

On Man's Perfection in Righteousness

By Saint Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)

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Augustin to his [holy](#) brethren and fellow-[bishops](#) Eutropius and Paulus.

Chapter 1

Your [love](#), which in both of you is so great and so [holy](#) that it is a delight to [obey](#) its commands, has laid me under an obligation to reply to some definitions which are said to be the work of Cœlestius; for so runs the title of the paper which you have given me, "The definitions, so it is said, of Cœlestius." As for this title, I take it that it is not his, but theirs who have brought this work from [Sicily](#), where Cœlestius is said not to be,—although many there make boastful pretension of holding views like his, and, to use the apostle's word, "being themselves deceived, lead others also astray." [2 Timothy 3:13](#) That these views are, however, his, or those of some associates of his, we, too, can well [believe](#). For the above-mentioned brief definitions, or rather propositions, are by no means at variance with his opinion, such as I have seen it expressed in another work, of which he is the undoubted author. There was therefore good reason, I think, for the report which those brethren, who brought these tidings to us, heard in [Sicily](#), that Cœlestius taught or wrote such opinions. I should like, if it were possible, so to meet the obligation imposed on me by your brotherly kindness, that I, too, in my own answer should be equally brief. But unless I set forth also the propositions which I answer, who will be able to form a judgment of the value of my answer? Still I will try to the best of my ability, assisted, too, by God's mercy, by your own [prayers](#), so to conduct the discussion as to keep it from running to an unnecessary length.

Chapter 2

(1) The First Breviate of Cœlestius

"First of all," says he, "he must be asked who denies man's ability to live without [sin](#), what every sort of [sin](#) is,—is it such as can be avoided? or is it unavoidable? If it is unavoidable, then it is not [sin](#); if it can be avoided, then a man can live without the [sin](#) which can be avoided. No reason or [justice](#) permits us to designate as [sin](#) what cannot in any way be avoided." Our answer to this is, that [sin](#) can be avoided, if our corrupted nature be healed by God's [grace](#), through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#). For, in so far as it is not sound, in so far does it either through blindness fail to see, or through weakness fail to accomplish, that which it ought to do; "for the flesh [lusts](#) against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," [Galatians 5:17](#) so that a man does not do the things which he would.

(2) The Second Breviate

"We must next ask," he says, "whether [sin](#) comes from will, or from necessity? If from necessity, it is not [sin](#); if from will, it can be avoided." We answer as before; and in order that we may be healed, we [pray](#) to Him to whom it is said in the psalm: "Lead Thou me out of my necessities."

(3) The Third Breviate

"Again we must ask," he says, "what [sin](#) is,—natural? or accidental? If natural, it is not [sin](#); if accidental, it is separable; and if it is separable, it can be avoided; and because it can be avoided, man can be without that which can be avoided." The answer to this is, that [sin](#) is not natural; but nature (especially in that corrupt state from which we have become by nature "children of [wrath](#)" [Ephesians 2:3](#)) has too little determination of will to avoid [sin](#), unless assisted and healed by God's [grace](#) through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(4) The Fourth Breviate

"We must ask, again," he says, "What is [sin](#),—an act, or a thing? If it is a thing, it must have an author; and if it be said to have an author, then another besides God will seem to be introduced as the author of a thing. But if it is impious to say this, we are driven to confess that every [sin](#) is an act, not a thing. If therefore it is an act, for this very reason, because it is an act, it can be avoided." Our reply is, that [sin](#) no [doubt](#) is called an act, and is such, not a thing. But likewise in the body, lameness for the same reason is an act, not a thing, since it is the foot itself, or the body, or the man who walks lame because of an injured foot, that is the thing; but still the man cannot avoid the lameness, unless his foot be cured. The same change may take place in the inward man, but it is by God's [grace](#), through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#). The defect itself which causes the lameness of the man is neither the foot, nor the body, nor the man, nor indeed the lameness itself; for there is of course no lameness when there is no walking, although there is nevertheless the defect which causes the lameness whenever there is an attempt to walk. Let him therefore ask, what name must be given to this defect,—would he have it called a thing, or an act, or rather a bad property in the thing, by which the deformed act comes into [existence](#)? So in the inward man the [soul](#) is the thing, theft is an act, and [avarice](#) is the defect, that is, the property by which the [soul](#) is [evil](#), even when it does nothing in gratification of its [avarice](#), even when it hears the prohibition, "You shall not [covet](#)," [Exodus 20:17](#) and censures itself, and yet remains avaricious. By [faith](#), however, it receives renovation; in other words, it is healed day by day, [2 Corinthians 4:16](#) —yet only by God's [grace](#) through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#).

Chapter 3

(5) The Fifth Breviate

"We must again," he says, "inquire whether a man ought to be without [sin](#). Beyond [doubt](#) he ought. If he ought, he is able; if he is not able, then he ought not. Now if a man ought not to be without [sin](#), it follows that he ought to be with [sin](#),—and then it ceases to be [sin](#) at all, if it is determined that it is owed. Or if it is absurd to say this, we are [obliged](#) to confess that man ought to be without [sin](#); and it is clear that his obligation is not more than his ability." We frame our answer with the same illustration that we employed in our previous reply. When we see a lame man who has the opportunity of being cured of his lameness, we of course have a right to say: "That man ought not to be lame; and if he ought, he is able." And yet whenever he wishes he is not immediately able; but only after he has been cured by the application of the remedy, and the medicine has assisted his will. The same thing takes place in the inward man in relation to [sin](#) which is its lameness, by the [grace](#) of Him who "came not to call the righteous, but sinners;" [Matthew 9:13](#) since "the whole need not the physician, but only they that be sick." [Matthew 9:12](#)

(6) The Sixth Breviate

"Again," he says, "we have to inquire whether man is commanded to be without [sin](#); for either he is not able, and then he is not commanded; or else because he is commanded, he is able. For why should that be commanded which cannot at all be done?" The answer is, that man is most wisely commanded to walk with right steps, on purpose that, when he has discovered his own inability to do even this, he may seek the remedy which is provided for the inward man to cure the lameness of [sin](#), even the [grace](#) of [God](#), through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#).

(7) The Seventh Breviate

"The next question we shall have to propose," he says, "is, whether God wishes that man be without [sin](#). Beyond [doubt](#) God wishes it; and no [doubt](#) he has the ability. For who is so foolhardy as to hesitate to [believe](#) that to be possible, which he has no [doubt](#) about God's wishing?" This is the answer. If God wished not that man should be without [sin](#), He would not have sent His Son without [sin](#), to heal men of their [sins](#). This takes place in [believers](#) who are being renewed day by day, [2 Corinthians 4:16](#) until their righteousness becomes perfect, like fully restored health.

(8) The Eighth Breviate

"Again, this question must be asked," he says, "how God wishes man to be,—with [sin](#), or without [sin](#)? Beyond [doubt](#), He does not wish him to be with [sin](#). We must reflect how great would be the impious [blasphemy](#) for it to be said that man has it in his power to be with [sin](#), which God does not wish; and for it to be denied that he has it in his power to be without [sin](#), which God wishes: just as if God had created any man for such a result as this,—that he should be able to be what He would not have him, and unable to be what He would have him; and that he should lead an [existence](#) contrary to His [will](#), rather than one which should be in accordance therewith." This has been in fact already answered; but I see that it is necessary for me to make here an additional remark, that we are saved

by hope. "But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

[Romans 8:24-25](#) Full righteousness, therefore, will only then be reached, when fulness of health is attained; and this fulness of health shall be when there is fulness of [love](#), for "[love](#) is the fulfilling of the law;" [Romans 13:10](#) and then shall come fulness of [love](#), when "we shall see Him even as He is." [1 John 3:2](#) Nor will any addition to [love](#) be possible more, when [faith](#) shall have reached the fruition of sight.

Chapter 4

(9) The Ninth Breviate

"The next question we shall require to be solved," says he, "is this: By what means is it brought about that man is with [sin](#)?—by the necessity of nature, or by the freedom of choice? If it is by the necessity of nature, he is blameless; if by the freedom of choice, then the question arises, from whom he has received this freedom of choice. No [doubt](#), from [God](#). Well, but that which God bestows is certainly good. This cannot be gainsaid. On what principle, then, is a thing [proved](#) to be good, if it is more prone to [evil](#) than to good? For it is more prone to [evil](#) than to good if by means of it man can be with [sin](#) and cannot be without [sin](#)." The answer is this: It came by the freedom of choice that man was with [sin](#); but a penal corruption closely followed thereon, and out of the liberty produced necessity. Hence the cry of [faith](#) to [God](#), "Lead Thou me out of my necessities." With these necessities upon us, we are either unable to understand what we want, or else (while having the wish) we are not strong enough to accomplish what we have come to understand. Now it is just liberty itself that is promised to [believers](#) by the Liberator. "If the [Son](#)," says He, "shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." [John 8:38](#) For, vanquished by the [sin](#) into which it fell by its volition, nature has lost liberty. Hence another scripture says, "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." [2 Peter 2:19](#) Since therefore "the whole need not the physician, but only they that be sick;" [Matthew 9:12](#) so likewise it is not the free that need the Deliverer, but only the enslaved. Hence the cry of [joy](#) to Him for deliverance, "You have saved my [soul](#) from the straits of necessity." For [true](#) liberty is also real health; and this would never have been lost, if the will had remained good. But because the will has [sinned](#), the hard necessity of having [sin](#) has pursued the sinner; until his infirmity be wholly healed, and such freedom be regained, that there must needs be, on the one hand, a permanent will to live happily, and, on the other hand, a [voluntary](#) and [happy](#) necessity of living virtuously, and never sinning.

