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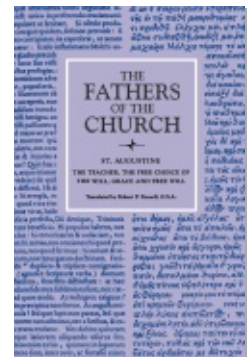
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*THE FREE CHOICE OF
THE WILL*

(De libero arbitrio)

INTRODUCTION

SAINST AUGUSTINE'S *De libero arbitrio* is the last and most important in the series of Dialogues begun after his conversion to the Catholic faith in the late summer of 386. While preparing for baptism at the country villa of Cassiciacum, not far from Milan, the neo-convert conducted discussions of a predominantly philosophical nature in the company of his mother, Monica, his son, Adeodatus, and a few pupils and friends. To this earliest literary period belong the Dialogues, *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita*, and *De ordine*, which deal, respectively, with the problem of certitude, human happiness, Divine Providence and the problem of evil. Next in order is the *Soliloquia*,¹ a kind of contrived dialogue between Augustine's reason and himself, in which the two questions basic to Augustinian philosophy are examined, namely, God and the soul.² The problem of the immortality of the soul is discussed more fully in his next work, *De immortalitate animae*, composed at Milan, though not in dialogue form, while Augustine was a candidate for baptism. A further study on the soul, *De quantitate animae*, was written the following year at Rome shortly before Augustine's return to Africa. While a member of the small lay-community which he had established in his native town of Tagaste, Augustine composed the well-known dialogue, *De magistro*, which reproduces discussions with his son, Adeodatus, on the function of language and the role of the teacher in learning, including some of his earliest statements on the celebrated

¹ Augustine himself coined the term *soliloquia*. Cf. *Soliloquia* 2.7.14; *Retract.* 1.4.1.

² Translations of these four Dialogues are available in Vol. [5] of this series (Writings of St. Augustine I, New York 1948).

doctrine of divine illumination. Although begun at Rome between 387 and 388, the *De libero arbitrio* was not completed until after his ordination to the priesthood at Hippo in 391. With the completion of this work, not later than 395, there comes to an end the so-called philosophical period of Augustine's writings which, for the most part, contain personal reflections upon the great themes of classical philosophy, examined in the light of a reason already illumined by the Christian revelation.

The *De libero arbitrio* is among Augustine's first works against the Manichees in a prolonged polemic extending over a period of almost twenty years. It is not surprising that his first polemic should have been directed against the very system which had won his allegiance for nearly ten years, and which continued to pose a serious threat to the Catholic faith, not only in North Africa, but throughout the whole Roman Empire. In this work, Augustine readily acknowledges that the facile and convenient solution of the problem of evil proposed by the Manichees had been a powerful factor in his decision to join the sect in his twentieth year.³ According to the metaphysical dualism of Manes, man was composed of two antagonistic elements derived from two eternal and conflicting principles of Light and Darkness, corresponding to Good and Evil respectively. Accordingly, the conflict in man between good and evil represented merely one aspect of the universal conflict between these ultimate cosmic forces which, in effect, exonerated man from any moral responsibility for his conduct.⁴ The principal scope of the *De libero arbitrio* is a refutation of this dualistic doctrine, with special reference to the nature and origin of moral evil, and to the created

³ 1.2.4.

⁴ The best modern exposition of Manichaeism is that by H. C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme: son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Paris 1949). A good English account, based largely upon the former, is found in the recent biography by G. Bonner, *Saint Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (London 1963) 157-192. Cf. also J. Ries, "Manichaeism," *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 9.153-160.

will as its sole and adequate cause. As early as 386, Augustine had raised the problem of evil from the standpoint of a universal providence in the dialogue, *De ordine*, but had to abandon the original plan of the work almost from the start, owing to the inability of his youthful pupils to cope with so difficult a problem at the time. As a result, these two books deal largely with the proper order to be observed in studies so that the mind may pass more securely from the consideration of things corporeal to the contemplation of incorporeal reality.⁵

When Augustine had completed the *De libero arbitrio*, he little realized that some of his own weapons employed against the Manichees would, ironically, be turned upon him during a later polemic that was to occupy the last twenty years of his life. It was at Rome, about the year 410, that the future heresiarch, Pelagius, first came upon this striking sentence from the tenth book of Augustine's *Confessions*: "Grant what thou dost command, and command what thou wilt." Pelagius, we are told, was infuriated by this implicit denial of man's moral sufficiency and took sharp issue with his companion, a friend of Augustine, who had quoted the passage to him. The whole affair is described in *De dono perseverantiae*⁶ by Augustine, who dates the origin of the Pelagian controversy from this episode.

In essence, the doctrine of Pelagius involved a denial of the absolute gratuity and necessity of grace for man's moral perfection, based upon the conviction that man can fulfill the Law perfectly and merit salvation by his own unaided will. As the controversy progressed, Pelagius occasionally made the concession that grace might make it easier for a

⁵ Cf. *Retract.* 1.3.1. The *Retractations*, in two books, present a general review of Augustine's works, excluding the *Letters* and *Sermons*. The true scope of this work, composed between 426 and 427, is more accurately conveyed by the title *De recensione librorum*, indicated by Possidius, Augustine's first biographer; cf. his *Vita* 28 (translated in this series, Vol. 15 [New York 1952] 108).

⁶ 20.53.

man to lead a good life, but this in no way altered his essential position that man alone is the cause of his own salvation.⁷ From the notion of moral sufficiency, Pelagius was logically led to a denial of original sin and of the necessity for baptism.

From the very beginning of the controversy, Pelagius strongly insisted that his teaching on man's freedom and natural capacity to merit salvation were in substantial agreement with the views expressed by Augustine in the *De libero arbitrio*, and that Augustine had abandoned these in favor of a later and novel doctrine on grace. To support the charge Pelagius cleverly extracted a number of passages from the Dialogue, which he interpreted in favor of man's moral suffering. In the general review of his books, the *Retractations* (426-427), the aged Bishop insists upon the following points in his defense against this Pelagian accusation. First, there is no doctrinal incompatibility between his early teaching on free will and his later and more explicit teaching on grace. And, since he was occupied at the time in refuting the Manichees, it was sufficient to establish that, while God is the sole and supreme Cause of all that exists, He is not the Author of evil, which has its adequate cause in the created will. Secondly, though the emphasis in the Dialogue is on man's free will, there are explicit references to grace, and an even larger number of passages where the doctrine is clearly implied. Augustine further insists that certain passages of the *De libero arbitrio* would appear even to have anticipated the later errors of Pelagius. The Saint's grave concern to vindicate his doctrinal consistency and to exonerate the Dialogue from any Pelagian interpretation, is evidenced by the minute and extensive treatment accorded this work in the *Retractations*.⁸

Several factors may explain the importance and lasting value of this early work on free will. It is not only one of the earliest, but also one of his more definitive refutations of basic Manichaean doctrine. In a letter to Jerome, some twenty years

⁷ Cf. *Ep.* 186.

⁸ A translation of the relevant chapter is found below, pp. 235-241.

later, Augustine states that the book was widely circulated from the time it appeared, and that it is still read by many.⁹ Earlier he had recommended it to his Manichaean adversary, Secundinus, against whom he wrote about the year 406.¹⁰ Again, owing to the comprehensive scope of the subject matter treated in connection with the central theme, the work emerges as a kind of compendium of Augustinian philosophy, which is the main reason why it has survived its usefulness as a mere anti-Manichaean polemic. An eminent French scholar has called it the most mature and solid of all the earlier Dialogues and writings of the Saint.¹¹

In addition to its principal theme, freedom of the will and the origin of moral evil, those three books resume and develop more fully a number of philosophical notions found in the earlier Dialogues. As a result, there is scarcely a single topic of major importance for philosophy that is not brought to bear in some way on the central and unifying theme. Subjects discussed include the existence of certitude, the internal and external senses, being and its properties, the theory of illumination, the spirituality and immortality of the soul, beatitude, eternal and natural law, and the virtues. Particularly noteworthy is Augustine's celebrated proof for God's existence in the second book, the most detailed and systematic exposition of the argument to be found in all his works. Finally, there is the characteristic and important teaching on the relation of faith to reason and on the role of faith in the development of what may be termed a Christian philosophy. The Dialogue itself represents an early and faithful illustration of the familiar Augustinian principle "believe that you may understand,"¹² which centuries later would find its definitive and well-known formulation in Anselm's "*Credo ut intelligam*."

⁹ *Ep.* 166.3.7.

¹⁰ *Contra Secundinum* 11.

¹¹ C. Boyer, in *Gregorianum* 20 (1939) 449.

¹² *Tractatus in evangelium Ioannis* 29.6.

From the testimony of the *Retractations*, it is clear that the three books entitled *De libero arbitrio* resulted from discussions held during Augustine's second sojourn in Rome the year before his final return to North Africa, late in 388.¹³ The first book, and quite probably the first part of book two, were completed at Rome; the remaining parts of book two and the third book were not completed until about 395, four years after Augustine's ordination to the priesthood at Hippo Regius in 391. Despite the silence on the part of the manuscript tradition and the *Retractations* concerning the identity of Augustine's interlocutor, his Letter to Evodius, written in 415, seems to leave no reasonable doubt that it was the latter.¹⁴ According to the *Confessions*, our main source for a knowledge of his early years, Evodius was, like Augustine, a native of Tagaste, and had served in the military before his conversion to the Catholic faith in Milan.¹⁵ He accompanied Augustine to Cassiciacum in the late summer of 386, and was present at Monica's death at Ostia the following year.¹⁶ He then returned with Augustine to Rome for a year, where he participated in the two Dialogues, *De quantitate animae* and *De libero arbitrio*. Upon returning to Africa, he lived with Augustine both at Tagaste and at Hippo until his appointment as Bishop of Uzala in 396.

The present translation has been made from the critical text edited by William M. Green, in *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 74 (Vienna 1956).¹⁷

¹³ 1.9.1.

¹⁴ 162.2. The remaining extant correspondence between Augustine and Evodius includes the following: Augustine to Evodius, Letters 159, 164, 169; Evodius to Augustine, Letters 158, 160, 163.

¹⁵ 9.8.17.

¹⁶ 9.12.31.

¹⁷ The traditional division into chapters and sections has been used, however, in preference to Green's new system of sectioning.

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THE FREE CHOICE OF THE WILL

BOOK ONE

Chapter I

1. *Evodius*. Tell me, please, whether God is not the cause of evil.¹

Augustine. I will tell you if you make it clear what kind of evil you are inquiring about, for we usually speak of evil in two ways: first, when we say that someone has done evil; second, when someone has suffered something evil.

Ev. I am eager to know about both kinds.

Aug. But if you know or take it on faith that God is good (and it would be irreligious to think differently), then He does no evil. Again, if we acknowledge that God is just (and to deny this would be sacrilegious), then, as He bestows rewards upon the good, so does He mete out punishments to the wicked. To those who suffer them, such punishments are of course evil. Accordingly, if no one suffers penalties unjustly (and this we must believe since we believe that the universe is ruled by Divine Providence), God is not at all the Cause of the first kind of evil, though He is of the second.

Ev. Is there not, therefore, some other cause of that evil which we have found cannot be God?

Aug. There certainly is, for, without a cause, it could not come to exist. But if you ask me who that cause is, no answer

¹ The opening words of the Dialogue are suggestive of a variant title of the work supported by early manuscripts and by the designation given by Possidius in his *Indiculum*, namely, *Unde malum et de libero arbitrio tres libri*.

is possible, for it is no one person but rather each evil man that is the author of his own misdeeds. If you have any doubt of this, take note of our earlier remark that evil deeds are punished by God's justice. For unless they were committed voluntarily, their punishment would not be just.²

2. *Ev.* I fail to see how anyone can sin who has not learned to do so. If this is true, I want to know who that someone is from whom we have learned to sin.

Aug. Do you look upon learning as something good?

Ev. Who would dare say that learning is something evil?

Aug. What if it is neither good nor evil?

Ev. I think it is good.

Aug. It certainly is, since, in fact, knowledge is imparted or awakened in us by learning, and it is only in this way that something is learned.³ Or do you have a different idea?

Ev. I think that only good things come to us by learning.

Aug. See to it then that you do not say that evil is learned, for the word "learning" derives solely from the verb "to learn."

Ev. If evil things are not learned, then how is it that man can do them?

Aug. Possibly, evil comes about from the fact that man turns his back upon learning and estranges himself from it. But whether this, or something else, is the reason, this much is certainly clear, that since learning is something good, and "learning" comes from "to learn," it is altogether impossible to learn things evil. For, if evil is learned, it is included in learning and thus, learning will not be something good. But learning is, according to your own admission, something good. Consequently, evil is not something learned, and it is pointless for you to ask who it is that teaches us wrongdoing. But if evil is something learned, we learn how to avoid it, not

2 This is the first of many passages found in the *Retractations* (1.9.3) quoted by Pelagius in favor of his teaching on grace. The entire chapter from the *Retractations* (1.9) is translated below (pp. 235-241).

3 A passing reference to the theory of "illumination" already suggested in the *Soliloquia* and stated for the first time in the *De magistro*.

how to do it. Hence, to do evil is nothing else than to stray from the path of learning.

3. Ev. I really think there are two kinds of learning: one, teaching us to do good; the other, to do evil. But when you asked whether learning was something good, I replied that it was, for the love of this very good had taken such hold on my mind that I was thinking of that kind of learning which concerns good conduct. But now I realize that there is another kind of learning which I declare, beyond any shadow of doubt, to be something evil, and I am looking for its author.

Aug. Do you at least think that understanding is something that can only be good?

Ev. So good, in fact, that I fail to see how anything else in man can be better, and I could not possibly say that any kind of understanding is evil.

Aug. Suppose the person being taught does not understand. Can you think of him as having learned?

Ev. Not at all.

Aug. If, then, every kind of understanding is good and no one learns who does not understand, then whoever is learning is doing good. For everyone who learns, understands, and everyone who understands is doing good. Consequently, whoever is looking for the author through whom we learn something is really looking for the author of our good actions. Put an end, therefore, to your wish to find an evil teacher of some kind or other. For if he is evil, he is not a teacher; if he is a teacher, he is not evil.

Chapter 2

4. Ev. Now that you force me to admit that we do not learn how to do evil, go on and tell me the reason why we do evil.

Aug. You raise a question which sorely perplexed me while yet a young man, and one which in my weariness drove me into the company of heretics and resulted in my fall.¹ I was so injured by this fall, so weighed down by the vast accumulation of nonsensical fables that, had not the love of finding the truth obtained divine aid for me, I would have been unable to rise from this fall and to breathe again in the former atmosphere of free inquiry. And as I took great pains to extricate myself from this perplexity, so I will follow the same procedure with you that led to my liberation. For God will be at hand and will enable us to understand what we have believed. We know well that we are following the course enjoined by the Prophet who says: "Unless you believe, you shall not understand."² We believe that all things in existence are from the one God, though He is not the author of sin. But this problem confronts the mind: if sins come from souls created by God, while these souls in turn come from God, how is it that sins are not at once chargeable to God?

5. *Ev.* You have just stated very clearly the problem which plagued my mind so much and which forcibly drew me into this inquiry.

Aug. Take courage, and go on believing what you believe, for there is no better belief even though the reason for it is hidden from me. To hold God in the highest esteem is most truly the beginning of all piety. Anyone who does not believe that God is Almighty or absolutely unchangeable, or that He is the Creator of all things good, though surpassing them in excellence, or that He is also a most just Ruler of all that He has created, or that He had need of no other

1 Although the dualistic solution of the problem of evil figured largely in his decision to embrace Manichaeism, Augustine acknowledges that he was also influenced by the professed rationalism of the system and by its claim to a knowledge of the secrets of physical nature. Cf. *De utilitate credendi* 2.

2 Isa. 7.9 [LXX]. This Septuagint rendering of the text is of capital importance for a proper understanding of the spirit of Augustine's philosophy.

nature in creating, as if He were not sufficient unto Himself—such a one does not hold God in the highest esteem.

It follows, therefore, that God created all things from nothing. But Him who is equal to the Father, and whom we call the Only Son of God, He did not create but begot Him from His own substance. When we try to represent Him more clearly, we call Him the Power and Wisdom of God through whom He made all that He created from nothing.

Having set down these points, let us strive with the help of God to understand the problem you raise in the following manner.

Chapter 3

6. Since your question has to do with the cause of our doing evil, we must first have a discussion on the nature of evil. State your opinion on this matter. If you cannot express it fully, all at once and in a few words, let me at least know what you think by mentioning, in particular, some evil deeds themselves.

Ev. Adultery, murder, and sacrilege, to say nothing of others which time and my memory do not allow me to mention. Can anyone think that these are not evil?

Aug. Tell me first, then, why you think it is wrong to commit adultery? Is it because the law forbids it?

Ev. It is not wrong just because the law forbids it; rather, the law forbids it because it is wrong.

Aug. What if someone with an exaggerated idea of the delights of adultery should press us further and ask us why we judge it wrong and reprehensible? Do you think that, for men who are eager not only to believe but also to understand, we must fall back on the authority of the law? I am one with you in this belief, and I do firmly believe and I call upon all peoples and nations to believe that adultery is wrong. But right now we are trying to acquire a rational understanding

and a firm grasp of something that we have accepted on faith. Think it over, then, as best you can, and tell me the reason why you think adultery is wrong.

Ev. I know it is wrong for the very reason that I myself would be unwilling to tolerate it in my own wife. But anyone who does to another what he is unwilling to have done to himself is certainly doing wrong.

Aug. What if a man's lust leads him to offer his wife to another to have her willingly violated by him, and he, in turn, desires the same liberty with the other's wife? Do you think he is doing nothing wrong?

Ev. On the contrary. He is doing great wrong.

Aug. But, according to that rule of yours, such a man commits no sin, for he is doing nothing that he is unwilling to have done to him. Accordingly, you must find another reason to show why adultery is wrong.

7. *Ev.* I think it is wrong for the reason that I have often seen men condemned for such a crime.

Aug. What of the fact that men have often been condemned for good deeds? Without sending you to other books, examine that history which owes its excellence to divine authority. You will find what a bad opinion we should have of the Apostles and all the martyrs if we agree that being condemned is a sure indication of wrongdoing, for they were all judged as deserving of condemnation for having confessed their faith. Consequently, if whatever is condemned is evil, then it was evil at that time to believe in Christ and to confess the faith itself. On the other hand, if not everything that is condemned is evil, you must look for another reason for teaching that adultery is wrong.

Ev. I cannot find any answer to give you.

8. *Aug.* Perhaps it is passion that is evil in adultery. But as long as you look for the evil in the outward act itself, which can be seen, you will run into difficulties. To give you an idea how the evil of adultery is passion, let us suppose that

there is no opportunity for intercourse with another man's wife, though it is somehow evident that one has the desire and would do the act if he could. In this case, he is no less guilty than if he were caught in the act.

Ev. Nothing could be clearer. I see now that there is no need for a long discussion to convince me of this in the case of murder and sacrilege, and, in fact, for all kinds of sin. It is now clear that passion¹ alone is the ruling factor in every kind of wrongdoing.

Chapter 4

9. *Aug.* Do you know too that another name for passion is desire?

Ev. I do.

Aug. Do you think there is any difference between this and fear?

Ev. Indeed, I think there is a great difference between them.

Aug. I believe you think so for the reason that desire seeks its object, while fear avoids it.

Ev. It is just as you say.

Aug. But suppose someone kills a man, not out of desire to gain possession of something, but because he fears that some evil may befall him—will he not be a murderer?

Ev. He will, indeed. Yet his act is not thereby free of the ruling passion of desire, because whoever kills a man out of fear, certainly desires to live free of fear.

Aug. Do you think it is a small good to live free of fear?

Ev. It is a great good, but it cannot possibly come to the murderer through his crime.

Aug. I am not asking you what can come to him but what

¹ *Libido* indicates the disorderly and perverse tendency in man's lower nature resulting from original sin and inclining him to evil. Against the Stoics, however, Augustine defends the view that the passions *in se* are both good and necessary for man. Cf. *De civitate Dei* 14.8-9. For a clarification of the terms *concupiscentia* and *libido*, cf. Bonner, *op. cit.* 398-401.

it is that he himself desires. Whoever desires a life free of fear certainly desires a good and, consequently, the desire is not blameworthy; otherwise we shall be placing blame upon all who love what is good. Hence we are forced to admit that there can be murder where we are unable to discover evil desire as the dominant factor, and it will no longer be true that the malice in all sins stems from the dominant influence of passion; otherwise there will be some form of murder that cannot possibly be sinful.

Ev. If murder means taking the life of a man, this can sometimes happen without any sin. When a soldier slays the enemy, when a judge, or his deputy, executes a criminal, when, by chance, a deadly weapon leaves someone's hand unintentionally or thoughtlessly, I do not think that these are guilty of sin in killing a man.

Aug. I agree, but such men are not usually called murderers. Answer me this question. If a slave kills his master from whom he was in fear of grave torture, do you think we should include him among those who take a man's life in a way that does not warrant their being called murderers?

Ev. I see a great difference between the two. The first are acting either according to the law or in a way not opposed to the law. But there is no law to sanction this man's crime.

10. *Aug.* You are bringing me back to authority again. But you must keep in mind that we have presently undertaken to understand what we believe. We take the laws on faith, and therefore, we must try to understand, if this is at all possible, whether the law may not be doing wrong in punishing such an act.

Ev. It is not wrong at all when it punishes a man who knowingly and willingly slays his master, which is something that none of the others did.

Aug. Do you recall having said a while ago that in every evil deed passion is the dominant factor whereby an act is made evil?

Ev. Yes, I do.

Aug. Well, did you not also grant that a man who desires to live free from fear is not harboring an evil desire?

Ev. I remember that too.

Aug. Therefore, when a master is slain by his servant from this kind of desire, it is not done by a desire that is blameworthy. Consequently, we have not yet found out why this deed is evil. For we agree that all wrongdoing becomes such only by passion, namely, by a desire that is blameworthy.

Ev. It now seems to me that this servant was condemned unjustly. I would not venture this opinion if I could think of something else to say.

Aug. Have you then convinced yourself that such a serious crime should go unpunished before you stop to consider whether that servant desired to be free from fear of his master in order to gratify his passions? The desire to live free from fear is characteristic not only of the good but also of evil men, with this difference, that good men desire it by turning their love from whatever cannot be possessed without fear of loss, while evil men, bent upon enjoying such things securely, try to remove whatever hindrances stand in their way. As a result, they lead a life of crime and wickedness which should be called death rather than life.

Ev. I have come to my senses, and am very glad to have a clear understanding of the nature of that blameworthy desire called passion. I now see that it is the love of things which each one can lose against his will.

Chapter 5

11. Let us now inquire, if you will, whether passion is also the dominant factor in acts of sacrilege which we see frequently committed out of superstition.¹

¹ No further mention of this problem occurs in the dialogue.

Aug. Take note whether this question be not premature. I think we should first inquire whether an on-rushing enemy or a stealthy assassin may be slain, in the absence of passion, to defend one's life or liberty or virtue.

Ev. How am I to judge that these men are free of passion who take up the sword in defense of things that can be lost against their will? On the other hand, if they cannot lose them, what need is there to go to the extreme of killing a man to defend them?

Aug. Then the law is not just which gives a traveler the right to kill a robber to avoid being killed himself, or the right to any man or woman to destroy, if they can, an assailant about to attack with violence before the injury is inflicted. Soldiers, too, are commanded by law to kill the enemy, and if a soldier refrains from doing this, he is punished by the commander. Can we be rash enough to assert that these laws are unjust, or rather that they are no laws at all? For an unjust law, it seems to me, is no law.

12. *Ev.* I think the law is well protected against any such accusation since, for those people whom it governs, the law allows for minor transgressions to prevent the commission of more serious crimes. It is a far lesser evil that one who plots another's death should be slain rather than the person who is protecting his own life. And it is a much greater crime that a man should be the victim of a violent attack than that the attacker should be killed by the victim of the attempted attack. In the slaying of any enemy, the soldier is an agent of the law and consequently readily discharges his duty apart from any passion. A law which itself has been enacted for the protection of the people, cannot be charged with passion. Actually, if the lawgiver enacts a law, and does so at God's command, namely, in compliance with eternal justice, he may have done so completely free of passion. But if he did enact this law under the influence of passion, it does not follow that compliance with the law must be accompanied by passion, since

a good law can be enacted by a lawgiver who is not good. If, for example, a ruler who has seized tyrannical power should accept a bribe from an interested party to issue a decree making it unlawful to carry off a woman forcibly, even for the purpose of marriage, the law is not evil just because it was made by an unjust and corrupt lawmaker. One can, therefore, without passion, obey a law enacted for the protection of its citizens when it commands that an enemy force be met by the same kind of force. The same may be said of all public servants who are subject to the ruling powers according to the existing law and established order.

But I fail to see how these men mentioned before can be without blame, though they are blameless in the sight of the law. For the law does not compel them to kill, but leaves it within their power. Consequently, they are not at liberty to kill anyone to defend those things which can be lost against their will and which, on this account, ought not be loved at all. As for life, there may be a doubt on the part of some as to whether it can be taken away from the soul at all when the body is destroyed. But if it can be taken away, it is worthless; if not, there is nothing to fear. But as for chastity, who could doubt that it is rooted in the soul itself, seeing that it is a virtue? It cannot, therefore, be snatched away by the violence of an assailant. Whatever the slain attacker was going to snatch from us is something not entirely within our power and, consequently, I fail to see how we can call it our own. Accordingly, I certainly am not blaming the law which permits such assailants to be slain, yet I can find no way to defend those who kill them.

13. *Aug.* I can find far less reason for your trying to defend men who are not guilty in the eyes of the law.

Ev. Perhaps guilty by no law, but only if these are laws which men can see and read. I am not sure that they are not bound by some more compelling and entirely unseen law if we suppose that there is nothing in nature over which Divine

Providence does not rule. How, in the light of this law, are they without sin who defile themselves by human slaughter for the sake of things which ought to be despised? It seems to me that the law drafted for governing people legally permits such things, while Divine Providence punishes them. A law enacted for the governing of people is concerned with upholding whatever is enough to maintain peace among unenlightened men so far as this is possible by man-made laws. But transgressions against the divine law have other appropriate penalties from which, as I see it, wisdom alone can set them free.

Aug. I commend and approve this distinction of yours. Though it is only a beginning and not fully developed, it nevertheless gives promise of leading us on to higher things. You are of the opinion that laws enacted for the government of cities make many concessions and leave unpunished many crimes which are nevertheless punished by Divine Providence, and rightly so. And we should not reproach what a law fails to accomplish simply because it does not do everything.

Chapter 6

14. Let us examine, if you will, how far evil deeds are punishable by that kind of law which restrains people in this present life and then see what remains for the hidden and inescapable punishment meted out by Divine Providence.

Ev. I am eager to do so, if only we can come to a conclusion on so important a matter, for I think the subject is inexhaustible.

Aug. Rather take courage and, placing your trust in God, enter upon the path of reason. For there is nothing so obscure and difficult that cannot, with God's help, become perfectly clear and easy. Therefore, with reliance upon God and with a prayer for His help, let us investigate the question we have

raised. First of all, tell me whether laws promulgated in written form are a help to men living in the present life.

Ev. Obviously they are, for surely states and nations are made up of these men.

Aug. What of men themselves, and peoples? Do they belong to that class of reality where they cannot perish or change, or are they subject to change and to the conditions of time?

Ev. Could anyone doubt that human nature is obviously subject to change and time?

Aug. If, therefore, people are found possessed of moderation and prudence, vigilant for the common good wherein each one esteems his own private interest of less importance than the public good, is it not right to enact a law permitting such people to set up for themselves magistrates to provide for their welfare, that is, for the public welfare?

Ev. It is absolutely right.

Aug. If, after having gradually grown corrupt, these same people should afterward prefer the individual to the common good, should offer their vote for sale and, bribed by those who covet honor, should entrust the government to wicked and disreputable men, would it not also be right, provided some honest man of great ability was found at the time, to strip these people of the power to elect public officials and to subject them to the rule of a few good men, or even to that of one man?

Ev. That would also be right.

Aug. Since these two laws then appear to be contradictory, insofar as one grants the people the power to elect public officials while the other takes it away and, since the second law was enacted in such a way that both cannot be in force at once in the same city, are we to say that one of them is unjust and should never have been made?

Ev. Not at all.

Aug. Let us then call that law "temporal" which, though just, can yet be justly changed in the course of time.

Ev. Let us give it that name.

15. *Aug.* What of that law called supreme reason,¹ which must always be obeyed, whereby the wicked merit an unhappy life and the virtuous a happy life and by which, ultimately, that law which we called "temporal" can be justly enacted and justly changed? Can any thinking person fail to see that this law is changeless and eternal? Could it ever be unjust that the wicked should be unhappy, while the good are happy; or that people possessed of moderation and prudence should elect their own rulers, while a depraved and good for nothing people should be without such freedom?

Ev. I see that this law is eternal and changeless.

Aug. I think that you also see that it is from this eternal law that men have derived whatever is just and lawful in the temporal law. For if those people elect officials at one time and at another time do not, each motivated by justice, this alteration of the temporal law derives its character of justice from that eternal law whereby it is always just for responsible people to elect their officials, but not for irresponsible people. Or do you have a different view?

Ev. I agree.

Aug. Therefore, let me explain briefly, as well as I can put it in words, the notion of that eternal law which is impressed upon our nature:² "It is that law in virtue of which it is just that all things exist in perfect order." If you think differently, just say so.

Ev. When you say what is true, there is nothing for me to contradict.

Aug. Since this law, therefore, is the one law which is the source for all the variations in those temporal laws for governing men, is the eternal law itself capable of any variation?

¹ Mainly under the influence of Christian revelation, the Ciceronian formula is transformed by Augustine to express the notion of divine exemplarism and that of the eternal law, which it implies.

² Another passing reference to the Augustinian doctrine of illumination.

Ev. I see that this is absolutely impossible, for there is no force, no chance-occurrence, no natural upheaval that could ever bring it about that justice would no longer mean the perfect ordering of all things.

Chapter 7

16. *Aug.* Come now, and let us see how man himself realizes perfect order within himself, for a people is made up of men united under one law, and this, as we said, is the temporal law. Tell me, now, whether you are absolutely certain that you are alive.

Ev. Where could I ever have found anything more certain by way of an answer?

Aug. Can you see the difference between being alive and knowing that one is alive?

Ev. I realize, of course, that no one can know he is living unless he is alive, but I do not know whether everything living knows that it is alive.

Aug. I only wish that, as you already believe, so too, you might come to know that animals are without reason. Then our discussion might pass on quickly from the present subject. But since you say you do not know, you are stirring up a lengthy discussion. The point is not one that can be passed over while we still go on to our conclusion with the kind of strict logic that I feel is necessary. Now, then, tell me this. We often observe how wild beasts are tamed by men, that is, made subject to man, not only in body but also in spirit, so they obey man's will by a kind of instinct and habit. Do you think it could possibly happen that some beast of great ferocity or physical strength, endowed also with sharp cunning, might try in turn to subdue a man, though many beasts can destroy his body either by sheer force or by stealth?

