the one God. The law remains that no one born of a man and a woman, that is, by the union of their bodies, is found exempt from sin. But he who was exempt from sin was also exempted from that manner of conception."⁹⁹ So too, in commenting on the Gospel according to Luke, he says, "For intercourse with a man did not open the gates of the Virgin's womb; rather, the Holy Spirit poured spotless seed into that inviolable womb. For among those born of a woman, the holy Lord Jesus was absolutely the only one who did not experience the contagion of earthly corruption because of the new manner of his immaculate birth; rather, he shrugged it off by his celestial majesty."¹⁰⁰

48. Pelagius contradicts these words of the man of God, whom he praised so highly, when he says, "As we are begotten without virtue, so we are begotten without vice."¹⁰¹ What recourse does Pelagius have but to condemn his own error or to repent of his having praised Ambrose so highly? But blessed Ambrose said these things as a Catholic bishop in accord with the Catholic faith. Hence, it follows that Pelagius has strayed from the path of this faith along with his disciple, Caelestius, and has been correctly condemned by the authority of the Catholic Church, unless he should repent, not for having praised Ambrose, but for having held views opposed to his. I know that you read with great eagerness those works written to build up and strengthen the faith. Nonetheless, however useful this book might be for such a purpose, it must at long last be brought to an end.

Notes

1. Pelagius, *Profession of Faith for Pope Innocent (Libellus fidei ad Innocentium papam)* 7.
2. Augustine is citing from Paulinus of Milan's indictment (*Libellus minor*) brought against Caelestius at the Council of Carthage that was held late in 411 or early in 412.
3. Caelestius, *Profession of Faith at Rome (Libellus fidei Romae)*; this work was presented to Pope Zosimus in 417 and has been lost.
4. Paulinus of Milan, the former secretary of Saint Ambrose and his biographer.
5. Rufinus the Syrian, who according to Marius Mercator spread the Pelagian heresy at Rome during the pontificate of Anastasius (399-401). In Rome he stayed with Senator Pammachius who died circa 410.
6. The "little book: *liber minor*" is the indictment that was brought against Caelestius by Paulinus of Milan; see above note 2.
7. The Acts of the Council of Carthage.
8. See above 2, 2.
9. See Jn 3:5.
10. Caelestius, *Profession of Faith at Rome (Libellus fidei Romae)*; see above note 3.
11. See *The Grace of Christ* 32, 35. Augustine is addressing Albina, Pinianus, and Melania.
12. Caelestius, *Profession of Faith at Rome (Libellus fidei Romae)*.
13. *Ibid.*
14. That is, Pope Innocent, who died on 12 March 417.
15. These letters of Pope Innocent are found among the letters of Augustine: Letters 181-183.
16. See the letter of Pope Zosimus, "*Magnum Pondus*," CSEL 35/1, p. 102.
17. This general council of more than two hundred African bishops met in Carthage on 1 May 418 and stated in nine canons the Catholic teaching. See the Introduction for a translation of these canons.
18. That is, the Council of Diospolis held on 20 December 415, which Augustine comments on in detail in *The Deeds of Pelagius*.
19. Augustine, Letter 177, 2.
20. Pope Innocent, Letter 183, 3-4 (among the Letters of Augustine).
21. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 6, 16.
22. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 23; the previous six points constitute Paulinus of Milan's indictment (*Libellus minor*) against Caelestius.
23. In 414 Hilary of Syracuse sent to Augustine Letter 156 (among the letters of Augustine) with the following list of statements made by some Sicilian Christians. Augustine's reply is contained in Letter 157.
24. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 23.
25. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 24.
26. See above 11, 12 and *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 23.
27. Caelestius, *Profession of Faith at Rome (Libellus fidei Romae)*; see above 6, 7 and below 23, 26.
28. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 33, 57, where Augustine complains that Pelagius condemned the statements of Caelestius at the Synod of Diospolis, but in his own report of what occurred at that synod merely disowned them, thus seeming to leave open the possibility of later defending them.
29. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1.
30. These are the words of the indictment (*Libellus minor*) of Paulinus of Milan from the Council of Carthage in 411 or 412.
31. The Latin text treats this whole sentence as a quotation, though it is actually a modification of the previous quotation.
32. Again the Latin text treats this whole sentence as a quotation, though it is really a summary of what Pelagius said.
33. See *The Deeds of Pelagius* 11, 24 and 35, 65.
34. The book is *The Deeds of Pelagius*, which Augustine wrote for Aurelius, the bishop of Carthage.

35. The four books are Pelagius' *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)*.
36. The text would seem to indicate that Pelagius wrote his books, *In Defense of Free Choice*, after the Council of Diospolis, though compare this with his statement in what he says at 16, 17.
37. Augustine indicates that in his book, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)*, Pelagius apparently tried to justify to his disciples his condemnation of Caelestius' doctrine.
38. Once again from the indictment of Paulinus of Milan.
39. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1; see above 13, 14.
40. That is, the Palestinian bishops gathered at the Council of Diospolis on 20 December 415.
41. Augustine seem to imply that Pelagius wrote his books, *In Defense of Free Choice*, prior to the Council of Diospolis, but published them only afterwards. Compare this with his statement at the end of 14, 15.
42. Augustine refers to the Councils of Carthage and Milevus in 416 and the Council of Carthage in 418, to the popes, Innocent and Zosimus, and to the decree of Honorius of 30 April 418.
43. Augustine refers to Pelagius' *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)*.
44. Augustine's argument supposes the practice of the early Church according to which infants received the Eucharist at Baptism.
45. Pelagius, *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)*.
46. *Ibid.*
47. This book is Caelestius' "Memo: *Libellus brevissimus*" which he wrote and submitted at the Council of Carthage in 411 or 412.
48. Pelagius, *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)*.
49. The source of this saying of Pelagius is not known.
50. Pelagius, *Letter to Pope Innocent (Epistula ad Innocentium papam)* and *Profession of Faith (Liber fidei)*.
51. Pelagius, *Profession of Faith (Liber fidei)* 7.
52. Augustine refers to the written response by the African bishops gathered in a council in Carthage during the winter of 417-418 to the letter of Pope Zosimus from the fall of 417.
53. This is Pope Zosimus' letter condemning Pelagianism, the *Tractoria*, which is lost.
54. Pelagius, *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans (Expositio in epistulam ad Romanos)* 5, 15: PLS I, 1137.
55. *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* 3, 3, 5-6.
56. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice (Pro libero arbitrio)* 1; see above 13, 14.
57. Caelestius' statement at the Council of Carthage in 411 or 412; see above 4, 3.
58. Caelestius, *Profession of Faith at Rome (Libellus fidei Romae)*.
59. See Gn 2:7.
60. See 2 Kgs 2:11 for Elijah and Gn 5:24 for Enoch.
61. See 2 Cor 12:2.
62. See Gn 5:25-27. See *The City of God* XV, 11 for Augustine's discussion of this problem.
63. See Jn 4:34 and 5:30.
64. See Rom 5:5.
65. See Gal 3:21.
66. See Mt 1:23.
67. See Mt 27:51.
68. See Ps 68:10.
69. See Jgs 6:36-40.
70. See *Answer to Two Letters of the Pelagians* I, 21, 39.
71. The CSEL edition has "moon: luna." I have followed the BA emendation to "lime: lima." The ALG retains the CSEL reading and adds a note explaining that the reference is to the crescent-shaped decorations found on shoes and clothes at this time in North Africa.
72. Pelagius, perhaps from his work, *Nature (De natura)*.
73. See 1 Tm 2:5.
74. The Latin "*femor*: thigh" stands by metonymy for the male genital organs. During his Manichaean years Augustine found this practice of the patriarchs quite disgusting until he came to see that to swear by the God of heaven while holding Abraham's genitalia prefigured the incarnation.

75. See Gn 14:18.20. That is, by his offering of bread and wine, Melchizedek prefigured the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, with which the faithful were quite familiar.

76. See Phil 2:7.

77. See Gn 7 and 19.

78. See Rom 10:10.

79. See Gn 17:11-14.

80. Augustine probably has Origen in mind here. See *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* I, 17, 22 and 22, 31 for Augustine's rejection of prenatal sin.

81. See Rom 9:11.

82. See Jos 5:2-3.

83. See Rom 8:3.

84. The objection which Augustine reports probably stems from a letter written to Count Valerius. The content suggests that the source might be Julian of Eclanum.

85. See 1 Thes 4:5.

86. For example, *The Good of Marriage*.

87. See Rom 7:23.

88. See Gn 3:7.

89. See Gn 2:7.22.

90. Augustine appeals to the *Marriage Tables* (*tabulae matrimoniales*) of Roman law.

91. Augustine here answers the objection found in Pelagius' *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (*Expositio in epistulam ad Romanos*) 5:18: PLS I, 1137: "If baptism washes away that sin, those born of two baptized parents ought not to have sin. After all, they could not transmit to their offspring what they themselves did not have. This also happens, because, if the soul does not come by generation, but only the flesh, the flesh alone has the inherited sin and it alone deserves punishment."

92. See Mt 12:29.

93. See 1 Cor 1:25.

94. See 1 Cor 1:25.

95. See Ps 49:13.

96. See above *The Grace of Christ* 43, 47-50, 55.

97. Ambrose, *Faith in the Resurrection* (*De fide resurrectionis*) or *On the Death of His Brother, Satyr* (*De excessu fratris sui Satyri*) II, 6: PL 16, 1317: CSEL 73, 254.

98. Ambrose, *Penance* (*De paenitentia*) I, 3, 13: PL 16, 470: CSEL 73, 125-126.

99. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* (*Expositio in Isaiam prophetam*), a lost work.

100. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (*Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*) II, 56: PL 15, 1573: CSEL 32/4, 72: CCL 14, 55.

101. Pelagius, *In Defense of Free Choice* (*Pro libero arbitrio*) 1; see above 13, 14.

THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE SOUL

Revisions II, 56 (83)

At the same time a certain Vincent Victor in Caesarian Mauretania found in the home of a Spanish priest named Peter begins a work of mine. In it I confessed in a certain passage that I did not know with regard to the origin of the soul of individual human beings whether they are propagated from the one soul of the first man and then from parents or whether individual souls are given to individuals without any propagation, as the soul was given to that one man. I did, nonetheless, claim to know that the soul is not a body, but a spirit. Against these views of mine he wrote two books for the same Peter, which the monk Renatus sent me from Caesarea.

When I had read them, I responded with four books: one for the monk Renatus, another for the priest Peter, and two for that Victor. Though the one for Peter has the length of a book, it is really a letter, but I did not want it to be separated from the other three. In all of them, in which I discussed many necessary questions, I defended my hesitation regarding the origin of souls which are given to individual human beings, and I disclosed many errors and the evils stemming from his presumption. Nonetheless, since he is a young man who should not be hastily condemned, but instructed, I treated him with all the gentleness I could, and I received from him an answer in which he corrected his ideas.

The book of this work for Renatus begins as follows: *Sinceritatem tuam erga nos*. The one for Peter begins as follows: *Domino dilectissimo fratri et compresbytero Petro*. The first of the last two books for Vincent Victor begins in this way: *Quod mihi ad te scribendum putavi*.

Introduction

Though the present work is traditionally classed among Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings, it was certainly not written against Pelagian views or against someone whom Augustine took to be a Pelagian. Neither Augustine in his *Revisions* nor Possidius in the *Indiculum* regarded the work as directed against the Pelagian heresy.¹ Nonetheless, Augustine's refutation of the views of Vincent Victor do touch upon a question of considerable importance for the understanding of the transmission of original sin, namely, whether human souls are propagated from their parents, as their bodies are, or God creates them for individual human beings as those human beings come to be. A. de Veer has argued,

Vincent Victor, in fact, seems to have developed his system in order to assure at any cost the eternal salvation of infants who have died without baptism, and that could also explain the enthusiasm with which the priest Peter and the faithful present applauded his explanation.²

If that is the case, the relation to Augustine's anti-Pelagian works is evident.

The Date of Composition

The four books of Augustine's answer to Vincent Victor were not written all at once, but over some extent of time. Augustine tells us that the monk Renatus sent him the two books of Victor in the summer, though he did not receive them until the end of autumn, because of his absence from Hippo.³ Since Augustine's Letter 190 to Optatus, which provoked the two books by Vincent Victor, was written in the autumn of 418, Vincent Victor could not have written his books and Augustine could not have received them until the end of the autumn of 419 at the earliest. Furthermore, since Augustine was absent from Hippo from April until late December of 419, it is likely that he received the books at the end of that year and immediately replied with the first book for Renatus in late 419 or early 420.⁴ In the second book for Peter Augustine refers to the work he wrote for Renatus and speaks of his plan to write to Vincent Victor.⁵ In the time between writing the first two books and writing the last two, Augustine apparently received further information about Vincent Victor.⁶ Hence, it would seem that he could have written the final two books no earlier than 421, and there is no reason to suppose a later date.

The Occasion of the Work

Letter 190 to Optatus has been identified as the work of Augustine's which Vincent Victor read in the home of Peter the priest and which led him to write his two books.⁷ It is likely that Augustine wrote the letter during his stay at Caesarea in Mauretania in September of 418 where he was sent by Pope Zosimus on mission to the bishops of Mauretania.⁸ It was there that Augustine received a copy of Optatus' letter from Renatus who urged Augustine to reply; it was there that Muresis, a friend of Optatus, also consulted Augustine on the same question. Letter 202A written to the same Optatus after Letter 190, but prior to *The Nature and Origin of the Soul*, provides important historical information about Optatus and the circumstances in which the various works were composed, since it reports in indirect discourse parts of Optatus' two letters to Augustine. Optatus described himself as newly ordained and poorly educated.⁹ Hence, he could not have been Optatus of Milevis, who, if still alive, would have been long in office and who, as bishop of Milevis, would not have needed to be informed about the Pelagian heresy as Augustine informs the recipient of Letter 190.

In his letters to Augustine Optatus reported to Augustine that he had come into conflict with some older members of his clergy, because they, it seems, held that "all human souls are propagated and passed on through generation from that one soul which was given to the first human being," while Optatus himself insisted with them that "God made human beings, and now makes them and will make them"¹⁰—a point with which Augustine wholeheartedly agrees. The real question, Augustine points out, is whether God makes souls through propagation or out of nothing.

Optatus had, as he reminded Augustine, consulted the bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Caesarea who were gathered in council along with Augustine. He had asked whether souls come by propagation from the first human being or God is their author.¹¹ Hence, in Letter 190 Augustine wrote in reply to his young colleague in the episcopacy who was in conflict with his older clergy, because he held that souls are not propagated from the soul of Adam, but individually created for individual human beings. Optatus' reason for his position was that God is the maker of souls, as he is of everything else. His clergy, on the other hand, insisted upon the propagation of souls.

In Letter 190 Augustine replied to Optatus and expressed his ignorance about the answer to the question of the origin of the souls. Augustine mentions that Muresis consulted him in order to inform Optatus of what Augustine

held on this question, either by my response or by his own, namely, whether souls are born, like bodies, by propagation and are derived from that first soul which was created for the first human being or whether the almighty creator, who *works even now* (Jn 5:17), makes a new soul for each person without any propagation.¹²

In his long reply to Optatus Augustine said,

Before I offer my advice to Your Holiness on this matter, I want you to know that in all my many works I have never dared to offer a definite opinion on this question or was so bold as to put in writing for the information of others something about which I myself was not clear.¹³

In the same letter Augustine did, however, point out that there are certain things about the soul that he did know. He maintained that he knew that the soul "is not a part of God, but a creature, and that it is not born from God, but made by him."¹⁴ He also said that he knew that it "is not a body, but a spirit."¹⁵ Moreover, he said that he knew that the soul does not enter the body on account of some sins that it committed prior to embodiment.¹⁶

Vincent Victor, a young man and a recent convert to Catholicism from Rogatism, a splinter group of the Donatists, came upon a copy of Augustine's Letter 190 to Optatus in the home of Peter the priest and was shocked to find the admission of such ignorance in a man of supposedly great learning. He wrote two books in response in which he defended from the scriptures the creationist position and rebuked Augustine for his confessed ignorance of the matter and for his claim to know that the soul was not a body, but a spirit. Hence, Vincent Victor seems to have sided with the young bishop, Optatus, and was sufficiently persuasive that the elderly priest, Peter, jumped for joy and kissed the head of the young Vincent Victor.

The Contents of the Work

The first book is addressed to the monk Renatus, who had sent the books of Vincent Victor to Augustine. Augustine assures Renatus that he is pleased to have received them and takes no offense at his having forwarded them; in fact, he assures Renatus that Vincent Victor is a young man of promising talents whom he considers worth instructing (paragraphs 1-3). He first points out the errors in faith which he found in Vincent Victor's writings (paragraphs 4-16), focusing especially on the statements of Vincent Victor that imply that the soul is of the same nature as God. Then he takes up the battery of scriptural texts which Vincent Victor had appealed to as evidence that God creates individual souls for individual human beings (paragraphs 17-31). In each case Augustine shows that the scriptural evidence is insufficient to justify either the view that human souls are propagated in much the same manner as their bodies, ultimately coming from the soul of Adam, or the view that God now creates new souls for individual human beings. In conclusion, Augustine warns in particular against the error of holding that the souls come from the breath of God in such a way that they are not created out of nothing (paragraph 32). He points out that both those who defend the propagation of souls (paragraph 33) and those who defend

the creation of new souls (paragraph 34) need to find certain arguments from scripture if they are to support their views. The defenders of the latter view must, moreover, avoid the following erroneous claims: that God makes souls sinful by the original sin of another, that little ones who die without baptism can attain eternal life and the kingdom of heaven, with original sin being forgiven by some other means, that souls sinned elsewhere before being in the flesh and thus merited to be thrust into sinful flesh, and that sins which souls did not commit are correctly punished, because God foreknew that they would commit them, if they lived longer (paragraph 34). If one does not discover from scripture certain answers to the question regarding the origin of souls, one must remain silent; otherwise, the likelihood is that one will deny that little ones have any original sin and fall into the Pelagian heresy. In closing Augustine again thanks Renatus and urges him to pass his reply on to Vincent Victor and others who may need it (paragraph 35).

The second book, which is really a letter addressed to the priest, Peter, is quite different in tone. When Peter had heard what Vincent Victor had written, he jumped for joy and kissed the young man on the head in gratitude for the knowledge he had gained (paragraph 1). Augustine asks Peter what it is that he learned from Vincent Victor, exploring what it possibly could have been that delighted the old priest so much (paragraphs 2-8). Then Augustine turns to a cluster of errors he himself finds in the books of Vincent Victor on the nature of the soul (paragraphs 9-10), on the preexistence of souls (paragraph 11), and on the soul's meriting anything before being in the body (paragraph 12). Augustine takes up another group of errors concerned with the death of little ones without baptism; these errors have to do with their predestination (paragraph 13), their admission into paradise (paragraph 14), the offering of the sacrifice of the body of Christ for them (paragraph 15), and their eventual entrance into the kingdom of heaven (paragraphs 16-17). Augustine points out that the heart of the dispute concerns the origin of souls (paragraph 18) and insists upon the inadequacy of the scriptural proofs that Vincent Victor offered to show that souls are not derived by propagation from the first soul that God breathed into Adam (paragraphs 19-21). Augustine brings the book to a close with an admonition to Peter that he should not rejoice over having learned something from Vincent Victor, but should diligently correct his errors (paragraphs 22-23).

In the third book, the first of the two addressed to Vincent Victor, Augustine begins by assuring the young convert of his love and by admonishing him to correct his erroneous views, if he really wants to be a Catholic (paragraphs 1-2). He then lists eleven errors which he has found in Vincent Victor's work (paragraphs 3-19). The listing of errors involves a precision and definiteness not found in the previous two books and may be an indication that Augustine has

had more time to sharpen his assessment of Vincent Victor's teaching. Augustine closes the book with an exhortation to the young man to correct his erroneous views in accord with his stated concession that he was ready to be corrected (paragraph 20). Augustine acknowledges Vincent Victor's natural talent, eloquence, and knowledge of the scriptures and expresses the desire that the two of them could sit down together and discuss the points on which the young man needs to correct his thought (paragraph 21). Again he mentions the eleven points that need correction and urges Vincent Victor to drive them from his mind, his lips, and his writings (paragraphs 22-23).

In the fourth book, Augustine takes up a defense of himself against the rebukes which Victor has directed toward him (paragraph 1). The young convert has found fault with Augustine on two points: one, that Augustine did not venture to decide the question of "the origin of souls which God has given or gives to human beings after the first man"—a point which Augustine admits he does not know—and two, that Augustine claimed to know that the soul is a spirit and that the soul is not a body (paragraph 2). Vincent Victor, on the other hand, had held that the soul is a body and is not a spirit. The structure of Augustine's reply conforms to the divisions of Victor's objections. In paragraphs 3-16 Augustine defends his ignorance regarding the origin of human souls. He first points out the implications of Victor's likening one who lacks such knowledge to a mindless animal and insists that there are many things we do not know about ourselves (paragraphs 3-13). Then he points out that scripture provides no remedy for our ignorance of the origin of our souls (paragraphs 14-16), referring Victor to his more extensive discussion of the scriptural evidence in the first book written for Renatus. Turning to the second point on which Victor had found fault with him, Augustine defends his claim that the soul is not a body. He does not offer a proof of the soul's incorporeality, but argues against the inference that, if the soul is not a body, it is an airy nothing (paragraphs 17-18). Then, he takes up his claim that the soul is a spirit and justifies it in terms of scriptural evidence and against the counter-evidence mustered by Victor (paragraphs 19-37). Here the largest portion of the text deals with the non-bodily character of likenesses of bodies, that is, the images of bodies seen in dreams and visions. The discussion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus whose souls are after death described in bodily terms (paragraphs 21-24) and of several visions of Saint Perpetua that seem to entail that souls are bodily (paragraphs 25-28) responds to arguments that Vincent Victor used to show that souls are bodies. In paragraphs 36-37 Augustine turns to the way the scriptures use the term "spirit." Finally, in paragraphs 38-39 Augustine again lists the errors that the young convert must correct and indicates the points on which Augustine has defended both his own ignorance and his own claims to knowledge.

The Text and Previous Translations

The text translated is that established by C. F. Urba and J. Zycha in CSEL 60 (Vienna, 1913), pp. 303-419. I have also consulted the text in BA 22 and have benefited, especially from the introduction by A. de Veer and notes by F.-J. Thonnard and E. Bleuzen in that edition. The work has been previously translated into English by P. Holmes in NPNF 5/1 (New York, 1887; reprinted 1971). A more recent translation of Book Three has appeared in "Appendix A" of Mary C. Preus' *Eloquence and Ignorance in Augustine's On the Nature and Origin of the Soul* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 147-163. In the present century the work has also been translated into Spanish by M. Lanseros in BAC 21 (Madrid, 1947), pp. 761-972; into French by F.-J. Thonnard in BA 22 (Paris, 1975), pp. 376-667; into German by A. Marxsein and D. Morick in ALG III (Würzburg, 1977), pp. 167-282; and into Italian by I. Volpi in NBA 17/2 (Rome, 1981), pp. 287-479.

Notes

1. See *Revisions* II, 56 (83). In his *Indiculum* Possidius lists the work under "diverse books and treatises" (MA II, 180).

2. BA 22, p. 279 (my translation); de Veer refers to III, 15, 22 and IV, 24, 38 as evidence for the first claim and to II, 1, 1 and 17, 23 for the second.

3. See *The Nature and Origin of the Soul* I, 1, 1; subsequent references to the work in the introduction will use a shortened version of the title.

4. See A. Zumkeller's Introduction to the work in ALG III, pp. 58-59, as well as A. de Veer's Introduction to it in BA 22,

5. See *Nature and Origin* II, 10, 14 and 4, 7, respectively.

6. See *Nature and Origin* IV, 2, 2.

7. For this introduction I am deeply indebted to A. de Veer's Introduction to the work in BA 22, 273-320.

8. See Letter 190, I, 1.

9. See Letter 202A, 3, 7 and 5, 11.

10. Letter 202A, IV, 8.

11. Letter 202A, V, 11.

12. Augustine, Letter 190, 1.

13. *Ibid.*, 2.

14. *Ibid.*, 4.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

Book One: To Renatus

Augustine's Gratitude for Receiving Vincent Victor's Books

1, 1. Your loyalty toward us, my dear brother, Renatus, your fraternal good will, and the strength of the love you return to us is something we have previously regarded as tried and tested. But you have now proved yourself even more by your friendly concern in sending me two books of a man whom I did not know at all, but whom I do not think should be ignored, namely, Vincent Victor. That, after all, is the name I found on the books. You sent them to me last summer, but they reached me only at the end of autumn, because I was away.¹ How, in fact, could you not bring these writings to my attention? You certainly ought to have done so. Certain writings of this person came into your hands, though he was writing to someone else. He mentions my name for all to read in order to attack a statement of mine which I published in certain books.² And so, you did what a loyal and dear friend of mine ought to have done.

2, 2. I am, however, a little disappointed that Your Holiness still knows me less well than I want, since you have in fact supposed that I would take it as an injury done to me that you made known to me what someone else did. You see that such an idea is so far from my mind that I am not even complaining that I have suffered an injury from that other person. Should he, after all, have remained silent, because some of his views differed from mine? I ought to be pleased with him for not remaining silent so that we can read what he thinks. Someone might say that he should have written to me rather than to a third party about me. But since he was someone unknown to me, he did not dare to address himself to me to refute what I had said. Nor did he think that he should consult me on a point about which he thought he had no reason for doubt, but about which he had full and certain knowledge.

3, 3. He has, after all, a gift of eloquence that allows him to explain what he thinks. Hence, one must work with him and hope that he will think correctly so that he does not make what is useless attractive and so that he does not regard as true what he has expressed well. And yet, in his eloquent discourse there are many things in need of correction and points on which his excessive exuberance must be curtailed. You yourself, who are a serious man, were not pleased with him on this account, as you indicate in writing. But this is something that is easily corrected or that gives pleasure to flighty minds, while the more serious bear with it without any loss to the faith. We have, after all, some people whose language is full of froth, though their faith is sound. Hence, we should not give

up hope that in his case this defect can be removed, tempered, and brought or recalled to a perfect and solid measure, even if it is tolerable if it remains as it is. This is especially true, since he is said to be a young man. Thus hard work may make up for his lack of training, and a mature age may help him moderate what his intemperate talkativeness pours forth. It is troublesome, dangerous, and deadly, if, when we praise eloquence, we encourage silliness and drink a deadly potion out of a precious cup.

The Errors of Vincent Victor regarding the Faith

4. I will begin to indicate the points which are especially to be avoided in his treatise. He says that "the soul was created by God, but is not a part or the nature of God."³ And that is perfectly correct. But he does not want to admit that it was made from nothing and mentions no other creature from which it was made.⁴ Thus, he makes God its author in such a way that God is believed to have made it, not out of what is non-existent, that is, out of nothing, and not out of some reality that is not what God is, but out of himself. He fails to realize that he is back at the point he thinks he has avoided, namely, that the soul is precisely the nature of God. And so, it follows that something is made by God from the nature of the same God, and for him in his making he himself who does the making is the matter out of which he does the making. Accordingly, the nature of God is changeable and, having been changed for the worse, the nature of the very same God is condemned by that very God. Given the intelligence of a believer that you have, you see that such a view is untenable and must be banished and kept far from the heart of a Catholic. Thus, whether the soul was made by God's breath or the breath of God itself was made the soul, the soul was not created out of him, but by him out of nothing.