(10) The Tenth Breviate

"Since God made man good," he says, "and, besides making him good, further commanded him to do good, how impious it is for us to hold that man is [evil](#), when he was neither made so, nor so commanded; and to deny him the ability of being good, although he was both made so, and commanded to act so!" Our answer here is: Since then it was not man himself, but [God](#), who made man good; so also is it [God](#), and not man himself, who remakes him to be good, while liberating him from the [evil](#) which he

himself did upon his wishing, believing, and invoking such a deliverance. But all this is effected by the renewal day by day of the inward man, [2 Corinthians 4:16](#) by the [grace](#) of God through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), with a view to the outward man's resurrection at the last day to an [eternity](#) not of punishment, but of life.

Chapter 5

(11) The Eleventh Breviate

"The next question which must be put," he says, "is, in how many ways all [sin](#) is manifested? In two, if I mistake not: if either those things are done which are forbidden, or those things are not done which are commanded. Now, it is just as certain that all things which are forbidden are able to be avoided, as it is that all things which are commanded are able to be effected. For it is vain either to forbid or to enjoin that which cannot either be guarded against or accomplished. And how shall we deny the possibility of [man's](#) being without [sin](#), when we are compelled to admit that he can as well avoid all those things which are forbidden, as do all those which are commanded?" My answer is, that in the [Holy Scriptures](#) there are many divine precepts, to mention the whole of which would be too laborious; but the Lord, who on earth consummated and abridged His word, expressly declared that the law and the [prophets](#) hung on two commandments, [Matthew 22:40](#) that we might understand that whatever else has been enjoined on us by God ends in these two commandments, and must be referred to them: "You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your [soul](#), and with all your mind;" [Matthew 22:37](#) and "You shall [love](#) your neighbour as yourself." [Matthew 22:39](#) "On these two commandments," says He, "hang all the law and the [prophets](#)." [Matthew 22:40](#) Whatever, therefore, we are by God's law forbidden, and whatever we are bidden to do, we are forbidden and bidden with the direct object of fulfilling these two commandments. And perhaps the general prohibition is, "You shall not [covet](#);" [Exodus 20:27](#) and the general precept, "You shall [love](#)." [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) Accordingly the [Apostle Paul](#), in a certain place, briefly embraced the two, expressing the prohibition in these words, "Be not conformed to this world," [Romans 12:2](#) and the command in these, "But be transformed by the renewing of your mind." [Romans 12:2](#) The former falls under the negative precept, not to [covet](#); the latter under the positive one, to [love](#). The one has reference to continence, the other to righteousness. The one enjoins avoidance of [evil](#); the other, pursuit of good. By eschewing [covetousness](#) we put off the old man, and by showing [love](#) we put on the new. But no man can be continent unless God endow him with the gift; [Wisdom 8:21](#) nor is God's [love](#) shed abroad in our hearts by our own selves, but by the [Holy Ghost](#) that is given to us. [Romans 5:5](#) This, however, takes place day after day in those who advance by willing, believing, and [praying](#), and who, "forgetting those things which are behind, reach forth unto those things which are before." [Philippians 3:13](#) For the reason why the law inculcates all these precepts is, that when a man has failed in fulfilling them, he may not be swollen with [pride](#), and so exalt himself, but may in very weariness betake himself to [grace](#). Thus the law fulfils its office as "schoolmaster," so terrifying the man as "to lead him to [Christ](#)," to give Him his [love](#). [Galatians 3:24](#)

Chapter 6

(12) The Twelfth Breviate

"Again the question arises," he says, "how it is that man is unable to be without [sin](#),—by his will, or by nature? If by nature, it is not [sin](#); if by his will, then will can very easily be changed by will." We answer by reminding him how he ought to reflect on the extreme presumption of saying—not simply that it is possible (for this no [doubt](#) is undeniable, when God's [grace](#) comes in aid), but—that it is "*very easy*" for will to be changed by will; whereas the apostle says, "The flesh [lusts](#) against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that you do not the things that you would." [Galatians 5:17](#) He does not say, "These are contrary the one to the other, so that you will not do the things that you can," but, "so that you do not the things that you would." How happens it, then, that the [lust](#) of the flesh which of course is culpable and corrupt, and is nothing else than the desire for [sin](#), as to which the same apostle instructs us not to let it "reign in our mortal body;" [Romans 6:12](#) by which expression he shows us plainly enough that that must have an [existence](#) in our mortal body which must not be permitted to hold a dominion in it;—how happens it, I say, that such [lust](#) of the flesh has not been changed by that will, which the apostle clearly implied the [existence](#) of in his words, "So that you do not the things that you *would*," if so be that the will can so easily be changed by will? Not that we, indeed, by this argument throw the blame upon the nature either of the [soul](#) or of the body, which God created, and which is wholly good; but we say that it, having been corrupted by its own will, cannot be made whole without the [grace](#) of [God](#).

(13) The Thirteenth Breviate

"The next question we have to ask," says he, "is this: If man cannot be without [sin](#), whose fault is it,—man's own, or some one's else? If man's own, in what way is it his fault if he is not that which he is unable to be?" We reply, that it is man's fault that he is not without [sin](#) on this account, because it has by man's sole will come to pass that he has come into such a necessity as cannot be overcome by man's sole will.

(14) The Fourteenth Breviate

"Again the question must be asked," he says, "If man's nature is [good](#), as nobody but [Marcion](#) or Manichæus will venture to deny, in what way is it good if it is impossible for it to be free from [evil](#)? For that all [sin](#) is [evil](#) who can gainsay?" We answer, that man's nature is both good, and is also able to be free from [evil](#). Therefore do we earnestly [pray](#), "Deliver us from [evil](#)." [Matthew 6:13](#) This deliverance, indeed, is not fully wrought, so long as the [soul](#) is oppressed by the body, which is hastening to corruption. [Wisdom 9:15](#) This process, however, is being effected by [grace](#) through [faith](#), so that it may be said by and by, "O death, where is your struggle? Where is your sting, O death? The sting of death is [sin](#), and the strength of [sin](#) is the law;" [1 Corinthians 15:35-36](#) because the law

by prohibiting [sin](#) only increases the desire for it, unless the [Holy Ghost](#) spreads abroad that [love](#), which shall then be full and perfect, when we shall see face to face.

(15) The Fifteenth Breviate

"And this, moreover, has to be said," he says: "[God](#) is certainly righteous; this cannot be denied. But God imputes every [sin](#) to man. This too, I suppose, must be allowed, that whatever shall not be imputed as [sin](#) is not [sin](#). Now if there is any [sin](#) which is unavoidable, how is God said to be righteous, when He is supposed to impute to any man that which cannot be avoided?" We reply, that long ago was it declared in opposition to the [proud](#), "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not [sin](#)." Now He does not impute it to those who say to Him in [faith](#), "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." [Matthew 6:12](#) And [justly](#) does He withhold this imputation, because that is just which He says: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." [Matthew 7:2](#) That, however, is [sin](#) in which there is either not the [love](#) which ought to be, or where the [love](#) is less than it ought to be,—whether it can be avoided by the human will or not; because when it can be avoided, the man's present will does it, but if it cannot be avoided his past will did it; and yet it can be avoided,—not, however, when the [proud](#) will is lauded, but when the [humble](#) one is assisted.

Chapter 7

(16) The Sixteenth Breviate

After all these disputations, their author introduces himself in person as arguing with another, and represents himself as under examination, and as being addressed by his examiner: "Show me the man who is without [sin](#)." He answers: "I show you one who is able to be without [sin](#)." His examiner then says to him: "And who is he?" He answers: "You are the man." "But if," he adds, "you were to say, 'I, at any rate, cannot be without [sin](#),' then you must answer me, 'Whose fault is that?' If you then were to say, 'My own fault,' you must be further asked, 'And how is it your fault, if you cannot be without [sin](#)?' He again represents himself as under examination, and thus accosted: "Are you yourself without [sin](#), who say that a man can be without [sin](#)?" And he answers: "Whose fault is it that I am not without [sin](#)? But if," continues he, "he had said in reply, 'The fault is your own;' then the answer would be, 'How *my* fault, when I am unable to be without [sin](#)?' Now our answer to all this running argument is, that no controversy ought to have been raised between them about such words as these; because he nowhere ventures to affirm that a man (either any one else, or himself) is without [sin](#), but he merely said in reply that he *can be*,—a position which we do not ourselves deny. Only the question arises, when can he, and through whom can he? If at the present time, then by no faithful [soul](#) which is enclosed within the body of this death must this [prayer](#) be offered, or such words as these be spoken, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," [Matthew 6:12](#) since in [holy baptism](#) all past debts have been already forgiven. But whoever tries to persuade us that such a [prayer](#) is not proper for faithful members of [Christ](#), does in fact acknowledge nothing else than that he is not himself a [Christian](#). If, again, it is through himself that a man is able to live without [sin](#), then did Christ die in vain. But "Christ is not dead in

vain." No man, therefore, can be without [sin](#), even if he wish it, unless he be assisted by the [grace](#) of God through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#). And that this perfection may be attained, there is even now a training carried on in growing [[Christians](#),] and there will be by all means a completion made, after the conflict with death is spent, and [love](#), which is now cherished by the operation of [faith](#) and hope, shall be perfected in the fruition of sight and possession.

