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Reassessing Pelagianism:  
Augustine, Cassian, and Jerome on the Possibility of a Sinless Life

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By

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Reassessing Pelagianism:  
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The classic understanding of the debate commonly called the “Pelagian Controversy” is that grace was the central issue at hand. This view may be traced back to Augustine, whose superior rhetorical skills successfully established the debate on his terms. As a result of this narrow, Augustinian lens, an assumption has been passed down through the centuries that his opponents were an organized and centralized movement bent on corrupting Christianity.

This understanding, however, is dismissed today. Scholars now understand that the men who have been put under this umbrella term had a variety of interests and concerns. They, however, still have tried to determine a common theme that unites these men. A variety of responses have been given: an affirmation of free will, denial of original sin, preserving divine justice, defending the efficacy of baptism, and ethical concerns. These answers are inadequate as the single cause of the controversy. A more fruitful answer is that the tie that bound these men together was the claim that it is possible to live a life free of sin.

Although scholars, such as Rackett and Winrich Löhr, have begun to investigate the variety of ways that sinlessness was understood by Pelagius, Caelestius, and Julian of Eclanum, little work has been done with this question regarding their interlocutors.

This dissertation intends to fill this lacuna by analyzing Augustine, Cassian, and Jerome concerning the possibility—or impossibility—of living a life free of sin. By

doing so, it will attempt to accomplish several goals: (1) it will construct a narrative of how these fifth-century Fathers reacted to their opponents' claim of the possibility of sinlessness. (2) It will then demonstrate that the theological views of the Church Fathers were not uniformly Augustinian; they were much more diffuse and variegated than previously argued.

This dissertation by Stuart Squires fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Historical Theology approved by Philip Rousseau, D.Phil., as Director, and by William Loewe, Ph.D. and Tarmo Toom, Ph.D., as Readers.

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FOR MY FAMILY

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## Abbreviations

### Series

<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i>	ACW
<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>	ANF
<i>Classics of Western Spirituality</i>	CWS
<i>Clavis Patrum Graecorum</i>	CPG
<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>	NPNF
<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>	PG
<i>Patrologia Latin</i>	PL

### Multiple Authors

<i>Epistula</i>	Ep.
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### Anonymous Sicilian

<i>Ad Adolescentem</i>	Ad adol.
<i>De castitate</i>	De cast.
<i>De divitiis</i>	De div.
<i>De malis doctoribus et operibus fidei et de iudicio futuro</i>	De mal.
<i>De possibilitate non peccandi</i>	De poss. non. pecc.
<i>Honorificentiae tuae</i>	Hon. tuae

### Augustine

<i>Acta contra Fortunatum Manicheum</i>	C. Fort.
<i>Ad Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati</i>	Cresc.
<i>Confessiones</i>	Conf.
<i>Contra Academicos</i>	C. Acad.
<i>Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum</i>	C. ep. Pel.
<i>Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum</i>	C. Jul. imp.
<i>Contra Iulianum</i>	C. Jul.
<i>Contra litteras Petiliani donatistae cirtensis Episcopi, libri iii</i>	C. litt. Pet.
<i>De gestis Pelagii</i>	Gest. Pel.
<i>De gratia Christi et de peccato originali</i>	Gr. et pecc. or.
<i>De haeresibus</i>	Haer.
<i>De natura et gratia</i>	Nat. et gr.
<i>De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum</i>	Pecc. mer.
<i>De perfectione iustitiae hominis</i>	Perf. iust.
<i>De praedestinatione sanctorum</i>	Praed. sanct.
<i>De spiritu et littera</i>	Spir. et litt.
<i>Retractiones</i>	Retract.

### Calvin

<i>Institutio Christianae Religionis</i>	Inst. Christ. Rel.
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**Cassian**

*Collationes*  
*De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*  
*De institutis coenobiorum*

*Coll.*  
*De inc.*  
*Inst.*

**Evagrius**

*Antirrhetikos*  
*De diversis malignis cogitationibus*  
*De oratione*  
*Praktikos*  
*Sententiae ad virginem*

*Antir.*  
*De div. mal. cog.*  
*De ora.*  
*Prak.*  
*Sen. ad virg.*

**Gennadius**

*De viris inlustribus*

*De vir. inlustr.*

**Jerome**

*Apologia adversus libros Rufini*  
*Commentarii in Ezechielem*  
*Contra Ioannem Hierosolymitanum*  
*Contra Iovinianum*  
*Dialogi Contra Pelagianos*  
*Epistula 130: Ad Demetriadem*  
*Praefatio in libro Hieremiae prophetae*

*Apol.*  
*Com. in Ez.*  
*C. Ioan.*  
*C. Iov.*  
*Dial.*  
*Ep. 130*  
*Praef in lib. Hier.*

**Origen**

*Commentaria in Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos*

*Com. Rom.*

**Orosius of Braga**

*Liber Apologeticus, Contra Pelagianum*

*Lib. Apol.*

**Pelagius**

*Epistula [ad amicum] de divina lege*  
*Epistula ad Celantiam [matronam]*  
*Epistula ad Claudiam de virginitate*  
*Epistula ad sacram Christi virginem Demetriadem*  
*Expositiones xiii epistularum Pauli*  
*Liber de vita Christiana (Christianorum)*

*Div. leg.*  
*Ad Cel.*  
*Virg.*  
*Ad Dem.*  
*Expos. (ad Romanos)*  
*Vit. Christ.*

**Prosper of Aquitaine**

*Epistula ad Augustinum Hipponensem*  
*Pro Augustino liber contra collatorem*

*Ep ad Aug.*  
*C. coll.*

**Rufinus of Aquileia**

*Apologia contra Hieronymum*

*Apol. C. Hier.*

**Rufinus the Syrian**  
*Liber de Fide*

*Lib. Fid.*

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# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## **Modern Scholarship's Understanding of the Pelagians**

In the early fifth century, men such as Pelagius, Caelestius, Rufinus the Syrian, the Anonymous Sicilian, and Julian of Eclanum—often called “Pelagians”—engaged in a theological “pamphlet war”<sup>1</sup> with Augustine of Hippo, Cassian, and Jerome.<sup>2</sup> Over the centuries, this dispute, known as the “Pelagian Controversy,” has been seen as centrally concerned with the nature of grace, while other issues of theological anthropology and soteriology (such as baptism, free will, and predestination) have orbited around this preoccupation.<sup>3</sup> Adolph von Harnack gives an exemplary definition of this classic understanding when he claims that “the crucial question” in this fight is centered on “whether grace is to be reduced to nature.”<sup>4</sup> This line of thinking has continued into the

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Bonner, “Pelagianism and Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cassian is rarely included in any discussion of the “Pelagian Controversy.” Rather, he is usually relegated to the afterthought known as the “Semi-Pelagian Controversy.” One of the goals of this dissertation is to question these tidy categories and to argue that Cassian should be considered as much of a voice in the “Pelagian Controversy” as any of the other authors listed, even though his involvement started relatively late and after the imperial condemnations of Pelagius in 418.

<sup>3</sup> John Ferguson does an excellent job of outlining the many issues of this controversy: sin, original sin, the possibility of sinlessness, the person of Jesus, grace, free will, the relationship between God and humanity, the law and the gospel, infant baptism, death, and prayer. John Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1956), 159-182.

<sup>4</sup> Adolph von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, third ed., vol. V (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1899), 170. Gerald Bonner has offered two more nuanced definitions for “Pelagianism.” He has distinguished between the theological heresy and the historical controversy. For the first definition, he claims that “the word Pelagianism is commonly employed in two different ways. It is used by dogmatic theologians to describe the heresy which dispenses with any need for Divine Grace and denies any transmission of Original Sin.” The second definition: “an ascetic movement within the Christian Church during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a movement composed of disparate elements which came, in the course of time, to be associated under the name of the British theologian and exegete Pelagius, though his claim to be the dominating spirit of the movement is, at best, debatable.” Gerald Bonner, *Augustine and Modern Research on Pelagianism*, ed. Robert P. Russell, The Saint

middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the work of such scholars as Robert Evans,<sup>5</sup> and continues in some circles today—for example in the work of B.R. Rees, who claimed that “one thing is certain: the relationship of human freedom to divine grace was the crucial issue on which Augustine and Pelagius differed.”<sup>6</sup>

But, one must stop and ask: why is grace “the crucial” question, or issue? The answer, as many scholars over the past fifty years have shown, is that the necessity and efficacy of grace was made the fundamental question because Augustine, who has often been credited with singlehandedly saving the Church,<sup>7</sup> pushed it to the forefront. Augustine made it clear that this fight revolved around grace when he said that “God’s grace, which was the whole point of the fierce battle [at the Synod of Diospolis of 415], was passed over in silence.”<sup>8</sup> Because Augustine was able to set the terms for the debate during the fifth century, Gerald Bonner has correctly stated that “historians and

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Augustine Lecture Series: Augustinian Institute, Villanova University (Wetteren: Villanova University Press, 1972), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Evans claimed that grace was “the real issue.” Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), 7.

<sup>6</sup> B.R. Rees, “Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic” in *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, vol. I (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 54.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Warfield claimed that “both by nature and by grace, Augustin was formed to be the champion of truth in this controversy.” Benjamin Warfield, *Introductory Essay on Augustin and the Pelagian Controversy*, ed. Philip Schaff, A Select Library of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series. Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings, vol. 5 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), xxi. Also, Bonner states that “of the importance of these [long-term effects of the “Pelagian Controversy”] there can be no question, and this is largely due to Augustine’s voluminous writings.” Gerald Bonner, “Pelagianism Reconsidered,” in *Studia Patristica: Cappadocian Fathers, Greek Authors after Nicea, Augustine, Donatism, and Pelagianism*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livstone (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1993), 237.

<sup>8</sup> In this quote, Augustine has the Synod of Diospolis in mind. It is clear from the rest of Augustine’s writings that he believes that the whole fight is centered on grace: *Gest. Pel.* 30 (55). See also Michael R. Rackett, “What’s Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and his Followers,” *Augustinian Studies* 33 (2002): 24-25.

theologians have too long tended to form their image of Pelagianism by looking through Augustinian spectacles.”<sup>9</sup>

As a result of these “Augustinian spectacles,” a “Pelagian” heresiological category has been passed down over time, which declares this group of authors as a centralized and organized movement bent on deceiving Christians on the correct understanding of grace, so this narrative goes. Peter Brown, for example, in his biography of Augustine, alluded to a body of authors when he claimed that “indeed, Pelagianism as we know it, that consistent body of ideas of momentous consequences, has come into existence; but in the mind of Augustine, not of Pelagius,”<sup>10</sup> and Brown later claimed that “Pelagianism could appear as a movement with a definite programme of action.”<sup>11</sup> The unity implied here was not necessarily consciously acknowledged by all parties, but could only exist from the start in the eyes of later beholders. Throughout the rest of this dissertation, following Michael Williams’s rejection of the term “Gnosticism” because it is reductionist and misleading, this dissertation will reject the term “Pelagian” on the same grounds, and cease using it from this point forward.<sup>12</sup>

The standard view articulated here is dismissed today. Scholars have begun to realize that those authors, who have been placed under this umbrella, actually have a

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<sup>9</sup> Bonner, “Pelagianism and Augustine,” 48.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 346. Bonner agrees with Brown on this point, but believes that this did not happen in 411-12, but, rather, should be pushed back to 416-417. Bonner, “Pelagianism and Augustine,” 48.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 349.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3-28.

variety of interests and concerns. These interests and concerns, although they often overlap with each other, are much more diverse and nuanced than previous generations have allowed. Bonner, for example, has claimed that

we can no longer think of the Pelagians as constituting a party with a rigidly-defined doctrinal system but rather as a mixed group, united by certain theological principles which nevertheless left the individual free to develop his own opinions upon particular topics. Within the general framework of Pelagianism may be detected various shades of emphasis ... accordingly, it is misleading—except in general terms—to talk about the ‘Pelagian view’ on any matter; rather, we must consider which particular Pelagian we have in mind—a task which is not always easy, in view of the disagreement among scholars as to the identity of the authors of many of our Pelagian tracts.<sup>13</sup>

Roland Teske also has argued that “modern scholarship has brought us to see that Pelagianism was not a uniform body of doctrine to which those we label as Pelagians all subscribed. Rather, each of the figures in this early stage of the Pelagian controversy is quite distinct in his theology and bears at most a family resemblance to the others.”<sup>14</sup> Philip Rousseau also rejected the standard view, saying that “the ‘Pelagian Controversy’, however we might understand that term, is ill studied as the juxtaposition of two sets of doctrine and would be more fully done justice to by our recognizing its historical unfolding, its single flow across the decades (and the provinces), carrying in its current a range of individual vessels.”<sup>15</sup> Although they wrote texts that were not as uniform as has

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<sup>13</sup> Gerald Bonner, "Rufinus of Syria and African Pelagianism," *Augustinian Studies* 1, (1970): 31.

<sup>14</sup> Roland Teske, "Introduction," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Answer to the Pelagians: I*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Rousseau, "Cassian and Perverted Virtue," (Washington, DC: Tenth Annual Lecture as Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Professor of Early Christian Studies. The Catholic University of America, Thursday, September 17, 2009), 14.

previously been allowed,<sup>16</sup> one must still ask: what are the “certain theological principles,” or the “family resemblance,” or the “single flow?”

Michael Rackett, in his dissertation titled “Sexuality and Sinlessness,” has shown the variety of ways that scholars have offered to answer this question:

many scholars have framed the Pelagian controversy in anthropological terms: an affirmation of human free will or a denial of original sin. ... Other writers have suggested that the Pelagians were most concerned not with affirming human nature per se but with preserving divine justice, constituting a perfect Church, or defending the efficacy of baptism. Sympathetic readers have acknowledged a warm concern for biblical ethics, while theological critics have seen only a cold Stoic moralism.<sup>17</sup>

He is not satisfied with any of these answers but believes that there is a different thread that ties these authors together that has previously been ignored. He says that “the central theological principle which united the diverse Pelagian movement was the affirmation of the possibility of sinlessness.”<sup>18</sup> Rackett’s analysis is foundational for this dissertation, and I view what is done here as complementing his work.

### **Modern Scholarship’s Understanding of the Church Fathers**

Although scholars have begun to reassess the nuances between Pelagius and others, almost no work has been done to show that the Church Fathers, such as Augustine, Cassian, and Jerome, proffered diverse texts as well. A monolithic

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<sup>16</sup> Donato Ogliaari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 230.

<sup>17</sup> Rackett offers extensive footnotes for this section where he details the different authors who have made these various arguments. Michael R. Rackett, “Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2002), 252-53.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.



Augustinianism, rather, has been allowed to persist until today. David Johnson, a scholar of Cassiodorus at the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary who studied under Dr. Karlfried Froehlich at the Princeton Theological Seminary, has shown that there continues to be a homogenous understanding of fifth-century authors writing on the subjects of theological anthropology and soteriology that centers on Augustine. “It is commonly taught,” he claims, “that Augustinianism became the basis for orthodox doctrine in the Western Church up until at least the era of the great scholastics, and perhaps all the way to the Reformation.”<sup>19</sup> He has demonstrated in his analysis of Adolph von Harnack, Reinhold Seeberg, G.W.H. Lampe, and Jaroslav Pelikan that Christianity is continually described as a singular, cohesive, and Augustinian theology.<sup>20</sup>

Augustine Casiday has called for scholars to reject this overly simplistic Augustinianism and pay greater attention to the subtleties of Catholic theology. He claims that “scholars have corrected the slovenly habit of thinking of Pelagianism as a theological monolith, citing the diversity of views comprehended within the Pelagian movement. For similar reasons, we should be extremely wary of oversimplifying the

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<sup>19</sup> David Johnson, “Purging the Poison: The Revision of Pelagius’ Pauline Commentaries by Cassiodorus and his Students” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989), 256. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300): The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 220-29.