Ev. I do not agree that this could possibly happen.

Aug. Very good. Now tell me this too. Since it is obvious that man is easily surpassed by many brute animals in physical strength and in other bodily functions, what is it in which man so excels that no beast can master him, while he can master many beasts? May it not be that very thing that is usually called reason or understanding?

Ev. I cannot discover anything else, since that is the one thing in the soul by which we excel the beast. If animals did not have souls, I would say that we excel them by the very fact that we have a soul. But, since they have souls, there is something wanting in their souls, making them subject to us, which is found in ours, making us superior to them. And since, as anyone can see, it is something of no little importance, what better name can we give it than reason?

Aug. Now you see how something which men find very difficult can become easy, when God comes to our aid. For I acknowledge that I thought that this question, which I now see we have concluded, would have detained us for as long a time as for all the other subjects covered since the start of our discussion. Keep this point in mind so that our subsequent discussion may proceed in a logical fashion. Now I believe you understand that what we call knowledge is the same thing as what we perceive by our reason.

Ev. That follows.

Aug. Therefore a man who knows he is living is not without reason.

Ev. That is evident.

Aug. Now beasts have life, although they are without reason, as was brought out above.

Ev. That is clear.

Aug. See, now you know what you answered you did not know, namely, that not everything living knows that it is living, although everything that knows it is living has to be living.

17. *Ev.* I have no further doubt of it. Continue now with

what you have in mind, for I have learned well enough that it is one thing to live, another, to know that one is living.

Aug. Which of these two, then, is the more excellent in your opinion?

Ev. What else but the knowledge of life?

Aug. Do you think the knowledge of life is better than life itself? Or do you feel perhaps that knowledge is a higher and truer form of life since no one can know who does not understand. What does it mean to understand, if not to live a more enlightened and perfect life by the very light of the mind? That, if I am not mistaken, is why you have not preferred anything else to life, but have placed the better life above just any form of life at all.

Ev. You have grasped and expounded my own view perfectly, provided, however, that knowledge can never be evil.

Aug. I do not think this is possible unless we use the term "understanding" in a transferred sense, meaning "personal experience." Experience is not always something good, as is the case when we experience punishment. But how can knowledge, understood in the strict and proper sense, ever be evil, since we acquire it by reason and intelligence?

Ev. I see that distinction too. Continue now with the remaining points.

Chapter 8

18. *Aug.* Here is what I am trying to say: Whatever sets man above the beast, whether we call it "mind" or "spirit"¹ or, more correctly both, since we find both terms in the Scriptures, if this rules over and commands the other parts that make up man, then man's life is in perfect order. We see how many things we share in common not only with brute animals but

¹ Augustine's terminology for the soul is not strictly fixed. The various terms employed, such as *anima*, *animus*, *spiritus*, *mens*, *ratio*, *intelligentia*, and *intellectus* have been elucidated as far as possible by E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. Lynch (New York 1960) 269-271.

also with trees and plants, for we observe that bodily nutrition, growth, reproduction, and health are also proper to trees, which make up the lowest level of life. We also notice, and admit the fact, that brute animals see and hear and have the power to perceive corporeal qualities by smell, taste, and touch, and that frequently their perceptions are keener than ours. Add to all this, the physical strength and power of their limbs, the swiftness and agility of their bodily movements. We excel some animals in all these respects, in others, we are their equal, while in others, we are even surpassed by some animals. Certainly, qualities of this kind are possessed by us in common with brute animals. Actually all animal activity consists in the pursuit of bodily pleasures and in the avoidance of what is disagreeable.

But there are other things which apparently do not pertain to animal life though even in man they are not his highest endowments, such as the power to jest and laugh. Anyone with a true discernment of human nature will say that this is a human quality, though of a lower order. Again, there is the love of praise and glory, and the lust for power which, though absent in the beasts, must not make us think that we are better than beasts because of our desire for such things. When this desire is not subject to reason, it makes men unhappy, and no one has ever thought that unhappiness should make him better than someone else. We are to think of a man as well-ordered, therefore, when his reason rules over these movements of the soul, for we must not speak of right order, or of order at all, when the more perfect is made subject to the less perfect. Do you not think so?

Ev. That is obvious.

Aug. It follows, therefore, that when reason, or mind, or spirit, rules over the irrational movements of the soul, then that is in control in man which ought to be, by virtue of that law which we found to be eternal.

Ev. I understand and agree with you.

Chapter 9

19. *Aug.* Do you think then that a man is wise when his life is organized and ordered in this way?

Ev. If we do not think that he is wise, I fail to see how anyone else could be.

Aug. I believe you also realize that most men are unwise.

Ev. That, too, is obvious enough.

Aug. If wise is the opposite of unwise, and we already know what a wise man is, then you also know who the unwise man is.

Ev. Anyone can see that he is a man whose mind is not in perfect control.

Aug. Should we say, then, that such a man has no mind at all, or rather, that even though it is present, his mind is not in control?

Ev. It is a case of the latter.

Aug. I would especially like to know what grounds you have for knowing that there is a mind in men when it fails to exercise its mastery.

Ev. I wish you would do this yourself, for it is not easy for me to shoulder this task.

Aug. It should at least be easy for you to recall what we said a short time ago, namely, that when beasts are tamed and trained, they serve man's purposes, and that men, in turn, would be subjected to the same treatment from beasts were they not superior to them in some way, as we have already shown. Now it was not in the body that we discovered this superiority, and when it became clear that it was found in the soul, we could find no other name for it but reason. Later on, we remembered that is also called mind and spirit. But if reason and mind are not the same, it is certain at least that only the mind can make use of reason. Hence the conclusion that whoever has reason cannot be without mind.

Ev. I remember this very well and agree with it.

Aug. Well then, do you think that only men who are wise can tame animals? I call wise only those men whose life is controlled by the mind and who are at peace with themselves by their complete mastery over every unlawful desire.

Ev. It is ridiculous to regard as wise those men who are commonly referred to as animal trainers, or even shepherds or herdsmen or charioteers. We see how all of them have control over animals that are tame and what pains they take to train the untamed.

Aug. See, now you have patent proof to make it clear that mind can be found in a man and still not have the mastery. It is certainly present in such men, for they act in a way that would be impossible without having a mind. But the mind does not have this mastery because they are unwise, and, as we know very well, this mastery on the part of the mind is found only in those who are wise.

Ev. I am amazed that we should have already reached this conclusion earlier, and that I was still unable to think of an answer.

Chapter 10

20. But we are now speaking of other matters, for it has already been shown that wisdom in man consists in this mastery on the part of his mind and also that it is possible for the mind to lack such mastery.

Aug. Do you think that the power of passion is greater than the mind, which we know has been given mastery over the passions? Personally, I do not think so. For there could be no perfect order if the weaker should lord it over the stronger. Consequently, I feel that the power of the mind must be greater than desire for the very reason that it is only right and just that it should hold sway over desire.

Ev. I feel the same way, too.

Aug. We can have no hesitation, then, in preferring every

virtue to all vices, so that a virtue is more perfect and sublime to the extent that it becomes stronger and more invincible?

Ev. Unquestionably.

Aug. It follows that a soul infected with vice cannot overcome one fortified by virtue.

Ev. Very true.

Aug. I think you will not deny that any kind of soul at all is better and stronger than any body.

Ev. No one denies this who understands (and it is readily understandable) that a living substance should be more highly valued than a non-living substance, or that what imparts life should be esteemed more than that which receives it.

Aug. It is then far less possible for any kind of body at all to overcome a soul endowed with virtue.

Ev. That is perfectly evident.

Aug. What of a just soul and mind that keeps its natural right to rule? Could it ever dethrone some other mind possessed of equal power and virtue, and make it subject to desire?

Ev. This is impossible, not merely because both souls have the same degree of excellence but also because, in its attempt to degrade the other soul, the first will defect from its just state and become a wicked mind, thereby becoming the weaker of the two.

21. *Aug.* You have grasped this point very well. Consequently, you have only to tell me, if you can, whether you think there is anything more excellent than a mind endowed with reason and wisdom.

Ev. Nothing, I think, apart from God.

Aug. I think so too. But the question is a difficult one, and this is not the opportune time to seek a proper understanding of it. And, though we accept this matter with a firm faith, a full discussion of this problem must be undertaken by us with care and diligence.

Chapter 11

For the time being we can be sure that whatever that nature is which rightfully excels a mind adorned with virtue, it cannot possibly be unjust. Consequently, though it were within its power to do so, not even this nature will force the mind to become a slave to passion.

Ev. Anyone could see that right away.

Aug. Whatever, therefore, is the equal of mind, or superior to it, will not make it a slave to lust because of its own justice, provided the mind is in control and is strong in virtue. On the other hand, anything inferior to the mind cannot do so because of its own weakness, as we have learned from what we already agreed upon. We are faced with the conclusion, then, that nothing else can make the mind the companion of evil desire except its own will and free choice.

Ev. Nothing, I see, could be more logical.

22. *Aug.* It follows that you feel it is only just that such a mind should suffer punishment for so great a sin.

Ev. I cannot deny it.

Aug. Well, then, are we to take lightly a punishment entailing such consequences as these, where passion lords it over the mind, dragging it about, poor and needy, in different directions, stripped of its wealth of virtue, now mistaking the false for the true, even defending something vigorously at one time only to reject at another what it had previously demonstrated, while all the while it rushes headlong into other false judgments; now withholding all assent, while fearful for the most part of the clearest demonstrations; now in despair of the whole business of finding the truth while it clings tenaciously to the darkness of its folly; now at pains to see the light and understand, and again falling back out of weariness to the darkness? And all the while, the cruel tyranny of evil desire holds sway, disrupting the entire soul and life of man by various and conflicting surges of passion;

here by fear, there by desire; here by anxiety, there by empty and spurious delights; here by torment over the loss of a loved object, there by a burning desire to acquire something not possessed; here by pain for an injury received, there by the urge to revenge an injury. On every possible side, the mind is shriveled up by greed, wasted away by sensuality, a slave to ambition, is inflated by pride, tortured by envy, deadened by sloth, kept in turmoil by obstinacy, and distressed by its condition of subjection. And so with other countless impulses that surround and plague the rule of passion. How could we ever think that this is not a punishment when, as you see, it is something that all have to suffer who do not hold fast to wisdom?

23. *Ev.* I do indeed consider this a heavy penalty and one that is absolutely just, if a man, who once occupied the summit of wisdom, should choose to descend therefrom and become the slave of passion. But it is doubtful whether anyone could be found who has either made such a choice, or who would make it now. We believe that man was so perfectly created by God and established in happiness that it was only by his own will that he fell from this state into the miseries of this mortal life. Nevertheless, while I accept this firmly on faith, I have as yet not grasped it by my understanding. If you think we should put off a careful inquiry into this matter for the present, you do so against my will.

Chapter 12

24. But the problem that troubles me most is why we suffer these very severe penalties when, to be sure, we are not wise and have never been wise before, or why it would be right to say that we suffer them because we abandoned the heights of virtue and chose to be enslaved by passion. If you can clear up this point by discussion, I would not agree at all that you should postpone the question.

Aug. You speak as if you knew for sure that we have never been wise, for you have in mind the period of time beginning with our birth into this life. But wisdom resides in the soul, and whether the soul lived another kind of life before its union with the body and one time lived a life of wisdom is a great question, a great mystery, which will have to be examined in its proper place.¹ But there is no reason why this should keep us from elucidating as far as possible the subject at hand.

25. I am asking you whether we have a will.

Ev. I do not know.

Aug. Do you want to know?

Ev. Even that I do not know.

Aug. Then do not ask me any more questions.

Ev. Why?

Aug. Because I do not have to answer your questions unless you want to know what you are asking. Furthermore, if you have no desire to attain wisdom, there should be no discussion with you about such matters. Finally, you can be no friend of mine unless you wish me well. Furthermore, look into yourself and see whether you do not will a happy life for yourself.

Ev. I acknowledge there can be no denying that we have a will. Go on now, and let us see what you are going to conclude from this.

Aug. I shall, but tell me first whether you think you also have a good will.

Ev. What is a good will?

Aug. It is a will by which we seek to live a good and upright life and to attain unto perfect wisdom. See now whether you are not seeking after a good and upright life and whether you do not have a strong desire to be wise, or whether, in any case, you can dare deny that we have a good will when we choose these things.

¹ In Book Three, Augustine reviews for the first time the four views proposed to explain the origin of the soul (20.56-58; 21.59).

Ev. I do not deny any of this, and I agree, therefore, not only that I have a will but also that it is now a good will.

Aug. Please tell me what value you set on this will. Do you think that riches or honors or bodily pleasures, or all three together, can be compared in any way with the will?

Ev. God forbid such wicked folly!

Aug. Should we not then rejoice a little that we have something in the soul—I am referring to this good will itself—in comparison with which all the things we mentioned are worthless, though we see how men in great numbers spare no effort or risk to acquire them?

Ev. Rejoice we should, indeed, and very much so.

Aug. Do you think that those who fail to experience this joy suffer only a small loss when they are deprived of so great a good?

Ev. On the contrary, they suffer a very great loss.

26. *Aug.* I believe you see then that it lies within our will either to enjoy or to lack so great and true a good as this.² For what is more within the power of the will than the will itself? When anyone has a good will, he really possesses something which ought to be esteemed far above all earthly kingdoms and all the delights of the body. On the other hand, if he does not have a good will, he is truly deprived of something which the will alone can of itself bestow upon him and which is more excellent than all those goods which lie beyond our control. Accordingly, when he thinks himself most unhappy if he loses his fine name, vast wealth, and various kinds of bodily goods, will you not rather think him most unhappy for clinging to goods he can lose so easily and which he cannot have when he wants them, even though he possesses all these things in abundance? For he lacks a good will which should not even be compared with these, and though it is so great a good, one has only to will it in order to possess it.

Ev. Very true.

² Also adduced by Pelagius against Augustine's teaching on the necessity of grace. Cf. *Retract.* 1.9.3.

Aug. It is, therefore, only right and just that foolish men should suffer such misery, even though there was never a time when they were wise—and this is an uncertain and baffling question.

Ev. I agree.

Chapter 13

27. *Aug.* Now consider whether you think that prudence is the knowledge of things that we should desire and avoid.

Ev. I think it is.

Aug. What of fortitude? Is it not that disposition of soul whereby we despise all misfortune and the loss of things that are not within our control?

Ev. I think so.

Aug. And is not temperance also that disposition which restrains and checks our desire for those things which it is shameful for us to desire? Or do you disagree?

Ev. On the contrary, you are saying just what I think.

Aug. And how shall we define justice except to say that it is a virtue whereby each one is given what is his own?

Ev. My own idea of justice is no different.

Aug. The man of good will (and we have been discussing its excellence at length) will consequently embrace this alone with a love that knows nothing better. Let him find his delight therein and make it the object of his joy and delight, while he examines and appraises its value, aware that it cannot be snatched from him or stolen against his will. Can we doubt that this man will be opposed to everything that is hostile to this one good?

Ev. He would simply have to be opposed.

Aug. Do we think that he is devoid of all prudence if he sees that he should seek this good and avoid whatever is opposed to it?

Ev. I do not think that anyone could possibly do this without prudence.

Aug. Right. But do we not also ascribe fortitude to this man? He cannot really love or esteem highly all the things that lie outside our control, for these are loved by a perverse will which he must oppose as inimical to his most cherished good. But since he has no love for them, he does not grieve over their loss but is rather disdainful of them, and this, as we have already seen and agreed, is the task of fortitude.

Ev. Let us certainly ascribe fortitude to him. I do not see how I could possibly apply this term more properly than to a man who bears with calm equanimity the absence of those goods which we are unable either to acquire or retain by the sheer powers of our nature. And we have seen how the man with fortitude must do this very thing.

Aug. Now see whether we may deprive him of temperance, since this is the virtue which keeps our passions in check. And what is so harmful to a good will as passion? Consequently, you will readily understand why a man who values his good will resists the passions in every way possible and is at war with them, and therefore has a right to be called a temperate man.

Ev. Go ahead. I am in agreement.

Aug. There remains the virtue of justice which, as I see it, cannot possibly be wanting in such a man. For a man who has a good will and values it, resisting, as we said, whatever is contrary to it, cannot bear ill-will towards anyone. It follows that he will not injure anyone, which is only possible when a man gives to each one his due. I believe you recall that you were in agreement when I stated that this was the function of justice.

Ev. I do indeed, and I acknowledge that in a man who esteems highly his own good will and loves it, all those four virtues are found which you defined a short time ago to my satisfaction.

28. *Aug.* What, then, can keep us from acknowledging that the life of this man is praiseworthy?

Ev. Nothing at all. In fact, everything inclines, and even compels us to do so.

Aug. Well, then, can you possibly think that an unhappy life should not be avoided?

Ev. I am very much of the same opinion, and believe that there is nothing else for us to do but to avoid it.

Aug. But you certainly do not think that a praiseworthy life should be avoided.

Ev. I think that it should rather be sought after earnestly.

Aug. A praiseworthy life, therefore, is not an unhappy life.

Ev. That follows, of course.

Aug. You have no further difficulty, as far as I can see, in agreeing with this conclusion, namely, that the life that is not unhappy is the happy life.

Ev. That is obvious.

Aug. Then we agree that the happy man is one who values his own good will, in comparison with which he despises whatever else may be called good, which can be lost even when the will to retain it remains.

Ev. Why should we not agree to a conclusion that follows logically from points already agreed upon?

Aug. You have a good grasp of the matter. But tell me now, if you will, whether having a love for one's good will and a high esteem of it, as we said, is itself a good will?

Ev. What you say is true.

Aug. But if we rightly judge this man to be happy, shall we not also be right in judging as unhappy a man whose will is of a contrary nature?

Ev. Absolutely right.

Aug. How are we justified then in regarding as doubtful the fact that it is by the will that we merit and live a good and praiseworthy life, and, by the same will, a life that is shameful and unhappy,¹ even though formerly we were never wise?

¹ Cited by Pelagius in support of his teaching on free will. Cf. *Retract.* 1.9.3.

Ev. I admit that we arrived at this conclusion by arguments that are certain and undeniable.

29. *Aug.* Consider this point too. I think you will recall how we defined a good will, where I believe we said it was that by which we seek to live a good and upright life.

Ev. That is my recollection.

Aug. If, then, it is by a good will that we love and embrace this good will, preferring it to all those things that we are unable to retain by our sheer volition, then it follows, as our reasoning has shown, that those four virtues reside in the soul and that possessing them is the same as living a good and upright life. Accordingly, any man with the will to lead a good and upright life, provided he prefers this will to all fleeting goods, will acquire so great a possession with such great ease that to have what he wills is the same thing as to will it.²

Ev. Honestly, I can hardly restrain myself from shouting for joy at the sudden appearance of a good at once so great and so easy to acquire.

Aug. When this very joy deriving from the possession of this good uplifts the soul peacefully, quietly, and steadfastly, it is called the happy life. Or do you think that living the happy life is something other than finding delight in goods that are true and certain?

Ev. I feel as you do.

Chapter 14

30. *Aug.* That is right. But do you not think that every man wills and desires the happy life in every way possible?

Ev. Undoubtedly.

Aug. Then why do they not all attain it? We had agreed in our discussion that men merit a happy life by their will

² Also employed by Pelagius to defend man's moral sufficiency. *Ibid.*

and an unhappy life also by their will, so that they deserve what they get. But now a kind of contradiction suddenly appears, which, unless we examine it carefully, threatens to upset our previous careful and clear line of reasoning. How, for example, can anyone endure an unhappy life because of his own will when there is no one at all who wills to live unhappily? Or how does man by his will attain the happy life when there are so many unhappy, and yet they all will to be happy?

Does it come about because it is one thing to will what is good or bad, but another to merit something in virtue of a good or bad will? For those who are happy—and they must also be good—are not happy simply because they willed to live the happy life, for bad men do this too, but because they wished to live upright lives, which bad men are unwilling to do. It is little wonder, therefore, that unhappy men do not attain what they want, namely, the happy life, for they do not also will what must be its companion, and without which no one can deserve to attain it, namely, an upright life. Certainly, the eternal law, which it is now time to consider again, has unalterably decreed that merit is in the will,¹ whereas reward and punishment are identified with happiness and unhappiness. Hence, when we say that men are unhappy by their own choice, we are not saying they want to be unhappy but that their will is such that unhappiness results of necessity and even against their will. Hence this does not go counter to our earlier conclusion that all men want to be happy, though not all succeed because they do not all have the will to lead an upright life, and it is this will which alone can merit the happy life. Do you have any objections to raise here?

Ev. No, I have none.

¹ Another passage adduced by Pelagius to show that man can merit eternal happiness by his own unaided will. Cf. *Retract.* 1.9.3.

Chapter 15

31. But let us see now how all this is related to the question we raised about the two kinds of law.

Aug. Just as you say. But first tell me whether the man who loves an upright life and takes such delight in it that it becomes for him not only something righteous but also a pleasure and a joy—tell me whether he loves and cherishes this law when he sees that it bestows a happy life upon a good will, and an unhappy life upon a bad will.

Ev. He loves it with a strong and perfect love, for it is in following it that he lives as he does.

Aug. In loving this law then, is he loving something changeable and temporal, or something fixed and lasting?

Ev. Something everlasting of course, and changeless.

Aug. And what of those who persist in their evil will and yet desire to be happy? Is it possible for them to love that law whereby unhappiness is their first recompense?

Ev. Not at all, it seems to me.

Aug. Is there anything else that they love?

Ev. Yes, there are many, namely, those things which their persistent bad will prompts them to acquire or to retain.

Aug. I take it that you are speaking of wealth, honors, bodily delights, and beauty, and all the rest that they cannot acquire when they want them and which they can lose against their will.

Ev. Those are the very things.

Aug. Can you think that these are everlasting when you see how subject they are to the vicissitudes of time?

Ev. Only a fool could think so.

Aug. Obviously, then, there are men who love things eternal, and others who love things temporal, and we have already agreed that there are two laws, one eternal and the other temporal. Now if you have any idea of justice, which

of these men, in your opinion, should be subject to the eternal law, and which to the temporal law?

Ev. I think the answer to your question is easy. I think that men whose happiness derives from their love of things eternal come under the eternal law, whereas the temporal law is laid upon the unhappy.

Aug. Your judgment is correct provided you hold fast to the conclusion which our reasoning proved so clearly, namely, that those subject to the temporal law cannot be immune from the eternal law. For we have already determined that it is the source of whatever is just and of whatever may undergo just alteration. You apparently understand well enough that men who adhere to the eternal law by a good will have no need of the temporal law.

Ev. I see what you mean.

32. *Aug.* So the eternal law commands us to turn our love from temporal things and to direct it, once purified, to things eternal.

Ev. Yes, it does.

Aug. Next, what would you say is commanded by the temporal law? Only this, that men inordinately attached to those goods which we can call our own for a time, should possess them by virtue of that very right which preserves peace and human society, so far as is possible in such affairs. These temporal goods include, first of all, the body and what are called goods of the body, such as sound body, keenness of sense, strength, beauty, and any others there may happen to be. Some are necessary for the useful arts and must therefore be valued more highly; others are of less value. Next comes freedom, which is not true freedom except for those who are happy and who adhere to the eternal law. But I am presently speaking of that freedom which makes men think they are free when they have no masters, or which is desired by those who want to be set free from any human masters. Then come parents, brothers, wife, children, kindred, relatives, friends,

and those who are joined to us by ties of intimacy. Then there is the state itself which is commonly regarded as holding the place of a parent. Also, honors and praise, and what is called popular favor. Last of all, there is money, a single term including all things of which we are the rightful owners, and which we seem to have the power to dispose of by sale or donation.

To explain just how the temporal law assigns each man his share of these things would be a difficult and lengthy matter, and one that is clearly unnecessary for the question at hand. It suffices to understand how, in the meting out of punishment, the power of the law does not go beyond depriving those punished of these goods, or of a portion of them. Consequently, it imposes restraint through fear and accomplishes its purpose by constantly harassing the souls of unhappy men for whose government it has been designed. As long as they fear to lose these goods, they practice a kind of moderation in their use capable of holding together a society that can be formed from men of this stamp. The law does not punish the sin committed by loving these things, but the crime of taking them from others unjustly.

See, therefore, whether we have now reached the end of a discussion which you thought was interminable, for we had undertaken to inquire how far the temporal law governing peoples and states of this world can go in inflicting punishment.

Ev. I see we have finished this question.

33. *Aug.* Then do you also see that if men did not love those things which can be taken away against their will, there would be no question of any punishment, either in the form of an injustice done them or by way of a just penalty inflicted upon them?

Ev. I see that too.

Aug. Accordingly, with respect to the same things, one man makes good use of them, another, bad use. The man who

makes bad use of them is captivated by his love for them and is entangled by them. In other words, he becomes subject to things which should be subject to him, making these goods his goal when, really, his true good should consist in assigning them their proper place and use. On the other hand, the man who uses them rightly shows that these things are really good but that they are not his true good; for they do not make him a good or better man, rather, they become so because of him. Consequently, he is not held fast by their love and does not make them, so to speak, members of his own soul (which would result from loving them), lest, when they come to be amputated, they afflict the soul with excruciating pain and corruption. He rises completely above these things, ever ready, as the occasion requires, to possess and control them, and even more ready to lose them and be without them.

In view of all this, do you think it is right to blame silver and gold because of greedy men, or food and wine because of gluttons and drunkards, or the feminine form because of fornicators and adulterers, and so on, particularly, when you see the physician puts fire to a good use while the poisoner uses bread for his wicked purposes?

Ev. It is perfectly true that we should not blame the things themselves but men who put them to a bad use.

Chapter 16

34. *Aug.* Very well. I believe we have now begun to see the force of the eternal law and have discovered just how far the temporal law may go in meting out punishment. We have also made a clear enough distinction between two classes of things, eternal and temporal, and again between two classes of men, those who pursue and love things eternal, and those who pursue and love temporal things. But we also agreed

that what each man chooses to pursue and embrace is within the power of the will to determine, and that it is only the will that can dethrone the mind from its citadel and despoil it of its right order.¹ It is also clear that when someone puts a thing to bad use, we are not to blame the thing itself but the one who makes bad use of it. Let us go back, if you will, to the question proposed at the start of this discussion and see whether it has been solved. We had set out to inquire about the nature of wrongdoing and our entire discussion has been directed to this end.

We may now, then, turn our attention to this question and inquire whether wrongdoing is anything else than the pursuit of temporal things to the neglect of things eternal, namely, the pursuit of things, as if they were great and wonderful, which are perceived by the lowest part of man, his body, and which we can never be sure of, and the neglect of those things which the mind enjoys and perceives of itself, and which cannot be lost to the man who loves them. For every kind of wrongdoing, namely, sin, is included, it seems to me, under this one class. But I am waiting to find out what you think.

35. Ev. It is just as you say, and I agree that all sins fall under this one class and occur when a man turns away from what is divine and truly abiding and turns to what is changing and uncertain. And though these latter have been assigned their rightful place and achieve a kind of beauty all their own, nevertheless, it is the mark of a wicked and perverse soul to become a slave to the pursuit of those things which should rather be regulated according to the good pleasure of the soul whose right to rule derives from divine order and law. I think we have at the same time found a solution to the problem of why we do evil, which we proposed to examine after the question on the nature of wrongdoing. For, unless I am mistaken, we do evil from the free choice of the will, as was shown by the argument already advanced.

¹ Quoted by Pelagius in favor of man's moral autonomy.

But now I am asking whether He who created us should have given us that very freedom of choice by which it has been shown that we have the power to sin. For, without this power, we apparently would not have been capable of sinning, and there is thus reason to fear that God will be adjudged the cause even of our evil deeds.

Aug. Have no fear of this. But we will have to find another time to examine this matter more carefully since the discussion at hand needs to be kept within limits and brought to an end. I would have you believe that we have, so to speak, knocked at the door of great and abstruse questions that warrant our inquiry. When we have begun, with God's help, to penetrate their inner recesses, you will certainly recognize what a difference there is between our present discussion and those that are to follow, and how these latter excel, not only in the mental discernment required for their inquiry, but also in the lofty character and resplendent light of their truth. Only let us be religiously motivated so that God in His Providence may allow us to hold fast to the end the course we have embarked upon.

Ev. I accede to your will, and willingly concur with your judgment and wishes.

BOOK TWO

Chapter 1

1. *Ev.* Now explain to me, if that is possible, why God gave man free choice of the will since, if he had not received it, man would certainly be unable to sin.

Aug. Do you know for sure that God has given man something which you think should not have been given him?

Ev. From what I seem to gather from the previous book, we do have free choice of the will and this alone enables us to sin.

Aug. I also recall that this point was made clear. But I have asked you just now whether you know that it was God who gave us that very thing which we obviously possess and which enables us to sin.

Ev. I think it is none other, for it is from Him that we have our being and from Him that we merit reward or punishment, according as we live good or sinful lives.

Aug. I am also eager to know whether you see this clearly or whether you are willing to believe it on authority, even though you do not understand it.

Ev. I assure you that I first accepted this on authority; yet what could be truer than that everything good comes from God, that everything just is good, and that it is just that there should be punishment for sinners and rewards for the righteous? Hence the conclusion that God makes sinners unhappy and the righteous happy.

2. *Aug.* I agree, but I would raise this other question as to how you know that we have our being from God. For you

did not now explain this, but only that it is from Him that we merit either punishment or reward.

Ev. I see that the only evidence for this point stems from our earlier conclusion that God punishes sins, since, in fact, all justice comes from Him. For while it is a mark of goodness to bestow benefits upon strangers, it is not in keeping with justice to inflict punishments upon them. Clearly, therefore, we belong to God, not only because He is most generous to us with His gifts, but also because He is most just in meting out punishment. Again, from the fact that every good comes from God, and here you agreed with my contention, we can understand that man too comes from God. For man himself, insofar as he is man, is something good because he can live an upright life whenever he so wishes.¹

3. *Aug.* Obviously, if this is so, the question you raised is already answered. If, indeed, man is something good and cannot do what is right unless he wills to, then he must have free will, without which he cannot do what is right. For we must not suppose that because a man can also sin by his free will that God gave it to him for this purpose. The fact that man cannot lead an upright life without it is sufficient reason why God should have given it. That it was given for this purpose can be seen from this, that when he has used it to commit sin, he is subject to divine punishment, which would be unjust if free will had been given him not only to live uprightly but also to commit sin. How could punishment be justly visited upon a man who used his will for the very purpose for which it was given him? But when God punishes a sinner, what does He seem to say but: "Why did you not use your free will for the purpose for which I gave it to you, namely, to do what is right?" Besides, if man were without free choice of the will, what would become of the good called justice whereby sins are punished and good deeds are honored? For, unless something is done by the will, it can be neither a

¹ The first of two sentences from this Book quoted by Pelagius for his teaching on free will. Cf. *Retract.* 1.9.3.

sin nor a good deed. Consequently, punishments and rewards would be unjust if man did not possess free will. Moreover, there must be a place for justice both in punishments and rewards because it is one of those goods that come from God. It follows, therefore, that God should have given man free will.