Chapter 8

(17) It is One Thing to Depart from the Body, Another Thing to Be Liberated from the Body of This Death

He next proposes to establish his point by the testimony of [Holy Scripture](#). Let us carefully observe what kind of defence he makes. "There are passages," says he, "which prove that man is commanded to be without [sin](#)." Now our answer to this is: Whether such commands are given is not at all the point in question, for the fact is clear enough; but whether the thing which is evidently commanded be itself at all possible of accomplishment in the body of this death, wherein "the flesh [lusts](#) against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would." [Galatians 5:17](#) Now from this body of death not every one is liberated who ends the present life, but only he who in this life has received [grace](#), and given [proof](#) of not receiving it in vain by spending his days in good works. For it is plainly one thing to depart from the body, which all [men](#) are [obliged](#) to do in the last day of their present life, and another to be delivered from the body of this death,—which God's [grace](#) alone, through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), imparts to His faithful [saints](#). It is after this life, indeed, that the reward of perfection is bestowed, but only upon those by whom in their present life has been acquired the merit of such a recompense. For no one, after going hence, shall arrive at fulness of righteousness, unless, while here, he shall have run his course by hungering and thirsting after it. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." [Matthew 5:6](#)

(18) The Righteousness of This Life Comprehended in Three Parts,—Fasting, Almsgiving, and Prayer

As long, then, as we are "absent from the Lord, we walk by [faith](#), not by sight;" [2 Corinthians 5:6](#) whence it is said, "The just shall live by [faith](#)." [Habakkuk 2:4](#) Our righteousness in this pilgrimage is this—that we press forward to that perfect and full righteousness in which there shall be perfect and full [love](#) in the sight of His [glory](#); and that now we hold to the rectitude and perfection of our course, by "keeping under our body and bringing it into subjection," [1 Corinthians 9:27](#) by doing our [alms](#) cheerfully and heartily, while bestowing kindnesses and forgiving the trespasses which have been committed against us, and by "continuing instant in [prayer](#);" [Romans 12:12](#) —and doing all this with sound doctrine, whereon are built a [right faith](#), a firm hope, and a pure charity. This is now our righteousness, in which we pass through our course hungering and thirsting after the perfect and full righteousness, in order that we may hereafter be

satisfied therewith. Therefore our Lord in the [Gospel](#) (after saying, "Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them," [Matthew 6:1](#)) in order that we should not measure our course of life by the limit of human [glory](#), declared in his exposition of righteousness itself that there is none except there be these three,—[fasting](#), [alms](#), [prayers](#). Now in *the fasting* He indicates the entire subjugation of the body; in *the alms*, all kindness of will and deed, either by giving or forgiving; and in *prayers* He implies all the rules of a [holy](#) desire. So that, although by the subjugation of the body a check is given to that concupiscence, which ought not only to be bridled but to be put altogether out of [existence](#) (and which will not be found at all in that state of perfect righteousness, where [sin](#) shall be absolutely excluded),—yet it often exerts its immoderate desire even in the use of things which are allowable and right. In that real beneficence in which the just man consults his neighbour's welfare, things are sometimes done which are prejudicial, although it was thought that they would be advantageous. Sometimes, too, through infirmity, when the amount of the kindness and trouble which is expended either falls short of the necessities of the objects, or is of little use under the circumstances, then there steals over us a disappointment which tarnishes that "cheerfulness" which secures to the "giver" the approbation of [God](#), [2 Corinthians 9:7](#) This trail of sadness, however, is the greater or the less, as each man has made more or less progress in his kindly purposes. If, then, these considerations, and such as these, be duly weighed, we are only right when we say in our [prayers](#), "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." [Matthew 6:12](#) But what we say in our [prayers](#) we must carry into act, even to loving our very enemies; or if any one who is still a babe in Christ fails as yet to reach this point, he must at any rate, whenever one who has trespassed against him repents and craves his pardon, exercise forgiveness from the bottom of his heart, if he would have his heavenly Father listen to his [prayer](#)

(19) The Commandment of Love Shall Be Perfectly Fulfilled in the Life to Come

And in this [prayer](#), unless we choose to be contentious, there is placed before our view a mirror of sufficient brightness in which to behold the life of the righteous, who live by [faith](#), and finish their course, although they are not without [sin](#). Therefore they say, "Forgive us," because they have not yet arrived at the end of their course. Hence the apostle says, "Not as if I had already attained, either were already perfect. . . Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of [God](#) in [Christ Jesus](#). Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." [Philippians 3:12-15](#) In other words, let us, as many as are running perfectly, be thus resolved, that, being not yet perfected, we pursue our course to perfection along the way by which we have thus far run perfectly, in order that "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part may be done away;" [1 Corinthians 13:10](#) that is, may cease to be but in part any longer, but become whole and complete. For to [faith](#) and hope shall succeed at once the very substance itself, no longer to be [believed](#) in and hoped for, but to be seen and grasped. Love, however, which is the greatest among the three, is not to be superseded, but increased and fulfilled,—contemplating in full vision what it used to see by [faith](#), and acquiring in actual fruition

what it once only embraced in hope. Then in all this plenitude of charity will be fulfilled the commandment, "You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your [soul](#), and with all your mind." For while there remains any remnant of the [lust](#) of the flesh, to be kept in check by the rein of continence, God is by no means loved with all one's [soul](#). For the flesh does not [lust](#) without the [soul](#); although it is the flesh which is said to [lust](#), because the [soul lusts](#) carnally. In that perfect state the just man shall live absolutely without any [sin](#), since there will be in his members no law warring against the law of his [mind](#), [Romans 7:23](#) but wholly will he [love God](#), with all his heart, with all his [soul](#), and with all his mind [Matthew 22:37](#) which is the first and chief commandment. For why should not such perfection be enjoined on man, although in this life nobody may attain to it? For we do not rightly run if we do not [know](#) whither we are to run. But how could it be [known](#), unless it were pointed out in precepts? Let us therefore "so run that we may obtain." [1 Corinthians 9:23](#) For all who run rightly will obtain,—not as in the contest of the theatre, where all indeed run, but only one wins the prize. [1 Corinthians 9:24](#) Let us run, believing, hoping, longing; let us run, subjugating the body, cheerfully and heartily doing [alms](#),—in giving kindnesses and forgiving injuries, [praying](#) that our strength may be helped as we run; and let us so listen to the commandments which urge us to perfection, as not to neglect running towards the fulness of [love](#).

Chapter 9

(20) Who May Be Said to Walk Without Spot; Damnable and Venial Sins

Having premised these remarks, let us carefully attend to the passages which he whom we are answering has produced, as if we ourselves had quoted them. "In Deuteronomy, 'You shall be perfect before the Lord your God.' [Deuteronomy 18:13](#) Again, in the same book, 'There shall be not an imperfect man among the sons of [Israel](#).' [Deuteronomy 23:17](#) In like manner the Saviour says in the [Gospel](#), Be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' [Matthew 5:48](#) So the apostle, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, says: 'Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect.' [2 Corinthians 13:11](#) Again, to the Colossians he writes: 'Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in [Christ](#).' [Colossians 1:28](#) And so to the Philippians: 'Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that you may be blameless, and harmless, as the immaculate sons of [God](#).' [Philippians 2:14-15](#) In like manner to the Ephesians he writes: 'Blessed be the God and father of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be [holy](#) and blameless before Him.' [Ephesians 1:3-4](#) Then again to the Colossians he says in another passage: 'And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by [wicked](#) works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death; present yourselves [holy](#) and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight.' [Colossians 1:21-22](#) In the same strain, he says to the Ephesians: 'That He might present to Himself a [glorious](#) Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing but that it should be [holy](#) and without blemish.' [Ephesians 5:26-27](#) So in his first Epistle to the Corinthians he says 'Be sober, and righteous, and [sin](#) not.' [1 Corinthians 15:34](#) So again in the Epistle of St. Peter it is written: 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your [mind](#), be sober, and hope to the end, for

the [grace](#) that is offered to you: . . . as [obedient](#) children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former [lusts](#) in your [ignorance](#): but as He who has called you is [holy](#), so be [holy](#) in all manner of conversation; because it is written, [Leviticus 19:2](#) Be [holy](#); for I am [holy](#).' [1 Peter 1:13-16](#) Whence blessed David likewise says: 'O Lord, who shall sojourn in Your tabernacle, or who shall rest on Your [holy](#) mountain? He that walks without blame, and works righteousness.' And in another passage: 'I shall be blameless with Him.' And yet again: 'Blessed are the blameless in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.' To the same effect it is written in Solomon: 'The Lord loves [holy](#) hearts, and all they that are blameless are acceptable unto Him.'" [Proverbs 11:20](#) Now some of these passages exhort men who are running their course that they run perfectly; others refer to the end thereof, that men may reach forward to it as they run. He, however, is not unreasonably said to walk blamelessly, not who has already reached the end of his journey, but who is pressing on towards the end in a blameless manner, free from damnable [sins](#), and at the same time not neglecting to cleanse by almsgiving such [sins](#) as are venial. For the way in which we walk, that is, the road by which we reach perfection, is cleansed by clean [prayer](#). That, however, is a clean [prayer](#) in which we say in [truth](#), "Forgive us, as we ourselves forgive." [Matthew 6:12](#) So that, as there is nothing censured when blame is not imputed, we may hold on our course to perfection without censure, in a word, blamelessly; and in this perfect state, when we arrive at it at last, we shall find that there is absolutely nothing which requires cleansing by forgiveness.

