

given you but a single warning. Love the holy scriptures, and wisdom will love you. Love wisdom, and it will keep you safe. Honour wisdom, and it will embrace you round about.' Let the jewels on your breast and in your ears be the gems of wisdom. Let your tongue know no theme but Christ, let no sound pass your lips that is not holy, and let your words always reproduce that sweetness of which your grandmother and your mother set you the example. Imitate them, for they are models of virtue.

LETTER CXXXI.

FROM AUGUSTINE.

At the suggestion of Jerome, Marcellinus (for whom see Letter CXXXVI.) had consulted Augustine on the difficult question of the origin of the soul but had failed to get any definite opinion from this latter. Augustine now writes to Jerome confessing his inability to decide the question and asking for advice upon it. He begins by reciting—and justifying—his own belief that the soul is immortal and incorporeal and that its fall into sin is due not to God but to its own free choice. He then goes on to say that he is quite ready to accept creationism as a solution of the difficulty if Jerome will shew him how this theory is reconcilable with the church's condemnation of Pelagius and its assertion of the doctrine of original sin. The damnation of unbaptized infants is assumed throughout.

The date of the letter is 415 A.D. Its number in the Letters of Augustine is CLXVI.

LETTER CXXXII.

FROM AUGUSTINE.

In this letter Augustine deals with the statement of James ii. 10 ("whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all") and explains it by saying that every breach of the law is a breach of love. He also takes occasion to criticise two doctrines of the schools then prevalent, (1) that all sins are equal and (2) that he who has one virtue has all and that all virtues are wanting to him who lacks one.

The date of the letter is 415 A.D. Its number in the Letters of Augustine is CLXVII.

LETTER CXXXIII.

TO CTESIPHON.

Ctesiphon had written to Jerome for his opinion on two points in the teaching of Pelagius, (1) his quietism and (2) his denial of original sin. Jerome now refutes these two doctrines and points out that Pelagius has drawn them partly from the philosophers and partly from the heretics. He censures Rufinus, who had died 5 years before, for attributing to Sixtus bishop of Rome a book which is really the work of Xystus a Pythagorean, and for passing off as the composition of the martyr Pamphilus a panegyric of Origen really due to his friend Eusebius. In both these assertions, however, Jerome is more wrong than right. (See Prolegomena to the works of Rufinus.) The letter concludes with a promise to deal more fully with the heresy of Pelagius at some future time, a promise afterwards redeemed by

the publication of a 'dialogue against the Pelagians.' The date of the letter is 415 A.D.

1. In acquainting me with the new controversy which has taken the place of the old you are wrong in thinking that you have acted rashly, for your conduct has been prompted by zeal and friendship. Already before the arrival of your letter many in the East have been deceived into a pride which apes humility and have said with the devil: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the Most High."¹ Can there be greater presumption than to claim not likeness to God but equality with Him, and so to compress into a few words the poisonous doctrines of all the heretics which in their turn flow from the statements of the philosophers, particularly of Pythagoras and Zeno the founder of the Stoic school? For those states of feeling which the Greeks call *πάθη* and which we may describe as "passions," relating to the present or the future such as vexation and gladness, hope and fear,—these, they tell us, it is possible to root out of our minds; in fact all vice may be destroyed root and branch in man by meditation on virtue and constant practice of it. The position which they thus take up is vehemently assailed by the Peripatetics who trace themselves to Aristotle, and by the new Academics of whom Cicero is a disciple; and these overthrow not the facts of their opponents—for they have no facts—but the shadows and wishes which do duty for them. To maintain such a doctrine is to take man's nature from him, to forget that he is constituted of body as well as soul, to substitute mere wishes for sound teaching.² For the apostle says:—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"³ But as I cannot say all that I wish in a short letter I will briefly touch on the points that you must avoid. Virgil writes:—

Thus mortals fear and hope, rejoice and grieve,
And shut in darkness have no sight of heaven.⁴

For who can escape these feelings? Must we not all clap our hands when we are joyful, and shrink at the approach of sorrow? Must not hope always animate us and fear put us in terror? So in one of his Satires the poet Horace, whose words are so weighty, writes:

From faults no mortal is completely free;
He that has fewest is the perfect man.⁵

2. Well does one of our own writers⁶ say: "the philosophers are the patriarchs of the

¹ Cf. Letter LII. §3.