Chapter 2

4. *Ev.* I admit now that God gave it. But let me ask you this: if it was given to do good, do you not think it should have been impossible to turn it to a sinful purpose? As with justice itself, which is given man to lead a good life, how could anyone lead a bad life by reason of his being just? So, too, if the will were given to do good, no one would be able to sin by his will.

Aug. I hope God will enable me to answer your question, or better, that He will enable you to answer it yourself, when you are enlightened by that truth within you, which is the greatest teacher of all.¹ I wish you would tell me shortly—provided you know for sure that God gave us free will, which was what I asked you—whether we should say that something should not have been given when we acknowledge that it was God who gave it. For, if it is not certain that He gave it, it is right for us to ask whether it was a good gift, so that if we find that it was, we will also have found that it was given by Him who has given all good things to man. Now if we find

¹ A summary of conclusions already reached in the *De magistro* on the doctrine of illumination and its logical counterpart of the teacher's role in learning. Though inspired by both Neoplatonic and biblical sources, Augustine's doctrine possesses an originality that cannot be reduced to any of the classical epistemologies of Greek philosophy. For a summary of the theory and its interpretation, including that of the author himself, cf. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine* 77-96. Several new interpretations have been more recently advanced. Cf. J. Morán, *La teoría del conocimiento en san Agustín* (Valladolid 1961); C. E. Schuetzinger, *German Controversy on Saint Augustine's Illumination Theory* (New York: Pageant Press 1960).

that it was not a good gift, we will realize that God did not give it, since it is blasphemous to charge Him with wrongdoing. But if it is certain that He Himself gave it, then, no matter how it was given, we must acknowledge that there is no reason why it either should not have been given or been given differently than it was given. For He gave it, who may never be rightly blamed for what He has done.

5. *Ev.* While I accept all this with a firm faith, yet, since I have no intellectual grasp of it, let us so conduct our inquiry as if it were all uncertain. As I see it, our uncertainty as to whether free will was given us to do good, since we can also sin by it, gives rise to the further uncertainty as to whether it should have been given at all. If it is uncertain that free will was given to do good, it is also uncertain whether it should have been given, and, consequently, also uncertain that God gave it to us. For, if it is uncertain whether it should have been given, it is uncertain that it was given by God since it would be impious to suppose that He has given anything which he should not have given.

Aug. You are certain, at least, that God exists.

Ev. This too I hold firmly, not from direct knowledge, but by faith.

Aug. Suppose, then, that one of these fools of whom it is related in the Scripture, "the fool has said in his heart, there is no God,"² should say this to you, and should be unwilling to go along with what you believe, but want to know whether what you believe is true. Would you abandon this man or would you think that he should somehow be convinced of what is a matter of firm belief for you, especially if he was not stubborn in his opposition but was eager in his desire to know?

Ev. What you just said clearly suggests how I should answer him. Even though he were utterly unreasonable, he would at least admit that no one should enter into a discussion on any

2 Ps. 13.1.

subject at all with a man who is insincere and obstinate, and, most of all, on a subject of such importance. Once this was admitted, he would first prevail upon me to believe that he is making this inquiry in good faith and that as far as the present problem is concerned, he harbors no hidden guile or obstinacy. I would then point out (and I think this would be a simple matter for anyone) that since he wishes another to believe the hidden thoughts of his own mind, thoughts known to him but unknown to the one who believes them, it is much more reasonable for him to believe in God's existence on the authority of the books of those great men who have left a written record testifying that they lived with the Son of God. They have also recorded certain things they witnessed which could not possibly have happened if there were no God. And it would be very foolish of him to reproach me for believing these men since he wished me to believe him. Now certainly he could find no good reason for not wanting to imitate what he is unable to reproach.

Aug. Now if you think it is enough to accept God's existence on the word of such great men without being rash, then what of those other questions which we undertook to explore, as if they were uncertain and completely unknown? Why, I ask, do you do not likewise think that we should also believe these things on the authority of these men to the extent that we need expend no further effort in investigating them?

Ev. But we are eager to know and understand what we believe.

6. *Aug.* Your memory serves you well, and there is no denying that this was the position we took at the opening of our earlier discussion.³ For, unless believing and understanding were different, and unless we were first to believe those important and heavenly truths which we are eager to understand, there would be no point in the prophet's saying: "Un-

³ Cf. 1.2.4.

less you believe, you shall not understand.”⁴ Our Lord, too, both by word and deed, exhorted those whom He called to be saved that they should first believe. Later, when He referred to the gift He would bestow upon those who believed, He did not say, “This is eternal life that they may *believe*,” but, “This is eternal life that they may *know* Thee, the one true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.”⁵ Then, to those who already believed, He said: “Seek and you shall find.”⁶ Now we cannot say that we have “found” something which is believed but not known, nor can anyone become fit to find God unless he has first believed what he will afterwards come to understand. Let us, therefore, in obedience to the Lord’s command, carry on our inquiry earnestly. For what we are seeking at His behest, that we shall find upon His manifesting it to us Himself, so far as these things can be found in this life and by men like ourselves. We must believe that they are perceived and grasped more clearly and perfectly by more virtuous men, even while they dwell on this earth, and certainly by all good and religious men after their present life. We must make this our hope too, and, despising all that is worldly and human, we must desire and love the higher things in every way possible.

Chapter 3

7. Let us pursue our inquiry, if you will, according to this order: first, what evidence is there that God exists;¹ next,

4 Isa. 7.9. In the *De doctrina christiana* (1.2.17), Augustine mentions the alternative reading suggested by the Hebrew text but interprets it according to the sense of the Septuagint version.

5 John 17.3.

6 Matt. 7.7.

1 The beginning of Augustine’s rational dialectic to prove God’s existence from the existence and nature of truth. Nowhere else in his writings is the problem dealt with *ex professo* or in such detail. The connection between the problem of certitude and God’s existence, as here evidenced, strongly supports Gilson’s observation “. . . that in

do all things, insofar as they are good, come from God; lastly, should free will be numbered among things good. Once these questions have been answered, I think it will become clear enough whether it was right to give free will to man.

Hence, to begin with what is most evident, I will ask you whether you yourself exist. Possibly, you are afraid of being mistaken by this kind of a question when, actually, you could not be mistaken at all if you did not exist?²

Ev. Go on instead to the other questions.

Aug. Then, since it is evident that you exist, and that this could not be so unless you were living, then the fact that you are living is also evident. Do you understand that these two points are absolutely true?

Ev. I understand that perfectly well.

Aug. Then this third point is also evident, namely, that you understand.

Ev. It is evident.

Aug. Which of these three, in your opinion, is the most excellent?

Ev. Understanding.

Aug. Why do you think so?

Ev. Because, while these are three in number, existence, life, and understanding, and though the stone exists and the animal lives, yet I do not think that the stone lives or that the animal understands, whereas it is absolutely certain that whoever understands also exists and is living. That is why I have no hesitation in concluding that the one which contains

Saint Augustine the problem of God's existence cannot be distinguished from the problem of knowledge; knowing how we apprehend truth and knowing the existence of Truth are one and the same thing" (*The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* 18).

² Although suggested as early as the Cassiciacum period in *De beata vita* (2.7) and the *Soliloquia* (2.1.1), this is the first formal statement of Augustine's own argument against the Skeptics based on the immediate evidence of personal existence. Similar formulations appear later in *De vera religione* (39.73), *De Trinitate* (15.12.21), and *De civitate Dei* (11.26). For a comparison with the "cogito" of Descartes, cf. G. Lewis, "Augustinisme et Cartésianisme," *Augustinus Magister* (Paris 1954) 2.1087-1104.

all three is more excellent than that which is lacking in one or both of these. Now whatever is living is certainly also existing, but it does not follow that it also understands. This kind of life, I think, is proper to animals. But it certainly does not follow that what exists must also live and understand, for I can admit that a corpse exists, but no one would say it lives. And still less can something understand if it is not living.

Aug. We maintain, then, that two of these three are lacking in a corpse, one in the animal, and none in man.

Ev. That is true.

Aug. We likewise maintain that the most excellent among the three is what man possesses together with the other two, namely, understanding, and that having this, he must also exist and live.

Ev. We do, indeed.

8. *Aug.* Now tell me whether you know you have these well known senses of the body, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

Ev. I do.

Aug. What do you think is the function of sight, that is, what do we perceive when we see?

Ev. Anything corporeal.

Aug. When we see, we do not likewise perceive what is hard and soft, do we?

Ev. No.

Aug. What then is the proper function of the eyes, that is, what do we perceive with them?

Ev. Color.

Aug. Of the ears?

Ev. Sound.

Aug. Of smell?

Ev. Odors.

Aug. Of taste?

Ev. Flavor.

Aug. Of touch?

Ev. Soft or hard, smooth or rough, and many such qualities.

Aug. And what of the shapes of bodies? Do we not perceive that they are large, small, square, round, and so on, both by touch and sight? Consequently, these qualities are not proper either to sight or vision alone, but belong to both.

Ev. I understand.

Aug. Then you further understand that each sense has its own proper object to report while some senses have certain objects in common.

Ev. I understand that also.

Aug. Can we, therefore, determine by any of these senses what is the proper object of each sense or what those objects are which some or all of them have in common?

Ev. Not at all. This is discerned by some power within.

Aug. Might not this be the reason itself, which is wanting in beasts? For, in my opinion, reason enables us to grasp these and to know just what they are.

Ev. I think it is rather reason that enables us to know that there is a kind of internal sense to which everything is referred by those well-known five senses. Now the power enabling the animal to see is one thing, that by which it shuns or seeks what it perceives by seeing is something else. The former is located in the eye, the latter within, in the soul itself. The inner sense enables the animal to seek and acquire things that delight and to repel and avoid things that are obnoxious, not only those that are perceived by sight and hearing, but all those which are grasped by the other bodily senses. But this power cannot be called either sight or hearing or smell or taste or touch, but is some other kind of power that presides over all of them together. Although, as I mentioned, we do grasp this power by our reason, yet we may not call it reason, since it is obviously present in beasts.

9. *Aug.* I acknowledge that this power, whatever it is, does exist, and I do not hesitate to call it the inner sense. But

unless the impressions brought to us by the bodily senses pass beyond even this inner sense, they cannot result in knowledge. For it is by reason that we grasp whatever we know. To mention but a few instances, we know that color cannot be perceived by hearing nor sound by sight. And this is something that we do not know by sight or hearing or by that inner sense which is not lacking in beasts. We are not to suppose that beasts know that light is not perceived by the ear or sound by the eye, since we discern this only by rational reflection and thought.

Ev. I could not say that I have grasped this point. Suppose that beasts do discern that color cannot be perceived by hearing or sound by sight by means of that inner sense which you admit they do possess.

Aug. You do not suppose, do you, that animals can distinguish one from another the color they perceive, the power of sense in the eye, the inner sense within the soul, and reason by which all these are enumerated and defined, one by one?

Ev. Not at all.

Aug. But could reason distinguish these four things one from another and assign their limits by definition unless color was referred to it by the sense of sight, and this sense, in turn, by that inner sense which presides over it, and this inner sense, in turn, by its direct action upon reason, provided, however, that there is no other power interposed?

Ev. I fail to see how it could be otherwise.

Aug. Are you aware of this, that color is perceived by the sense of sight, whereas this sense of sight is not perceived by sight itself? For you do not see the act of seeing itself by the same sense by which you see color.

Ev. Absolutely not.

Aug. Try now to make these further distinctions. You will not deny, I think, that color and seeing color are different, and also that the power is different by which color can be perceived in its absence as if it were present.

Ev. I draw a distinction between these two, and admit that they are distinct from one another.

Aug. Except for color, you do not see any of these three with the eyes, do you?

Ev. Nothing else but color.

Aug. Tell me then what it is that enables you to see the other two, for you could not distinguish them if they were not seen.

Ev. I do not know the nature of that other power. I know it exists but nothing more.

Aug. Then you do not know whether it is reason itself or that vital power, called the inner sense, which presides over the bodily senses, or something else?

Ev. I do not know.

Aug. But this much you do know, that reason alone can define these powers and that it can only do so with what is presented for its scrutiny.

Ev. That is certain.

Aug. It follows that this other power, whatever it is, which enables us to perceive all that we know, is the servant of reason. It presents and reports to reason whatever has come within its reach so that the objects of sense perception can be assigned their proper limits and be grasped not only by sensation but also by knowledge.

Ev. That is right.

Aug. Reason itself distinguishes between its servants and the impressions they convey to it, and likewise recognizes what a difference there is between these and itself and asserts its primacy over them. Now does reason know reason in any other way than by reason itself? Or how would you otherwise know that you had reason unless you perceived it by reason?

Ev. That is very true.

Aug. Consequently, in perceiving color, we do not perceive by the same sense our act of seeing; in hearing we do not hear our act of hearing; in smelling a rose, the act itself of smelling

imparts no fragrance to us; in tasting a flavor, the act itself has no taste in our mouth, and in touching something, we cannot touch the act itself of touching. It is evident that those five senses cannot be perceived by any one of them, though all corporeal qualities can be perceived by them.

Ev. It is evident.

Chapter 4

10. *Aug.* I think it is likewise clear that the inner sense perceives not only what it receives from the five bodily senses but also the senses themselves. For if the beast were not aware of its act of perception, it could not otherwise direct its movements toward something, or away from it. This awareness is not ordered towards knowledge, which is the function of reason, but towards movement which it does not perceive by any of the five senses.

If this is still obscure, it may become clear if you note the single example of what occurs in any one of the senses, such as sight. The beast could not open its eyes at all or turn its gaze towards the thing it wants to see were it not for the fact that while its eyes were closed or not fixed upon the object, it perceived that it was not seeing. But if it is conscious of its not seeing when in fact it does not see, it must also be aware of its seeing when it does see. The fact that, while seeing, the beast does not alter its gaze by that desire which moves it to turn its gaze when it does not see something, shows that it is aware of both states.

But whether this vital power, which is aware of its perceiving corporeal things, also perceives itself, is not so clear, except for the fact that when a person raises the question in his own mind, he comes to see that all living things shun death. Since death is the contrary of life, we must infer that the vital power is aware of itself since it shuns what is con-

trary to it. But if this point is still not clear, then disregard it, so that our effort to reach the desired conclusion will be based solely on clear and evident proofs.

These points are clear: corporeal qualities are perceived by the bodily senses; one and the same sense cannot perceive itself; the inner sense perceives that corporeal qualities are perceived by the bodily sense and also the bodily sense itself; all these things of sense, as well as reason itself, are known by reason and come under the heading of knowledge. Do you not think so?

Ev. I do indeed.

Aug. Come, tell me how this question arose, for we have been pursuing this avenue of inquiry a long time in our desire to reach a solution.

Chapter 5

11. *Ev.* So far as I recall, we are now dealing with the first of those three questions which we proposed a while ago when we arranged a plan for this discussion, namely, how the existence of God can be made evident, though we must believe it with a strong and persevering faith.

Aug. You have recalled this very well. But I want you also to keep carefully in mind that when I asked whether you were existing, it was made clear that you knew not only this but also two other things.

Ev. I remember that too.

Aug. Now see which one of these three you think is that one to which pertains everything perceived by the bodily senses, that is, in what class of things you think we should locate whatever is perceived by our senses, by the eyes or by any other organ of the body. Should it be with things that merely exist, with those that also live, or with those that also understand?

Ev. With those that merely exist.

Aug. In which of the three classes do you think the sense power itself should be placed?

Ev. In the class of things living.

Aug. Which of these two do you think is better, the sense itself or its object?

Ev. The sense, of course.

Aug. Why is that?

Ev. Because whatever also has life is better than something which merely exists.

12. *Aug.* And what of that inner sense which we found was inferior to reason and which we still share in common with beasts? Would you hesitate to rank this sense above that by which we perceive a body, which you said should be ranked above the body itself?

Ev. I would have no hesitation whatever.

Aug. I should like you to tell me why you have no hesitation on this point. For you cannot say that this inner sense should be placed in that one of the three classes which also includes understanding, but rather in the class of things which exist and live, although they lack understanding. This inner sense is found also in beasts which are without understanding. If this is so, I would like to know why you rank the inner sense above that which perceives corporeal qualities, since both are found in the class of things that live. You ranked the sense which perceives bodies above bodies because the latter are in the class of things which only exist, while the former are in the class of things that also live. Since the inner sense is also found in this class, tell me why you think it is better.

If you say it is because the inner sense perceives the bodily sense, I do not believe you will find any rule that we could rely upon for holding that the subject perceiving is better than what it perceives. Otherwise, we might also be forced to conclude that the person understanding is better than what he understands. This, of course, is untrue because man

understands wisdom but he is not better than wisdom itself. Consider, then, why you thought that the inner sense should be ranked above the sense by which we perceive things corporeal.

Ev. It is because I look upon the inner sense as a ruler and kind of judge of the latter. For if there is any shortcoming in the discharge of their function, the inner sense demands this service from the bodily senses as a kind of debt owed by its servant, as was pointed out a short time ago. The sense of sight does not see that it is seeing or not seeing and, failing to do so, it cannot judge what is missing or what is sufficient. This is done by the inner sense which directs the soul of the beast to open its eyes when they are closed and to supply what it perceives is missing. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that what judges is better than what is judged.

Aug. Do you understand then that even the bodily senses pass a kind of judgment on bodies? Pleasure and pain are theirs to experience whenever they come in contact gently or roughly with a body. Just as the inner sense judges as to what is missing or what is sufficient in visual perception, so the eyes themselves judge as to what is deficient or sufficient in the matter of color. So too in the case of hearing, just as the inner sense judges whether or not it is attentive enough, so the auditory sense judges concerning sounds, discerning those which either flow gently into the ear or which produce a harsh dissonance.

There is no need to continue with the rest of the bodily senses. I think you know already what I am trying to say, namely, that just as the inner sense judges the bodily senses, approving what is complete in them and requiring what is deficient, so too the bodily senses themselves judge bodies, admitting pleasurable sensations of touch found in them, while rejecting the opposite.

Ev. I see these points clearly and agree that they are perfectly true.

Chapter 6

13. *Aug.* See now whether reason also judges the inner sense. I am not asking whether you have any doubt that reason is better than the inner sense because I am sure that this is your judgment. Yet I feel that now we should not even have to ask whether reason passes judgment on the inner sense. For in the case of things inferior to it, namely, bodies, the bodily senses, and the inner sense, is it not, after all, reason itself that tells us how one is better than the other and how far superior reason itself is to all of them? This would not be possible at all unless reason were to judge them.

Ev. Obviously.

Aug. Consequently, that nature which not only exists but also lives, though it does not understand, such as the soul of beasts, is superior to one that merely exists and neither lives nor understands, such as the inanimate body. Again, that nature which at once exists and lives and understands, such as the rational mind in man, is superior to the animal nature. Do you think that anything can be found in us, namely, something among those elements which complete our nature and make us men, that is more excellent than that very thing which we made the third in those three classes of things? It is clear that we have a body and a kind of living principle which quickens the body itself and makes it grow, and we recognize that these two are also found in beasts. And it is also clear that there is a third something, the apex, so to speak, or eye of the soul, or whatever more appropriate term may be employed to designate reason and understanding, which the animal nature does not possess. So I ask you to consider whether there is anything in man's nature more excellent than reason.

Ev. I see nothing at all that is better.

14. *Aug.* But suppose we could find something which you are certain not only exists but is also superior to our reason, would you hesitate to call this reality, whatever it is, God?

Ev. If I were able to find something which is better than what is best in my nature, I would not immediately call it God. I do not like to call something God because my reason is inferior to it, but rather to call that reality God which has nothing superior to it.

Aug. That is perfectly true. For God Himself has given this reason of yours the power to think of Him with such reverence and truth. But I will ask you this: if you should find that there is nothing above our reason but an eternal and changeless reality, would you hesitate to say that this is God? You notice how bodies are subject to change, and it is clear that the living principle animating the body is not free from change but passes through various states. And reason itself is clearly shown to be changeable, seeing that at one time it endeavors to reach the truth, and at another time it does not, sometimes it arrives at the truth, sometimes it does not. If reason sees something eternal and changeless not by any bodily organ, neither by touch nor taste nor smell nor hearing nor sight, nor by any sense inferior to it, but sees this of itself, and sees at the same time its own inferiority, it will have to acknowledge that this being is its God.

Ev. I will openly acknowledge that to be God, if, as all agree, there is nothing higher existing.

Aug. Good! It will be enough for me to show that something of this kind exists. Either you will admit that *this* is God or, if there is something higher, you will admit that *it* is God. Accordingly, whether there exists something higher or not, it will become clear that God exists, when, with His assistance, I shall prove, as I promised, that there exists something above reason.

Ev. Prove then what you are promising.

Chapter 7

15. *Aug.* I shall do so. But first I shall ask you whether my bodily senses are the same as yours, or whether mine are mine alone and yours are yours alone. If this latter were not so, I would be unable to see anything with my eyes which you would not see.

Ev. I fully agree that though the senses are of the same nature, yet each one of us has his own sense of sight or hearing, and so forth. One man cannot only see but also hear something that another man does not hear, and one man can perceive by any one of the senses something different from what another perceives. So it is obvious that your senses are yours alone and mine are mine alone.

Aug. Would you give the same or a different answer concerning the inner sense?

Ev. Not a different answer, certainly. My inner sense perceives my bodily sensations and your inner sense perceives yours. I am often asked by a man who sees something whether I also see it, simply because I am conscious of seeing or not seeing it, while he is not.

Aug. What of reason itself? Does not each one of us have his own since, actually, it can happen that I understand something while you do not, and you may be unable to know whether I do understand, although I do know.

Ev. It is also clear that each one of us has his own rational mind.

16. *Aug.* You could not possibly say, could you, that we possess individually our own sun or moon, or morning star, or other such things that we see, though each one of us sees these things with his own sense?

Ev. I could never say such a thing.

Aug. So it is possible for many of us to see some one thing at one and the same time, though each of us has his own individual senses with which he perceives the same thing

which we all see at the same time. Consequently, though my senses are distinct from yours, it may happen that what we see is not something different for both, but the one thing which is present to each of us and which is seen by both of us at the same time.

Ev. That is perfectly clear.

Aug. We can also hear the same voice at the same time so that, while my hearing is distinct from yours, yet it is not a different voice that we are hearing at the same time. Neither is one part of the voice heard by me and another part by you, but whatever sound is made is within the hearing of both of us, perceived as one sound in its entirety.

Ev. That too is clear.

17. *Aug.* With regard to the other senses, you must now take note that what we have to say in this connection holds for them in a way neither entirely the same nor entirely different from what was said about the two senses of sight and hearing. You and I can inhale the same air and perceive the quality of the air by its odor. Again, we can both taste the same honey, or any other kind of food and drink, and perceive its quality from the taste. Although the taste is the same, yet our senses are individual to us, yours belong to you, and mine to me. So when both perceive the one odor or taste, you do not perceive it with my sense nor do I perceive it with yours. Neither do I perceive it by a single sense which we can share in common, but my sense is mine entirely and so is yours, though it is the one odor or taste that is perceived by both of us.

Accordingly, these two senses of smell and taste are found to have something similar to the two senses of sight and hearing. But they differ in a way which has a bearing on the subject we are presently considering. For, though we both inhale the same air with our nostrils or taste the same food that we take, I do not breathe in that part of the air which you do, or eat the same portion of food that you eat, but I

take one part, and you, another. Therefore, when I breathe, I inhale as much of all the air as I need, and you do the same. And though the same food is all eaten by both of us, yet it cannot be taken wholly by both of us in the way that we both hear a whole word at the same time and both see the same sight equally well. But in the case of food and drink, different portions have to pass into each of us. Do you have some faint understanding of all this?

Ev. On the contrary, I agree that it is perfectly clear and certain.

18. *Aug.* You would not say, would you, that we should compare the sense of touch with those of sight and hearing with reference to the point now under discussion? We can both perceive by the sense of touch not only the same body, but also the same part of the body. It is different with food, for each one of us cannot take all the food placed before us when we are both eating it. But you and I can touch the same body in its entirety, not just different parts of it, but the whole body.

Ev. I admit that in this respect the sense of touch is very much like the two previous senses. But I see it differs in this, that both of us can see and hear all of the same thing together, that is, at the same time. Now both of us can touch a whole body at one time, but only in different parts, and only the same part at different times. I cannot apply my sense of touch to the part you are touching unless you remove yours.

19. *Aug.* A very astute answer! But you should note this point too, that though some objects perceived by us are perceived together and others separately, yet each of us has an individual awareness of his own sense perceptions of the objects he perceives through the bodily sense. I am neither aware of your sensations nor are you aware of mine. In other words, with regard to things corporeal, what we can perceive individually but not together is that alone which so becomes

part of us that we can change and transform it into ourselves. So it is with food and drink where both of us cannot taste the same portion. Although nurses actually serve food already masticated to infants, yet the portion which is taken to be tasted and is assimilated into the body of the nurse chewing it cannot be returned and given back as food for the infant. When the palate tastes something pleasant, no matter how small a portion it is, it claims this for itself once and for all, and makes it become part of the body's nature. If this were not the case, no taste could remain in the mouth after masticated food was rejected from the mouth. We may say the same of the parts of the air we breathe. Though you can inhale some of the air which I exhale, you cannot do so with that part which has become nourishment for me because it cannot be returned. Physicians point out that we take in nourishment even with our nostrils. When I breathe, I am the only one who can perceive this nourishment and I cannot return it by exhaling it for you to inhale it again and perceive it with your nostrils.

Although we perceive other sense objects, our perception of them does not destroy their nature and change them into our bodily substance. We can both perceive them either together or at different times, so that what I perceive, either in whole or in part, can also be perceived by you. Light, sound, and bodily objects are examples of things with which we can come in contact, but without altering their nature.

Ev. I understand.

Aug. It is clear, therefore, that those things which are not changed by us, though we perceive them with our bodily senses, are not the property of our senses and hence are all the more common to us, seeing that they are not changed or converted into our own individual or, so to speak, private property.

Ev. I am in full agreement.

Aug. We are to understand by individual and, so to speak,

private property, that which is identified with each one of us and which each one alone can perceive within himself as belonging properly to his own nature. By common and, so to speak, public, we understand that which is experienced by all who perceive something, without any deterioration or change in the thing itself.

Ev. That is correct.

Chapter 8

20. *Aug.* Come now, and let me have your attention. Tell me whether anything can be found which all thinking men perceive in common, each one making use of his own mind and reason. Something which is seen is present to everybody and is not changed into something else useful for those to whom it is present, like food and drink, but remains whole and entire, whether it is seen or not. Or do you think that perhaps no such thing exists?

Ev. On the contrary, I see there are many, but it is sufficient to single out one of them, the nature and truth of number which are present to all who make use of reason. Everyone engaged in computing them strives to grasp their nature with his own reason and intelligence. Some do this rather easily, others with more difficulty, while others cannot do it at all, though the truth makes itself equally available to all who can grasp it. And whenever someone experiences this, it is not altered or changed into a kind of nourishment for the one who perceives it. When anyone errs in judgment about it, the reality itself, which remains true and intact, is not at fault; rather, his own error is measured by his failure to behold the reality itself.

21. *Aug.* That is certainly true. I see you were quick to find an answer as becomes a man not unfamiliar with such matters. But suppose I were to tell you that these numbers have not been impressed upon our mind by any nature of

their own but come from things which we grasp with the bodily senses and are a kind of sense-image of things visible, how would you reply? Or would you also be of the same opinion?

Ev. I could never think of such a thing. Even if I could perceive numbers by the bodily senses, I could not on this account also perceive the nature of numerical division and addition by the bodily sense. It is by the light of the mind that I show a man to be wrong whose computation indicates an incorrect total either in addition or subtraction. Besides, I cannot tell how long anything will endure which comes in contact with my bodily senses, such as the heavens and the earth, and all the other bodies which I see are contained in them. But seven and three are ten, not only now, but forever. And there has never been, nor will there ever be a time when seven and three were not ten. This is why I have said that the indestructible truth of number is common to me and to anyone at all who uses his reason.

22. *Aug.* I cannot gainsay the absolute truth and certainty of your answer. But you will readily see that even the numbers themselves have not been brought in through the bodily senses if you realize that all numbers are designated as multiples of the number one. For example, twice one is two, one tripled is three, and ten times one is ten. No matter what the number, it is so designated according to the number of times it contains the number one. But anyone with a true notion of "one" will doubtless discover that it cannot be perceived by the bodily senses. Whatever comes in contact with the bodily senses can be shown to be many, and not one, since, being a body, it also has numberless parts. To say nothing of the minute and barely discernible particles, no matter how small the tiny body, it has one part on the right, another on the left, one above and another below, one to the far side and another on the near side, parts at the extremes and parts in between. We have to admit that such parts are

found in any body, no matter how small it is. Accordingly, we acknowledge that no bodily reality is one, truly and simply, and yet it would be impossible to enumerate so many parts within the body unless these were differentiated by the concept of one.

Whenever I look for this "one" in a body, though I am sure I will not find it, I certainly know what I am looking for and what it is that I do not find there. I know it cannot be found, or better, that it is not present there at all. Consequently, when I recognize that a bodily reality is not one, I know the meaning of one; otherwise, I could not number the many parts in the body. Wherever it is that I come to know one, I certainly do not know it by the bodily senses, for by these I know only bodies, which, as we have shown, are not one, truly and simply. Furthermore, if we have not perceived one by the bodily sense, then neither have we perceived any number by them, none at least of those numbers which we can discern with the understanding. For there is not one of them that does not get its name from its being a given multiple of one, which is not perceived by the bodily senses. The half of any small body has itself its own half, although the whole body is made up of two halves. Hence those two parts of the body are such that even they are not simply two. But the number we call two, because it is twice that which is simply one, has one for its half, namely, that which is simply one, and this in turn cannot have a half or a third, or any other fraction, because it lacks parts and is truly one.

23. Since we are following numerical order, we see next that two follows one and that it is related to one as its double. The double of two does not follow at once, but three, and then four, which is the double of two. And this ordered sequence extends to all the remaining numbers according to a fixed and changeless law. Thus, after one, the first of all numbers, the first number, apart from one, which follows next is two, the double of one. After this second

number, namely, two, the second number, apart from the number two, is the double of two, since the first number after two is three, while the second after two is four, the double of two. After the third number, apart from three, is the double of three, since after three, the first number is four, the second is five, and the third is six, which is the double of three. So too, after number four, the fourth number, apart from four, is the double of four, since following the fourth number, namely, after four, the first number is five, the second is six, the third is seven, and the fourth is eight, which is the double of four. You will also find that the same thing holds for all the other numbers, which we discovered when we combined the first two, that is, numbers one and two, namely, that the double of any number is as many times removed from that number as the number doubled is removed from the beginning of number.

How, then, do we discern that this numerical relationship, which we observe to prevail throughout the whole range of numbers, is changeless, fixed, and indestructible? No one perceives all numbers by any bodily sense, for they are innumerable. I say, then, how do we know that this holds true for all numbers? What idea or image enables us to see with such assurance that this fixed law governing number holds throughout innumerable instances, unless it be that inner light of which the senses have no knowledge?