<sup>20</sup> Harnack claims that “we regard the history of the dogma of the West from Augustine to the Reformation as one complete development.” Seeberg says that “the ideas which he [Augustine] expressed gave birth to the dogmatic history of the West.” Lampe says that “so far as the West was concerned ... it was an essentially Augustinian view which prevailed.” Pelikan says that “we shall have to write [the history of Western theology] ... as a ‘series of footnotes’ to Augustine.” Johnson, “Purging the Poison: The Revision of Pelagius’ Pauline Commentaries by Cassiodorus and His Students,” 256-7.

rejection of Pelagianism.”<sup>21</sup> To begin this task of branching outside of Augustine and his intellectual offspring, Casiday argues that Cassian’s writings against Pelagius should be researched more thoroughly: “the Augustinian-Pelagian dichotomy that is presupposed in most historical research is dramatically over-simplistic. A consideration of Cassian’s case against Pelagius shows that one could object to Pelagianism without being Augustinian.”<sup>22</sup> By taking Cassian more seriously, Casiday argues, scholars will come to the same conclusion as Johnson, that “orthodoxy was not exclusively Augustinianism. Orthodoxy was eclectic and not necessarily even coherent. In it, Augustinian ideas played a prominent, but not exclusive, role.”<sup>23</sup> Thirteen years later, this exact same rejection of “the illusion of coherence” was echoed by Rousseau when he claimed that “Christianity’s ability to articulate convincing answers to current questions, within the broad setting of Mediterranean society and its religious traditions, should not encourage us to assume, however, that its answers immediately formed either a coherent body of doctrine or a single community of believers.”<sup>24</sup> Early Christian thought, then, was neither strictly Augustinian nor entirely uniform.

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<sup>21</sup> Augustine Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 101. He also claims that “there is in recent scholarship on Cassian no discernible recognition of the illegitimacy of reducing ‘anti-Pelagianism’ to Augustine and his adherents, which is a crucial move in making the Pelagian controversy into a bipolar affair, and thus in construing every text that does not easily fit into one camp or the other as a ‘middle way.’ ... there is in fact no reason to suppose that there were ever only two options.” Ibid., 8.

<sup>22</sup> Augustine Casiday, “Cassian Against the Pelagians,” *Studia Monastica* 46 (2004): 7.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, “Purging the Poison: The Revision of Pelagius’ Pauline Commentaries by Cassiodorus and his Students,” 292.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries* (New York: Longman, 2002), 11.

## Argument

This dissertation will analyze Augustine, Cassian, and Jerome concerning the possibility—or impossibility—of living a life free of sin. By doing so, it will attempt to accomplish several goals: (1) to construct a narrative of how these fifth-century Fathers reacted to the theme of sinlessness, which, as Rackett has pointed out, is a more adequate way to see this debate than through the Augustinian lens of grace. It should be noted here that although I am convinced by Rackett’s assessment of the importance of the question of sinlessness for Pelagius and others in his cohort, I believe that Rackett went too far when he claimed that sinlessness is “*the* central theological principle which united the diverse Pelagian movement [emphasis mine].”<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, by replacing the central question of grace with the central question of sinlessness, Rackett falls into the same reductionist trap as previous scholars.<sup>26</sup> This dissertation recognizes sinlessness as one of the most important themes for Pelagius and others, but it refuses to claim that this is *the* heart of the matter. (2) This dissertation will respond to the call of Johnson and Casiday to demonstrate that the theological views of the Church Fathers were not uniformly Augustinian; they were much more diffuse and variegated than previously argued.

We shall see that, in the end, all three of our authors rejected the idea that one may live a sinless life. It is because of this agreement, it seems, that scholars have

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<sup>25</sup> Rackett, “Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity,” 251.

<sup>26</sup> Although Rackett makes this crucial mistake, I still view this dissertation as a natural extension of Rackett’s work. He has done an excellent job detailing the diverse views of sinlessness between Pelagius, the Anonymous Sicilian, and Julian of Eclanum. He does very little work, however, with the view of sinlessness of the Church Fathers. Most importantly, he entirely ignores Cassian. This dissertation intends to fill this lacuna.

ignored investigating this issue. When one begins to examine it closely, however, one quickly sees that our three authors have entirely different definitions of sinlessness, starting points, concerns, conceptions, and arguments. They are far from monolithic.

## Method

Methodologically, the analysis undertaken here will be a comparison and contrast. Two models by established scholars in the field of Late Antiquity have informed the approach adopted here. First, Elizabeth Clark's *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* is important for two reasons. She lucidly demonstrated that Epiphanius, Theophilus, Jerome, and Shenute considered Origen's theology suspicious for different reasons.<sup>27</sup> By doing so, she showed that there was not a homogenous set of allegations leveled against him. In a similar vein, this dissertation will reveal that our authors had an equally wide-ranging group of problems with Pelagius and his ilk. Also, her exposition of the shifting complexion over time of Theophilus' fears must influence our analyses of our three men. Their arguments, too, morphed as time passed.

The second model important for this study is Lewis Ayres' *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. At the beginning of the book, he states that his goal is to construct a paradigm "for exploring the [Trinitarian] theologies that came to be counted as 'orthodox' at the end of the [fourth] century. This

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<sup>27</sup> Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 85-6.

paradigm attempts to move beyond simplistic east/west divisions and to respect the diversity of ‘pro-Nicene’ theologies better than available accounts.”<sup>28</sup> He nimbly weaves his way through the Mediterranean world to reveal the nuances among these ‘orthodox’ authors (his quotations) that have previously been overlooked. Our project, similarly, attempts to show that there was a wide array of thoughts among our Catholic authors about how they themselves defined, understood, and rejected the idea of sinlessness.

Our project will unfold in two movements. The initial three chapters will take each of our authors individually and investigate how, at different times and in different circumstances during their lives, they placed themselves in opposition to Pelagius (and often each other). I wholeheartedly agree with Clark that “this approach may strike the reader as less than exciting,”<sup>29</sup> but it will allow us to come to the clearest portrayal of the issue at hand, even if it inevitably leads to a lack of panache that other, trendy methods may foster.

The fifth chapter will continue our comparison and contrast, but will do so in a different way. It will place the arguments of our authors into a larger perspective by looking at three issues. First, it will place our authors into their historical contexts to see how their arguments were influenced by their personal lives and the controversies that had been consuming their time either before or during their writings against Pelagius. Then, it will look at how they define sinlessness. Each of their arguments emerges from

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<sup>28</sup> Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 9.

the way they conceive of the concept of sinlessness; as they all define it differently, they, therefore, construct their claims differently. Finally, it will relate their arguments against sinlessness to their overall critiques of their interlocutors in order to see how they conceived of sinlessness in relation to Pelagius' anthropology.

The concluding chapter will offer some suggestions for future research, which could not be addressed in these pages, and details some implications that this dissertation has for scholarship.

### **Rufinus the Syrian, the Anonymous Sicilian, and Julian**

Before we turn to our three authors, we must briefly establish that the possibility of sinlessness was one of the most important themes that connected their opponents together. Pelagius and Caelestius are the obvious starting points, but as Löhr and Rackett have demonstrated this thoroughly, a similar exposition here would be unnecessarily repetitious.<sup>30</sup> We will continue their work by showing that Rufinus the Syrian, the Anonymous Sicilian, and Julian of Eclanum shared this idea as well.

A shadowy, peripheral figure, the author of the *Liber De Fide* has been much debated, but scholarly consensus is becoming more comfortable with claiming that it was a man who often is called Rufinus the Syrian, although it Marius Mercator in the fifth

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<sup>30</sup> Winrich Löhr, "Pelagius' Schrift *De natura*: Rekonstruktion und Analyse," *Recherches Augustiniennes*, no. 31 (1999): 235-94; Rackett, "Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity," 256-71.

century was the only one to call him that at the time.<sup>31</sup> Dunphy has recently argued that this man did not actually exist and that, since the seventeenth century, scholars have mistaken him for Rufinus of Aquileia.<sup>32</sup> Only time will tell if scholars find his argument persuasive.

We know very little about this author, but probably died before our debate began. The standard scholarly view is that this Rufinus was the same monk who resided in Bethlehem, had been a student of Jerome, and even may have participated in the translation of the Vulgate, although Dunphy has recently shown that this is probably not the case.<sup>33</sup> Jerome, as we will see later, was virulently anti-Origenist, and this attitude seems to have rubbed off onto him.<sup>34</sup> He twice mentions a Rufinus who had been living in Bethlehem whom he had dispatched on legal business. First, in his *Apologia adversus libros Rufini* we see that Rufinus (described as a presbyter) was sent to help a man named Claudius,<sup>35</sup> and later, in a letter to Rufinus of Aquileia, he was sent through Rome to Milan and Jerome ordered Rufinus to visit him.<sup>36</sup> He probably settled in Rome for good

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<sup>31</sup> Rondet, for example, leaves open the possibility that Caelestius wrote it. Henri Rondet, "Rufin le Syrien et le *Liber de Fide*," *Augustiniana* 22 (1972): 539.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Dunphy, "Rufinus the Syrian: Myth and Reality," *Augustiniana* 59, no. 1 (2009): 131.

<sup>33</sup> Eugene TeSelle, "Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius: Explorations in the Prehistory of the Pelagian Controversy," *Augustinian Studies* 3, (1972): 63; Walter Dunphy, "Marius Mercator on Rufinus the Syrian: Was Schwartz Mistaken?," *Augustinianum* 32 (1992): 281; Walter Dunphy, "Ps-Rufinus (The 'Syrian') and the Vulgate: Evidence Wanting!," *Augustinianum* 52, no. 1 (2012): 254-5.

<sup>34</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 17, 20-22, 27, 36; TeSelle, "Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius: Exploration in the Prehistory of the Pelagian Controversy," 63; Miller, "Introduction," 3.

<sup>35</sup> Jerome, *Apol.* 3 (24).

<sup>36</sup> *Ep.* 81 (2).

(for unknown reasons) between 399-402, during the pontificate of Anastasius I.<sup>37</sup> It was in Rome that Caelestius came under his influence to the extent that, at his own trial in Carthage, he named him as the holy priest (*sanctus presbyter*) who had rejected the idea of the transmission of sin, when pressured by the deacon Paulinus of Milan.<sup>38</sup> Because of his origins and his influence at the early stages, there is speculation that, although this may be seen as the first great western theological controversy,<sup>39</sup> it had its roots in the east,<sup>40</sup> although some have even suggested that he was not in fact from Syria.<sup>41</sup>

Different suggestions have been given for the date of the composition of the *Liber*. Altaner and Miller have suggested that it was between 413 and 428,<sup>42</sup> but Refoulé has shown that Book I of Augustine's *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum* was written largely in response to Rufinus.<sup>43</sup> I agree with Bonner and Teske that the text must have been written shortly after his arrival in Rome.<sup>44</sup> There

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<sup>37</sup> Altaner, "Der *Liber de fide*: ein Werk des Pelagianers Rufinus des 'Syrers'," 436.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *Gr. et pecc. or.* 2.3 (3).

<sup>39</sup> Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963), 352.

<sup>40</sup> L.W. Barnard, "Pelagius and Early Syriac Christianity," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 35 (1968): 195-6.

<sup>41</sup> Berthold Altaner, "Der *Liber de fide*: ein Werk des Pelagianers Rufinus des 'Syrers'," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 130 (1950): 440; Sister Mary William Miller, "Introduction," in *Rufini Presbyteri Liber de Fide: A Critical Text and Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Altaner, "Der *Liber de fide*: ein Werk des Pelagianers Rufinus des 'Syrers'," 440; Miller, "Introduction," 10.

<sup>43</sup> Refoulé, "Datation du premier concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus fidei* de Rufin," 44-7.



had even been a popular idea that there was a lost Book of the *Liber*,<sup>45</sup> but Dunphy has shown this not to be the case.<sup>46</sup>

Rufinus was interested in many of the same issues that troubled Pelagius and Caelestius, but he stressed them differently. The first two, which are his main worries, are intimately related: the punishment of Adam's sin and the notion of original sin, which Rufinus rejected.<sup>47</sup> Adam, whom he believed had been created immortal in soul but mortal in body,<sup>48</sup> undeniably sinned against God; but his transgression only wounded himself.<sup>49</sup> He rejected the idea of original sin as a perverse reading of Scripture.<sup>50</sup> Babies, of course, were baptized by this time and he, like his confreres, was forced to offer a theological argument for this practice. He said that baptism allowed little ones to become partakers in the kingdom of heaven, created in Christ, and to become sons of God.<sup>51</sup> Thus, he says, when a baby who has been born of two parents who have been baptized, the baby does not need to be baptized, which seems to be a claim that he alone

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<sup>44</sup> Bonner, "Rufinus of Syria and African Pelagianism," 38; Teske, "Introduction," 20.

<sup>45</sup> Miller, "Introduction," 2; Bonner, "Rufinus of Syria and African Pelagianism," 39.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Dunphy, "Rufinus the Syrian's 'Books'," *Augustinianum* 23 (1983): 525.

<sup>47</sup> Miller, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>48</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 29.

<sup>49</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 36-41; Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.30 (49).

<sup>50</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 41, 48; Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 1.30 (58), 1.34 (63).

<sup>51</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 40-1; Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 1.18 (23), 1.30 (58).

was willing to make.<sup>52</sup> Like his colleagues, he declares that the will is entirely free to choose either good or evil,<sup>53</sup> and that it is the responsibility of each person to choose the good.<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that he was not at all concerned with the definition of *gratia*, as it would later be understood.

Rufinus did not stress sinlessness as much as Pelagius or Caelestius. We may turn to two different *loci*: the *Liber* and Book II of Augustine's *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*. In the *Liber*, we see references to Rufinus' belief that Adam and Eve never sinned after their initial disobedience. He twice insists that, because Scripture does not explicitly mention any subsequent sins, we must assume that they successfully refrained from it.<sup>55</sup> This is further supported, he claims, by the fact that the multiple sins of other Old Testament figures—such as Cain—were, in fact, explicitly described.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, Enoch and Elijah, “because they were very pleasing to God” (*cum bene placuissent Deo*), did not taste the bitterness of death. Noah, too, was declared “just” (*iustus*) because he had “merited” (*merere*) the same salvation as those who merit it through baptism.<sup>57</sup> This was only possible because their individual wills were free to turn to the Good.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.25 (39-41).

<sup>53</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 19, 37.

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.3 (3), 2.15 (22).

<sup>55</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 35, 39.

<sup>56</sup> *Lib. Fid.* 39.

<sup>57</sup> Rufinus, *Lib. Fid.* 39.

In Augustine's *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*, Rufinus moves from Old Testament figures to the Apostles.<sup>59</sup> He first establishes the premise that if we really do not want to sin, we will not do so and that God would never give commandments that would be impossible to do follow. We will see later that Jerome will begin his *Dialogi Contra Pelagianos* lambasting this idea.<sup>60</sup> The Apostles, Rufinus claims, were "holy (*sanctus*) and already perfect (*perfectus iam*) and who had absolutely no sin (*nullum omnino habentes peccatum*).” When they, like all Christians, pray the *Pater noster* and say “forgive us our trespasses,” he interprets this to mean “that there existed in the one body both those who still had sins and they themselves who had absolutely no sin.”<sup>61</sup> Paul, especially, may be singled out as being sinless because his statement, “I have kept the faith. There remains for me the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim 4:7-8), proves, Rufinus insists, Paul’s purity.<sup>62</sup>

If Rufinus was less concerned about sinlessness than Pelagius or Calestius, our next author—often called the Sicilian Briton,<sup>63</sup> Sicilian Anonymous,<sup>64</sup> the Anonymous

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<sup>58</sup> Teselle, “Rufinus the Syrian, Calestius, Pelagius: Explorations in the Prehistory of the Pelagian Controversy,” 72.

<sup>59</sup> While Refoulé has definitively shown that anonymous quotations in Book I are from *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*, there has been no definitive proof offered that the quotations from Book II are as well. I agree with Teske, however, that they most likely were from Rufinus. Teske, “Introduction,” 76 n.30, 78 n. 105, 114 n. 3, 115 n. 30, 49; Refoulé, “Datation du premier concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus fidei* de Rufin,” 44-7.

<sup>60</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 1.1.

<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.10 (13).

<sup>62</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.16 (24).

<sup>63</sup> Robert F. Evans, *Four Letters of Pelagius* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), 25.