¹ Isa. xiv. 13, 14. ² Cf. Letter LXXIX. §9. ³ Rom. vii. 24.
⁴ Virgil. *Æneid*, vi. 733, 734. ⁵ Horace, Sat. I. iii. 68, 69.
⁶ Tertullian, against *Heremogenes*, c. ix.

heretics." It is they who have stained with their perverse doctrine the spotlessness of the Church, not knowing that of human weakness it is said: "Why is earth and ashes proud?"¹ So likewise the apostle: "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity";² and again, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do."³ Now if Paul does what he wills not, what becomes of the assertion that a man may be without sin if he will? Given the will, how is it to have its way when the apostle tells us that he has no power to do what he wishes? Moreover if we ask them who the persons are whom they regard as sinless they seek to veil the truth by a new subterfuge. They do not, they say, profess that men are or have been without sin; all that they maintain is that it is possible for them to be so. Remarkable teachers truly, who maintain that a thing may be which, on their own shewing, never has been; whereas the scripture says:—"The thing which shall be, it is that which hath been already of old time."⁴

I need not go through the lives of the saints or call attention to the moles and spots which mark the fairest skins. Many of our writers, it is true, unwisely, take this course; however, a few sentences of scripture will dispose alike of the heretics and the philosophers. What says the chosen vessel? "God had concluded all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all";⁵ and in another place, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."⁶ The preacher also who is the mouthpiece of the Divine Wisdom freely protests and says: "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not:"⁷ and again, "if thy people sin against thee, for there is no man that sinneth not:"⁸ and "who can say, I have made my heart clean?"⁹ and "none is clean from stain, not even if his life on earth has been but for one day. David insists on the same thing when he says: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me;"¹⁰ and in another psalm, "in thy sight shall no man living be justified."¹¹ This last passage they try to explain away from motives of reverence, arguing that the meaning is that no man is perfect in comparison with God. Yet the scripture does not say: "in comparison with thee shall no man living be justified," but "in thy sight shall no man living be justified." And when it says "in thy sight" it

means that those who seem holy to men to God in his fuller knowledge are by no means holy. For "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."¹ But if in the sight of God who sees all things and to whom the secrets of the heart lie open² no man is just; then these heretics instead of adding to man's dignity, clearly take away from God's power. I might bring together many other passages of scripture of the same import; but were I to do so, I should exceed the limits I will not say of a letter but of a volume.

3. It is with no new doctrines that in their self-applauding perfidy they deceive the simple and untaught. They cannot, however, deceive theologians who meditate in the law of the Lord day and night.³ Let those blush then for their leaders and companions who say that a man may be "without sin" if he will, or, as the Greeks term it *αναμάρτητος*, "sinless." As such a statement sounds intolerable to the Eastern churches, they profess indeed only to say that a man may be "without sin" and do not presume to allege that he may be "sinless" as well. As if, forsooth, "sinless" and "without sin" had different meanings; whereas the only difference between them is that Latin requires two words to express what Greek gives in one. If you adopt "without sin" and reject "sinless," then condemn the preachers of sinlessness. But this you cannot do. You know⁴ very well what it is that you teach your pupils in private; and that while you say one thing with your lips you engrave another on your heart. To us, ignorant outsiders you speak in parables; but to your own followers you avow your secret meaning. And for this you claim the authority of scripture which says: "to the multitudes Jesus spake in parables;" but to his own disciples He said: "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."⁵

But to return; I will shortly set forth the names of your leaders and companions to shew you who those are of whose fellowship you make your boast. Manichæus says of his elect—whom he places among Plato's orbits in heaven—that they are free from all sin, and cannot sin even if they will. To so great heights have they attained in virtue that they laugh at the works of the flesh. Then there is Priscillian in Spain whose infamy makes him as bad as Manichæus, and whose disciples profess a high esteem for you. These are rash enough to claim for them-

¹ Eccles. x. 9.² Rom. vii. 23.³ Rom. vii. 19.⁴ Eccles. i. 9. Jerome inverts the words of the Preacher.⁵ Rom. xi. 32.⁶ Rom. iii. 23.⁷ Eccles. vii. 20.⁸ 1 K. viii. 46.⁹ Prov. xx. 9.¹⁰ Ps. li. 5.¹¹ Ps. cxliiii. 2.¹ S. xvi. 7.² Ps. xlv. 21; Heb. iv. 13.³ Ps. i. 2.⁴ Jerome here addresses Pelagius.⁵ Matt. xiii. 3, 11.

selves the twofold credit of perfection and wisdom. Yet they shut themselves up alone with women and justify their sinful embraces by quoting the lines :

The Almighty father takes the earth to wife ;
Pouring upon her fertilizing rain,
That from her womb new harvest he may reap.¹

These heretics have affinities with Gnosticism which may be traced to the impious teaching of Basilides.² It is from him that you derive the assertion that without knowledge of the law it is impossible to avoid sin. But why do I speak of Priscillian who has been condemned by the whole world and put to death by the secular sword?³ Evagrius⁴ of Ibera in Pontus who sends letters to virgins and monks and among others to her whose name bears witness to the blackness of her perfidy,⁵ has published a book of maxims on apathy, or, as we should say, impassivity or imperturbability ; a state in which the mind ceases to be agitated and—to speak simply—becomes either a stone or a God. His work is widely read, in the East in Greek and in the West in a Latin translation made by his disciple Rufinus.⁶ He has also written a book which professes to be about monks and includes in it many not monks at all whom he declares to have been Origenists, and who have certainly been condemned by the bishops. I mean Ammonius, Eusebius, Euthymius,⁷ Evagrius himself, Horus,⁸ Isidorus,⁹ and many others whom it would be tedious to enumerate. He is careful, however, to do as the physicians, of whom Lucretius says :¹⁰

To children bitter wormwood still they give
In cups with juice of sweetest honey smeared.