24. Men endowed with the God-given ability to reason and not blinded by stubbornness, are constrained by these and many other such proofs to acknowledge that the law and truth of numbers do not pertain to the bodily sense, that they remain changeless and incorruptible, and belong to all who use their reason to perceive them. Many other things possibly come to mind which, as the common and, as it were, public possession of all who use reason, are there to be seen by the mind and reason of each one who perceives them, though the realities themselves remain intact and unchanging. However,

I was delighted to hear that the law and truth of numbers came especially to your mind when you wanted to give an answer to my question. It is not without some intent that number and wisdom are brought together in the Sacred Scriptures, where it is said: "I have gone round—I and my heart—to know and to consider, and to search out wisdom and number."¹

Chapter 9

25. But let me ask you this: What, in your opinion, should be our view of wisdom itself? Do you think that each man has his own individual wisdom, or that there is one wisdom present to all alike, and that a man becomes wiser the more he shares in it?

Ev. I do not yet know to what wisdom you refer, for I notice that wise actions and words are looked at differently by men. Those who wage war think they are acting wisely, while those who spurn war to devote care and effort to tilling the soil, prefer to extol this activity and to regard it as wisdom. Those shrewd enough to devise schemes for acquiring money are wise in their own eyes. Those uninterested in such things and who renounce them and all such temporal goods, to direct all their effort to the search for truth so as to know themselves and God, judge that this is the one great task of wisdom. Those who are unwilling to allow themselves such leisure for the quest and contemplation of truth, preferring to work for the welfare of men amidst burdensome cares and duties and are occupied with the task of providing just rule and government for human affairs, think that they are wise. And those who combine both of these, living part of their life in the contemplation of truth and part in the discharge of official duties, which they feel are owing to human society, think they have won the prize for wisdom. I

¹ Eccles. 7.26.

make no mention of the countless sects where each one sets its own followers above the rest and would have it that they alone are wise.

Consequently, since the answer to our present problem must not be what we believe but what we grasp with a clear understanding, I cannot possibly reply to your question about the nature of wisdom unless I know by reflection and rational discernment what I already hold on faith.

26. *Aug.* Do you think there can be any wisdom but the truth wherein the highest good is seen and possessed? Now those men whom you mentioned as pursuing different goals, all seek good and shun evil, but they pursue different goals because they have different ideas about the good. Any man, then, who seeks what should not be sought is still in error, even though he would not be seeking it unless he thought it was good. A man who seeks nothing, or who seeks what ought to be sought, is not in error.

Insofar, therefore, as all men seek the happy life, they are not in error. But to the extent that a man fails to hold to that way of life which leads to happiness, by so much is he in error, though he avows and professes that he is seeking only happiness. For there is error whenever we follow something which does not lead us where we want to go. And the more one errs in his way of life, the less wise he is, for he is all the farther from the truth wherein the highest good is seen and possessed. It is by attaining to the possession of the highest good that a man becomes happy, which is unquestionably what all of us desire.

Just as we agree that we want to be happy, so do we agree that we want to be wise since, without wisdom, no one is happy. For no one is happy except by the highest good which is found in the contemplation and possession of that truth which we call wisdom. So, just as the notion of happiness is impressed on our minds even before we are happy—this enables us to have the assurance and to state unhesitatingly

that we want to be happy—so too, even before we are wise, we have the notion of wisdom impressed on our minds. And if any one of us is asked whether he wants to be happy, it is this notion that enables him to reply that he does, beyond any shadow of doubt.

27. We agree then about the nature of wisdom, though you were not able to put it in words. For if you did not perceive it at all in your mind, you simply could not know that you want to be wise or that this was your duty, which I do not think you will deny. If, then, we are in agreement about wisdom, I want you to tell me whether, as in the case of the law and truth of numbers, you think that wisdom too is present to all alike who use their reason, or whether you feel there are as many wisdoms as there are men capable of becoming wise. For there are as many minds as there are men, so that we do not perceive anything with one another's mind.

Ev. If the highest good is one for all men, then that truth wherein we can contemplate and possess it, namely, wisdom, must also be common to all.

Aug. Do you doubt that the highest good, whatever it is, is the same for all men?

Ev. I really do, because I notice that different men take delight in different things as their highest good.

Aug. I only wish that no one had any doubt about the highest good, just as no one doubts that it is only by the possession of this good, whatever it is, that man can become happy. But as this is an important question and may require a lengthy discussion, let us go all the way and suppose that there are just as many highest goods as there are different classes of things which different men seek as their highest good. It does not follow, does it, that wisdom itself is not something one and common to all alike, simply because those goods which they see and choose in the light of this wisdom are many and varied? If you think it does, you could also doubt that the sunlight is something one, since the objects

we see in it are many and varied. From among these objects each one freely chooses something to enjoy through his sense of sight. One man likes to look at a mountain height and finds delight in such a view; another, at the level expanse of a meadow; another, at the slope of a valley; another, at the green forest; another, at the undulating surface of the sea; another gathers in all or several of these at once for the sheer delight of looking at them.

The things which men see in the light of the sun and which they choose for their enjoyment are many and varied, yet there is the one sunlight in which each viewer sees and takes hold of an object for his enjoyment. Similarly, the goods are many and varied from which each one chooses what he wants, and it is by contemplating and taking hold of this object of his choice that each one really and truly makes this the highest good wherein to find his enjoyment. It is still possible that the light of wisdom itself, in which these things are seen and grasped, may be one and shared by all alike who are wise.

Ev. I acknowledge that this is possible and that there is nothing to prevent the one wisdom from being common to all, even though the highest goods are many and varied. But I would like to know whether this is the case, since, by granting that it is possible, it does not necessarily follow that it is so.

Aug. We know for now that wisdom does exist. But whether there is one wisdom common to all, or whether each wise man has his own wisdom in the way that he has his own soul or mind, is something that we do not yet comprehend.

Ev. That is true.

Chapter 10

28. *Aug.* Well then, where do we see the truth of what we now know, namely, that wisdom or wise men exist, and that all men want to be happy? I certainly have no doubt whatever that you do see this and that it is true. Do you see then

that this is true just as you see your own thoughts which are completely unknown to me unless you disclose them to me? Or do you see it in such a way as to understand that it can also be seen as true by me, though you did not tell it to me?

Ev. I have no doubt indeed that you could also see it, even against my will.

Aug. Is not this one truth, then, which we both see with our individual minds, common to both of us.

Ev. Quite evidently.

Aug. I also believe you will not deny that we should have a zeal for wisdom and will agree that this in fact is true.

Ev. I do not deny this at all.

Aug. Can we possibly deny that this truth is likewise one and that it is something to be seen by all alike who know it? Yet each one sees it with his own mind, not with mine or yours, or with anyone else's mind, since what is seen is present to all alike who behold it.

Ev. We could never deny that.

Aug. Will you not also admit that these statements have an absolute truth which is present and common to you as well as to me, and to all who see it, namely: we ought to live justly, the less perfect should be subordinated to the more perfect, like things should be equally esteemed, each one should be given his due?

Ev. I agree.

Aug. Can you deny that something incorrupt is better than the corrupt, the eternal better than the temporal, the inviolable better than what is subject to injury?

Ev. Who could possibly deny it?

Aug. Can anyone say, therefore, that this truth belongs to him alone when its changeless character is there to be seen by all who have the power to behold it?

Ev. No one could truly say that this truth belongs to him alone, since it is just as much one and common to all as it is true.

Aug. Who, again, is there to deny that the soul should turn from what is corrupt to the incorrupt, and should love, not the corrupt, but the incorrupt? Or how can anyone, once he acknowledges that something is true, fail to understand its changeless character or to see that it is present to all alike who are able to behold it?

Ev. That is perfectly true.

Aug. Well then, will anyone doubt that a life which does not turn away from its firm and moral convictions by any adversity is better than one which is easily broken and overcome by temporal misfortune?

Ev. Who could doubt it?

29. *Aug.* I will look for no further examples of this kind. It is enough that together we see and admit as an absolute certainty that those truths are so many rules and beacons of virtue, that they are true and changeless, and, whether taken singly or collectively, that they are present in common for all to see who can do so, each one viewing them with his own mind and reason. But what I am really asking is whether you think that these truths pertain to wisdom. I believe that in your opinion a man is wise who has acquired wisdom.

Ev. I certainly think so.

Aug. Could a man who lives justly live this way unless he knew which are the lower things that he subordinates to the higher, which the things of equal rank that he brings together, and what things he assigns as appropriate to each class?

Ev. He could not.

Aug. Then you will not deny, will you, that a man who sees these things does so wisely?

Ev. I do not deny it.

Aug. Does not the man who lives prudently choose the incorrupt and judge that it should be preferred to the corrupt?

Ev. Quite clearly.

Aug. Then when a man chooses to turn his soul to what

everybody admits should be chosen, can we deny that he is making a wise choice?

Ev. I could never deny that.

Aug. Therefore, when he turns his soul to what was a wise choice, he does so wisely.

Ev. Most certainly.

Aug. And the man who is undeterred by fear or punishment from what he has wisely chosen, and to which it was wise of him to turn, is undoubtedly acting wisely.

Ev. Beyond any doubt.

Aug. It is perfectly clear then that all those truths which we call rules and beacons pertain to wisdom. The more a man uses them in the conduct of his life and lives in conformity with them, the more wisely does he live and act. And we cannot really say that what is done wisely is found apart from wisdom.

Ev. That is absolutely true.

Aug. Accordingly, just as there are true and changeless rules governing numbers whose law and truth are, as you said, unalterably present and common to all who see them, so, too, are the rules of wisdom likewise true and changeless. When you were asked just now about a few of them, one by one, you replied that they were true and evident and admitted that they are common for all to see who are capable of beholding them.

Chapter 11

30. *Ev.* I cannot doubt it. But I would very much like to know whether these two, namely, wisdom and number, fall under some one class since you mentioned that they are placed together even in the Sacred Scriptures. Is one derived from the other, or is it contained in the other; does number, for example, derive from wisdom, or is it contained in wisdom? For I would not dare assert that wisdom derives from

number or is contained in it. I do not see how I could do so because I am acquainted with many mathematicians or accountants, or whatever else they may be called, who work out perfectly accurate and remarkable calculations. But of wise men, I either know very few, or possibly none at all. Wisdom, it strikes me, is far nobler than number.

Aug. You mention a subject at which I am also wont to marvel. For whenever I go over in my mind the unchanging truth of number, and consider, so to speak, its abode or sanctuary or sphere, or however else we may suitably indicate somehow the seat and dwelling-place of number, I am far removed from the body.¹ And when I chance to find something that I can think of, but not something that I can adequately express in words, I return wearily to the familiar things about us in order to be able to speak, and I speak in the usual way of things that confront our gaze. This happens to me even when I do all I can to think carefully and intently about wisdom. That is why I marvel exceedingly at the fact that, while wisdom and number occupy a hidden and certain abode in Truth, and while there is also the additional scriptural testimony which I cited, linking them together—I marvel exceedingly, as I said, why number is of little value for most men, while wisdom is dear to them.

But it doubtless comes down to this, that they are one and the same thing. Yet, since the Sacred Scripture has this to say of wisdom that "it reaches from end to end strongly and orders all things gently,"² then, possibly, the power whereby "it reaches from end to end strongly," is called number, while

¹ The Pythagorean influence on Augustine's treatment of number is apparent in the early dialogue *De ordine*, where the "science of number" is assigned a kind of primacy in the order of knowledge (2.18.47). His sermons and scriptural commentaries often reflect the attitude of an age fascinated by the sacramental aspect of number and occasion ingenious pieces of exegesis which at times appear fanciful and extravagant to men of a later day. On the scriptural influence on Augustine's notion of number, cf. W. Most, "The Scriptural Basis of Saint Augustine's Arithmology," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 13 (1951) 284-295.

² Wis. 8.1.

that whereby "it orders all things gently" is here called wisdom, though both belong to one and the same wisdom.

31. Wisdom has endowed all things with number, even the least and those at the lowest confines of the universe. Though they hold the lowest place in existence, bodies all possess these numbers. But the capacity for wisdom has not been given to bodily things or to every kind of soul, but only to rational souls. It is there that wisdom has, so to speak, taken up its abode and from where it orders all things it has endowed with number, even the lowest. Since it is easy for us to judge about bodily things, occupying, as they do, a place beneath us, and to see that they have numbers impressed on them which we also judge to be below us, we therefore set a lower value upon numbers.

But once we begin to change our course, as it were, to an upward direction, we discover that number transcends even our minds and abides unchangingly in truth itself. But since few men are capable of wisdom, whereas the ability to count has been given even to fools, men admire wisdom and have little regard for number. There are, on the other hand, men learned and devoted to study, and the more these withdraw from the taint of earthly things, the more clearly they behold in the truth itself both number and wisdom and hold both in high esteem. And when they compare truth with gold and silver and the other things for which men struggle, then not only these, but even they themselves, appear vile in their sight.

32. It should not surprise you that men have belittled number and set a high value on wisdom simply because it is easier for them to count than to acquire wisdom, when you stop to consider how much more they value gold than the light of a lamp, compared to which gold is something trivial. But greater honor is given something far inferior simply because even a beggar can light himself a candle, whereas only a few can possess gold. This is far from implying that, in comparison with number, wisdom is found inferior, since it

is the same; but it must find an eye capable of discerning this identity.

Light and heat are perceived coexistent, so to speak, in the one fire and cannot be separated from each other. Yet, the heat reaches objects placed near it, while the light is spread even over a larger area. In like manner, the power of understanding, present in wisdom, warms what is near it, such as rational souls, whereas, for things farther removed, such as bodies, it does not reach them with the warmth of its wisdom, but permeates them with the light of number. Perhaps you find this obscure, for no analogy drawn from visible things to illustrate an invisible reality can be made to fit perfectly.

Only take note of this point which is enough for our problem at hand and is clear even to more lowly minds, such as ours. Though we are unable to see clearly whether number is contained in wisdom, or is derived from it, or whether wisdom itself derives from number, and is contained in it, or whether it can be shown that both are names of the same thing, this much at least is clear, that both are true and are unchangeably true.

Chapter 12

33. You would in no way deny, then, that there exists unchangeable truth that embraces all things that are immutably true. You cannot call this truth mine or yours, or anyone else's. Rather, it is there to manifest itself as something common to all who behold immutable truths, as a light that in wondrous ways is both hidden and public. But how could anyone say that anything which is present in common to all endowed with reason and understanding is something that belongs to the nature of any one of these in particular? You recall, I believe, the result of our discussion a short time

ago concerning the bodily senses,¹ namely, that the objects perceived by us in common by sight and hearing, such as color and sound, which you and I see and hear together, are not identified with the nature of our eyes or ears, but are common objects of our perception. So too, you would never say that the things each one of us perceives in common with his own mind, belong to the nature of either of our minds. You cannot say that what two people perceive at the same time with their eyes is identified with the eyes of either one; it is a third something toward which the view of both is directed.

Ev. That is perfectly clear and true.

34. *Aug.* This truth, therefore, which we have discussed at length and in which, though it is one, we perceive so many things—do you think that compared to our minds it is more excellent, equally excellent, or inferior? Now if it were inferior, we would not be making judgments according to it, but about it. We do make judgments, for example, about bodies because they are lower, and we often state not only that they exist or do not exist this way, but also that they ought or ought not so to exist. So too with our souls; we not only know that our soul is in a certain state, but often know besides that this is the way it ought to be. We also make similar judgments about bodies, as when we say that a body is not so bright or so square as it ought to be, and so on, and also of souls, when we say the soul is not so well disposed as it ought to be, or that it is not so gentle or not so forceful, according to the dictates of our moral norms.

We make these judgments according to those rules of truth within us which we see in common, but no one ever passes judgment on the rules themselves. For whenever anyone affirms that the eternal ought to be valued above the things of time, or that seven and three are ten, no one judges that it ought to be so, but merely recognizes that it is so. He is not

1 Cf. 2.7.

an examiner making corrections, but merely a discoverer, rejoicing over his discovery.

But if this truth were of equal standing with our minds, it would itself also be changeable. At times our minds see more of it, at other times less, thereby acknowledging that they are subject to change. But the truth which abides in itself, does not increase or decrease by our seeing more or less of it, but, remaining whole or inviolable, its light brings delight to those who have turned to it, and punishes with blindness those who have turned from it.

And what of the fact that we judge about our own minds in the light of this truth, though we are unable to judge at all about the truth itself? We say that our mind does not understand as well as it ought, or that it understands as much as it ought. But the mind's understanding should be in proportion to its ability to be drawn more closely and to cling to the unchangeable truth. Consequently, if truth is neither inferior nor equal to our minds, it has to be higher and more excellent.

Chapter 13

35. I had promised to show you, if you recall, that there is something higher than our mind and reason. There you have it—truth itself! Embrace it, if you can, and enjoy it; “find delight in the Lord and He will grant you the petitions of your heart.”¹ For what more do you desire than to be happy? And who is happier than the man who finds joy in the firm, changeless, and most excellent truth?

Men proclaim they are happy when they embrace the beautiful bodies of their wives and even of harlots, which they desire so passionately, and shall we doubt that we are happy in the embrace of truth? Men proclaim they are happy when,

¹ Ps. 36.4.

suffering from parched throats, they come to a copious spring of healthful waters, or, when hungry, they come upon a big dinner or supper sumptuously prepared. Shall we deny we are happy when we are refreshed and nourished by truth? We often hear men proclaim they are happy if they recline amid roses and other flowers, or delight in the fragrance of ointments. But what is more fragrant, what more delightful, than the breath of truth? And shall we hesitate to say we are happy when we are filled with the breath of truth? Many decide that for them the happy life is found in vocal music and in the sounds of string instruments and flutes. Whenever these are absent, they account themselves unhappy, whereas when they are at hand, they are thrilled with joy. When truth steals into our minds with a kind of eloquent silence without, as it were, the noisy intrusion of words, shall we look for another happy life and not enjoy that which is so sure and intimately present to us? Men delight in the glitter of gold and silver, in the lustre of gems, and are delighted by the charm and splendor of light, whether it be the light in our own eyes, or that of fires on earth, or the light in the stars, the moon, or the sun. And they think themselves happy when they are not withdrawn from these enjoyments by some kind of trouble or penury, and they would like to go on living forever for the sake of those delights. And shall we be afraid to find our happiness in the light of truth?

36. Quite the contrary. Since it is in truth that we know and possess the highest good, and since that truth is wisdom, let us see in wisdom our highest good. Let us make it our aim to enjoy fully, for happy indeed is the man whose delight is in the highest good.

It is this truth which throws light on all things that are truly good and which men choose according to their mental capacity, either singly or severally, for their enjoyment. By the light of the sun men choose what they like to look at and find delight in it. If some of them are perchance endowed with

a sound, healthy, and powerful vision, they will like nothing better than to gaze at the sun itself which also sheds its light on other things in which weaker eyes find delight. Similarly, when the sharp and strong vision of the mind beholds a number of immutable truths known with certainty, it directs its gaze to truth itself, which illumines all that is true.² As if unmindful of all else, it clings to this truth and, in enjoying it, enjoys everything else at the same time. For whatever is delightful in other truths is made delightful by the truth itself.

37. Our freedom is found in submission to this truth. And it is our God Himself who frees us from death, namely, from our sinful condition. It is the Truth Himself, speaking also as a man with men, who says to those believing in him: "If you remain in my word, you are indeed my disciples, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."³ But the soul is not free in the enjoyment of anything unless it is secure in that enjoyment.

Chapter 14

Now no one is secure in the possession of goods which can be lost against his will. But no one loses truth or wisdom against his will, for he cannot be separated from them by spatial distances. What we call separation from truth and wisdom is a perverse will which makes inferior things the object of its love. But no one wills anything unwillingly.

In possessing truth, therefore, we have something which all of us can equally enjoy in common, for there is nothing want-

² Augustine's earlier effort to prove the existence of God by rational argument would seem to exclude an Ontologistic interpretation of this passage. For if man's intellect enjoys in this life a natural and intuitive vision of God, then His existence can be neither an object of faith nor of rational demonstration. In the *De Genesi ad litteram* (12.27-28, 55-56), he had allowed the vision of God to Moses and St. Paul, but later rejected this view entirely. Cf. *De Trinitate* 2.16.27.

³ John 8.31-32.

ing or defective in it. It welcomes all its lovers without any envy on their part; it is available to all, yet chaste with each. No one of them says to another: step back so I too may come close; take your hands away so I may also embrace it. All cling to it; all touch the selfsame thing. It is a food never divided into portions; you drink nothing from it that I cannot drink. By sharing in it, you make no part of it your personal possession. I do not have to wait for you to exhale its fragrance so that I too may draw it in. No part of it ever becomes the exclusive possession of any one man, or of a few, but is common to all at the same time in its entirety.¹

38. Consequently, the objects we touch or taste or smell bear less resemblance to such truth than those which we perceive by hearing and sight. Every word is fully heard by all who hear it and by each one at the same time; every visible object before our eyes is seen at the same time as much by one as by another.

But these analogies are quite remote. No spoken word, for instance, emits all its sound at the same time, since its sound is prolonged over intervals of time, one part coming before another. And every visible object protrudes, so to speak, through space and is not wholly present everywhere. In any case, these things can all be taken from us against our will, and there are obstacles which stand in the way of our being able to enjoy them.

And even if the beautiful singing of a vocalist were to last forever, his admirers would vie with one another to come to hear him; they would press about each other, and, as the crowd became larger, would fight over seats so that each might be closer to the singer. And as they listened, they could not take any of the sound to keep for themselves but could only be caressed by all the fleeting sounds. And if I should

¹ The theoretic principles for Augustine's view of Christian humanism, expounded in *De doctrina christiana* (2.40), stem in part from this conception of truth, which belongs to all because it belongs to none. *Rationem autem veritatis quae nec mea nec tua est sed utrique nostrum ad contemplandum proposita . . .* (*C. Secundinum Manichaeum* 2).

wish to gaze at the sun, and were able to do so uninterruptedly, it would leave me at sunset and could be covered over by a cloud, and I could be forced to give up the pleasure of seeing it because of many other hindrances. Finally, even if the delights attached to seeing light and hearing sound were to be ever present, what great advantage would be mine since I share this in common with brute animals?

But the beauty of truth and wisdom does not turn away any who come because the audience is already overcrowded, provided only that there is a steadfast will to enjoy them. This beauty does not pass with time or move from place to place; it is not interrupted by nightfall or concealed by shadows, and is not at the mercy of the bodily senses. It is near to all throughout the world who have made it the object of their love, and belongs to them forever. It occupies no one place and is nowhere absent; outwardly, it admonishes us, inwardly, it teaches us.² All who behold it are changed for the better, and no one can change it for the worse. No one passes judgment on it, and without it no one can judge aright. Hence it is clear, beyond doubt, that truth is superior to our minds, each one of which is made wise by it alone, and is made a judge, not of truth itself, but of all other things in the light of truth.

Chapter 15

39. You granted that if I could prove that there was something above our minds, you would admit it was God, provided that there was still nothing higher. I agreed and stated that it would be enough for me to prove this point. For if there is anything more excellent, then this is God; if not, then truth itself is God. In either case, you cannot deny that God exists,

² The same theme is developed in *De magistro*, a dialogue between Augustine and his son, Adeodatus, composed about the year 389; translated in the opening pages of this volume.

which was the question we proposed to examine in our discussion. If you are uneasy because of what we have received on faith through the hallowed teaching of Christ, namely, that there is a Father of Wisdom, then remember that we have accepted this also on faith, namely, that the Wisdom begotten of the eternal Father is equal to Him. We are not to inquire further about this just now, but only to accept it with an unshaken faith.

God exists indeed, and He exists truly and most perfectly. As I see it, we not only hold this as certain by our faith, but we also arrive at it by a sure, though, as yet, very inadequate form of knowledge. But this is sufficient for the matter at hand and will enable us to explain the other points that have a bearing on the subject, unless, of course, you have some objections to raise.

Ev. I accept all this, overwhelmed as I am with an incredible joy which I am unable to express to you in words. I declare that it is absolutely certain. I do so, prompted by that inner voice which makes me want to hear the truth itself and to cling to it. I not only grant that this is good, but also that it is the highest good and the source of happiness.

40. *Aug.* You are certainly right. I too rejoice exceedingly. But I will ask you whether we are already wise and happy, or whether we are still striving to make this our goal.

Ev. I think rather we are striving toward it.

Aug. How then do you grasp those things which you rejoice in as being true and certain? You do grant that an understanding of them pertains to wisdom. Can a foolish man know wisdom?

Ev. Not while he remains foolish.

Aug. Then you must now be wise, or else you do not yet know wisdom.

Ev. I am, to be sure, not yet wise, but, insofar as I do know wisdom, I would say that I am not foolish. For I cannot deny that the things I know are certain, and that this is wisdom.

Aug. Please answer me this question: will you not grant that a man who is not just is unjust, and the man who is not prudent is imprudent, and the man who is not temperate is intemperate? Can there be any doubt about it?

Ev. I grant that when a man is not just, he is unjust, and I would give the same answer regarding the prudent and temperate man.

Aug. Why, then, is a man not foolish when he is not wise?

Ev. This I will also admit, that when a man is not wise, he is foolish.

Aug. Now which one of the two are you?

Ev. Whichever one you want to call me, for I dare not say that I am wise. Yet, I see how it follows from what I have admitted that I should not hesitate to say I am foolish.

Aug. Then the foolish man knows wisdom. For, as we have stated, he would not be sure he wanted to be wise, and that he ought to be so, unless the notion of wisdom were fixed in his mind; fixed in his mind, as are those things pertaining to wisdom itself about which, when questioned one by one, you replied, and in the knowledge of which you found delight.

Ev. It is just as you say.

Chapter 16

41. *Aug.* In our effort to be wise as quickly as possible, what else do we do but concentrate our soul wholly upon what the mind has discovered, and make this its permanent abode? As a result, the soul will no longer take delight in any individual good of its own that entangles it in things of a transitory nature but, once stripped of its attachment for the things of time and place, it will take hold of that which is forever one and the same. Just as the soul is the total source of life for the body, so is God the source of happiness for the soul. While we are engaged in this task, and until we

have finished it, we are wayfarers. And if it is now granted us to enjoy those true and certain goods which cast their light along our darksome journey, take note whether this be not the very thing which Scripture says about the way Wisdom acts towards its lovers when they come in search of it: "She shows herself to them cheerfully in the ways, and meets them with all providence."¹

Turn where you will, wisdom speaks to you by the imprint it has left on its works, and, when you are slipping back into what is outward, it entices you to return within by the beauty of those very forms found in things external. This is done so you may recognize that whatever delights you in a body and attracts you by the bodily senses is imbued with number. Thus, you must search for its source and return within yourself and come to see that it is not possible to pass judgment, favorable or unfavorable, on things known by the bodily senses unless you have at your disposal a knowledge of certain laws governing beauty to which you refer whatever objects you perceive outwardly.²

42. Look at the heavens and the earth and the sea, and at all the things they contain. Whether these shine from above or crawl on the earth below, or fly or swim, they all have forms because they possess number. Take away number from them, and they are nothing. What then, is the source of their existence but that same source where number derives, since, in fact, they enjoy existence only insofar as they are possessed of number?

Even men who create beauty in working with bodily materials make use of numbers in their art and fashion their products in accordance with them. While producing their work, they manipulate their hands and tools until what

¹ Wis. 6.13.

² While a Manichaeon, Augustine had composed a work on esthetics, *De pulchro et apto*, which was no longer extant at the time he wrote the *Confessions* (4.13.20). The present discussion reveals a marked dependence upon Plotinus' treatise *On the Beautiful*. Cf. *Enneads* (1.6.9).

is being formed externally is made as perfectly as possible to conform with the inward light of number. Then, through the senses as intermediaries, it wins the approval of the mind which judges within, as it contemplates the higher realm of numbers. Ask me next what it is that moves the bodily members of the artisan and it will be found to be number, for even they move in a measured rhythm. If you take from his hand what he is making, and from his mind the intention to make something, then that bodily movement is calculated to give delight, and is called pantomime. Ask what there is in pantomime to cause delight, and number will answer that it is present there.

Now examine the beauty of a graceful body, and number will be found at work in space. Examine beauty in bodily movement, and you will see how number plays a role in the proper timing. Enter into the realm of art where number has its origin, and try to find time and place there. You will find there neither place nor time, and yet it is there that number has its abode. This realm of number is devoid of spaces, nor is its duration measured in terms of days. Yet, when men desirous of becoming artists set about the task of learning this art, they are moving their bodies in space and time, but their soul they move only in time; and with the passing of time they become more proficient in their art.

Now go beyond even the soul of the artist to get a view of the eternal realm of number. Wisdom will now shine upon you from its inner abode and from the very sanctuary of truth. If your gaze, as yet weak, recoils from this light, turn the mind's eye back along the way where "wisdom showed herself cheerfully." Only remember that you have put off for a time a vision which you will seek again when you are stronger and sounder.

43. O Wisdom, O Light most pleasing to a mind made pure! Woe to those who forsake your guidance and grope about among your shadowy imitations and, more enamored

of your signs than of you, are forgetful of what you wish to intimate. For you never cease to intimate your nature and excellence to us, and the entire beauty of created things consists in these signs. The artist, too, through the beauty of his work, intimates in a way to the viewer of it that he should not fasten his attention there completely but should so scan the beauty of the artistic work that he will turn his thoughts back fondly upon him who made it. Those who love the things you make instead of yourself are like men who listen to the eloquence of a wise man. In their overeagerness to hear his beautiful voice and the skillful cadence of his words, they neglect the primary importance of his thoughts for which the spoken words were to serve as signs.

Woe to those who turn away from your light and are delighted to cling to their own darkness. Turning their back, so to speak, upon you, they are enchained by works of the flesh as by their own shadow,³ and yet, even such delight as they experience there, comes to them from the encompassing rays of your light. But while love of the shadow continues, it makes the mind's eye weaker and less able to endure the sight of your presence. Hence, so long as a man prefers to pursue whatever is easier for his weakened condition to endure, the more is he encompassed in darkness. This is the beginning of his inability to see that which exists most perfectly, and he begins to judge as evil whatever deceives him through want of foresight, or appeals to his impoverished condition, or torments him in his state of captivity. Yet he is justly suffering these penalties for having turned from wisdom; and what is just cannot be evil.

44. Hence, if you take a look at any changeable reality, you will be unable to grasp it either by the bodily senses or by mental reflection unless it is held together by some numerical determinant, without which it will fall back into nothing. Have no doubt that there exists an eternal and changeless

³ A clear allusion to Plato's allegory of the "cave" in Book Seven of the *Republic*.

form which keeps such changeable things from losing their existence and enables them to pass, as it were, through the phases of their temporal duration by the regularity of their movements and their separate and varied forms. Such a form is neither circumscribed by place nor spread, as it were, through space; nor is it extended or changed in the course of time. In virtue of this form, all changeable realities are able to receive their forms, each according to its nature, and to realize fully their numerical perfection in place and time.