Sicilian,<sup>65</sup> or the Anonymous Roman<sup>66</sup> (we will refer to him here as the Anonymous Sicilian)—was on the exact opposite end of the spectrum. In fact, he wrote an entire *epistula* addressing just this issue, *de possibilitate non peccandi*. Scholarly consensus points to this author as the man about whom Hilary wrote to Augustine asking for advice. We know almost nothing about Hilary, but the tone of his letter to Augustine gives the impression that he is a layman.<sup>67</sup> In his response, Augustine addresses Hilary as “son” (*filio hilario in domino salute*), and the report of the Synod of Diospolis did not assign him an ecclesial rank.<sup>68</sup> Teske’s translation, however, suggests that the Synod called Hilary a “holy bishop,” but the *NPNF* translation does not do so, and the Latin seems to suggest that the phrase *sanctus episcopus* refers to Augustine alone, not Hilary.<sup>69</sup> He states that there were men who were circulating a variety of ideas—such as the ability to keep the commandments, the possibility of not sinning, and the inability of a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, among others—that were fogging his understanding of the

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<sup>64</sup> Bonner, *Augustine and Modern Research on Pelagianism*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Rackett, “Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity,” 32.

<sup>66</sup> Josef Lössl, “Augustine, ‘Pelagianism’, Julian of Aeclanum and Modern Scholarship,” *Journal of Ancient Christianity* 11 (2007): 138.

<sup>67</sup> Rees says he was a lawyer. “Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic,” in *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, 11.

<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 157; *Gest. Pel.* 11 (23).

<sup>69</sup> “*Quoniam sanctus episcopus Augustinus aduersus discipulos eius in Scilia respondit Hilario ad subiecta capitula scribens librum in quo ista continentur.*” Augustine, *Gr. et pecc. or.* 2.11 (12).

Gospel message.<sup>70</sup> Augustine wrote a *liber* (*Ep.* 157)<sup>71</sup> in reply, addressing each of these issues and twice mentions the drama in Sicily in two of his treatises.<sup>72</sup>

Like Hilary, we know very little about the Anonymous Sicilian. He seems to have been converted from a milquetoast Christianity, and, like many converts, was zealous for his new life.<sup>73</sup> His unflinchingly optimistic anthropology and his heavy emphasis on the possibility to be free of sin make him, in many ways, a more extreme version of Pelagius.<sup>74</sup> There is no doubt that at the time he wrote the texts that are extant, he was living in Sicily.<sup>75</sup> His *patria*, however, remains elusive. Mention of a long and difficult sea journey<sup>76</sup> led Caspari, Morris, and Evans to suggest that he was from Britain.<sup>77</sup> As Bonner and Rees have made clear, however, there is absolutely no evidence for such a statement; he could have been from anywhere, most likely in Italy or Gaul.<sup>78</sup> While there currently is not enough information to make any definitive claims, I am

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<sup>70</sup> *Ep.* 156.

<sup>71</sup> *Gest. Pel.* 11 (23).

<sup>72</sup> *Gr. et pecc. or.* 2.11 (12).

<sup>73</sup> Anonymous Sicilian, *Hon. tuae* 5 (1-2).

<sup>74</sup> Evans, *Four Letters of Pelagius*, 25; Bonner, *Augustine and Modern Research on Pelagianism*, 5; Rees, "Introduction," 18.

<sup>75</sup> Anonymous Sicilian, *Hon. tuae* 5 (2).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 (1), 2 (2), 5 (1).

<sup>77</sup> C.P. Caspari, *Briefe, Abhandlungen, und Predigten aus den zwei letzten Jahrhunderten des kirchlichen Altertums und dem Anfang des Mittelalters* (Brussels: Christiana, 1964), 387; Morris, "Pelagian Literature," 37; Evans, *Four Letters of Pelagius*, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Bonner, *Augustine and Modern Research on Pelagianism*, 5; Rees, "Introduction," 16, 148.

inclined to say that he was probably from Rome because of a passing mention of the *urbs* in one of his letters.<sup>79</sup>

It is clear that he was deeply influenced by Pelagius' *Expositiones, de vita Christiana, de virginitate, and de divina lege*, but even the origin of this influence is hotly disputed.<sup>80</sup> Some scholars claim that Pelagius and Caelestius had stayed in Sicily for a short time immediately before or after the sack of Rome, and it was at this time that they would have met each other;<sup>81</sup> others suggest that they might have met in Rome or that the Anonymous Sicilian only received Pelagius' texts while in Sicily.<sup>82</sup> Again, it is impossible to say with certainty, but I would suggest that they did not meet in Rome or Sicily and that the Anonymous Sicilian had only been influenced by Pelagius through texts. He names three different individuals (a "holy" Antiochus, a woman of great nobility, and a "holy" Martyrius)<sup>83</sup> whom he knew personally and who had greatly influenced him, but never once mentions Pelagius by name. This absence should not be ignored.

We know that he was married at one time, but by the time he was writing these letters he rejected marriage for chastity, as well as meat and non-Christian authors such

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<sup>79</sup> Anonymous Sicilian, *Hon. tuae* 5 (3).

<sup>80</sup> Evans, *Four Letters of Pelagius*, 28-9.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 29. Ferguson claims that Pelagius and Caelestius certainly stayed in Sicily, but this does not necessarily mean that they met the Anonymous Sicilian during this time. Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 49, 61.

<sup>82</sup> Rees, "Introduction," 18.

<sup>83</sup> Anonymous Sicilian, *Hon. tuae* 3.5 (2); *Ad adol.* 1.

as Virgil, Sallust, Terence, and Cicero.<sup>84</sup> The fate of his wife is unknown. His marriage produced a daughter whom he wanted to remain a virgin and whom he gave to the aforementioned woman of great nobility for instruction.<sup>85</sup> A friend of his—possibly a parent—applied intense pressure to get him to return to his homeland, but he refused to return stating that he needed to remain for a time where he had found this new teaching.<sup>86</sup> He did promise to return one day to the *urbs* with his female mentor once he had solidified his knowledge of the Christian life.<sup>87</sup> It also seems that he came from a wealthy family but that he had abandoned his wealth to live a life of poverty, which stung his correspondent, but did not seem to bother him.<sup>88</sup> Such ascetic tendencies far exceed anything we know about Pelagius or Caelestius, and set him apart from his compatriots.

Three of his six extant texts discuss sinlessness: *Honorificentiae tuae*, *Ad Adolescentem*, and, of course, *De possibilitate non peccandi*. In the first two, he only mentions sinlessness in passing, while third offers a defensive tone. Although it is impossible to prove definitively, I suggest that he had written the first two without any knowledge of the drama brewing in Africa, and the third was written directly against a text, or texts, challenging his position. In his *Reichtumskritik und Pelagianismus*. *Die*

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<sup>84</sup> *De cast.* 10 (9); *De mal.* 11 (1); *Ad adol.* 2 (4).

<sup>85</sup> *Hon. tuae* 5 (2-3). Rees says that he does not “understand why Nuvolene ... states that our author took the girl with him to Sicily.” If he were writing from Sicily, and the woman who influenced him was in Sicily, I do not understand Rees’ comment. Rees, “Introduction,” 154 n. 28.

<sup>86</sup> Anonymous Sicilian, *Hon. tuae* 5 (1).

<sup>87</sup> *Hon. tuae* 5 (3).

<sup>88</sup> *Hon. tuae* 4 (1).

*pelagianische Diatribe de divitiis: Situierung, Lesetext, Übersetzung, Kommentar,*

Andreas Kessler offers a window of 411-14 for the dating of this text.<sup>89</sup> If this is correct, and Teske's dating of 414-15 for Augustine's *Ep.* 157 is also correct, then it is possible that he had procured a copy of the response to Hilary in 414 and that it had instigated this *apologia*.<sup>90</sup>

The basis for his claim for sinlessness is even more tightly connected to the idea of the possibility of obeying all of the commandments than we see from his colleagues. God's law is very clear. "For if a man could not be without sin," he says, "there would be no commandment to that effect; but it is common knowledge that there is such a commandment, and so we must either describe God as unjust or, since it is wicked to think thus of God, must believe that he has commanded what is possible."<sup>91</sup> In another letter, he makes explicit the commandments he has in mind: you should not do to anyone what you do not want done to you (Tob. 4:15), and do to others what you would want done to you (Mt. 7:12. Lk. 6:31).<sup>92</sup>

His *De possibilitate non peccandi* gives us the most condensed exposition of his understanding of sinlessness. He once again cites several biblical passages (Lev. 19:2; Mt. 5:48; Phil. 2:14,15; Col. 1: 21, 22) to show that humanity is called to live without

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<sup>89</sup> Andreas Kessler, *Reichtumskritik und Pelagianismus. Die pelagianische Diatribe de divitiis: Situierung, Lesetext, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Paradosis 43 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitäts-Verlag, 1999), 108-13.

<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *Letters: 156-210*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans., Roland Teske., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>91</sup> *Hon. tuae* 1 (4).

<sup>92</sup> *Ad adol.* 4 (1).



sin.<sup>93</sup> With this authority established, he states that the inability to follow this command is a problem of the movement of the free will, and that “it is impious to say that sin is inherent in nature.”<sup>94</sup> This, I argue, is a thinly veiled rejection of Augustine’s *Ep.* 157. Along with similar statements from Pelagius,<sup>95</sup> this leads us to wonder if Augustine’s opponents ever clearly understood his belief that *peccatum originale* is not part of human nature, but, rather, a deficiency of human nature. Regardless, the Anonymous Sicilian stresses that the call to sinlessness encourages individuals not to sin and, when they do sin, to repent.<sup>96</sup> If one were to claim that sinlessness is impossible, this would lead to laziness, and it also would engender a false sense of security by giving sinners an excuse for their sins.<sup>97</sup> The call to the sinless life, he believes, is the only way to exhort sinners to virtue.

Sinlessness is viewed differently by Julian of Eclanum, whose argument is generally tied to his belief in the illusion of original sin and the goodness of human nature. In 408 or 409, Augustine received a letter from Memorius, the bishop of Apulia, asking him to send the six books of his *De musica* (completed around 391) for the education of his son, Julian, who was around twenty-five years old at the time. Short of patience, Augustine curtly replied that he had little time for such trivialities, but, in the

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<sup>93</sup> Anonymous Sicilian, *De poss. non. pecc.* 4 (3).

<sup>94</sup> *De poss. non. pecc.* 4 (1). See also, 3 (1).

<sup>95</sup> Pelagius, “we do, however, refute the charge that nature’s inadequacy forces us to do evil.” *Ad Dem.* 8.

<sup>96</sup> Anonymous Sicilian, *De poss. non. pecc.* 3 (2).

<sup>97</sup> *De poss. non. pecc.* 3 (1-2).

end, sent him the sixth book, the only one that had been corrected because he had been too busy. He then warmly requested that Memorius send him his son to visit him in Africa. “[I dare not] say that I love him more than you,” he gushes, “because I would not say this truthfully, but I still venture to say that I desire his presence more than yours.”<sup>98</sup> Such words were probably the only kind words that Augustine would ever have for the future bishop of Eclanum.

Julian was born around 380 and died in exile in Sicily, around 454. Gennadius tells us that he was proficient in both Latin and Greek,<sup>99</sup> and his classically Roman education demonstrated knowledge of Aristotle. He married Titia, the daughter of the bishop of Benevento, Aemilius; but it is unknown if they ever consummated their marriage.<sup>100</sup> By the time he tangled with Augustine, his marriage was chaste.<sup>101</sup> He became bishop sometime before 417,<sup>102</sup> and was known for extreme generosity to the poor.<sup>103</sup>

After Pelagius and Caelestius had been condemned in 418, Julian and 18 Italian bishops, mostly from Campania and around Aquileia,<sup>104</sup> refused to sign Pope Zosimus’

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<sup>98</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 101 (4).

<sup>99</sup> Gennadius, *De vir. Inlustr.* 46.

<sup>100</sup> Josef Lössl, *Julian von Aeclanum: Studien zu seinem Leben, seinem Werk, seiner Lehre und ihrer Überlieferung*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 60 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), 65-7.

<sup>101</sup> Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans., Antonia Nevill (London: S.C.M. Press, 2002), 413-14.

<sup>102</sup> Lamberigts, “Julian of Eclanum,” in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 478.

<sup>103</sup> Gennadius, *De vir. Inlustr.* 46.

<sup>104</sup> Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 414.

*Epistula tractoria*.<sup>105</sup> For his disobedience, he was forced to leave Italy a year later and was received, for a short time, by Theodore of Mopsuestia. He went to Constantinople where he sought refuge with Nestorius, as had Caelestius, but was exiled from there as well.<sup>106</sup> It was probably because of his association with Nestorius that he was condemned by name at the Council of Ephesus in 431.<sup>107</sup> In 439, he asked Pope Sixtus III (432-40) to reinstate him, but his request was denied.

For Julian, sinlessness almost entirely fades into the background, although not completely.<sup>108</sup> Sinlessness is still the undisputed goal, but he becomes so entangled discussing the means of reaching the goal that he almost loses sight of it.<sup>109</sup> He spends much more time discussing original sin which, if true, precludes any possibility of sinlessness. If one is ontologically sinful (he assumes that that is Augustine's

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<sup>105</sup> Lössl, *Julian von Aeclanum: Studien zu seinem Leben, seinem Werk, seiner Lehre und ihrer Überlieferung*, 262-79.

<sup>106</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 384.

<sup>107</sup> Lössl, *Julian von Aeclanum: Studien zu seinem Leben, seinem Werk, seiner Lehre und ihrer Überlieferung*, 311-19.

<sup>108</sup> Mathijs Lamberigts, "Julian of Aeclanum on Grace: Some Considerations," in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1991: Cappadocian Fathers, Greek Authors after Nicaea, Augustine, Donatism, and Pelagianism*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 348.

<sup>109</sup> Philip Barclift, "In Controversy with Saint Augustin: Julian of Eclanum on the Nature of Sin," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 58 (1991): 15. Augustine said that if Julian had not come along, "the structure of the Pelagian doctrine would necessarily have remained without an architect." *C. Jul.* 6 (36). For Augustine to make such a statement assumes a uniformity in his opponents' thought, and that Julian organized this uniformity and gave it a clear voice. These pages show that there was much more variety in their thinking and that it is accurate to say that Julian simply gave it form. Although Julian believed in the possibility of sinlessness, he spent more time attacking Augustine than putting forward his comprehensive view of sinlessness.

position),<sup>110</sup> one could never reach a state where one does not commit any acts of sin, which is how he distinguishes his definition of sinlessness from Augustine.<sup>111</sup> Augustine, he believes, makes his first mistake right at the beginning.

The twisted nature of original sin, which is best seen in *concupiscentia*, leads to the deprecation of marriage, Julian believes, an emphasis that sets him apart from his compatriots.<sup>112</sup> He holds that if concupiscence is a symptom of the fall, and everyone is subject to concupiscence, then one could never will oneself to a sinless life because of it. Such a view inevitably condemns marriage as evil because a husband and wife condemn themselves—and their children—through the marital act.<sup>113</sup> One must reject, he concludes, the idea of original sin, embrace concupiscence, praise marriage, and admit that sexuality is a gift, all of which do not impede a life without sin.<sup>114</sup>

## Conclusion

We have seen in this introductory chapter that modern scholarship has begun to reject the longstanding construct established by Augustine that *gratia* was the entrance into—and primary error of—the thought of Pelagius and his colleagues. As a contribution to this effort, this dissertation will explore the issue of sinlessness (which has

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<sup>110</sup> Augustine, *C. Jul. imp.* 1 (49).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 (47).

<sup>112</sup> Lössl, “Augustine, ‘Pelagianism’, Julian of Aeclanum and Modern Scholarship,” 143.

<sup>113</sup> Augustine, *C. Jul. imp.* 4 (106).

<sup>114</sup> Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 194-7.

been entirely overlooked until recently) of Pelagius' three most important opponents, Augustine, Cassian, and Jerome. Following the precedents set by Clark and Ayres, we will compare and contrast these authors to see how they addressed this question similarly and differently from each other. We have expanded the work done by Löhr and Rackett by seeing how Rufinus of Syria, the Anonymous Sicilian and Julian of Eclanum agreed with each other that sinlessness is possible while, at the same time, asserted it for different core reasons and emphasized it to different degrees. The stage is now set. Let us move to Augustine of Hippo.