Chapter 10

(21) To Whom God's Commandments are Grievous; And to Whom, Not. Why Scripture Says that God's Commandments are Not Grievous; A Commandment is a Proof of the Freedom Of Man's Will; Prayer is a Proof of Grace

He next quotes passages to show that God's commandments are not grievous. But who can be [ignorant](#) of the fact that, since the generic commandment is [love](#) (for "the end of the commandment is [love](#)," [1 Timothy 1:8](#) and "[love](#) is the fulfilling of the law" [Romans 13:10](#)), whatever is accomplished by the operation of [love](#), and not of [fear](#), is not grievous? They, however, are oppressed by the commandments of [God](#), who try to fulfil them by fearing. "But perfect [love](#) casts out [fear](#);" [1 John 4:18](#) and, in respect of the burden of the commandment, it not only takes off the pressure of its heavy weight, but it actually lifts it up as if on wings. In order, however, that this [love](#) may be possessed, even as far as it can possibly be possessed in the body of this death, the determination of will avails but little, unless it be helped by God's [grace](#) through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#). For as it must again and again be stated, it is "shed abroad in our hearts," not by our own selves, but "by the [Holy Ghost](#) which is given unto us." [Romans 5:5](#) And for no other reason does [Holy Scripture](#) insist on the [truth](#) that God's commandments are not grievous, than this, that the [soul](#) which finds them grievous may understand that it has not yet received those resources which make the Lord's commandments to be such as they are commended to us as being, even gentle and pleasant; and that it may [pray](#) with groaning of the will to obtain the gift of facility. For the man who says, "Let my heart be

blameless;" and, "Order Thou my steps according to Your word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me;" and, "Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven;" [Matthew 6:10](#) and, "Lead us not into [temptation](#);" [Matthew 6:13](#) and other [prayers](#) of a like purport, which it would be too long to particularize, does in effect offer up a [prayer](#) for ability to keep God's commandments. Neither, indeed, on the one hand, would any injunctions be laid upon us to keep them, if our own will had nothing to do in the matter; nor, on the other hand, would there be any room for [prayer](#), if our will were alone sufficient. God's commandments, therefore, are commended to us as being not grievous, in order that he to whom they are grievous may understand that he has not as yet received the gift which removes their grievousness; and that he may not think that he is really performing them, when he so keeps them that they are grievous to him. For it is a cheerful giver whom God loves. [2 Corinthians 9:7](#) Nevertheless, when a man finds God's commandments grievous, let him not be broken down by despair; let him rather oblige himself to seek, to ask, and to knock.

(22) Passages to Show that God's Commandments are Not Grievous

He afterwards adduces those passages which represent God as recommending His own commandments as not grievous: let us now attend to their testimony. "Because," says he, "[God's](#) commandments are not only not impossible, but they are not even grievous. In Deuteronomy: 'The Lord your God will again turn and [rejoice](#) over you for good, as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you shall hearken to the voice of the Lord your [God](#), to keep His commandments, and His ordinances, and His judgments, written in the book of this law; if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your [soul](#). For this command, which I give you this day, is not grievous, neither is it far from you: it is not in heaven, that you should say, Who will ascend into heaven, and obtain it for us, that we may hear and do it? neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who will cross over the sea, and obtain it for us, that we may hear and do it? The word is nigh you, in your mouth, and in your heart, and in your hands to do it.' [Deuteronomy 30:9-14](#) In the [Gospel](#) likewise the Lord says: 'Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your [souls](#). For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' [Matthew 11:28-30](#) So also in the Epistle of Saint John it is written: 'This is the [love](#) of [God](#), that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.'" [1 John 5:3](#) On hearing these testimonies out of the law, and the gospel, and the epistles, let us be built up unto that [grace](#) which those [persons](#) do not understand, who, "being [ignorant](#) of God's righteousness, and wishing to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of [God](#)." [Romans 10:3](#) For, if they understand not the passage of Deuteronomy in the sense that the [Apostle Paul](#) quoted it,—that "with the heart men [believe](#) unto righteousness, and with their mouth make confession unto [salvation](#);" [Romans 10:10](#) since "they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," [Matthew 9:12](#) —they certainly ought (by that very passage of the [Apostle John](#) which he quoted last to this effect: "This is the [love](#) of [God](#), that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous" [1 John 5:3](#)) to be admonished that God's commandment is not grievous to the [love](#) of [God](#), which is shed abroad in our hearts only by the [Holy Ghost](#), not by the determination of [man's](#) will by

attributing to which more than they ought, they are [ignorant](#) of God's righteousness. This [love](#), however, shall then be made perfect, when all [fear](#) of punishment shall be cut off.

Chapter 11

(23) Passages of Scripture Which, When Objected Against Him by the Catholics, Cœlestius Endeavours to Elude by Other Passages: the First Passage

After this he adduced the passages which are usually quoted against them. He does not attempt to explain these passages, but, by quoting what seem to be contrary ones, he has entangled the questions more tightly. "For," says he, "there are passages of Scripture which are in opposition to those who [ignorantly](#) suppose that they are able to destroy the liberty of the will, or the possibility of not sinning, by the authority of Scripture. For," he adds, "they are in the [habit](#) of quoting against us what [holy](#) Job said: 'Who is pure from uncleanness? Not one; even if he be an infant of only one day upon the earth.'" [Job 14:4-5](#) Then he proceeds to give a sort of answer to this passage by help of other quotations; as when Job himself said: "For although I am a righteous and blameless man, I have become a subject for mockery," [Job 12:4](#) —not understanding that a man may be called righteous, who has gone so far towards perfection in righteousness as to be very near it; and this we do not deny to have been in the power of many even in this life, when they walk in it by [faith](#).

(24) To Be Without Sin, and to Be Without Blame—How Differing

The same thing is affirmed in another passage, which he has quoted immediately afterwards, as spoken by the same Job: "Behold, I am very near my judgment, and I [know](#) that I shall be found righteous." [Job 13:18](#) Now this is the judgment of which it is said in another scripture: "And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday." But he does not say, I am already there; but, "I am very near." If, indeed, the judgment of his which he meant was not that which he would himself exercise, but that whereby he was to be judged at the last day, then in such judgment all will be found righteous who with sincerity [pray](#): "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." [Matthew 6:12](#) For it is through this forgiveness that they will be found righteous; on this account that whatever [sins](#) they have here incurred, they have blotted out by their deeds of charity. Whence the Lord says: "Give [alms](#); and, behold, all things are clean unto you." [Luke 11:41](#) For in the end, it shall be said to the righteous, when about to enter into the promised kingdom: "I was an hungered, and you gave me meat," [Matthew 25:35](#) and so forth. However, it is one thing to be without [sin](#), which in this life can only be predicated of the Only-begotten, and another thing to be without accusation, which might be said of many just [persons](#) even in the present life; for there is a certain measure of a good life, according to which even in this human intercourse there could no just accusation be possibly laid against him. For who can [justly](#) accuse the man who wishes [evil](#) to no one, and who faithfully does good to all he can, and never cherishes a wish to avenge himself on any man who does him wrong, so that he can [truly](#) say, "As we

forgive our debtors?" And yet by the very fact that he [truly](#) says, "Forgive, as we also forgive," he plainly admits that he is not without [sin](#).

(25)

Hence the force of the statement: "There was no [injustice](#) in my hands, but my [prayer](#) was pure." [Job 16:18](#) For the purity of his [prayer](#) arose from this circumstance, that it was not improper for him to ask forgiveness in [prayer](#), when he really bestowed forgiveness himself.

(26) Why Job Was So Great a Sufferer

And when he says concerning the Lord, "For many bruises has He inflicted upon me without a [cause](#)," [Job 9:17](#) observe that his words are not, He has inflicted *none with a [cause](#)*; but, "many without a [cause](#)." For it was not because of his manifold [sins](#) that these many bruises were inflicted on him, but in order to make trial of his patience. For on account of his [sins](#), indeed, without which, as he acknowledges in another passage, he was certainly not, he yet judges that he ought to have suffered less. [Job 6:2-3](#)

(27) Who May Be Said to Keep the Ways of the Lord; What It is to Decline and Depart from the Ways of the Lord

Then again, as for what he says, "For I have kept His ways, and have not turned aside from His commandments, nor will I depart from them;" [Job 23:11-12](#) he has kept God's ways who does not so turn aside as to forsake them, but makes progress by running his course therein; although, weak as he is, he sometimes stumbles or falls, onward, however, he still goes, sinning less and less until he reaches the perfect state in which he will [sin](#) no more. For in no other way could he make progress, except by keeping His ways. The man, indeed, who declines from these and becomes an [apostate](#) at last, is certainly not he who, although he has [sin](#), yet never ceases to persevere in fighting against it until he arrives at the home where there shall remain no more conflict with death. Well now, it is in our present struggle therewith that we are clothed with the righteousness in which we here live by [faith](#),—clothed with it as it were with a breastplate. [Ephesians 6:14](#) Judgment also we take on ourselves; and even when it is against us, we turn it round to our own behalf; for we become our own accusers and condemn our [sins](#): whence that scripture which says, "The righteous man accuses himself at the beginning of his speech." [Proverbs 18:17](#) Hence also he says: "I put on righteousness, and clothed myself with judgment like a mantle." [Job 29:14](#) Our vesture at present no [doubt](#) is wont to be armour for [war](#) rather than garments of peace, while concupiscence has still to be subdued; it will be different by and by, when our last enemy death shall be destroyed, [1 Corinthians 15:26](#) and our righteousness shall be full and complete, without an enemy to molest us more.