Chapter 17

45. Every changeable reality must also be capable of receiving form. Just as we call something changeable which is capable of undergoing change, so I would call "formable," whatever is capable of receiving form.¹ But nothing can impart form to itself, because nothing can give itself what it does not have, and, surely, a thing is given form so that it may have form. So if anything possesses form, there is no need for it to receive what it has. But if it does not have form, it cannot receive from itself what it does not have. Nothing, therefore, as we have said, can give itself form. Now what more can we say about the changing nature of body and soul, since enough has been said previously? We may conclude, then, that body and soul both receive forms from an immutable and everlasting form, with reference to which it was said: "Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed, but Thou art forever the same and thy years fail not."² The Prophet spoke of years that do not fail to indicate eternity.

1 In the third of his commentaries on the Book of Genesis, *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine states that by one single act God produced simultaneously both "unformed matter" and "form," and that the former is prior only by the priority of nature and not of time (1.15.29).

2 Ps. 51.27.

Of the same form it is likewise said that "abiding in itself, it renews all things."³

By this we may also understand that all things are ruled by providence. If everything in existence would become nothing, once form was entirely taken away, then this unchangeable form is itself their providence. Through it all changing realities subsist so as to achieve their perfection and movements by the numerical principles belonging to their forms. If this form did not exist, these would have no being. Accordingly, the man who is making his way toward wisdom will see, as he gazes thoughtfully upon the whole of creation, how wisdom reveals itself cheerfully to him along the way and comes to meet him with all providential care. And he will yearn all the more eagerly to complete this journey as the path itself is made more beautiful by that wisdom which he so ardently desires to reach.

46. If you are able to find some other class of creature besides that which exists without life, and that which exists with life but without understanding, and that which exists with life and understanding, then you might venture to affirm that there is something good which does not come from God. These three classes may even be expressed by two words, if we call them body and life. For that which has only life and no understanding, as animals, and that which has understanding, as man, are rightly said to have life. Now these two, namely, body and life, are reckoned among things created, since we also speak of life of the Creator Himself, and this is the highest form of life. Since these two, namely, body and life, are capable of receiving form, as our earlier remarks have shown, and since they would fall back into nothingness were all form to be taken away, they give sufficient indication that they owe their existence to that form which is always the same.

Consequently, all good things, however great or small, can

³ Wis. 7.27.

only come from God. What can be greater among creatures than life endowed with understanding, or what can be less than body? No matter how far these deteriorate and tend towards nothingness, something of form remains in them to give them such existence as they have. Whatever form is left in anything undergoing such deterioration, comes to it from that form which knows no deterioration and which does not permit even the movements of things, whether towards progress or deterioration, to go beyond the limits imposed by their numbers. Consequently, whatever we find praiseworthy in nature, whether it be deemed worthy of great or of slight praise, must be referred to the highest and unspeakable praise of the Creator. But you may have something further to add.

Chapter 18

47. Ev. I am, I admit, sufficiently convinced that God exists and that all goods come from God, so far as such evidence is possible in the present life and for men like ourselves. All existing things come from God, whether they have understanding and life and existence, or have only life and existence, or have only existence. Now let us examine the third question to see whether it can be shown that free will should be reckoned among things that are good. Once this is proven, I will have no hesitation in granting that God gave it to us and that it is something that should have been given.

Aug. You recall very well the questions proposed, and you were quick to notice that the second question has already been cleared up. But you should have seen that the third was also settled. You gave it as your opinion that free will should not have been given because people commit sin by it. In opposition to your view, I retorted that moral conduct is only possible by free will and went on to assert that God had

given it for this purpose.¹ You replied that free will should have been given us in the same way as justice, which one can only use rightly. This reply of yours compelled us to embark upon these roundabout discussions to prove that good things, great and small, come from God alone. This point could only be clarified after we had refuted the wicked folly expressed by the fool who said in his heart, "there is no God."² Some kind of reasoning, suited to our feeble mentality, was undertaken on this important matter in order to give us something certain by way of conclusion, while God Himself was helping us along so perilous a course. Although these two truths, namely, that God exists, and that all good things come from Him, were at first held firmly by faith, they have now been examined in such a way that this third truth is manifestly evident, namely, that free will must be numbered among things that are good.

48. In an earlier discussion it was proven and agreed upon by us that a corporeal nature occupies a lower place in existence than does the nature of the soul, and that the soul is therefore a greater good than the body. If, then, among goods of the body we find some which man can misuse, we do not say that they should not therefore have been given, since we do acknowledge that these are good. We should not be surprised then if we also find in the soul some goods which we can also misuse. But because they are good, they could only be given by Him from whom all good things come.

You can see how a great good is wanting in a body having no hands; yet a man who perpetrates cruel and shameful deeds with them makes bad use of his hands. If you were to see someone with no feet, you would admit that an important good is wanting to the body's integrity, and yet you could not deny that a man who uses his feet to injure someone or to disgrace himself is making bad use of his feet.

¹ A passage exploited by Pelagius in his attack upon Augustine's teaching on grace.

² Ps. 13.1.

With our eyes we can perceive light and distinguish bodily forms one from another. This power of sight is the noblest endowment of our body and for this reason these organs have been given a kind of exalted place of honor in our body. Our eyes also serve to protect health and furnish many other benefits to life. Yet, many men do much that is shameful with their eyes and enlist them to serve the cause of lust. You can see what a great good is wanting to a face having no eyes, but when we possess them, who else has given them but God, the Giver of all goods?

Just as you look favorably upon these goods in the body and praise Him who gave them, without regard to those who misuse them, so you should also grant that free will, without which no one can live right, is good and is given by God. You should further acknowledge that those who misuse this good should be condemned rather than admit that He who gave free will should not have given it.

49. Ev. I would like you to prove for me first that free will is a good, and then I would grant that God gave it to us, because I acknowledge that all things good come from God.

Aug. Have I failed then to prove this to you after so much effort in our earlier discussion? You granted at the time that the beauty and form of a body are wholly derived from the supreme form of all things, namely, the truth, and that these are good. Truth itself says in the Gospel that even the hairs of our head are numbered.³ Have you forgotten what we said about the supremacy of number and how its power extends from end to end? What perversity to count the hairs of our head, small and lowly as they are, among things good, and fail to discover their cause and to see that God alone is the Creator of everything good, since all good things, great and small, derive from Him, from whom comes every good. Again, what perversity to doubt about free will, without which it is impossible to lead an upright life, as even they acknowledge who live wickedly.

³ Cf. Matt. 10.30.

In any case, please tell me now which you think is the higher good in us. Is it that without which we can live rightly, or that without which we cannot live rightly?

Ev. Please go easy on me, for I am ashamed that I could not see this. How could anyone doubt that that without which there can be no right living is the more excellent good by far?

Aug. Would you deny then that a man with one eye can live rightly?

Ev. May I never be guilty of such colossal folly!

Aug. Since you grant, then, that the eye is something good in the body, even though its loss is no hindrance to leading a good life, will you take the view that free will is not a good, when no one can live rightly without it?

50. Think of justice, which no one can put to bad use. It is reckoned among the greatest goods found in man and among all the virtues of the soul which make for a good and upright life. Nor does anyone put to bad use the virtues of prudence or courage or temperance. In all these virtues, as well as in justice itself, which you mentioned, it is right reason that prevails, and without it the virtues cannot exist. But no one can put right reason to a bad use.

Chapter 19

These virtues are, therefore, great goods. But you must remember that not only the great but even the least goods exist through Him alone from whom all good things come, namely, from God. Our earlier discussion led to this conclusion, to which you gladly gave assent time after time.

As I was saying, these virtues which enable us to live rightly are great goods, whereas all forms of bodily beauty are the least goods, since we can live rightly without them. But the powers of the soul, without which there can be no

right living, are intermediate goods. No one puts virtues to a bad use, but anyone can put the other goods, namely, the intermediate and least, not only to good, but also to bad use. So no one puts virtues to bad use, since the function of virtue is the good use of those things which we can also put to bad use. No one makes bad use of what he puts to good use. Accordingly, the vast liberality of God's goodness has brought into existence not only the great, but also the intermediate and least goods. His goodness is more to be praised for the great than for the intermediate goods, and more for the intermediate than for the least goods, but still to be praised more for all of them than if He had not given existence to them all.

51. *Ev.* I agree. But, since in our discussion of free will we see that it can make either good or bad use of other things, I am perplexed as to how free will is to be numbered among the things which we use.

Aug. In the same way that our reason gives us certain knowledge of all that we know, though reason itself is numbered among the things we know by reason. Have you forgotten that when we were inquiring as to what reason could know, you admitted that reason too is known by reason? If we make use of other things by our free will, you must not therefore think it strange that we can also make use of free will by free will itself. As in using other things, the will is making use of itself, so in knowing other things, reason also knows itself. Memory, too, embraces not only all the other things we remember, but, by our not forgetting that we have a memory, it also remains somehow within us. It remembers not only other things but also itself; or better yet, it is by memory that we remember ourselves, other things, and memory itself.

52. Consequently, a man possesses the happy life when his will, an intermediate good, clings to the changeless good. This is not his own good exclusively but is common to all,

like truth, which we discussed at length without doing it justice. And this happy life, namely, the state of the soul in union with the changeless good, is man's proper and principal good. In this good, too, are found all the virtues which no one can put to bad use. And while these are important and principal goods in man, we understand well enough that they belong to each man and are not the common possession of all.

Men become wise and happy by clinging to truth and wisdom, which are common to all. But one man does not become happy by the happiness of another. Even when he emulates the happy man in order to be happy himself, he seeks happiness from the same source which he knows made the first man happy, namely, the truth, which is changeless and common to all. Nor does one man become prudent or courageous or temperate or just by the presence of these virtues in another. But he acquires these by conforming his soul to the changeless norms and beacons of the virtues, which abide indestructibly in truth itself and in wisdom, which are common to all. The man whose soul is conformed and fixed to these principles is endowed with such virtues and is set up as an example for one's imitation.

53. By adhering to the changeless good, which is common to all, the will acquires the principal and important goods, though the will is itself an intermediate good. But when it turns away from the changeless good, common to all, and turns towards a good of its own, or to an external or lower good, then the will sins. It turns towards a good of its own whenever it wants to be its own master; to an external good, when it is eager to know the personal affairs of others, or whatever is none of its own business; to a lower good, when it loves the pleasures of the body. Thus, a man who becomes proud, curious, and sensuous is delivered over to another kind of life which, in comparison with the higher life, is a death. And yet, this life is subject to the rule of

Divine Providence, which assigns everything to its proper place and gives to each one his due.

As a consequence, neither those goods sought after by sinners are in any way evil, nor free will itself, which we found was to be counted among the intermediate goods. Evil consists rather in the will's turning away from the changeless good and in its turning to goods that are changeable. Since this turning from one thing to another is not done from necessity, but freely, the unhappiness which results is justly deserved.

Chapter 20

54. Since the will undergoes movement when it turns from the unchangeable to the changeable good, you may perhaps ask how this movement originates. It is really evil, though free will must be reckoned as a good, since it is impossible to live rightly without it. For if this movement, namely, the turning away of the will from the Lord, is unquestionably sinful, we could not say, could we, that God is the cause of sin? If this movement, therefore, does not come from God, then where does it come from?

If I reply to your question by saying that I do not know, you may be distressed all the more. Yet, I would be answering you correctly, because what is nothing, cannot be known. Only make sure to hold firm to your religious conviction that you know of no good, either by the senses, or by the intellect, or in any other way, that does not come from God. Hence, no kind of nature will be found that does not come from God. Wherever you find things possessed of measure, number, and order, have no hesitation in ascribing them all to God their Maker. Remove these three from things entirely, and nothing at all will be left. Even were some vestige of an inchoative form to remain where you see no measure or number or order (since wherever these exist, form is complete), you would have

to disallow even this inchoative form, since this seems to serve as material which the maker must bring to perfection. For, if the full perfection of form is a good, the beginning of form is something good. Hence, if all good is taken away entirely, there will remain not something, but nothing at all. All good is from God and, consequently, there is no nature that is not from God. Hence, that movement of the soul's turning away, which we admitted was sinful, is a defective movement, and every defect arises from non-being. Look for the source of this movement and be sure that it does not come from God.

Yet, since it is voluntary, this defect lies within our power. If you are fearful of it, then your will is against it, and unless you will it, it will not exist. What could be more secure than to live a life where nothing can happen to you which you do not will? But, since man cannot rise of his own will as he fell of his own will, the right hand of God, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, is outstretched to us from above.¹ Let us embrace Him with a strong faith, await Him with a sure hope, and love Him with an ardent charity.

If you think there is something further that we should investigate more carefully on the origin of sin—I see no need for it at all—but if you think there is, it will have to be put off for another discussion.

Ev. I will certainly comply with your wish to put off for another time the problems arising from our discussion. For I cannot agree with your view that this matter has already been sufficiently investigated.

¹ This clear and explicit statement on the necessity of grace is one of several referred to in the *Retractations* as anticipating the errors of Pelagius (1.9.4-6).

BOOK THREE

Chapter 1

1. *Ev.* Since it is clear enough to me now that free will must be reckoned among things good, and not among the least of them, to be sure, we are therefore forced to admit that it was given by God and that it should have been given. If you deem the question opportune, I would like to find out from you the cause of that movement by which the will itself turns from the unchangeable good, common to all, and turns towards individual goods, either those of others or the lowest goods, and why, for that matter, it turns to all kinds of transitory goods.

Aug. Why do we have to know this?

Ev. Because if the free will given to us is such that this movement comes from its nature, then it turns to these goods of necessity, and where nature and necessity rule, there is no culpability.

Aug. Do you approve of this movement or not?

Ev. I disapprove.

Aug. Then you think it is blameworthy?

Ev. Yes, I do.

Aug. Then you are blaming a movement of the soul that is blameless.

Ev. I am not laying blame on any movement of the soul that is blameless. I simply do not know whether a fault is committed when one abandons the unchangeable good and turns towards goods that are changeable.

Aug. Then you are blaming something you do not know.

Ev. Do not press me over the use of words. I did not know

whether there is any fault committed. I meant to say that there certainly is a fault and when I said I did not know, I really meant to ridicule any doubt concerning something so obvious.

Aug. See just what that very obvious truth is which made you forget what you said a short while ago. If that movement of the soul arises from nature or necessity, it can in no way be blameworthy. But now you are maintaining that it is blameworthy so tenaciously that you think any doubt about so obvious a matter deserves to be ridiculed. Why, then, have you seen fit to assert, or at least to propose as somewhat doubtful, something which you yourself now show to be manifestly untrue? You said: "If the free will given to us is such that this movement comes from its nature, then it turns to these goods of necessity, and where nature and necessity rule, there is no culpability." Since you have no doubt that this movement is blameworthy, you should have had no doubt at all that this was not the kind of will given to us.

Ev. I termed this movement blameworthy, and therefore stated that I disapproved of it and could not doubt that it is blameworthy.¹ But I do deny that the soul is culpable when it is drawn by this movement from the unchangeable good to changeable goods, if its nature is such that it is drawn there by necessity.

2. *Aug.* Whose movement is it that you admit is really blameworthy?

Ev. I see now it is in the soul, but I do not know whose it is.

Aug. Do you deny that the soul moves by this movement?

Ev. I do not.

Aug. Then do you deny that a movement which moves a stone belongs to the stone? I am not speaking of that motion by which we move a stone, or where it is moved by some ex-

¹ The problem of the origin of evil is crucial to Augustine's refutation of Manichaeism. While indebted to Plotinus for the notion of evil as privation, he could not accept the further view that evil is necessary or that matter itself is essentially evil.

ternal force, as when it is thrown up in the air, but of the movement by which a stone tends downward of its own force and falls to the ground.

Ev. I do not deny, of course, that the movement by which a stone, as you say, changes its direction to return to the earth belongs to the stone, but I do say that this movement comes from its nature. Now if the soul also has this kind of movement, then it too is determined by nature and cannot be blamed since its movement is fixed by nature. Even if this movement should bring the soul to ruin, it is driven there by a necessity of its nature. Since, on the contrary, we are certain that this movement is voluntary, we must simply deny that it is determined by nature. Consequently, it is unlike the movement which moves the stone by a natural necessity.

Aug. Have we accomplished anything in our two previous discussions?

Ev. We have, indeed.

Aug. I believe you recall that in our first discussion it was shown to our satisfaction that the mind becomes a slave of sinful desire only by its own will.² For it cannot be forced into such a shameful condition by anything superior or equal to it, which would be unjust, or by anything beneath it, which is impossible. We must conclude that the movement by which the soul turns for its delight away from God towards the creature is its own movement. If this movement is looked upon as culpable—and you thought it was ridiculous for anyone to doubt it—then it is not determined by nature, but is voluntary. It resembles in this respect the movement of the stone in its downward course, since one movement belongs to the soul just as the other belongs to the stone. But it is unlike it in another respect, namely, that it is not within the power of the stone to check its downward movement, whereas, while the soul is unwilling, its movement does not make it love lesser goods by forsaking those that are higher. Hence, the

movement for the stone is fixed by nature, while that of the soul is voluntary. So if anyone says that the stone sins because it tends downward by its own weight, I will not say he has less sense than the stone, but he is certainly thought to be out of his mind. But we charge the soul with sin when we find it guilty of having forsaken what is higher to find its enjoyment in what is lower.

What need, then, is there to look for a cause of that movement by which the soul turns from the unchangeable to a changeable good? We agree that it belongs to the soul alone and is voluntary, and, consequently, culpable. Furthermore, all practical instruction in this matter has this for its aim, that, renouncing and restraining this kind of movement, we turn our will from the instability of temporal things to the enjoyment of the everlasting good.³

3. *Ev.* I see and can almost touch and grasp the truth of what you say. There is nothing I perceive so surely and intimately as the fact that I have a will which moves me to find delight in anything. But if this power which enables me to will or not to will is not mine, then I cannot readily find anything to call my own. So if I do wrong by my will, to what can I impute the act, if not to myself? Since it is the good God who made me, and I can do good only by my will, it is clear enough that the good God gave it to me for this purpose.

But if the movement by which the will can turn in different directions were not voluntary and subject to our control, a man ought not to be praised or blamed when, so to speak, he turns the hinge of his will in the opposite directions of higher and lower goods. And there would be no need at all to admonish him to neglect things temporal and to strive for the possessions of the eternal, or to try to lead a good rather than a bad life. But anyone who would think that man should not be so admonished, should be banished from the company of men.

³ Another passage appropriated by Pelagius to support his teaching on the freedom of the will.

Chapter 2

4. This being the case, I am perplexed beyond words as to how God can have foreknowledge of all things future and yet we are not compelled by any necessity to sin. Were anyone to assert that something can take place otherwise than God foreknew it, he would attempt to destroy God's foreknowledge by the wildest kind of blasphemy.

God foreknew, then, that the first man would sin, which anyone will have to admit who agrees with me that God knows all future events. If this therefore is true, I do not say that God should not have made him, for He made him good, or that the sin of him, whom God made good, could cause any injury to God. In fact, in making man, God manifested His goodness, and in punishing him, He also manifests His justice, and in redeeming him, manifests His mercy. So I do not say that God should not have made him, but I will say that, insofar as God foreknew that man was going to sin, that had to take place which God foreknew was going to happen. How, therefore, is the will free where there appears to be such inevitable necessity?

5. *Aug.* You have been knocking hard at the door of God's mercy. May He come to our help and open it to those who stand knocking. I do think, however, that men for the most part are tormented by this problem only because they fail to pursue their inquiry in a religious spirit and are quicker to excuse their sins than they are to confess them. Or they prefer to think that divine providence does not rule over human affairs, and, surrendering body and soul to blind chance, they give themselves over to lust, to be battered and torn asunder. By denying God's judgments and evading the judgment of men, they fancy they can ward off their accusers through protection from the goddess Fortune. Yet, they usually depict her in statues and paintings as blind, so that they may be better off than Fortune, by which they think

they are ruled, or may acknowledge that this same blindness prompts them to think and say such things. It would not be preposterous to admit that such men do everything by the falling out of chance, since their every action is a sort of fall. But I feel we have said enough in our second discussion against this opinion, which is replete with the most foolish and senseless kind of error.¹

But there are others who, while not daring to deny that God's providence rules over men's lives, prefer to subscribe to the wicked and erroneous belief that this providence is weak or unjust or evil, rather than to confess their sins in a spirit of humble piety. Whenever these conceive of that Being who is most good, just, and powerful, they should all be open to the conviction that God's goodness and justice and power are far greater and higher than anything they conceive in their mind. And they should further understand, if they examine themselves, that they would have a duty to give thanks to God even if He had willed to make them something less perfect than they are, and they should exclaim with all their heart and from the depths of their soul, "I have said: Lord, have mercy on me, heal my soul because I have sinned against thee."² Thus they would be led to wisdom along the sure path of divine mercy; they would neither be proud over what they had discovered, nor disheartened about what remains to be discovered; their knowledge would make them more fit for contemplation, while their ignorance would make them pursue their inquiry with great humility. I have no doubt that you are convinced of this, but you must see now how easy it was for me to answer such an important question once you had replied to a few questions of my own.

Chapter 3

6. You are undoubtedly perplexed and puzzled by the prob-

¹ Cf. 2.17.45.

² Ps. 40.5.

lem as to how these two positions are not mutually opposed and incompatible, namely, that God foreknows all future events and yet we sin freely and not of necessity. If God foreknows that man will sin, then you will say that he must sin, and if this has to happen, there is no freedom of the will in the act of sinning, but rather an inevitable and unbending necessity. You are afraid that our reasoning will lead either to the impious denial of God's foreknowledge, or, if that is impossible, to our having to admit that we do not sin freely, but of necessity. Is there something else troubling you?

Ev. Nothing else just now.

Aug. So it is your opinion that everything foreknown by God takes place of necessity, and not freely.

Ev. I certainly think so.

Aug. Pay attention for heaven's sake! Examine yourself for a moment, if you can, and tell me whether you are going to will something sinful tomorrow or something good?

Ev. I do not know.

Aug. Do you think that God does not know it either?

Ev. I could never believe that.

Aug. If God knows what you are going to will tomorrow, and if He foresees what every man now and in the future is going to will, then all the more does He foresee how He will deal with the just and the wicked.

Ev. Obviously, if I say that God has foreknowledge of my actions, I must say with much greater assurance that He foreknows His own and foresees with absolute certainty what He is going to do.

Aug. If everything which God foreknows happens of necessity and not freely, are you not afraid that someone may counter by saying that God will also do whatever He is going to do, not freely, but of necessity?

Ev. When I stated that those things happen of necessity which God foreknows, I had in mind only those which occur

in His creation, but not those which take place within Him; actually, these do not come into existence, but are eternally present in Him.

Aug. Then God does nothing in His creation?

Ev. God has decreed once and for all that order is to be achieved in the universe which He created, and He does not govern anything by a new decree of His will.

Aug. Does not God make anyone happy?

Ev. He does indeed.

Aug. When a man is made happy, God is certainly acting at that time.

Ev. That is true.

Aug. If, for example, you are going to be happy a year from now, God will make you happy a year from now.

Ev. Yes.

Aug. Then He has foreknowledge today of what He will do a year from now.

Ev. He always had foreknowledge of it. I agree once more that He foreknows this, if this is what is going to happen.

7. *Aug.* Please tell me whether you are His creature, and whether your happiness is something that will be realized within you.

Ev. Of course I am His creature and my future happiness will come about within me.

Aug. So your happiness will be realized in you, not freely, but from necessity, through God's action.

Ev. God's will is necessity for me.

Aug. So you will be happy against your will?

Ev. If the power to be happy were mine, I would certainly be happy already. I want to be happy even now, and I am not because it is not I but God who makes me happy.

Aug. The voice of truth is making itself heard very well in you. If our very act of willing is not in our power, then you could not be conscious of anything else that is. Hence

nothing is so much in our power as the will itself,¹ for it is there at hand the very instant that we will something. Thus, we may truly say that we do not age freely, but of necessity, or that we do not fall ill freely, but of necessity, or that we do not die freely, but of necessity, and so on. But not even a madman would venture to assert that we do not will by our will.

Consequently, though God foreknows what we are going to will in the future, it does not thereby follow that we are not willing something freely. As for happiness, you stated that you could not become happy of yourself, as if I had denied it. I do maintain that when you come to be happy, you will become so, not against your will, but willingly. Since God has foreknowledge of your future happiness, and since nothing can happen differently than He has foreknown it, or there would be no foreknowledge, we do not have to suppose on this account that you will be happy without willing it. Such a supposition would be absurd and far from the truth. Just as God's foreknowledge of your happiness, which He knows for certain even today, does not take away your will for happiness at the time you begin to be happy, so too, a sinful will, should it ever be yours in the future, will not cease to be your will because God foreknew its future.

8. See, if you will, how anyone could make such a blind assertion as this: "If God has foreknowledge of my future will, then I am necessitated to will what He has foreknown, since nothing can happen differently than God has foreknown it. But if I am necessitated, we must admit that I no longer will freely, but of necessity." What sheer folly! Why could not something happen other than God foreknew, if what God foreknew as a future will is not a will? I pass over the equally astounding assertion, which I mentioned a moment ago, of the man who said he was necessitated to will the way he did. He is trying to destroy the will by presupposing

¹ A further passage alleged by Pelagius as supporting his doctrine of man's moral sufficiency.

necessity, for if he is necessitated to will, how can he will when there is no will?

If he says, instead, that the will itself is not within his power because he is necessitated to will, he will come up against the same answer you gave when I asked whether you would be happy in the future against your will. You replied that you would already be happy if it were within your power, for you said you had the will, but not yet the power, to become happy. At that point I interjected the remark that the voice of truth was making itself heard in you, for we cannot deny that we have the power unless we fail to make our own the very thing we are willing. But if the will itself is not at our disposal while we will, then, of course, we are not willing at all. But if it is impossible for us not to will while we are willing, then the will is present to us whenever we will. There is nothing in our power except that which is present while we are willing. Unless, then, it is within our power, our will is no will. Furthermore, it is because the will is in our power that it is free. What is not within our power, or cannot be, does not come under our freedom.

Accordingly, we do not deny God's foreknowledge of all things future, and yet we do will what we will. Since God has foreknowledge of our will, its future will be such as He foreknows it. It will be a will precisely because He foreknows it as a will, and it could not be a will if it were not in our power. Hence God also has foreknowledge of our power over it. The power, then, is not taken from me because of His foreknowledge, since this power will be mine all the more certainly because of the infallible foreknowledge of Him who foreknew that I would have it.²

² Consistent with the main purpose of defending man's freedom against the Manichaeans, Augustine insists that God's foreknowledge does not destroy but rather presupposes such freedom. Efforts to interpret his words in favor of the respective schools of Molina and Bañez have proved inconclusive. As S. Grabowski observes: "In this matter no support for either side can be gained from the writing of Saint Augustine" (*The All-Present God* [Saint Louis 1954] 154).

Ev. See, now I no longer deny that everything must happen as God foreknew that it would and that He foresees our sins in such a way that our will still remains free and subject to our power.

Chapter 4

9. *Aug.* What, then, is it that perplexes you? Unmindful, possibly, of our conclusion in the first discussion, are you going to deny that we are not forced to sin by anyone else, whether he is superior, or inferior, or equal to us, but that it is we who sin by our own will?

Ev. I dare not deny any of these points at all. But I still have to admit that I do not see how these two notions are not at variance, namely, God's foreknowledge of our sins and the freedom of the will in sinning. We must admit that God is just and has foreknowledge. But I would like to know what kind of justice it is that makes God punish sins which are committed of necessity, or how those things do not take place necessarily which He foreknew would happen, or how we can fail to ascribe to the Creator whatever occurs of necessity in His creatures.

10. *Aug.* What basis do you have for your opinion that our free will is at variance with God's foreknowledge? Is the reason foreknowledge, or God's foreknowledge?

Ev. Chiefly because it is God's foreknowledge.

Aug. Well, then, if *you* foreknew that someone was going to sin, would he have to sin?

Ev. Indeed he would. Unless I foreknew what is certain, I would not have foreknowledge.

Aug. Therefore, what God foreknows must come about, not because God foreknows it, but only because it is foreknown. If foreknowledge is not certain, there is no foreknowledge.

Ev. I agree. But what are you driving at?

Aug. If I am not mistaken, it is the fact that you would not necessarily be making a man sin because you foreknew he was going to sin. Your foreknowledge would not itself make him sin, though he is certainly going to sin; otherwise you would not foreknow that it would happen. Therefore, just as these two are not at variance, namely, your foreknowledge of what another will do and his freedom to do it, so, though God does not force anyone to sin, yet He foresees those who are going to sin by their own will.

11. Why, then, should a just God not punish sins which He has not forced anyone to commit because of His foreknowledge? Just as you do not compel past events to happen by your memory of them, so God does not compel events of the future to take place by His foreknowledge of them. Again, just as you recall certain things that you have done, though you do not do all the things you remember, so God foreknows all things whereof He is the Cause, though He is not Himself the Cause of all that He foreknows. He is not the cause of evil deeds, but only their avenger.

You must see from this what that justice is which makes God punish sins, since He does not perpetrate what He knows is going to happen. For if He ought not to punish sinners because He foreknows that they are going to sin, then neither ought He to reward the righteous, since He foresees equally well that they will do what is right. Let us rather acknowledge that God's foreknowledge requires that nothing future be hidden from His view, while His justice demands that sin, being a voluntary offense, should not go unpunished by His judgment, since it was not necessitated by His foreknowledge.

Chapter 5

12. Now your third question raised the problem of how we can fail to ascribe to the Creator whatever takes place of

necessity in His creation.¹ This problem should not readily cast uncertainty on that precept of religious conduct which obliges us to render thanks to the Creator. Even if He had assigned us a lower place in His creation, we should in all justice praise His bountiful goodness. Though weakened by sin, our soul is yet more noble and perfect than if it were to be changed into that light which we behold with our eyes. And you are certainly aware how greatly God is praised for the excelling quality of this light by souls, even when they have become enslaved to the bodily senses. Consequently, the fact itself that sinful souls incur blame should no longer perplex you and make you say to yourself that it would have been better had they never existed. They incur blame when we compare them with themselves and see what they would be if they had not willed to sin. Nevertheless, God their Maker deserves the highest praise that man can give Him, not only because He deals justly with them as sinners, but also because He has so fashioned their souls that, even when stained by sin, they are in no way surpassed in dignity by that physical light for which He is nonetheless justly praised.

13. Though you may not perhaps allege that it would have been better if these souls had never existed, I would also caution you against saying that they should have been created differently. Whatever right reason suggests to you as more perfect, you may be sure that God has already made it, for He is the Creator of all things good. Whenever you suppose that something better should have been made, because you are unwilling to have anything less perfect exist, this is not right reason but a want of understanding stemming from envy. It is as if you should wish that the earth had not been made, once you had gotten a view of the heavens. This attitude is

¹ The two previous questions raised by Evodius at the beginning of the former chapter inquired whether God can justly punish sins committed of necessity, and whether God's foreknowledge does not necessitate the course of future events.

entirely wrong. You might have reason to find fault if you saw that the earth had been created while the heavens had been passed over since you might allege that the earth should have been made according to your idea of what the heavens should be. But when you see that the heavens too have been made according to the idea you had in mind for the earth, though it is called the heavens rather than the earth, I do not think you should ever begrudge existence to a less perfect creature or to the earth since you have not been deprived of something more perfect.