When human beings breathe out, they cannot, of course, make their breath out of nothing; rather, they exhale the air that they have inhaled. But one should not suppose that God was surrounded with air and drew in a small amount of it in inhaling and poured it back out in exhaling, when he breathed into the face of the man and, in that way, made his soul.⁵ But even if that were the case, what he breathed forth could not come out of himself, but out of something subject to him that could be blown about. Heaven forbid that we should deny that the Omnipotent could make out of nothing the breath of life that made the man a living soul. Heaven forbid that we should be forced into the awkward position of thinking that either there already existed something other than God out of which he made the soul or of believing that he made out of himself something that we see was made subject to change. After all, something made out of him is necessarily of the same nature as he is and, accordingly, is immutable.⁶ But the soul is subject to change—something everyone admits. It is not, therefore,

made out of him, because it is not immutable as he is. If, however, it was made out of no other reality, it was undoubtedly made out of nothing, but by him.

5. 5. In claiming that "it is not a spirit, but a body," what else is he out to establish but that we are composed, not of soul and body, but of two or even three bodies? After all, when he says that "we are composed of spirit, soul, and body" and states that "all three of these are bodies,"⁷ he certainly thinks that we are made up of three bodies. I suspect that I must point out to him rather than to you the great absurdity entailed by that opinion. This error, however, is tolerable in someone who has not yet realized that there is something that, though not a body, can bear some likeness to a body.⁸

6. 6. But who is going to tolerate his statement in the second book, where he tried to solve the most difficult question of how original sin belongs to the body and the soul, if the soul is not derived from the parents, but is newly breathed in by God? In an attempt to solve this question which is so troublesome and profound, he says, "It is right that it recovers through the flesh its pristine state which it had seemed to have lost for a little while through the flesh, so that it might begin to be reborn through that by which it had merited to be defiled."⁹ You see, of course, that, having dared to take up something beyond his capacities, the man has fallen to such depths that he said that the soul merited to be defiled through the flesh, although there is no way he can say how it merited this condition before it was in the flesh. After all, if it begins to have the merit of sin from the flesh, let him explain, if he can, how it merited to be defiled by the flesh before its sin. For this merit, as the result of which it was sent into the sinful flesh to be defiled by it, it certainly had either from itself or—an idea even further removed from the truth—from God. It cannot, of course, before being in the flesh have from the flesh the merit as a result of which it was rightly sent into the flesh to be defiled. If, then, it had this merit from itself, how did it have it, since it did nothing evil before being in the flesh?¹⁰ But if one says that it had this merit from God, who is going to listen to this, who is going to tolerate it, who is going to let anyone say this with impunity? At this point, after all, one is not asking what it did to merit to be judged worthy of condemnation after being in the flesh, but what it did, before being in the flesh, to merit to be so condemned that it was sent into the flesh to be defiled. Let him explain this, if he can, since he has dared to say that the soul merited to be defiled through the flesh.

7. 7. So too, in another passage, when he raised the same question in which he got himself tangled, while trying to explain it, he said in the person of his opponents, "Why, they ask, did God punish the soul by so unjust a censure that he willed to banish it to the body of sin, since by association with the flesh it begins to be sinful, though it could not be sinful?" He ought, of course, to be on guard against shipwreck in the rock-infested whirlpool of this question and

not to venture out where he cannot save himself by getting across, though he might do so by returning, that is, by repenting. For, he tries to escape from God's foreknowledge, but he tries in vain. In his foreknowledge, God, of course, foreknows the sinners whom he is going to heal, but he does not make them sinners. After all, if he sets free from sin those souls which he himself plunged into sin when they were innocent and pure, he heals the wound which he inflicted upon us, not the wound he finds in us. But God save us! Heaven forbid that we should say that, when God purifies the souls of little ones by the bath of rebirth, he is then correcting the harm which he himself caused them, when he mingled them, though they had no sin, with sinful flesh so that they were defiled by the original sin of that flesh. This fellow raises the accusation that they merited to be defiled through the flesh, and he is unable to say where they merited so great an evil before they were in the flesh.

8. 8. In the vain supposition that he could solve this question concerning the foreknowledge of God, he gets himself more entangled and says, "If the soul, which could not be sinful, merited to be sinful, it did not, nonetheless, remain in sin, because, having been prefigured in Christ, it ought not to be in sin, just as it could not be."¹¹ What does "could not be sinful" or "could not be in sin" mean except, I suspect, "on the condition that it did not enter the flesh"? After all, it could not be sinful with original sin or be in original sin in any way save through the flesh which is derived from its parents. We see, then, that it is set free from sin through grace, but we do not see how it merited to be involved in sin. What does his statement mean, "If the soul merited to be sinful, it did not, nonetheless, remain in sin"? If I should ask him why it did not remain in sin, he will correctly reply, "Because the grace of Christ has set it free." Thus, just as he says that the sinful soul of a little one was set free, so let him also say how it merited to be sinful.

9. But what does he say to one to whom there happens what he foretold? For, in posing that question for himself, he says, "Other charges are added to the complaints and murmurs of those who grumble, and struck, as it were, by a storm, we are again cast upon immense rocks."¹² If I were to say this of him, he would probably be angry, but these are his words. With them as a preface, he posed the question in which he reveals the rocks upon which he was cast and shipwrecked. After all, he was brought to this and borne, driven, hurled upon such horrible crags that he absolutely cannot save himself except by correcting what he said. He is unable to show what the soul did to merit becoming sinful, though he was not afraid to say that it merited to become sinful prior to any sin of its own. How without sin would anyone merit so great a punishment that, having been conceived in the wickedness of another, it is no longer free from sin, before it leaves the womb of its mother? The souls of little ones, however, who receive a new birth in Christ, are set free from this punishment by a grace

that is completely gratuitous without any preceding merits on their part. *Otherwise, grace is no longer grace* (Rom 11:6). Moreover, on this profound question this brilliant fellow is displeased by our hesitation, which is at least based on caution, if not learning. Let him state, if he can, what the soul did to merit attaining this punishment from which grace sets it free without any merit. Let him state this so that he defends what he said with some argument, if he can. I would not, after all, ask for this, if he had not said that the soul merited to be sinful. Let him state what sort of merit this was, good or bad. If it was good, how did it meet with evil by good merit? If evil, where did it acquire some evil merit prior to all sin? So too, I say, if it was good, then grace does not set it free gratuitously, but as something owed to it, for a good merit preceded the grace, and then grace will no longer be grace.¹³ But if it was evil, I ask what it was. Was it that it came into the flesh into which it would not have come unless he in whom there is no wickedness¹⁴ sent it? He will, then, never succeed—without plunging himself into worse difficulties—in defending this position of his, which involves the claim that the soul merited to be sinful.

With regard to these little ones whose original sin is washed away by baptism, he somehow or other found something to say, namely, that “it could in no way harm those predestined to eternal life by God’s foreknowledge that they for a short time had contact with the sin of another.”¹⁵ It would be tolerable for him to say this, if he did not get himself ensnared in his own words, when he says that the soul merited to be sinful. He absolutely cannot free himself from that tangle unless he repents having said this.

Unbaptized Little Ones Are Promised Not Only Paradise, but the Kingdom of Heaven

9, 10. When he wanted to reply concerning those little ones who are prevented by death from being baptized, he dared to promise them, not only paradise, but even the kingdom of heaven. After all, he found no way he could escape from being forced to say that God damns to eternal death the innocent souls which he placed in sinful flesh without their having merited it by a previous sin. But he somehow grasped the wrongness of his statements that the souls of the little ones are redeemed for eternal life and the kingdom of heaven without any grace of Christ and that in them original sin can be removed without the baptism of Christ in which sins are forgiven. When he saw, then, the deep whirlpool into which he had hurled himself and which was threatening him with shipwreck, he said, “I believe, of course, that we should continuously offer constant prayers and the sacrifices of the priests on their behalf.”¹⁶ Here you have another point from which he is never going to extricate himself unless he takes back what he said. After all, who would offer the body of Christ except for those who are members

of Christ? It was for this reason that he said, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:5) and in another passage, *Those who lose their lives for my sake will find them* (Mt 10:39). No one becomes a member of Christ except either by baptism or by death for Christ.

11. Hence, when some drew or tried to draw a precedent against the necessity of baptism from that thief, who was not a follower of the Lord before the cross, but acknowledged him on the cross, the saintly Cyprian counted him among the martyrs who are baptized by their blood.¹⁷ This happened to many who were not baptized when persecution raged. For the fact that he acknowledged the crucified Lord carried as much weight and as much value in the eyes of one who knew how to weigh these things as if he has been crucified for the Lord. For his faith blossomed on the wood of the cross at the very time when that of the disciples wilted, except that, as their faith faded in terror at his death, it sprang to life at his resurrection. They, after all, lost hope over his dying; he placed his hope in the one with whom he was dying. They fled from the source of life; he called upon one who was sharing his punishment. They grieved over his death as if it were the end of the man; he believed that he would reign with him after death. They abandoned the one who promised salvation; he paid honor to his companion on the cross. In him was found the measure of a martyr, for he believed in Christ at the time when those who were going to be martyrs failed. And this was clear in the eyes of the Lord, for he immediately bestowed such great blessedness¹⁸ upon one who was not baptized, as if he had been washed by the blood of martyrdom. Who of us does not also see the great faith, the great hope, the great love with which he was able to accept death for the living Christ, as he sought life in the dying Christ?

In addition, it is not beyond belief to say that the thief who believed at that moment beside the Lord was washed by that water which flowed from the wound in his side as though by a sacred baptism.¹⁹ I pass over the possibility that he was baptized before he was condemned, since no one knows this, no one can prove it. But persons can interpret such things as they will, provided that one does not use the example of the good thief to undo the Lord's command regarding baptism and no one promises to unbaptized little ones some sort of middle place of rest or happiness of any sort or in any place between damnation and the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ The Pelagian heresy, after all, promised them this. It does not fear damnation for little ones, since it supposes that they have no original sin, and it does not offer them hope of the kingdom of heaven, if they do not receive the sacrament of baptism. But though this fellow admits that little ones are bound by original sin, he dares to promise them even the kingdom of heaven—something that not even the Pelagians dared to do, though they said they were completely without sin. See the sort of snares in which his pride has trapped him, if he does not repent of having written such things!

10, 12. The story of Dinocrates, the brother of Saint Perpetua, is not part of the canonical scriptures.²¹ Nor did she or whoever wrote it do so with the intention that the boy who died at the age of seven had died without baptism. Rather, it is believed, as her martyrdom drew near, her prayers for him were heard so that he was transferred from punishment to rest. For boys of that age are already able both to lie and speak the truth, both to confess and deny the faith. Hence, when they are baptized, they recite the creed and make the responses to the questions for themselves. And so, who knows whether after baptism that boy was not at the time of persecution lured away from Christ through idolatry by his pagan father? And, for this reason, he may have entered into damnation when he died²² and did not leave there until he was pardoned through the prayers of his sister as she was about to die for Christ.

11, 13. But suppose we grant him this point, which one can in no sense grant in accord with sound Catholic faith and the rule of the Church, namely, that the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ may be offered for unbaptized human beings of any age, on the grounds that they might be helped to attain the kingdom of heaven through such piety on the part of their relatives. What answer is he going to make regarding so many thousands of infants who are born of non-believing parents²³ and who do not, by some divine or human mercy, come into the hands of believers and depart from this life at that tender age without the bath of rebirth? Let him state, if he can, how these souls merited to become so sinful that they were not able to be set free from their sin even afterwards. For, if I ask why they deserved to be damned if they are not baptized, he will correctly answer me, "Because of original sin." So too, if I ask where they contracted original sin, he will reply, "From the sinful flesh, of course." If, then, I ask why they merited to be condemned to sinful flesh, though they did nothing evil before being in the flesh, here he needs to find an answer. If I ask why they merited to be condemned to undergo the defilement of the sins of others so that neither baptism gives them rebirth after their evil birth nor do sacrifices remove their stains, at this point all argumentation fails. For these little ones were or are still being born in such places and to such parents that they cannot receive any such help. After all, we are not asking why souls have merited to be damned after their union with sinful flesh; rather, we are asking why they merited to be condemned to undergo union with the sinful flesh, though they had no sin before union with sinful flesh. It is not possible to say, "They suffered no harm from the defilement that they for a short time shared from the sin of another, since in God's foreknowledge their redemption had been prepared."²⁴ We are, after all, now talking about those who received no help toward redemption, since they left their bodies before baptism. It is not possible to say, "Frequent sacrifices on their behalf will purify those whom baptism has not washed, because God in his foreknowledge willed that they have for a time contact with the sins of others,

not with the disaster of eternal damnation, but with the hope of eternal happiness.”²⁵ For we are now talking about those who were born among unbelievers and who could receive no such help from unbelievers. If those helps could be used, they certainly could not benefit the unbaptized, just as those sacrifices he mentioned that were performed for the dead sinners in the Book of Maccabees²⁶ could not have benefited them if they were not circumcised.

14. Let this fellow find, if he can, something to say, when he is asked why, without any sin either original or personal, the soul merited to be condemned to undergo the original sin of another so that it could not be set free from it. And let him see which of the two he will choose: Will he say that even those souls of dying little ones, who leave this life without the bath of rebirth and for whom the sacrifice of the Lord’s body is not offered, are released from the bond of original sin, though the apostle teaches that, as the result of the one, they all enter condemnation,²⁷ if grace does not come to their aid, so that they are rescued through the one for redemption? Or will he say that souls who have no personal or original sin, but are perfectly innocent, simple, and pure, are punished with eternal damnation by the just God, though he himself put them in sinful flesh never to be set free?

12, 15. I myself maintain that one should hold neither of these two views, nor should one hold this third view, namely, that souls sinned elsewhere before being in the flesh so that they merited to be condemned to the flesh. The apostle determined with perfect clarity that they did nothing good or bad before they were born in the flesh.²⁸ Hence, it is clear that little ones have contracted only original sin, for which they are in need of the forgiveness of sins. Nor should one hold the fourth view, namely, that those souls of little ones are banished and condemned by the just God to sinful flesh, because he foreknew that they would lead bad lives, if they had attained an age at which they could use free choice.

Even this fellow has not dared to say that, despite having gotten himself in such difficulties; in fact, he even quite clearly and briefly spoke against this silly idea, when he said that “God would have been unjust, if he willed to judge an unborn human being on the basis of actions not done by the person’s own will.”²⁹ He made this answer, when he was dealing with the question in opposition to those who say, “Why did God make a human being who, since he had foreknowledge, he foreknew would not be good?”³⁰ For he would have judged an unborn person, if he refused to create him, because he had foreknown that he would not be a good person. And, as this man saw, God ought to have judged the person on the basis of the actions the person had done, not on the basis of the actions God foreknew, but were not permitted ever to take place. For, in the case of someone who has died, if sins, which the person would have committed if he had lived, are condemned, even though they were not committed, then the person who *was taken away so that evil would not change his mind*

(Wis 4:11) received no benefit, since he will be judged in accord with the evil that would have been in him, not in accord with the innocence which was actually found in him. And no baptized person who had died could be secure, because human beings can, even after baptism, sin not merely in some way or other, but can even apostatize. Well then, if a baptized person who has been taken from this life was going to be an apostate if he lived, are we to suppose that he received no benefit insofar as he *was taken away so that evil would not change his mind* (Wis 4:11)? And, on account of the foreknowledge of God, are we to think that he will be judged, not as a believing member of Christ, but as an apostate. After all, if sins not yet committed, not yet thought of, but foreknown and yet to occur, are punished, how much better it would have been that those two have been cast out of paradise before their sin so that they did not sin in a place so holy and so filled with happiness!

What of the fact that foreknowledge is completely destroyed, if what is foreknown will not take place? After all, how can one correctly say that a future that is not going to be is foreknown? How, then, are sins punished which do not exist, that is, sins which were committed neither before being in the flesh when this life had not yet begun nor after being in the flesh when death precludes them?

13, 16. Since, then, the soul of a little one exists, but is not of an age capable of free choice, this intervening time from when the soul is sent into the flesh until it is released from the flesh offers no reason for its damnation, if baptism is not received, except original sin. We do not deny that on the basis of this sin the soul is justly condemned, because it is a just law that established punishment for sin. But our question is why the soul was condemned to be subject to this sin, if it is not derived from that one soul which sinned in the first father of the human race. Hence, if God does not condemn innocent persons and does not make guilty those whom he sees are innocent, and if only baptism in the Church of Christ sets souls free from original or personal sins, and if before being in the flesh souls had no sin at all, and if sins cannot be condemned by a just law before they are committed and even more if they have never been committed, let him not propose any one of these four theories. And let him explain, if he can, how the souls of little ones, which leave this life without baptism and are sent into damnation, have merited to have been sent into sinful flesh, though they committed no sin, so that they might find there the sin for which they are rightly condemned. Moreover, he must avoid these four theories which sound doctrine condemns, that is, he must not dare to say either that souls that exist without sin are made sinful by God or that they are freed from original sin without the sacrament of Christ or that they sinned somewhere else before they were sent into the flesh or that sins are condemned which they never had in them. If he refuses to hold these, because one should, of course, not hold them, and states

that little ones do not contract original sin and do not have any grounds for being condemned, if they leave this life without having received the sacrament of rebirth, he will undoubtedly incur the damnable heresy of Pelagius and deserve to be condemned himself. But to avoid this misfortune, how much better it would be for him to share my hesitation about the origin of the soul. Then he will not dare to affirm what he neither grasps by human reason nor can defend by divine authority, and he will not be forced to admit his folly, because he fears to confess his ignorance.

The Inadequacy of the Proofs from Scripture

14, 17. At this point he might say that his view has divine authority as its defense, because he thinks that he can prove from the testimonies of the holy scriptures that "souls are not produced by God through propagation, but new souls are breathed into each individual."³¹ Let him prove this, if he can, and I will admit that I have learned from him something that I was investigating with great effort. But he needs to see whether he can perhaps find other texts, for he has not proved this point by the testimonies that he has already cited. All of the texts which he brought to bear are, of course, certain with regard to some point, but they are proven ambiguous with regard to this question posed regarding the origin of the soul.

It is certain that God gave to human beings breath and spirit, since the prophet says, *Thus speaks the Lord, who made the heaven and founded the earth and all that is on it; he gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk over it* (Is 42:5). This fellow wants this testimony to be interpreted in favor of the view which he defends so that, because it says, *he gives breath to the people*, he is believed not to make souls for the people by propagation, but to breathe new souls into each individual. Let him, then, dare to say that God did not give us flesh, because the flesh takes its origin from our parents. The apostle says of the grain of wheat, *God gives it a body as he wills* (1 Cor 15:38). Let him deny, if he dares, that grain comes to be from grain and its shoots come from seed according to its kind. But if he does not dare to deny that, how does he know in what sense scripture said, *he gives breath to the people*—whether taking it from the parents or breathing it in as new.

18. Also how does he know whether the sentence does not involve a repetition so that both parts should be understood as referring to one thing? In that case, *he gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk over it* (Is 42:5) is meant to refer, not to the soul or spirit that gives life to human nature, but to the Holy Spirit. After all, if "breath" could not refer to the Holy Spirit, the Lord would not have breathed upon his disciples after the resurrection and said, *Receive the Holy Spirit* (Jn 20:22). Nor would it say in the Acts of the

Apostles, *Suddenly a sound came from heaven, as if a strong wind were blowing, and they saw divided tongues as of fire that came to rest upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:2-4). What if the prophet foretold this when he said, *he gives breath to the people upon it*? And to explain why he said “breath,” he repeated the idea and said, *and spirit to those who walk over it*? This, after all, most obviously occurred, when *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*. Perhaps the one hundred and twenty persons who were then present in the one place were not yet enough to be called a people. But at least when four or five thousand believed, were baptized, and received the Holy Spirit,³² no one is going to have any doubt that a whole people and a multitude which lived upon, that is, walked over, the earth received the Holy Spirit at one time. After all, the spirit which is given as part of the nature of a human being is not given to those walking over the earth, but to those still enclosed in their mothers’ wombs. But as to whether this spirit is given by propagation or breathed in as new, one should, in my opinion, affirm nothing until one or the other becomes clear beyond any doubt.

He gave breath, then, to the people upon the earth and spirit to those who walk over it, when many believed at one time and were filled with the Holy Spirit. And he gives it to his people, even though not to all at one time, but to each at his own time, until the total number of that same people has become complete through some departing from this life and others taking their place in this life. Then, in this passage of the holy scripture, “breath” is not one thing and “spirit” another; rather, the same idea is repeated. In the same way *he who dwells in the heavens* is not someone other than *the Lord*, and *mocks* is not something other than *sneers*, but the same idea is repeated, where we read, *He who dwells in the heavens will mock them, and the Lord will sneer at them* (Ps 2:4). And when scripture said, *I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession* (Ps 2:8), it did not mean one thing by “inheritance” and another by “possession,” nor did it mean one thing by “the nations” and something else by “the ends of the earth.” There is, rather, a repetition of the same idea. He will find countless expressions of the sort in the words of God, if he pays attention to what he reads.

19. Latin-speakers have translated what a Greek calls *πνοήν* in various ways, at times as “breath,” at other times as “spirit,” and at still other times as “inspiration.” The Greek manuscripts, in fact, have this word in this testimony of the prophet with which we are now dealing in which it says, *he gives breath to the people upon it*, that is, *πνοήν*. The same word is found in the passage in which the man was given life: *And God breathed into his face the breath of life* (Gn 2:7). But the same word is also found in the psalm in which we sing, *Let every spirit praise the Lord* (Ps 151:6); it is also found in the Book of Job where it says, *It is the inspiration of the Almighty that teaches* (Jb 32:8 LXX). The

translator did not want to say "breath," but "inspiration," even though the Greek has *πνοή*, which is also found in the words of the prophet which we are now discussing. I certainly do not see that there is any reason to doubt that the passage refers to the Holy Spirit. The topic, after all, is the source of wisdom in human beings: *It is not due to the number of years; rather, it is, he says, the spirit in human beings. It is the inspiration of the Almighty that teaches* (Jb 32:7-8 LXX). The repetition was meant to bring us to understand that he did not say the words, *it is the spirit in human beings*, with reference to the human spirit. For he wanted to indicate the source of their wisdom, since they do not have it from themselves, and by the repetition he explained this in the words, *It is the inspiration of the Almighty that teaches*.

So too, in another passage of the same book, he says, *The intelligence understands the pure words of my lips. It is the divine Spirit who made me, but it is the inspiration of the Almighty that teaches* (Jb 33:2-3 LXX). Here the word, *inspiratio* or *aspiratio*, is *πνοή* in Greek, which is translated in these words of the prophet as "breath." Although it would be rash to deny that the words, *he gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk over it* (Is 42:5), refer to the human soul or human spirit, one has much better reason to understand the Holy Spirit in that passage. Hence, on what grounds is someone going to dare to decide that the prophet intended to signify in that passage the soul or spirit that gives life to our nature? If he had, of course, clearly said, "He gives soul to people on the earth," we would still have to investigate whether God gives it by taking it from members of the race that already exist, just as he gives a body, not merely to human beings or animals, but even to the seed of grain and of any other plants as he chooses, or whether he breathes in a new soul, as the first man received his.

20. There are also some people who understand these words of the prophet, *he gives breath to the people upon it* (Is 42:5), that is, upon the earth, so that they want "breath" to be interpreted as the soul. But they think that the addition, *and spirit to those who walk over it*, refers to the Holy Spirit, following the order in which the apostle said, *It is not the spiritual, but the animal that comes first; afterwards, there comes the spiritual* (1 Cor 15:46). In fact, one can derive from this statement of the prophet this beautiful meaning, namely, that he wanted the words, *those who walk over it*, to be understood as "those who hold it in contempt." After all, those who receive the Holy Spirit hold earthly things in contempt out of love for heavenly things. None of these interpretations are against the faith. One can take both, that is, the breath and the spirit, as pertaining to human nature, or one can take both as referring to the Holy Spirit, or one can take "breath" as referring to the soul and "spirit" as referring to the Holy Spirit. But if we are to understand the human soul and spirit in this passage, just as one may not doubt that God gives it, so one must still investigate how he gives it.

Does he give it by propagation, just as he gives the members of the body which he certainly gives by propagation? Or does he, by breathing a new spirit into individuals, give them one that has not come from propagation? We want someone to defend this, not by some ambiguous authority of the words of God, as this fellow does, but by an absolutely certain authority.

21. For the same reason, the words of God, *For the spirit will go forth from me, and I have made every breath* (Is 57:16), should be understood of the Holy Spirit, because *the spirit who will go forth from me* is the Spirit of whom the Savior said, *He proceeds from the Father* (Jn 15:26). One cannot deny that the words, *I have made every breath*, is said of every soul. But God also makes every body; no one disputes the fact that he makes the human body by propagation. Accordingly, though it is clear that he makes the soul, we must still investigate how he makes it, whether by propagation, like the body, or by breathing it in, as he made the first soul.

22. He also adds a third testimony, because scripture says, *He who forms the human spirit in them* (Zec 12:1). As if anyone would deny this! But the question is how he forms it. Who but God forms the bodily eyes of human beings? And I think that it is in them, not outside of them, that he forms them, and he certainly does so by propagation. Since, then, he forms the human spirit in them, we have to investigate whether he forms it by breathing it in anew or as derived from propagation.

23. We also know that the mother of the young Maccabees, a woman richer in virtues when her sons suffered martyrdom than in offspring when they were born, encouraged her sons with the words, *I do not know, my sons, how you came to be in my womb. It was not I, after all, who gave you spirit and soul, nor was it I who formed the faces and members of each of you. Rather, God, who made the world and everything in it, made the human race, and he examines the actions of everyone; it is he who will restore to you spirit and soul in great mercy* (2 Mc 7:22-23). We are familiar with these words, but we do not see how they favor what he claims. After all, will any Christian deny that God gives soul and spirit to human beings? But in the same way I do not think that this fellow denies that God gives to human beings ears, tongue, hands, feet, all the senses of the body, and the form and nature of all the members. After all, how is he going to deny that these are God's gifts, unless he forgets that he is a Christian? But, as it is clear that God makes and gives these by propagation, we must also investigate how he makes the human soul and how its maker gives it. Does it come from the parents or from nothing or—as this fellow claims, and this is a position that one must absolutely avoid—from some nature of God's breath that is already existing, not created from nothing, but from out of him?

15. 24. The testimonies from the scriptures which he cites by no means teach the view of which he is trying to convince us. In fact, they say nothing at all

relevant to this question. How, then, can he say, "We claim with assurance that the soul comes from God's breath, not from generation, because it is given by God"?³³ He implies that the body is given by someone else than by him who created it! From him are all things, through him are all things, and in him are all things,³⁴ though they come not from his nature, but from his workmanship. He continues, "Nor does it come from nothing, because it arises from God."³⁵ We clearly warn him that we do not need any further investigation of whether this is so. What he says is certainly not true, namely, that the soul comes neither from generation nor from nothing. We declare, I say, beyond any doubt that this is not true. One or the other: if it does not come from generation, it comes from nothing. It does not come from God in such a way that it shares God's nature. That is a view that it is certainly sacrilegious to hold. We are still asking for and looking for certain testimonies that it does not come from generation, but not the sort of testimonies that this fellow offered, for they do not prove what we are looking for.