# **CHAPTER TWO: AUGUSTINE**

## **Introduction**

Augustine never wrote one single text that presents his thoughts about sinlessness—these thoughts were spread over a number of texts. One's initial response may be to force these thoughts together to construct a mosaic to give a clear picture of how he conceived of sinlessness.<sup>1</sup> As is often the case with him, however, one cannot capture his thoughts in one picture.<sup>2</sup> Rather, one must approach them as one approaches Claude Monet's *Haystacks*, which must be viewed in succession to see how they changed over time and, only then, to come to a full appreciation of this series. In a similar fashion, we will analyze Augustine's beliefs on the possibility of sinlessness and see that they did not remain static; he changed his position several times over a few short years. We will look at his first five treatises (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*, *De spiritu et littera*, *De natura et gratia*, *De perfectione iustitiae*

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Clark argues that one may think of Augustine's thought as a mosaic, but I am convinced that this way of thinking warps our understanding of him. Clark, Mary, *Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom* (New York: Desclée, 1958), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Recent scholarship has attempted to make Augustine's thought homogenous from 386 until his death in 430: Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). This has caused a stir among Augustinian scholars: Mark Boone, "Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity, by Carol Harrison," *Augustinian Studies* 40 (2009): 154-7; Chad Tyler Gerber, "Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity, by Carol Harrison," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (2007): 120-2; Josef Lössl, "Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity, by Carol Harrison," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (2007): 300-2; David Meconi, "Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity, by Carol Harrison," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 180-2; John Rist, "Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity, by Carol Harrison," *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1011 (2006): 542-4; Paul Rorem, "Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity, by Carol Harrison," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 4 (2009): 519-21; Françoise Vinel, "Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity, by Carol Harrison," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 82, no. 4 (2008): 573-4.

*hominis*, and *De gestis Pelagii*) and the canons of the Council of Carthage of 418 (Augustine had been the key figure in constructing them) to demonstrate these changes.

Augustine wrote texts other than these five against Pelagius and others, such as *Julian*, which will not be discussed in this chapter because, after 418, there is little discussion about sinlessness. Why is this so? Is sinlessness, in the end, only a minor footnote? It receives little attention after Pelagius' condemnation, I argue, because of the superior rhetorical skills of Augustine, not because it becomes an irrelevant issue for his interlocutors. He, through the force of his writings, was able to shift the debate from sinlessness to his own interest: grace. This shift can best be seen at the end of his *De gestis Pelagii*.<sup>3</sup>

Two main points are at the heart of this chapter.

First, in his overall understanding of sinlessness, Augustine initially makes one claim (in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum* he permits a hypothetical possibility of anyone becoming sinless because, through God's grace, anything is possible; but, there has never been anyone in the history of the world who has actually been sinless) then asserts the opposite (in *De perfectione iustitiae hominis* he allows that there have been saints in the past who have been without sin) then demonstrates that he is unsure (in *De gestis Pelagii* he admits that this matter is open for

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<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 30 (55).

debate) and then, finally, he returns to his original position (through the canons of the Council of Carthage of 418, he shows that everyone has sinned).<sup>4</sup>

The second important point concerns the *Theotokos*. Augustine had very little to say about Mary, but what little he did say was important for later medieval thinking.<sup>5</sup> Initially, he claimed that Mary had sinful flesh just as the rest of humanity.<sup>6</sup> Later—forced to reconsider his position by Pelagius, who claimed that Mary was sinless<sup>7</sup>—he changed his mind and stated that he did not want to make any definitive claims about the Mother of God.<sup>8</sup>

Our idea that Augustine's understanding of the sinless life changed over time rejects established scholarly consensus. Gerald Bonner concisely offers the standard view of Augustine's thought during this debate; he claims that "Augustine was essentially re-stating the arguments which he had employed at the very beginning of the controversy in the *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione*" and that "as the controversy progressed, there occurred a change, not of doctrine but of emphasis."<sup>9</sup> While Bonner is correct that

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<sup>4</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.6 (7), 2.7 (8); *Perf. iust.* 21 (44); *Gest. Pel.* 30 (55); Dionysius, *Codex Canorum Ecclesiasticorum*, PL, vol. 67 (217B-219C).

<sup>5</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.24 (38).

<sup>7</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 36 (42).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Bonner, "Augustine and Pelagianism," *Augustinian Studies* 24 (1993): 43; Bonner, "Anti-Pelagian Works," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 41.



there was expansion, refinement, and, yes, a shift in emphasis in Augustine's writings, we will see that there was also a change in several of his key thoughts on sinlessness.

*De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*

Augustine began his reply to the notion of the possibility of living a life free of sin in his text *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*, probably written in 411/412, in response to a letter from Marcellinus. This letter, now lost, asked Augustine to respond to a variety of issues, including: whether or not Adam would have died if he had not sinned, whether or not sin passed to the descendants of Adam because of the fall, and whether or not people may be free of sin. Although Augustine addresses this work to Marcellinus, in reality this text is written as a response to the as of yet unnamed opponents, whom Marcellinus brought to Augustine's attention.

In this first text, Augustine does not take these opponents very seriously, nor does he seem to grasp the severity of their claims. He states that "one need not, of course, with a rash incautiousness, immediately oppose those who say that there can be human beings in this life without sin."<sup>10</sup> For him, this question seems to be an abstract theological exercise with very little at stake. Augustine's casual attitude prevents him from seeing the inevitable anthropological and soteriological issues (such as the autonomy of the free will and the individual's role in salvation) that are inseparable from

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<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.6 (7). Even in *Spir. et litt.* 2 (3), Augustine makes a similar claim that betrays that he still does not take his opponents seriously.

the question of sinlessness, which he would only later come to understand and reject.<sup>11</sup> Even Marcellinus, the layman and government bureaucrat, seems to have a better grasp of the implications of their claims than Augustine does.<sup>12</sup> We will see that it is not until *De natura et gratia* that Augustine considers them as corrupting the heart of the Christian message.

In Book II, Augustine responds to Marcellinus by asking and answering four questions: (1) whether or not one can live life without sin, (2) whether or not there has ever been a person—other than Jesus—who has been sinless, (3) why it is that no human being is sinless, and (4) whether or not someday there will be a person who achieves a state of sinlessness.<sup>13</sup> Although he was responding to Marcellinus' letter, Augustine—in a subtle rhetorical ploy—poses these four questions and, therefore, establishes the parameters of the debate.

The first question is only briefly discussed. Augustine claims that it is possible for one to remain sinless. This sinlessness may only be achieved, he says, through the grace of God and the movement of the free will. The free will is necessary because God will not force an individual to be sinless. The sinless life must be desired by the individual and only then will God offer His aid.<sup>14</sup> Initially, this may seem to be a

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<sup>11</sup> One may suggest that Augustine was diminishing the importance of this issue because he wanted to emphasize the issue of grace. This suggestion, however, is problematic because Augustine does not address the question of grace at all in this text. At this point of the debate, he has yet to put grace front and center.

<sup>12</sup> *Spir. et litt.* 1 (1).

<sup>13</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.6 (7), 2.7 (8-16, 25), 2.17 (26)-2.19 (33), 2.20 (34-36).

surprising claim and that Augustine has agreed with his opponents' arguments. He is making what I will call a "hypothetical" claim to sinlessness because, as we will soon see, he does not believe that there have ever been any individuals without sin. If Augustine categorically were to eliminate the possibility of the sinless life, then he would be placing a limitation on God's power. He would never want to do so and, therefore, allows this hypothetical possibility of God's intervention in the life of an individual.

Historically, as he makes clear in his second point, there has never been a single individual who has achieved such a state.<sup>15</sup> He refutes his opponents by quoting a variety of biblical passages (Ps 143:2; Ps 32:5-6; 1 Jn 1:8) and alludes to several others (Rv 14:3-5; Prv 18:17) that prove this impossibility.

In his third point, Augustine states that there has never been a sinless individual because there has never been anyone who truly wanted to be without sin. When one is assured that something is good then one will desire it. This knowledge of goodness, however, is due to the grace of God. At other times, one does not understand the goodness of a deed or take delight in it; it is at these moments that pride leads the individual to sin.<sup>16</sup>

Augustine then poses his fourth question: will there ever be anyone in the future who will be free of sin?<sup>17</sup> Despite his earlier claim that it is hypothetically possible for

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.6 (7).

<sup>15</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.7 (8).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.17 (26), 2.17 (27).

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.20 (34).

one to be without sin, he claims this will never happen.<sup>18</sup> Returning to an argument from Book I, he links the impossibility of a sinless life to his discussion about the necessity of baptism in infants because of original sin.<sup>19</sup> For, even if one is able to live a life in adulthood free of sin, through grace and the pure desire of the free will, one is still born corrupted.

### *De spiritu et littera*

Augustine's second treatise relevant for our topic, *De spiritu et littera*, written at the end of 412 or at the beginning of 413, was an expansion of his claim in Book II of *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*. Marcellinus read Augustine's initial response and was perplexed by his position that, in theory, one may live a life without sinning. He felt that it was absurd to claim that one may achieve such a goal and, at the same time, not be able to prove anyone has ever done so in the past. In response, Augustine points to several verses in the Bible (Mt 19:24; Mk 10:25; Lk 18:25) that show that something has been claimed as a possibility without there ever having been an historical case.<sup>20</sup>

While we do not see evidence in this text that Augustine has yet changed his thinking about sinlessness, it is still important for us because scholars have often misunderstood its purpose. Paul Meyer, for example, has argued that *De spiritu et littera*

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 2.20 (34).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1.9 (9).

<sup>20</sup> *Spir. et litt.* 1 (1).

should not be listed among the corpus of writings against Pelagius; rather, it simply should be read for a greater understanding of his exegesis of Paul.<sup>21</sup> Jean Chéné, likewise, has shelved Augustine's concern for sinlessness and analyzed *De spiritu et littera* to determine if Augustine made an argument for the universal salvific will of God.<sup>22</sup> Chéné, at least, is willing to acknowledge that it was written against Pelagius and those who claimed the possibility of a sinless life. But it seems to me that Meyer, Chéné, and other scholars<sup>23</sup> who only read this text for Augustine's definition of grace miss the point of *De spiritu et littera*. Although Augustine spends most of his time defining how one should correctly understand grace, he does so to explain how one may be sinless. Grace—which is bookended by a discussion of sinlessness (1 (1-2.3) and 35 (62-66)) and should be seen as framing the entire text—is the means to the end of sinlessness. Debate about the sinless life, then, caused Augustine's composition on grace.

### *De natura et gratia*

At the end of 414,<sup>24</sup> Augustine received a copy of Pelagius' *De natura*—written around 405-406<sup>25</sup>—from two men, Timasius and James, who had been admirers of

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<sup>21</sup> Paul W Meyer, "Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter* as a Reading of Paul's Romans," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 368.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Chéné, "Saint Augustin enseigne-t-il dans le *De spiritu et littera* l'universalité de la volonté salvifique de Dieu?," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 47 (1959): 223.

<sup>23</sup> Bonner, "Spiritum et littera, De," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 815-16.

<sup>24</sup> Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 333.

Pelagius. They had grown suspicious of his emphasis on the undefiled goodness of human nature and had written to Augustine stating that Augustine's words had swayed their opinions. Although *De natura* is no longer extant *in toto*, it is clear from the remaining fragments that its main focus concerns the possible sinlessness of humanity.<sup>26</sup> It was Augustine's reply, *De natura et gratia* (written towards the end of the spring of 415),<sup>27</sup> that signaled an important shift in his understanding of the arguments of his opponents, and displayed a more urgent tone in his rhetoric. But, he was still hesitant to condemn Pelagius openly because he hoped that Pelagius would recant his views—an unfounded thought, because Pelagius never hinted that he was open to persuasion. Brown argues that Augustine hesitated to mention Pelagius by name because of the powerful patrons who supported Pelagius, but Augustine has shown this naïve optimism in the past.<sup>28</sup> When one compares the treatises that he wrote against Pelagius and the Donatists, one sees, at the beginning, the same desire that they will come to agree with his position; but he would become frustrated and bitter by their resolve. By the end of his life, Augustine's aggravation with Pelagius had spilled over to Julian of Eclanum, against whom he unleashed a series of vulgar tirades.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Y.M. Duval, "La Date du *De Natura* de Pélage: Les Premières Étapes de la Controverse sur la Nature de la Grâce," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36 (1990): 283.

<sup>26</sup> Löhr, "Pelagius' Schrift *De natura*: Rekonstruktion und Analyse," 235-94.

<sup>27</sup> Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 333.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Brown, "The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West," in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 217.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *C. Jul. imp.* 2 (44), 2 (206), 4 (56).

*De natura et gratia* is of interest because we see a shift in Augustine's thinking about the Virgin Mary. Gerald Bonner offers the standard scholarly view:

Augustine, it will be noticed, is careful in his affirmation of universal human sinlessness to give Mary a place apart. It is not so much that he declares her personal sinlessness, as that he absolutely refuses to discuss the matter *propter honorem Domini*, for the honour of the Lord. This specific reference to the Mother of God—and the total number of such references is not very large in the great bulk of Augustine's writings—is evidence of the particular place which Mary enjoyed in the eyes of Christians by the beginning of the fifth century, not only in the Greek east but in the traditionally conservative Latin west.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine, in the passage to which Bonner alludes, says that one should “leave aside the holy Virgin Mary; on account of the honor due to the Lord, I do not want to raise here any question about her when we are dealing with sins. After all, how do we know what wealth of grace was given to her in order to conquer sin completely, since she merited to conceive and bear the one who certainly had no sin?”<sup>31</sup>

Bonner, Pelikan, Ferguson, and Doyle agree that Augustine said that Mary was sinless.<sup>32</sup> These scholars, however, ignore a previous discussion, from Book II of *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*, where a different understanding of Mary's *status* is given. “Therefore,” Augustine says, “he [Jesus] alone, having become man, while remaining God, never had any sin and did not assume sinful flesh, though he assumed flesh from the sinful flesh of his mother [*de materna carne*

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<sup>30</sup> Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 328.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *Nat. et gr.* 36 (42).

<sup>32</sup> Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 328, n.1; Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 33, 191, 195; Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 166; Daniel Doyle, “Mary, Mother of God,” in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 544.

*peccati*]. Whatever of the flesh he took from her, he either cleansed it to assume it or cleansed it by assuming.”<sup>33</sup> We can see here that there is a shift, over just a few years, from certainty to doubt about Mary’s sinfulness.<sup>34</sup>

It is impossible to know for sure what caused Augustine’s thought to change, but a few points should be made. Pelagius’ *De natura* offered a long list of men and women from the Old and New Testaments whom he believed were sinless; among others, he mentioned the Virgin Mary, which seems to have forced Augustine to take a closer look at his own thinking.<sup>35</sup> Augustine surely did not want to concede this point to Pelagius because he might be seen as associating himself with Pelagius. At the same time, he did not want to slander Mary. His only option would be quietly to avoid it. It is surprising that Pelagius allowed Augustine to do so and how rarely Mary is mentioned at all in this debate, as one would expect Pelagius often to refer to Mary as *the* exemplar of sinlessness. But, he does not. Rather, Pelagius chose to spend more time discussing other biblical figures such as Job or Elizabeth.<sup>36</sup> Augustine must have been relieved that he was not pressured by Pelagius to commit himself to an answer. While we must not project back to the fifth century our modern understanding of Mary’s Immaculate Conception and sinless life, the rare appearance of Mary in this debate is perplexing.

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<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.24 (38).

<sup>34</sup> Augustine is not clear when exactly the flesh of Mary was cleansed. This issue would later haunt the medieval theologians. For example, see John Duns Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, trans., Allan B. Wolter (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 2000), 2 (1-2).

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, “Piety demands, he [Pelagius] says, that we admit that she [Mary] was without sin.” *Nat. et gr.* 36 (42).

<sup>36</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.10 (14-15, 22).



*De perfectione iustitiae hominis*

Augustine received a text titled *Liber definitionum*<sup>37</sup> from two bishops, Eutropius and Paul, who asked him to respond to it because they were worried that it was being spread throughout Sicily.<sup>38</sup> His response, *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*, roughly can be dated between 412 and 418, although it was probably written around 416.<sup>39</sup> The majority of the citations from Caelestius are directly related to our topic, which show his theological preoccupation.

Two features deserve our attention: first, earlier in this chapter, we saw that Augustine believed that, although it is hypothetically possible to achieve a state of sinlessness (through the grace of God), in reality this historically has never been achieved. At the end of *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*, however, Augustine changes his mind:

finally, one might claim that, apart from our head, the savior of his body, there have been or are some righteous human beings [*aliqui homines iusti*] without any sin [*sine aliquo peccato*], whether because they never consented to its desires or because we should not consider as a sin

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<sup>37</sup> Honnay argues that Augustine did not believe that Caelestius actually wrote this text. Guido Honnay, "Caelestius, Discipulus Pelagii," *Augustiniana* 44 (1994): 281. I would argue, however, that the first paragraph of *Perf. iust.* suggests that Augustine believed that either Caelestius or his followers wrote it.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *Perf. iust.* 1.