That is to say, he has set in the forefront of his book John,¹¹ an undoubted Catholic and

saint, by his means to introduce to the church the heretics mentioned farther on. But who can adequately characterize the rashness or madness which has led him to ascribe a book of the Pythagorean philosopher Xystus,¹ a heathen who knew nothing of Christ, to Sixtus² a martyr and bishop of the Roman church? In this work the subject of perfection is discussed at length in the light of the Pythagorean doctrine which makes man equal with God and of one substance with Him. Thus many not knowing that its author was a philosopher and supposing that they are reading the words of a martyr, drink of the golden cup of Babylon. Moreover in its pages there is no mention of prophets, patriarchs, apostles, or of Christ ; so that according to Rufinus³ there has been a bishop and a martyr who had nothing to do with Christ. Such is the book from which you and your followers quote passages against the church. In the same way he played fast and loose with the name of the holy martyr Pamphilus ascribing to him the first of the six books in defence of Origen written by Eusebius of Cæsarea⁴ who is admitted by every body to have been an Arian. His object in doing so was of course to commend to Latin ears Origen's four wonderful books about First Principles.

Would you have me name another of your masters in heresy? Much of your teaching is traceable to Origen. For, to give one instance only, when he comments on the psalmist's words : " My reins also instruct me in the night season,"⁵ he maintains that when a holy man like yourself has reached perfection, he is free even at night from human infirmity and is not tempted by evil thoughts. You need not blush to avow yourself a follower of these men ; it is of no use to disclaim their names when you adopt their blasphemies. Moreover, your teaching

¹ Virgil, *Georg.* ii. 325-327.

² See note on Letter LXXV. § 3.

³ He was condemned by a council at Saragossa in 380-381 A.D. and was put to death by Maximus at Trèves in 385 A.D. at the instigation of the Spanish bishops. Martin of Tours tried to save his life in vain.

⁴ According to Sozomen (*H. E.* vi. c. 30) Evagrius was in his youth befriended by Gregory of Nyssa, who left him in Constantinople to assist Nectarius in dealing with theological questions. Being in danger, both as to his chastity and as to his personal safety on account of an acquaintance he had formed with a lady of rank, he withdrew to Jerusalem, where he was nursed through a severe illness by Melanion. The rest of his life he spent as an ascetic in the Egyptian desert. See also *Pallad. Hist. Laus.*, § lxxxvi.

⁵ Viz., Melanion, who having sided with Rufinus in his controversy with Jerome, incurred the latter's displeasure. The name means 'black.' See Letter IV. § 2.

⁶ Viz., Rufinus of Aquileia, Jerome's former friend.

⁷ These three were known as 'the long brothers.' Their expulsion from Egypt by Theophilus was one of the causes which led to the downfall of John of Chrysostom.

⁸ A contemporary Egyptian monk of great celebrity.

⁹ See Letter XCII. and note.

¹⁰ Lucretius, i. 935-937.

¹¹ Viz., John of Lycopolis, an Egyptian hermit of the latter half of the fourth century. His reputation for sanctity was only second to that of Antony. The book about monks here spoken of does not occur in the list of the writings of Evagrius in the *Dict. of Chr. Biog.*, taken from Socrates, Gennadius and Palladius. Rufinus' *History of the Monks* bears a close affinity to the *Historia Lausica* of Palladius, who was closely allied to

Evagrius ; and it is possible that Jerome may have attributed Palladius' work to Evagrius. See *Prolegomena* to Rufinus, and comp. *Ruf. Hist. Mon. i.* with *Pall. Hist. Laus.*, xliii.

¹ In his references (here and in his comm. on Jeremiah, book iv., ch. 22) to the Gnomes of Sixtus or Xystus, Jerome is both inaccurate and unfair. For Rufinus merely states that the author was traditionally identified with Sixtus, bishop of Rome and martyr ; and he does not endorse the statement. In its present form the book is so strongly Christian in tone and language that it is strange to find it described as Christless and heathen. Of its origin nothing certain is known, but probably it is "the production of an early Christian philosopher working up heathen material with a leaven of the Gospel" (*Dict. Chr. Biog.* s. v. Xystus).

² It is not clear which Sixtus is meant. Sixtus I. is not known to have been a martyr and Sixtus II. can hardly be intended. For though his claim to the title is undisputed he can scarcely have written what Origen already quotes as well known.

³ Jerome elsewhere twits Rufinus with the same mistake (see *Comm.* on *Jer.*, book iv., ch. 22). He was not, however, alone in making it, for even Augustine was for a time similarly deceived (see his *Retractions*, ii. 42).

⁴ Cf. *Against Rufinus*, i. 8, 9. There is now no doubt that Jerome was wrong and Rufinus right as to the authorship of the book. See the article entitled "Eusebius" in the *Dict. of Christian Biog.* and the *prolegomena* to his works as issued in this series.

⁵ *Ps.* xvi. 7 and Origen's *Comm.* ad loc.

corresponds to Jovinian's second position.¹ You must, therefore, take the answer which I have given to him as equally applicable to yourself. Where men's opinions are the same their destinies can hardly be different.