25. Since he is left speechless amid the great profundity of this question, I wish that he would imitate the mother of the Maccabees! She knew that she had conceived her sons from her husband and that both their bodies and their souls and spirits were created by the creator of all things. Nonetheless, she said, *I do not know how you came to be in my womb* (2 Mc 7:22). I would like him to tell me what she did not know. After all, she certainly knew those things I mentioned, such as how they came into her womb in terms of their bodies, since she could have no doubt that she had conceived them from her husband. She also confessed, because she knew this too, that God gave them soul and spirit, that he formed their faces and members. What, then, was it that she did not know? Was it perhaps what we too do not know—namely, whether God derived the soul and spirit, which he certainly gave them, from the parents or breathed in a new one as he did for the first human being? But whether it is this point or another that she did not know with regard to the formation of human nature, she admitted her ignorance and did not rashly defend what she did not know. And yet, this fellow would not say to her what he was not ashamed to say to us, *Though human beings received a position of honor, they did not understand; they were compared to mindless animals and have become like them* (Ps 49:13). Notice what this woman said to her sons, *I do not know how you came to be in my womb*, and yet she is not to be compared to a mindless animal. She said, *I do not know*, and as if they were asking her why she did not know, she added, *It was not I, after all, who gave you spirit and soul* (2 Mc 7:22). He, then, who gave it knows how he made what he gave—whether he derived it from propagation or breathed it in as something new.

16, 26. "Learn," he tells me; "you see, the apostle is teaching." I will certainly learn, if the apostle teaches, for it is God who teaches through the

apostle. But what is it that the apostle is teaching? "Look," he tells me, "when he was speaking to the Athenians, he confidently explained this with the words, *He gives to all life and spirit*" (Acts 17:25). Who, after all, is going to deny this? He tells me, "But you must understand what the apostle says. He says 'gives,' not 'gave,' using the indefinite and continuous present tense, not speaking about what is past and over with. And what he gives without ceasing, he always gives, just as he who gives always exists."³⁶ I have quoted his words as I found them in the second of those books you sent me. Notice there, first of all, where he has got himself by trying to affirm what he does not know. He has, after all, dared to say that God not only gives souls now and in this present age, but that through endless time and without ceasing he always gives them to those who are born. "He always gives," he says, "just as he who gives always exists." Since what the apostle said is quite clear, heaven forbid that I deny that I understand it. But what this fellow says, he himself ought to understand is against the Christian faith, and he ought to avoid saying it in the future. After all, when the dead rise, no one will be born. Hence, God will not at that time give souls to people being born; rather, he will judge the souls along with their bodies that he gives in this age. He does not, then, always give souls, although he who now gives them always exists.

And from the fact that the blessed apostle did not say, "gave," but "gives," he cannot draw the conclusion that he wants to draw, namely, that he does not give souls by propagation. He, of course, gives them, even if he gives them by propagation, because he gives to human beings the members of the body, the bodily senses, the form of the body, and the very substance of the body, though he gives these by propagation. The Lord said, *If God so clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow is cast into the oven* (Mt 6:30). He did not say, "clothed," as when he first created it, but said, "clothes," because he does so now. Are we going to deny on the basis of this that lilies are procreated by the propagation of their species? What if God also gives the soul and spirit of a human being when he gives it, but gives it by the propagation of the race? I myself neither defend nor refute this view. But if one is going to defend it or to refute it, I insist that it be done with clear and unambiguous testimonies. Nor am I to be compared with a mindless animal, because I confess that I do not yet know this; I should rather be compared to a cautious human being, because I do not dare to teach what I do not know. I am not going to compare him in turn to a mindless animal, repaying an injury with an injury; rather, I am going to admonish him as a son that he should admit that he does not know what he does not know and that he should not attempt to teach what he has not yet learned. Otherwise, he will be comparable, not to animals, but to those human beings whom the apostle describes as, *wanting to be teachers of the law, but not understanding either what they say or the things about which they speak* (1 Tm 1:7).

17, 27. Why is it that he does not care to pay attention to the scriptures about which he speaks? When he reads that human beings come from God, he maintains that they "are from God only in terms of soul and spirit,"³⁷ and not also in terms of their body. He does not want the words of the apostle, *We have our being from him* (Acts 17:28), to refer to the body, but only to the soul and spirit. If bodies, then, do not come from God, the text of scripture is false that it is God from whom are all things, through whom are all things, and in whom are all things.³⁸ Moreover, when the same apostle says, *For, just as the woman came from the man, so the man comes through the woman* (1 Cor 11:12), let this fellow explain to us to which propagation he meant to refer, the soul's, the body's, or both of them. But he does not want to have souls come from propagation. It remains, then, for him and all the others who attack the propagation of souls, that the apostle referred only to the male and female body, when he said, *For, just as the woman came from the man, so the man comes through the woman*, because the woman was made from the man so that a man might later be born of the woman. If in saying this the apostle wanted us to understand only the bodies of the two sexes and not their souls and spirits as well, why did he immediately add, *But all things are from God*, unless their bodies are also from God? This is what he says, *For, just as the woman came from the man, so the man comes through the woman, but all things are from God* (1 Cor 11:12).

Let this fellow, then, decide what the apostle was speaking about. If he was speaking of bodies, bodies are also clearly from God. Why is it that, wherever this fellow finds in the scriptures the phrase, "from God," when the subject is human beings, he wants us to understand, not their bodies, but only their souls and spirits? If the words, *But all things are from God*, referred to the bodies of each sex and to the soul or spirit, then the woman came from the man in her entirety. For the woman came from the man, and the man comes through the woman, and all things are from God. What does "all things" refer to, if not to what he was talking about, that is, the man from whom the woman came, and the woman who came from the man, and the man who came through the woman? The man who came through the woman is not, after all, the man from whom the woman came, but the man who was born afterward to the man through the woman, as we are born today. Accordingly, if, when the apostle said this, he was speaking of their bodies, the bodies of each sex are undoubtedly from God. On the other hand, if he meant that only the souls and spirits of human beings come from God, then the woman, of course, came from the man in terms of her soul and spirit, and those who argue against the propagation of souls have no argument left. If, however, he made a distinction so that he said that the woman came from the man in terms of her body, but from God in terms of her soul and spirit, how can the statement of the apostle be true, *But all things are from God*, if the woman's body came from the man in such a way that it was not from God?

It is better to hold that the apostle spoke the truth than to prefer this fellow to the apostle. Hence, the woman came from the man, either in terms of her body alone or in terms of the whole of her human nature. We affirm neither of these as certain; rather, we are still investigating which of these is true. And the man comes through the woman, whether the whole nature of the human being which is born through the woman is taken from the father or only the flesh. There is still some question on this. But there is no question here that all things come from God, that is, the body and soul and spirit of both the man and the woman. For, even if they were not born or drawn or derived from God in such a way that they are of his nature, they are still from God. They have their being from him by whom they have been created, established, and made.

28. He says, "By saying, *And he gives to all life and spirit*, and then adding, *and made the whole human race from one blood* (Acts 17:25-26), the apostle refers the origin of the soul and spirit to the creator and the origin of the body to generation." By no means! Those who do not want rashly to deny the propagation of souls, before it becomes fully clear whether it is or is not the case, have something in these words of the apostle that they should understand as favoring their side. He said, *from one blood*, in the sense of "from one human being," using the figure by which the part signifies the whole.³⁹ After all, if we allow him to understand the words of scripture, *And the man became a living soul* (Gn 2:7), as signifying the whole by a part, so that one also understands there the spirit, which scripture does not mention, why should we not allow others to understand the words, *from one blood*, in such a way that they can understand there both the soul and the spirit? After all, a human being designated by the term, "blood," is not composed of the body alone, but also of soul and spirit.

Those who defend the propagation of souls ought not to attack this fellow because scripture speaks of the first man as the one *in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12); it does not say, "in whom the flesh of all has sinned," but "all sinned," that is, all human beings, since a human being is not just flesh. This fellow, then, ought not to be attacked on this point, for scripture may have said, "all human beings," so that we would understand this of the flesh alone. So too, he should not attack the defenders of the propagation of souls, because scripture says, *the whole human race from one blood* (Acts 17:26), as if this meant that only the flesh is involved in propagation. For, if their claim is true that a soul does not come from a soul, but that only flesh comes from flesh, then scripture said, *from one blood*, not in order to signify the whole human being by a part, but merely to signify the flesh of the one human being. Then, in the expression, *in whom all have sinned*, we must understand only the flesh of all human beings which has been passed on from the first, with scripture signifying the part by the whole. But if it is true that the whole human being, that is, body, soul, and

spirit, is propagated from the whole human being, scripture said, *in whom all have sinned*, in the proper sense. And in this case it said as a figure of speech, *from one blood*, signifying the whole by a part, that is, the whole human being who is composed of soul and flesh or rather—as this fellow prefers to say—of soul and spirit and flesh.

The words of God, after all, frequently signify the whole by the part and the part by the whole. The whole is signified by the part where we read, *To you all flesh will come* (Ps 65:3), because we understand the whole human being by the flesh. But the part is signified by the whole, when it says that Christ was buried, since only his flesh was buried. Now the words cited in this testimony from the apostle that *he gives to all life and spirit* should not, I think, cause anyone difficulties, given the previous explanation. It is, after all, God who gives them. But we are still investigating how he gives them, whether by breathing them in anew or by propagation. He is, of course, correctly said to give even the substance of the flesh which no one denies is given by propagation.

18, 29. Let us now look at that testimony from Genesis, where the woman, having been made from the man's side, was brought to him and he said, *Now this is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh* (Gn 2:23). This fellow thinks that Adam ought to have said, "soul from my soul" or "spirit from my spirit," if this was also taken from him. But those who maintain the propagation of souls think that they can provide an even more unbeatable defense for their view from this text. For, when scripture said that God took the rib from the side of the man and built it into the woman, it did not add that he breathed into her face the breath of life.⁴⁰ The reason was, they say, that she already had her soul from the man. After all, if she did not, the holy scripture would certainly not have deprived us of knowledge on this point.⁴¹ To the objection that Adam said, *Now this is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh* (Gn 2:23) and did not say, "spirit or soul from my spirit or soul," they can answer as we have explained above, namely, that in the expression "my bone and flesh" the part stands for the whole and the parts taken from Adam were ensouled, not dead. One should not, of course, deny that the Almighty could have done this, just because no human being can cut off a piece of human flesh along with the soul.

Adam went on to say, *She will be called "woman" because she was taken from her man* (Gn 2:23). Why did he not rather say, "because her flesh was taken from her man"? That would have strengthened their view. Those who disagree can, therefore, say at this point: Because scripture did not say that the flesh of the woman, but the woman was taken from her man, one should understand the whole woman with soul and spirit. For, even if the soul is without sex, nonetheless, when we call them women, there is no need to think of them as without souls. Otherwise, they would not be admonished about their dress in this way, *Not with elaborate hairdos or with gold or pearls or in expensive*

dresses, but as is fitting for women who profess to live in piety by their good conduct (1 Tm 2:9-10). Piety is, of course, interior, in the soul or in the spirit, and they are called women even for the purpose of their interior adornment, where there is no sex.

30. As these sides argue back and forth with each other, I judge between them as follows: I admonish each of them that they should not rest their case upon what is not known and that they should not dare rashly to assert what they do not know. After all, if scripture had said, "He breathed the breath of life into the face of the woman, and she became a living soul," it still would not follow that the soul is not propagated by the parents, unless we read that it said this same thing about their child as well. It is, after all, possible that a member not having a soul, but taken from the body, needed to receive a soul, but that the soul of a child would be derived from the father through the mother by the transmission involved in propagation. A point passed over in silence is something hidden from us; it is neither denied nor affirmed. Accordingly, one needs to bolster the position by clearer proofs, if perhaps scripture elsewhere does not pass it over in silence. Hence, those who defend the propagation of souls are not helped at all by the fact that God did not breathe the soul into the face of the woman, and those who deny it ought not to allow themselves to be convinced of what they do not know, just because Adam did not say, "soul from my soul." For, scripture could have been silent about the woman's receiving her soul by God's breathing it into her, as the man received his, so that the question was not resolved, but was left open. So too, scripture could have been silent about Adam's saying, "Soul from my soul," so that the same question was not resolved, but left open. And thus, if the soul of the first woman comes from the man, the part stands for the whole, where we read, *Now this is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh* (Gn 2:23), since the whole woman, and not merely her flesh, was taken from the man. If, however, it does not come from the man, but God breathed it into her, as he did for the man, the whole stands for the part, where we read, *She was taken from her man* (Gn 2:23), because her flesh, and not the whole woman, was taken from him.

31. Hence, this question is not resolved by these testimonies which are certainly ambiguous on this point. But I do know this: The people who think that the soul of the woman did not come from the soul of the man, because scripture did not say, "soul from my soul," as it said, *flesh from my flesh*, argue in the same way that the Apollinarists and whoever else there are who argue against the soul of the Lord.⁴² They deny it, because they read the scripture text, *The Word was made flesh* (Jn 1:14). After all, they say, if the soul was there also, it ought to have said, "The Word was made man." We answer these people that scripture often refers to the whole human being by the term "flesh." For example, *And all flesh will see the salvation of God* (Is 40:5 LXX; Lk 3:6). After

all, flesh without a soul cannot see anything. Moreover, many other passages from the holy scriptures show without any ambiguity that there is not only flesh, but also a human, that is, a rational soul, in Christ the man. For this reason, those who defend the propagation of souls can interpret the words, *Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh*, so that the part stands for the whole. Then the soul is understood there too, just as we understand that the Word was not made flesh without a soul. And just as other testimonies teach that Christ had a human soul, these people could argue in favor of the propagation of souls by other testimonies that are not ambiguous. In turn, we also warn those who attack the propagation of souls that they should use certain proofs to show that God breathes new souls into human beings. Thus, they need to defend the view that the words, *Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh* (Gn 2:23), was not said in accord with the figure in which the part stands for the whole so that the soul is understood there as well, but was said as referring properly to the flesh alone.

Conclusion and Summary of the Errors of Vincent Victor

19, 32. Since this is the case, I see that I must bring this book to a close. It contains, in fact, everything which I thought most necessary for my readers to know. They must avoid siding with this fellow whose books you sent me regarding the idea that souls come from God's breath in such a way that they do not come from nothing. People who believe this, after all, even if they deny it verbally, in reality cry out that souls have the substance of God and are of his kinship, not by gift, but by nature. For one can in no sense reasonably deny that from whatever one derives the origin of his nature one also derives the kind of nature one has. But this fellow stands in contradiction to himself to the point that he says that souls are God's kindred, not by nature, but by gift, and yet were not made out of nothing, but draw their origin from him. And thus, he has no hesitation to link them once again with the nature of God, though he had previously denied this.

33. We do not forbid people to defend the view that God breathes new souls into human beings without propagation. But this should be done by people able to find something for deciding this question in the canonical books which is not ambiguous or by people able to find something in their own reasonings that is not opposed to the Catholic truth. It should not be done by a person such as this fellow seems to be. He did not find anything to say and was unwilling to call off his investigation. He had no measure of his abilities, and to avoid silence, he dared to say "the soul merited to be defiled through the flesh and merited to be a sinful soul,"⁴³ though he could find no merit in it—either good or bad—before it was in the flesh. He said that "little ones who leave the body without baptism can be released from original sin and that the sacrifice of the

body of Christ should be offered for them," ⁴⁴ though they were not incorporated into Christ through his sacraments in his Church. He said that "those who leave this life without the bath of rebirth attain not only rest, but can even come to the kingdom of heaven." ⁴⁵ He says many other absurd things, but I thought that it would take too long to gather them all and bring them together in this book. Heaven forbid, then, that, if the propagation of souls is false, it should be refuted by such people and that, if the breathing in of new souls is true, it should have such defenders.

34. Hence, whoever wants to defend the view that new souls are breathed in as children are born and that they are not derived from the parents should avoid any of those four positions that I mentioned above. That is, they should not say that God makes souls sinful by the original sin of another. They should not say that little ones who die without baptism can come to eternal life and the kingdom of heaven, with original sin being forgiven by some other means. They should not say that souls sinned elsewhere before being in the flesh and that they merited by that to be thrust into sinful flesh. They should not say that sins which were not found to be in them were correctly punished because they were foreknown, although they were not allowed to come to that point of life where they would commit them. They should, then, say none of these four, because each of them is false and against the faith. They must discover certain testimonies from the scriptures on this question, and then they may defend their view, not merely free from any prohibition on my part, but even with my approval and gratitude. If, however, they do not discover the absolutely certain authority of the words of God on this question and they are driven to maintain one of those four positions for the lack of anything better, they should hold their tongue. Otherwise, they will be forced to say for the lack of anything better that the souls of little ones do not have original sin, as the Pelagian heresy holds—a heresy long deserving condemnation and recently condemned. ⁴⁶ It is, after all, better for persons to admit that they do not know what they do not know than to fall into a heresy already condemned or to found a new one, while rashly daring to defend what they do not know. The other false and absurd statements of this man in which he wanders from the path of truth, though not so dangerously, are many. And if the Lord wills, I intend to write something to him about his books. Perhaps I will there throw light on all those points or, if not on all, at least on most of them.

20, 35. I thought, however, that I should write this book for you rather than for someone else. After all, as a true Catholic and a good friend, you showed concern for our faith and our reputation with both loyalty and good will. You will give it to those to whom you can or to those to whom you judge it should be given in order to be read or to be copied. In it I thought that I should place a bridle on and refute the presumption of this young man in such a way that I showed my love for him. I did not want him to be condemned, but to be corrected

and to make progress *in the great house*, which is the Catholic Church. God's mercy has brought him to it so that he might be in it *a vessel of honor that has been made holy, useful to the Lord, always ready for every good work* (2 Tm 2:20-21), both by living a good life and by teaching sound doctrine. Moreover, if I ought to love him, as I do, how much more ought I love you, my brother, whose good will toward me and whose cautious and sober Catholic faith I know so well! It was for this reason that you took care to have those books copied and sent to me out of brotherly and obviously sincere love, for they offended you and you found my name used in them in a way you did not like. Heaven forbid that I should be angry with you, my friend, because you did this. If you had not done so, I should rather be angry with every right a friend has. And so, I thank you very much. I have clearly shown how I have interpreted your action by the fact that I have written this book for you without any delay as soon as I read those which you sent.

Notes

1. Augustine left Hippo early in April of 419 to be with his dying friend, Bishop Florentinus, at Hippo Diarrhytus. After the funeral, Augustine went to Carthage for the Council of Carthage, which opened on 25 May. He remained in Carthage until late December. See the "Introduction" to the BA edition of *De natura et origine animae* (BA 22, pp. 287-288), as well as O. Perler, *Les voyages de saint Augustin* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1969), pp. 350-360.

2. Augustine is referring especially to his Letter 190, to Optatus, in which he stated that he did not know whether souls were propagated from parents or newly created by God for each individual.

3. Vincent Victor. Though Augustine reports what Vincent Victor holds in indirect discourse, I have followed the CSEL Latin edition in using quotation marks here and elsewhere.

4. The Priscillianists also objected to the idea that the soul was made from nothing, claiming that the will of God was not nothing. This similarity in doctrine may indicate a relationship between the teaching of Vincent Victor's group and Priscillianism. See Orosius' *Memorandum to Augustine on the Errors of the Priscillianists and Origenists* 3.

5. See Gn 2:7.

6. Augustine's conviction that God is absolutely immutable, incorruptible, and inviolable is basic to his view of reality. See *Confessions* VII, 1, 1, for his coming to this insight, which allowed him to reject the Manichaean myth as well as the Manichaean claim that souls are divine by their nature.

7. Vincent Victor.

8. See IV, 17, 25, where Augustine discusses the images seen in dreams and visions which are likenesses of bodies, but not themselves bodies. He claims there that the soul is proved to be non-bodily especially on the basis of such images.

9. Vincent Victor; see II, 7, 11, where Augustine cites the same text and explains the phrase "pristine state."

10. See Rom 9:11, a text which Augustine has come to realize rules out any prenatal sin by which a soul could have merited to be in the body.

11. Vincent Victor; see also II, 8, 12 and III, 10, 11.

12. Vincent Victor.

13. See Rom 11:6.

14. See 2 Chr 19:7 and Rom 9:14.

15. Vincent Victor.

16. Vincent Victor.

17. See Cyprian, Letter 73, 22.

18. See Lk 23:43.

19. See Jn 19:32,34.

20. The doctrine of "limbo" as a place for unbaptized infants did not enter Christian theology until the middle ages in the *Commentaries on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Augustine flatly rejects any doctrine of a middle place for unbaptized infants in the present work, though he had prior to the Pelagian controversy allowed, in *Free Will* III, 23, 66, a middle sentence from their judge between reward and punishment. The third canon of the Council of Carthage (418) explicitly rejected the Pelagian view that infants dying without baptism attained paradise, though not the kingdom of heaven.

21. Vincent Victor had appealed to popular narrative, *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*. For an English translation, see *The Passion of Perpetua*, tr. by Marie-Louise von Franz (Irving, TX: Spring Publications, 1980).

22. The text is problematic. A variant reading would allow: "into condemnation to death." As the text reads, it seems that Augustine thought that the soul of the baptized Dinocrates who died and was condemned was released from punishment at the prayers of his sister.

23. Augustine uses the term "wicked: *impii*," which here refers to any pagans or non-Christians, just as he uses "pious: *pii*" for Christian believers.

24. Vincent Victor.

25. Vincent Victor.

26. See 2 Mc 12:43.

27. See Rom 5:16,18.

28. See Rom 9:11.

29. Vincent Victor.

30. Vincent Victor.

31. Vincent Victor.

32. See Acts 4:31.

33. Vincent Victor.

34. See Rom 11:36.

35. Vincent Victor.

36. Vincent Victor.

37. Vincent Victor.

38. See Rom 11:36.

39. The figure is metonymy. Augustine provides examples in which a part signifies for the whole and others in which a whole signifies a part.

40. See Gn 2:7.

41. The influence of Tertullian seems likely again at this point. See *De anima* 36, 4, where he says, "But the breath of God would have ensouled [her], if the soul was not transferred to the woman, as the flesh was."

42. See *Heresies* V. As Augustine points out, the Arians denied the presence of a human soul in Christ as well as the Apollinarists.

43. Vincent Victor.

44. Vincent Victor.

45. Vincent Victor.

46. Augustine refers to the Council of Carthage in 418.

Book Two: To Peter the Priest

Augustine's Reasons for Writing to Peter

The bishop Augustine sends greetings in the Lord to Peter, his beloved brother and fellow priest.

1. I received the two books which Vincent Victor wrote for Your Holiness; they were sent to me by our brother, Renatus, a layman, but a man with a prudent and religious concern for his own faith and the faith of those whom he loves. When I read them, I discovered a man with a fluency in speech that was not merely up to the mark, but even to the point of overflowing. He was not, however, as yet instructed, as he needed to be, on the topics about which he wanted to speak. But if the Lord should give him this gift, he will be able to be of benefit to many. He has no small amount of ability which allows him to explain and present his ideas attractively, if he would only first make the effort to have correct ones. Errors expressed with eloquence are, of course, very harmful, because uneducated persons think that they are true, just because they are well expressed.

I do not know how you have interpreted those books, but, if what I have heard is true, you jumped for joy when they were read, and you, though an old man and a priest, kissed the head of that young layman, in gratitude for having learned what you had not known. Here I do not find fault with your humility; on the contrary, I praise you for having honored your teacher, not a human being, but the truth who has deigned to speak to you through him,¹ if only you can show me what truth you have received through him. I would like, then, that you inform me in your reply what he has taught you. Heaven forbid, after all, that I should be embarrassed to learn from a priest, if, with praiseworthy and exemplary humility, you were not embarrassed to learn from a layman, if indeed you have learned some truth.

Augustine Explores What Peter Learned from Vincent Victor

2. And so, my dear brother, I desire to know what you have learned from him so that I may rejoice with you, if I already know it, or that I may learn it from you, if I do not know it. Were you unaware that soul and spirit are two distinct realities, according to the words of scripture, *You have separated my soul from my spirit* (Jb 7:15 LXX), and that both of them belong to human nature so that a whole human being is spirit and soul and body? At times, however,

those two are together called by the term, "soul," for example, in the text, *And the man became a living soul* (Gn 2:7), where the spirit is also understood. So too, at times both are referred to by the term, "spirit," as in, *And having bowed his head, he handed over his spirit* (Jn 19:30), where one has to understand the soul as well. Were you unaware that both of them are of one substance? I suspect that you already knew these points. But if you did not know them, you should know that you have not learned something that it is a great danger not to know.

If there are some more subtle points to discuss on this topic, it is better to do so with this man² with whose eloquence we are already familiar. For example, when we speak of the soul in such a way that we understand the spirit as well, are both of them the soul in the sense that the spirit is a part of the soul? Or do we, as he thought, name by this term the whole from the part? Or are both of them the spirit, while it is the part that is properly called the soul? Or is the whole also called by the name of the part here, when we say "spirit," so that the soul is understood as well? This is, after all, what he thinks. But, as I said, these things need subtle discussion, and we can be ignorant of them without danger or certainly without any great danger.

3. So too, I wonder whether he taught you that the body has senses and the soul has other senses. And did you, a man of a venerable age, before hearing this, think that it was one and the same power by which we distinguish white and black—something that sparrows also see along with us—and by which we discern what is righteous and unrighteous—something that Tobit saw, even after he lost the eyes of the flesh? If this is the case, when you heard or read, *Enlighten my eyes so that I never fall asleep in death* (Ps 13:4), you thought only of the eyes of the flesh. Or, if this point is obscure, when you recalled the words of the apostle, *That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened* (Eph 1:18), you believed that we had our heart on our face and above our cheeks. Heaven forbid that I should think that of you; hence, he did not teach you this either.

4. Or, before this man's teaching, which you now rejoice to have discovered, you may have thought that the nature of the soul was to be a piece of God. Then it was clearly a terrible danger for you not to know that this was false. And if you learned from this fellow that the soul is not a piece of God, thank God as much as you can, that you have not left the body before having learned this. After all, you would have left the body as a great heretic and terrible blasphemer! I would, nonetheless, never have dreamed that you, a Catholic and a respected priest, thought that the nature of the soul was to be a piece of God. Hence, I confess this to you, my friend: I fear that this fellow may have taught you something that is opposed to the faith that you held.

3, 5. I do not think that in the Catholic Church you ever believed that the soul is a piece of God or that the soul and God in any sense have the same nature. But I also fear that you may have agreed with this man "that God did not make

the soul out of nothing, but that it comes from him in such a way that it emanates from him.”³ For he uses this word among others, and by using them he has plunged over a huge cliff on this question. If this is what he taught you, I do not want you to teach it to me; quite the contrary, I want you to unlearn what you have learned.

After all, it is not enough not to believe and not to say that the soul is a part of God, for we do not say that the Son or the Holy Spirit is a part of God, and yet we do say that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same nature. It is, then, not enough that we do not say that the soul is a part of God; rather, we also need to say that the soul and God are not of one and the same nature. Hence, that man correctly said that “souls are God’s kindred by gift, not by nature.”⁴ This holds, not for everyone, but for believers. He again returned to the point on which he went astray and said that God and the soul are of the same nature, not in so many words, but with a statement that is perfectly clear. After all, when he says that the soul comes from God in such a way that he did not create it from another nature or from nothing, but from himself, of what is he trying to convince us but what he denies in other words, namely, that the soul is of the same nature as God?

Every nature is either God who has no author or is from God, because it has him as its author. A nature that has God as the author of its being is either uncreated or created. That which is uncreated and yet has being from him is either begotten by him or proceeds from him. That which is begotten is the only Son; that which proceeds is the Holy Spirit. This Trinity is of one and the same nature, for these three are one. Each one alone is God, and all together they are one God, immutable, everlasting, without temporal beginning or end. But that nature which is created is called a creature, while God, its creator, is the Trinity.