<sup>39</sup> Bonner keeps open the possibility of the text being written as early as 412, while Teske places it at 415, as does Rackett. Bonner, "Perfectione iustitiae hominis, De," in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 646; Roland Teske, "Introduction," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Answer to the Pelagians* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1997): 269; Rackett, "Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity," 278. I would suggest that it was written after Augustine had met Orosius returning from Palestine, and received letters from Jerome, Hieron, Lazarus, and Jerome's *Dialogi*.

something so slight that God does not count it against their holiness. In any case, I do not believe that one should resist this idea too much.<sup>40</sup>

Note the shift of focus to allow the possibility of a sinless individual, which calls for a few comments. It is clear that Augustine does not have the Virgin Mary in mind because he uses the plural (*homines*), not the singular (*homo*).<sup>41</sup> He probably was thinking about some of the figures from the Old and New Testaments (Noah, Daniel, Job, Zechariah, Elizabeth), but Augustine did not want to mention them by name.<sup>42</sup> It is also not a coincidence that Augustine made this claim at the very end of the text while summarizing his argument because this allowed him to avoid expanding this argument. Although he hesitated to defend this new argument with any force, it should not be seen as simply an aberration but as a genuine change of heart.<sup>43</sup>

The second important point comes from the lines shortly after this quotation: “for I know,” Augustine says “that such is the view of some whose position on this matter I dare not reprehend, though I cannot defend it either.”<sup>44</sup> Teske has argued that Augustine was thinking of Ambrose,<sup>45</sup> but I want to suggest that he is referring to Jerome, who, as

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<sup>40</sup> Augustine, *Perf. iust.* 21 (44).

<sup>41</sup> While Mary is not mentioned by name, we should not necessarily include her just because she wasn’t explicitly excluded.

<sup>42</sup> These people previously had been discussed as possible examples of sinlessness. Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2 (10.12-16, 24).

<sup>43</sup> *Perf. iust.* 21 (44). It is unclear exactly what caused this change of heart. It could have occurred because of the change in circumstances in the debate or the context of the situation.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *Letters: 156-210*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans., Roland Teske., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2004), 18 n. 3.

we will see, claimed that one may be sinless for a short time.<sup>46</sup> Shortly before Augustine wrote this text, Paul Orosius (who will be discussed in detail in a later chapter) returned to Hippo from Palestine. He had brought with him, among other things, a letter (172) from Jerome and a copy of the *Dialogi contra Pelagianos*.<sup>47</sup> At first glance, this letter seems to praise Augustine, something that is a dramatic turn from their previous correspondence that displayed Jerome's suspicion of Augustine.<sup>48</sup> Jerome said that Augustine had written several books that "were full of learning and resplendent with every sparkle of eloquence."<sup>49</sup> Jerome, however, is actually criticizing Augustine in this letter because he also says that "[in Augustine's texts can be found] the words of the blessed apostle, 'each person abounds in his own ideas (Rom 14:5), one in this way, another in that (1 Cor 7:7).' Certainly whatever could be said and drawn from the sources of holy scriptures by your lofty mind [*ingenium*] you have stated and discussed."<sup>50</sup> This should be read as a subtle criticism because Jerome believed that Augustine was generating his own ideas about sinlessness and has turned away from the writings of the tradition in favor of his own opinions. This criticism is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Jerome earlier had charged Ambrose with plagiarism because

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<sup>46</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (12).

<sup>47</sup> Frend, "Orosius, Paulus," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 616.

<sup>48</sup> Stuart Squires, "Jerome's Animosity against Augustine," *Augustiniana* 58, no. 3 (2008): 181-99. For good introductions to this correspondence: Ferdinand Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*. (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1922), vol. I: 297-306; Carolinne White, *The Correspondence (394-419) Between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

<sup>49</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 172 (1).

<sup>50</sup> *Ep.* 172 (1).

Ambrose relied too heavily on the writings of others when he wrote on virginity.<sup>51</sup>

Second, Cassian would later criticize Jerome for abandoning tradition in favor of his own views when he wrote about ascetic practices, a criticism that would have made Jerome furious if he were still alive at the time. Goodrich states that “Jerome, in particular, is made the target of doubt [by Cassian]. He was a particularly eloquent writer, but his ascetic works were drawn from his own ingenuity [*ingenium*]. His teachings were the product of his fertile mind, rather than the fruit of *experientia*.”<sup>52</sup> Augustine clearly detected Jerome’s backhanded compliment because, shortly after receiving this letter, he began to quote authors such as Cyprian, Ambrose, Irenaeus, Hilary, Gregory, and Basil and would rely on tradition throughout his debate with Julian.<sup>53</sup>

This letter is also instructive because Jerome recognizes that he and Augustine think differently about sinlessness. He says that “if enemies, and especially heretics, see differences of opinion between us, they will slander us by saying that they stem from rancor of the heart.”<sup>54</sup> While Augustine and Jerome see themselves as having the same general agenda against Pelagius, both men recognize that they disagree on the question of sinlessness (which will become clearer after our analysis of Jerome).

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<sup>51</sup> Neil Adkin, “Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot,” *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993): 364-76.

<sup>52</sup> Richard J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 71.

<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *Nupt. et conc.* 2.29 (52); *C. ep. Pel.* 4.8 (20-11, 31); *C. Jul.* 1.3 (5-9, 46). Earlier, Augustine had mentioned some of these authors, but he was responding to Pelagius’ claim that his arguments are consistent with tradition. Augustine, *nat. et. gr.* 61 (71-67, 81). Augustine did not draw on the tradition until after he read Jerome’s letter.

<sup>54</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 172 (1).

### *De gestis Pelagii*

The last text from Augustine that is relevant for our purposes, *De gestis Pelagii*, was written in late 417 or early 418.<sup>55</sup> It was a reaction to the Synod of Diospolis that was convened at the end of 415. Two deposed bishops of Gaul, Heros of Arles (a disciple of Martin of Tours) and Lazarus of Aix, accused Pelagius of heresy. They charged him on seven counts from his own writings and also of agreeing with Caelestius, who had been condemned in Carthage. One of these bishops fell ill and could not attend; the other would not appear at the Synod without his colleague. Pelagius was proclaimed orthodox.

This decision by the Synod made Augustine's campaign against Pelagius much more complicated to justify. How was he supposed to attack Pelagius's ideas when a group of orthodox bishops found Pelagius to be in harmony with the Church? He claimed that Pelagius purposefully had misled the bishops,<sup>56</sup> and that it was not the fault of the Synod that they did not understand Pelagius' treachery because the bishops did not know Latin.<sup>57</sup> Augustine attempted to walk a thin line between criticizing him while, at the same time, not calling into question the legitimacy of the Synod itself.

Late in this text, Augustine once again returned to the question of sinlessness because he was upset by the fact that the texts of Pelagius neglect any mention of the

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<sup>55</sup> Bonner, "Gestis Pelagii, De," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 382.

<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 11 (26).

<sup>57</sup> Carole Burnett has pointed to the woefully inadequate case presented against Pelagius. Carole Burnett, "Dysfunction at Diospolis: A Comparative Study of Augustine's *De gestis Pelagii* and Jerome's *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*," *Augustinian Studies* 34.2 (2003): 155.

assistance of God. At the Synod, Pelagius' verbal testimony diverged from what he had written in his texts by adding the phrase "by the grace of God."<sup>58</sup> Although Augustine's anger at this discrepancy should come as no surprise, his next claim is intriguing. The Synod discussed the statement from Caelestius, which was condemned at the Council of Carthage of 411/12, that before Christ there were human beings without sin.<sup>59</sup> Pelagius distanced himself from this statement of Caelestius. He had stated previously that there were individuals who had been without sin, but now he only said that there were people who were holy and righteous.<sup>60</sup> Augustine says that Pelagius "realized, after all, how dangerous [*periculosus*] and difficult [*molestus*] a point it was [to agree with Caelestius]"<sup>61</sup> since Pelagius knew that Caelestius had been condemned for it. Augustine's mild language—in contrast to his earlier harsh criticisms—is noteworthy; he does not want to use stronger language than *periculosus* and *molestus* because he himself allowed for the possibility of just such a claim and he did not want to sound like a hypocrite.<sup>62</sup>

But, he is no longer certain of the possibility of a sinless life. In this text, there is yet another shift in his thinking and he now leaves open for debate the question of sinlessness, saying that "it was not ... decided [at Diospolis] whether in this flesh lusting

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<sup>58</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 11 (26).

<sup>59</sup> *Gest. Pel.* 11 (23).

<sup>60</sup> *Nat et gr.* 36 (42).

<sup>61</sup> *Gest. Pel.* 11 (26).

<sup>62</sup> *Perf. iust.* 21 (44).

against the spirit there has been, is, or will be someone with the use of reason and the choice of the will, whether in human society or monastic solitude, who will not have to say ... ‘forgive us our debts’ (Mt 6:12) ... that is perhaps a question to be peacefully investigated, not among Catholics and heretics, but among Catholics.”<sup>63</sup> We can see that he now abandons his previous position from *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*,<sup>64</sup> but does not yet want to commit himself to the opposite. The shift in Augustine’s thought from *De perfectione iustitiae hominis* to *De gestis Pelagii*, I would suggest, was caused by the indecision at Diospolis. Augustine recognized that his acknowledgement of possibility of the sinless life cannot ultimately be sustained, and the hesitancy of Diospolis persuaded him of this.

### **The Council of Carthage of 418**

The final piece of our puzzle comes from the Council of Carthage of 418. We know very little about this Council, but we do have nine canons from it—four are important for our purposes. Although these canons cannot be attributed solely to Augustine’s pen, he surely played an important role in the Council that was held on the first of May<sup>65</sup> with over 200 African bishops in attendance.<sup>66</sup> Shortly thereafter, probably

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<sup>63</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 30 (55). I have changed the punctuation of this translation to make Augustine’s words clearer.

<sup>64</sup> *Perf. iust.* 21 (44).

<sup>65</sup> Merdinger, “Councils of North African Bishops,” in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 249.

<sup>66</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 111.

on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June,<sup>67</sup> Pope Zosimus sent a response, his *Epistula Tractoria*, condemning Caelestius and Pelagius.<sup>68</sup>

Canons six through nine are important for us because, while Augustine had recently claimed that sinlessness is “perhaps a question to be peacefully investigated,”<sup>69</sup> the Council of Carthage closed the investigation by claiming that it is impossible for anyone to be sinless, including those who are considered “holy persons.”

- *Canon Six:* They [the bishops at the Council] likewise decreed that, if any say that we are given the grace of justification so that we can more easily (*facile*) do by grace what we are commanded to do by free choice, as though if grace were not given, we could still fulfill the divine commandments without it, though not easily (*facile*), let them be anathema.
- *Canon Seven:* They likewise decreed that, if any think that the statement of Saint John, the apostle, ‘if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:8),’ is to be interpreted in the sense that one should say that we have no sin on account of humility, not because it is the truth, let them be anathema.
- *Canon Eight:* They likewise decreed that, if any say that in the Lord’s Prayer holy persons say, ‘forgive us our debts’ (Mt 6:12), so that they do not say this for themselves, because this petition is no longer necessary for them, but for others who are sinners in their people, and that in this way every holy person does not say, ‘forgive me my debts,’ but ‘forgive us our debts,’ so that the righteous are understood to say this for others rather than for themselves, let them be anathema.
- *Canon Nine:* They likewise decreed that, if any claim that the words of the Lord’s Prayer where we say, ‘forgive us our debts’ (Mt 6:12), are said by holy persons in the sense that they say them humbly and not truthfully, let them be anathema.<sup>70</sup>

The discrepancy between Augustine’s hesitancy to make any claims for the possibility of sinlessness at the end of *De gestis Pelagii* and these four canons prompts many questions.

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<sup>67</sup> Teske, "Introduction," 377.

<sup>68</sup> Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 339.

<sup>69</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 30 (55).

<sup>70</sup> Dionysius, *Codex Canonum Ecclesiasticorum*, PL, vol. 67 (217B-219C).



What caused the Council to be called? I argue that Augustine was the main figure who organized the Council to condemn the theology of Pelagius. Augustine's frustration at the way that the Synod of Diospolis had failed to censure the writings of Pelagius (not to mention the attack on Augustine's character at the Synod of Jerusalem)<sup>71</sup> was too much for him to swallow; he had to take matters into his own hands. Augustine's central role in this Council may seem obvious, but we should keep in mind that Augustine had no hand in the Council of Carthage of 411/12 that dealt with Caelestius.<sup>72</sup> His leadership role, then, should not be assumed.

Two examples from these Canons point to Augustine's fingerprints on this Council. The first is from the discussion in Canon Six which addresses how "easily" (*facile*) one may keep God's commandments. This brings to mind Augustine's recent response found in *De gestis Pelagii*. After having received a letter from Pelagius about Diospolis, and having received the minutes of it from Cyril of Alexandria,<sup>73</sup> Augustine noticed an important difference between the two: in the first Pelagius used the word "easily" (*facile*), while in the second he did not.<sup>74</sup> This discrepancy was a sign to Augustine of Pelagius' heresy as well as his willful subversion of the Synod.<sup>75</sup> Second,

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<sup>71</sup> Orosius of Braga, *Liber Apologeticus, Contra Pelagianum*, PL, vol. 31 (1173D-1213), 4.

<sup>72</sup> For an excellent discussion of Caelestius and the Council of Carthage 411/12, see Otto Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1975), 4-28.

<sup>73</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 4\* (2).

<sup>74</sup> *Gest. Pel.* 30 (54).

<sup>75</sup> Robert F. Evans, "Pelagius' Veracity at the Synod of Diospolis," in *Studies in Medieval Culture*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1964), 21-30.

the quotation of 1 Jn 1:8 in Canon Seven reflects a biblical quotation that was constantly discussed throughout Augustine's writings.<sup>76</sup> The presence of these two examples cannot be coincidental and must be seen as stemming directly from Augustine. It is also clear that Augustine was behind the Council because, of the 200 bishops in attendance, only he and 14 other bishops remained in Carthage after the Council waiting for the response of the Pope.<sup>77</sup>

Did the other bishops need to convince him of the impossibility of a sinless life, or did Augustine come to this conclusion on his own? We saw earlier that Augustine had reconsidered his understanding of Mary based on the writings of Pelagius and his indecision on the sinlessness because of Diospolis. Here, however, Augustine did not return to his original point through any outside influence. Canons Eight and Nine give us a glimpse into Augustine's thinking. In the paragraph from *De gestis Pelagii* where he claims that the question of historical sinlessness is open to investigation, Augustine quoted Mt 6:12 (as we earlier saw) saying that "it was not, nonetheless, decided ... whether in human society or in monastic solitude, who will not have to say, not because of others, but because of himself, 'Forgive us our debts.'"<sup>78</sup> Both Canons Eight and Nine, however, use Mt 6:12 to claim definitively that there never has been, is, or will be anyone without sin. At some point between 416 and 418, therefore, Augustine's

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<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.7 (8), 2.8 (10), 2.10 (12), 2.13 (18); *Spir. et litt.* 36 (65); *Nat. et gr.* 14 (15), 34 (38), 36 (42), 62 (73); *Perf. iust.* 18 (39), 21 (44); *Gest. Pel.* 11 (26), 12 (27).

<sup>77</sup> Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 339.

<sup>78</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 30 (55). This passage from the *Pater Noster* was also crucial to Cassian's understanding of prayer, which is at the heart of his critique of Pelagius, as we will see in the next chapter. *Con.* 9 (18-24).

appreciation of this passage from the Lord's Prayer grew and it must have been one of the key factors that convinced him of the impossibility of the sinless life.<sup>79</sup> The importance of this verse can also be seen later in his refutation against Julian's claims of sinlessness.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that Augustine's understanding of the question of sinlessness changed as years passed and he slowly began to see the gravity of the claims that Pelagius, Caelestius, and others were making. Originally, he did not see that the question was one even to be taken seriously, even though Caelestius had been condemned at the Council of Carthage of 411/12 for saying that there were human beings before Christ who were sinless. We also saw that Augustine claimed that hypothetically one may be sinless because to say otherwise would limit the power of God. Despite this hypothetical possibility, Augustine originally claimed that there has never been anyone sinless and that there never will be anyone sinless. Even those men and women from the Old and New Testaments—such as Job, Noah, and Daniel—were certainly righteous individuals and exemplary compared to other humans, but they were not entirely sinless.