(28) When Our Heart May Be Said Not to Reproach Us; When Good is to Be Perfected

Furthermore, concerning these words of Job, "My heart shall not reproach me in all my life," [Job 27:6](#) we remark, that it is in this present life of ours, in which we live by [faith](#), that our heart does not reproach us, if the same [faith](#) whereby we [believe](#) unto righteousness does not neglect to rebuke our [sin](#). On this principle the apostle says: "The good that I would I do not; but the [evil](#) which I would not, that I do." [Romans 7:15](#) Now it is a good thing to avoid concupiscence, and this good the just man would, who lives by [faith](#); [Habakkuk 2:4](#) and still he does what he [hates](#), because he has concupiscence, although "he goes not after his [lusts](#);" [Sirach 18:30](#) if he has done this, he has himself at that time really done it, so as to yield to, and acquiesce in, and [obey](#) the desire of [sin](#). His heart then reproaches him, because it reproaches himself, and not his [sin](#) which dwells in him. But whensoever he suffers not [sin](#) to reign in his mortal body to [obey](#) it in the [lusts](#) thereof, [Romans 6:12](#) and yields not his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto [sin](#), [Romans 6:13](#) [sin](#) no [doubt](#) is present in his members, but it does not reign, because its desires are not [obeyed](#). Therefore, while he does that which he would not,—in other words, while he wishes not to [lust](#), but still [lusts](#),—he consents to the law that it is [good](#): [Romans 7:16](#) for what the law would, that he also wishes; because it is his desire not to indulge concupiscence, and the law expressly says, "You shall not [covet](#)." [Exodus 20:17](#) Now in that he wishes what the law also would have done, he no [doubt](#) consents to the law: but still he [lusts](#), because he is not without [sin](#); it is, however, no longer himself that does the thing, but the [sin](#) which dwells within him. Hence it is that "his heart does not reproach him in all his life;" that is, in his [faith](#), because the just man lives by [faith](#), so that his [faith](#) is his very life. He [knows](#), to be sure, that in himself dwells nothing good,—even in his flesh, which is the dwelling-place of [sin](#). By not consenting, however, to it, he lives by [faith](#), wherewith he also calls upon God to help him in his contest against [sin](#). Moreover, there is present to him to will that no [sin](#) at all should be in him, but then how to perfect this good is not present. It is not the mere "doing" of a good thing that is not present to him, but the "perfecting" of it. For in this, that he yields no consent, he does good; he does good again, in this, that he [hates](#) his own [lust](#); he does good also, in this, that he does not cease to give [alms](#); and in this, that he forgives the man who [sins](#) against him, he does good; and in this, that he asks forgiveness for his own trespasses,—sincerely avowing in his petition that he also forgives those who trespass against himself, and [praying](#) that he may not be led into [temptation](#), but be delivered from [evil](#),—he does good. But how to perfect the good is not present to him; it will be, however, in that final state, when the concupiscence which dwells in his members shall exist no more. His heart, therefore, does not reproach him, when it reproaches the [sin](#) which dwells in his members; nor can it reproach unbelief in him. Thus "in all his life,"—that is, in his [faith](#),—he is neither reproached by his own heart, nor convinced of not being without [sin](#). And Job himself acknowledges this concerning himself, when he says, "Not one of my [sins](#) has escaped You; You have sealed up my transgressions in a bag, and marked if I have done iniquity unawares." [Job 14:16-17](#) With regard, then, to the passages which he has adduced from the book of [holy](#) Job, we have shown to the best of our ability in what sense they ought to be taken. He, however, has failed to explain the meaning of the words which he has himself quoted from the same Job: "Who then is pure from uncleanness? Not one; even if he be an infant of only one day upon the earth." [Job 14:4-5](#)

Chapter 12

(29) The Second Passage. Who May Be Said to Abstain from Every Evil Thing

"They are in the [habit](#) of next quoting," says he, "the passage: 'Every man is a liar.'" But here again he offers no solution of words which are quoted against himself even by himself; all he does is to mention other apparently opposite passages before [persons](#) who are unacquainted with the sacred Scriptures, and thus to cast the word of God into conflict. This is what he says: "We tell them in answer, how in the book of Numbers it is said, 'Man is [true](#).' While of [holy](#) Job this eulogy is read: 'There was a certain man in the land of Ausis, whose name was Job; that man was [true](#), blameless, righteous, and godly, abstaining from every [evil](#) thing.'" [Job 1:1](#) I am surprised that he has brought forward this passage, which says that Job "abstained from every [evil](#) thing," wishing it to mean "abstained from every [sin](#);" because he has argued already that [sin](#) is not a thing, but an act. Let him recollect that, even if it is an act, it may still be called a thing. That man, however, abstains from every [evil](#) thing, who either never consents to the [sin](#), which is always with him, or, if sometimes hard pressed by it, is never oppressed by it; just as the wrestling champion, who, although he is sometimes caught in a fierce grapple, does not for all that lose the prowess which constitutes him the better man. We read, indeed, of a man without blame, of one without accusation; but we never read of one without [sin](#), except the [Son of man](#), who is also the only-begotten [Son of God](#).

(30) "Every Man is a Liar," Owing to Himself Alone; But "Every Man is True," By Help Only of the Grace of God

"Moreover," says he, "in Job himself it is said: 'And he maintained the [miracle](#) of a [true](#) man.' [Job 17:8](#) Again we read in Solomon, touching wisdom: 'Men that are liars cannot remember her, but men of [truth](#) shall be found in her.' [Sirach 15:8](#) Again in the Apocalypse: 'And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault.'" [Revelation 14:5](#) To all these statements we reply with a reminder to our opponents, of how a man may be called [true](#), through the [grace](#) and [truth](#) of [God](#), who is in himself without [doubt](#) a liar. Whence it is said: "Every man is a liar." As for the passage also which he has quoted in reference to Wisdom, when it is said, "Men of [truth](#) shall be found in her," we must observe that it is undoubtedly not "*in her*," but *in themselves* that men shall be found liars. Just as in another passage: "You were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the [Lord](#)," [Ephesians 5:8](#) —when he said, "You were darkness," he did not add, "in the Lord;" but after saying, "You are now light," he expressly added the phrase, "in the [Lord](#)," for they could not possibly be "light" in themselves; in order that "he who [glories](#) may [glory](#) in the Lord." [1 Corinthians 1:31](#) The "faultless" ones, indeed, in the Apocalypse, are so called because "no guile was found in their mouth." [Revelation 14:5](#) They did not say they had no [sin](#): if they had said this, they would deceive themselves, and the [truth](#) would not be in them; [1 John 1:8](#) and if the [truth](#) were not in them, guile and untruth would be found in their mouth. If, however, to avoid [envy](#), they said they were not without [sin](#), although they were sinless, then this very insincerity would be a lie, and the character given of them would be untrue: "In their mouth was found no guile." Hence indeed "they are without fault;" for as they have forgiven those who have done them wrong, so are they purified by God's forgiveness of themselves.

Observe now how we have to the best of our power explained in what sense the quotations he has in his own behalf advanced ought to be understood. But how the passage, "Every man is a liar," is to be interpreted, he on his part has altogether omitted to explain; nor is an explanation within his power, without a correction of the [error](#) which makes him [believe](#) that man can be [true](#) without the help of God's [grace](#), and merely by virtue of his own [free will](#).

Chapter 13

(31) The Third Passage. It is One Thing to Depart, and Another Thing to Have Departed, from All Sin. "There is None that Does Good,"—Of Whom This is to Be Understood

He has likewise propounded another question, as we shall proceed to show, but has failed to solve it; nay, he has rather rendered it more difficult, by first stating the testimony that had been quoted against him: "There is none that does good, no, not one;" and then resorting to seemingly contrary passages to show that there are [persons](#) who do good. This he succeeded, no [doubt](#), in doing. It is, however, one thing for a man not to do good, and another thing not to be without [sin](#), although he at the same time may do many [good](#) things. The passages, therefore, which he adduces are not really contrary to the statement that no person is without [sin](#) in this life. He does not, for his own part, explain in what sense it is declared that "there is none that does good, no, not one." These are his words: "Holy David indeed says, 'Hope in the Lord and be doing good.'" But this is a precept, and not an accomplished fact; and such a precept as is never kept by those of whom it is said, "There is none that does good, no, not one." He adds: "Holy Tobit also said, 'Fear not, my son, that we have to endure poverty; we shall have many blessings if we [fear God](#), and depart from all [sin](#), and do that which is [good](#).'" [Tobit 4:21](#) Most [true](#) indeed it is, that man shall have many blessings when he shall have departed from all [sin](#). Then no [evil](#) shall betide him; nor shall he have need of the [prayer](#), "Deliver us from [evil](#)." [Matthew 6:13](#) Although even now every man who progresses, advancing ever with an upright purpose, departs from all [sin](#), and becomes further removed from it as he approaches nearer to the fulness and perfection of the righteous state; because even concupiscence itself, which is [sin](#) dwelling in our flesh, never ceases to diminish in those who are making progress, although it still remains in their mortal members. It is one thing, therefore, to depart from all [sin](#),—a process which is even now in operation,—and another thing to have departed from all [sin](#), which shall happen in the state of future perfection. But still, even he who has departed already from [evil](#), and is continuing to do so, must be allowed to be a doer of good. How then is it said, in the passage which he has quoted and left unsolved, "There is none that does good, no, not one," unless that the Psalmist there censures some one nation, amongst whom there was not a man that did good, wishing to remain "children of [men](#)," and not sons of [God](#), by whose [grace](#) man becomes good, in order to do good? For we must suppose the Psalmist here to mean that "good" which he describes in the context, saying, "[God](#) looked down from heaven upon the children of [men](#), to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." Such good then as this, seeking after [God](#), there was not a man found who pursued it, no, not

one; but this was in that class of men which is [predestinated](#) to destruction. It was upon such that God looked down in His foreknowledge, and passed sentence.