4. Such being the state of the case, what object is served by "silly women laden with sins, carried about with every wind of doctrine, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth?"² Or how is the cause helped by the men who dance attendance upon these, men with itching ears³ who know neither how to hear nor how to speak? They confound old mire with new cement and, as Ezekiel says, daub a wall with untempered mortar; so that, when the truth comes in a shower, they are brought to nought.⁴ It was with the help of the harlot Helena that Simon Magus founded his sect.⁵ Bands of women accompanied Nicolas of Antioch that deviser of all uncleanness.⁶ Marcion sent a woman before him to Rome to prepare men's minds to fall into his snares.⁷ Apelles possessed in Philumena an associate in his false doctrines.⁸ Montanus, that mouthpiece of an unclean spirit, used two rich and high born ladies Prisca and Maximilla first to bribe and then to pervert many churches.⁹ Leaving ancient history I will pass to times nearer to our own. Arius intent on leading the world astray began by misleading the Emperor's sister.¹⁰ The resources of Lucilla helped Donatus to defile with his polluting baptism many unhappy persons throughout Africa.¹¹ In Spain the blind woman Agape led the blind man Elpidius into the ditch.¹² He was followed by Priscillian, an enthusiastic votary of Zoroaster and a magian before he became a bishop. A woman named Galla seconded his efforts and left a gadabout sister to perpetuate a second heresy of a kindred form.¹³ Now also the mystery of iniquity is working.¹⁴

Men and women in turn lay snares for each other till we cannot but recall the prophet's words: "the partridge hath cried aloud, she hath gathered young which she hath not brought forth, she getteth riches and not by right; in the midst of her days she shall leave them, and at her end she shall be a fool."¹

5. The better to deceive men they have added to the maxim given above² the saving clause "but not without the grace of God;" and this may at the first blush take in some readers. However, when it is carefully sifted and considered, it can deceive nobody. For while they acknowledge the grace of God, they tell us that our acts do not depend upon His help. Rather, they understand by the grace of God free will and the commandments of the Law. They quote Isaiah's words: "God hath given the law to aid men,"³ and say that we ought to thank Him for having created us such that of our own free will we can choose the good and avoid the evil. Nor do they see that in alleging this the devil uses their lips to hiss out an intolerable blasphemy. For if God's grace is limited to this that He has formed us with wills of our own, and if we are to rest content with free will, not seeking the divine aid lest this should be impaired, we should cease to pray; for we cannot entreat God's mercy to give us daily what is already in our hands having been given to us once for all. Those who think thus make prayer impossible and boast that free will makes them not merely controllers of themselves but as powerful as God. For they need no external help. Away with fasting, away with every form of self-restraint! For why need I strive to win by toil what has once for all been placed within my reach? The argument that I am using is not mine; it is that put forward by a disciple of Pelagius, or rather one who is the teacher and commander of his whole army.⁴ This man, who is the opposite of Paul for he is a vessel of perdition, roams through thickets—not, as his partisans say, of syllogisms, but of solecisms, and theorizes thus: "If I do nothing without the help of God and if all that I do is His act, I cease to labour and the crown that I shall win will belong not to me but to the grace of God. It is idle for Him to have given me the power of choice if I cannot use it without His constant help. For will that requires external support ceases to be will. God has given me freedom of

¹ See Against Jovinian, book ii. 1. His second position is that "persons baptized with water and the spirit cannot be tempted of the devil."

² Eph. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7.

³ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

⁴ Ezek. xiii. 10-16.

⁵ This legendary companion and disciple of Simon Magus is said to have been identified by him with Helen of Troy. According to Justin Martyr she had been a prostitute at Tyre.

⁶ Cf. Epiphanius, Adv. Haer. lib. i. tom. ii, p. 76, ed. Migne.

⁷ Jerome is alone in speaking of this emissary. It has been suggested that he may have had in mind the gnostic Marcellina, who came to Rome during the episcopate of Anicetus.

⁸ Apelles, the most famous of the disciples of Marcion, lived and taught mainly at Rome. Philumena was a clairvoyante whose revelations he regarded as inspired.

⁹ See Letter XLI.

¹⁰ Constantia, sister of Constantine the Great.

¹¹ Lucilla, a wealthy lady of Carthage, having been condemned by its bishop Cæcilianus, is said to have procured his deposition by bribing his fellow-bishops.

¹² Agape, a Spanish lady, was a disciple of the gnostic Marcus of Memphis (cf. Letter LXXV. § 2). She was thus one of the links between the gnosticism of the East and the Priscillianism of Spain. Elpidius was a rhetorician who spread in Spain the Zoroastrian opinions which culminated in Priscillianism.

¹³ Of these sisters nothing further is known.

¹⁴ 2 Th. ii. 7.

¹ Jer. xvii. 11, Vulg.

² Viz., "A man may be without sin." See for this and the other statements of Pelagius, Aug. de Gestis Pelagii, esp. c. 2 and 6. Jerome's Anti-Pelagian Dialogue takes these words as containing the essence of Pelagianism.