A creature, then, is said to come from God in such a way that it is not made out of his nature; after all, it is said to come from him precisely because it has him as the author of its being, not so that it is born from him or proceeds from him, but so that it is created, constituted, made by him. There is a created nature that comes from no other, that is, that comes from absolutely nothing, such as heaven and earth or, rather, all the matter of the whole worldly mass created along with the world.⁵ And there is a created nature that comes from another nature already created and existing, for example, the man from the mud of the earth, the woman from the man, a human being from parents. Every creature, nonetheless, comes from God who creates it either from nothing or from something, but does not beget or produce it out of himself.

6. If I am speaking with a Catholic, I am merely recalling these points rather than teaching them. After all, I do not think that they are new ideas for you or something that you have heard, but not believed. Rather, I think that, in reading this letter of mine, you recognize in it your own faith which, by the gift of God,

we share in the Catholic Church. If, then, as I began to say, I am speaking with a Catholic, where do you believe the soul comes from? I do not mean the soul of each of us, but the first soul given to the first human being. If you believe it comes from nothing and was made and breathed into the human being by God, you believe what I do. But if you believe there was some other creature subject to God's workmanship like some matter and that the soul was made from it, like the dust from which Adam was made, or the rib from which Eve was made, or the waters from which the fish and birds were made, or the earth from which all earthly animals were made,⁶ that is not Catholic, that is not true. But heaven forbid that you think that it was made neither from nothing nor from some other creature, but from God himself, that is, that he made or makes souls from his own nature. If this is what you learned from this fellow, I do not rejoice with you or compliment you. With him you have wandered far from the Catholic faith!

After all, it would be more tolerable—it would be false, as I said, but more tolerable—to believe that the soul was made out of some other creature, which God had already made, than out of the nature of God. For in that case the fact that the soul is mutable, that it sins, that it becomes wicked, that it will, if it remains wicked, be condemned in the end, is at least not attributed to the nature of God in a terrible blasphemy. Reject, my brother, I beg you, reject not this faith, of course, but the error filled with detestable impiety. Otherwise, you will be cut off from the number of the faithful—God keep you from that!—when you suppose that such is the Catholic faith, you an old man and a priest led astray by a young layman!

One should not, after all, deal with you as one would with him, nor does this terrible error of yours, even though you got it from him, deserve the same indulgence as the error of that young man. He has recently entered the Catholic fold to be healed; you are counted among the Catholic shepherds. We do not want a sheep who comes from error to the Lord's flock to be cured in such a way that the sick sheep first destroys the shepherd with deadly contagion.

7. If you say, "That man did not teach me this, nor have I been so charmed by the attractiveness of his well-expressed and eloquent discourse that I in any sense agreed with this error of his," I offer great thanks to God. But I ask why you kissed his head, as is reported, and were grateful for having learned something that you did not know before you heard that man's presentation. Or, if it is not true that you did and said that, I beg you to be so good as to inform us of this so that your letter may refute this empty rumor. If it is true that you thanked the man with such humility, I am content, provided that he did not teach you what I have shown above is something to be detested and shunned.

4. I do not find fault with you for having expressed your thanks to your teacher with such great humility, if there is something else that is true and useful that

you learned from his presentation. But I ask what this is. Is it perhaps that the soul is not a spirit, but a body? I do not consider that a lack of knowledge of these things involves great harm to Christian doctrine.⁷ And if one engages in a subtle discussion on the kinds of bodies, what one learns involves more difficulty than usefulness. If God wills that I write to that young man, as I desire to do, you will perhaps then come to know that he did not teach you this either, even if you rejoice over having learned it from him. I ask you to make the effort to answer what else you might have learned that is clearly useful and necessary for the faith.

8. He holds the perfectly correct and highly salutary belief that souls are judged when they leave their bodies, before they come to that judgment at which they must be judged, after they receive back their bodies, and experience torment or glory in the same flesh in which they lived this life.⁸ Was this the point that you did not know? Who could be so deaf toward the gospel and so obstinate that he does not hear or does not believe this, once he has heard it, in the story of that poor man who was carried to the bosom of Abraham after death and of the rich man who was tormented in hell?

But has he taught you how a soul without a body can desire a drop of water from the finger of the poor man, since he himself has admitted that the soul seeks bodily nourishment only in order to shore up the collapse of its corruptible body? These are his words. "Because the soul," he says, "seeks food or drink, are we to believe that food enters into it?" And a little later he asks, "How does one understand and prove that the sustenance from foods does not pertain to the soul, but to the body, for which we also procure clothing, besides food, for a similar reason? Thus the delivery of nourishment, we see, belongs to the same thing to which the wearing of clothing belongs."⁹ He also illustrated this statement of his, which he expressed quite clearly, with a comparison. He goes on to say, "Why do we suppose that any tenant looks out for his dwelling? If he notices that the roof is shaking or the wall is leaning or that the foundation is slipping, does he not look for supports and assemble materials by which he can diligently and carefully shore it up against the threat of collapse so that the danger to the dwelling does not pose a risk for the inhabitant? In the same way, recognize," he says, "that the soul desires food for its flesh from which it undoubtedly gets this desire."¹⁰ That young man explained these ideas of his in language that is both clear and ample, stating that nourishment is sought, not for the soul, but for the body, though the care of the soul, like an inhabitant in a house, shores up the threatened collapse of the failing flesh by its provident repairs.

Let him also explain this to you. What was it that the soul of the rich man wanted to stop the collapse of? It certainly did not have a mortal body, and yet it was thirsty and asked for a drop of water from the finger of the poor man. This teacher of his elders has something here on which to exercise his ability; let him

seek and find, if he can, why it was that this soul in hell begged for such liquid refreshment, even in so small an amount, since it lacked a dwelling that was falling to ruin.

The Errors of Vincent Victor on the Soul

The First Error: The Nature of the Soul

5. 9. He believes that God is incorporeal, and I congratulate him for having abandoned the ravings of Tertullian, at least on this point. The latter contends that, as the soul, so God is also corporeal.¹¹ Though this fellow disagrees with him on this point, he tries to convince us of even more amazing ideas, such as that the incorporeal God does not create out of nothing, but exhales from himself a corporeal breath. There is a doctrine that will make every age perk up its ears! There is a doctrine that deserves to have people of many years and even priests as its disciples! Let him read out, let him read in the assembly what he has written; let him invite to his reading people who are known and people who are unknown, the learned and the unlearned. Gather together, old and young; learn what you did not know; hear what you have never heard. You see, according to the teaching of this fellow, God creates a breath, not from something else that somehow or other exists and not from what does not exist at all. Rather, from what he himself is, though he is incorporeal, he breathes out a body! He himself, then, changes his own nature into a body, before it undergoes change in the body of sin.

Or does he mean that he does not change something of his own nature, when he produces a breath? In that case he does not make it from himself; after all, he is not one thing and his nature another. Who would hold such a foolish idea? If he says that God makes the breath from his own nature in such a way that he remains whole, that is not what the question is about. The question is whether that which is not made from something else or from nothing is not the same as he is, that is, with the same nature and essence. For, though the Son was generated, the Father remains whole, but because the Father generated him from himself, he did not generate something other than what he himself is. After all, apart from the fact that the Word was made flesh, the Word is an other, but not something else,¹² that is, he is another person, but not a different nature. And why is this? The reason is that he was not created from something else or from nothing, but was born from him, not so that he might become better than he was, but simply so that he might be and might be that which he is from whom he was born.¹³ That is, that he might be of one and the same nature, equal, coeternal, like in every respect, equally immutable, equally invisible, equally incorporeal, equally God, exactly what the Father is, except that he is the Son, not the Father.

But if he holds that God himself remains whole and creates something different and inferior, not from nothing or from something else, but from himself, and that there flows forth from the incorporeal God a body, heaven forbid that a Catholic mind should drink in such a doctrine! It is, after all, not a stream from a divine source, but a fiction of the human heart.

6, 10. How ineptly he struggles to free the soul, which he thinks is corporeal, from any modifications of the body! He discusses the infancy of the soul, the paralysis and blockage of the senses of the soul, and the amputation of members of the body without any cutting of the soul. But I should deal, not with you, but with him, on these questions. He is the one who should sweat over giving an account of his statements so that we do not seem to want to weary a grave old man with the work of a youth. He argues that the likeness in character between children and their parents is not the result of the generation of their soul. It is logical that those who attack the propagation of souls hold this view, but those who defend this position do not rest the case for their claim upon it. After all, they see that children differ from their parents in character, and they suppose that this is possible, because individual human beings often display characters that are quite different, not, of course, because they have received a new soul, but because their lives have improved or deteriorated. Thus they say that it is possible for a soul not to have the character of the soul from which it was propagated, since a single soul can have different characters at different times.

Suppose, then, you believe that you have learned from him that the soul does not come from generation. I wish that you had really learned this from him! I would then gladly entrust myself to you for instruction. But it is one thing to learn something, and it is quite another to think that one has learned something. If, then, you think that you have learned something that you still do not know, you clearly have not learned it. Rather, you have rashly believed what you enjoyed hearing, and a false view has found its way into your mind by reason of its attractiveness. I do not say this, because I am certain that it is false that souls are breathed into human beings as new rather than that they derive their origin from their parents. That is something that I think one must still look for from those who are able to teach it. Rather, I say this, because this fellow has dealt with this topic in such a way that he has not only not solved the question, which still needs to be studied, but in such a way that he said things which are undoubtedly false. For, when he wanted to prove points that were doubtful, he was so bold as to say things that one must certainly reject.

The Second Error: The Preexistence of the Soul

7, 11. Are you going to have any hesitation about rejecting what he says, when he asks regarding the soul, "Do you mean that the soul does not contract

a disease from the sinful flesh, though you see that its sanctification comes to it in turn through the flesh, so that it regains its [good] state through that through which it lost its merit? Or, since the body is washed in baptism, is what we believe is conferred in baptism never transferred to the soul or spirit? It is right, then, that it recovers through the flesh its pristine state which it had seemed to have lost for a little while through the flesh, so that it might begin to be reborn through that through which it had merited to be defiled.”¹⁴

Notice how much this teacher of yours has erred in these words! He said that the soul recovers its [good] state through the flesh through which it had lost its merit. The soul, then, had some good state and merit before being in the flesh, and he wants it to recover this through the flesh, when the flesh is washed by the bath of rebirth. Therefore, it lived somewhere before being in the flesh in a good state and merit, and it lost this state and this merit, when it entered the flesh. He said that “it recovers through the flesh its pristine state, which it had seemed to have lost for a little while through the flesh.” It had, then, before being in the flesh a previous state—that is what “pristine” means, and what sort of state could it have been but a blessed and praiseworthy one? He claimed that it is recovered through the sacrament of baptism, although he does not want the soul, which, it is clear, was once happy in paradise, to derive its origin through propagation.

How then can he say in another passage that “he constantly claims that the soul comes, neither by generation nor from nothing and that it exists neither by itself nor before union with the body.”¹⁵ See, in this passage he wants souls to live somewhere else before union with the body in so happy a manner that the same blessedness is restored to them through baptism. And then he forgets himself again and goes on to say, “so that it might begin to be reborn through that,” that is, the flesh, “through which it had merited to be defiled.” Above he had indicated that it had lost some good merit through the flesh, but now he indicates that it is some bad merit as a result of which it comes or is sent into the flesh, when he says, “through which it had merited to be defiled.” After all, if it merited to be defiled, it is certainly not good merit. Let him say how it sinned before it was defiled through the flesh so that it merited to be defiled through the flesh. Let him say this, if he can—and he cannot, because he cannot at this point find anything at all to say that is true.

The Third Error: No Merit before Union with the Body

8. 12. So too, he says a little later, “If, then, the soul, which could not be sinful, merited to be sinful, it did not, nonetheless, remain in sin, because, having been prefigured in Christ, it ought not to be in sin, just as it could not be.”¹⁶ My brother, you have at least read and considered these statements afterwards, and you thought about what you praised in their reader and why you gave thanks

after they were read. So, I ask you, what do you think this means: "If, then, the soul, which could not be sinful, merited to be sinful"? What do "merited" and "could not" mean? For it could not merit this, if it had not been sinful, but it would not have been sinful, unless it were possible that it sinned before any bad merit and, thereby, produced some merit for itself as a result of which it went on to other sins, once the Lord abandoned it.

Or did he say, "which could not be sinful," because it could not be sinful, unless it entered the flesh? How, then, did it merit to be sent to a place where it could be sinful, since, if it had not come there, it could not be sinful anywhere else? Let him tell us; how did it merit this? After all, if it merited to be sinful, it had already sinned in some way as a result of which it merited to be sinful. But if it had not sinned at all, how did it merit to be sinful? Perhaps these questions seem obscure, or people claim they are obscure, though they are perfectly clear. After all, he ought not to say that the soul merited to be sinful through the flesh, when he could find no merit of the soul, either good or bad, before it was in the flesh.

Errors Regarding Little Ones Dying without Baptism

The First Error: Their Predestination

9, 13. But let us come to points which are more obvious. After all, he was caught in great difficulties about how souls are held subject to the bond of original sin, if they do not derive their origin from that soul which first sinned, but God breathes them into the sinful flesh free from every contagion and propagation of sin. He did not want to be told that God made them guilty by breathing them into the flesh in that way. Hence, he first tried to bolster his opinion from God's foreknowledge, claiming that he had prepared a redemption for them. In the sacrament of this redemption, little ones are baptized so that original sin which they contracted from the flesh is washed away. It is as if God corrected what he had done, since he made those innocent souls to be defiled.

Later he came to speak about those who were not rescued by such a help and died before they were baptized. He said, "On this topic I do not offer myself as an authority, but I draw a conjecture from an example. We say that one must give an account of this sort with regard to infants who, having been predestined for the baptism of the present life, are overtaken by death, before they are reborn in Christ. After all, we read in scripture," he says, "*He was taken away so that evil would not change his mind or falsehood deceive his soul. For this reason, he made haste to remove him from the midst of iniquity, for his soul was pleasing to God* (Wis 4:11.14), and *Having attained perfection in a short time, he completed a long life*" (Wis 4:13).

Who is going to stoop so far as to have this fellow as his teacher? People generally want little ones to be baptized, but at times, despite their rush, the little ones die before baptism. But does it follow that, if they had remained in this life a little longer and died immediately after baptism, evil would change their minds and falsehood deceive their souls? Does it follow that, lest this happen to them, they were rescued and were taken away before they were baptized? They would, then, be changed for the worse in baptism itself, and they would be deceived by falsehood, if they were taken away after baptism. Is this a doctrine worthy of admiration and deserving to be followed? Rather, it ought to be detested and held as accursed!

When he read this, he counted on the prudence of you who were present and especially on the prudence of you for whom he wrote and to whom he presented the books he read. He was confident that you would not believe that scripture said of unbaptized infants what it said of all the saints who die at an early age. The foolish suppose that they were ill-treated, if they were taken from this life early and were not able to attain the years which human beings desire for themselves as a great gift of God.

What does it mean to say that infants predestined for the baptism of this life are overtaken by death, before they are reborn in Christ? It sounds as though some power of fortune or of fate or of something else does not permit God to carry out what he has predestined. And how is it that he takes them away, since they were pleasing to him? Or does he predestine them to be baptized, though he himself does not permit that what he has predestined come about?

The Second Error: Their Admission to Paradise

10, 14. Pay attention to what else this fellow dares to say; amid the great depth of this question, he is displeased with our hesitation, which contains more caution than knowledge. He says, "I would venture to say that these infants can attain pardon of their original sins, not, however, that they are brought into the heavenly kingdom. In the same way, the Lord granted, not the kingdom of heaven, but paradise, to the thief who confessed his faith in Christ,¹⁷ but was not baptized. After all, the statement of scripture stands, *Anyone who has not been reborn of water and the Holy Spirit will not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Jn 3:5), especially since the Lord said that there are many dwellings in his Father's presence,¹⁸ which correspond to the many different merits of those who dwell there. Thus, someone unbaptized is brought there for pardon, while someone baptized is brought to the reward which was prepared through grace."¹⁹ You see that this man separates paradise and the dwellings which are in the Father's presence from the kingdom of heaven so that even the unbaptized have an abundance of places of endless happiness. He does not see, when he

says this, that, while he refuses to separate the dwelling of any baptized little one from the kingdom of heaven, he is not afraid to separate the house of God the Father or some parts of it from that kingdom. After all, the Lord Jesus did not say that there were many dwellings in the universe of creatures or in some part of the universe, but said, *In my Father's house there are many dwellings* (Jn 14:2). How, then, can someone unbaptized be in the house of God the Father, when only one who has been reborn can have God as Father? Let him not be ungrateful to God who has deigned to set him free from the schism of the Donatists or Rogatists so that he tries to divide the very house of God the Father and put a part of it outside the kingdom of heaven where the unbaptized can dwell.²⁰ With what right does he presume that he will enter the kingdom of heaven, when he excludes from that kingdom the house of the king to the extent that he wants?

He argues on the basis of the thief who was crucified next to the Lord and placed his hope in the Lord, even when he was crucified, and of Dinocrates, the brother of Saint Perpetua, that even unbaptized persons can receive pardon for their sins and some place of beatitude. He argues as if someone, whom it would be unthinkable not to believe, had indicated to him that they were not baptized. I explained quite amply what I thought on this topic in the book which I wrote for our brother, Renatus.²¹ You will be able to learn this, if you do not refuse to read it, for he will not refuse you, if you ask him.

The Third Error: The Sacrifice Offered for the Unbaptized

11, 15. This fellow is, nonetheless, getting hot under the collar and is being choked by terrible difficulties. Perhaps he is more aware than you are how wrong he is in saying that apart from Christ's baptism original sin can be removed in little ones. Then, in order at least to some extent to have recourse in this matter, although belatedly, to the sacraments of the Church, he says, "I decree that constant oblations and the sacrifices of the holy priests should be continually offered for them."²² Take this man, if you prefer, as a source of decrees, if it was not enough to have him as a source of teaching. Then, you will be able to offer the sacrifice of the body of Christ even for those who are not incorporated into Christ. Though he has dared to insert in his books something so novel and so foreign to the practice of the Church and the rule of truth, he does not say, "I suppose"; he does not say, "I think"; he does not say, "I judge"; nor does he say, "I suggest" or "I say," but "I decree." Thus, if we should be offended by the novelty or wrongness of the view, we would be brought into line by the authority of the decree.

You must see to it, my brother, how you can put up with this fellow as your teacher. Heaven forbid that Catholic priests, who know what sound doctrine is

and with whom you ought to be allied, should agree to listen to his decree. They should, rather, desire to see that he comes back to his senses, grieves over having held such ideas and having even put them in writing, and repents with salutary correction. He says, "I maintain that one should do this, following the example of the Maccabees who fell in battle."²³ They secretly took some forbidden objects and fell in the battle. We find," he says, "that the priests adopted this plan that the offering of sacrifices should restore to purity the souls of those who were bound by guilt from the forbidden act."²⁴ He says this as though he read in scripture that sacrifices were offered for the uncircumcised, just as he decreed that these sacrifices of ours be offered for the unbaptized. Circumcision was, of course, the sacrament of that era which prefigured the baptism of ours.

The Fourth Error: Their Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven

12, 16. Nonetheless, in comparison with how he later appears, he at this point makes a more tolerable mistake. For he went on, it seems, to regret—not what he should have regretted, namely, that he dared to claim that the unbaptized were released from original sin and were pardoned all their sins so that they are sent to paradise, that is, to a place of great happiness, and that they might merit to have blessed dwellings in the house of God the Father. Rather, he regretted that he had granted them a place of lesser happiness outside the kingdom of heaven. He went on to add, "Someone may object to the idea that in the meanwhile paradise was temporarily granted to the soul of the thief or of Dinocrates. For the reward of the kingdom of heaven still remains for them at the resurrection, although the statement of our Prince is against it, *Anyone who has not been reborn of water and the Holy Spirit will not enter the kingdom of heaven* (Jn 3:5). One should also recognize that my approval for this side is an indication that I am not envious, but one must expand the effects of God's mercy and foreknowledge as well as the love involved in it."²⁵ I have copied these words from his second book. Could anyone have an audacity, a rashness, and a presumption that included more error in this matter? He calls to mind the Lord's statement; he quotes it; he inserts it in his writings; he says, "Although the statement of our Prince is against it, that *anyone who has not been reborn of water and the Holy Spirit will not enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Jn 3:5). And yet he dares by his decree to stand up against the statement of the Prince! He says, "One should recognize that my approval is an indication that I am not envious," when I say that the souls of the unbaptized merit paradise. It is on their account that he mentions the thief and Dinocrates, as though to forestall or rather to prejudice the question. But at the resurrection they pass to a better state and receive the reward of the kingdom of heaven, "although the statement of our Prince is against it." Now, my brother, I beg you, consider what sentence

he will earn who gives his assent to anyone against the authority of the statement of the Prince.

17. The authority of Catholic councils and of the Apostolic See has with full justice condemned the new Pelagian heretics, because they dared to grant to unbaptized little ones a place of rest and salvation even apart from the kingdom of heaven.²⁶ They would not have dared to do this, if they did not deny that they had original sin which needed to be removed by the sacrament of baptism. But this fellow, as a Catholic, holds that little ones are bound by original sin. And yet, he releases them from this bondage without the bath of rebirth. After death he mercifully sends them to paradise, and with even greater mercy he brings them into the kingdom of heaven after the resurrection. Saul thought that he was a merciful person of this sort when he spared the king whom God ordered slain.²⁷ But his disobedient mercy or merciful disobedience was rightly rejected and condemned so that human beings would not try to merit mercy from him contrary to the decision of their maker.

The Truth proclaims from the lips of his own body, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:5). And to make the martyrs, who are slain for the name of Christ before they are washed by the baptism of Christ, exceptions to this statement, he said in another place, *Those who lose their lives for my sake will find them* (Mt 10:39). And the apostle cries out, *The sin of the one led to the condemnation of all human beings* (Rom 5:18), so that no one who has not been reborn by the bath of Christian faith is promised the removal of original sin. The Lord showed that there is one help toward salvation against this condemnation. He said, *Those who believe and are baptized will be saved, but those who do not believe will be condemned* (Mk 16:16). This mystery of belief is carried out in the case of little ones by the responses of their sponsors so that they do not face condemnation on account of that one, if this is not done. And, nonetheless, against such clear words voiced by the truth, vanity steps forth with a heart full of folly rather than of mercy and says, "Not only do little ones not enter into condemnation, even if no bath of Christian faith frees them from the bond of original sin, but they even enjoy the happiness of paradise for a time after death, and after the resurrection they will possess even the happiness of the kingdom of heaven."²⁸ Would this fellow dare to speak this way against most solidly founded Catholic faith, if he did not dare to undertake the solution of the question of the origin of souls which exceeds his abilities?

The Core of the Dispute: The Origin of Souls

13, 18. He is pressed with terrible difficulties from those who ask, "Why has God punished the soul with such an unjust treatment that he chose to assign it

to the body of sin, when it begins to be sinful by its association with the flesh, though it could not be sinful?"²⁹ They, of course, mean that the soul could not be sinful, if God had not mingled it and associated it with sinful flesh. This fellow could not discover how God did this with any sort of justice, especially on account of the eternal damnation of little ones who, because they die without baptism, have not had original sin removed. Why, then, did the just and good God make the souls of the little ones subject to the bond of original sin, when he foreknew the sacrament of Christian grace would not rescue them? Why did he send these souls that were free from every stain of generation into a body that is derived from Adam and in that way make them deserving of eternal damnation?

This fellow could not discover an answer to this and did not want to say that the souls derived their sinful origin from that one soul. He preferred to get out of the difficulty through suffering a wretched shipwreck rather than through controlling his rash course by dropping the sails and raising the oars of his argument in prudent deliberation. My old man's hesitation held no appeal to the youth; it was as though this extremely troublesome and dangerous question needed a burst of eloquence rather than the counsel of prudence. He himself foresaw this, although to no purpose, for he set forth these ideas as if they were objections from opponents. "As a result," he said, "other charges are added to the complaints and grumblings of those who carp at us, and we are at times struck by a storm and hurled between huge rocks."³⁰ Having made this opening statement, he raised for himself the craggy question just mentioned. He suffered shipwreck on it from the Catholic faith, unless he has repaired what he damaged by repentance.

I myself have skirted that storm and those rocks, unwilling to risk my ship to them, and I wrote on this topic to reveal the grounds of my hesitation rather than any rash presumption.³¹ When he found this small work of mine at your home, he mocked it and thrust himself onto these rocky cliffs with a burst that was more spirited than wise. I think that you now see where this overconfidence of his has brought him; I thank God even more, if you saw it before. Since he was unwilling to check his impetuous course because of its doubtful outcome, he made a wretched landing, claiming that God now gives paradise and later gives the kingdom of heaven to little ones who have died without Christian rebirth.

His Scriptural Proofs Are Inadequate

14, 19. The testimonies from the scriptures he cited by which he tried to prove that God did not derive souls by propagation from that first soul, but that he breathed individual souls into each individual, as he did that first soul, are

uncertain and ambiguous insofar as they are relevant to this question, and thus they can easily be interpreted otherwise than he wants. I have already shown this in that book which I wrote to our friend, whom I mentioned above.³² The testimonies that he used in which we read that God gives or makes or forms souls do not reveal how he gives them or makes them or forms them, whether by propagation from that first soul or by breathing them in as he did with that first soul.³³ Because he reads that God gives or makes or forms souls, this fellow thinks that propagation of souls has been denied, though by the testimony of the same scripture, God also gives or makes or forms bodies, and no one has any doubt that they are given, made, or formed by him through propagation by the seed.

20. So too, we have the statement of scripture that God made the whole human race *from one blood* (Acts 17:26) and Adam's statement, *Now this is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh* (Gn 2:23). Because the former text did not say, "from one soul," and the latter did not say, "soul from my soul," he supposes that it denies that the souls of children come from their parents or that the soul of the woman came from the man. He implies that, if it did not say, *from one blood*, but "from one soul," we should understand by it something other than the whole human being, but still not reject the body's being propagated. So too, if Adam had said, "soul from my soul," he would not have excluded the flesh, which was clearly taken from him. After all, scripture often designates a whole by its part and a part by its whole.

Surely, if that passage of scripture from which this fellow drew his testimony said that the human race took its beginning, not *from one blood*, but from one human being, it would not prejudice the case against those who deny the propagation of souls, although a human being is not the soul alone or the body alone, but both of them. After all, they would reply that scripture could have referred to the part by means of the whole, that is, to human flesh alone by "human being." In the same way, those who defend the propagation of souls claim with regard to the phrase, *from one blood*, that whole was referred to by means of the part, that is, the human being by means of the blood.

After all, as the words, *from one blood*, where scripture does not say, "from one human being," seem to help the one side, so it seems to help the other side when scripture says, *Through one human being sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus it was passed on to all human beings, in whom all have sinned* (Rom 5:12), for it does not say, "in whom the flesh of all has sinned." So too, as it seems to help the one side, when it says, *Now this is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh* (Gn 2:23), because it mentions the part, not the whole, so what immediately follows, *She will be called "woman," because she was taken from her man* (Gn 2:24), seems to help the other side. They claim that it ought to have said that her flesh was taken from the man, if

it was not the whole woman, that is, including the soul, but only the flesh that was taken from the man.