Chapter 14

(32) The Fourth Passage. In What Sense God Only is Good. With God to Be Good and to Be Himself are the Same Thing

"They likewise," says he, "quote what the Saviour says: 'Why do you call me good? There is none good save one, that is, God?'" [Luke 18:19](#) This statement, however, he makes no attempt whatever to explain; all he does is to oppose to it sundry other passages which seem to contradict it, which he adduces to show that man, too, is [good](#). Here are his remarks: "We must answer this text with another, in which the same Lord says, 'A [good](#) man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth [good](#) things.' [Matthew 12:35](#) And again: 'He makes His sun to rise on the good and on the [evil](#).' [Matthew 5:45](#) Then in another passage it is written, 'For the [good](#) things are created from the beginning;' [Sirach 39:25](#) and yet again, 'They that are good shall dwell in the land.'" [Proverbs 2:21](#) Now to all this we must say in answer, that the passages in question must be understood in the same sense as the former one, "There is none good, save one, that is, God." Either because all [created](#) things, although God made them very good, are yet, when compared with their Creator, not good, being in fact incapable of any comparison with Him. For in a transcendent, and yet very proper sense, He said of Himself, "I Am that I Am." [Exodus 3:14](#) The statement therefore before us, "None is [good](#) save one, that is, [God](#)," is used in some such way as that which is said of John, "He was not that light;" [John 1:8](#) although the Lord calls him "a lamp," just as He says to His [disciples](#): "You are the light of the world: . . .neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel." [Matthew 5:14-15](#) Still, in comparison with that light which is "the [true](#) light which lights every man that comes into the world," [John 1:9](#) he was not light. Or else, because the very sons of God even, when compared with themselves as they shall hereafter become in their [eternal](#) perfection, are good in such a way that they still remain also [evil](#). Although I should not have dared to say this of them (for who would be so bold as to call them [evil](#) who have God for their Father?) unless the Lord had Himself said: "If you then, being [evil](#), [know](#) how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give [good](#) things to them that ask Him?" [Matthew 7:11](#) Of course, by applying to them the words, "your Father," He [proved](#) that they were already sons of [God](#); and yet at the same time He did not hesitate to say that they were "[evil](#)." Your author, however, does not explain to us how they are good, while yet "there is none good save one, that is, God." Accordingly the man who asked "what good thing he was to do," [Matthew 19:16](#) was admonished to seek Him [Luke 10:27-28](#) by whose [grace](#) he might be good; to whom also *to be good* is nothing else than *to be Himself*, because He is unchangeably good, and cannot be [evil](#) at all.

(33) The Fifth Passage.

"This," says he, "is another text of theirs: 'Who will boast that he has a pure heart?'" [Proverbs 20:9](#) And then he answered this with several passages, wishing to show that

there can be in man a pure heart. But he omits to inform us how the passage which he reported as quoted against himself must be taken, so as to prevent [Holy Scripture](#) seeming to be opposed to itself in this text, and in the passages by which he makes his answer. We for our part indeed tell him, in answer, that the clause, "Who will boast that he has a pure heart?" is a suitable sequel to the preceding sentence, "whenever a righteous king sits upon the throne." [Proverbs 20:8](#) For how great soever ever a man's righteousness may be, he ought to reflect and think, lest there should be found something blameworthy, which has escaped indeed his own notice, when that righteous King shall sit upon His throne, whose cognizance no [sins](#) can possibly escape, not even those of which it is said, "Who understands his transgressions?" "When, therefore, the righteous King shall sit upon His throne, . . . who will boast that he has a pure heart? or who will boldly say that he is pure from [sin](#)?" [Proverbs 20:8-9](#) Except perhaps those who wish to boast of their own righteousness, and not [glory](#) in the mercy of the Judge Himself.

Chapter 15

(34) The Opposing Passages

And yet the passages are [true](#) which he goes on to adduce by way of answer, saying: "The Saviour in the gospel declares, 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.' [Matthew 5:8](#) David also says, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His [holy](#) place? He that is innocent in his hands, and pure in his heart;' and again in another passage, 'Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good and upright in heart.' So also in Solomon: 'Riches are good unto him that has no [sin](#) on his [conscience](#);' [Sirach 13:24](#) and again in the same book, 'Leave off from [sin](#), and order your hands aright, and cleanse your heart from [wickedness](#).' [Sirach 38:10](#) So in the Epistle of John, 'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward [God](#); and whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of Him.'" [1 John 3:21-22](#) For all this is accomplished by the will, by the exercise of [faith](#), hope, and [love](#); by keeping under the body; by doing [alms](#); by forgiving injuries; by earnest [prayer](#); by supplicating for strength to advance in our course; by sincerely saying, "Forgive us, as we also forgive others," and "Lead us not into [temptation](#), but deliver us from [evil](#)." [Matthew 6:12-13](#) By this process, it is certainly brought about that our heart is cleansed, and all our [sin](#) taken away; and what the righteous King, when sitting on His throne, shall find concealed in the heart and uncleaned as yet, shall be remitted by His mercy, so that the whole shall be rendered sound and cleansed for seeing God. For "he shall have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy: yet mercy triumphs against judgment." [James 2:13](#) If it were not so, what hope could any of us have? "When, indeed, the righteous King shall sit upon His throne, who shall boast that he has a pure heart, or who shall boldly say that he is pure from [sin](#)?" Then, however, through His mercy shall the righteous, being by that time fully and perfectly cleansed, shine forth like the [glorious](#) sun in the kingdom of their Father. [Matthew 13:43](#)

(35) The Church Will Be Without Spot and Wrinkle After the Resurrection

Then shall the Church realize, fully and perfectly, the condition of "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," [Ephesians 5:27](#) because then also will it in a real sense be [glorious](#). For inasmuch as he added the epithet "[glorious](#)," when he said, "That He might present the Church to Himself, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," he signified sufficiently when the Church will be without spot, or wrinkle, or anything of this kind,—then of course when it shall be [glorious](#). Because it is not so much when the [Church](#) is involved in so many [evils](#), or amidst such offences, and in so great a mixture of very [evil](#) men, and amidst the heavy reproaches of the ungodly, that we ought to say that it is [glorious](#), because kings serve it,—a fact which only produces a more perilous and a sorer [temptation](#);—but then shall it rather be [glorious](#), when that event shall come to pass of which the apostle also speaks in the words, "When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in [glory](#)." [Colossians 3:4](#) For since the Lord Himself, in that form of a servant by which He united Himself as Mediator to the [Church](#), was not [glorified](#) except by the [glory](#) of His [resurrection](#) (whence it is said, "The Spirit was not yet given, because Christ was not yet [glorified](#)" [John 7:39](#)), how shall His Church be described as [glorious](#), before its resurrection? He cleanses it, therefore, now "by the laver of the water in the word," [Ephesians 5:26](#) washing away its past [sins](#), and driving off from it the dominion of [wicked angels](#); but then by bringing all its healthy powers to perfection, He makes it meet for that [glorious](#) state, where it shall shine without a spot or wrinkle. For "whom He did [predestinate](#), them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also [glorified](#)." [Romans 8:30](#) It was under this [mystery](#), as I suppose, that that was spoken, "Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be consummated," or perfected. [Luke 13:32](#) For He said this in the person of His body, which is His Church, putting *days* for distinct and appointed periods, which He also signified in "the third day" in His [resurrection](#).

(36) The Difference Between the Upright in Heart and the Clean in Heart

I suppose, too, that there is a difference between one who is upright in heart and one who is clean in heart. A man is upright in heart when he "reaches forward to those things which are before, forgetting those things which are behind" [Philippians 3:13](#) so as to arrive in a right course, that is, with [right faith](#) and purpose, at the perfection where he may dwell clean and pure in heart. Thus, in the psalm, the conditions ought to be severally bestowed on each separate character, where it is said, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His [holy](#) place? He that is innocent in his hands, and clean in his heart." He shall ascend, innocent in his hands, and stand, clean in his heart,—the one state in present operation, the other in its consummation. And of them should rather be understood that which is written: "Riches are good unto him that has no [sin](#) on his [conscience](#)." [Sirach 13:24](#) Then indeed shall accrue the good, or [true](#) riches, when all poverty shall have passed away; in other words, when all infirmity shall have been removed. A man may now indeed "leave off from [sin](#)," when in his onward course he departs from it, and is renewed day by day; and he may "order his hands," and direct them to works of mercy, and "cleanse his heart from all [wickedness](#)," [Sirach 38:10](#) —he may be so merciful that what remains may be forgiven him by free pardon. This indeed is the sound and suitable meaning, without any vain and empty boasting, of that which St.