Again, there is such variety with respect to the parts of the earth itself that no form of earthly beauty can occur to the mind which has not been made somewhere over the whole expanse of the earth by God, the Creator of all things. We can pass so gradually from the most fertile and fairest tracts of land to the most barren and unproductive through those in between, that you do not dare to find fault with any part except by comparing it with something better. In this way you mount all the levels of excellence until you reach the best kind of land, though you would not want this alone to exist. But what a difference there is between the earthly universe and the heavens! In between are found moisture and air, and from these four elements are formed all the many various natures and kinds of things whose number, though incalculable for us, is known to God. There may be something in nature which you do not conceive of in your mind, but it is impossible that something not exist which you truly conceive of in your mind. You cannot conceive of anything better in the creation which has escaped the knowledge of the Creator. It is really the nature of the soul to live in union with the Divine Ideas² and it depends upon them whenever it pronounces one thing to be better than another. If it sees

² Augustine's doctrine of illumination is intimately connected with his notion of the Divine Ideas. For an interesting presentation of this teaching in the light of its Platonic background, cf. *De diversis quaestionibus* 83 q. 46.

the truth, and understands it, it does so in the light of those Ideas with which it is united. So the soul must believe that God has made what his right reason tells him should have been made, even though he fails to see it among the things created. Even though a man were unable to see the heavens with his eyes and yet could rightly conclude by his reason that such a thing should be made, he would have to believe it was made, though he could not see it with his eyes. Only in the light of those Ideas, after which all things have been made, could he see in his mind why something had to be made. One cannot form a true conception of anything not present in these Ideas anymore than he can find something there which is not true.

14. Most men go astray on this point when, having perceived more perfect realities with their mind, they try to find them with their eyes in the wrong places. It is as if a man with an intellectual grasp of perfect roundness should become indignant at not finding it in a nut, supposing that he had never seen anything round expect this fruit. So it is with men who see perfectly well that a creature is better if, while possessed of free will, it has nevertheless remained ever united to God and has never sinned. When they look at the sins of men, they are grieved, not simply because men do not give up sinning, but because they have been created at all. God, they tell us, should have created us so that we would always will to enjoy His changeless truth but never will to sin.

These men should put an end to their complaining and indignation. The fact that God has created men does not force them to sin just because He has given them the power to do so if they choose. Furthermore, there are angels who have never sinned and who never will sin. If you are elated by a creature that perseveres fully in its will not to sin, there can be no doubt that you are right to prefer it to one that sins. But just as you give this creature a preference in your thinking, so has God the Creator given it preference in the

ordering of the universe. You must believe that a creature of this kind exists in the higher realms and has its abode on high in heaven. For if the Creator shows His goodness in making a creature who He foresees is going to sin, He cannot fail to show that same goodness in making one that He foreknew would not sin.

15. A creature so sublime as this finds its eternal happiness in the endless enjoyment of its Creator, which it merits by its unwavering will to hold fast to justice. The sinful creature, too, has its proper place in the order of things. Through sin it has lost its happiness, but not its power to recover happiness. It is certainly better than the creature that is held captive forever by its will to sin. It occupies a middle place between the latter and the other which is ever steadfast in its will for justice, because it can regain its high estate by humble repentance. For God has not withheld His bountiful goodness from making a creature which He foreknew would not only sin, but would persist in its will to sin. Just as a stray horse is better than a stone that does not go astray through a lack of self-movement and sense perception, so a creature which sins by its free will is more excellent than one that does not sin because it is without free will. And just as I might praise a wine as good in its own way and blame a man who became drunk from this wine, nevertheless, I would set a higher value on this man, whom I reprov'd and who is still drunk, than I would on the wine which I praised and which made him drunk. So too, the bodily creature should be duly praised according to its rank, while they are deserving of blame who, through the intemperant use of it, are turned away from the perception of truth. Here again, despite their perversity and a kind of intoxication, these men excel that bodily creature, however praiseworthy in its own way, which has brought them to ruin by intemperate desire; more excellent, not through the demerit of their sins, but because of the abiding dignity of their nature.

16. It follows then, that any soul is of greater excellence than any kind of body, and that the sinful soul is never changed into a body, however great has been its fall. The identity of the soul's nature is not lost completely so that it never loses its superiority over the body. In the world of bodies, light holds the first place. Hence the least soul must be ranked above the best body. It may happen that one body is better than another which has a soul, but it is never better than the soul itself.

Why then, should not God be praised, and why should His unspeakable praises not be proclaimed far and wide? For He has made souls destined to abide by the laws of justice, and also others that He foresaw would sin, or even persevere in their sins. Even souls like these are still more excellent than creatures that cannot sin because they do not enjoy the rational and free choice of the will. These, in turn, are still better than the most resplendent light shed by any kind of body, such as that which some men make the great mistake of worshipping in place of the nature of the most-high God Himself.³

In the arrangement of bodily creatures, all the way from the clusters of the stars down to the number of our hairs, the beauty of these good things is achieved so progressively that it would be utterly absurd to ask what this or that is doing there, for all things have been created in their proper order. How much more absurd it is to speak this way about any kind of soul at all which, no matter how far its beauty has diminished or deteriorated, will, without a doubt, always surpass in dignity any kind of bodily reality.

17. Reason and utility judge things in a different light. Reason judges them in the light of truth and is guided by sound judgment in subordinating lower things to those higher. Utility tends, generally, from a habit of convenience to value more highly things which reason shows to be of less

³ An allusion to the Manichaeian identification of the sun with God. Cf. *C. Secundinum Manichaeum* 1.20.

value. Though reason ranks the heavenly bodies far above those of earth, what worldly-minded man would not rather have many stars missing in the heavens than to have a single bush missing in his field, or a cow from his herd? Older people either disregard entirely, or at least patiently await for correction, judgments made by children who prefer the death of any man, except a few whose love brings them joy, to the death of a pet-sparrow; all the more so, when it is a man who frightens them, while the sparrow sings well and is attractive. Something the same is done by those whose intellectual growth has enabled them to advance in wisdom whenever they come upon men of poor judgment. Such praise God for His lesser creatures because they are better suited to their carnal senses while, in regard to His higher and nobler creatures, they either give Him little or no praise, or even censure Him or try to improve upon Him, or do not believe that He is their Maker. Those wiser men should accustom themselves either to disregard such judgments completely, if they cannot correct them, or to endure them patiently until they can correct them.

Chapter 6

18. In view of all this, that notion is far from true which would have us impute the sins of a creature to the Creator, even though those things have to take place which He foreknew would happen. You, for your part, assert that you do not see how we can avoid imputing to God whatever is bound to take place in His creature. I, on the contrary, see no way, and I would deny outright that there is, or can be, any way, to impute to God whatever must occur in His creature by reason of its sinful will.

If anyone says he would rather not exist than be unhappy, I will reply: "You are not telling the truth, for you are unhappy even now, yet you do not wish to die, for the simple

reason that you wish to exist. Therefore, though you do not wish to be unhappy, you still wish to exist. Be thankful, then, for the fact that you will to exist so that you may be rescued from what you do not want to be. You willingly exist, and you are unwilling to exist unhappily. But if you are ungrateful for your will to exist, it is only right that you be compelled to be what you do not will to be. So I praise the goodness of the Creator because you have what you wish, even though you are ungrateful. I praise the justice of Him who orders all things, because you have to suffer unwillingly for your ingratitude."

19. If he should say, "I do not wish to die, not because I prefer an unhappy existence to no existence at all, but because I may be more unhappy after death," I will reply: "If this is unjust, you will not be more unhappy; but if just, let us praise Him whose laws have decreed that this shall be your state." If he says, "How am I to presume that I shall not be unhappy," I will reply: "If your future state is in your own power, either you will not be unhappy, or you will be justly unhappy because you have not ruled over your life justly. Or, again, if you have the will, but not the power, to rule over your life, then, not being in your own power, you are either in the power of no one or of someone else, unwillingly or willingly. If you are in no one's power, you either want it this way, or you do not. But you cannot be so unwillingly unless some other force has overpowered you; yet no force can overpower a man who is not in another's power; and if you are not in another's power through your own volition, we must conclude again that you are in your own power. Again, either you are justly unhappy for not having ruled over your life justly, or your future, whatever it is, will be of your own choosing, so that you will still have reason to thank the Creator for His goodness. But if you are not in your own power, then he who has you in his power is either stronger than you, or weaker. If he is weaker, you are

at fault and your unhappiness is just, because you can overcome someone weaker if you want to. If, being weaker, you are in the power of someone stronger, you simply have no right to think that so rightful an order of things is unjust." So I was perfectly right when I said, "If this is unjust, you will not be more unhappy after death; but if just, let us praise Him whose laws have decreed that this shall be your state."

Chapter 7

20. But suppose he says, "It is because I am already existing that I prefer to be unhappy rather than not to exist at all. But if I could have been consulted before I existed, I would have chosen not to exist rather than to be unhappy. The fact itself that I now fear not to exist though I am unhappy is part of that very unhappiness which makes me will what I ought not to will, for I ought rather to will not to exist than to be unhappy. But now I admit that I really do prefer unhappiness to nothingness. And the more unwise I am to make such a choice, the unhappier it is, and it is all the more unhappy, as I see more clearly that I should not have made this choice."

I will reply: "Be all the more cautious not to blunder at the very point where you fancy you are seeing the truth. Now if you were happy, you would surely prefer to exist rather than not to exist. Even now, unhappy as you are, you nevertheless prefer to be unhappy rather than not to exist at all, though you do not wish to be unhappy. Make every effort, then, to understand how great a good existence itself is, which is desired by the happy and unhappy alike. If you weigh this matter well, you will see that you are unhappy to the extent that you fail to draw near to the Being that exists supremely, and that your failure to perceive this

Supreme Existence is why you think it is better for someone not to exist than to be unhappy. You will further realize that you nevertheless wish to exist for the simple reason that you owe your existence to Him who exists supremely."

21. If, then, you would escape unhappiness, have a love for this will to exist which is within you. In fact, the more you will to exist, the closer you will come to Him who exists supremely. And now give thanks that you do exist. Though you are less perfect than those who are happy, you are yet superior to beings which lack even the will to be happy; yet many of these things are praised even by men who are unhappy. Nevertheless, all things are rightly deserving of praise by the very fact that they exist, since they are good inasmuch as they exist.

The greater your love to exist, the more strongly will you desire eternal life and you will long all the more to become so disposed as to have no attachment to things temporal; for our affections have been branded with the love of temporal things and bear the stamp of them. Before coming to be, temporal things do not exist; while existing, they are already passing away; once having passed away, they exist no longer. Hence, while belonging to the future, they do not yet exist, and once they have passed away, they no longer exist. How, then, shall we take lasting possession of them, since coming to exist is the same for them as to be going out of existence? But the man who loves existence, looks upon these things as good inasmuch as they exist, and loves that which exists forever. And if his love of the former left him inconstant, he will be made strong by his love of the latter. If he wasted himself on the love of transitory things, he will be made firm by the love of that which endures. He will stand firm and come into the possession of that same existence which he desired when he feared not to exist and was unable to stand firm, being ensnared by the love of things that pass away.

You should, therefore, experience no regret, but rather great elation, over the fact that you prefer even an unhappy existence to the termination of an unhappy existence, since you would not then be existing at all. If, to your initial will to exist, you expand your existence more and more, you will advance higher and become eminently fitted for that which exists supremely. You will thus preserve yourself from any kind of fall whereby the lowest thing in existence passes into non-existence, dragging along with it the impetuosity of its lovers. Hence he who would rather not exist for fear of being unhappy must be unhappy, because it is impossible for him not to exist. But the man who loves to exist more than he detests existing unhappily should exclude what he dislikes by enhancing that which he loves. When he begins to enjoy perfect existence in keeping with his nature, he will not be unhappy.

Chapter 8

22. See how absurd and inconsistent it is for anyone to say that he would rather not exist than be unhappy. A man who says he would rather have this than that is making a choice of something, whereas non-existence is not something, but nothing. It is logically impossible, therefore, for you to make a choice when the object of your choice does not exist. You assert that you really wish to exist, though you are unhappy, but say that you should not wish this. What should you will, then? I should will rather not to exist, you say. If this is what you should wish, it is better, but, since that cannot be better which does not exist, you should not, therefore, wish it at all. Furthermore, the natural insight that prompts you not to will non-existence is more trustworthy than the supposition which makes you think you should have willed it. Again, when a man has attained what he rightly chose as something to be desired, he necessarily becomes a

better man. But he cannot become better if he is not going to exist. No one, therefore, can logically choose not to exist.

Nor should we be unsettled by the judgment of those men who have been driven by unhappiness to take their own lives. Either they have sought to find refuge where they imagined they would be better off, and this view, however they may have come to it, is not opposed to our line of reasoning; or if they thought they would no longer exist at all, we will be far less unsettled by the illogical choice of men who make "nothing" the object of their choice. If anyone chooses non-existence, he is obviously choosing "nothing," even though he is unwilling to give this for an answer.

23. Allow me, however, to express my own view, if I can, about this whole question. In my opinion, no one who takes his life or in any way desires death, really feels certain that he will not exist after death, even though he holds it somewhat as an opinion. Opinion is found in a man who exercises his reason or belief in a matter that is either true or false, while feeling derives its force either from custom or nature. The possibility that opinion and feeling may be different is readily seen from the fact that we frequently think we should do one thing, while we find delight in doing something else. Sometimes, too, feeling is more trustworthy than opinion, when the latter arises from error and feeling springs from nature. A sick man, for instance, is often enticed by cold water which would be good for him to drink, though he believes it will hurt him if he drinks it. Sometimes opinion is more trustworthy than feeling, as when a man takes the word of medical science that cold water is bad for him, when in fact it is, and yet he is delighted to drink it. At other times, both are true, as when that which is beneficial is not only thought to be so, but also gives delight. At other times, both are wrong, as when something harmful is thought to be beneficial and gives us endless delight. Usually, however, a right opinion corrects the wrong custom, while a wrong opinion

vitiates what is right by nature, for such is the power which reason exercises in its rule and supremacy.

Consequently, when anyone is driven by unbearable hardships to desire death wholeheartedly, in the belief that he will not exist after death, he decides upon death and grasps for it. Opinion leads him to entertain the false notion of a complete extinction, whereas feeling suggests a natural desire to be at rest. But the state of rest is not the same as nothing; on the contrary, a thing at rest exists more perfectly than that which is not at rest. In fact, restlessness makes us vacillate in our affections so that one of them destroys the other, while rest possesses a constancy which is uppermost in our mind when we say of anything that it exists. Accordingly, every desire on the part of a man's will for death is directed, not towards extinction after death, but towards rest. Though he has the mistaken belief that he will not exist, he still has a natural desire to be at rest, that is, to enjoy a more perfect existence. Hence, just as no one can possibly find delight in not existing, so it should never happen that anyone should be ungrateful towards the goodness of his Creator for his existence.

Chapter 9

24. Suppose someone should say that it was not difficult or laborious for an omnipotent God to see to it that everything He made should so maintain its proper place that no creature would come to the extremity of unhappiness; for, being omnipotent, He could have done so, and, being good, He could not be envious. I will say, in reply, that the orderly arrangement of creatures extends all the way from the highest to the lowest according to certain just gradations in such a way that only envy could prompt a man to say that a creature should not exist, or that it should be different. For if he wants it to be the same as something higher, then such

a creature is already existing and possesses such excellence that nothing more should be added, since it is perfect in its kind. If he maintains that the lower creature should also have this excellence, he either wants to add to the higher, which is already perfect, and then he is wanting in moderation and justice; or he wants to destroy the lower creature, and then he becomes malicious and envious.

But if he asserts that it should not exist, he is still malicious and envious, because, while opposed to its existence, he is still compelled to praise it, even though it is of a lower rank. It is as if he were to say that the moon should not exist. For he must admit, or else be guilty of an absurd and obstinate denial, that even the light of a lamp, though much less luminous, has a beauty of its own, is a suitable ornament in the darkness, is well suited for use at night, and, in all these respects, is deserving of praise in its own small way. How, then, can he rightly presume to say that the moon should not exist when he realizes he would be open to ridicule if he were to say that the lamp should not exist?

Now if he does not deny that the moon should exist, but says that it should be like the sun, he fails to realize that he is merely saying that there should be two suns but no moon. Here he is doubly mistaken: he wants to add to the perfection of the universe by desiring another sun and to detract from its perfection by taking away the moon.

25. Here he may point out that he has no fault to find with the moon, since it is not made unhappy by reason of its inferior brightness, but that he is saddened over the plight of souls, not because of their darkened condition, but on account of their unhappiness. Let him note carefully that the moon's brightness has no more to do with unhappiness than does the brightness of the sun with happiness, for although they are heavenly bodies, they are bodies nevertheless with respect to the kind of light that can be seen by our bodily eyes. Bodies, as bodies, are capable neither of happiness nor of unhappi-

ness, though they may be the bodies of men who are happy or unhappy.

But the analogy drawn from such luminous bodies can be instructive. As you examine the difference among these bodies and see that some are brighter, it is wrong for you to ask that darker bodies be removed or be made equal to those that are brighter. But if you make everything bear upon the perfection of the universe, the various grades of luminous bodies will enable you to see all the more clearly the fact that they all exist. You will further perceive that the perfection of the universe requires that the presence of things more perfect shall not entail the absence of those less perfect.

Consider in the same light the differences that also exist among souls. Here, too, you will discover how the unhappiness, which you deplore, contributes to the perfection of the universe, since some souls merit unhappiness because of their sinful will. And it is far from true to assert that God should not have made such souls, when we owe him praise for having also made other creatures far inferior to the condition of unhappy souls.

26. But my opponent, apparently, has another objection occasioned by his failure to grasp what has been said. Suppose, he says, that even our unhappiness fills out the perfection of the universe; then, in the event that we would always be happy, something would be wanting to the perfection of the universe. Thus, if the soul comes to an unhappy state only through sin, then our sins are necessary for the perfection of the universe, which God has made. How, then, is it just for God to punish sin when, unless there was sin, His creation could not be whole and entire?

Here is my answer. Neither sin nor unhappiness is necessary for the perfection of the universe, but souls, taken simply as souls, are necessary. They can sin if they will, and if they do, they become unhappy. If their unhappiness were to continue once their sins were taken away, or if it were present

before they sinned, one might rightly contend that the order and government of the universe are defective. Again, if sins are committed and there is no unhappiness, the order of things is no less vitiated by injustice. When happiness is found in those who do not sin, the universe is in perfect order. Likewise, when unhappiness befalls those who sin, the universe remains no less perfect. The universe is always complete and perfect by every kind of nature for the reason that souls are not absent from it, whether it be those whose unhappiness results from sin, or those whose happiness comes from doing what is right. For sin and the punishment of sin are not any sort of nature, but are states found in nature, the former, voluntary, the latter, penal. The voluntary state is a shameful one when sin is committed. Consequently, a penal state is applied to the sinful state to assign the nature a place which is fitting for its condition, and to compel it to be in harmony with the beauty of the universe. In this way the penalty for sin makes amends for the shameful of the sin.

27. By sinning, therefore, the higher creature is punished by the lower creatures, because the latter are of such lowly condition that they can be embellished even by debased souls and so be brought into harmony with the beauty of the universe. What is so great in a house as a man, and what so mean and low as the sewer of the house? Yet, when a slave is apprehended in some misdeed for which he deserves to be made to clean the sewer, he enhances it by his own disgrace. Both of these things, the slave's disgrace and the cleaning of the sewer, now combined and reduced to a distinctive kind of unity, are blended and woven into the ordering of the household so that the beauty of their unity conforms to the harmony of the entire household. Yet, if the slave had not willed to do wrong, some other provision for cleaning the household necessities would have been available for the running of the house.

What is so low in all nature as an earthly body? Yet even the sinful soul so embellishes this corruptible flesh as to impart to it a beauty all its own and a life-giving movement. Through sin, such a soul is unsuited for a heavenly abode but is suited for an earthly habitation as a means of punishment. Hence, no matter what choice the soul makes, the universe, whose Creator and Ruler is God, remains ever beautiful through the harmonious arrangement of its parts. When the most excellent of souls dwell in the lowest of creatures, they do not enhance them by their unhappiness, which they have not, but by making the right use of them. But if sinful souls were permitted to dwell in the higher regions, this would be wrong, because they are not suited for things that they cannot use properly and to which they add nothing by way of embellishment.

28. Consequently, though this earthly orb is reckoned among things corruptible, it still keeps intact, as far as it can, the image of the higher realities of which it is continuously pointing out to us certain examples and signs. If we see some great and good man sacrificing his body to be burned from a sense of duty, we do not call this a punishment for sin, but a proof of courage and patience. And though this horrible corruption is destroying his bodily members, we love him more than if he were not undergoing such suffering, and we actually marvel that the soul's nature is not altered by the changes in the body. But when we see the body of a ruthless robber destroyed in a similar way as a punishment, we approve this orderly process of the law. Both men, then, enhance such torments, but the first does so on the merit of his virtue, the other, by the demerit of his sin. If, after his exposure to the flames, or even beforehand, we should see the good man transformed into a state suited for a heavenly abode and transported to the stars, we would certainly rejoice. But if, whether before or after his punishment, we should see the wicked thief raised to an everlasting place of honor, despite

the persistence of his evil will, who of us would not take umbrage at this? Hence, both can enhance the dignity of the lower creation, but only one can do so for the higher.

This reminds us to take note that the first man enhanced the mortal character of our flesh as a suitable punishment for sin, and that our Lord also enhanced it so that in His mercy He might free us from sin. The just man could have a mortal body and, if he persevered in justice, could attain the immortality of the saints, which is impossible for the wicked man so long as he remains wicked. I refer to the immortality proper to heaven and to the angels; not to those angels about whom the Apostle says: "Know you not that we will judge the angels,"¹ but to those of whom the Lord says: "For they will be equal to the angels of God."² Men, whose vainglory prompts them to desire equality with the angels, do not will to be equal to the angels but to have the angels equal to them.³ If they persist in this will, their punishment will be equal to that of the angels who love their own power more than that of Almighty God. Since these have not sought God through the lowly entrance of humility, which the Lord Jesus Christ has shown us in His own life, and have been unforgiving and proud during life, they will be placed on His left side where He will say to them: "Depart into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels."⁴

Chapter 10

29. Sins spring from two sources, our own thoughts and the persuasion of others, and I believe that the Prophet was referring to these when he said: "From my hidden sins

1 1 Cor. 6.3.

2 Luke 20.36.

3 Here I have adopted the Maurist reading . . . *non ideo volunt esse angelis, sed angelos sibi*, rather than that of Professor Green, which omits *angelos*.

4 Matt. 25.41.

cleanse me, O Lord, and from the sins of others spare thy servant."¹ Both sources, of course, are voluntary. Just as a person who sins by thought does not do so against his will, so when he consents to another's evil persuasion, he does so only by his will. Yet, to sin not only through one's own thoughts without being persuaded to do so by another, but also to persuade someone else by envy or deceit to sin, is a more grievous offense than being induced to sin by the persuasion of another. Accordingly, the Lord's justice is vindicated by His punishing both kinds of sin.

This issue, too, was weighed on the scales of justice, namely, that the devil should not be denied his power over men whom his evil persuasion had made subject to him. It would have been unfair for the devil not to rule over one whom he had made his captive. It is unthinkable that the perfect justice of the supreme and true God, which encompasses all things, should fail to impose order even upon the ruin suffered by sinners.

But since man had sinned less grievously than the devil, he was enabled to recover salvation by the very fact that he was given in bondage, even in his mortal flesh, to the prince of this world, namely, the lowest and mortal region of the universe, in bondage, that is, to the prince of all sinners and the ruler of death. Conscious now of his mortal condition, living in dread of injury and destruction from the meanest and most contemptible beasts, even the smallest of them, insecure for his future, man grew accustomed to check sinful delights, and, most of all, to curb pride, which led to his fall and which is the one vice that rejects the healing remedy of mercy. What indeed stands so much in need of mercy as an unhappy man, and what is so undeserving of mercy as the unhappy man who is proud?

30. So it has come to pass that the Word of God, through whom all things have been made and who is the source of

¹ Ps. 18.13-14

happiness in the Angels, has reached out in His mercy even to our misery, and has become flesh and has dwelt among us. And though not yet equal to the Angels, man could thus eat the Bread of Angels if the Bread of Angels should Himself deign to become equal with men. Nor has His coming down to us made Him abandon the Angels, but He is wholly present at the same time to them and to us. He nourishes the Angels within by His divinity, and teaches us by outward signs through the human nature that is ours. By faith He prepares those whom He will nourish by the vision of His countenance, as He does for the Angels.

Rational creatures find their most perfect nourishment, so to speak, in this Word. And, though the human soul is rational, it was held captive by the bonds of death as a penalty for sin, debased to the point that it must toil to grasp things invisible by inferences drawn from things that are visible. This Food of rational creatures has been made visible to our eyes, not by any change in His nature, but by putting on our nature, that He may recall us from the pursuit of visible things to His divine nature which is invisible to our eyes. In this way the soul discovers the outward lowliness of Him whom it had inwardly abandoned in its pride, and by imitating the visible example of His humility, the soul will return to the heights of things invisible.

31. Having put on man's nature, God's Word and only Son has also brought under man's power the devil, whom He has ever held, and will ever hold, under the power of His law. He has wrested nothing from the devil by tyrannical force but has subdued him by the law of justice. After the woman had been deceived and man had fallen because of the woman, the devil laid claim to the entire offspring of the first man, as to sinners subject to the law of death. He did so from a malicious desire to harm them, though in accordance with strict justice. The devil's power prevailed until he put to death the Just One, in whom he could show nothing deserving of death,

not only because, though guiltless, He was slain, but also because He was born free from the influence of lust. The devil had subjected his captives to lust that he might make his own whatever was born of it, as fruit from his own tree, motivated of course by covetousness, but not without a just title of ownership.

It is, then, a matter of strict justice that the devil should be forced to set free all those who believe in Him whom he put to death so unjustly. Thus, by suffering death for a time, these discharge their debt, and, by living for all eternity, they live in Him who paid a debt for them, which He Himself did not owe. But the devil could in justice keep as his companions in eternal damnation those whom he had persuaded to remain obstinate in their unbelief. Thus man, whom the devil had subdued, not forcibly but by persuasion, was not wrested forcibly from the devil. Besides, having justly suffered the further humiliation of having to serve the devil to whom he had consented in doing evil, man was justly set free by Him to whom he consented in doing good, because, in consenting to evil, man had sinned less grievously than the devil had done by his evil suggestion.

Chapter 11

32. God therefore made all creatures, not only those that would persevere in virtue and justice, but also those that would sin. He did not make them to sin, but to be an adornment of the universe, whether they willed to sin or not. If there were no souls to occupy the highest place in the order of the created universe, such that should they will to sin, the universe would be undermined and ruined, something of great importance would be lacking in the creation; for there would be lacking that very thing whose absence would disturb the stability and orderly arrangement of the universe.

Such are the excellent, holy, and sublime creatures comprising the Powers of heaven and beyond, over whom God alone rules, and to whom the whole world has been made subject. Without the exact and perfect discharge of their duties by such creatures, it would be impossible for the world to exist. Again, if there were no souls that would choose either to sin or not to sin, the order in the universe would not be impaired, though something of great importance would thus be lacking. Rational souls do in fact exist, unequal, of course, in function to higher souls, but equal to them in nature. And there are many classes of things made by the Most High God, which, though still lower than these, are yet worthy of praise.

33. The nature of those exercising a higher function is such that the order of the universe would suffer not only if this nature were non-existent but also if it were to sin. The nature of souls having lower functions is such that the universe would be less perfect only if they did not exist, but not if they were to sin. Upon the former nature there has been conferred the power to maintain all things in order as its own special function and one which cannot possibly be lacking in the created order. It is not because it has received this function that it perseveres in its good will; rather, it has received this function because God, who assigned it, foresaw that it would so persevere. It does not, however, maintain all things in order by its own authority, but by fidelity to His authority and the devout discharge of His commandments "from whom and through whom and in whom all things have been made."¹

To the former there has also been granted the exalted power to maintain all things in order, provided, of course, it was sinless, though it does not possess this power exclusively but only in conjunction with the latter, since it was foreknown that it would sin. Spiritual natures can be joined together and separated without any increase or decrease in bulk. Con-

¹ Cf. Rom. 11.36

sequently, the task of the higher would not be made easier by their union with the lower nor rendered more difficult if the lower should desert its function because of sin. Though spiritual creatures may possess their individual bodies, they cannot be joined or separated by reason of place or physical bulk but only by a sameness or difference in their inclinations.

34. When the soul has been assigned its rightful place, subsequent to its sinning, among the lower and mortal bodies, it does not rule over its own body with complete freedom but only according as the laws of the universe permit. Nevertheless, such a soul is not thereby made inferior to a heavenly body to which even earthly bodies have been made subordinate. Certainly, the tattered clothing of a condemned slave is inferior to that worn by a well-deserving slave who is highly esteemed by his master. But the slave himself, because he is a man, is better than any kind of costly attire. The higher spiritual nature, then, residing in a heavenly body, adheres to God, and, through its angelic power, is able to lend adornment even to earthly bodies and to rule them according to the command of Him whose will it beholds in some ineffable manner. The lesser spiritual nature, weighed down by a mortal body, can scarcely exercise inner control over the very body which oppresses it, and yet it lends it as much adornment as possible. Upon other bodies that surround it from without, it exercises an outward but weaker influence so far as is possible.

Chapter 12

35. We may thus infer that, even had the spiritual nature never willed to sin, nothing in the way of suitable adornment would have been lacking to the lowest level of corporeal creation. For what is capable of ruling the whole, can also rule over a part, though that which can do something less, cannot necessarily accomplish something greater. The

fully competent physician can also heal a bodily sore effectively, but it does not necessarily follow that a man who is useful in treating a sore can cure every kind of human disorder. Indeed, if we consider the true force of our reasoning which makes it perfectly clear that there had to exist a creature that never sinned and never will sin, that same reasoning will show us that such a creature refrains from sin by its free will and is free from sin, not by compulsion, but of its own accord. However, if it were to sin—though it has not done so, just as God foreknew—nevertheless, if it were to sin, the indescribable force of God's power would suffice to rule this universe, so that by assigning all things their due and proper place, He permits nothing shameful or unbecoming to exist throughout His entire domain. Even without the agency of any powers created for this very purpose, and even if all the angelic natures had sinfully defected from His commands, God would rule over all things by His own power in the best and most suitable way possible. Nor would He on this account be harboring any ill-will towards the existence of spiritual creatures, since His bountiful goodness has also created bodily creatures which are far inferior to spiritual creatures, even when these latter sin. Hence, anyone who gazes thoughtfully upon the heavens and the earth and things visible, all arranged in classes according to their proper form and mode of being, will believe that God alone is their Maker and acknowledge that He deserves praise beyond the power of words to express. On the other hand, if there is no better plan for ordering the universe than that the power of angels should govern all things in virtue of their natural excellence and the good dispositions of their will, then, even if all the angels were to sin, they would not have left the Creator of angels without the resources to rule over His own domains. God's goodness would not fail through any kind of weariness nor would His Omnipotence be found wanting in the face of difficulty to create other angels and assign them to the posi-

tions which the others had deserted through sin. And if spiritual natures were to suffer just condemnation, they could not, however numerous they might be, obstruct the order of things which makes just and appropriate provision for those who deserve condemnation. Wherever, therefore, we direct our attention, we find that God deserves praise far beyond the power of language to express, for He is the perfect Creator and most just Ruler of all natures.