Furthermore, after both sides have been heard, an impartial judge certainly sees that one should not urge against those who defend the propagation of souls those testimonies which mention the part, because scripture could refer to the whole by means of a part. For instance, when we read, *The Word was made flesh* (Jn 1:14), we certainly do not understand there the flesh alone, but the whole man. Nor should one urge against those who attack the propagation of souls those testimonies which mention, not a part, but the whole human being, because scripture could in these cases refer to the part by means of the whole. In that way we confess that Christ was buried, though only his flesh was buried. For such reasons we state that one should neither rashly defend nor rashly attack the propagation of souls; rather, we advise you that other testimonies must be sought that will not be found to be ambiguous.

15, 21. For these reasons, I still do not know what this fellow could have taught you or why you were grateful to him. The question about the origin of souls stands as it was. Whether God derives them by propagation from that one soul which he breathed into the first human being or whether he gives them, makes them, or forms them for human beings out of his breath, as he did for the first human being, the Christian faith has no doubt that he gives, makes, or forms them. This fellow tried to solve that question and failed to consider his own abilities. He attacked the propagation of souls and claimed that the creator breathed them into human beings free from all contagion of sin, not making them out of nothing, but out of himself. Thus, he brought dishonor to the nature of God by the accusation that he was subject to change—something that was quite uncalled for.

When he wanted to give a reason why God should not be believed unjust, if he enclosed in the bonds of original sin souls free from all sin, even those which he does not redeem by Christian rebirth, he said those things which I wish he had not taught you. For he conceded so much salvation and happiness to unbaptized little ones that even the Pelagian heresy was unable to do as much. I have not, nonetheless, discovered what he would say about so many thousands of little ones who are born of unbelieving parents and die among unbelievers. I do not mean those whom human beings are unable to rescue through baptism, if they should want to, but those whom no one could baptize or could think of baptizing and for whom no one has offered or is going to offer the sacrifice, which this fellow thinks should be offered for the unbaptized.

Suppose he were asked with regard to these what their souls merited that God placed them in sinful flesh, since they were not going to be washed by baptism or reconciled by the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, but were going to be damned for eternity. Either he will be completely stymied and will, though

belatedly, find our hesitation attractive, or he will decree that the body of Christ should be also offered for all the little ones who die without Christian baptism everywhere in the world, even though their names are not mentioned, since they are not known in the Church of Christ, because they were not incorporated into the body of Christ.

The Conclusion

16, 22. Heaven forbid, my brother, that you find these ideas attractive or that you rejoice over learning them or presume to teach them. Otherwise, he will be found to be far better off than you, since in the beginning of his first book he began with the modest and humble preface, in which he said, "In my desire to obey you, I have been accused of presumption." And a little later he said, "Since I am not confident that what I have said can be proved and since I do not always insist on defending even my own opinion, if I am shown that it cannot be proved, my heart is ready to reject my own judgment and to follow views of greater value and truth. In fact, as it is a sign of an excellent choice and praiseworthy intention to be easily won over to views with greater truth, so it is a mark of a bad and stubborn judgment not to be willing to turn more quickly back to the path of reason." ³⁴ If he said this with sincerity and his thoughts corresponded to what he said, he certainly has a mind of great promise. Likewise, at the end of the second book, he said, "Do not suppose that I left it in your power to judge what I said to turn aside your hostility. And so that some traces of the letters remaining in the defective sections may not trouble and offend the gaze of some curious reader, strictly censor the whole work line by line. And, while I hold myself apart from this assessment, impose the proper penalty upon ink marks that have expressed incorrect ideas, lest this be an occasion for ridiculing your judgment as too indulgent in my regard or my mistakes which are hidden there." ³⁵

17, 23. He has fortified his books with that preface and protected them with this conclusion at the end, and he has placed on your shoulders the religious task of his correction and improvement. May he find from you what he is looking for so that you improve and rebuke him with justice and mercy. But let the oil of the sinner which anoints his head be far from your hands and lips;³⁶ I mean by that the improper agreement of a fawner and the deceptive mildness of a flatterer. If you are negligent in correcting him when you see he needs correction, your action goes against love, but if you think that he does not need to be corrected, because you suppose that these views of his are correct, your thought goes against the truth. Then he who is quite ready to be corrected, if there were only someone to correct him, would be better off than you, if, having knowledge, you contemptuously look down upon him in his error or if, lacking knowledge,

you follow the same error along with him. Therefore, consider with sobriety and vigilance all the things in those books written for you and entrusted to you, and you may well find more items to find fault with than I have. As for whatever he said in them that deserves approval and praise, if there really was some point in them that you did not know and learned from his presentation, clearly state what it is so that everyone may know that you were grateful to him for it and not for the many things in them that deserve to be blamed. I mean those people who listened to him with you, when he gave his reading, or who will read those same books afterward. I fear that, at your invitation, they will drink poison from his polished eloquence as from a precious cup, even if you yourself do not drink it, if they do not know what you drink or do not drink from it. I fear that, on account of your praise, they may think that everything in them can be drunk in good health. After all, what is it to hear and read and draw from memory what has been said but to drink? The Lord told those who would believe in him that *If they drink something deadly, it will not harm them* (Mk 16:18). Accordingly, those who read with judgment and approve what deserves to be approved and reject what deserves to be rejected in accord with the rule of faith, even if they should commit to memory some statements which deserve to be rejected, will not be harmed by any poison from such twisted ideas. If God is merciful, I will not regret having admonished or warned a man of your gravity and religion on these points, whether in return for or in anticipation of your love, however you interpret this effort which I thought I should offer you. I will certainly offer abundant thanks to him, in whose mercy it is most salutary to place our confidence, if this letter either finds your faith, or makes your faith, whole and free from the distortions and errors which I was able to point out in the books of this man.

Notes

1. Augustine alludes to one of his favorite themes, namely, that there is but one teacher, Christ. See *The Teacher* 14, 46.

2. That is, with Vincent Victor, as Augustine does in the next two books of this work.

3. Vincent Victor.

4. Vincent Victor.

5. For Augustine's doctrine of matter, see *Confessions* XII, 3, 3. Augustine found the existence of formless matter implied in the first verses of Genesis and explicitly affirmed in Wis 11:18. In *Confessions* XII, 29, 40, he explains that matter is not temporally prior to form, but has a priority to form analogous to the priority of sounds to a melody. A melody is made out of sounds, though the sounds are not temporally prior to the melody.

6. See Gn 2:7, 22 and 1:20-25.

7. Though Augustine himself was certain that the human soul is incorporeal or spiritual, he was well aware that one did not need such a concept of the soul to be a Christian. Augustine himself had struggled for many years to be able to conceive of an incorporeal reality, as he reports in the *Confessions*; see, for example, *Confessions* V, 10, 19-20, V, 14, 25, and VII, 1, 1. But he was well

aware that "the little ones" in the Catholic Church were quite unable to rise up to the spiritual understanding of God and the soul which he had attained from reading the books of the Platonists; see, for example, *Confessions* VI, 3, 4-4, 5, for Augustine's discovery that the spiritual persons in the Catholic Church did not hold the anthropomorphic view of God that he had believed they held.

8. Augustine clearly distinguishes two judgments: the judgment immediately following death which has come to be called the particular judgment, and the judgment that will take place after the resurrection of the body, namely, the general judgment.

9. Vincent Victor.

10. Vincent Victor.

11. See *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* X, 15, 41, where Augustine attributes to Tertullian the doctrine that both God and the soul are bodily. See Tertullian, *De anima* 7, for the corporeality of the soul; see *Adversus Praxean* 7, 8, for Tertullian's claim that God is a body, even though he is a spirit.

12. The Latin distinction between "*alius . . . sed non . . . aliud*: an other, but not something else," appears in the Creed of the XVIth Council of Toledo in 693.

13. Augustine contrasts the natural sonship of the Son with the adoptive sonship of human beings. Our becoming children of God involves our becoming something better than we had been; the Son, however, did not first exist and then become the Son of the Father.

14. Vincent Victor; see also I, 6, 6 and III, 7, 9 and 10.

15. Vincent Victor.

16. Vincent Victor; see also I, 8, 8.

17. See Lk 23:43.

18. See Jn 14:2.

19. Vincent Victor.

20. Augustine refers to the Donatists or Rogatists as a schism (*divisio*) and then warns against "dividing" the house of God by putting part of it outside the kingdom of heaven.

21. See I, 9, 11-10, 12.

22. Vincent Victor.

23. See 2 Mc 12:39-46.

24. Vincent Victor.

25. Vincent Victor.

26. The third canon of the Council of Carthage in 418 ruled out the interpretation of Jn 14:2 as implying a place of happiness for unbaptized infants in the kingdom of heaven or anywhere else.

27. See 1 Sm 15.

28. Vincent Victor.

29. An objection to the position of Vincent Victor which he presumably mentioned in his books.

30. Vincent Victor.

31. Augustine refers to Letter 190 which triggered Vincent Victor's two books.

32. Augustine refers to Book I, which was written for Renatus.

33. See I, 14, 17-16, 26.

34. Vincent Victor.

35. Vincent Victor.

36. See Ps 141:5.

Book Three: To Vincent Victor

Augustine Urges Vincent Victor to Be a True Catholic

1, 1. The fact that I thought that I should write directly to you is something that I want you, my dear son, Victor, to bear in mind from the start. I would never have done that, if I held you in contempt. Yet, do not on that account misinterpret our humility and suppose that you have our approval, just because you see that we do not hold you in contempt. I love you, not as a man who should be followed, but as one who needs to be corrected. And since I do not give up hope that you can be corrected, do not be surprised that I cannot hold someone I love in contempt. After all, if I ought to have loved you, before you entered into communion with us, with the desire that you become a Catholic, how much more ought I to love you, now that you are in communion with us, with the desire that you may not be a new heretic, but that you may be a Catholic whom no heretic can stand up to. As is apparent from the gifts of mind that God has already bestowed on you, you will surely become a wise man. But you must not believe that you already are one. Rather, you must piously, humbly, and persistently ask him who makes human beings wise that you may be wise, and you must want to avoid being deceived by error more than being honored with the praise of men who are in error.¹

2, 2. Your name in the title of your books first aroused my interest in you. For, when I asked those who had known you and happened to be present who Vincent Victor was, I heard that you had been a Donatist, or rather a Rogatist, but had recently entered into communion with the Catholic Church. I rejoiced, as we usually do over people we know who have been set free from that error; in fact, I rejoiced much more, because I saw that a man with the sort of talents that pleased me in your writings had not remained among the opponents of the truth.

My informants added a point which saddened me amid all those joys, namely, that you wanted to bear the name, Vincent, because you still consider the successor of Rogatus, who bore that name, to be a great and holy man. There were even some who said that you had boasted that he appeared to you in some sort of vision and helped you to compose these books about which I have undertaken to deal with you in this modest work of ours. They said that you claimed that he himself dictated what you should write with regard to the subject matter and the arguments. If that is true, I am not surprised that you were able to say those things which you will undoubtedly regret having said, if you listen

to my admonition with patience and examine and review those books with the mind of a Catholic. For the one whom the apostle has denounced, because he *transforms himself into an angel of light* (2 Cor 11:14), has transformed himself into that man whom you regard as having been or as being an angel of light. At least, he is less able to deceive Catholics in this way, when he transforms himself, not into angels of light, but into heretics. I do not want you to be deceived by him, now that you are a Catholic. He will, therefore, be pained that you have learned the truth in proportion to his previous joy that he had convinced you of what is false!

You should not love someone who is dead, when love for him can harm you and cannot help him. I advise you to consider this brief idea. He is certainly not someone holy and righteous, if it was from the snares of heretical Donatists, or rather Rogatists, that you escaped; on the other hand, if you consider him holy and righteous, you met destruction in entering into communion with the Catholics. You are merely pretending to be Catholic, if at heart you are what that man was whom you love. And you know the frightening words of scripture that *the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from someone insincere* (Wis 1:5). But if you are sincerely in communion with us and are not merely pretending to be Catholic, why do you still love this dead heretic to the point that you want to take pride in bearing his name, though you are no longer trapped in his error? We do not want you to have the sort of name that will make you the tombstone commemorating a dead heretic. We do not want your book to have an inscription which we would call false, if we read it upon his tomb. After all, we know that Vincent was not a victor, but a man who was defeated. Would that he had been defeated to his benefit, as we want you to be defeated by the truth!

People suppose that you acted shrewdly and cleverly when you put the name of Vincent Victor on those books of yours, which you want us to believe were dictated under his revelation to you. They suppose that you did not want so much to have the name Vincent for yourself as that he might have the name Victor, as if, in revealing to you what to write, he had overcome his error. What good is there in that, my son? Be a true Catholic instead, not a Catholic by pretense. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit will flee from you, and Vincent, into whom the spirit of all evil has transformed himself in order to deceive you, will be unable to help you in any way. For, whatever deceit he used to convince you, those errors stem from that spirit.

If, after being admonished, you correct these errors in the humility and the peace of the Catholic Church, they will be judged to be the errors of a young man with a strong desire to be corrected rather than of one who wants to remain in them. But if—heaven forbid!—he has persuaded you to defend them with stubbornness, they will have to be condemned as heretical doctrines along with their author. The charge I have as a pastor and physician of souls demands this,

before the deadly contagion spreads through the trusting people, while salutary discipline goes by the board in the name of love, but not out of genuine love.

Eleven Errors To Be Corrected by Vincent Victor

3. 3. If you want to know what those errors are, you can, of course, read what I have written to our brothers, Renatus, the servant of God, and Peter, the priest, for whom you thought that you should write those very works we are discussing, as you said, "In obedience to the desire of the one who asked for them."² They will certainly give them to you to read if you want them, and they will push them upon you, even if you do not ask for them. I will, nonetheless, not pass over in silence even here the points which I especially want you to correct in those same books and in your faith.

The First Error: God Made the Soul out of Himself

The first error is that you refuse to hold that the soul was made by God in such a way that he made it out of nothing, but hold that he made it out of himself.³ Here you do not think that it follows that its nature is the same as God's, since you clearly recognize the wrongness of saying that. But to avoid that error, you must say that God is the author of the soul in such a way that it was made by him, not from him. For what is from him—for example, his only-begotten Son—has the same nature as he does. The soul was, of course, made by him, not from him, so that it does not have the same nature as God. Either then state from what it was made, or say that it was made from nothing.

What do you mean when you say, "it is a certain particle of the breath of God's nature"?⁴ Are you going to deny that the breath of God's nature, to which breath this particle belongs, has the same nature as God? If you deny this, then God also made from nothing this breath, the breath of which you would have the soul to be a particle. But if he did not make it from nothing, tell us from what God made it. If he made it out of himself, then he himself—heaven forbid!—is the matter of his product. You say, "When he makes the breath or exhalation from himself, he himself remains whole."⁵ As if the flame of a lamp does not remain whole, when another is lighted from it! And the flame has, nonetheless, the same, not a different nature.

4. 4. "But," you say, "when we inflate a bag, it is not a portion of our nature or quality⁶ that is poured into it, for the extension of the filled bag by reason of the air drawn into it is brought about without any lessening of us."⁷ You add still more to these words, and you delay over and stress the comparison as if we needed it to understand how God makes the soul from himself and without any loss to his nature and how, though the soul is made from him, it is not the same

nature as he is. This is, in fact, what you say: "Is it a piece of our soul that is blown into the bag? Or do we produce human beings when we inflate bags?⁸ Do we suffer some loss to ourselves when we exhale in different directions? We do not suffer any loss when we make our breath pass from us into something else. Since the quality of our own breath remains complete in us and its quantity remains whole, we do not recall feeling any loss from the inflation of the bag."⁹

Now pay attention to how badly you are misled by this comparison, which you suppose is quite elegant and apropos. You claim that God who is incorporeal breathes forth from himself a corporeal soul which he has not made from nothing, while we send forth a breath that is corporeal, even if more subtle than our bodies. And yet, we do not exhale the breath from our soul, but from this air within the interior of our bodies. For, as the other members of the body are moved by a sign from the soul, so the soul moves the lungs like bellows for drawing in and expelling this airy breath. After all, apart from solid and liquid nourishments which are our food and drink, God has poured out around us this third nourishment of air. We take these in so that we can exist for a long time without food and drink, but we cannot live even for a short span of time without this third nourishment which the surrounding air provides us as we breath in and out. We must not only take in food and drink, but we must also expel it by the channels made for this purpose so that we do not suffer harm in either way, either by not taking them in or by not expelling them. So too, since this third airy nourishment cannot remain in us and is not consumed by staying in us, but expelled as soon as it is taken in, it has the same paths, not different ones, by which it enters and exits, namely, the mouth and nose or both of these.

5. Test for yourself what I am saying in your own person. Expel your breath by breathing out and see whether you survive without taking air in. Take a breath and see what discomfort you suffer if you do not let it go. We do the same thing when we, in your example, inflate a bag, as we do in order to live, except that in the former case we draw in a bit more so that we can breath out a bit more. Thus we force the breath we breathe, that is, the air, to fill and extend the bag, not by gently breathing in and out, but by blowing vigorously. How, then, can you say, "We do not suffer any loss when we make our breath pass from us into something else. Since the quality of our own breath remains complete in us and its quantity remains whole, we do not recall feeling any loss from the inflation of the bag."¹⁰ It is clear, my son, that you have not paid attention to what you did, if you ever inflated a bag. You do not feel what you lose by breathing out since you immediately take another breath. But you can easily learn this lesson, if you prefer learning to defending what you said, simply because it is what you said. As it is, you do not inflate a bag, but you are yourself inflated, and with the empty noise of your windy talk you inflate your listeners, whom you ought to build up with the truth.

For this matter I am not sending you to any teacher but yourself. Breathe into a bag, and immediately close your mouth and hold your nose; in that way at least, experience that what I say is true. For when you begin to suffer unbearable discomfort, what is it that you desire to take in with open mouth and nose, if you think that, when you breathed out, you lost nothing? See what pain you are in, if you do not take in by inhaling what you gave up by exhaling. See what losses and injuries that exhaling would have produced, if inhaling had not undone them. For, unless what you used to fill the bag returns to nourish you, once the pathway has been opened, what will you have left, not only in order to be able to inflate the bag, but in order to be able to live?

6. These are the things you ought to consider when you write rather than to suggest to us by this comparison with bags that are inflated or are to be inflated that God breathes forth souls from some other nature already existing, as we produce a breath from the air that surrounds us. You certainly ought not to say—and this point is something both incompatible with this comparison and full of impiety—that, without any loss to himself, but still from his own nature, God brought forth or made something changeable. That implies something still worse: that he is the matter of what he produces.

If we are to draw some comparison between our breath and this topic, here is what we ought rather to believe. We do not make the breath from our nature; rather, we make it from the surrounding air which we draw in and expel when we inhale and exhale, for we are not omnipotent. And we do not make it living and sentient, though we ourselves are living and sentient. So too, God was able to make a breath living and sentient; he did not make it out of his nature; rather, because he is omnipotent, he could create what he wants, even out of what does not exist at all, that is, out of nothing. He would, nonetheless, certainly make it mutable, though he himself is immutable.

5, 7. What is the point of the addition you thought you should make to this comparison drawn from the example of blessed Elisha, namely, that he raised a dead boy by breathing into his face?¹¹ Do you really think that the breath of Elisha became the soul of the boy? I would not have thought that you had wandered so far from the truth. If the very same soul, then, which had been taken from the living boy so that he died, was restored to him so that he came back to life, what was the point of your saying that nothing was taken away from Elisha? You imply that we believed that something passed from him into the boy as a result of which the boy was once again alive. But if you said this because he exhaled and still remained whole, what need was there to say this with regard to Elisha raising the dead boy, since you could, in any case, say this of anyone who exhales without raising anyone from the dead?

Heaven forbid that you should believe that the breath of Elisha became the soul of the boy when he came back to life! And so, you have certainly spoken

without sufficient reflection when you wanted the only difference between what God first did and what Elisha did to be that God breathed once, while Elisha breathed three times. You did, in fact, say that Elisha breathed into the face of the dead son of that Shunammite woman, just as happened at the first beginnings of our race. "And when the divine power," you said, "had by the breath of the prophet warmed the dead members and restored them to life in their former strength, nothing was taken away from Elisha, though by his breath the dead body received its soul and mind restored to life. The only difference is that the Lord breathed into the man's face once and he was alive, while Elisha blew into the face of the dead boy three times."¹² Your words make it sound as if it is only the number of breaths that keep you from believing that the prophet did the same thing as God did. This point too must be corrected. There was a great difference between that action of God and this action of Elisha. God breathed the breath of life by which the man became a living soul; Elisha breathed a breath that was neither sentient nor living, but symbolic and intended to signify something else.

Moreover, the prophet did not cause the boy to come back to life by giving him a soul; rather, because he loved him, he got God to do this. As for your saying that Elisha breathed three times, either your memory—as often happens—or a faulty manuscript has led you astray. What else can I say? You should not look for examples and arguments to bolster your case; you should, rather, correct and change your position. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe, do not say, do not teach that God made the soul, not from nothing, but from his own nature.

The Second Error: God Gives Souls through Endless Time

6, 8. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that God gives souls through endless time and thus always gives them, just as he who gives them always exists.¹³ There will, after all, be a time when God will not give souls, although he himself will not cease to exist. Your statement that he always gives them could, of course, be taken in the sense that he gives them without stopping as long as human beings are born and give birth to children.¹⁴ In that sense scripture says of certain people, *They are always learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth* (2 Tm 3:7). The "always" used here is not taken in the sense that they will never stop learning, since they will certainly not learn once they have ceased living in this body or once they have begun to burn in the punishment of hellfire. But you did not allow us to take your phrase when you said, "always gives," in that sense, because you thought that it had to be tied to endless time.

Nor was this enough. When you were asked to explain more clearly the sense in which you said, "always gives," you added, "just as he who gives them

always exists.” Sound Catholic faith utterly condemns this! Heaven forbid that we believe that God always gives souls, just as he who gives them always exists! After all, he exists without ever ceasing to exist, but he will not always give souls. Rather, when the time for generating has passed and no human beings are any longer being born to whom souls need be given, he will certainly cease giving them.

The Third Error: The Soul Lost Merit through the Flesh

7, 9. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that the soul lost some merit through the flesh, as if it had some good merit prior to being in the flesh.¹⁵ After all, the apostle says that those not yet born did nothing either good or bad.¹⁶ How then could the soul have any good merit prior to being in the flesh, when it had done nothing good? Or will you perhaps dare to say that the soul lived a good life, though you cannot prove that it even existed? What, then, is the point of your question, “Do you mean that the soul does not contract a disease from the sinful flesh, though you see that its sanctification comes to it in turn through the flesh so that it regains its good state through the flesh through which it lost its merit?”¹⁷ In case you do not know it, apart from older heretics, the Catholic Church has also condemned these views more recently in the case of the Priscillianists, namely, that the soul is thought to have some good state or good merit prior to being in the flesh.¹⁸

The Fourth Error: The Soul Recovers Its Pristine State

10. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that the soul “recovers through the flesh its pristine state” and is “reborn through that through which it had merited to be defiled.”¹⁹ I pass over the fact that by your statement, “It is, then, right that it recovers through the flesh its pristine state which it had seemed to have lost for a short time through the flesh, so that it might begin to be reborn through that through which it had merited to be defiled,”²⁰ you contradict yourself within a few lines. A little earlier you said that the soul recovers its good state through the flesh through which it had lost its merit. In that case one can in no way understand anything but its good merit, which you, of course, mean is recovered through the flesh in baptism. Later you said that it merited to be defiled through the flesh, and in that case one must understand a bad, not a good merit. I pass this over, but in any case it is not Catholic to believe that the soul had either good or bad merit prior to being in the flesh.

The Fifth Error: The Soul Merited to Be Sinful before All Sin

8, 11. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that the soul merited to be sinful before all sin.²¹ After all, it is a very bad merit to have merited to become sinful. And it could, of course, in no way have such a bad merit before all sin, especially before it entered the flesh when it could have neither good nor bad merit. What then do you mean when you say, "If, then, the soul, which could not be sinful, merited to be sinful, it did not, nonetheless, remain in sin, because, having been prefigured in Christ, it ought not to be in sin, just as it could not be."²² Pay attention to what you say, and stop saying such things! How did the soul merit to be sinful while being unable to be sinful? How, I ask you, did it merit to be sinful, though it did not live badly? How, I ask you, did it become sinful, though it could not be sinful? Or, if you say, "it could not," because it could not apart from the flesh, how did it then merit to be sinful so that it was sent into the flesh by that merit? For, prior to being in the flesh, it could not be sinful and merit anything evil?

The Sixth Error: Unbaptized Infants Receive Pardon for Original Sin after Death

9, 12. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that infants who die before they are baptized "can attain pardon of their original sins."²³ You are misled by examples, whether by that of the thief who on the cross professed his faith in the Lord or by that of Dinocrates, the brother of Saint Perpetua. They offer you no support for this erroneous view. In God's judgment that thief could be counted among those who were purified by the profession of faith that consists in martyrdom. But in any case you do not know whether he had been baptized. I pass over the belief that, inasmuch as he was crucified next to him, he could have had the water along with the blood spurting from the Lord's side poured over him and could have been washed by that most holy baptism. But what if he had been baptized in prison, just as later at the time of persecution others were also able to be secretly baptized? What if he was baptized before he was arrested? After all, the laws of the state were not able to spare him in terms of the death of the body, because he had received from God the forgiveness of his sins. What if, when already baptized, he committed the crime and outrage of robbery? Then it was not as someone unbaptized, but as a penitent, that he received the forgiveness of his offenses which he had lost after baptism. So too, the piety of the faith in his mind was just as apparent to the Lord as it is to us in his words.

After all, if we contend that those, about whom scripture does not mention whether they were baptized, departed from this life without baptism, we do an

injustice to the apostles, since apart from the apostle Paul, we do not know when they were baptized. But if we could know that they were baptized from the statement of the Lord to blessed Peter, *One who has been washed does not need to wash* (Jn 13:10), what about the others about whom we find nothing of the sort in scripture? What about Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, Silas, Philemon, the evangelists Mark and Luke, and countless others. Heaven forbid that we doubt that they were baptized, though we do not find it in scripture!

As for Dinocrates, he was a seven-year-old boy, at an age at which boys who are baptized already recite the creed and answer for themselves the questions. But I have no idea why you think that he could not, after having been baptized, have been led back by his wicked father to the sacrilegious practices of the pagans and was, for that reason, suffering the punishments from which he was set free by his sister's prayers. You have, after all, not read in the account that he was never a Christian or that he died still a catechumen; moreover, that account is not in the canon of scripture from which you should produce evidence in questions of this sort.

The Seventh Error: Fallibility of God's Predestination

10. 13. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that those whom the Lord predestined for baptism can be snatched away from his predestination and die before there has been accomplished in them what the Almighty has predestined.²⁴ I fail to understand how power is attributed to chance events in opposition to the power of God so that by their intervention what he predestined is not permitted to take place. There is no need to emphasize excessively the immense whirlpool of impiety into which this error sucks its victim, since it is sufficient to admonish in a few words a prudent man who is ready to be corrected. These are in fact your words: "We say that one must give an account of this sort with regard to infants who, having been predestined for the baptism of the present life, are overtaken by death, before they are reborn in Christ."²⁵ Are, then, those who were predestined for the baptism of the present life overtaken by death before they come to it? In that case, God either would have predestined what he foreknew would not occur, or he did not know that it would not occur. Thus either his predestination or his foreknowledge would be mistaken. You see how much could be said here, were it not for the fact that I just said that I would on this point admonish you with only a few words.