John said: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of Him." [1 John 3:21-22](#) The warning which he clearly has addressed to us in this passage, is to beware lest our heart should reproach us in our very [prayers](#) and petitions; that is to say, lest, when we happen to resort to this [prayer](#), and say, "Forgive us, even as we ourselves forgive, we should have to feel compunction for not doing what we say, or should even lose boldness to utter what we fail to do, and thereby forfeit the confidence of faithful and earnest [prayer](#)."

Chapter 16

(37) The Sixth Passage

He has also adduced this passage of Scripture, which is very commonly quoted against his party: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and [not](#)." [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#) And he makes a pretence of answering it by other passages,—how, "the Lord says concerning [holy](#) Job, 'Have you considered my servant Job? For there is none like him upon earth, a man who is blameless, [true](#), a worshipper of [God](#), and abstaining from every [evil](#) thing.'" [Job 1:8](#) On this passage we have already made some remarks. But he has not even attempted to show us how, on the one hand, Job was absolutely sinless upon earth,—if the words are to bear such a sense; and, on the other hand, how that can be [true](#) which he has admitted to be in the [Scripture](#), "There is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and [not](#)." [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#)

Chapter 17

(38) The Seventh Passage. Who May Be Called Immaculate. How It is that in God's Sight No Man is Justified

"They also, says he, "quote the text: 'For in your sight shall no man living be justified.'" And his affected answer to this passage amounts to nothing else than the showing how texts of [Holy Scripture](#) seem to clash with one another, whereas it is our duty rather to demonstrate their agreement. These are his words: "We must confront them with this answer, from the testimony of the [evangelist](#) concerning [holy](#) Zacharias and [Elisabeth](#), when he says, 'And they were both righteous before [God](#), walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.'" [Luke 1:6](#) Now both these righteous [persons](#) had, of course, read amongst these very commandments the method of cleansing their own [sins](#). For, according to what is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews of "every [high priest](#) taken from among [men](#)," [Hebrews 5:1](#) Zacharias used no [doubt](#) to offer [sacrifices](#) even for his own [sins](#). The meaning, however, of the phrase "*blameless*," which is applied to him, we have already, as I suppose, sufficiently explained. "And," he adds, "the blessed apostle says, 'That we should be [holy](#), and without blame before Him.'" [Ephesians 1:4](#) This, according to him, is said that we should be so, if those [persons](#) are to be understood by "*blameless*" who are altogether without [sin](#). If, however, they are "*blameless*" who are without blame or censure, then it is impossible for us to deny that there have been, and still are, such [persons](#) even in this present life; for it does not follow

that a man is without [sin](#) because he has not a blot of accusation. Accordingly the apostle, when selecting ministers for ordination, does not say, "If any be *sinless*," for he would be unable to find any such; but he says, "If any be without accusation," [Titus 1:6](#) for such, of course, he would be able to find. But our opponent does not tell us how, in accordance with his views, we ought to understand the scripture, "For in Your sight shall no man living be justified." The meaning of these words is plain enough, receiving as it does additional light from the preceding clause: "Enter not," says the Psalmist, "into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified." It is judgment which he fears, therefore he desires that mercy which triumphs over judgment.

[James 2:13](#) For the meaning of the [prayer](#), "Enter not into judgment with Your servant," is this: "Judge me not according to Yourself," who art without [sin](#); "for in Your sight shall no man living be justified." This without [doubt](#) is understood as spoken of the present life, while the predicate "shall not be justified" has reference to that perfect state of righteousness which belongs not to this life.

Chapter 18

(39) The Eighth Passage. In What Sense He is Said Not to Sin Who is Born of God. In What Way He Who Sins Shall Not See Nor Know God

"They also quote," says he, "this passage, "If we say that we have no [sin](#), we deceive ourselves, and the [truth](#) is not in us." [1 John 1:8](#) And this very clear testimony he has endeavoured to meet with apparently contradictory texts, saying thus: "The same St. John in this very epistle says, "This, however, brethren, I say, that you [sin](#) not. Whosoever is born of God does not commit [sin](#); for his seed remains in him: and he cannot [sin](#)."

[1 John 3:9](#) Also elsewhere: 'Whosoever is born of God [not; because his being born of God preserves him, and the evil](#) one touches him not.' [1 John 5:18](#) And again in another passage, when speaking of the Saviour, he says: 'Since He was manifested to take away [sins](#), whosoever abides in Him [not: whosoever has not seen Him, neither known](#) Him.'

[1 John 3:5-6](#) And yet again: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of [God](#); and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we [know](#) that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that has this hope towards Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.'" [1 John 3:2-3](#) And yet, notwithstanding the [truth](#) of all these passages, that also is [true](#) which he has adduced, without, however, offering any explanation of it: "If we say that we have no [sin](#), we deceive ourselves, and the [truth](#) is not in us." [1 John 1:8](#) Now it follows from the whole of this, that in so far as we are born of God we abide in Him who appeared to take away [sins](#), that is, in [Christ](#), and [sin](#) not,—which is simply that "the inward man is renewed day by day;" [2 Corinthians 4:16](#) but in so far as we are born of that man "through whom [sin](#) entered into the world, and death by [sin](#), and so death passed upon all [men](#)," [Romans 5:12](#) we are not without [sin](#), because we are not as yet free from his infirmity, until, by that renewal which takes place from day to day (for it is in accordance with this that we were born of God), that infirmity shall be wholly repaired, wherein we were born from the first than, and in which we are not without [sin](#). While the remains of this infirmity abide in our inward man, however much they may be daily lessened in those who are advancing, "we deceive ourselves, and the [truth](#) is not in us, if we say that we have no [sin](#)." Now, however [true](#) it is that "whosoever

[has not seen Him, nor known Him](#)," [1 John 3:6](#) since with that vision and [knowledge](#), which shall be realized in actual sight, no one can in this life see and [know](#) Him; yet with that vision and [knowledge](#) which come of [faith](#), there may be many who commit [sin](#),—even apostates themselves,—who still have [believed](#) in Him some time or other; so that of none of these could it be said, according to the vision and [knowledge](#) which as yet come of [faith](#), that he has neither seen Him nor [known](#) Him. But I suppose it ought to be understood that it is the renewal which awaits perfection that sees and [knows](#) Him; whereas the infirmity which is destined to waste and ruin neither sees nor [knows](#) Him. And it is owing to the remains of this infirmity, of whatever amount, which remain firm in our inward man, that "we deceive ourselves, and have not the [truth](#) in us, when we say that we have no [sin](#)." Although, then, by the [grace](#) of renovation "we are the sons of [God](#)," yet by reason of the remains of infirmity within us "it does not appear what we shall be; only we [know](#) that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Then there shall be no more [sin](#), because no infirmity shall any longer remain within us or without us. "And every man that has this hope towards Him purifies himself, even as He is pure,"—purifies himself, not indeed by himself alone, but by believing in Him, and calling on Him who sanctifies His [saints](#); which sanctification, when perfected at last (for it is at present only advancing and growing day by day), shall take away from us for ever all the remains of our infirmity.

Chapter 19

(40) The Ninth Passage

"This passage, too," says he, "is quoted by them: 'It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.'" [Romans 9:16](#) And he observes that the answer to be given to them is derived from the same apostle's words in another passage: "Let him do what he will." [1 Corinthians 7:36](#) And he adds another passage from the Epistle to Philemon, where, speaking of Onesimus, [St. [Paul](#) says]: "Whom I would have retained with me, that in your stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. But without your mind would I do nothing; that your benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.' Likewise, in Deuteronomy: 'Life and death has He set before you, and good and [evil](#): . . .choose life, that you may live.' So in the book of Solomon: 'God from the beginning made man, and left him in the hand of His counsel; and He added for him commandments and precepts: if you will—to perform acceptable faithfulness for the time to come, they shall save you. He has set fire and water before you: stretch forth your hand unto whether you will. Before man are good and [evil](#), and life and death; poverty and [honour](#) are from the Lord God.' [Sirach 15:14-17](#) So again in Isaiah we read: 'If you be willing, and hearken unto me, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you be not willing, and hearken not to me, the sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken this.'" [Isaiah 1:19-20](#) Now with all their efforts of disguise they here betray their purpose; for they plainly attempt to controvert the [grace](#) and mercy of [God](#), which we desire to obtain whenever we offer the [prayer](#), "Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven;" [Matthew 6:10](#) or again this, "Lead us not into [temptation](#), but deliver us from [evil](#)." [Matthew 6:13](#) For indeed why do we present such petitions in earnest supplication, if the result is of him that wills, and him that runs, but not of God

that shows mercy? Not that the result is without our will, but that our will does not accomplish the result, unless it receive the divine assistance. Now the wholesomeness of [faith](#) is this, that it makes us "seek, that we may find; ask, that we may receive; and knock, that it may be opened to us." [Luke 11:9](#) Whereas the man who gainsays it, does really shut the door of God's mercy against himself. I am unwilling to say more touching so important a matter, because I do better in committing it to the groans of the faithful, than to words of my own.