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<sup>79</sup> This argument is similar to one made by scholars, such as Paula Fredriksen, who claim that Augustine had changed his mind about the relationship between grace and free will around 396/97 because of a new assessment of the letters and life of Paul. Prior to this new assessment, in his *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine believed that the free will is unencumbered, while after this new assessment, (which changed as he wrote *ad Simplicianum*), Augustine believed that the will is impeded by the sin of Adam. Paula Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul against the Manichees and the Pelagians," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 23 (1988): 102-5.

<sup>80</sup> Augustine, *C. ep. Pel.* 1.14 (28), 4.10 (27); *C. Jul.* 2.8 (23), 4.3 (28), 4.3 (29).

Later, in *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*, he changed his mind to allow that there have been persons from the past who were sinless. In his next text, *De gestis Pelagii*, he is unsure if there has ever been anyone who was without sin and that this question is open for consideration. Then, he and the Council of Carthage of 418 say that sinlessness is an impossible state to achieve; anyone who claims the opposite is anathema.<sup>81</sup> The second main argument demonstrated that Augustine's view of Mary changed. Initially, he claimed that she was sinless, but later was compelled to suspend his judgment because Pelagius claimed that Mary was sinless.

We will see, however, that Augustine's concerns, preoccupations, and thought processes about sinlessness did not diverge only from Jerome, which we began to discuss in this chapter and will be discussed in detail later. In the next chapter, Cassian's thoughts on sinlessness will be analyzed and it will become apparent that, although Cassian ultimately agreed with Augustine that it is impossible for any individual to spend his or her entire life without sin, his conception of the question at hand is radically different than Augustine's. Cassian did not divide his thoughts between the possibility of hypothetical and historical sinlessness, as he was not interested in such theological gymnastics. Cassian's lens was, as always, ascetic. Sinlessness was understood by Cassian as a state of unceasing prayer whereby the monk was able to permanently avoid the trappings of the body and remain turned toward God without distraction. This permanent θεωρία is impossible, however, because of the weakness of the flesh. I will

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<sup>81</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.6 (7); *Gest. Pel.* 11 (23); *Pecc. mer.* 2.6 (7), 2.7 (8), 2.20 (34), 2.10 (12-14, 21); *Perf. iust.* 21 (44); *Gest. Pel.* 30 (54); Dionysius, *Codex Canorum Ecclesiasticorum*, PL, vol. 67 (217B-219C).

argue that Cassian's view of sinlessness developed from an Evagrian foundation, which will be significant in light of our later discussion on Jerome's writings on sinlessness.<sup>82</sup>

Before we begin our assessment of Cassian, it would be prudent to take a step back and to look at how this chapter on Augustine fits with the larger goals of this dissertation. While we only will be able to draw together the disparate threads of our three authors after they all have been discussed, a few words should be said here about Augustine. One of the stated objectives of this project is to shift the focus away from Augustine's central preoccupation with grace and assess how he, Cassian, and Jerome responded to the possibility of the sinless life, one of the central concerns of Pelagius, Caelestius, and Julian of Eclanum.<sup>83</sup> What we have seen here is that, unlike his understanding of grace which had remained constant since his *Ad Simplicianum* of 397,<sup>84</sup> Augustine's views on the possibility of the sinless life changed over time due to challenges he faced from his interlocutors. He was, in a sense, wrestling with these ideas while in the midst of refuting his opponents. This lens of sinlessness, rather than grace, provides for us a different approach by which we can come to a new appreciation of this anthropological debate.

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<sup>82</sup> We will see in the next chapter that many scholars over the years have pointed to an Evagrian influence on Cassian. No scholar, however, has yet to make the connection between these two men on the issue of sinlessness.

<sup>83</sup> We must be cautious about discussing issues of the fall, sin, grace, and salvation as separate issues. Although this project attempts to shift the focus away from Augustinian grace to sinlessness, all of these issues are intimately linked in the end and cannot be separated from each other.

<sup>84</sup> While Harrison believes that Augustine's understanding of the centrality of grace may be seen as early as 386, Augustine himself points to the fact that his thoughts had changed in 397. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, vi; Augustine, *Praed. sanct.* 4 (8).

# **CHAPTER THREE: CASSIAN**

## **Introduction**

Cassian, our second author, offers a different critique of sinlessness than Augustine. Since the late 16th century,<sup>1</sup> he (and others such as the monks of Gaul and Hadrumetum) has been relegated to an ancillary debate called the “Semi-Pelagian Controversy.” This attribution continues today in secondary sources—such as Weaver’s *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*—which constructs an artificial distinction between the “Pelagian” debate and the “Semi-Pelagian” debate. Just as this dissertation calls for a rejection of the term “Pelagian,” it now also calls for the term “Semi-Pelagian” to be abandoned because it is misleading, lacks nuance, and is ultimately unhelpful. It is important to include Cassian in our discussion with Augustine and Jerome here because, although scholars have tended to see him in a different light than these two authors, Cassian was as equally disturbed by Pelagius’ claims as they were.

This chapter will divide the analysis of Cassian’s thought into several sections. First, we must review Evagrius’ thought on *πρακτική* and *θεωρητική* because his ideas of pure prayer and contemplation of the Trinity are the foundation for Cassian’s critique of Pelagius that will be found in *Conf.* 23. Second, we will explore Cassian’s *Conf.* 22 to see that Cassian rejected the possibility of sinlessness because only Christ is sinless.<sup>2</sup> To

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<sup>1</sup> Leyser, “Semi-Pelagianism,” in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 761.

say that one may be sinless in this life is to equate oneself with Christ. Third, this chapter will assess Cassian's argument in *Conf.* 23. He defines sinlessness as the ability to remain forever in contemplation of God. This is impossible, however, because every monk is inevitably distracted by the needs of the flesh. It is in this conference that the influence from Evagrius will become most evident. Fourth, we will turn to the *De incarnatione*. This text is crucial for our purposes because it removes any doubt that Cassian's anonymous criticisms in *Conf.* 22 and 23 were directed at Pelagius as he was explicitly named and equated with Nestorius. Finally, we will see how the argument against sinlessness in *De incarnatione* reveals the anonymous target of criticism in Cassian's famous *Conf.* 13.

## Evagrius

Before we begin our analysis of Cassian's understanding of the sinless life, we must first say a few words about Evagrius' thought so that we will see clearly his influence on Cassian in our later sections. It is widely acknowledged by scholars that Evagrius was the most important influence on Cassian's intellectual development.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> While Augustine would certainly agree that Christ was sinless, this was not one of Augustine's arguments against Pelagius in the way that it would be for Cassian.

<sup>3</sup> Many scholars have noted the importance that Evagrius for Cassian: Salvatore Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico* (Rome: Herder, 1936), 103-5; Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, Second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 92; Peter Munz, "John Cassian," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 11 (1960): 1; Juana Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and its Sources," *Studia Monastica* 8 (1966): 8; Richard Byrne, "Cassian and the Goals of Monastic Life," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 22 (1987): 5. Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11; Steven Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, ed. Francis G. Gentry, *Studies in Medieval History and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 11; Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the*

Cassian probably had read Evagrius' work and they may have met when Cassian went to Cellia.<sup>4</sup> We must take a fresh look at Evagrius' thought because, while many scholars have pointed to the Evagrian influence of the concept of ἀπάθεια<sup>5</sup> (a term that Cassian never used, but the spirit of this idea may be found in his use of the biblical term *puritas cordis*),<sup>6</sup> no scholar has yet to draw a connection between Evagrius and Cassian's rejection of Pelagius' idea of the possibility of sinlessness. I will claim that one of Cassian's two arguments against sinlessness—seen in his *Conf.* 23—was influenced by Evagrius: Cassian's definition of sinlessness as pure prayer and contemplation of the Trinity. In this section, we will discuss Evagrius' understanding of the passions,

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*Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 120.

<sup>4</sup> Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism* (Cambridge: The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1950), 26; Ogliairi, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 120.

<sup>5</sup> Juana Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and its Sources: Symeon-Macarius, the School of Evagrius Ponticus, and the Apophthegmata Patrum," *Studia Monastica* 12 (1970): 7-41; Groves, "Mundicia Cordis: A Study of the theme of Purity of Heart in Hugh of Pontigny and the Fathers of the Undivided Church," 304-31; David Alan Ousley, "Evagrius' Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual life" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1979); Mark Sheridan, "The Controversy over Apatheia: Cassian's Sources and His Use of Them," *Studia Monastica* 39 (1997): 287-310; Róbert Somos, "Origen, Evagrius Ponticus and the Ideal of Impassibility," in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, ed. W.A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 365-73; Jeremy Driscoll, "Apatheia and Purity of Heart in Evagrius Ponticus," in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.*, ed. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 141-59; Benedict Guevin, "The Beginning and End of Purity of Heart: From Cassian to the Master and Benedict," in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.*, ed. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville: A Liturgical Press, 1999), 197-214; Augustine Casiday, "Apatheia and Sexuality in the Thought of Augustine and Cassian," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 45 (2001): 359-94; Christoph Joest, "The Significance of Acedia and Apatheia in Evagrius Ponticus: Part II," *American Benedictine Review* 55.3 (2004): 273-307.

<sup>6</sup> Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and its Sources: Symeon-Macarius, the School of Evagrius Ponticus, and the Apophthegmata Patrum," 32.



thoughts, memories, demons, senses, ἀπάθεια, pure prayer, and the goal of prayer—contemplation of the Trinity.

The two main problems that hinder monks on their ascent towards God are passions and evil thoughts. It is the goal of πρακτική, the first stage of the practical life, as Juana Raasch says, to achieve the “purification of the mind from the passions.”<sup>7</sup> These passions “are one type of distraction, a base one at that: the presence of passion disrupts the stability and calm which are necessary for the mind to ascend to God in prayer.”<sup>8</sup> Evil thoughts, the other distraction, constantly disrupt the mind from pure contemplation of God, and anchor the monk to this world.<sup>9</sup> Although passions and evil thoughts are similar and both hinder the monk’s progress, the relationship between passions and thoughts for Evagrius is not entirely clear. On the one hand, Raasch claimed that “the passions are set in motion by demons and give rise to thoughts, *logismoi*, within the soul.”<sup>10</sup> David Ousley, on the other hand, says that “passions are aroused by thoughts.”<sup>11</sup> Evagrius himself claims that there have been two schools of thought,<sup>12</sup> but never sides with either argument; sometimes, he leads his audience to believe that the passions are

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>8</sup> Ousley, “Evagrius' Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life,” 308.

<sup>9</sup> Evagrius, *Sen. ad virg.* 38.

<sup>10</sup> Raasch, “The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and its Sources: Symeon-Macarius, the School of Evagrius Ponticus, and the Apophthegmata Patrum,” 31.

<sup>11</sup> Ousley, “Evagrius' Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life,” 213.

<sup>12</sup> Evagrius, *Prak.* 37. See also Robert Sinkewicz, “Introduction.” In *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, xvii-xl. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 253-4 n. 46.

prior, while at other times he concludes that evil thoughts come first.<sup>13</sup> Evagrius is not deeply concerned with the order of the passions and evil thoughts, however, because they both need to be harnessed. This may be achieved through a series of rigorous ascetic endeavors.<sup>14</sup>

While Evagrius is not clear if passions cause the evil thoughts or the thoughts cause the passions, he is quite certain about the three culprits that elicit both passions and thoughts: memories, demons, and the senses.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes, these three act independently of each other; other times, they act in concert to cause the monk to become distracted from prayer.

Memory, the first cause, distracts the monk by bringing images into the mind that impede the monk's progress. Evagrius exhorts his audience to shun such memories. "When you pray," he says, "guard your memory strongly so that it does not present you with its own passions, but instead moves you toward knowledge of the service—for by nature the mind is too easily pillaged by the memory at the time of prayer."<sup>16</sup> With constant ascetic practice, however, one may begin to control these distracting memories so that they will not disrupt prayer.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 76.

<sup>14</sup> Evagrius, *De div. mal. cog.* 3.

<sup>15</sup> Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 76.

<sup>16</sup> Evagrius, *De ora.* 45.

<sup>17</sup> *De ora.* 62.

Evagrius spends much more time talking about demons, the second cause, than the other two causes. For him, demons pose the greatest threat to the stillness of the mind because they directly subvert it by acting “through the stimulation of a specific area of the brain, causing the appearance of a phantasm, which, the monk, if he is deceived, takes to be an image of God, or at least an apparition of him.”<sup>18</sup> More insidiously, they also are indirectly disruptive by forcing the monk’s memory to recall images to the mind.<sup>19</sup> Either by causing new phantasms or the recall of memory, demons are the most pressing enemy.

Senses, the third cause, are the least important of the three, and Evagrius says very little about them.<sup>20</sup> Even though the senses draw images from the external world into the mind, the monk’s true struggle remains in the interior life. “Evagrius,” as David Brakke says, “urges his reader to become not merely a ‘monastic man,’ that is, someone who has withdrawn from committing sins in action, but rather, a ‘monastic intellect,’ that is, someone who is free even from thoughts of sin.”<sup>21</sup> The senses, then, must not be allowed to distract the mind of the monk from its immediate objective, ἀπάθεια.

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<sup>18</sup> Ousley, “Evagrius’ Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life,” 300-1.

<sup>19</sup> Evagrius, *De ora.* 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Prak.* 38.

<sup>21</sup> David Brakke, “Introduction,” in *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 26.

The final stage of *πρακτική*, which may also be seen as the beginning of the *θεωρητική*, is *ἀπάθεια*.<sup>22</sup> Because there has been much confusion about this term, it is important that we specifically define how Evagrius used it. Ousley offers the best definition of Evagrius' understanding of this term when he says that "for Evagrius, then, *apatheia* is not a matter of man becoming a stone or a God [*contra* Jerome]: rather it is the reordering of the parts of the soul so that the rational is dominant, and thus the rational creature can act in accordance with its true (rational) nature. It does not differ materially from the goal of the *via purgativa* of the more classical terminology."<sup>23</sup> This "reordering" can only be achieved through ascetic endeavors.<sup>24</sup>

Evagrius, however, does not simply claim that a monk may achieve *ἀπάθεια*. Rather, he makes a distinction between imperfect *ἀπάθεια* and perfect *ἀπάθεια*.

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<sup>22</sup> Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and its Sources: Symeon-Macarius, the School of Evagrius Ponticus, and the Apophthegmata Patrum," 31; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 83; Ousley, "Evagrius' Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life," 222.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 223. There are two other definitions that may help clarify this term according to Evagrius: "For Evagrius *apatheia* is the goal of monastic asceticism. *Apatheia* is a state of integration 'where enemies cannot trouble, where anxiety cannot disturb, where injury is met with patience, where the changes and chances of mortality do not shake, where the will is detached and unwavering because it is set on God.' The term describes the monk who is free to love and therefore open to receive the direct knowledge of God or *gnosis*. In Evagrius's scheme, therefore, *apatheia* is the gateway to love, which is the gateway to contemplation." Richard Byrne, "Cassian and the Goals of Monastic Life," 11. "Thanks to his fondness for gnomic utterances, we have several pithy definitions of *apatheia* from Evagrius. Thus, '*apatheia* is the tranquil state of the rational soul framed by meekness and prudence,' it is also 'the health of the soul' and 'the blossom of ascetic struggle.' 'The passions that fall upon the heart are vices, on account of the deprivation of which one is called 'passionless.' 'The kingdom of heaven is *apatheia* of the soul with true knowledge of reality.' Evagrius presupposes that ascetics can possess *apatheia* here and now." Casiday, "Apatheia and Sexuality in the Thought of Augustine and Cassian," 368.

<sup>24</sup> Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and its Sources: Symeon-Macarius, the School of Evagrius Ponticus, and the Apophthegmata Patrum," 7-41; Ousley, "Evagrius' Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life," 217-19; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 67.

Christoph Joest has articulated the difference between the two by stating that “imperfect apatheia belongs to a man who still experiences temptations, but once he has overcome all demons, then is perfect passionlessness attained.”<sup>25</sup> Evagrius himself tells us that perfect ἀπάθεια may be achieved only when the monk is able to overcome the temptations of demons.<sup>26</sup> Only once the monk is able to remain undisturbed by passions and thoughts stirred by demons, memories, and senses has he obtained true ἀπάθεια.