The Eighth Error: A Scripture Text Misapplied

14. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that "with regard to infants who are overtaken by death, before they are reborn in Christ,"

scripture says, *He was taken away so that evil would not change his mind or falsehood deceive his soul. For this reason, he made haste to remove him from the midst of iniquity, for his soul was pleasing to God (Wis 4:11.14) and Having attained perfection in a short time, he completed a long life (Wis 4:13).*²⁶ This has nothing to do with them at all! Rather, it has to do with those who have been baptized and live a pious life, but are not permitted to live here for a long time. They attained perfection, not by many years, but by the grace of wisdom. This mistake of thinking that scripture said this about little ones before they were baptized does an intolerable injury to the sacred bath. It implies that the little ones, who could have been taken away once they were baptized, were taken away before baptism, precisely so that evil would not change their minds or falsehood deceive their souls. It is as if one believed that there is in this same baptism an evil and a falsehood by which little ones would be changed for the worse and deceived, if they were not taken away before.

Moreover, because their souls were pleasing to God, God made haste to remove them from the midst of iniquity; he would not wait even a little longer in order to accomplish in them what he had predestined. Rather, he preferred to act contrary to his predestination, as if he were in a hurry, afraid that what he found pleasing in the unbaptized might be destroyed in baptism. He acted as if the dying infant would perish right where one ought to hasten to bring it so that it does not perish. Who then would believe, say, write, or proclaim that these words written in the Book of Wisdom were said of little ones who have died without baptism, if he considered them as they ought to be considered?

The Ninth Error: Other Dwellings in the Father's House

11, 15. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that outside the kingdom of God there are some dwellings which the Lord said are in the house of his Father.²⁷ He does not, after all, say, "There are many dwellings in my Father's presence," as you have cited the passage.²⁸ But if he had said it that way, those dwellings should not be understood to be anywhere else but in the house of his Father. He clearly says, *In my Father's house there are many dwellings (Jn 14:2)*. Who then would dare to separate some parts of the house of God from the kingdom of God? When we find that kings of the earth reign not only in their house and not only in their own country, but far and wide across the sea, are we to say that the king who made heaven and earth does not reign even in the whole of his house?

16. You might perhaps say that everything belongs to the kingdom of God, because he reigns in the heavens, he reigns on earth, in the depths, in paradise, and in hell. Where, after all, does he not reign whose power is everywhere supreme? You might, on the other hand, say that the kingdom of heaven is one

thing and the kingdom of the earth or of other parts of creation is something else, but only those who have been washed by the bath of rebirth are allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven in accord with the true and definitive statement of the Lord. In the other kingdoms there can be some dwellings of the house of God which, though belonging to the kingdom of God, do not, nonetheless, belong to the kingdom of heaven, where the kingdom of God is more excellent and more blessed. Thus it would be possible that no parts and no dwellings of the house of God are wrongfully separated from the kingdom of God; yet, not all of them would have been prepared for the inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven. And in these dwellings which are not in the kingdom of heaven there could dwell in happiness even the unbaptized, to whom God might wish to grant that they might be in the kingdom of God, although, because they were not baptized, they cannot be in the kingdom of heaven.

17. Those who say this think that they have something to say, because they do not pay sufficient attention to the scriptures and they do not understand how we speak of the kingdom of God, when we say in prayer, *May your kingdom come* (Mt 6:10). We mean by "the kingdom of God" the place where the whole family of his faithful will reign blessedly and everlastingly along with him. For, in terms of the power which he has over all things, he certainly reigns even now. What is it, then, that we pray may come but that we may merit to reign with him? Those who will burn in the punishment of eternal fire will also be subject to his power. But are we going to say that they will on that account be in the kingdom of God? It is one thing to hold positions of honor in the kingdom of God, and it is something else to be bound by the laws of the kingdom of God.

In order that it may be utterly clear to you that one should not assign the kingdom of heaven to the baptized and give the other parts of the kingdom of God to the unbaptized, as you suppose, listen to the Lord himself. He did not say, "*Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, but one cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (Jn 3:5). These are, after all, his words to Nicodemus on this topic, *Truly, truly, I tell you, unless one has been born again, one cannot see the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:3). Notice, he did not say: "the kingdom of heaven," but "the kingdom of God." And when Nicodemus said in answer, *How can one be born when one is old? Can one reenter one's mother's womb and be born?* (Jn 3:4), the Lord openly and clearly restated the same idea: *Truly, truly, I tell you, unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:5). Notice that he did not say here either "the kingdom of heaven," but "the kingdom of God." He explained the meaning of his words, *Unless one has been born anew*, when he said, *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit*. And he explained the words, *one cannot see*, when he said, *one cannot enter*. But he did not restate in other words the phrase, *the kingdom of God*. Nor is there any need at present

to investigate and discuss whether we should take "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven" in different senses or whether the two names refer to a single reality. It is sufficient that one cannot enter the kingdom of God if one has not been washed by the bath of rebirth. I think that you now understand what a departure from the truth it is to separate some dwellings found in the house of God from the kingdom of God. Hence, that you may hold the Catholic faith, I warn you, if you will allow me, not to put off correcting your idea that in some of those dwellings in the house of his Father, which the Lord said were many, there will certain dwell people, even though they were not reborn of water and the spirit.

The Tenth Error: Sacrifice Offered for the Unbaptized

12, 18. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that the sacrifice of Christians should be offered for those who have departed from their body without being baptized.²⁹ You do not, after all, show that the sacrifice of the Jews which you mentioned from the Book of Maccabees was offered for those who departed from their body without being circumcised. In that statement of yours, which is so novel and which you have brought forth in opposition to the authority and discipline of the whole Church, you have used an expression full of insolence. You say, "I decree that constant oblations and the sacrifices of the holy priests should be continually offered for them."³⁰ Thus, you, a layman, are not subject to God's priests in order to learn, nor do you even join them in a common investigation, but you place yourself above them by your decree. Rid yourself of such things, my son. That is not how one walks in the way which, as the humble Christ taught,³¹ is Christ himself. No one so swollen with pride enters through his narrow gate.³²

The Eleventh Error: The Promise of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Unbaptized after the Resurrection

13, 19. If you want to be a Catholic, do not believe or say or teach that some of those who have departed from this life without the baptism of Christ for a time do not enter the kingdom of heaven, but paradise, and then at the resurrection of the dead they attain the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven.³³ After all, not even the Pelagian heresy has dared to grant them this much, though it holds the view that little ones do not contract original sin. Although, as a Catholic, you admit that they are born with sin, you hold the novel opinion that is even more perverse, namely, that they are forgiven this sin with which they are born and are brought to the kingdom of heaven without the baptism that brings salvation. You do not realize that in this matter your view is worse than

Pelagius'. He shows respect for the statement of the Lord in accord with which the unbaptized are not permitted to enter the kingdom of heaven; he does not dare to send there the little ones whom he believes to be free from all sin. But you disregard the words of scripture: *Unless one has been reborn of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God* (Jn 3:5). Thus, besides the error by which you dare to separate paradise from the kingdom of God, you do not hesitate to promise certain people who died without baptism absolution from their sinfulness and the kingdom of heaven, even though, as a Catholic, you believe that they are born in sin.

You act as if, in upholding original sin against Pelagius, you could still be a true Catholic, even if in opposition to the Lord you are a new heretic by undermining his statement about baptism. My dear friend, we do not want you to be a victor over heretics in such a way that one error is victorious over another and—what is worse—in such a way that the greater error is victorious over the lesser. You say in fact, "Someone may object to the idea that in the meanwhile paradise was temporarily granted to the soul of the thief or of Dinocrates. For the reward of the kingdom of heaven still remains for them at the resurrection, although the statement of the Prince is against it, *Anyone who has not been reborn of water and the Holy Spirit will not enter the kingdom* (Jn 3:5). One should also recognize that my approval for this side is an indication that I am not envious, but one must expand both the effects of God's mercy and foreknowledge as well as the love involved in them."³⁴

These are your words; by those words you admit that you agree with one who says that paradise has been granted temporarily to certain unbaptized persons, but that there remains for them at the resurrection the reward of the kingdom of heaven. This is in opposition to the statement of the Prince which has determined that one who has not been born again of water and the Holy Spirit will not enter that kingdom. Fearing to tamper with that statement of the Prince, Pelagius believed that even those whom he did not regard as guilty would not enter the kingdom of heaven without baptism. You admit that little ones have the guilt of original sin; nonetheless, you absolve them without the bath of regeneration and send them to paradise, and afterwards you even permit them to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Augustine Exhorts Vincent Victor to Change His Views

14, 20. Correct now without any delay these errors and any others of this sort, if with greater attention and more leisure you should perhaps find others in your books. Do this, if you have a Catholic heart, that is, if you spoke the truth earlier, when you said that you are not confident that what you have said can be proved and that you do not always insist on defending even your own opinion, if you

are shown that it cannot be proved, and that your heart is ready to reject your own judgment and to follow ideas of greater value and truth.³⁵ Now is the time to prove, my friend, that what you said was not false. Then the Catholic Church will be able to rejoice that your mind is not only rich in talent, but also cautious, pious, and modest, and then the madness of heresy will not flame forth out of stubborn contentiousness. Now is the time to show how great was the sincerity of heart with which you immediately added to those words of yours which I have mentioned the following: "In fact, as it is a sign of an excellent choice and of praiseworthy intention to be easily won over to views with greater truth, so it is the mark of bad and obstinate judgment to be unwilling to turn more quickly back to the path of reason."³⁶

Be a man of excellent choice and of praiseworthy intention, and let yourself be won over to views with greater truth. Do not be a man of bad and obstinate judgment so that you are unwilling to turn very quickly back to the path of reason. If you have said these things honestly, if you have not merely uttered them on your lips, but have thought them interiorly and sincerely in your heart, you were opposed to any delay in the great good of your own correction. It was, in fact, not enough for you to say that it is the mark of bad and obstinate judgment to be unwilling to turn back to the path of reason; you added, "very quickly." You did this in order to show how damnable the person is who never attains this good, since you thought that one who attains it somewhat slowly is to be blamed so severely that he is deservedly said to be a man of bad and obstinate judgment. Listen, then, to yourself, and you yourself most of all will draw profit from what you have said. Thus by the gravity of your mind you will more quickly turn back to the path of reason than you had by the inconstancy of youth turned away from it, due to less instruction and insufficient reflection.

21. It would take too long to review and discuss all the items that I want to see corrected in your books, or rather in you yourself, and to give you at least a brief explanation of the individual points. Do not, on the other hand, belittle yourself on this account and suppose that your native talents and eloquence should be considered of slight value. I have found in you no small knowledge of the holy scriptures, but your education is less than is appropriate for such talent and effort. Hence, I neither want you to become vain by crediting yourself with more than you should, nor do I not want you to lose your fervor through self-depreciation and despair. I wish I could read your writings together with you and could show you what needs correction through conversation rather than in writing! We could accomplish this task more easily by our conversing with each other than by the written word, and if it had to be done in writing, it would require many volumes. Here you have the chief errors; I wanted to limit them to a definite number. I urgently admonish you not to delay in correcting them and to keep them from your faith and from your preaching. Then you will use

God's gift, your great ability for argumentation, profitably in order to build up and not to tear down the teaching that brings health and salvation.

15. 22. I have discussed these errors as well as I could, but I will briefly run through them by way of repetition. The first is that you said that God made the soul not out of nothing, but from himself. The second is that God gives souls through endless time and thus always gives them, just as he who gives them always exists. The third is that the soul lost through the flesh some merit that it had before being in the flesh. The fourth is that through the flesh the soul recovers its pristine state and is reborn through the same flesh through which it had merited to be defiled. The fifth is that the soul merited to be sinful before all sin. The sixth is that infants who have been taken by death before they are baptized can attain the forgiveness of their original sins. The seventh is that those whom God has predestined for baptism can be removed from that predestination and die before what the Almighty has predestined has been accomplished in them. The eighth is that scripture said of infants who are taken by death before they are reborn in Christ, *He was taken away so that evil would not change his mind* (Wis 4:11) and the other things we read relative to this idea in the Book of Wisdom. The ninth is that some of the dwellings which the Lord said were in his Father's house are outside of the kingdom of God. The tenth is that the sacrifice of Christians should be offered for those who have left the body without having been baptized. The eleventh is that some of those who have departed from this life without baptism in the meanwhile do not go to the kingdom, but to paradise, but later at the resurrection of the dead they attain even the beatitude of the kingdom of heaven.

23. For the present, do not at all hesitate immediately to eradicate these eleven errors which are clearly very serious and opposed to the Catholic faith. Drive them from your mind, from your speech, and from your writings, if you want us to rejoice not only over your having come to the altars of the Catholic Church, but over your truly being a Catholic. For, if all of these were defended with stubbornness, they could amount to as many heresies as the errors we have counted. Hence, consider how horrible it is that they are all found in one individual, since each of them would deserve to be condemned in separate individuals. But if you are not stubborn in defending them or—better yet—if you combat them with words and writings inspired by the faith, you will be more praiseworthy for censoring yourself than if you corrected someone else with good reason. Moreover, you will deserve more admiration for correcting these views than if you had never held them. May the Lord be present to your mind and pour into your spirit by his spirit the readiness of humility, the light of truth, the sweetness of love, and the peace of piety so that you prefer to conquer your own mind with what is true rather than any opponent's with what is false. Heaven forbid that you should think that you have fallen away from the Catholic faith

on account of these views, even though they are opposed to the Catholic faith, provided that in the presence of God, who correctly sees every heart, you recall what you truthfully stated. After all, you said that you are not confident that what you have said can be proved and that you do not always insist on defending even your own opinion, if you are shown that it cannot be proved, because your heart is ready to reject your own judgment and to follow views of greater value and truth.³⁷ Even in saying things that are not Catholic because of ignorance, a mind of this sort is Catholic, by the very fact that it foresees and is prepared for correction. But here is the end of this volume, where the reader may have a little rest so that his attention may be refreshed by a new beginning for what follows.

Notes

1. Augustine alludes to the praise that Vincent Victor received from the priest, Peter; see II, 1.
2. Vincent Victor.
3. Vincent Victor; see I, 15, 24 for the text.
4. Vincent Victor.
5. Vincent Victor.
6. The expression, "nature and quality," is probably taken from Tertullian; see *De anima* 7, 1-2 and 9, 1.
7. Vincent Victor.
8. See Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* II, 9, 6: "Nor do you make a pipe a human being, if you blow into a pipe."
9. Vincent Victor.
10. Vincent Victor; see above III, 4, 4.
11. See 2 Kgs 4:34-35.
12. Vincent Victor; the text of 2 Kgs 4:34-35 makes no mention of Elisha's blowing three times into the boy's face, as Augustine points out.
13. Vincent Victor; see I, 16, 26 for the exact words.
14. See Lk 20:34.
15. The editors of the BA edition suggest that Augustine has here drawn his own conclusion from what Vincent Victor wrote rather than given a quotation.
16. See Rom 9:11.
17. Vincent Victor; see II, 7, 11.
18. For the Priscillianists, see *Heresies* and *Orosius' Memorandum*, as well as Augustine's *To Orosius in Refutation of the Priscillianists and Origenists*. Augustine is probably referring to the condemnation of the Council of Toledo in 400.
19. Vincent Victor.
20. Vincent Victor; see I, 6, 6 and II, 7, 11.
21. Again, the BA editors suggest that this is a conclusion that Augustine has drawn rather than a statement on the part of Vincent Victor.
22. Vincent Victor; see II, 8, 12.
23. Vincent Victor; see II, 10, 14.
24. Vincent Victor.
25. Vincent Victor; see II, 9, 13.
26. Vincent Victor; see II, 9, 13.
27. Vincent Victor; see II, 10, 14.
28. Vincent Victor's Latin text has *apud Patrem meum* instead of the Vulgate's *in domo Patris mei*; both could be translated by the English, "in my Father's house."

29. See II, 11, 15.
30. Vincent Victor; see II, 11, 15.
31. See Jn 14:6.
32. See Mt 7:13 and Lk 13:24.
33. See II, 10, 14.
34. Vincent Victor; see II, 12, 16.
35. See II, 16, 22.
36. Vincent Victor; II, 16, 22.
37. See II, 16, 22, as well as above III, 14, 20.

Book Four: To Vincent Victor

Augustine Turns to Vincent Victor's Rebukes

1, 1. Now listen to what I desire to say to you about myself, if I can, that is, if God grants this, for we and what we say rest in his hands. You have, after all, rebuked me, even mentioning me twice by name. In the beginning of your book you acknowledged that you were still aware of your inexperience and lacked the support of learning, but you called me a man of great learning and of wide experience, when you mentioned me by name. On these questions, nonetheless, you thought that you knew what I admit I do not know or what, despite my ignorance, I presume to know.¹ And with all the freedom that was needed, you, a young man and a layman, did not only not hesitate to rebuke an old man and a bishop, but you did not hesitate to rebuke someone who was in your judgment very learned and widely experienced.

I for myself do not know that I have such great learning and wide experience; quite the contrary, I know that I certainly do not. Moreover, I have no doubt that it is possible that an inexperienced and unlearned person can know something that an experienced and learned person does not know. And in this respect I certainly offer you my praise, because you preferred the truth to a human being. Even if you did not grasp the truth, you surely thought you had. You were rash in this, because you thought that you knew what you did not know, but you were being frank, because you chose to disclose what you thought, without being afraid of the person involved. Hence, you should realize that one ought to exercise much greater care in recalling the Lord's sheep from error, if it is shameful for the sheep themselves to conceal the failings of their shepherds, should they know of any.

How I wish that you would rebuke those failings of mine that deserve a just reprimand! After all, I ought not to deny that there are many things in my many writings, as there are in my life, with which one can find fault with correct judgment and without being at all rash. If you were to find fault with some of these things, I would in that case perhaps show you the sort of person I want you to be on those points on which I am correct in rebuking you. I would present myself to you, an older man to a younger one and a superior to a subject, as an model of correction that would be more salutary in proportion to my greater humility. But you have rebuked me on points where humility does not demand my correction; rather, the truth demands that I in part admit what I do not know and in part defend what I do know.

Vincent Victor's Rebukes and Augustine's Reply

2, 2. These are the points on which you find fault with me: One, that I did not venture to decide anything with regard to the origin of the souls which God has given or gives to human beings after the first man, because I admit that I do not know this. Two, that I said that I knew that the soul is a spirit, not a body. On this second point, you found fault with two things: first, that I believed that it is not a body and, second, that I believed it was a spirit. For you think that the soul is a body and that it is not a spirit.

Listen, then, to my defense against your rebuke, and from the occasion of my defending myself before you, learn what you ought to correct in yourself. Recall the words of your book where you first mentioned me by name. You said, "I know that several men of wide experience, when consulted on this question, have held their silence or have said nothing very clear; having begun an explanation, they left their discussion without a conclusion. Such was the case with the letter of the learned and renowned bishop, Augustine, which I read again and again at your home.² Studying the secrets of this sort of thing with, in my opinion, too much modesty and reserve, they have kept to themselves the judgment that their treatise calls for and have claimed that they cannot come to any decision on this matter. But, believe me, it seems utterly absurd and unreasonable that a human being should lack self-knowledge or that one who is believed to have acquired knowledge of all things should be held to be ignorant of himself. How do human beings differ from animals, if they do not know how to investigate and discuss their own quality and nature? The text of scripture would fittingly apply to them, *Though human beings received a position of honor, they did not understand; they became like animals and have been compared to them* (Ps 49:13). God who is good did not, after all, create anything without a reason, and he made human beings rational animals, capable of intelligence, possessed of reason and quick in mind, to govern all non-rational beings by their wise providence. What could one say that makes less sense than that he deprived them of a knowledge only of themselves? The wisdom of the world stretches out toward the knowledge of the truth in an investigation that is utterly vain, because it cannot know him through whom it is possible to know the truth, but it has tried to make out regarding the nature of the soul something like or even approximating the truth. How indecent and shameful, then, it is for religious persons either to know nothing or to have forbidden themselves to know anything at all on this topic."³

Augustine Turns Vincent Victor's Arguments against Him

3. Your eloquent and brilliant correction of our ignorance demands that you know everything which pertains to the nature of human beings so that, if you

fail to know anything about them, you are compared, not by my judgment, but by your own, to the animals. Though you seem to have explicitly referred to us by the words, *Though human beings received a position of honor, they did not understand* (Ps 49:13), since we have a position of honor in the Church which you do not, you are, nonetheless, in a position of honor by nature so that you are better than the animals. And yet, according to your judgment, you ought to be compared to them, if you do not know any of those things which clearly belong to your nature. After all, you did not reproach with this rebuke merely those who do not know what I do not know, that is, the origin of the human soul. And yet, I am not completely ignorant of its origin, for I do know that God breathed into the face of the first man and that the man was made into a living soul.⁴ If I had not read this in scripture, I could not know it by myself. But you said, "How do human beings differ from animals, if they do not know how to investigate and discuss their own quality and nature?"⁵ You seem to have understood this in the sense that human beings ought to investigate and discuss their entire quality and nature so that nothing remains hidden from them. If that is so, I am going to compare you to the animals, if you will not tell me the number of your hairs. But if you concede that, regardless of how much progress we make in this life, we lack knowledge of some things pertaining to our nature, I ask you how far you will go with this concession. After all, it may include the admission that we do not completely know the origin of our soul, though, insofar as it pertains to salvation through faith, we know without any ambiguity that the soul is given by God and that it is not of the same nature as God.

Do you perhaps think that each person ought to be ignorant of his own nature to the extent that you are ignorant of it and ought to know it to the extent that you have been able to know it? Then, if people are slightly more ignorant of it than you are, you will compare them to the animals, because you were able to know more than they do. So too, if anyone knows a little more than you, he will by the same token compare you to the animals. Tell us, then, to what extent you allow us to be ignorant of our nature so that our distance from the animals is preserved, and consider whether those who know that they do not know something about themselves are not further removed from the animals than those who think that they know what they do not know.

The whole nature of a human being is, of course, spirit, soul, and body. Anyone, then, who would separate the body from human nature is being foolish. In order to know the nature of the body, physicians, who are called anatomists, have examined by dissecting one by one the members, veins, nerves, bones, marrow, and inner organs, even of living human beings, as long as they were able to survive in the hands of these researchers. They have not, nonetheless, compared us to the animals, because we do not know these things.

Or are you perhaps going to say that those people who do not know the nature of the soul should be compared to the animals, not those who do not know the nature of the body? But then you should not have spoken as you did at the start. For you did not say, "How do human beings differ from animals, if they do not know how to investigate and discuss the nature and quality of their own soul?" You said, "How do human beings differ from animals, if they do not know how to investigate and discuss their own quality and nature?" Our quality and our nature, then, include the body, though each of these components is discussed separately. But I will fill many volumes, if I want to discuss knowledgeably all the points concerning human nature that I can; nonetheless, there are many things which I admit I do not know.

3, 4. We have discussed in the previous book the point you were trying to make in discussing the breathing of a human being.⁶ Does it belong to the nature of the soul, because the soul causes it in a human being? Or does it belong to the nature of the body which is moved by the soul in order to cause it? Or does it belong to the nature of this air whose movement back and forth shows that it does this? Or does it rather belong to all three, namely, to the soul which moves the body and to the body which receives and returns the breath by its motion and to this air surrounding us on all sides that nourishes us when it enters and relieves us when it is expelled? And yet, man of letters and eloquence that you are, you still did not know this, when you believed, stated, wrote, and read out in the assembled group you invited that we inflate a bag from our own nature, without any lessening of our nature.

And yet, you could easily know how we do this, if you wanted, not by poring over the words of human beings and of God, but by turning your attention to yourself. Why then should I entrust myself to you so that you might teach me about the origin of souls, something I admit that I do not know, when you do not know from what you produce what you continually produce with your nostrils and mouth? God grant that, as a result of my admonition, you yield to rather than resist a truth that is so easy to grasp and so clear! May he grant that you do not question your lungs about the inflation of a bag in such a way that you prefer to have them inflated against me rather than to yield to them as they teach you and give you a true answer, not by speaking and arguing, but by inhaling and exhaling. Hence, I would willingly accept your correcting and chiding of my ignorance concerning the origin of souls; in fact, I would be extremely grateful, if you would not merely attack that ignorance of mine with hard blows, but would also dispel it by your words of truth. After all, if you could teach me what I do not know, I ought to endure you with great patience, as you strike me not merely with your words, but with your fists.

Augustine Defends His Own Lack of Knowledge

4, 5. I admit to you, my friend, that, with regard to this question, I greatly desire to know, if possible, one of these two things: either what I do not know concerning the origin of souls or whether it is something that we ought to know, while we live this life. After all, it may very well belong among those things about which scripture says, *Do not investigate matters higher than you, and do not search out things mightier than for you. Rather, always bear in mind what the Lord has commanded you* (Sir 3:22). But this is something I want to know, either from God himself who knows what he creates or from some learned persons who know what they say, but not from a man who does not know what he breathes.

No one recalls his infancy, and do you suppose that persons can know, without being taught by God, how they began to have life in their mothers' wombs, especially if human nature still remains hidden from them to the point that they do not know, not only what they have within themselves, but also what is added to it from the outside? And so, my friend, are you going to teach me or anyone else how human beings who are born receive their souls, when you still do not know how they are nourished during life so that, if that nourishment is removed for a short time, they immediately die? Are you going to teach me or anyone how human beings receive their souls, when you still do not know how bags are filled, when they are inflated? I wish that, just as you do not know the origin of souls, I would at least know whether this is something that I ought to know in this life! After all, if this belongs among those higher questions which we are forbidden to search out and investigate, we should be afraid of sinning, not because we do not know it, but because we are searching for it. Nor should we suppose that it does not belong among those higher questions, because it does not have to do with the nature of God, but with our own nature.

5, 6. In fact, it is more difficult to know some of God's works than to know God himself, insofar as he can be known. We have, after all, learned that God is a trinity, but we do not yet know the number of the kinds of animals that he created, even of the animals of the earth which could have entered Noah's ark. Or have you somehow learned this? In the Book of Wisdom it says, *If their ability was such that they were able to take the measure of this world, how is it that they did not more easily discover its Lord?* (Wis 13:9). Or is this matter not higher than us, because it is something within us? The nature of our soul, after all, is more internal to us than the body. As if the soul could not more easily come to know the body externally through the eyes of the body than internally through itself! After all, is there anything in the inner parts of the body in which the soul itself is not present? And yet it has investigated all its inner living parts only by the eyes of the body, and it has learned whatever it was able to learn of them through the eyes of the body. But the soul was certainly present there, even

when it did not know these things. Since our inner organs cannot be alive without the soul, the soul was able to give them life more easily than to come to know them.

Or, for the purpose of our knowledge of it, is the body higher than the soul itself? And, thus, suppose that the soul wanted to search out and determine when the seed of a human turns to blood and when it turns to solid flesh, when the bones begin to harden and be filled with marrow, and how many kinds of veins and nerves there are. Suppose it seeks out the twists and turns by which the former carry fluids through the body and the latter hold it together, and asks whether the skin should be counted among the nerves and the teeth among the bones—the teeth are different, after all, since they lack marrow—and how the nails differ from both of them. They are like them in hardness, but they have it in common with hair that they can be cut and that they grow back. Suppose it asks the purpose of the passages, not for blood, but for air, which are called arteries. If the soul desires to know these things and other things of this sort concerning the nature of the body, are we to say to the person, *Do not investigate matters higher than you, and do not search out things mightier than you* (Sir 3:22)? Whereas, if it investigates what it does not know about its origin, are we to say that this is not higher than it and not beyond its abilities to grasp?