(41) Specimens of Pelagian Exegesis

But I beg of you to see what kind of objection, after all, he makes, that to him who "wills and runs" there is no necessity for God's mercy, which actually anticipates him in order that he may run,—because, forsooth, the apostle says concerning a certain person, "Let him do what he will," [1 Corinthians 7:36](#)—in the matter, as I suppose, which he goes on to treat, when he says, "He not, let him marry!" [1 Corinthians 7:36](#) As if indeed it should be regarded as a great matter to be willing to marry, when the subject is a laboured discussion concerning the assistance of God's [grace](#), or that it is of any great advantage to will it, unless God's [providence](#), which governs all things, joins together the man and the [woman](#). Or, in the case of the apostle's writing to Philemon, that "his kindness should not be as it were of necessity, but [voluntary](#),"—as if any good act could indeed be [voluntary](#) otherwise than by God's "working in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure." [Philippians 2:13](#) Or, when the [Scripture](#) says in Deuteronomy, "Life and death has He set before man and good and [evil](#)," and admonishes him "to choose life;" as if, forsooth, this very admonition did not come from God's mercy, or as if there were any advantage in choosing life, unless God inspired [love](#) to make such a choice, and gave the possession of it when chosen, concerning which it is said: "For [anger](#) is in His indignation, and in His pleasure is life."

Or again, because it is said, "The commandments, if you will, shall save you," [Sirach 15:15](#)—as if a man ought not to thank [God](#), because he has a will to keep the commandments, since, if he wholly lacked the light of [truth](#), it would not be possible for him to possess such a will. "Fire and water being set before him, a man stretches forth his hand towards which he pleases;" [Sirach 15:16](#) and yet higher is He who calls man to his higher vocation than any thought on man's own part, inasmuch as the beginning of correction of the heart lies in [faith](#), even as it is written, "You shall come, and pass on from the beginning of [faith](#)." [Song of Songs 4:8](#) Every one makes his choice of good, "according as God has dealt to every man the measure of [faith](#);" [Romans 12:3](#) and as the Prince of [faith](#) says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him." [John 6:44](#) And that He spoke this in reference to the [faith](#) which believes in Him, He subsequently explains with sufficient clearness, when He says: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life; yet there are some of you that [believe](#) not. For Jesus [knew](#) from the beginning who they were that [believed](#) not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." [John 6:62-65](#)

(42) God's Promises Conditional. Saints of the Old Testament Were Saved by the Grace of Christ

He, however, thought he had discovered a great support for his [cause](#) in the [prophet](#) Isaiah; because by him God said: "If you be willing, and hearken unto me, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you be not willing, and hearken not to me, the sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken this." [Isaiah 1:19-20](#) As if the entire law were not full of conditions of this sort; or as if its commandments had been given to [proud](#) men for any other reason than that "the law was added because of transgression, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made." [Galatians 3:19](#) "It entered, therefore, that the offence might abound; but where [sin](#) abounded, [grace](#) did much more abound." [Romans 5:20](#) In other words, That man might receive commandments, trusting as he did in his own resources, and that, failing in these and becoming a transgressor, he might ask for a deliverer and a saviour; and that the [fear](#) of the law might [humble](#) him, and bring him, as a schoolmaster, to [faith](#) and [grace](#). Thus "their weaknesses being multiplied, they hastened after;" and in order to heal them, Christ in due season came. In His [grace](#) even righteous men of old [believed](#), and by the same [grace](#) were they holpen; so that with [joy](#) did they receive a foreknowledge of Him, and some of them even foretold His coming,—whether they were found among the people of [Israel](#) themselves, as [Moses](#), and Joshua the son of Nun, and Samuel, and David, and other such; or outside that people, as Job; or previous to that people, as [Abraham](#), and [Noah](#), and all others who are either mentioned or not in [Holy Scripture](#). "For there is but one [God](#), and one Mediator between [God](#) and [man](#), the man Christ Jesus," [1 Timothy 2:5](#) without whose [grace](#) nobody is delivered from condemnation, whether he has derived that condemnation from him in whom all [men sinned](#), or has afterwards aggravated it by his own iniquities.

Chapter 20

(43) No Man is Assisted Unless He Does Himself Also Work. Our Course is a Constant Progress

But what is the import of the last statement which he has made: "If any one say, 'May it possibly be that a [man sin](#) not even in word?' then the answer," says he, "which must be given is, 'Quite possible, if God so will; and God does so will, therefore it is possible.'" See how unwilling he was to say, "If God give His help, then it would be possible;" and yet the Psalmist thus addresses God: "Be Thou my helper, forsake me not;" where of course help is not sought for procuring bodily advantages and avoiding bodily [evils](#), but for practising and fulfilling righteousness. Hence it is that we say: "Lead us not into [temptation](#), but deliver us from [evil](#)." [Matthew 6:13](#) Now no man is assisted unless he also himself does something; assisted, however, he is, if he [prays](#), if he believes, if he is "called according to God's purpose;" [Romans 8:28](#) for "whom He did foreknow, He also did [predestinate](#) to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the [first-born](#) among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did [predestinate](#), them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also [glorified](#)." [Romans 8:29-30](#) We run, therefore, whenever we make advance; and our wholeness runs

with us in our advance (just as a sore is said to run when the wound is in process of a sound and careful treatment), in order that we may be in every respect perfect, without any infirmity of [sin](#) whatever,—a result which God not only wishes, but even causes and helps us to accomplish. And this God's [grace](#) does, in co-operation with ourselves, through Jesus Christ our Lord, as well by commandments, [sacraments](#), and examples, as by His [Holy Spirit](#) also; through whom there is hiddenly shed abroad in our hearts [Romans 5:5](#) that [love](#), "which makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," [Romans 8:26](#) until wholeness and [salvation](#) be perfected in us, and God be manifested to us as He will be seen in His [eternal truth](#).

Chapter 21

(44) Conclusion of the Work. In the Regenerate It is Not Concupiscence, But Consent, Which is Sin

Whosoever, then, supposes that any man or any men (except the one Mediator between [God](#) and [man 1 Timothy 2:5](#)) have ever lived, or are yet living in this present state, who have not needed, and do not need, forgiveness of [sins](#), he opposes [Holy Scripture](#), wherein it is said by the apostle: "By one man [sin](#) entered into the world, and death by [sin](#); and so death passed upon all [men](#), in which all have [sinned](#)." [Romans 5:12](#) And he must needs go on to assert, with an impious contention, that there may possibly be men who are freed and saved from [sin](#) without the liberation and [salvation](#) of the one Mediator Christ. Whereas He it is who has said: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" [Matthew 9:12](#) "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." [Matthew 9:13](#) He, moreover, who says that any man, after he has received remission of [sins](#), has ever lived in this body, or still is living, so righteously as to have no [sin](#) at all, he contradicts the Apostle John, who declares that "If we say we have no [sin](#), we deceive ourselves, and the [truth](#) is not in us." [1 John 1:8](#) Observe, the expression is not *we had*, but *we have*." If, however, anybody contend that the apostle's statement concerns the [sin](#) which dwells in our mortal flesh according to the defect which was caused by the [will](#) of the first man when he [sinned](#), and concerning which the [Apostle Paul](#) enjoins us "not" to "[obey](#) it in the [lusts](#) thereof, [Romans 6:12](#) —so that he does not [sin](#) who altogether withholds his consent from this same indwelling [sin](#), and so brings it to no [evil](#) work,—either in deed, or word, or thought,—although the lusting after it may be excited (which in another sense has received the name of [sin](#), inasmuch as consenting to it would amount to sinning), but excited against our will,—he certainly is drawing subtle distinctions, and should consider what relation all this bears to the Lord's Prayer, wherein we say, "Forgive us our debts." [Matthew 6:12](#) Now, if I judge aright, it would be unnecessary to put up such a [prayer](#) as this, if we never in the least degree consented to the [lusts](#) of the before-mentioned [sin](#), either in a slip of the tongue, or in a wanton thought; all that it would be needful to say would be, "Lead us not into [temptation](#), but deliver us from [evil](#)." [Matthew 6:13](#) Nor could the Apostle James say: "In many things we all offend." [James 3:2](#) For in [truth](#) only that man offends whom an [evil](#) concupiscence persuades, either by deception or by force, to do or say or think something which he ought to avoid, by directing his appetites or his aversions contrary to the rule of righteousness. Finally, if it be asserted that there either have been, or are in this present

life, any [persons](#), with the sole exception of our Great Head, "the Saviour of His body," who are righteous, without any [sin](#),—and this, either by not consenting to the [lusts](#) thereof, or because that must not be accounted as any [sin](#) which is such that God does not impute it to them by reason of their godly lives (although the blessedness of being without [sin](#) is a different thing from the blessedness of not having one's [sin](#) imputed to him),—I do not deem it necessary to contest the point over much. I am quite aware that some hold this opinion, whose views on the subject I have not the [courage](#) to censure, although, at the same time, I cannot defend them. But if any man says that we ought not to use the [prayer](#), "Lead us not into [temptation](#)" (and he says as much who maintains that God's help is unnecessary to a person for the avoidance of [sin](#), and that human will, after accepting only the law, is sufficient for the purpose), then I do not hesitate at once to affirm that such a man ought to be removed from the public ear, and to be [anathematized](#) by every mouth.