This experience of ἀπάθεια, however, is only the necessary precondition that allows the desired state of pure prayer.<sup>27</sup>

Pure prayer is the target at which the monk aims. Evagrius, Elizabeth Clark says, identifies [pure prayer] with contemplation, requires that worshipers rid themselves of both emotions and images from the sense world. Prayer demands a kind of ‘purgation’ that entails a moral, spiritual, and (we would say) psychological discipline. The time of prayer serves as a kind of ‘mirror’ through which we can judge the condition of our own souls: it is, he posits, a ‘state’ (*katastasis*).<sup>28</sup>

When the monk has reached this “state,” all internal and external distractions fail to disrupt the monk’s focus. Evagrius offers an amusing and powerful image of a monk who had reached this state of pure prayer: “there was,” he says, “another of the saints living in stillness in the desert, vigorous in prayer, whom the demons, when they

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<sup>25</sup> Joest, “The Significance of *Acedia* and *Apatheia* in Evagrius Ponticus: Part II,” 280-1. See also, Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Evagrius, *Prak.* 60.

<sup>27</sup> *De ora.* 71; Ousley, “Evagrius’ Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life,” 305-7; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-7.

attacked, played with like a ball for two weeks: they tossed him in the air and caught him in a rush-basket, but they were not in the least able to lead his mind down from its fiery prayer for even a moment.”<sup>29</sup> This saint was only able to remain in prayer during this ordeal because his mind was no longer cluttered with thoughts and passions.<sup>30</sup>

Pure prayer itself, however, is not the end; if it were, Hans Urs von Balthasar would be correct—Evagrius’ thought would be closer to Buddhism than Christianity.<sup>31</sup> The true end is the mind’s ability to contemplate the mystery of the Trinity, which is only made possible through ἀπάθεια and pure prayer. Evagrius says that “a monastic intellect is one who has departed from the sin that arises from the thoughts that are in our intellect and who at the time of prayer sees the light of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>32</sup> With pure prayer, as Owen Chadwick claims, the “*Nous* has become the temple of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>33</sup> Only once the monk has been able to reach this level of contemplation of the Holy Trinity does he achieve his aim. Unfortunately, the monk cannot remain contemplating the Holy Trinity indefinitely as “it is not within our power to prevent thoughts from troubling our mind.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Evagrius, *De ora.* 111.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Ponticus,” *Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik* (1939): 38.

<sup>32</sup> Evagrius, *Antir.* Prol. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism* (Cambridge: The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1950), 85.

### ***Conference 22 and 23***

Cassian's arguments against Pelagius begin in *Conf.* 22 and 23.<sup>35</sup> They were written sometime around the year 427 and were dialogues held between Cassian, his travelling companion Germanus, and with Abba Theonas.<sup>36</sup> Theonas most likely lived in Scetis.<sup>37</sup> The beginning of *Conf.* 21 tells us that his parents made him marry at a young age because they were concerned about his chastity, believing that marriage would prevent him from falling into sin. He had been living with his spouse for five years when he went to Abba John—who was in charge of alms for the poor—to offer him a tithe.<sup>38</sup> After listening to John's teaching, Theonas decided that he must leave his wife and

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<sup>34</sup> Steven Driver, "From Palestinian Ignorance to Egyptian Wisdom: Jerome and Cassian on the Monastic Life," *American Benedictine Review* 48 (1997): 311.

<sup>35</sup> Rebillard claims that *Conf.* 11 was written against Pelagius. Cassian's only brief mention of sinlessness (11.9.5.), I argue, leads to the conclusion that Cassian had probably only heard of Pelagius' argument through Augustine or Jerome at that point; it was not until later that he had actually read Pelagius' own writings. Éric Rebillard, "*Quasi funambuli*: Cassien et la controverse pélagienne sur la perfection," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 40 (1994): 197-203; 209.

<sup>36</sup> We cannot know exactly when they was written, but Rebecca Harden Weaver says that we can be certain that the third group "would have been completed between Honoratus's accession in late 426 and his death, probably early in 429. Because of the close relation among the three groups, it seems reasonable that the third group was composed soon after the first two, thus probably 427." Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*. North American Patristic Society: Patristic Monograph Series (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 94.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart suggests that "the evidence seems to converge on Scetis, rather than either Panephysis or Diolcos, as Theonas' monastic home." See Stewart's analysis of the available data on Theonas' geographic location. Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 137.

<sup>38</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 21.1 (1).

devote himself to the ascetic life.<sup>39</sup> Cassian would meet him years later in the desert and sit at his feet.

In his *Conf.* 22, Cassian offers his first of two critiques of the idea that one may live a sinless life. He rests this first on a Christological foundation, a point that we will see again in his *De incarnatione*. It is Christ, and Christ alone, whose life was lived without falling to temptation. “But,” Cassian says, “what would be the meaning of what the Apostle says—namely, that he came in the likeness of sinful flesh—if we too could have a flesh unpolluted by any stain of sin? For he says this of him who alone is without sin as if it were something unique: ‘God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh’ [Rom. 8:3].”<sup>40</sup> For Cassian, one can never claim that one may be sinless because sinlessness is reserved only for Christ, and anyone who claims such a place with Christ is anathema. “Whoever [*quisquis*] dares to say that he is without sin, therefore, claims for himself, by a criminal and blasphemous pride, an equality in the thing that is unique and proper to him alone.”<sup>41</sup> To whom does this *quisquis* refer? It cannot be Germanus, because he never made any claim that sinlessness is possible. He only asked about those who are permitted to “participate in the mysteries of Christ.”<sup>42</sup> If all are sinful and only those who are “free of wrong doing” may receive the sacraments, he did not understand

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 21.9 (7).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 21.11 (1).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 22.12 (3).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 22 (8).



who could ever partake in them.<sup>43</sup> Cassian, then, must be arguing against someone outside of the dialogue between Theonas and Germanus—he most certainly was referring to Pelagius. We will see later that this is confirmed by Cassian's *De incarnatione*.

The main focus of this conference was on the problem *De nocturnis inlusionibus*. A discussion about sinlessness was a tangent leading away from this stated goal. Theonas, therefore, did not wish to pursue the topic of sinlessness and stopped the dialogue before going any further.<sup>44</sup> He resumed his discussion—and introduced a second critique of Pelagius—in *Conf.* 23, the “companion” to *Conf.* 22.<sup>45</sup>

*Conf.* 23,<sup>46</sup> which often is ignored in favor of others such as 12, 13, or 16, does not receive the proper scholarly attention it deserves.<sup>47</sup> Scholars often believe that it is tedious and offers little for a greater understanding of Cassian's thought. Boniface Ramsey, for example, dismissed it when he stated that it “is little else than a lengthy and somewhat repetitive commentary.”<sup>48</sup> We will see that it is much more than that.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 22 (8).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 22 (16).

<sup>45</sup> Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 86.

<sup>46</sup> Julien Leroy and Ansgar Kristensen argue that this conference was intended for a cenobitic audience. Julien Leroy, “Les préfaces des écrits monastiques de Jean Cassien,” *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 42 (1966): 171-4; Ansgar Kristensen, “Cassian's Use of Scripture,” *American Benedictine Review* 28 (1977): 271. Stewart, however, argues that “there is no geographical reference in them that fixes Theonas' location, though the milieu seems to be anchoritic.” Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 137.

<sup>47</sup> Terrence, Kardong. “John Cassian's Teaching on Perfect Chastity,” *American Benedictine Review* 30 (1979): 249-63; D.J. Macqueen. “John Cassian on Grace and Free Will with Particular Reference to *Institutio* Xii and *Collatio* Xiii,” *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 44 (1977): 5-28; Adele Fiske. “Cassian and Monastic Friendship,” *American Benedictine Review* 12 (1961): 190-205.

It begins as a close analysis of Paul's statement that "the good that I want to do I do not do, but the evil that I hate, this I do. But if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it but sin dwelling in me ... I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see another law in my members at war with the law in my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members (Romans 7:19ff)," which was introduced at the end of *Conf. 22*. Few of Cassian's *Conferences* confined themselves to close analysis of only one particular passage.<sup>49</sup> He used Paul's Epistle as a springboard to criticize Pelagius' understanding of sinlessness. Éric Rebillard has argued that *Conf. 23* is "*au cœur de la controverse pélagienne*."<sup>50</sup> Stewart has suggested that it should be understood as a reaction to Jerome.<sup>51</sup> Neither Rebillard nor Stewart constructed arguments to support their statements; they only made their claims in passing. I believe that Rebillard and Stewart are both correct, and I will offer evidence to show that it was written against both men.

Germanus believes that Paul was speaking about sinners in Rom. 7:19ff.<sup>52</sup> Because Paul was *beatus*, Germanus could not bring himself to believe that the Apostle would ever refer to himself in such a vulgar fashion. Theonas counters Germanus saying

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<sup>48</sup> Boniface Ramsey, "General Introduction," in *John Cassian: The Conferences* (New York: Newman Press, 1997), 785.

<sup>49</sup> Modestus Haag, "A Precarious Balance: Flesh and Spirit in Cassian's Works," *American Benedictine Review* 19 (1968): 180.

<sup>50</sup> Éric Rebillard, "*Quasi funambuli*: Cassien et la controverse pélagienne sur la perfection," 198.

<sup>51</sup> Casiday, "Cassian Against the Pelagians," 23. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 28; see also n.4 p. 159. He states that this conference was written in response to Jerome's *Ep.* 133.

<sup>52</sup> Boniface Ramsey claims that Germanus was following Origen's exegesis here and that Theonas' contradiction to this claim goes against Origen. Boniface Ramsey, "General Introduction," 783.

that Paul was, in fact, talking about those who are perfect.<sup>53</sup> For Theonas, sinners would never claim that they do not want to do evil.<sup>54</sup> In a rhetorical style typical for Cassian, Theonas offers a laundry list of biblical quotations (Gn 8:21 LXX; Cf. Phil 3:19; Jer 9:4; Rom 7:25b; Mt 15:19)<sup>55</sup> in order to show that sinners revel in their misdeeds.

Theonas claims that Germanus should not look at the bare signification of Paul's words. Rather, he says that "when we have considered not in word but in experience the condition of dignity of those by whom they were put forth and arrived at the same disposition, in accordance with which all these meanings were without a doubt conceived and these words uttered."<sup>56</sup> In other words, Paul *appears* to be speaking about sinners, but we must understand that he was intending to speak about himself, and anyone else who was of the spiritual elite. It is impossible to know, however, exactly what were his failures until one is on his spiritual level. Although he certainly had "splendid and precious jewels"<sup>57</sup> that few other men could obtain, he would give them all up to reach perfection that had eluded him.

What is this perfection? Theonas used the biblical example of Mary and Martha (Luke 10: 38-42)<sup>58</sup> to indicate that even though Paul (and the other apostles) was virtuous

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<sup>53</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.16 (2), 23.1 (1).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.1 (3).

<sup>55</sup> Boniface Ramsey, "General Introduction," 814.

<sup>56</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.2 (1).

<sup>57</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.2 (4).

<sup>58</sup> This story of Mary and Martha would become the standard story recited by monks throughout the Medieval Period to indicate the superiority of the contemplative life over the active life. Pelikan, *The*

in chastity, abstinence, prudence, hospitality, sobriety, temperance, mercy and justice,<sup>59</sup> the perfection that he sought was θεωρία, or *contemplatio Dei*. Thus, while it is good to possess all virtues, permanent contemplation of God is superior to everything else.<sup>60</sup> He insists that it only will be in the future when the corruption of this life has been replaced by grace that one will be able to bask ceaselessly in the beatific vision.<sup>61</sup>

No matter how virtuous one is in this life, or how much one wants to devote oneself to contemplation, one inevitably must act. Even when one is able to have a quiet mind for a time, the needs of the flesh inevitably force the mind to lose focus. Not even Paul, blessed with many gifts, was able to sustain his gaze upon God because of his earthly responsibilities.<sup>62</sup> This definition of sinlessness is noteworthy and it differs from the definitions of sinlessness from Augustine and Jerome, which we will see later. Cassian, as we have seen, allows for an individual (someone as holy as Paul) to be perfectly virtuous. In other words, one may be *sanctus*, but not *immaculatus*.<sup>63</sup> No one is entirely sinless, however, because one cannot remain vigilant in prayer.<sup>64</sup>

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*Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300): The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 119-120.

<sup>59</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.2 (2).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.4 (4).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.3 (4).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.5 (1), 23.5 (30), 23.5 (5-6).

<sup>63</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 20 (12).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.5 (9).

To common sinners, the inability to maintain unceasing prayer seems like an insignificant problem. To men like Paul who strive to keep their gaze on God's splendor and ignore the trials of daily life, however, this mental endeavor is no trivial matter.<sup>65</sup> These holy men understand that the briefest lapse in contemplation is a great offense against God because to turn away from Eternal Beatitude to the finitude of the sensorial world is a sin of impiety. He tells Germanus why Paul took this seemingly insignificant problem so seriously, saying that "rightly will a person be guilty not only of no insignificant sin but in fact of the very serious crime of impiety if, while pouring forth his prayer to God, he suddenly goes after a vain and immoral thought and abandons his presence, as if he neither saw nor heard."<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, those who "cover the eyes of their heart with a thick veil of vice" are constantly running from pleasure to pleasure in hopes of finding fleeting moments of happiness.<sup>67</sup>

The problem with sinners, Theonas says, is that they are unaware that they should even strive for the perfection of sinlessness. Sinners are only capable of realizing the severity of the "capital crimes" that they commit and feel that it is only the worst sins which need to be avoided.<sup>68</sup> When such sins are successfully averted, the sinner feels

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 23.6 (2).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 23.6 (4).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 23.6 (5).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 23.7 (1).

that he has done his duty and has achieved a state of sinlessness. This false sense of spotlessness precludes the sinner from seeking forgiveness from God.<sup>69</sup>

It is this definition of sinlessness as θεωρία or *contemplatio Dei* where we can best see the Evagrian foundation for Cassian's rejection of Pelagius. Evagrius, as we saw in the previous section, claimed that the monk's goal was to achieve a state of pure prayer after having gone through a rigorous ascetic process that harnessed the mind. This pure prayer leads to the contemplation of the Trinity. While Cassian did not use the exact same vocabulary as Evagrius, (Cassian often avoided Evagrius' vocabulary),<sup>70</sup> the Evagrian ideal is present in *Conf.* 23. Cassian's rejection of Pelagius' belief in the possibility of sinlessness, then, is clearly rooted in Evagrian soil.

In chapter 11, Cassian shifts his discussion from articulating the problem of the impossibility of permanent contemplation of God to the cause of this problem: a postlapsarian humanity where the flesh is constantly at "war with the law of [the] mind."<sup>71</sup> One is forced to abandon *contemplatio* because the human condition, after the fall of Adam and Eve, no longer has the capacity to remain forever turned towards God. The necessity of sin is "inserted in the nature of the human condition ... which leads captive their understanding by the violent law of sin, forcing it to abandon the chief good and to submit to earthly thoughts."<sup>72</sup> Pelagius often argued that God gave humanity the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 23.7 (2).

<sup>70</sup> Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 42.

<sup>71</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.11 (1).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 23.11 (1).

capacity to choose either good or evil, that “it was because God wished to bestow on the rational creature the gift of doing good of his own free will and the capacity to exercise free choice, by implanting in man the possibility of choosing either alternative [good or evil].”<sup>73</sup> Cassian rejects the idea of the unadulterated free will in *Conf.* 23 because every descendent of Adam suffers from this condition.

God, of course, could have prevented Adam and Eve from turning to contingent reality so that they would not have faced punishment. But, Theonas says, this unjustly would have suspended the autonomy of the free will given to our first parents; it was just of God to honor their choice to obey the serpent.<sup>74</sup> God knew that “He could have saved them then, but he did not wish to, because justice did not permit breaking sanctions imposed by his own decree.”<sup>75</sup> Instead, God “was reserving his salvation for future ages, so that the fullness of the set time might be attained in the proper order.”<sup>76</sup> That “proper order” would come about generations later through Jesus.<sup>77</sup>

Humanity is certainly fallen, Theonas insists, and, although we cannot permanently remain clean because of the law of sin, the way that we know that our condition is flawed is because of our ability to contrast our experience of sin with the

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<sup>73</sup> Pelagius, *Ad Dem.* 3 (2).