You think that it is absurd and unreasonable that a soul does not know whether it has been newly breathed in by God or it has been derived from its parents. For, it does not remember this past event and counts it among all those things which it has irrevocably forgotten, such as infancy and the other things that immediately followed birth, if there was, in fact, any awareness of them when they took place. But you do not think it absurd and unreasonable that it does not know the body subject to it and is completely ignorant, not with regard to its past, but with regard to its present state. For example, does it move the veins in order to make the body alive, while it moves the nerves in order to do something with the members of the body? And if so, why does it move the nerves only if it wills, while it carries on the pulsation of the veins without interruption, even if it does not will to?

With regard to the part of the body which rules over the rest, called ἡγεμονικόν, does it govern from the heart or from the brain? Or does it govern in two ways: from the heart for movements and from the brain for sensations? Or does its governance come from the brain for sensations and voluntary movements, but from the heart for the non-voluntary pulsations of the veins? And if it produces the former two from the brain, why does it have sensation, even if it does not will to, but only moves its members when it wills? Since, then, it is the soul alone that does these things in the body, why does it not know what it does and how it does it? Is it not something shameful for it not to know these things, since you think it is shameful for it not to know from what or how

it was made, even if it did not make itself? Or, since some people do know how and by what means it does these things in the body, do you think that this question does not belong among those things that are too lofty and too difficult for us?

6, 7. I am going to pose a more difficult question for you. Why do so few people know how they do things all of us do? Perhaps you will say: Because so few have studied the art of anatomy or the art of observation included in the art of medicine. It is an art which only a few pursue, while the rest do not want to learn these things, although they could have, if they had wanted to do so. I pass over mentioning why many, who try to learn these things, are unable. By reason of a slowness of wit they are prevented from learning from others things they themselves do within themselves. How strange this is!

Here you have my principal question: Why do I not need any art to know that the sun and the moon and the other stars are in the sky, but I do need an art to know the source of the movement when I move my finger, whether it comes from the heart or the brain or from both or from neither of them? Why do I not need a teacher to know what is so high above me, while I wait to learn from another human being how I do something that goes on within myself? After all, although we are said to think with the heart and although we know what we think without anyone else knowing it, we do not know in what part of the body we have the heart with which we think, unless we learn this from someone else, who does not know what we think. When we hear that we should love God with our whole heart, I know that this does not refer to the part of our flesh that lies behind the ribs, but to the power that produces thoughts. It correctly bears this name, because, as the motion in the heart that carries the pulse through all the veins never stops, so we turn something over in our thought without ceasing. Nonetheless, since every sense exists in the body as a result of the soul, why can we, even in the dark and with the eyes closed, count our external members by the bodily sense called touch, though we know none of our inner organs by the interior presence of the soul itself, by which it is present to everything it enlivens and animates? I do not think any human being knows this; certainly no physicians do, whether those who rely on observation, or those who practice anatomy, or the dogmatic types, or those who follow a particular method.

8. There is a point in saying to anyone who has tried to learn these things, *Do not investigate matters higher than you, and do not search out things mightier than you* (Sir 3:22). They are not higher, after all, than our stature can reach, but higher than our conjectures can grasp and mightier than the strength of the human mind can penetrate. And yet this is not the heaven of heavens, nor the measure of the stars, nor the limit of the sea and lands, nor the underworld beneath. It is we ourselves who are unable to comprehend ourselves. We ourselves are too high and too mighty and surpass the small measure of our

knowledge. We ourselves cannot grasp ourselves, and we are certainly not outside ourselves. We should not, then, be compared to the animals, because we have not completely discovered what we are. And yet you think that we should be compared to the animals, if we have forgotten what we were, if indeed we ever knew it! After all, my soul is not now being derived from my parents or being breathed into me by God. Whichever of these he did, he did when he created me; he is not now making my soul from me or in me. That making is over and done with; it is not something present to me or in the recent past. I do not even know whether I knew it and have forgotten it or whether I was unable to be aware of and to know it, even when it took place.

The Powers of Our Mind Remain Unknown to Us

7, 9. Look, now, at the present. While we exist, while we are alive, while we know that we are alive, while we are certain that we remember, understand, and will, we boast of having a great knowledge of our nature, but we do not at all know what our memory or intelligence or will is capable of. A friend of mine from my youth, Simplicius by name, a man of excellent and remarkable memory, was asked by us for the second last verses in all of Vergil's books; he answered immediately and quickly from memory. We also asked him for the verses before those, and he recited them. We came to suspect that he could recite Vergil backwards; we asked him to do so, beginning from whatever passage we chose, and he did so. We wanted him to do the same thing with prose from some oration of Cicero's he had memorized; he proceeded to recite it backwards as far as we wanted. We were amazed, and he called upon God as his witness that he did not know that he could do this before that experiment. Thus, as far as memory goes, his mind at that point came to know itself, and whenever it learned, it was able to learn only by trial and experience. And yet before he tried, he was the same person. Why then did he not know himself?

10. Often we assume that we will retain something in memory, and when we think so, we do not write it down. Later, when we want to recall it, it does not come to mind, and we regret having believed that it would come to mind and not having put it in writing so that we would not lose it. At another time, though we are not looking for it, it suddenly comes to mind. Were we not ourselves, when we had that thought? And yet we are not what we were, when we could not think of it. How is it, then, that we are somehow taken away from and denied to ourselves and then that we are somehow brought back and restored to ourselves? It is as though we were other persons or in other places, when we looked for and did not find what we had put in our memory. How is it that we ourselves could not get at ourselves as if we were somewhere else? And then we do get at ourselves when we find it. After all, where do we look except in ourselves? And what do we look for but ourselves, as though we were not in

ourselves and had withdrawn somewhat from ourselves? Do you not see and are you not astonished at this deep puzzle? And what else is this but our nature, not as it was, but as it is now? You see that it is something we are searching for rather than something we have grasped. Often I have thought that I would understand a question that someone raised for me, if I thought about it; I thought about it and yet could not understand it. The powers of my intelligence are, therefore, certainly not known to me, and I do not believe they are known to you either.

11. Perhaps you look down on me for my admitting my ignorance, and for this reason you also compare me to the animals. But I am not going to stop warning or, if you prefer, at least advising you to acknowledge our common weakness in which virtue is made perfect.⁷ Otherwise, while presuming to know what you do not know, you will not be able to attain the truth. After all, I suspect that there is something that you seek to understand and yet cannot, and you would not seek to do so, if you did not hope that you would be able to. Accordingly, you too do not know the powers of your intelligence, though you profess to know your nature and do not admit your ignorance along with me.

What shall I say about the will where we certainly claim to have free choice? The blessed apostle, Peter, for example, wanted to lay down his life for the Lord; he clearly willed to do so. He was not trying to deceive the Lord in promising this;⁸ rather, he did not know the extent of the power of his will. Hence, a man as great as he, who recognized that Jesus was the Son of God, did not know himself. We know, then, that we will or do not will something; yet, if we are not mistaken, my dear son, we do not know, even when our will is good, what it is capable of, the extent of its powers, what temptations it will give in to or not give in to.

8, 12. You see how many things, not past, but present, we do not know about our nature, and they have to do not only with our body, but also with the interior human being; yet we are not compared to the animals. But you thought that I deserved such an insult, because I am ignorant of something in the past, namely, the origin of my soul. It is not that I am entirely ignorant of it; rather, I do not know it completely, for I do know that God gave it to me and that it is not, nonetheless, made out of God. How will I ever be able to recount all that we do not know about the nature of our spirit and soul? We should at this point cry out to the Lord what the prophet cried out in the psalm, *Your knowledge has been made marvelous from me; it has become great; I cannot attain it* (Ps 13:6 LXX). Why, after all, did he add, *from me*, except because he conjectured from himself how incomprehensible God's knowledge was, since he could not comprehend even himself?

The apostle was taken up to the third heaven and heard ineffable words which a human being may not utter, and he says that he does not know whether this happened to him in the body or outside the body.⁹ And yet, he was not afraid

that you would compare him to the animals. His spirit knew that it was in the third heaven, that it was in paradise, but did not know whether it was in the body. The apostle Paul himself was certainly not the third heaven and paradise, but he himself was his body, soul, and spirit. You see, he knew great, lofty, and divine things, which were not what he himself was, and he did not know this point which pertained to his nature. Who can fail to be amazed at his ignorance of himself amid such knowledge of great mysteries?

Finally, who would believe it, if he who does not deceive had not said, *We do not know what we should pray for as we ought* (Rom 8:26)? Our concern at this point ought, most of all, to be that we stretch out toward those things which lie ahead, and you compare me to the animals, because I have forgotten something about my origin among the things which lie in the past. Yet you hear the same apostle saying, *Having forgotten the past and stretched out toward what lies ahead, I deliberately struggle on toward the reward of God's lofty calling in Christ Jesus* (Phil 3:13-14).

9, 13. Are you perhaps going to judge that I deserve mockery and am like the irrational animals, because I said, *We do not know what we should pray for as we ought* (Rom 8:26)? Perhaps that would be more tolerable. After all, it is a correct and sound judgment that leads us to prefer our future to our past, and we need prayer, not on account of what we were, but on account of what we shall be. Hence, it is certainly much more of a concern that we do not know what we should pray for than that we do not know how we came to be. But call to mind where you read this, or recall it by rereading it, and do not throw a rock of reproach at me lest you hit someone whom you do not want to hit. It was the apostle, the teacher of the nations, of course, who said, *We do not know what we should pray for as we ought* (Rom 8:26). He not merely taught this in words; he shows us this by his example. For, in his ignorance, he prayed, contrary to his own interests and to the attainment of his salvation, that the thorn in his flesh would leave him, though it was given him, he said, so that he would not be filled with pride over the greatness of the revelations he received.¹⁰ And because the Lord loved him, he did not do what Paul asked for in his ignorance.

Nonetheless, when he said, *We do not know what we should pray for as we ought*, he immediately added, *But the Spirit makes intercession with ineffable groans. And he who searches hearts knows what the Spirit thinks, for he intercedes for the saints as God wills* (Rom 8:26-27). That is, the Spirit which *God sent into our hearts crying out, Abba, Father* (Gal 4:6), and in whom we *cry out, Abba, Father* (Rom 8:15), makes the saints to intercede for us. Scripture said both of these, namely, that we received the Spirit *crying out, Abba, Father* and that we received the Spirit *in whom we cry out, Abba, Father*, in order to explain the sense of "crying out," that is, "making us cry out," so that he makes us cry out.

May the Spirit, then, teach me this as well, when he wills, if he knows it is good for me to know my origin in terms of my soul. But may the Spirit who searches the depths of God¹¹ teach me this, not a human being who does not know the breath by which a bag is inflated. Heaven forbid, however, that I should for this reason compare you to an animal. After all, you were not without this knowledge due to a lack of ability, but due to a lack of attention.

The Proofs from Scripture Do Not Settle the Question

10, 14. Although the questions regarding the origin of souls are higher than those concerning the breath we inhale and exhale, you are perhaps confident that you have learned these higher matters from the holy scriptures, from which we learn through faith things which no human minds can search out. After all, to know that the flesh will rise and be unendingly victorious is, of course, far more excellent than anything that physicians could learn about it by their study. The soul cannot perceive this by any sense, despite the fact that by its presence it gives life to all those things it does not know. And it is by far better to know that the soul, which has been reborn and renewed in Christ, will be blessed for eternity, than whatever we do not know about its memory, intelligence, and will. However, we would never be able to know these things which I called more excellent and better, if we did not believe the words of God.

Perhaps you think that you are relying on these words so that you have no hesitation in stating a definite opinion on the origin of souls. First of all, if that were the case, you ought not to have attributed the fact that human beings can investigate and discuss their quality and nature to human nature itself, but to the gift of God. After all, you said, "How do human beings differ from animals, if they do not know this?"¹² Why do we need to find it in scripture in order to know this, if we ought to know this by the very fact that we differ from the animals? After all, you offer me no scripture text in order to prove to me that I am alive, for my nature is such that I cannot fail to know this. So too, if it belongs to my nature to know that other point, why do you produce testimonies from the scriptures for me to believe? Do only those people who read the scriptures differ from the animals? Were we not created to be different from the animals even before we could learn to read? Why is it, I ask, that you attribute so much to our nature that, by reason of the fact that it differs from the animals, it already knows how to investigate and discuss the origin of souls? But then why do you make it so lacking in this knowledge that it cannot know this by human means, unless it believes God's witnesses?

11, 15. Moreover, you are mistaken on this point as well. For the divine testimonies which you wanted to bring to bear on the solution of this question do not solve it. They prove something else, a point without which we truly cannot

live a life of piety, namely, that it is God who gives, creates, and forms our souls. But they do not state how he does this, whether by breathing in new souls or by deriving souls from parents, apart from that one soul which he gave to the first man. Read carefully what I have written to our brother, the servant of God, Renatus.¹³ Because I have proved this point there, it was not necessary to say it here as well. You would like me to decide the question that you yourself decided so that I might be forced into the same sort of difficulties into which you were. As a result, you said many serious things against the Catholic faith. If you recall and consider them with faith and humility, you will certainly see how much you would have benefited, if you had known how not to know what you do not know, and how much benefit you now have, if even now you know that. After all, intelligence in human nature is something that you find pleasing, for, if we did not have it, we would really not differ in any way from the animals in terms of our souls. Understand, then, what you do not understand so that you do not completely fail to understand. And do not look down upon someone who understands that he does not understand this with the aim of truly understanding what he does not understand. For this reason, the sacred psalm said, *Though human beings received a position of honor, they did not understand; they were compared to the mindless animals and became like them* (Ps 49:14). Read and understand in order that you may humbly avoid this insult rather than proudly hurl it at someone else. After all, it was speaking of those who regard this life as the only life, who, like animals, live according to the flesh and have no hope beyond death; it was not speaking of those who do not deny that they know what they know and who admit that they do not know what they do not know. These people are safer in understanding their own weakness than if they trust in their strength.

16. Do not, my son, let my old man's fearfulness bring displeasure to your youthful confidence. Granted, I have not been able, with either God or with some learned and spiritual person as my teacher, to know this point which we are investigating on the origin of souls. I am, nonetheless, more inclined to defend the correctness of God in not wanting us to know this, as is the case with so many other things, than rashly to make some statement. For, either such a statement would be so obscure that not only would I be unable to bring others to understand it, but I would also be unable to understand it myself, or it would be something of help to heretics who try to convince people that the souls of little ones are free from every stain. They fear that such a stain will be traced back to and reflect upon God as its source, because he forced innocent souls, whom he foreknew the bath of rebirth would not help, to be sinners by giving them to the sinful flesh. And they would not have the grace of baptism to help them by which they might be set free from eternal damnation, for countless souls of infants depart from their bodies, before they are baptized.

Heaven forbid that, in a desire to throw light on this, I should say what you said, namely, that the soul merited through the flesh to be defiled and to be sinful,¹⁴ though it previously had no sin by which it could correctly be said to have merited this. Heaven forbid that I should say that even without baptism original sins are removed and that the kingdom of heaven is in the end given even to the unbaptized.¹⁵ If I were not afraid to state these propositions and others of the sort that are such deadly poisons for the faith, I would perhaps not be afraid to come to some definite decision. How much better, then, that I do not discuss the soul separately and assert what I do not know, but simply hold what I see the apostle taught with perfect clarity: As a result of one man all human beings who are born from Adam face damnation,¹⁶ unless they are reborn in Christ, as he determined that they be reborn,¹⁷ before they die in their body. To those whom he predestined to eternal life, he most mercifully gives grace, and to those whom he predestined to eternal death, he most righteously assigns punishment, not only on account of sins which they willingly add, but also on account of original sin, if infants add nothing. On this question this is my position; the result is that God's hidden works retain their secrecy, and my faith remains intact.

The Question of the Soul's Incorporeality

12. 17. Now I must also reply to you, to the extent that the Lord gives me the ability, regarding that passage where you repeated my name, while speaking of the soul, and said, "We do not, in fact, admit, as Augustine, a bishop of great expertise, professes, that it is incorporeal and is at the same time a spirit."¹⁸ Let us, then, first discuss whether the soul is to be considered incorporeal, as I said, or corporeal, as you said. Then, let us see whether it is also called a spirit in accord with our scriptures, even though it is not the whole, but only a part of it that is properly called a spirit. I would, first of all, like to know how you define a body. After all, if only that which is composed of members of the flesh is a body, then neither the earth nor the heaven nor a stone nor water nor the stars nor anything else of the sort will be a body. But if a body is whatever is composed of larger or smaller parts which occupy larger or smaller spaces, those things I mentioned are bodies as well. Air is a body; this visible light is a body, and all those things which the apostle calls *heavenly bodies and earthy bodies* (1 Cor 15:40).

18. But whether the soul is something of this sort is a very picky and subtle question. In any case, you do not maintain that God is a body, and I especially congratulate you on that point.¹⁹ On the other hand, you make me uneasy when you say, "If the soul is without a body so that it is, as certain people would have it, an airy and vacuous substance of sheer emptiness."²⁰ After all, with these

words of yours you seem to believe that everything which lacks a body has an empty substance. But if that is the case, how do you dare to say that God is without a body? Are you not afraid that it will follow that he has an empty substance? Moreover, if God lacks a body, as you have already admitted and if you do not say—and heaven forbid that you should!—that he has an empty substance, not everything that lacks a body has an empty substance. And so, if some say that the soul is incorporeal, it does not follow that they want us to think that it has an empty and vacuous substance, because they also admit that God is incorporeal, and he is not an empty something.

But recognize what a difference there is between what I say and what you think I say. I do not, after all, say that the soul has an airy substance; otherwise, I would be admitting that it is a body. Air is certainly a body according to all those who know what they are saying when they talk about bodies. But because I said that the soul is incorporeal, you thought that I said not only that the soul was sheer emptiness, but that its substance was, for that reason, airy. In fact, I said it was not a body, as air is, and what is filled with air certainly cannot be empty. Even your bags were not able to teach you this. After all, what else but air is enclosed in them when they are inflated? They are so far from being empty that they support weights by their fullness. Perhaps you think that a breath is something other than air, though a breath is air in motion, as you can learn from the waving of a fan. Take any hollow vessels which you suppose to be empty. In order to learn that they are full, hold them down in water on the side from which they are filled, and see how no liquid can enter them, because the air with which they are filled prevents it. But when they are placed in the water with their mouth above or on the side, they admit the liquid, if some is poured in or enters, as the air leaves and escapes where it finds an outlet. This can be more easily shown to someone present by example than by writing.

But there is no need to delay further on this point. Whether or not you understand that the nature of air is bodily, you should not think that I said that the soul is airy, but that it is absolutely incorporeal. You yourself admit that God is such, and you do not dare to say that he is something empty. You cannot deny that his substance is omnipotent and immutable. Why, then, should we be afraid that the soul would be sheer emptiness, if it is incorporeal, since we admit that God is incorporeal and do not say that he is sheer emptiness? The incorporeal God, then, could create a incorporeal soul, just as the living God creates a living soul, though the immutable God creates a mutable soul and the omnipotent God creates one by far his inferior.

The Question of the Soul's Being a Spirit

13. 19. I fail to see why you reject the view that the soul is a spirit and insist that it is a body. If it is not a spirit, because the apostle mentioned the spirit

separately, when he said, *Your whole being: spirit and soul and body* (1 Thes 5:23), we have the same reason for maintaining that it is not a body, because he also mentioned the body separately. But if you claim that the soul is a body, despite the fact that the body was mentioned separately, allow that it is a spirit, although the spirit was mentioned separately. There is much better reason for you to think that the soul is a spirit than that it is a body, because you admit that the spirit and the soul are of one substance, while you deny that the soul and the body are of one substance. How, then, can the soul be a body, since its nature is different from that of a body, and how can the soul not be a spirit, since the soul and the spirit have one and the same nature? In fact, do you not see that you are forced by that argument of yours to say that even the spirit is a body? Otherwise, if the spirit is not a body, the spirit and the soul do not have one and the same nature. Though you think that they are two things, you say that each of them has a single substance. Hence, the spirit is also a body, if the soul is a body. There is, after all, no other way that they can have one and the same nature.

Consequently, according to you, those things which the apostle mentions, *spirit and soul and body*, are three bodies, but two of these, the soul and the spirit, are bodies that have one nature, while that body, which is also called the flesh, is a different nature. In your view, the whole human being, a single reality and a single substance, is composed of these three bodies, one of which has a different substance, while the other two have one and the same substance. Though you make such a claim, you still do not want those two things that have one and the same substance, that is, the soul and the spirit, to have the one name "spirit," though the two things that do not have one and the same, but an unequal and diverse substance, that is, the soul and the body, have, as you see it, the one name "body."

14, 20. I am, however, going to pass this over in silence lest the dispute between us be more a matter of words than of reality. Let us see what the interior human being is. Is it the soul or the spirit or both of them? You say, as I see from your writings, that the interior human being is the soul. You were, after all, speaking of this, when you said, "And when the substance which could not be grasped solidifies, it will produce inside the body another body congealed by the force and breath of its nature, and from this the interior human being will begin to appear. The shape of the exterior human being has fashioned it to its own likeness as something enclosed in the form of its bodily covering."²¹ From this you conclude, "The breath of God made the soul; indeed, the breath from God became the soul, a substantial representation, bodily in terms of its nature, like its body and conformed to its image."²² After this, you begin to speak of the spirit and say, "This soul, which has its origin from the breath of God, could not exist without its own mind and innermost intellect, which is the spirit."²³ As I see it, then, you want the interior human being to be the soul and the

innermost human being to be the spirit, as if it were interior to the soul, just as the soul is interior to the body. The result is that, just as, according to you, the body admits through its hollow inner parts another body, namely, the soul, so we are to believe that the soul has empty interior parts where it admits a third body, the spirit. And thus the whole human being is composed of three things: the exterior, the interior, and the innermost. Do you not see the great absurdities that follow upon your view, when you try to maintain that the soul is bodily?

Next, tell me which of these will be renewed in the knowledge of God in accord with the image of its creator?²⁴ The interior or the innermost? I fail to see that, besides the interior and the exterior, the apostle knows of another human being interior to the interior human being, that is, the innermost human being of the whole human being. But choose the one you want to be renewed in accord with the image of God. How will it receive this image, since it has already taken on the image of the exterior human being? After all, if the interior human being pervades the members of the exterior human being and becomes solidified—you did use that word, as though a molten image were formed from a clay mold made from the dust—how can it be reformed, as long as the same form remains that was impressed upon it or expressed by the body? Will it have two images, an image of God from above and an image of the body from below, as a coin is said to have heads and tails.²⁵ Or are you perhaps going to say that the soul received the image of the body and the spirit will receive the image of God, inasmuch as the former is close to the body and the latter to God? Thus, the innermost human being would be reformed to the image of God, but not this interior human being. But there is no point in your saying this. For, if that innermost human being is spread out through all the members of the soul, as the soul is through the members of the body, it too has received the image of the body through the soul, just as that mold has formed it. Accordingly, it has no place to receive the image of God, as long as this image of the body remains in it, except in the way a coin, as I mentioned, is formed in one way on the top and in another way on the bottom. Whether you like it or not, your carnal manner of thinking about bodies leads you to these absurdities, when you think about the soul. But God is not a body, as you were perfectly correct to admit. How then could a body receive his image? I beg you, my brother, not to be conformed to this world, but to be reformed in the newness of your mind.²⁶ And do not be wise in terms of the flesh, for that spells death.²⁷

Lazarus and the Bosom of Abraham

15, 21. “But,” you say, “if the soul has no body, how was that rich man able to know anything in hell?” You say, “He had, of course, known Lazarus, but he had not known Abraham. How did he come to know Abraham who had died

so long before?"²⁸ If, when you say such things, you think that one does not come to know a human being except by his bodily form, I suppose that you continually look at a mirror in order to know yourself for fear that you might not be able to recognize yourself, if you should forget your own face. I ask you: Whom does one know better than oneself, and whose face can one see less well than one's own? Can anyone know God, who is undoubtedly incorporeal, if one cannot get knowledge, as you suppose, apart from the form of the body, that is, if only bodies can be known? What sort of a Christian pays such slight attention to the words of God, when discussing such important and difficult matters, that he says, "If the soul is incorporeal, it necessarily has no form"?²⁹ Have you forgotten that you read in scripture of the form of doctrine?³⁰ The form of doctrine, then, is bodily. Have you forgotten that scripture said of Christ Jesus that he was in the form of God before he was clothed with the man?³¹ How then are you going to claim, "If the soul is incorporeal, it necessarily has no form"? You hear scripture speak of the form of God, whom you admit is not bodily, and yet you speak as though form can only be found in bodily things.

22. You also say that "names cease where there is no distinction of form, and the use of names does nothing where there is no designation of persons."³² By this you want to prove that the soul of Abraham was bodily, because the rich man could say, *Father Abraham* (Lk 16:24). We have already said that there is form, even where there is no body. If you think that the use of names does nothing where there are no bodies, count these names, I beg you: *But the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and continence* (Gal 5:22-23). Tell me, do you not recognize the realities of which these are the names, or do you recognize them so that you see in them some bodily lines? I will pass over the rest, but tell me the shape, the members, and the color of love. Unless you yourself are empty, it cannot appear to you as something empty. "He whose help was implored," you say, "certainly appeared as bodily and as having form."³³ If people listen to you, no one will implore the help of God, because no one can see him as bodily.

16, 23. "Finally," you say, "the bodily members described in that passage indicate that there really was a body," and you claim that "the whole head is understood from the eye, since he was said to have raised his eyes, and the mouth is understood from the tongue and the hand from the finger, since it said, *Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue*" (Lk 16:24).³⁴ And, nonetheless, to avoid having to admit a bodily God because of the names of his members, you say that "one should interpret these as incorporeal powers," for you are perfectly correct in defending the incorporeality of God. What is the reason, then, why the names of these members do not lead you to hold that God is a body, but do lead to this in the case of the soul? Is it that, when they are said of a creature, these names are to be taken in their proper sense, but when they

are said of God, they should be interpreted as figures of speech and metaphors? Are you, then, going to attribute wings to us? After all, it was not the creator, but a creature, namely, a human being, who said, "If I shall take to my wings like a dove."³⁵ Moreover, if you say that the rich man had a bodily tongue because he said, *to cool my tongue*, then in us too, while we are still living in the flesh, the tongue itself has bodily hands, because scripture says, *Death and life lie in the hands of the tongue* (Prv 18:21). I do not think that even you consider sin a creature or a body. Why then does it have a face? Do you not hear the words of the psalm, *There is no peace for my bones before the face of my sins* (Ps 38:4)?

24. You think that the bosom of Abraham is bodily, and you claim that his whole body is acknowledged by it.³⁶ On something so important I am afraid that people will think that you are joking and indulging in mockery rather than being sober and serious. You cannot, after all, be so foolish as to think that the bodily bosom of one human being can hold so many souls—in fact, if I may speak as you do—that it can hold all those many bodies of people who have lived well and whom the angels have brought there, as they brought Lazarus. Or do you perhaps think that only that single soul merited to come to that bosom? If you are not joking and do not want to make a childish mistake, interpret Abraham's bosom as the remote and hidden place of rest where Abraham abides. It was called Abraham's, not because it belongs to him alone, but because he was made the father of many nations. He was proposed to them as a model to imitate because of his leadership in faith,³⁷ just as God wanted to be called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, although he is the God of countless people.