³ Isa. viii. 20, LXX.

⁴ Celestius is meant, after Pelagius the principal champion of free will.

choice, but what becomes of this if I cannot do as I wish?" Accordingly he propounds the following dilemma: "Either once for all I use the power which is given to me, and so preserve the freedom of my will; or I need the help of another, in which case the freedom of my will is wholly abrogated."

6. Surely the man who says this is no ordinary blasphemer; the poison of his heresy is no common poison. Since our wills are free, they argue, we are no longer dependent upon God; and they forget the Apostle's words: "what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"¹ A nice return, truly, does a man make to God when to assert the freedom of his will he rebels against Him! For our parts we gladly embrace this freedom, but we never forget to thank the Giver; knowing that we are powerless unless He continually preserves in us His own gift. As the apostle says, "it is not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."² To will and to run are mine, but they will cease to be mine unless God brings me His continual aid. For the same apostle says: "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do."³ And in the Gospel the Saviour says: "my Father worketh hitherto and I work."⁴ He is always a giver, always a bestower. It is not enough for me that he has given me grace once; He must give it me always. I seek that I may obtain, and when I have obtained I seek again. I am covetous of God's bounty; and as He is never slack in giving, so I am never weary in receiving. The more I drink, the more I thirst. For I have read the song of the psalmist: "O taste and see that the Lord is good."⁵ Every good thing that we have is a tasting of the Lord. When I fancy myself to have finished the book of virtue, I shall then only be at the beginning. For "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"⁶ and this fear is in its turn cast out by love.⁷ Men are only perfect so far as they know themselves to be imperfect. "So likewise ye," Christ says, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."⁸ If he is unprofitable who has done all, what must we say of him who has failed to do so? This is why the Apostle declares that he has attained in part and apprehended in part, that he is not yet perfect, and that forgetting those things which are behind he reaches forth unto those

things which are before.¹ Now he who always forgets the past and longs for the future shews that he is not content with the present.

They are for ever objecting to us that we destroy free will. Nay, we reply, it is you who destroy it; for you use it amiss and disown the bounty of its Giver. Which really destroys freedom? the man who thanks God always and traces back his own tiny rill to its source in Him? or the man who says: "come not near to me, for I am holy;"² I have no need of Thee. Thou hast given me once for all freedom of choice to do as I wish. Why then dost Thou interfere again to prevent me from doing anything unless Thou Thyself first makest Thy gifts effective in me?" To such an one I would say: "your profession of belief in God's grace is insincere. For you explain this of the state in which man has been created and you do not look for God to help him in his actions. To do this, you argue, would be to surrender human freedom. Thus disdaining the aid of God you have to look to men for help."

7. Listen, only listen, to the blasphemer. "Suppose," he avers, "that I want to bend my finger or to move my hand, to sit, to stand, to walk, to run to and fro, to spit or to blow my nose, to perform the offices of nature; must the help of God be always indispensable to me?" Thankless, nay blasphemous wretch, hear the apostle's declaration: "whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."³ Hear also the words of James: "go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil."⁴ You fancy that a wrong is inflicted on you and your freedom of choice is destroyed if you are forced to fall back on God as the moving cause of all your actions, if you are made dependent on His Will, and if you have to echo the psalmist's words: "mine eyes are ever toward the Lord: for it is he that shall pluck my feet out of the net."⁵ And so you presume rashly to maintain that each individual is governed by his own choice. But if he is governed by his own choice, what becomes of God's help? If he does not need Christ to rule him, why does Jeremiah write: "the way of man is not in himself"⁶ and "the Lord directeth his steps."⁷

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7.² Rom. ix. 16.³ Phil. ii. 13.⁴ John v. 17.⁵ Ps. xxxiv. 8.⁶ Ps. cxi. 10.⁷ 1 Joh. iv. 18.⁸ Luke xvii. 10.¹ Phil. iii. 12, 13.² Isa. lxxv. 5. LXX.³ 1 Cor. x. 31.⁴ Jas. iv. 13-16.⁵ Ps. xxv. 15.⁶ Jer. x. 23.⁷ Prov. xvi. 9.

You say that the commandments of God are easy, and yet you cannot produce any one who has fulfilled them all. Answer me this: are they easy or are they difficult? If they are easy, then produce some one who has fulfilled them all. Explain also the words of the psalmist: "thou dost cause toil by thy law,"¹ and "because of the words of thy lips I have kept hard ways."² And make plain our Lord's sayings in the gospel: "enter ye in at the strait gate;"³ and "love your enemies;" and "pray for them which persecute you."⁴ If on the other hand the commandments are difficult and if no man has kept them all, how have you presumed to say that they are easy? Do not you see that you contradict yourself? For either they are easy and countless numbers have kept them; or they are difficult and you have been too hasty in calling them easy.