36. Finally, let us leave the contemplation of this beauty of the universe to those who can do so through God's gift, and let us not try to lead men by means of words to the contemplation of things ineffable. And yet, on account of certain loquacious men, who are either fickle or deceitful,¹ let us examine this important question as briefly as possible.

Chapter 13

Every nature capable of becoming less good is a good nature, and every nature becomes less good when it is corrupted. Now, either corruption does no harm to a nature and it is not corrupted, or, if the nature is corrupted, it suffers harm from such corruption. If it suffers harm, corruption destroys something of its goodness and makes it less good. If corruption deprives it entirely of all its good, then what remains will no longer be capable of corruption because there will be no good to be lost by further corruption; for that is not corrupted which can suffer no harm from corruption. Again, a nature which does not undergo corruption is incorruptible. Consequently, there will be a nature which corruption has made incorruptible, which is altogether absurd.

Therefore, it is perfectly true to assert that every nature, insofar as it is a nature, is good. For, if it is incorruptible, it is better than a corruptible nature, while, if it is corrupti-

¹ A reference to the Manichaeans.

ble, it is undoubtedly good, since it becomes less good when undergoing corruption. Now every nature is either corruptible or incorruptible, and therefore every nature is good. I use the term "nature" to indicate what is also commonly called "substance." Hence every substance is either God or from God, since every good is either God or from God.

37. Now that we have firmly settled upon these principles as a kind of point of departure for our reasoning, give your attention to what I am going to say. Every rational creature endowed with free choice of the will is undoubtedly worthy of praise, provided it perseveres in its enjoyment of the highest and changeless good; and every nature which endeavors so to persevere is also worthy of praise. On the other hand, every nature that fails to persevere in this good and is unwilling to exert itself to this end is blameworthy to the extent that it fails to abide in the good and makes no effort to do so.

If, therefore, a created rational nature receives praise, then no one can doubt that He who created it is worthy of praise; and if it is blameworthy, no one can doubt that its Maker receives praise even when it is an object of reproach. For when we blame it for not having the will to enjoy the highest and changeless good, namely, the Creator, we are surely rendering praise to God. How great a good, then, is God, the Creator of all things! How deserving He is of praise and honor beyond the power of our words or thoughts to express! For we can neither be praised nor blamed without giving Him praise. We cannot be blamed for not abiding in Him unless this is our greatest, highest, and principal good. And why is this so, if not because God's goodness is ineffable? What justification can we find in our sins for blaming God when it is impossible to blame our sins without giving praise to God?

38. Then again, when we blame these things themselves, is it not their vice alone that is blamed? Moreover, you can-

not blame the vice in a thing without praising its nature. Either what you blame is natural to the thing and not a vice at all, and then it is you that should be corrected, rather than what you are wrongly blaming, so you will know how to blame the right things; or, if it is a vice that may be rightly blamed, it must also be against nature. All vice, precisely because it is vice, is against nature. If it does not harm a nature, it is not vice; if it is a vice because it harms nature, it is a vice because it is against nature. But if a nature is corrupted by another's vice, and not by its own, it is unjust to blame it, and we must ask whether that nature whose vice could corrupt another nature does not itself suffer corruption by its own vice. What does it mean for a thing to be vitiated, except that it is corrupted by vice?

Furthermore, a nature that is not vitiated is free from vice, whereas that which corrupts another nature by its vice is certainly possessed of vice. Hence, a nature that can corrupt another with its vice is itself first vitiated and already corrupted. We may thus conclude that all vice is against nature, even against the very nature of the thing that has it. Accordingly, since it is only the vice in a thing that is blamed, and, since something is a vice because it is against the nature that has it, we cannot properly blame the vice in a thing without praising its nature. You are rightly displeased with the vice only because it vitiates something in the nature that pleases you.

Chapter 14

39. We must see whether it is also true to say that a nature is corrupted by the vice of another when it has no vice of its own. If a nature possessed of vice approaches another nature in order to corrupt it and finds nothing in it capable of corruption, it does not corrupt it. But if it does find something corruptible, it joins forces with the vice of

the other to bring about its corruption. If a stronger nature is unwilling, it cannot be corrupted by a weaker, but if it is willing to be corrupted, its corruption starts with its own vice rather than with the other's. In the same way, a nature cannot be corrupted by one its equal if it is unwilling. Any nature in a vicious condition that accosts one free from vice in order to corrupt it, comes to it, by that very fact, not as its equal, but as one already weaker by reason of its vice.

But if a stronger nature corrupts one that is weaker, this comes about either because there is vice in both, if it comes from the evil desires of both, or it results from the vice of the stronger when its nature is of such excellence that, even though vitiated, it ranks above the lower nature that it corrupts. How could anyone rightly blame the fruits of the earth simply because men do not put them to good use when such men are already corrupted by their own vice and, in turn, corrupt these fruits by misusing them for sinful pleasure? Yet, only a fool could doubt that, even in its vitiated state, human nature is more excellent and stronger than any kind of fruit, even when it is unspoiled.

40. It is possible for a stronger nature to corrupt a weaker one and to do so without any vice on either part, if by vice we mean that which is blameworthy. Who, for instance, would dare to blame a frugal man who looked for nothing more in these fruits than natural replenishment, or who would blame the fruits themselves because they are corrupted by his use of them for food? In ordinary usage this is not called corruption since, most of the time, the term usually denotes a vice.

We can easily observe this fact too, that when a stronger nature corrupts one weaker, it does not do this to satisfy its own needs, as, for example, when it punishes a fault according to the demands of justice. It is with such a rule in mind that the Apostle says: "If any man corrupt the temple of God, God

will corrupt him.”¹ Or, again, such corruption is seen in the arrangement of changeable things which give way to one another according to laws eminently designed for the government of the universe according to the natural capacity of each part. If the sun’s brightness should injure someone whose eyes are too weak by nature to withstand its light, we should not imagine that the sun causes this alteration in the eyes to supply a deficiency in its own light or through any vice on its part. In any case, the eyes themselves should not be blamed because they obeyed their owner’s command to look into the light or because they were injured by yielding to the light itself.

Consequently, of all the forms of corruption, only that can be rightly blamed which involves vice. The others should either not even be called corruption, or, in any case, they cannot possibly be blameworthy since they do not involve vice. Indeed, the word “blame” (*vituperatio*) is thought to be derived from *vitium* and *paratum*, meaning something prepared exclusively for vice, namely, that which is properly due to vice.

41. Now, as I started to say, a vice is evil simply because it is against the nature itself that has it. Hence it is clear that the very thing whose vice is being blamed is itself deserving of praise because of its nature, and that we must therefore acknowledge that, in blaming their vices, we are bestowing praise upon the natures, upon those natures, that is, whose vices are being blamed. Since vice is opposed to a thing’s nature, its malice increases as the integrity of the nature decreases. Whenever, therefore, you blame the vice, you really praise the thing that you would want to see possessed of its integrity. And where is this integrity found, except in the nature? A nature that is perfect not only deserves no blame, but also merits praise according to the excellence of its nature. You call what is wanting to the natural perfection

1 1 Cor. 3.17.

of a thing a vice, thereby showing plainly enough that you are pleased with the nature and would like to see it perfect, which is why you blame its imperfection.

Chapter 15

42. If, then, the beauty and dignity of natures infected with vice are enhanced even when we blame their vices, how much more should God, the Creator of all natures, be praised for such natures, even in their vitiated condition! Though they owe their natures to Him, they become vitiated to the extent that they depart from the design by which God has made them. Moreover, they are blameworthy to the extent that, in recognizing the design wherein they were fashioned, we blame them because we do not find this in them. And if this very design, by which all things have been made, namely, the supreme and changeless Wisdom of God, is something which truly and supremely exists, as indeed it does, then you must see in what direction a thing is tending which departs from this design. But unless it were voluntary, this defect would not be blameworthy. Consider, if you will, whether it would be right for you to blame something which exists the way it should exist. I do not think so; rather you would blame that which is not what it should be. No one is indebted for something he has not received. And to whom is one indebted, except to him from whom he has received that which makes him a debtor? Even payments made in the form of a bequest are made for him who made the bequest. And payment made in favor of the rightful heirs of creditors is really paid to the creditors who have been succeeded by their rightful heirs. Otherwise, this should not be called a payment, but a transfer or donation, or whatever else such transactions are called.

Hence, it would be utterly absurd of us to assert that temporal things should not perish. Their status in the order of nature is such that, unless they pass out of existence,

things future could not succeed those that are past, and the beauty of the ages could not reach its full and natural perfection. They act according to the efficacy they have received and, to this extent, make return to Him to whom they are indebted for whatever existence they have. Anyone who laments the passing of these things should reflect on his own words, at least on those which voice his complaint, to see if his complaint is just and based upon prudence. If he is enamored by some of his words because of their sound and is unwilling to have them pass away and give place to the rest so that his whole discourse can be framed by the succession of his words, we will judge that he is afflicted with a strange kind of insanity.

43. No one therefore can rightly blame those things for their failure to continue; they pass away because they received no further existence, so that all things may run their course according to their appointed times. And no one can say that something should have remained in existence when it could not exceed the limits assigned to it.

Whether they sin or not, it is in rational creatures that the beauty of the universe achieves its final and most fitting perfection. Now they either do not sin [when they complain about the transitory nature of things], which would be a perfectly absurd thing to say, since one at least commits sin by condemning what is no sin; or they deserve no blame for their sin, which is just as absurd, for then we shall actually begin to praise evil deeds and the whole direction of man's thinking will be thrown into confusion and cause an upheaval in life; or an action will be blamed which was done as it should have been done, and this will give rise to abominable folly, or, to put it more mildly, to a most unfortunate kind of error; or, if we are constrained, as we are, by the truth of our reasoning to blame sins, and to blame rightly whatever does not exist as it should, then ask what the sinful nature owes and you will find that it owes the debt of good deeds; ask

to whom it owes this debt and you will find that it is God. It is from Him that the soul has received the power to act rightly when it so wills, and also from Him that it is made unhappy if it fails to act rightly, and made happy if it does act rightly.

44. Since no one prevails over the laws of the Almighty Creator, the soul may not fail to pay what it owes. It does so either by making good use of what it has received, or by forfeiting what it was unwilling to use rightly. Accordingly, if it does not pay with just acts, it will pay by suffering unhappiness, because the term "debt" holds for both cases. We might also express this by saying that if the soul does not pay by doing what it ought, it will pay by suffering what it ought. There is, however, no temporal interval between these two. It is not as though the soul fails in its duty at one time and suffers its due punishment at another. The beauty of the universe may not be disfigured even for an instant by having the ugliness of sin without the beauty of a just punishment. Whatever is punished now in utmost secrecy is reserved to the future judgment for its manifestation and painful experience of unhappiness. Just as one who is not awake is sleeping, so too, the man who fails to act as he ought experiences at once the suffering he deserves, because the happiness that comes from justice is so great that one cannot depart from it except to embark upon unhappiness. In all cases of defection, things suffering defection have either not received further existence, and there is no fault—just as even while they were existing, there was no fault since they did not receive further existence—or else they are unwilling to be what they were given the power to be, if they had so willed. And since what they received is something good, they are guilty if they fail to will it.

Chapter 16

45. God, however, is a debtor to no one since He con-

fers everything gratuitously. And if anyone should say that something is due him from God because of his merits, his existence, at least, is something not owed him, for nothing was owed him when he did not exist. Besides, what merit is there in turning to Him from whom you have your existence, that you may enjoy a more perfect existence from Him who has given you your existence? What, then, have you given God in advance that you can demand as a debt? When you refuse to turn to Him, He is not the loser, but you yourself. Without Him you would be nothing, and He is so much the cause of your existence that, unless you make due acknowledgment to Him for your existence by turning to Him, you will not, it is true, be non-existent, but you will be unhappy all the same.

All things, therefore, owe to Him, first of all, such existence as they have by their natures; next whatever further perfection they can achieve, if they so will, according to the will they have received, and according to what it is their duty to become, and for all that they ought to be. No one is at fault for what he has not received, but he is justly at fault for not doing as he ought. Now he has an obligation to do so if he has received free will and all the power that is needed.

46. When anyone does not act as he ought, this, far from being a fault on the part of the Creator, even redounds to His praise, because such a one suffers due punishment. The very fact that one is blamed for not doing what he ought to do, is simply to give praise to God to whom he owes a debt. If you receive praise for seeing what you are obliged to do, though you can only see this in Him who is the changeless Truth, how much more should He be praised who has both laid a command upon your will and has given you the power to fulfill it, and has not allowed your refusal to go unpunished?

If everyone must render what he has received, and if man has been so made that he sins of necessity, then it is his duty

to sin. Therefore, whenever he sins, he is doing what he ought to do. If it is wicked to make such an assertion, then no one is forced by his nature to sin.¹ Neither is he forced to sin by another's nature, for no one sins so long as what happens to him is against his will. If he suffers justly, his sin is not in suffering against his will, but in his having sinned by such willful action that he now suffers a just punishment against his will. If he suffers unjustly, how does he sin? For there is no sin in suffering something unjustly, but rather in perpetrating some unjust action. But if no one is forced to sin, either by his own nature or by someone else's, it follows that he sins by his own will.

If you wish to impute the sin to the Creator, you will exonerate the sinner who has done nothing that falls outside the designs of the Creator. But if it is just to defend the sinner, he has not sinned, and there is nothing to impute to the Creator. Let us, therefore, praise the Creator, whether the sinner can be defended or not. If he is justly defended, he is not a sinner; praise God, then. But if he cannot be defended, he is a sinner insofar as he turns away from the Creator. So give praise to the Creator. Accordingly, I do not see how we can impute our sins to God, our Creator, and I declare that there is no way possible, and that none in fact exists. I do find that He is deserving of praise even in these very sins, not merely because He punishes them, but also because they are committed at the very moment that one departs from His truth.

Ev. I am perfectly willing to accept these points and I give them my approval. And I agree it is perfectly true that it is altogether impossible to impute our sins rightly to our Creator.

Chapter 17

47. But I would still like to know, if this is possible, why

¹ Also appropriated by Pelagius against Augustine's teaching on grace.

one nature does not sin, which God foreknew would not sin, and why another does sin, which He foresaw was going to sin. I am no longer of the opinion that, because of God's foreknowledge, the one is forced to sin while the other is not forced to sin. But unless there were some cause for it, rational creatures would not be divided into some that never sin, others that continuously sin, and others, in between, as it were, that sometimes sin and at other times turn to doing what is right. What is the cause for the separation into these three groups? Now I do not want you to reply that it is the will, for I am looking for the cause of the will itself. Since they all have the same nature, there must be some cause why one never wills to sin, why another always wills to sin, and why another wills to sin at one time but not at another. This much alone seems clear to me, namely, that there has to be a cause for this threefold division of the human will, but what it is, I do not know.

48. *Aug.* Since the will is the cause of sin, and you are looking for the cause of the will itself, supposing I were to find this, will you not be looking for the cause of this cause which I have found? What limit will there be to our inquiry, and where will our investigation and discussion end, since there is no need to carry your inquiry beyond the root of the matter? Beware of supposing that anything could possibly be truer than the saying that "avarice is the root of all evil,"¹ namely, the desire for more than is sufficient. Sufficiency is measured by what each nature requires for its preservation according to its class. The word avarice, in Greek, *philarguria*, is not to be understood merely in terms of silver and coins, from which the Greek term is more properly derived, since, among the ancients, coins were made from silver or, as was more commonly the case, from a silver alloy, but must be understood in regard to everything that is desired immoderately whenever anyone simply wants more than is sufficient. Such

¹ 1 Tim. 6.10.

avarice is cupidity, and cupidity is a perverse will. A perverse will, therefore, is the cause of all evil. If this were natural, it would certainly preserve the nature and not be destructive of it, and consequently it would not be a perverse will. Hence the conclusion that the root of all evil is not in accord with nature, which is a sufficient rejoinder against those who want to reproach nature. But if you are looking for the cause of this root, how will it be the root of all evil? For there will be a cause of this cause and, as I said, when you find it, you will look for what caused it and there will be no end to our inquiry.

49. But what could possibly come before the will to be its cause? Either the will is itself the cause, and there will be no regress from this root of the will, or it is not the will, and the will is without sin. Consequently, either the will itself is ultimately the cause of sin, or the ultimate cause of sin is without sin. Sin can be justly imputed to no one but a sinner, and can therefore only be justly imputed to one who wills it.² But I fail to see why you wish to look for something else. Finally, whatever is the cause of the will is certainly either just or unjust. If just, whoever obeys it will not be sinning; if unjust, it must not be obeyed and one will not commit sin.

Chapter 18

50. Or is there perhaps some violent cause that compels one against his will? Now, must we go on repeating the same things over and over again? Recall the previous points which we mentioned at length concerning sin and free will. If it is difficult to commit them all to memory, keep this brief point in mind. Whatever the cause of the will, if a man is unable to resist, there is no sin in his yielding to it; if he can resist, he must not yield to it and there will be no sin. Or does it perhaps deceive a man caught off his guard? Then

² Another passage directed by Pelagius against Augustine.

let him take care not to be deceived. Or is the deception so powerful that it is simply impossible to be on one's guard against it? If this is the case, there is no sin, for how can anyone sin where he cannot possibly be on his guard? But sins are committed, and therefore it is possible to be on one's guard.

51. And yet there are things done even from ignorance which are condemned and judged as deserving of correction, as we read on the authority of the Sacred Writers. For example, the Apostle says: "I obtained mercy, because I acted in ignorance."¹ And the Prophet says: "Remember not the deeds of my youth and of my ignorance."² Actions performed of necessity are blameworthy when a man has the will to do right and cannot do so. Hence the words of the Apostle: "For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, I do"; and, "To will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not";³ and, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. For these things are contrary one to another, so that you do not what things you will."⁴ But these things are all the lot of men who spring from the time of man's condemnation to death; for if this is not a punishment for man, but is something natural, then there is no sin. If man does not depart from the natural condition in which he was made, which cannot be improved upon, then, in doing these things, he is only acting as he should. But if man were good, he would be in a different condition. But because he exists the way he does, he is not good now and does not have it in his power to become good, either because he does not see what kind of man he ought to be, or, though seeing this, he is unable to become what he sees he ought to be. Can there be any doubt that this is a punishment?

Now every punishment, if just, is a punishment for sin,

¹ 1 Tim. 1.13.

² Ps. 24.7.

³ Rom. 7.19, 18.

⁴ Gal. 5.17.

and is called a penalty. But if the punishment is unjust, and there is no doubt that it is a punishment, then it has been inflicted on man by some ruler who is unjust. Besides, since only a fool would doubt the omnipotence and justice of God, this is a just penalty and is inflicted as punishment for some kind of sin. For no unjust ruler could ever steal man from God, unknown to Him, or wrest him from God against his will, as if God were too weak and were so subject to threats or violence that this ruler might afflict man with unjust punishment. It remains, then, that this is a just punishment springing from man's condemnation.

52. We must not be surprised that man in his ignorance does not enjoy the free choice of will to choose the right thing to do or, though aware of what is right and with a will to do it, that he is unable to accomplish it against the opposition of carnal habits which have somehow become ingrown in nature by the vehemence present in the act of human generation. It is a perfectly just penalty for sin that man should forfeit what he would not put to good use when he could easily do so, if he were willing. That is to say, a man who fails to do what he knows is right, and a man who was unwilling to do what was right when he could, forfeits the power to do so when he wants to have it.

These two punishments, ignorance and difficulty, are truly present in every soul that sins. Through ignorance, the soul is tainted with error; through difficulty, it suffers anguish. But to accept falsity for truth, so as to err unwillingly, and to be unable to refrain from lustful acts through the resistance of carnal habits, these are not of man's nature as he originally existed, but are a punishment of man inflicted after his condemnation. When we speak of the will's freedom to do what is right, we are speaking, of course, of that freedom with which man was created.⁵

⁵ In the *Retractations* (1.9.5), Augustine reproduces section 51 entire and the second paragraph of section 52 to show how he had anticipated, as it were, certain Pelagian objections to his teaching on grace.

Chapter 19

53. Here there arises a question which is often mulled over by men who grumble and are ready to blame anything at all for sin, except themselves. They say, for example: "If Adam and Eve sinned, what have we poor creatures done that we should be born with the blindness of ignorance and with the anguish of difficulty? First, in ignorance of what we ought to do, we fall into error; then, when the precepts of justice begin to be made known to us, we have the will to fulfill them and cannot do so because some kind of compulsion from carnal concupiscence resists our efforts." In reply to such men, I will answer briefly that they should be quiet and should stop murmuring against God. They might have grounds to complain if no man had ever triumphed over error and lust. But there is everywhere present One who makes manifold use of creatures, at the service of Him their Lord, to recall the man who has turned away from Him, to teach him when he believes, to console him when he has hope, to encourage him when he loves, to assist his efforts, to hear him when he prays. You are not charged with a fault because you are in ignorance against your will, but because you fail to seek knowledge that you do not have. Nor are you at fault because you do not bind up your wounded members, but because you neglect Him who wants to heal them. These are personal sins of your own. No man has been denied a knowledge of the benefit of inquiring after something where ignorance is of no benefit, or of how he should make humble avowal of his weakness so that, while searching after knowledge and confessing his weakness, he may be assisted by Him who experiences neither error nor difficulty in coming to our aid.

54. Wrong actions done by anyone from ignorance and the inability to perform good acts that he wants to, are called sins for the very reason that they have their origin in the

first sin, which was voluntary, and it is this previous sin which has merited these consequences. We use the term "tongue" not only for the bodily member which moves about in our mouth when we speak, but also for the effect produced by this movement of the tongue, namely, the arrangement and sequence of words. It is in this sense that we say that Greek is one tongue, and Latin another. Similarly, we use the term "sin" not only in the strict sense of a fault which one commits knowingly and willingly, but also to indicate the effects which follow necessarily as punishment for such sin.

So, too, we use the term "nature" in different senses. In the strict sense, we speak of man as having a specific nature in which he was originally created in the state of innocence as one of a class. We use it in another sense to indicate the nature into which we are now born as mortal creatures, ignorant and slaves to the flesh, following the sentence of condemnation which was passed upon the first man. It is in this sense that the Apostle says: "For we were also by nature children of wrath, just as the others."¹

Chapter 20

55. As we are born from the first union, subject to ignorance and difficulty and death, because through sin our first parents were cast headlong into error, misery, and death, so too has it pleased the justice of the Supreme God and Ruler of the universe, first to reveal His justice by punishment at the time of man's origin, and then, as man advanced in time, to manifest His mercy as a Liberator. Though under a sentence of condemnation, the first man was not deprived of the happiness of having children. It was possible that even from his offspring, however carnal and mortal, something should appear and, in its own way, be a thing of beauty and an adornment for the earth. Yet, equity would not allow Adam

¹ Eph. 2.3.

to beget offspring better than himself. But it was only right that, from the moment of turning to God, each one should not only be unhampered in his desire but should even be aided in overcoming the punishment which man had merited at the beginning by turning away from God. In this way, too, the Creator of the universe showed how easy it would have been for man, had he so willed, to preserve the condition in which he was created since even his offspring were able to overcome the condition that was theirs by birth.

56. Again, if only a single soul was created from which are derived the souls of all men that are born, who can say that he did not sin when the first man sinned? But if souls are created one by one in each man that is born, it is not incongruous, but rather altogether fitting and in accord with order, that the evil merits of a former soul should be the natural inheritance of one that follows, and that the good merits of the succeeding soul should be the natural possession of the former. How is it unworthy of the Creator that He should have chosen even this way to show how the soul's dignity so far excels bodily creatures that one soul can begin to rise up from that condition which another had come to by its fall? When the sinful soul has reached the condition of ignorance and difficulty, this is properly called a punishment because the soul was better before this punishment. If, not only before sinning, but before beginning upon life, one soul begins to exist in the same condition to which another had come after a sinful life, it still possesses no small good for which to give thanks to its Creator, since even at the time of its creation and beginning, it is more excellent than the best of bodies. That the soul should not only enjoy a natural superiority over all bodies, but should also have power, with its Creator's help, to perfect itself and be able to acquire and possess by its pious efforts all the virtues by which it is freed from the anguish of difficulty and the blindness of ignorance—all these are no ordinary blessings.

If this is so, ignorance and difficulty will not be a punishment for sin to souls at birth, but a stimulus to make progress and the first step on the way to perfection. It is no small advantage that the soul, previous to any merit for good works, should have received a natural power of discernment to enable it to rank wisdom above error, and rest above difficulty, so it can attain these, not through birth, but by its own effort. But if a soul is unwilling to do so, it will be justly held as guilty of sin for not having made good use of the power it received. Though born in a state of ignorance and difficulty, it is not compelled by any necessity to remain in that state in which it was born. No one but God Almighty could be the Creator of such souls, who creates them before they love Him and perfects them once they have loved Him. He gives them being when they do not exist, and confers happiness upon those that love Him as the Source of their existence.

57. But if there are any souls already existing in some secret habitation, which God has assigned them, and these are sent forth to animate and rule over the bodies of individual men at birth, they are sent for this particular task. They must govern well the body, born under the punishment of sin, namely, the sentence of death incurred by the first man, that is, they must curb it through the practice of virtue and bring it into a just and lawful subjection so as to win for the body, too, a state of heavenly immortality in due order and at the appropriate time. When these souls embark upon the present life and endure the burden of carrying about this mortal frame, they must also endure the forgetfulness of their former life and the travail of the present one. The result will be ignorance and difficulty, which, in the case of the first man, was the penalty of death in order to bring him to an awareness of the miserable state of the soul; whereas, for these souls, this furnishes them an opportunity to restore the state of incorruption to the body. Again, this is spoken of as sin only because the flesh, which springs from a sinful source, causes

ignorance and difficulty in the souls that enter it. But the blame for this is not to be placed either upon these souls or upon their Creator.

The Creator has given them the power to discharge faithfully these burdensome tasks and has provided a way of faith for the blindness resulting from forgetfulness. Most of all, He has given them the power of discernment which makes every soul acknowledge that it should seek to know where ignorance is of no avail, that it should strive unremittingly to discharge its difficult tasks in order to overcome the difficulty of doing what is right, and should implore help from its Creator to assist it in its efforts. Outwardly, by His Law, and inwardly, by speaking to the depths of man's heart, He directs the soul to exert itself, while He prepares a state of glory in the Blessed City for those who triumph over him who led the first man to unhappiness and overcame him by his wicked persuasion. These men accept such unhappiness in order to overcome him by the excellence of their faith. It is no small glory to be engaged in a warfare in which we overcome the devil by accepting that very punishment which enables him to boast that he has made man his captive. But any man who is so captivated by the love of the present life that he neglects this duty will have no right whatever to charge this criminal desertion to the command of the Ruler. Rather, being subject to the Ruler of all things, he must take his place on the side of him in whose shameful service he found such delight as to desert his own ranks.

58. But if souls existing elsewhere are not dispatched by the Lord God, but come of their own accord to dwell in bodies, it is easy to see why the Creator should not be blamed at all for whatever ignorance and difficulty have resulted from their own free choice. Even if God had sent them Himself, He would be altogether blameless, since, despite their ignorance and difficulty, He has not withdrawn from them the freedom to ask and seek and strive, but is ready to

give to those who ask, to show the way to those who seek, and to open to those who knock. To souls that are zealous and well-disposed, He would bestow the power to overcome such ignorance and difficulty and gain the crown of glory. To those, however, that are neglectful and wish to allege weakness for their sins, He would not reproach their ignorance and difficulty as sinful. Yet, because they have chosen to remain in such a state rather than to arrive at the truth and a ready will, He will inflict a just punishment upon them because they lacked the zeal to seek and learn, to make humble confession of sin, and to pray.

Chapter 21

59. No one should rashly affirm any one of these four views about the soul: 1) souls come into existence by generation; 2) souls are newly created for each one who is born; 3) souls already existing elsewhere are sent by God into bodies; 4) souls descend into bodies of their own accord.¹ Either this question has not yet been explained and clarified by Catholic commentators of the Sacred Scripture, as the obscurity and perplexity of the matter warrant, or, if this has been done, such writings have not yet come into my hands. Only let our faith keep us from thinking anything false or unworthy of the Creator's nature, for we make our way to Him along the road of piety. If, therefore, we conceive of Him otherwise than as He is, we will be driven towards vanity, not towards happiness. But if we conceive of creatures otherwise than as they are, there is no danger, provided we do not regard our

¹ Only the first two of these, namely, spiritual generationism and creationism, are seriously considered. From a letter to Jerome (*Ep.* 166), it would appear that Augustine inclined towards creationism but found himself unable to explain the transmission of original sin in such an hypothesis. Actually, the problem of the soul's origin remained unsolved for him even to the end of his life. Cf. *Retractations* 1.1.3; *Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum* 2.178.

knowledge as certain. In our pursuit of happiness, it is not the creature, but the Creator, that we are commanded to seek. If our convictions about the Creator are other than what they should be, we are victims of a most pernicious kind of error. For no one can reach the happy life by tending towards something that either does not exist, or if it does exist, cannot make him happy.

60. In order to contemplate eternal truth in a way that will enable us to enjoy it and cling to it, a path through temporal things, suited to our infirmity, has been marked out for us, namely, that we accept on faith past and future events so far as this suffices for men on their journey towards things eternal. These teachings of faith are so regulated by God's mercy as to give them the greatest authority. Things present, however, as far as creatures are concerned, are perceived as transitory through the inconstancy and changing nature of the body and soul. We cannot know things of this kind at all unless we experience them. We must accept, then, on divine authority whatever we are told about any creature at all, whether past or future. Some, however, passed away before we could perceive them, while others have not yet come into our sense experience. Nevertheless, we must readily believe them because they help us very much to strengthen our hope and to arouse our love. At the same time, they remind us of our deliverance which God has not failed to provide throughout the orderly course of the ages.

Now any error that masquerades as divine authority can be best refuted by this line of reasoning; namely, can we show that it believes, or asserts as true, that there exists any form of beauty, even though changeable, apart from God's creation, or that any changeable form of beauty exists in God's nature, or that it maintains that God's nature is something of greater or less perfection than the Trinity? The Christian exercises all possible vigilance towards a pious and careful understanding of the Trinity and directs all his progress

towards this end. But this is not the place for a discussion on the unity of the Trinity and on the equality and properties of each Person in the Trinity. To recount certain truths concerning the Lord God, Author of all things and the Source of their ordered perfection, the Ruler of the universe, truths that pertain to salutary faith and provide gentle nourishment and a useful support for the soul's first efforts to rise from the things of earth to those of heaven—this is easy to do, and many have already done it. But to give a thorough treatment of this whole question, and present it so that every man's intelligence can be sufficiently won over to the clear light of reason, so far as is possible in this life, and to express it in words, or even in our thoughts, can hardly seem an easy task for any man, or, at any rate, for us.