Bodies and the Likenesses of Bodies

17, 25. You should not suppose that, in explaining these things, I am denying that it is possible that the soul of a dead person, like one who is dreaming, can have good or bad experiences in the likeness of his body. After all, even in dreams, when we endure some harsh and troublesome experiences, it is certainly we ourselves who do so, and we suffer great pains, except that they disappear when we awake. But to believe that it is bodies by which we are, as it were, carried hither and yon and flit about in our dreams is the mark of a person who has not given sufficient thought to this matter. It is especially from these images of things seen that the soul is proved not to be bodily, unless you are willing to say that those many things besides ourselves which we see in dreams are bodies, namely, the sky, the earth, the sea, the sun, the moon, the stars, rivers, mountains, trees, and animals. One who believes that these are bodies is foolish beyond belief, but they are certainly like bodies. To this kind there also belong those

things which are shown to us by God and signify things, whether in a dream or in an ecstasy. Is there anyone who can investigate or say from what they are made, that is, what their matter is? It is undoubtedly spiritual, not bodily. For such forms like bodies, but not bodies, are formed by the thought of those who are awake and are contained in the depth of memory. When we recall them, they come forth from its most hidden recesses in some marvelous and ineffable way, and they are displayed, as it were, before our eyes. If the soul were a body, it would not be able to grasp in thought so many and such great images of bodies or to retain them in memory. In accord with your definition, "by its corporeal substance [the soul] does not extend beyond its exterior body."³⁸ By what largeness—since it has none—does it grasp the images of such large bodies and spaces and areas?

Why is it surprising that the soul itself appears to itself in the likeness of its own body, even when it appears without its body? After all, it does not appear to itself in dreams with its body, and yet in that very likeness of its body it wanders, as it were, through known and unknown places and experiences many happy and unhappy things. I suspect that even you are not going to dare to say that the shape of the body and members that it seems to itself to have in dreams is a real body. For, if that were so, it would be a real mountain that it seems to climb, and a bodily house it seems to enter, and a real tree with a real body of wood under which it seems to lie, and real water it seems to drink. And all those things, among which the soul is found as though among bodies, will be bodies, if the soul, which is found among all those others under a similar image, is itself a body.

The Vision of Saint Perpetua

18, 26. I must say something to you regarding the records of the visions of the martyrs. After all, you thought that you should use a testimony from them as well.³⁹ Saint Perpetua saw herself in a dream in which she was changed into a man and wrestled with some Egyptian. Who is going to doubt that it was her soul that was in that likeness of the body and not her body? While retaining its feminine sex, her body was lying in bed with its members asleep, when her soul was wrestling in that likeness of a man's body. What are you going to say here? Was that likeness of a man a real body? Or was it not a body, though it bore the likeness of a body? Choose which you prefer. If it was a body, why did it not retain the form of its covering? After all, the soul did not find in the flesh of that woman male sex organs, by which it could be formed as it became more dense and, as you say, "congealed."⁴⁰

Next, I ask you, since, while she was asleep, her body was still living when her soul was wrestling, was the soul enclosed in its covering by all the members

of the living person and did it keep the form of the body from which it was formed? After all, it had not yet left those limbs, as happens in death. It had not yet withdrawn, under compulsion from death, its formed members from those forming members. Where, then, did the soul get the male body in which it saw itself wrestling with its opponent? But if it was not a body and was, nonetheless, something like a body, in which it experienced true pain or true joy, do you finally see how there could be a certain likeness of the body in the soul, without the soul itself being a body?

27. What if something of the sort happens in hell and souls recognize one another there, not by their bodies, but by likenesses of their bodies? After all, when we have painful experiences, even if it is in a dream, although that is the likeness of bodily members, not bodily members, it is not the likeness of pain, but pain. It is the same when we have joyful experiences. But since Saint Perpetua was not yet dead, you are perhaps unwilling to accept this example. And yet, what you understand to be the nature of those likenesses of bodies we have in dreams is a question that is very much to the point. In fact, the whole issue is settled if you admit that they are like bodies, but are not bodies.

Dinocrates, her brother, on the other hand, was dead; she saw him with the wound which he had when he was alive and which brought about his death.⁴¹ When you dealt with amputation of the members, why did you struggle with such great efforts to show that the soul was not cut at the same time? Look, there was a wound in the soul of Dinocrates, which was so serious that it drove the soul from the body, when it was in his body. How, then, is it possible, on your view, that, "when the members of the body are cut away, it pulls itself back from the blow and gathers itself into other parts by becoming more dense, so that a part of it is not amputated by the wound to the body, even if a member is cut away while one is asleep and does not know it?"⁴² You certainly credit it with great vigilance. For, even if it is engrossed with visions in dreams, if a blow should be struck, even though it does not know where the flesh will be hit, it withdraws with foresight and agility so that it cannot be struck and harmed or cut. And yet, you do not notice, my wise friend, that, if the soul withdrew from that spot, it would not feel the blow. Find an answer that you can make to this question. How does the soul snatch away its parts and hide them within so that the soul itself is not amputated or harmed where the member of the body is amputated or struck? Consider Dinocrates and tell me why his soul did not withdraw from the part of the body which was destroyed by the deadly wound so that there was not produced in the soul what was visible on his face even after the death of the body.

Or do you perhaps now prefer us to believe that these are likenesses of bodies rather than bodies so that, just as what was not a wound appears as a wound, so what is not a body appears as a body? For, if the soul can be wounded by those

who wound the body, must one not fear that it can be killed by those who kill the body? The Lord's testimony is perfectly clear that this is not possible.⁴³ And the soul of Dinocrates could not, nonetheless, die from what killed his body, and it appeared to be wounded, just as the body was wounded, because it was not a body, but had in the likeness of the body the likeness of a wound. But in what was not a true body there was the true misery of the soul, which was signified by the appearance of a bodily wound, and by the prayers of his holy sister he merited to be set free from that true misery.

28. Now what does it mean to say "that the soul receives its form from the body and is extended and grows with the growth of the body"?⁴⁴ You fail to notice how monstrous the soul of a youth or old man turns out, if his arm is cut off when he is an infant? "For the hand of the soul," as you say, "pulls back, so that it is not amputated as well with the hand of the body, and it encloses itself in other parts of the body by becoming more dense."⁴⁵ Accordingly, as small as the part of the body was from which that arm of the soul took its form, so small it will be retained wherever it is retained, because it lost the form of the body by whose growth it too could grow. Hence, the soul of a youth or old man, who lost a hand when he was little, leaves the body with two hands, for, because it took flight, the one hand was not amputated with the body. But the one hand is the hand of a youth or old man, while the other is that of an infant, as it was at first. Believe me, it is not the form of the body that makes such souls; it is, rather, the deformity of error that imagines them.

I do not think that you can be rescued from this error unless, with God's help, you carefully consider the visions of dreamers and come to know from them that there are some things which are not bodies, but the likenesses of bodies. For, though those things which we imagine as like bodies fall within that kind, nonetheless, in the case of the dead, we draw a more solid conjecture from those who are asleep. After all, there was no point in holy scripture referring to those who are dead as sleeping,⁴⁶ if sleep is not in some sense the brother of death.⁴⁷

19, 29. Hence, if the soul were a body and if the shape in which it sees itself in a dream were bodily, because it was the expression of the body, no human being with a bodily member amputated would see himself in a dream without the member he lacks, but would see himself whole, because nothing of his soul was amputated. But since people at times see themselves as whole and at times as they are with some part amputated, what does this fact teach us but that the soul, as with other things that it perceives in dreams, has its body now this way, now that, not a real body, but the likeness of a body? But its joy or sadness, delight or disgust is real, whether it is over bodies or likenesses of bodies.

Did you yourself not say and say quite truly that nourishment and clothing are not necessary for the soul, but for the body?⁴⁸ Why then did the rich man desire a drop of water in hell? Why did holy Samuel appear after death clothed

in his usual garment, as you yourself also mentioned?⁴⁹ Did the former want to repair the deterioration of his soul as well as of his flesh by liquid nourishment? Did the latter depart from the body with his clothes on? But the first felt a real pain by which his soul was tortured, though he did not have a real body for which he sought nourishment. The second was able to appear with his clothes on, though he was not a body; rather, both his soul and his garment bore the likeness of a body. After all, the soul does not extend itself and pull itself back in its clothing, as it does in members of the body, so that it is also formed by the clothing.

30. Who is capable of investigating the power of thought which even souls which are not good will receive after death, once they have been freed from the burden of corruptible bodies so that they can see and recognize by their interior senses souls that are equally bad or even good? Will they recognize them, not by their bodies, but by the likenesses of their bodies, or will they recognize them by the good or bad dispositions of their minds, in which there is nothing like the lines of bodily members? As a result, when he was being tormented, the rich man recognized Father Abraham, whose bodily shape he had not known, because his soul was able to retain the incorporeal likeness of his body.

Are we ever correct in saying that we have known someone, unless we were able to know the person's soul and will, which certainly do not have mass or colors? Thus we know ourselves more certainly than others, because we know our own conscience and will. We clearly see them, and yet we do not see in them any likeness of a body. We do not see them in others, though they are present, even though we know, recall, and think of their faces, when they are absent. But we cannot in that way know, recall, and think about our own face, and yet we say with complete truth that we know ourselves better than we know them. And so it is clear where one finds the better and truer knowledge of a person.

The Soul's Three Levels of Knowledge

20, 31. There is, then, something in the soul by which we perceive real bodies; we do this by the five senses of the body. And there is something else apart from these senses by which we see things that are like bodies, but are not bodies; by this latter means we see ourselves only as being like bodies. There is still something else by which we see things which are neither bodies nor likenesses of bodies, such as faith, hope, and love. We see them with more certainty and more constancy and without any colors or dimensions and other characteristics like those. Where ought we to be more present and dwell with a greater familiarity? Where ought we to be renewed according to the image of him who created us?⁵⁰ Is it not in that which I mentioned in the third place? After all, there we will certainly not have any sex nor any likeness of sex.

32. If that form of the male or female soul differentiated by male and female members is not a likeness of the body, but a body, whether you like it or not, it is male; whether you like it or not, it is female, depending upon whether it appears either as male or female. But suppose, in accord with your opinion, that the soul is a body and a living body and has large and hanging breasts, but no beard, and has a womb and the genital organs that a woman's body has, but that it is not female. Will I not say what is true and more logical, if I say that it also has eyes, a tongue, fingers, and other such bodily members, but that all this is a likeness of a body, not a body. People can test what I am saying for themselves when they imagine the body of absent persons, or they can surely test this, when they recall figures from their dreams, their own and those of others. But you are never going to find an example in the whole of nature of this monster where you have a true, living, and female body without the female sex.

33. What you say about the phoenix has nothing to do with the present question.⁵¹ The phoenix symbolizes the resurrection of bodies, but does not deny the sex of souls, if it is in fact, as some believe, reborn from its death. I suspect that you thought that your discourse would not be very convincing, if you did not declaim at length about the phoenix in the manner of an adolescent. Does its body, after all, have male genital organs without its being male, or does its body have female organs without its being a female? You must pay attention to what you say, to what you are trying to defend, to what you are trying to convince us of. You say, "The soul spread out through all the members became solid through congealing and from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, from the innermost marrow to the surface of the skin, the whole soul received the form of the body. Accordingly, in the body of a female the soul received whatever inner organs females have, and this is a real body and these are real members, but it is not, nonetheless, female."⁵²

Why, I ask you, are there all these female members in a real and living body without its being female? And why are there all these male members in a body without its being male? Who would presume to believe, say, and teach such things? Is it because souls do not generate souls? Then, neither are he-mules and she-mules male and female. Or is it because they could not have intercourse without bodies of flesh? But those who have been castrated have lost this ability too, and though they can neither perform the act nor achieve its effect, they have not lost their sex, since the shape, however slight, of the male members remains. No one ever has claimed that a eunuch was not male.

What is more, according to you, the souls of eunuchs also have their entire testicles, and if the genital organs of someone were totally removed, they will, of course, remain whole and absolutely entire in their soul. "After all, it knows how to withdraw," as you say, "when that part of the flesh begins to be cut away so that the form which was taken from that part is not lost when the part from

which it was taken is amputated. Rather, though it solidified when it was infused, it is still snatched away by a very rapid movement and is hidden within so that it is kept safe. And yet, though one brings the whole of the male genital organs with one, one is not male in hell who, since he did not have them in the body, was male only on account of the place for them.”⁵³ These statements are false, my son; if you do not want the soul to have a sex, do not make it a body either.

21, 34. Not every likeness of a body is a body. Go to sleep, and you will see. But when you wake up, carefully distinguish what you saw. After all, in a dream you will appear to yourself as bodily; that will not be your body, but your soul, and it will not be a real body, but the likeness of a body. Your body, after all, will be lying down; it will be walking about. The tongue of your body will be silent; it will speak. Your eyes will be closed; it will see. And, of course, the members of your body will lie there alive, not dead. Accordingly, that form of your soul, solidified, as you believe, has not yet been withdrawn, as it were, from its covering, and the likeness of your flesh is seen in it whole and entire. To this kind of bodily likenesses, which are not bodies, but which seem like bodies, there pertain all those things in the holy books which you read about, but do not understand, concerning visions of the prophets. They signify things done in time, past, present, or future. You are deceived by them, not because they are themselves deceptive, but because you do not interpret them as they should be interpreted. After all, in the book in which we find the vision of the souls of the martyrs, we also find in the same revelation the Lamb as though slain that had seven horns.⁵⁴ There we find horses and other animals represented, as was fitting. There, finally, we find that the stars fell and the heaven was folded, as a book.⁵⁵ And yet the world did not collapse. If, then, we interpret all these things wisely, we do not say that those were real bodies, though we do say that the visions were true.

35. A really careful examination of this sort of likeness of bodies would demand a more lengthy discourse.⁵⁶ We would have to ask whether the angels, either good or bad ones, appear in this way, when they appear in the form of human beings or of other bodies. Or do they have real bodies and appear in the reality of those bodies instead? Or in dreams and ecstasy are they seen, not in these bodies, but in likenesses of bodies, while to those who are awake, they present their real bodies to be seen and, if the occasion demands, to be touched? I do not, however, think that I should investigate and discuss these questions in this book. For the present, I have said enough about the incorporeality of the soul. If you prefer to believe that it is bodily, you must first define what a body is, so that we do not carry on a pointless argument over the word, while we are in agreement about the reality. I believe that you are wise enough to notice the great absurdities which result, if you think of the soul as having a body of the sort that all educated people call bodies, that is, ones that have the dimensions

of length, breadth, and height and occupy smaller spaces with their smaller parts and larger ones with their larger parts.

An Examination of the Language of Scripture

22, 36. There remains for me to show how it is not the entire soul, but a part of it, that is properly called a spirit. The apostle says, *Your whole being: spirit and soul and body* (1 Thes 5:23), and the Book of Job says it much more clearly, *You have separated my soul from my spirit* (Jb 7:15 LXX). And yet the entire soul is also called by this name. This too may seem to be much more a question of words than of reality. After all, it is agreed that there is something in the soul that is called spirit in the proper sense and that, if one leaves this part aside, one speaks of the soul in the proper sense. Hence, there is no dispute about the realities themselves, especially since I claim that the same thing that you do is properly called spirit, that is, the part by which we reason and understand, when we speak of these parts separately. For example, the apostle says, *Your whole being: spirit and soul and body* (1 Thes 5:23). He also seems to call this spirit "the mind," when he says, *With the mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin* (Rom 7:25). For the idea is this: *And the flesh lusts against the spirit, but the spirit against the flesh* (Gal 5:17), so that what he above called "the mind," he is here understood to call "the spirit." It is not, as you suppose, that "the whole which is composed of soul and spirit is called mind."⁵⁷ I have no idea where you got that. We usually call only our rational and intellectual part our mind. Accordingly, when the same apostle said, *Be renewed in the spirit of your mind* (Eph 4:23), what else did he mean but, "Be renewed in your mind"? Thus, the spirit of the mind is nothing but the mind, just as the body of the flesh is nothing but the flesh. Scripture also says, *in stripping off the body of the flesh* (Col 2:11), where it calls the flesh the body of the flesh.

He, of course, also speaks of the human spirit in another sense and clearly distinguishes it from the mind. *If, after all, I pray in tongues*, he says, *my spirit prays, but my mind has no fruit* (1 Cor 14:14). But we are not now speaking of that spirit which is distinct from the mind. This sense of spirit has difficulties of its own. After all, the divine scriptures refer to spirit in many ways and with many different meanings. We are now dealing with the spirit by which we reason, understand, and are wise. We are agreed in calling it spirit in the proper sense so that it is not the entire soul, but a part of it. If you, nonetheless, deny that the soul is a spirit, because its intelligence taken separately is called a spirit, you will be able to deny that the whole family of Jacob is called Israel, because, the ten tribes in Samaria taken separately were called Israel, with Judah left out.⁵⁸ But why should we delay over this anymore?

23, 37. Now pay attention to a passage from which we will more easily show that the soul is also called spirit. When you hear or read what scripture said at

the death of the Lord, *And having bowed his head, he handed over his spirit* (Jn 19:30), you want us to understand it in the sense that it signifies the whole by the part, not in the sense that the soul can also be called spirit. In order to prove what I claim with greater ease, I will use you yourself as a witness, for it will be quicker and handier. After all, you defined “spirit” so that it is clear that animals do not have a spirit, but a soul; they are, of course, called irrational, because they do not have the power of intelligence and reason. Hence, when you counseled human beings to know their nature, you spoke as follows: “God who is good did not, after all, create anything without a reason, and he made human beings rational animals, capable of intelligence, possessed of reason and quick in mind, to govern all non-rational beings by their wise providence.”⁵⁹ With these words of yours you have stated quite clearly a point that is entirely correct, namely, that human beings are capable of intelligence and possessed of reason—something which irrational animals certainly do not have. Hence, on the basis of God’s testimony you compared those people who do not understand to animals that do not, of course, have understanding.⁶⁰ This point is made in another passage, *Do not be like a horse or a mule which does not have understanding* (Ps 32:9). Since this is the case, notice too the words by which you defined and described spirit, when you tried to distinguish it from the soul. “This soul,” you said, “which has its origin from the breath of God, could not exist without its own mind and innermost intellect, which is the spirit.”⁶¹ And a little later you said, “And though the soul animates the body, nonetheless, that which perceives, that which is wise, that which is vigorous is necessarily spirit.”⁶² Again a little later you said, “The soul is one thing; the spirit is another, the wisdom and mind of the soul.”⁶³ By these words you indicate quite clearly what you take the human spirit to be, namely, the rational part of us by which the soul senses and understands—not in the way we sense with the bodily senses, but in the way the inner sense does, from which it was called “sentiment” (*sententia*).⁶⁴ This is undoubtedly the reason why we are regarded as superior to the animals, for they are without reason. Animals, then, do not have a spirit, that is, an intellect and a perception of reason and wisdom, but only a soul. Scripture says of them, *Let the waters bring forth the reptiles with living souls* (Gn 1:20) and *Let the earth bring forth the living soul* (Gn 1:24).

So that you may fully and clearly know that what is a soul is also called spirit in the language of the word of God, the soul of an animal is also called a spirit. Animals certainly do not have the spirit which you, my friend, defined and distinguished from the soul. Hence, it is clear that the soul of an animal can be correctly called by this general term, as we read in Ecclesiastes, *Who knows whether the spirit of a human being rises upward and whether the spirit of an animal goes down into the earth?* (Eccl 3:21). So too, scripture said of the devastation of the flood, *There died all the flesh that moved over the earth: that*

of birds, cattle, tame and wild animals, and every reptile that moves over the earth, and every human being and all things whatsoever that have the spirit of life (Gn 7:21-22). Here all ambiguity and doubt are removed, and we understand that "spirit" is the general term for "soul." The meaning of this word is so broad that even God is called "spirit,"⁶⁵ and though this breath of air is bodily, it is called *the spirit of the storm* (Ps 107:25 and 148:8). For this reason, the soul is also called "spirit," I think, in accord with the text, *You will take away their spirit, and they will die* (Ps 104:29), and again, *Their spirit will depart, and it will return to the earth* (Ps 146:4), that is, the body will return to its dust. Therefore, the soul is called "spirit," because of the fact that it is spiritual; it is called "soul," because it ensouls, that is, gives life to, the body. I suspect⁶⁶ that, having been advised by these testimonies which I have cited from the sacred writings in which the soul of an animal, that does not have understanding, is called "spirit," you will not deny this in the future. Hence, if you grasp and understand what we have discussed concerning the incorporeal soul, there is no reason for you to be displeased with me, because I said that I know that it is not a body, but a spirit, because I have shown both that it is not a body and that it is called by the generic name, "spirit."

Summary and Conclusion

24, 38. Hence, pick up and read with love these books which I have written to you with love. Listen to what you yourself said in the beginning of your first book, and do not insist, as you said, on defending your own view, if you are shown that it cannot be proved.⁶⁷ Especially avoid those eleven points about which I warned you in the previous book. Do not say that the soul comes from God in such a way that he created it, not out of nothing or out of another nature, but out of his own nature. Do not say that he gives souls through endless time and always, as he who gives them always exists. Do not say that the soul lost some merit through the flesh which it had before being in the flesh. Do not say that the soul recovers its pristine state through the flesh and is reborn through the flesh through which it merited to be defiled. Do not say that the soul merited to be sinful before all sin. Do not say that infants who have died without the baptism of rebirth attain the pardon of original sins. Do not say that those whom the Lord predestined for baptism can die beforehand and that what the Lord predestined is not accomplished in them. Do not say that scripture said about those who expire before they are baptized, *He was taken away so that evil would not change his mind* (Wis 4:11), as well as the other passages with this sense. Do not say that they have outside the kingdom of God some dwellings which the Lord said were many and in his Father's house.⁶⁸ Do not say that the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ should be offered for those who have left the

body without the baptism of Christ. Do not say that some of those who die without the baptism of Christ are for a time admitted to paradise and afterward obtain the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven. Avoid these points especially, my son, and do not take pleasure in the name, Vincent, if you wish to be a victor over error. Do not suppose that you know something when you do not know it; rather, learn how to be without knowledge in order that you may come to know. After all, one does not sin by not knowing something in the hidden works of God, but by rashly defending what is not known as if it were known and advancing and defending what is false instead of what is true.

I think that I have convinced you, my friend of the following points: That I ought not to be rebuked for not knowing whether human souls are created new or come from their parents. In any case, it is not permissible to doubt that they were made by God the creator, though not from his substance. Or that, if I am to be rebuked, I ought to be rebuked by someone who can teach me and can remove my ignorance. That souls have in themselves incorporeal likenesses of bodies, but souls themselves are not bodies. That, without giving up the distinction between soul and spirit, every kind of soul can also be called "spirit." But if I have failed to convince you of these, the readers will be better judges of whether I ought to have convinced you by what I said.

39. If you would like to know the other points—and they are many!—which I think need correction in your books, it would not be a terrible burden for you to come to me, not as a disciple to his master, but as a young man to an old one, as a strong man to one who is weak. After all, even if you should not have published them, once a person has been corrected, it is a sign of greater and truer glory to find fault with oneself in true confession than to receive praise from the lips of anyone in error. And yet, I am inclined to believe that not all those who listened to the reading of your books and praised them previously held those views which sound doctrine rejects or agreed with you on them. Rather, as the attention of their mind was caught by the force and sweep of your reading, they were hardly able to pay attention to these matters. Those who were able to notice them praised in you, not the clarity of the truth, but the richness of your language and the ability and talent of your mind. Generally, after all, we praise and love eloquence in a young man of promise, even if he does not yet have the maturity and reliability of a teacher. Hence, in order that you may have correct views and in order that what you say may be able, not only to please, but to edify others, you must exercise care over your discourses away from the applause of others.

Notes

1. See Letter 190 and *Revisions* II, 56 (83).
2. Vincent Victor is here addressing the priest, Peter, and is referring to Augustine's Letter 190.

3. Vincent Victor.
4. See Gn 2:7.
5. Vincent Victor.
6. See III, 4, 4-5, 7.
7. See 2 Cor 12:9.
8. See Mt 26:35.
9. See 2 Cor 12:2-4.
10. See 2 Cor 12:7-9.
11. See 1 Cor 2:10.
12. Vincent Victor; see IV, 2, 2.
13. Augustine refers Vincent Victor to the first book of this work in which he examines the scriptural texts which allegedly solve the question of the origin of souls.
14. Vincent Victor; see I, 19, 33 and II, 7, 11.
15. Vincent Victor; see II, 10, 14 and 12, 16.
16. See Rom 5:18.
17. See Jn 3:3.
18. Vincent Victor.
19. On this point Vincent Victor differs from Tertullian; see II, 5, 9.
20. Vincent Victor. The language and argumentation of Vincent Victor reflects those of Tertullian. See *De anima* 9, 5 and *Aduersus Praxean* 7, 7 and 8.
21. Vincent Victor; he draws his inspiration from Tertullian, *De anima* 9, 7 and 8.
22. Vincent Victor; see Tertullian, *De anima* 22, 2.
23. Vincent Victor.
24. See Col 3:10.
25. The Latin expression is literally "head and ships."
26. See Rom 12:2.
27. See Rom 8:6.
28. Vincent Victor. See Lk 16:19-31, as well as Tertullian, *De anima* 7, where he appeals to the same text.
29. Vincent Victor.
30. See Rom 6:17.
31. See Phil 2:6.
32. Vincent Victor.
33. Vincent Victor.
34. Vincent Victor.
35. See Ps 139:9 and 55:7; Augustine conflates the two passages.
36. Vincent Victor, but not a direct quotation.
37. See Gn 17:4-5 and Rom 4:17-22.
38. Vincent Victor.
39. Tertullian too appealed to such a vision to prove the corporeality of the soul; see *De anima* 9, 4.
40. See IV, 14, 20.
41. The wound was a cancer or an ulcer on the face; see *The Passion of Saint Perpetua* 7.
42. Vincent Victor.
43. See Mt 10:28.
44. Vincent Victor.
45. Vincent Victor.
46. See 1 Thes 4:12.
47. See Vergil, *Aeneid* VI, 278.
48. See II, 6, 8.
49. See 1 Sm 28:14.
50. See Col 3:10.
51. See Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 13, where he appeals to the example of the phoenix as reproducing non-sexually.
52. Vincent Victor.

53. Vincent Victor.

54. See Rv 5:6.

55. See Rv 6:13.14.

56. Augustine provides a longer discussion of this sort of vision and its objects in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* XII, where he calls this type of vision spiritual vision as opposed to corporeal and intellectual vision.

57. Vincent Victor.

58. See 1 Kgs 12:20.

59. Vincent Victor; see above IV, 2, 2.

60. See Ps 49:13, cited by Vincent Victor in IV, 2, 2.

61. Vincent Victor; see above IV, 14, 20.

62. Vincent Victor.

63. Vincent Victor.

64. Quintillian says that the ancients called “*sententia*” what they perceived by the mind (*Institutiones oratoriae* VIII, 5).

65. See Jn 4:24.

66. The bracketed text is not found in any manuscripts or editions previous to the CSEL edition; it has been inserted from Eugippius, *Excerpta* 185: CSEL 9/1, 629. It is debatable whether the text is authentic. The citation of Ps 145:4 contains the plural *their: eorum*, which is not found in the Vulgate or Septuagint, but is found in Eugippius. Note how the author explains that it is the body that will return to the earth, thus avoiding what might otherwise seem the sense of the text.

67. See II, 16, 22.

68. See Jn 14:2.

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(prepared by Michael Dolan)

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