8. It is a common argument with your party to say that God's commandments are either possible or impossible. So far as they are the former you admit that they are rightly laid upon us; but so far as they are the latter you allege that blame attaches not to us who have received them but to God who has imposed them on us. What! has God commanded me to be what He is,⁵ to put no difference between myself and my creator, to be greater than the greatest of the angels, to have a power which no angels possess? Sinlessness is made a characteristic of Christ, "who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth."⁶ But if I am sinless as well as He, how is sinlessness any longer His distinguishing mark? for if this distinction exists, your theory becomes fatal to itself.

You assert that a man may be without sin if he will; and then, as though awakening from a deep sleep, you try to deceive the unwary by adding the saving clause "yet not without the grace of God." For if by his own efforts a man can keep himself without sin, what need has he of God's grace? If on the other hand he can do nothing without this, what is the use of saying that he can do what he cannot do? It is argued that a man may be without sin and perfect if he only wills it. What Christian is there who does not wish to be sinless or who would reject perfection if, as you say, it is to be had for the wishing, and if the will is sure to be followed by the power? There is no Christian who does not wish to be sinless; wishing to be so, therefore, they all will be so. Whether you like it or not you will be caught in this dilemma, that you can produce nobody

or hardly anybody who is without sin, yet have to admit that everybody may be sinless if he likes. God's commandments, it is argued, are possible to keep. Who denies it? But how this truth is to be understood the chosen vessel thus most clearly explains: "what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;"¹ and again: "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified."² And to shew that it is not only the law of Moses that is meant or all those precepts which collectively are termed the law, the same apostle writes: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."³ Other words of his further explain his meaning: "we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I know⁴ not: for what I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it: but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."⁵

9. But you will demur to this and say that I follow the teaching⁶ of the Manichæans and others who make war against the church's doctrine in the interest of their belief that there are two natures diverse from one another and that there is an evil nature which can in no wise be changed. But it is not against me that you must make this imputation but against the apostle who knows well that God is one thing and man another, that the flesh is weak and the spirit strong.⁷ "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."⁸ But from me you will never hear that any nature is essentially evil. Let us learn then from him who tells us so in what sense the flesh is weak. Ask him why he has said:

¹ Rom. viii. 3.² Rom. iii. 20.³ Rom. vii. 22-25. In the Latin as in the Greek one word does duty for 'grace' and 'thanks.'⁴ R. V.⁵ Rom. vii. 14-20.⁶ This is the well known dualism of Manes (Manichæus), who held that the physical world and the human body are essentially evil.⁷ cf. Matt. xxvi. 41.⁸ Gal. v. 17.¹ Ps. xciv. 20, LXX and Vulg.² Ps. xvii. 4, LXX.³ Matt. vii. 13.⁴ Matt. v. 44.⁵ ἀνταρκής, self-determined.⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 22.

"the good that I would, I do not; the evil which I would not, that I do."¹ What necessity fetters his will? What compulsion commands him to do what he dislikes? And why must he do not what he wishes but what he dislikes and does not wish? He will answer you thus: "nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?"² Bring a yet graver charge against God and ask Him why, when Esau and Jacob were still in the womb, He said: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."³ Accuse Him of injustice because, when Achan the son of Carmi stole part of the spoil of Jericho, He butchered so many thousands for the fault of one.⁴ Ask Him why for the sin of the sons of Eli the people were well-nigh annihilated and the ark captured.⁵ And why, when David sinned by numbering the people, so many thousands lost their lives.⁶ Or lastly make your own the favorite cavil of your associate Porphyry, and ask how God can be described as pitiful and of great mercy when from Adam to Moses and from Moses to the coming of Christ He has suffered all nations to die in ignorance of the Law and of His commandments.⁷ For Britain, that province so fertile in despots, the Scottish tribes, and all the barbarians round about as far as the ocean were alike without knowledge of Moses and the prophets. Why should Christ's coming have been delayed to the last times? Why should He not have come before so vast a number had perished? Of this last question the blessed apostle in writing to the Romans most wisely disposes by admitting that he does not know and that only God does. Do you too, then, condescend to remain ignorant of that into which you inquire. Leave to God His power over what is His own; He does not need you to justify His actions. I am the hapless being against whom you ought to direct your insults, I who am for ever reading the words: "by grace ye are saved,"⁸ and "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."⁹ Yet, to lay bare my own weakness, I know that I wish to do many things which I ought to do and yet cannot. For while my spirit is strong and leads me to life my flesh is weak and draws me to death. And I have the warning of the Lord in my ears: "watch and pray that ye enter not

into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."¹⁰

10. It is in vain that you misrepresent me and try to convince the ignorant that I condemn free will. Let him who condemns it be himself condemned. We have been created endowed with free will; still it is not this which distinguishes us from the brutes. For human free will, as I have said before, depends upon the help of God and needs His aid moment by moment, a thing which you and yours do not choose to admit. Your position is that, if a man once has free will, he no longer needs the help of God. It is true that freedom of the will brings with it freedom of decision. Still man does not act immediately on his free will, but requires God's aid who Himself needs no aid. You yourself boast that a man's righteousness may be perfect and equal to God's; yet you confess that you are a sinner. Answer me this, then; do you or do you not wish to be free from sin? If you do, why on your principle do you not carry out your desire? And if you do not, do you not prove yourself a despiser of God's commandments? If you are a despiser, then you are a sinner. And if you are a sinner, then the scripture says: "unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee."¹¹ So long as you are unwilling to do what God commands, so long do you cast His words behind you. And yet like a new apostle you lay down for the world what to do and what not to do. However, your words and your thoughts by no means correspond. For when you say that you are a sinner—yet that a man may be without sin if he will, you wish it to be understood that you are a saint and free from all sin. It is only out of humility¹² that you call yourself a sinner; to give you a chance of praising others while you depreciate yourself.