Now, then, let us proceed with what we have undertaken so far as we are given help and leave to do so. As for things created, we must promptly believe whatever is related to us about the past or is prophesied about the future, if this helps to promote sound religion by awakening in us a sincere love of God and our neighbor. Against unbelievers, however, we must defend it to the point of either crushing their unbelief by the weight of authority, or by showing them as best we can, first, that it is not foolish to believe such things; secondly, that it is foolish not to believe them. Nevertheless, we ought to refute false teaching about the present, particularly, about things unchangeable, rather than what concerns the past and the future, and should disprove such teaching by means of clear arguments.

61. Within the order of temporal events, our expectation of the things to come should certainly occupy our attention more than an inquiry into things of the past since, even in the Sacred Books, the events narrated as past are represented either as a type, or promise, or a witness of things to come. Actually, even where things of the present life are concerned, whether favorable or unfavorable, little concern is shown for

one's past condition, but the weight of anxiety rests wholly upon one's hopes for the future. By a kind of natural instinct within us, things that have happened to us, once they are over, are regarded as though they had never taken place as far as having any influence upon our happiness or unhappiness is concerned. What harm can come to me if I do not know when I began to exist since I know that I now exist and do not despair of existing in the future? I do not turn my thoughts to things of the past, as if I lived in fear over a disastrous error for having thought of them otherwise than they were, but I direct my course towards what the future holds for me, under the merciful guidance of my Creator. Consequently, if I entertain any false belief or view about my future existence, or about God with whom I shall be existing in the future, I must strenuously avoid any such error. Otherwise, I shall either fail to make the necessary preparation, or I shall be unable to reach the goal I have in mind because I have mistaken one thing for something else.

Thus, if I were to buy a coat, it would not be a handicap were I to forget about last winter, but it would be, if I thought there were no threat of cold for the future. Similarly, my soul will not be handicapped if it chances to forget something it endured in the past, provided it is careful now to fasten its attention upon the goal for which it is admonished to prepare itself from now on. Again, for example, no harm would come to a man sailing for Rome if he were to forget from what shore he had set sail, so long as he knew how to steer his course from the position where he happened to be. But it would do him no good to remember the shore from which he embarked on his journey if he miscalculated about the port of Rome and should suffer shipwreck upon the shoals. So, too, if I do not remember the time my life began, this will be no hindrance to me so long as I know what the end is wherein I am to find rest. Any recollection or conjecture about the beginning of my life would be no help to

me if I should run upon the reefs of error by holding views unworthy of that same God who alone is the end of the soul's labors.

62. These remarks should not be construed as meaning that we would prohibit men who are capable from inquiring according to the divinely inspired Scriptures as to whether souls are generated from souls, or are separately created for each body they animate, or are sent from elsewhere by God's command to govern and animate the body, or make their own way into bodies of their own volition. We do not forbid such inquiry if reason demands that we examine and discuss these things in order to solve some important question, or if we are granted leisure from more important matters for an inquiry and examination of these matters. Rather, my remarks were intended to prevent a person from showing unreasonable displeasure in a question of this kind towards one who does not accept his view because of a doubt that may be all too human. Besides, even if someone should acquire a certain and clear grasp of this matter, he must not suppose that someone else has lost all hope of the things to come just because he does not remember his origins in the past.

Chapter 22

63. Whatever the status of the problem, namely, whether we should omit it altogether or defer it for consideration at another time, this will not prevent us from seeing clearly the truth of the matter at hand, that souls suffer punishment for their sins and do so without detriment to the majesty of God's nature, which remains inviolate, all-just, steadfast, and unchanging. As we have already explained at some length, these sins must be imputed to the will alone and we need look no further for the cause of sin.

64. But if ignorance and difficulty are man's natural state,

then it is from this condition that the soul begins to progress and advance towards knowledge and a state of rest until the happy life is fully realized in it. If, of its own accord, the soul neglects to make such progress in a knowledge of higher things and in the practice of piety, though it has not been denied the power to do so, then it deserves to be plunged into a worse state of ignorance and difficulty, which is already penal in character, and it takes its place among lower creatures according to a universal governance that is perfectly fitting and proper. The soul is charged with guilt, not because of its natural condition of ignorance and weakness, but because it made no effort to acquire knowledge and did not apply itself sufficiently to obtain the power to do what is right. Ignorance of language and inability to speak are natural to the infant. Such ignorance and difficulty in speaking are not only blameless under the rules of grammar, but are even a source of pleasure and delight for our human sensibilities. It was no fault of the child that it failed to acquire this ability, nor has it through its own fault lost the ability after having once acquired it.

Consequently, if our happiness consisted of eloquence, and if it were accounted a crime to make a mistake in speaking, as it is when we perform sinful acts in life, certainly no one would be blamed for being an infant, because it is from this state that a beginning is made towards attaining eloquence. If, however, because of a perverse will, one should remain in such a state, or should fall back into it, he would clearly be deserving of condemnation.

So even now, if ignorance of the truth and difficulty in doing right are natural to man and are the point of departure whence man begins his ascent to the happy state of wisdom and rest, no one is justified in reproaching happiness for its natural origin. But if a man is unwilling to advance or is willing to be a backslider, he rightly deserves to suffer the penalty.

65. But the soul's Creator is to be praised in every respect, either because He endowed the soul from the very beginning with a capacity for the highest good, or because He helps it to advance, or because He implements its progress and brings it to perfection, or because He subjects it to order by condemning it according to its just deserts whenever it sins, that is, when it either refuses to raise itself from its initial state to perfection, or when it falls back after it has made some progress. He did not therefore create it evil just because it was not so perfect then as when it received the power to become so later on. For all perfections found in bodies are far inferior to the soul in its original state, and yet any person of sound discernment would judge that even these deserved to be praised for what they are. The soul's ignorance of what it ought to do stems from the fact that it has not yet received this knowledge. But it will receive this too if it makes good use of what has already been given it, for it has received the power to seek it with diligence and devotion, if only it chooses to do so. Again, the soul finds itself unable to do at once what it sees ought to be done because it has likewise not yet received this power. One part of it, the higher, has gone ahead to perceive the good of a righteous act, but another part, the more sluggish and carnal element, is not brought into conformity with this view. Hence the soul is prompted by this very difficulty to beg Him for help in making progress, from whom it sees it owes its start.

This is why it loves God all the more, since it is elevated to its happy state, not by its own resources, but by the mercy of Him to whose goodness it owes its existence. The more it loves God, the Source of its existence, the more securely does it find repose in Him and the more fully does it experience the joys of His eternity.

We would be wrong to call the young and tender sapling barren, even though it goes through several summer seasons without bearing fruit until the proper time arrives to show

its fruit. Why, then, should the soul's Creator not be praised with all due reverence if He has given the soul a kind of beginning that enables it to mature with the fruits of wisdom and justice by its efforts and growth, and when He has so dignified it that it is within its power to reach out for happiness, if it wills to do so?

Chapter 23

66. An insidious objection is often levelled against this line of reasoning by ignorant men concerning the death of young children and the bodily sufferings with which we often see them afflicted. What need, they ask, was there for a child to be born when it departed this life before it could set out to merit in life? Or, what will be its destiny in the future judgment, seeing that it has no place either among the just, since it performed no good deeds, or among the wicked, since it did nothing sinful?

Here is my answer to their objection. Viewing the universe as a whole and the perfect order prevailing throughout the entire creation spread over time and place, it is impossible that the creation of any man would be superfluous in a universe where not even the creation of a single leaf of a tree is superfluous. What is really superfluous is any inquiry about the merits of one who has acquired no merits. We need have no fear that there may be a life in between virtue and vice, or that the Judge may pass a sentence halfway between reward and punishment.

67. Here, too, men are in the habit of asking what benefit comes to young children from the sacrament of Christ's baptism, since they often die after receiving it and before they could know anything about it. On this point, it is piously believed, and quite rightly so, that the child benefits from the faith of those who present it for baptism. Such a belief finds

support in the salutary authority of the Church, so that each one may realize how beneficial his own faith is for himself when it can also be turned to the benefit of others who do not yet have faith of their own. What benefit did the widow's son derive from his own faith, which he certainly did not possess once he was dead, whereas his mother's faith was instrumental in his being raised from the dead?¹ How much more, then, can the faith of another provide for the child whose lack of faith cannot be imputed to it?

68. A more serious complaint, almost compassionate in tone, is frequently voiced concerning the bodily suffering which afflicts young children. Because of their age, they are without sin, provided the souls animating them did not exist before they became human beings. What evil have these done, they ask, that they should undergo such sufferings? You might think there could be a reward for innocence before a person is able to cause harm! But God accomplishes some good in reforming the lives of older people when these are chastised by the suffering and death of their little ones so dear to them. Why should this not happen since, once it is over, it will be as if it never happened for those who suffered it? On the other hand, those for whose sake this has happened, will either become better if, after having profited from these temporal trials to reform their lives, they will choose to live more righteously; or they will have no excuse when they are punished at the future judgment if they failed to make use of the suffering of this present life to turn their desires towards life eternal. Besides, who can tell what good recompense God, in His hidden designs, has in store for these children when, as a result of their suffering, the harshness of parents is softened, their faith is strengthened, and their compassion is made evident to all? Though they have performed no good acts, they have nevertheless endured these sufferings without having committed any sins. It is not without reason that the Church proposes for our veneration as martyrs,

¹ Cf. Luke 7.12-15.

even the infants who were slain when the Lord Jesus Christ was being sought out for destruction by Herod.

69. These carping critics, who neglect to study such questions carefully but go about airing their opinions garrulously, usually try to shake the faith of those less instructed on the problem of pain and hardships also suffered by animals. What evil have even these deserved, they ask, or what can they hope for in the way of good that they should suffer such distress? They speak or think this way because they take a very unfair view of things and, incapable as they are of understanding the nature and excellence of the highest good, they would have everything conform to their own idea of what it is. They cannot conceive of a supreme good beyond the highest bodies which have a heavenly nature and are not so subject to corruption. Hence, without any regard for order, they make the unreasonable demand that animals should suffer neither death nor corruption in their bodies, as if they were not mortal, though they are on the lowest plane, or as if they were evil, just because the heavenly bodies are better.

Besides, the pain experienced by beasts reveals clearly a power of the animal soul which is wonderful and admirable in its own way. The very fact of their suffering makes it quite clear how much these souls strive for unity in ruling over their bodies and imparting life to them. For what is pain, if not a conscious struggle against disintegration and dissolution? Hence it is as plain as day how eager and tenacious the soul is to preserve unity throughout. It directs its attention to suffering within the body and is troubled by the deterioration of its unity and integrity, not in a voluntary or indifferent way, but with resistance and by putting up a struggle. Except for pain in the animal, we would have no evidence of the intense desire for unity in the lower living things. Without such evidence, we would not be made sufficiently aware that all these have been constituted by the supreme, sublime, and unspeakable unity of their Creator.

70. Indeed, if you reflect upon this matter reverently and carefully, you will see that all the beauty and movement of those creatures which come to man's attention speak words of instruction for us. Through the variety of their movements and tendencies, as by so many different tongues, they everywhere proclaim and cry out that we should recognize their Creator. Of those creatures that experience neither pain nor pleasure, there is not one that is not impelled by its unity to realize its distinctive beauty, or, in a general way, to achieve a degree of permanence within its nature. So too, among creatures that experience the anguish of pain or the delight of pleasure, there is none whose aversion to pain and desire for pleasure does not thereby attest to the fact that it shuns disintegration and seeks unity. In their very desire to know, wherein rational souls find a natural delight, they reduce all the objects of their perception to a unity, while, in the avoidance of error, they simply shun the confusion caused by meaningless equivocation. Why is all equivocation troublesome, if not for the fact that it has no fixed unity? Accordingly, it is now evident that whether they cause or suffer harm, whether they give or receive pleasure, they all suggest and proclaim the unity of the Creator.

But if ignorance and difficulty with which this present life must take its beginning are not the natural condition of souls, then we must conclude that these have either been assumed as a debt or have been imposed as a punishment. Now I think we have had enough discussion on these points.

Chapter 24

71. We should ask what the first man himself was like when he was created, rather than how his descendants have been propagated. Some think they are displaying great acumen when they propose the question as follows. If the first man was created wise, why, they ask, was he misled, and if he was

created foolish, how can God not be the cause of vice, since folly is the greatest of the vices? They speak as if it were impossible for human nature to be endowed with some intermediate state, besides folly and wisdom, which could be called neither folly nor wisdom. Actually, a man begins to be either foolish or wise, and must be called one or the other, only from the time he is able to possess wisdom and when, by neglecting to do so, his will is guilty of the vice of folly. No one is foolish enough to call an infant foolish, though it would be more absurd of him to want to call it wise. Though already a human being, the infant cannot be called either wise or foolish.

Hence it is clear that human nature is endowed with an intermediate state which you may not properly call either folly or wisdom. Consequently, if anyone were born with a soul in the same state as those who lack wisdom through negligence, no one could properly call him foolish, since he could tell that his conditions arose, not from vice, but from nature.

Folly is not any kind of ignorance at all about what we should seek and avoid, but an ignorance born of vice. This is why we do not say that irrational animals are foolish, since they have not been endowed with the power to become wise. But we often use terms in a way that is similar, but not the same. Though blindness is the most serious of all defects in the eye, it is not a defect in newborn puppies, and cannot, properly speaking, be termed blindness.

72. Accordingly, if a man was created in a state where, though yet unwise, he could receive a command that he ought certainly to obey, it is neither surprising that he could be seduced, nor an injustice that he should suffer punishment for failing to obey. Neither is the Creator the cause of his vice, since it was not yet a vice for man to be without wisdom when he had not yet received the power to have it. Yet he did have something that would enable him to advance towards

what he did not yet have, provided he was willing to make good use of it. It is one thing for a man to be rational, it is something else to be wise. Through reason, man became a fit subject for commands, and he must show himself faithful to these and so fulfill all that is commanded of him. Just as it is natural for reason to grasp a command, so too, it is the observance of such a command that gains for us the possession of wisdom. What nature does in the way of grasping the command is accomplished by the will in carrying it out. And as rational nature merits, in a way, to receive a command, so too, it is the observance of it that merits the bestowal of wisdom.

Now, from the time a man begins to be capable of receiving a command, from that moment he begins to have the power to sin. Before a man becomes wise, he can sin in two ways, either by failing to make himself fit to receive the command, or by not observing the command once he has received it. But if a man already wise turns from wisdom, then he sins. Just as the command does not issue from the person commanded, so too, wisdom does not come from the person who is enlightened but from Him who is the Source of enlightenment.

Is there any reason then why man's Creator should not be praised? Man is something good, and because he is capable of receiving a command, he is something better than the beast. He is better yet when he has already received a command, better yet when he has obeyed it, and still better when he is made happy by the eternal light of wisdom.

The malice of sin consists in a man's failure either to accept the command, or to observe it, or to be steadfast in the contemplation of wisdom. This enables us to see how the first man could be seduced by sin, even though he was created wise. Since this sin was within his free choice, it entailed a just penalty by reason of God's law. It is in this sense too that the Apostle says: "Professing themselves to be wise, they be-

came foolish."¹ For pride turns a man from wisdom and folly follows in its wake. Surely, folly is a kind of blindness, as the same Apostle indicates, where he says: ". . . and their foolish heart was darkened."² Now what is the cause of this darkness, but the turning away from the light of wisdom? And what causes this turning away, if not the fact that man, whose good is God, wills to be his own good, just as God is His own good? Whence the words of Scripture: "My soul is troubled in my own regard,"³ and, "Taste, and you shall be as gods."⁴

73. In examining this matter, some are disturbed by the question as to whether the first man fell from God through folly, or whether he became foolish by falling from God. If you answer that he fell from wisdom through folly, it will appear that he was foolish before he fell from wisdom, so that folly was the cause of it. Likewise, if you reply that he became foolish by falling, they will ask whether, in doing so, he acted foolishly or wisely. If he acted wisely, he did what was right and committed no sin; if he acted foolishly, then, they say, it was the folly already found in him that made him fall since, without folly, he could not do anything foolish. This makes it clear that there is some middle state through which a man passes from wisdom to folly. We cannot say that this state resulted either from folly or wisdom, and it is one that men in this life can only understand in terms of its contraries. Thus, no mortal can become wise unless he passes from folly to wisdom. If the transition itself is made foolishly, it is certainly not done well, which would be a very foolish thing to say; if the transition is made wisely, then wisdom was already present in man before he passed over to wisdom, which is something equally absurd. This makes it clear that there is a middle state which cannot

1 Rom. 1.22.

2 Rom. 1.21.

3 Ps. 41.7.

4 Gen. 2.5.

go by either name. So, too, when the first man passed from the heights of wisdom to folly, the transition was neither foolish nor wise. It is something like sleep and wakefulness, where falling asleep is not the same as sleeping and where awakening is not the same as being awake, but where there is a passing from one state to another. There is, however, this difference, that the latter generally happen involuntarily, while the former are always voluntary, which is why the punishments that follow are perfectly just.

Chapter 25

74. But the will is not drawn to any action unless something is perceived. It is within anyone's power to accept or reject something, but it is not in his power to be unaffected by what he sees. We must acknowledge that the soul is affected by the things it perceives, both of a higher and lower order, so that a rational being may take what it chooses from each, and, on the merit of what it takes, there follows unhappiness or happiness. In the garden of paradise, for example, God's command belonged to the perception of higher things, the suggestion of the devil, to things below. Neither the command enjoined upon him by God nor the suggestion made by the devil was in the power of man. Just how free man was from having to yield to the lower attraction of what he perceived, when he was free from the constraints of difficulty and living a sound life of wisdom, can be seen from the fact that even foolish men overcome this attraction as they approach wisdom, even though they find it hard to forego the deadly delights of their pernicious habits.

75. A question may arise at this point. If man was confronted by both classes of objects that he perceived, God's precept on the one hand, and the serpent's suggestion on the other, how was it suggested to the devil himself to pursue

wickedness and so fall from his place on high? If he had not been affected by something he perceived, he would not have chosen to do what he did, for, unless something had entered his mind, he would not have turned his thoughts at all to wickedness. How, then, did it enter his mind to embark upon something which would make a devil out of a good angel?

One who wills, certainly has to will something, and unless this something is either suggested externally by the bodily senses, or arises in the mind in some hidden way, he cannot will it. We must distinguish, then, two classes of things that are perceived. The first comes from the will of one who makes use of persuasion, as the devil did, when man sinned by yielding to him. The second class comprises things which come to the attention of the mind or to the bodily senses. Apart from the Changeless Trinity, which does not fall under the soul's comprehension but rather transcends it, the things that it perceives are these: first, the soul itself, by which we perceive that we are alive; secondly, the body, which is governed by the soul, enabling the soul to move whatever member is needed to perform an act at the time. Bodily things, on the other hand, are all subject to the perception of the bodily senses.

76. In contemplating supreme wisdom—which, being unchangeable, is not the soul—the mutable soul also gets a view of itself and somehow comes into its own mind. This is only possible because of the difference that separates the soul from God, though even the soul is something which, after God, can be a source of delight. But it is better for the soul when it forgets itself in its love of the unchangeable God, or utterly despises itself by comparison with Him. If, on the other hand, it gets in its own way, so to speak, and takes delight in itself, by a perverse imitation of God in its desire to enjoy its own power, then the more it wants to be greater, so much does it become less. Thus, "pride is the beginning of all sin, and the beginning of pride is man's apostasy from God."¹

¹ Ecclus. [Sirach] 10.15, 14.

In addition to his pride, there was the devil's insidious ill-will to urge upon man that very pride which he realized had brought damnation upon himself. Hence the provision that man should receive a corrective punishment rather than one which would entail his destruction. Thus, while the devil made himself an example of pride for man, the Lord, through whom we have the promise of life eternal, offered himself to man as an example of humility. Consequently, since Christ has purchased us by His blood, after having endured indescribable trials and suffering, let us cling steadfastly to our Liberator with such great love and be so transported by the light of His countenance that the sight of things below may not turn us from the higher vision. And even though some suggestion inspired by a desire for things below should enter our mind, the thought of eternal punishment and the torments suffered by the devil should bring us back to our senses.

77. Such is the beauty of justice and the delight of that eternal light, namely, changeless truth and wisdom, that, even were one permitted to abide in it only for the space of a single day, yet, for this alone, he would rightly and justly regard as nought the countless years of the present life, though they were filled with delights and an affluence of temporal goods. These words of the Psalmist: "For better is one day in thy courts over thousands,"² were expressed with no small degree of genuine fervor. They can also be understood, however, in another sense, where a thousand days may stand for the changing character of time, while one day stands for the changelessness of eternity.

I do not know that I have passed over any point needed to answer your questions, so far as the Lord has seen fit to allow me. And even if some question does come to your mind, the limits of this book compel me to bring it to an end and to rest at last from our discussion.

2 Ps. 83.11.

RETRACTATIONS, Book 1, Ch. 9

THE FREE CHOICE OF THE WILL

1. While still sojourning in Rome, we decided to inquire into the origin of evil by way of a discussion. Our discussion was so directed as to lead us to a possible understanding, through rational reflection and inquiry, of what we already believed about the matter, so far as God might assist our inquiry and, since we were agreed, once the arguments had been carefully examined, that evil came about only by the free choice of the will, the three books which resulted from this discussion were entitled "The Free Choice of the Will." I completed the second and third of these, as best I could at the time, after my ordination to the priesthood at Hippo Regius.

2. So many subjects were discussed in these books that some questions which came up were deferred, either because I could not solve them or because they would have required a lengthy discussion just at that time. But whatever solutions were proposed in either case, even when it was not clear which of those proposed for these same questions was closer to the truth, our reasoning led us nevertheless to this conclusion, that wherever the truth lay, we should believe, and even make it clear, that God is to be praised. This discussion was undertaken because of those who deny that evil has its origin in the free choice of the will and contend that if this were the case, God is at fault, since He is the Creator of all natures. In line with their wicked error—they are the Manichees—they would thus introduce a kind of changeless evil nature, co-eternal with God. Since this was the problem under consideration, there is no discussion in these books concerning the grace of God by which He so predestines His elect that He Himself even makes ready the wills of those among them who are already making use of their free choice. But when-

ever there was occasion to mention this grace, this was done in passing, and not as a defense of grace by means of painstaking arguments, as if this were the subject under discussion. To inquire into the origin of evil is one thing; to inquire how we can return to our original good, or to one that is better, is another matter.

3. Accordingly, the recent Pelagian heretics, who would assert the free choice of the will so as to leave no place for God's grace, since they maintain that it is given in accordance with our merits, must not be elated, as though I had defended their course; for I said many things in these books in favor of free will as the circumstances of the discussion demanded. In the first book I did, in fact, state that "evil deeds are punished by God's justice," and added, "unless they were committed voluntarily, their punishment would not be just" (1.1.1). Again, when I said that the will is so great a good that it is deservedly preferred to all bodies and external goods, I said: "I believe you see then that it lies within our will either to enjoy or to lack so great and true a good as this. For what is more within the power of the will than the will itself?" (1.12.26) And, in another place: "How are we justified then in regarding as doubtful the fact that it is by the will that we merit and live a good and praiseworthy life, and, by the same will, a life that is shameful and unhappy, even though formerly we were never wise?" (1.13.28) Again, in another place: "Accordingly, any man with the will to lead a good and upright life, provided he prefers this will to all fleeting goods, will acquire so great a possession with such great ease that to have what he wills is the same thing as to will it" (1.13.29). Similarly, I said elsewhere: "Certainly, the eternal law, which it is now time to consider again, has unalterably decreed that merit is in the will, whereas reward and punishment are identified with happiness and unhappiness" (1.14.30). And, in another place: "We also agreed that what each man chooses to pursue and embrace is within the

power of the will to determine" (1.16.34). And in the second book: "For man himself, insofar as he is man, is something good because he can live an upright life whenever he so wishes" (2.1.2). And I said in another place: ". . . moral conduct is only possible by free will" (2.18.47). And in the third book: "What need, then, is there to look for a cause of that movement by which the soul turns from the unchangeable to a changeable good? We agree that it belongs to the soul alone and is voluntary, and, consequently, culpable. Furthermore, all practical instruction in this matter has this for its aim, that, renouncing and restraining this kind of movement, we turn our will from the instability of temporal things to the enjoyment of the everlasting good" (3.1.2). And, in another place: "The voice of truth is making itself heard very well in you. If our act of willing is not in our power, then you could not be conscious of anything else that is. Hence nothing is so much in our power as the will itself, for it is there at hand the very instant that we will something" (3.3.7). Again, in another place: "If you receive praise for seeing what you are obliged to do, though you can only see this in Him who is the changeless truth, how much more should He be praised who has both laid a command upon your will and has given you the power to fulfill it, and has not allowed your refusal to go unpunished?" Then I went on to add: "If everyone must render what he has received, and if man has been so made that he sins of necessity, then it is his duty to sin. Therefore, whenever he sins, he is doing what he ought to do. If it is wicked to make such an assertion, then no one is forced by his nature to sin" (3.16.46). And again: "But what could possibly come before the will to be its cause? Either the will is itself the cause, and there will be no regress from this root of the will, or it is not the will, and the will is without sin. Consequently, either the will itself is ultimately the cause of sin, or the ultimate cause of sin is without sin. Sin can be justly imputed to no one but a sinner, and can therefore only be

justly imputed to one who wills it" (3.17.49). And, a little later: "... for how can anyone sin where he cannot possibly be on his guard? But sins are committed, and therefore it is possible to be on one's guard" (3.18.50). Pelagius used these statements of mine as evidence in a book of his. When I answered this book, I decided to entitle the book *Nature and Grace*.

4. Because no mention of grace was made in these and similar statements of mine, since we were not dealing with this question at the time, the Pelagians think or might think, that I held their views. But they are mistaken to think so. To be sure, it is the will that enables us to sin and to live a good life, and this was the problem under consideration in those statements of mine. Unless, therefore, the will is freed from the servitude which makes it "the servant of sin," and unless it is helped to overcome its vices, it is impossible for mortal men to lead righteous and godly lives. And unless this gift of God, which makes the will free, came before the act of the will, it would not be given because of the will's merits, and would not be grace, which, of course, is given freely. I have treated this subject sufficiently in other works of mine, where I refute these enemies of God's grace, the most recent of the heretics. Yet, even in this book, *The Free Choice of the Will*, which was not written against them, since they were not yet in existence, but against the Manichees on the subject of free will, I did not altogether pass over in silence this grace of God which they attempt to destroy by their base blasphemies. As a matter of fact, I stated in the second book: "... not only the great but even the least goods exist through Him alone from whom all good things come, namely, from God." And I added shortly afterwards: "... these virtues which enable us to live rightly are great goods whereas all forms of bodily beauty are the least goods, since we can live rightly without them. But the powers of the soul, without which there can be no right living, are intermediate goods. No one

puts virtues to bad use, since the function of virtue is the good use of those things which we can also put to bad use. No one makes bad use of what he puts to good use. Accordingly, the vast liberality of God's goodness has brought into existence not only the great, but also the intermediate and least goods. His goodness is more to be praised for the great than for the intermediate goods, and more for the intermediate than for the least goods, but still to be praised more for all of them than if He had not given them existence at all" (2.19.50). And in another place: "Only make sure to hold firm to your religious conviction that you know of no good, either by the senses, or by the intellect, or in any other way, that does not come from God" (2.20.54). Again, in another place, I stated: "But, since man cannot rise of his own will as he fell of his own will, the right hand of God, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, is outstretched to us from above. Let us embrace Him with a strong faith, await Him with a sure hope, and love Him with an ardent charity" (*ibid.*).

5. Again, in the third book, following the words which, as I mentioned, Pelagius took for his own use from my works—" . . . for how can anyone sin where he cannot possibly be on his guard? But sins are committed, and therefore it is possible for one to be on his guard" (3.18.50)—I went on to say: "And yet there are things done even from ignorance which are condemned and judged as deserving of correction, as we read on the authority of the Sacred Writers. For example, the Apostle says: 'I obtained mercy, because I acted in ignorance.' And the Prophet says: 'Remember not the deeds of my youth and of my ignorance.' Actions performed of necessity are blameworthy when a man has the will to do right and cannot do so. Hence the words of the Apostle: 'For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, I do'; and, 'To will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not'; and, 'The flesh

lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. For these things are contrary one to another, so that you do not what things you will.' But all these things are the lot of men who come to exist from the time of man's condemnation to death; for if this is not a punishment for man, but is something natural, then there is no sin. If man does not depart from the natural condition in which he was made, which cannot be improved upon, then, in doing these things, he is only acting as he should. But if man were good, he would be in a different condition. But because he exists the way he does, he is not good now and does not have it in his power to become good, either because he does not see what kind of man he ought to be, or, though seeing this, he is unable to become what he sees he ought to be. Can there be any doubt that this is a punishment? Now every punishment, if just, is a punishment for sin, and is called a penalty. But if the punishment is unjust, and there is no doubt that it is a punishment, then it has been inflicted on man by some ruler who is unjust. Besides, since only a fool would doubt the omnipotence and justice of God, this is a just penalty and is inflicted as punishment for some kind of sin. For no unjust ruler could ever steal man from God, unknown to Him, or wrest him from God against His will, as if God were too weak and were so subject to threats of violence that this ruler might afflict man with unjust punishment. It remains, then, that this is a just punishment arising from man's condemnation" (3.18.51). And, in another place: "But to accept falsity for truth, so as to err unwillingly, and to be unable to refrain from lustful acts through the resistance of carnal habits, these are not of man's nature as he originally existed, but are a punishment of man inflicted after his condemnation. When we speak of the will's freedom to do what is right, we are speaking, of course, of that freedom with which man was created" (3.18.52).

6. See! Long before the Pelagian heresy arose, we carried on this discussion as if we were already engaged in debate

against the Pelagians. For we stated that while all things good—great, intermediate, and least—are from God, free will is found among the intermediate goods, because we can also make bad use of it; yet, it is a kind of good without which we cannot live a good life. The good use of the will is already virtue, and virtue is found among the great goods which no one can put to a bad use. And, since we said that all goods, great, intermediate, and least, are from God, it follows that the good use of the will, which is virtue, is also from God and is numbered among the great goods. Mention was then made of the misery, inflicted in all justice upon sinners, from which they are freed by God's grace, for man could fall of himself, that is, by his free will, but could not rise again. Ignorance and difficulty, which all men suffer from the moment of birth, belong to that misery arising from man's just condemnation, and no one is freed from this evil except by the grace of God. Through their denial of original sin, the Pelagians refuse to admit that this misery derives from a just condemnation. Nevertheless, even though ignorance and difficulty were the original and natural condition of man, God should not be blamed but praised, as I argued in that same third book. This discussion must be regarded as directed against the Manichees, who do not accept the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament, where original sin is recounted. And these have the wicked effrontery to contend that whatever we read about original sin in the Letters of the Apostles has been inserted by corrupters of the Scriptures, as if it were something the Apostles never said. But against the Pelagians we must defend what is set forth in both parts of the Scripture, which they profess to accept.

This work opens with the words: "Tell me, please, whether God is not the cause of evil."