11. Another of your arguments is also intolerable, one which runs thus: "To be sinless is one thing, to be able to be so is another. The first is not in our power, the second generally is. For though none ever has been sinless, yet, if a man wills to be so, he can be so." What sort of reasoning, I ask, is this? that a man can be what a man never has been! that a thing is possible which according to your own admission, no man has yet achieved! You are predicating of man a quality which, for aught you know, he may never possess! and you are assigning to any chance person a grace which you cannot

¹ Rom. vii. 19. ² Rom. ix. 20, 21. ³ Mal. i. 2, 3. ⁴ Rom. ix. 13. ⁵ Josh. vii. ⁶ 1 Sam. iv. ⁷ 2 Sam. xxiv. ⁸ This objection is dealt with at length by Augustine (Letter CXI. §§ 8-15. See Vol. I. Series I. of this Library). ⁹ Eph. ii. 5. ¹⁰ Ps. xxxii. 1.

¹¹ Matt. xxvi. 41. ¹² Ps. l. 16, 17. ¹³ Or rather, mock humility.

shew to have marked patriarchs, prophets, or apostles. Listen to the Church's words, plain as they may seem to you or crude or ignorant. And speak what you think; preach publicly what secretly you tell your disciples. You profess to have freedom of choice; why do you not speak your thoughts freely? Your secret chambers hear one doctrine, the crowd around the platform hear another. The uneducated throng, I suppose, is not able to digest your esoteric teaching. Satisfied with the milk-diet of an infant it cannot take solid food.¹

I have written nothing yet, and still you menace me with the thunders of a reply; hoping, I suppose, that I may be scared by your terrors and may not venture to open my mouth. You fail to see that my purpose in writing is to force you to answer and to commit yourself plainly to doctrines which at present you maintain or ignore, as time, place, and person require. One kind of freedom I must deny to you, the freedom to deny what you have once written. An open avowal on your part of the opinions that you hold will be a victory for the church. For either the language of your reply will correspond to mine, in which case I shall count you no longer as opponents but as friends; or else you will gainsay my doctrine, in which case the making known of your opinion to all the churches will be a triumph for me. To have brought your tenets to light is to have overcome them. Blasphemy is written on the face of them, and a doctrine, which in its very statement is blasphemous, needs no refutation. You threaten me with a reply, but this nobody can escape except the man who does not write at all. How do you know what I am going to say that you talk of a reply? Perhaps I shall take your view and then you will have sharpened your wits to no purpose. Eunomians, Arians, Macedonians—all these, unlike in name, alike in impiety, give me no trouble. For they say what they think. Yours is the only heresy which blushes openly to maintain what secretly it does not fear to teach. But the frenzy of the disciples exposes the silence of the masters; for what they have heard from them in the closet they preach upon the housetop. If their auditors like what they say, their masters get the credit; and if they dislike it, only the disciples are blamed, the masters go free. In this way your heresy has grown and you have deceived many; especially those who cleave to women and are assured that they cannot sin. You are always teaching, you are always denying;

you deserve to have the prophet's words applied to you: "give to them glory, O Lord, when they are in travail and in the throes of labour. Give them, O Lord; what wilt thou give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts."¹ My temper rises and I cannot check my words. The limits of a letter do not admit of a lengthy discussion. I assail nobody by name here. It is only against the teacher of perverse doctrine that I have spoken. If resentment shall induce him to reply, he will but betray himself like a mouse which always leaves traces of its presence; and, when it comes to blows in earnest, will receive more serious wounds.

12. From my youth up until now I have spent many years in writing various works and have always tried to teach my hearers the doctrine that I have been taught publicly in church. I have not followed the philosophers in their discussions but have preferred to acquiesce in the plain words of the apostles. For I have known that it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent,"² and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."³ This being the case, I challenge my opponents thoroughly to sift all my past writings and, if they can find anything that is faulty in them, to bring it to light. One of two things must happen. Either my works will be found edifying and I shall confute the false charges brought against me; or they will be found blameworthy and I shall confess my error. For I would sooner correct an error than persevere in an opinion proved to be wrong. And as for you, illustrious doctor, go you and do likewise: either defend the statements that you have made, and support your clever theories with corresponding eloquence, and do not when the whim takes you disown your own words; or if, as a man may do, you have made a mistake, confess it frankly and restore harmony where there has been disagreement. Recall to mind how even the soldiers did not rend the coat of the Saviour.⁴ When you see brothers at strife you laugh; and are glad that some are called by your name and others by that of Christ. Better would it be to imitate Jonah and say: "If it is for my sake that this great tempest is upon you, take me up and cast me forth into the sea."⁵ He in his humility was thrown into the deep that he might rise again in glory to be a type of the Lord.⁶ But you are lifted up in your pride to the stars, only that of you too Jesus may

¹ Hos. ix. 11, 14, partly after the LXX., partly from memory.

² Isa. xxix. 14, as quoted by Paul, 1 Cor. i. 19.

³ 1 Cor. i. 25.

⁴ Joh. xix. 23, 24.

⁵ Jon. i. 12.

⁶ Matt. xii. 39, 40.

¹ cf. 1 Cor. iii. 2.

say: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."¹

13. It is true that in the holy scriptures many are called righteous, as Zacharias and Elizabeth, Job, Jehosaphat, Josiah, and many others who are mentioned in the sacred writings. Of this fact I shall, if God gives me grace, give a full explanation in the work which I have promised²; in this letter it must suffice to say that they are called righteous, not because they are faultless but because their faults are eclipsed by their virtues.³ In fact Zacharias is punished with dumbness,⁴ Job is condemned out of his own mouth,⁵ and Jehosaphat and Josiah who are beyond a doubt described as righteous are narrated to have done things displeasing to the Lord. The first leagued himself with the ungodly Ahab and brought upon himself the rebuke of Micaiah;⁶ and the second—though forbidden by the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah—went against Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, and was slain by him.⁷ Yet they are both called righteous. Of the rest this is not the time to write; for you have asked me not for a treatise but for a letter. For a complete refutation I require leisure and then I hope to destroy all their cavils by the help of Christ. For this purpose I shall rely on the holy scriptures in which God every day speaks to those who believe. And this is the warning which I would give through you to all who are assembled within your holy and illustrious house, that they should not allow one or at the most three mannikins to taint them with the dregs of so many heresies and with the infamy—to say the least—attaching to them. A place once famous for virtue and holiness must not be defiled by the presumption of the devil and by unclean associations. And let those who supply money to such men know that they are adding to the ranks of the heretics, raising up enemies to Christ, and fostering his avowed opponents. It is idle for them to profess one thing with their lips when by their actions they are proved to think another.

LETTER CXXXIV.

TO AUGUSTINE.

Jerome acknowledges the receipt of Letters CXXXI. and CXXXII. and excuses himself from answering the questions raised in them on the twofold ground (1) that the times are evil and (2) that it is inexpedient that he should be supposed to differ from Augustine. He prays for the speedy extinction of Pelagianism, regrets that he cannot send Augustine a critical Latin text of the O.T., and concludes with a number of salutations from

himself and those with him. The date of the letter is 416 A.D. Its number in Augustine's Letters is CLXXII.

LETTER CXXXV.

FROM POPE INNOCENT TO AURELIUS.

Shortly after the synod of Diospolis the Pelagians exulting in their success made an attack upon Jerome's monasteries at Bethlehem which they pillaged and partially burned. This gained for him the sympathy of Innocent who now (A.D. 417) asks Aurelius to transmit to him the letter which follows this.

Innocent to his most esteemed friend and brother Aurelius.¹

Our fellow-presbyter Jerome has informed us of your most dutiful desire to come to see us. We suffer with him as with a member of our own flock. We have been swift also to take such measures as have appeared to us expedient and practicable. As you count yourself one of us, most dear brother, make haste to transmit the following letter² to the aforesaid Jerome.

LETTER CXXXVI.

FROM POPE INNOCENT TO JEROME.

Innocent expresses his sympathy with Jerome and promises to take strong measures to punish his opponents if he will bring specific charges against them. The date of the letter is A.D. 417.

Innocent to his most esteemed son, the presbyter Jerome.

The apostle³ bears witness that contention has never done good in the church; and for this reason he gives direction that heretics should be admonished once or twice in the beginning of their heresy and not subjected to a long series of rebukes. Where this rule is negligently observed, the evil to be guarded against so far from being evaded is rather intensified.

Your grief and lamentation have so affected us that we can neither act nor advise.

To begin however, we commend you for the constancy of your faith. To quote your own words spoken many times in the ears of many, a man will gladly face misrepresentation or even personal danger on behalf of the truth; if he is looking for the blessedness that is to come. We remind you of what you have yourself preached although we are sure that you need no reminder. The spectacle of these terrible evils has so thoroughly roused us that we have hastened to put forth the authority of the apostolic see to repress the plague in all its manifestations; but as your letters name no individuals and bring no specific charges, there is no one at present against whom we can proceed. But we do

¹ Luke, x. 18.

² The Anti-Pelagian Dialogue, to which this letter is a kind of prelude.

³ Cf. Letter CXXXIII. §3.

⁴ Luke i. 20-22.

⁵ Job xlii. 6.

⁶ 1 Kings xxii. 19.

⁷ 2 Chr. xxxv. 20-24.

¹ At this time bishop of Carthage and a friend of Augustine.

² Letter CXXXVI.

³ Tit. iii. 10, 11.