<sup>74</sup> Here, Augustine and Cassian would agree about postlapsarian humanity. Curiously, though, Cassian can sound even more radical than Augustine when, for example, he writes that “we are most salutarily chastened when he deigns to visit us, that we are often even against our will drawn to salvation by him, and lastly, that when he visits and moves us, he turns even our free will itself, which is readily inclined to vice, to better things and to the path of virtue.” *Inst.* 12 (18).

<sup>75</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.12 (6).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.12 (5).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.12 (6).

sweetness of contemplation. To stress this point, he quoted Isaiah: “woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips (Is. 6:5).”<sup>78</sup>

How would Isaiah even know that he is unclean, Theonas asks? Isaiah understood his impurity in light of the fact that he had earned the right for purity through *θεωρία*.<sup>79</sup> One, then, may earn the “purity of perfection” through the efforts of *contemplatio Dei*. It is due to human efforts that one may know the “true and integral purity of perfection,” but, Cassian is sure to declare that this merit does not earn salvation because it is only “thanks to the grace and mercy of the Lord, they [sinners] presume upon the complete justification that they despair of being able to attain due to the condition of their human frailty.”<sup>80</sup>

Towards the end of the *Conference*, Cassian directly connects this second criticism back to the criticism we saw in *Conf. 22*. Theonas says that

whoever [*quisquis*], then, ascribes sinlessness (*anamarteton*)—that is, impeccability (*impeccantia*)—to human nature must go against not empty words but the witness and proof of his own conscience, which is on our side, and he may declare that he is without sin only when he feels that he has not been violently torn away (*avellere*) from the highest good. For, indeed, whoever looks into his own conscience, to give but one example, and sees that he has attended even one synaxis without having been interrupted (*interpellatio*) by any word or deed or thought may declare that he is sinless.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 23.17 (2).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 23.17 (3).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 23.17 (8). See also: *Inst.* 12 (14,17). and *Coll.* 3 (10,15).

<sup>81</sup> *Coll.* 23.19 (1). I have changed Ramsey’s translation here from “snatched away” to “violently torn away” to indicate the severity of the force at hand.



It is also characteristic of Cassian that he proceeds to be very practical in describing how we would know we were *absque peccato*: if we can survive one *synaxis* without any *interpellatione*—not, at first sight, a heavy demand. I would suggest that Cassian has in mind the same *quisquis* that we saw earlier in his *Conf.* 22: this is a reference to Pelagius.

It is not only Pelagius whom Cassian criticizes: he also takes Jerome to task for his statements on the possibility of being sinless in the short term—which we will analyze in detail in the next chapter. Jerome said that “we maintain, however, that perpetual freedom from sin is reserved for God only, and for Him Who being the Word was made flesh without incurring the defects and the sins of the flesh. And, because I am able to avoid sin for a short time, you cannot logically infer that I am able to do so continually. Can I fast, watch, walk, sing, sit sleep perpetually?”<sup>82</sup> Cassian would certainly agree with Jerome’s assessment that the ultimate ability to be sinless is “reserved for God only.” He, however, critiques Jerome for stating that one may be sinless “for a short time.” Theonas said that “although they [the holy] have not only uprooted all of their vices but are even attempting to cut off the thought and the recollection of their sins, they nonetheless profess daily and faithfully that they cannot be free from the stain of sin for even a single hour.”<sup>83</sup> Earlier, Cassian had also asked if one “is so close to him that he may rejoice to have carried out the Apostle’s order, in which he commanded us to pray without ceasing, for even a single day?”<sup>84</sup> We can see with

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<sup>82</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (12).

<sup>83</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23 (20).

these two quotes that there is a disconnect between Cassian and Jerome about the potential to avoid sin in the short term.

### *De incarnatione*

We now must turn to the last text relevant for this chapter, Cassian's *De incarnatione*. It was written around 429-30 and is his third and final surviving work.<sup>85</sup> *De incarnatione* was commissioned by Leo who, at the time, was archdeacon, but later would become the Pope.<sup>86</sup> After having finished his two great works, Cassian had hoped to "remain in the obscurity of silence"<sup>87</sup> but was forced (*compellere*) to condemn the Christology of Nestorius, who was still the bishop of Constantinople.<sup>88</sup> Cassian attacked Nestorius, but probably had little knowledge of Nestorius' thought, and few traces of his Christology can be found in *De incarnatione*.<sup>89</sup> This text has been heavily criticized as theologically sloppy by such scholars as Chadwick, Grillmeier, Rousseau, Stewart, and Ogliari.<sup>90</sup> Casiday, however, has defended it as "theologically sound."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 23.5 (9).

<sup>85</sup> Augustine Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 229.

<sup>86</sup> Gennadius, *De vir. ill.* 61.

<sup>87</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* Preface.

<sup>88</sup> Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*, 229.

<sup>89</sup> Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans., John Bowden, Second, Revised ed., vol. 1. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 468.

<sup>90</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 153-67; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 468-72; Philip Rousseau, "Cassian:

While *De incarnatione* is a popular text among scholars because of its Christological offerings, it is rarely mentioned in discussions about Pelagius.<sup>92</sup> Weaver, for example, never references it in her *Divine Grace and Human Agency* and does not even feel that it is worth including in her bibliography.<sup>93</sup> Although a discussion of Cassian's Christology and his understanding of Nestorius' Christology would be outside the bounds of this dissertation, I believe that *De incarnatione* reveals much about Cassian's position against Pelagius—scholars, therefore, need to give it proper attention.

The first important point comes from the beginning of the text. As we saw in our earlier sections, Cassian never uttered Pelagius' name in his *Conferences*. *De incarnatione*, however, explicitly mentions the "Pelagians." Cassian states that "they actually went so far as to declare that men could also be without sin if they liked. For they imagined that it followed that if Jesus Christ being a mere man was without sin, all men also could without the help of God be whatever He as a mere man without participating in the Godhead, could be."<sup>94</sup> Shortly after this, Cassian accuses Nestorius of believing this same idea which, he says, Nestorius learned from Pelagius.

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Monastery and World," in *The Certainty of Doubt: Tributes to Peter Munz*, ed. Miles Fairburn and W.H. Oliver (Wellington: University of Victoria Press, 1996), 84; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 31; Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 123-4.

<sup>91</sup> Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*, 254.

<sup>92</sup> A notable exception to this is Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 174 n. 31.

<sup>93</sup> Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, 241.

Whence this new author [Nestorius],” he says, “of a heresy that is not new, who declares that our Lord and Saviour was born a mere man, observes that he says exactly the same thing which the Pelagians said before him, and allows that it follows from his error that as he asserts that our Lord Jesus Christ lived as a mere man entirely without sin, so he must maintain in his blasphemy that all men can of themselves be without sin.”<sup>95</sup>

This explicit connection between Pelagius and sinlessness, I argue, proves that Cassian’s earlier refutations of sinlessness in *Conf.* 22 and 23 were primarily written against Pelagius.<sup>96</sup> They were not written against any anonymous Gallic authors, nor were they written simply as a theological exercise.

The connection that Cassian attempted to make between Pelagius and Nestorius has always perplexed scholars.<sup>97</sup> These two men never met each other; Pelagius was condemned for his anthropological and soteriological ideas, while Nestorius was condemned for his Christological ones; they never lived in the same area; they never cite each other as an authority. What, then, would lead Cassian to make such a claim? Chadwick said that Cassian was not the only person to make such a connection. He stated that Marius Mercator had done so, but Chadwick admits that Cassian probably had no knowledge of Mercator’s writings.<sup>98</sup> The more probable reason for the link is that, prior to his condemnation, Nestorius had written to Rome and—in the same letters that

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<sup>94</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 1 (3).

<sup>95</sup> *De inc.* 1 (3).

<sup>96</sup> Although Cassian’s arguments were against Pelagius, we saw earlier that Cassian also disagreed with Jerome’s understanding of sinlessness.

<sup>97</sup> Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 22.

<sup>98</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 143.

condemned the idea of the *Theotokos*—he inquired about Caelestius and Julian of Eclanum, who had taken refuge in Constantinople. Because of his relationship with Rome, Cassian most likely had heard about Nestorius' letters (although Cassian never had access to a complete copy of Nestorius' writings) and made the connection by this flimsy evidence.<sup>99</sup>

A second point from this explicit connection between Pelagius and sinlessness relates to the hotly contested question about Cassian's intended target of his *Conf.* 13. Many arguments have been made. Chadwick, following the tradition established by Prosper of Aquitaine,<sup>100</sup> claims that it was written against Augustine.<sup>101</sup> He never raises the possibility that *Conf.* 13 was written against Pelagius or Prosper. Chadwick is clearly in Cassian's camp and wants to retrieve this *Conference* from the taint of "semi-Pelagian errors,"<sup>102</sup> saying that it is a "*tour de force*" and a "fair-minded and good-spirited piece of controversy."<sup>103</sup> Cassian, Chadwick insists, understood that Augustine was not a heretic to be condemned (as were Pelagius and Nestorius) and, therefore, the conference was written in a "gentle and eirenic"<sup>104</sup> tone. Most importantly, the differences between them

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 142-3; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 22; Frances M. Young, *From Nicea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and its Background*, Second ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 292. See also: Jean Plagnieux, "Le grief de complicité entre erreurs Nestorienne et Pélagienne d'Augustin à Cassien par Prosper d'Aquitaine?," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 2 (1956), 391-402.

<sup>100</sup> Prosper, *C. coll.* 2 (4).

<sup>101</sup> Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, Second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 119-27.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 120, 126.

were minimal. He believes that Cassian “aligned himself with Augustine”<sup>105</sup> concerning humanity’s dependence on God. “Perhaps,” he concludes, “the amount of agreement between them is more surprising than the disagreement.”<sup>106</sup> Although, as we will see shortly, I ultimately agree with Chadwick that it is was written against Augustine, Chadwick’s disregard of the differences between them is troubling. It shows that he does not respect the gravity of the situation. The *initium* of grace is foundational to the question of salvation, and to casually dismiss the differences between Augustine and Cassian cheapens the issue.

Markus has challenged this standard view and has argued that *Conf.* 13 was written against “Pelagian views apparently held in Gaul.”<sup>107</sup> He believes that one should not automatically assume that Cassian was writing against Augustine and that, if we ignore “assumptions encouraged by centuries of received opinion,”<sup>108</sup> we will conclude that we have been wrong all along. His first argument is that this conference has “close links” with the one immediately preceding it and that it “purports to be an attack on Pelagian views.”<sup>109</sup> Secondly, he argues that it is more “natural” to see this conference in light of views already condemned in Gaul because there is no evidence to suggest that

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>107</sup> R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 178.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 178.

Augustine's writings had yet to be under attack there. In light of such an absence, he says, one must inevitably reject the historical consensus.

While Markus' arguments are compelling, there are several problems with his claims. He is certainly correct that *Conf.* 12 and 13 are intimately linked, but this does not preclude the possibility that *Conf.* 13 was written against one particular author or school of thought. I have shown in this chapter that the end of *Conf.* 22 and all of 23 were written (anonymously) against Pelagius. The first half of *Conf.* 22, which we have not discussed, addressed the problem of nocturnal illusions, a subject that has nothing to do either directly or indirectly with Pelagius. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that *Conf.* 13 was both intended to be linked to *Conf.* 12 and also to address (anonymously) an author or authors who were not explicitly named. Cassian always embedded his arguments against specific people within the context of his larger ascetic interests; they were never separated.

Markus' argument that Augustine's views had yet to be scrutinized in Provence is also problematic. While he may be correct that no precedent of critiquing Augustine was established, that does not prohibit Cassian from being the first to do so. Markus does not believe that Augustine's work (specifically his *De correptione et gratia*) was known in Gaul at the time that *Conf.* 13 was written.<sup>110</sup> Three years after Markus wrote *The End of Ancient Christianity*, however, Ramsey demonstrated that Cassian was well versed in Augustinian thought and that he knew *De correptione et gratia* at the time he penned his

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 178.

*De protectione Dei*. Ramsey claims that an allusion to (and reaction against) Augustine's idea that few people will be saved (found in *De correptione et gratia* 14 (44)) may be detected in Cassian's "optimistic and almost universalist view of salvation"<sup>111</sup> (found in *Conf.* 13 (7)). Ogliari also has convincingly shown that *De correptione et gratia* was written before *Conf.* 13 and that Cassian was well aware of its content.<sup>112</sup> It is very likely, then, that Cassian's *Conf.* 13 was the first Gallican critique of Augustine.

Casiday offers two different answers to this question. First, he claimed that *Conf.* 13 was written against unwritten "anti-Pelagian" ideas that were "current among his peers."<sup>113</sup> He believes that *Conf.* 13 shows little evidence that it was written against Augustine but that it is filled with criticisms of Pelagius and his followers. Cassian's refusal to explicitly quote Augustine's *De correptione et gratia* also deeply troubled Casiday and this absence supports his thesis that Cassian was unaware of the text. Such an absence, he says, means that scholars may only make an educated guess that it was written against Augustine; there is no irrefutable evidence that it was. Casiday also agrees with Chadwick that one should not read it as a work that was intended to be strictly against Pelagius and his followers, but must be read in the context of Cassian's larger ascetic goals. Finally, Casiday insists that Cassian was writing against anonymous Gallic authors because external evidence from Vincent of Lérins, Faustus of Riez, an

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<sup>111</sup> Boniface Ramsey, "John Cassian: Student of Augustine," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 28 (1993): 6.

<sup>112</sup> Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 91-7.

<sup>113</sup> Casiday, "Cassian against the Pelagians," 20.



item from the *Gallic Chronicle* (417-18), Arnobius the Younger, and Gennadius shows that predestinationist arguments were already swirling around Gaul at the time.<sup>114</sup>

There are two serious flaws to Casiday's argument. He claims that "the Antipelagian trends that recur right across Cassian's writings are particularly dense in *Conf.* 13; it is the notoriously Antiaugustinian bits that are unusual. They do not recur, for example, when Cassian returns to the question of grace and freedom in *Conf.* 23."<sup>115</sup> Casiday is correct that there is no trace of an Antiaugustinian sentiment in *Conf.* 23 because, as our chapter has demonstrated, it was written against Pelagius primarily and Jerome secondarily; we should not expect that there would be any hint of Augustine there because Cassian had Pelagius on the brain. Casiday's failed example causes us to become suspicious of the validity of his overall argument.

The second flaw in Casiday's argument deals with Cassian's refusal to name the object of his criticisms. "Cassian," he says, "never actually quotes Augustine's *On admonition and grace*. ... What we find in *Conf.* 13 are at best paraphrases that approximate to an Augustinian view. Now, we know Cassian was capable of unacknowledged direct quotation (e.g., he cites Evagrius Ponticus in this way)—so, if he in fact intended to chip away at Augustine, why did he not quote the offending treatise without acknowledging his source?"<sup>116</sup> Casiday is correct that Cassian does not name

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 18-20.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

Augustine, but this should not come as a surprise. Cassian did make unacknowledged direct quotations from Evagrius, but he did so as a source, not as an object of critique. Cassian did not want to name Augustine because he disagreed with him. This was far from the only instance of anonymous criticism. Cassian's entire ascetic corpus was written as a rebuttal to ascetic texts circulating in Gaul. Goodrich recently has shown that Cassian was fighting models of asceticism from Jerome, Pachomius, Basil, Rufinus, and Sulpicius Severus that he felt misrepresented the traditions of the desert fathers.<sup>117</sup> To answer Casiday's question: Cassian did not acknowledge his source because, as Ahl has pointed out, anonymity provided safety for classical authors.<sup>118</sup> Cassian undoubtedly had seen what happens when Augustine was crossed and he did not want to suffer the same fate as Pelagius.

Three years after having made his argument, Casiday offers a very confusing revision of his own position. At first, in regards to the sections in *Conf.* 13 that are "supposedly anti-Augustinian remarks," he repeats himself almost word-for-word: "when we try to make sense of *Conference* 13, our attention ought to be devoted to the preponderate objections to Pelagius, rather than the incidental corrections of Augustine—if indeed that is what they are."<sup>119</sup> Just two pages later, however, Casiday goes against his own argument and claims that *Conf.* 13 was written against Prosper, not Pelagius. He

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<sup>117</sup> Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*, 78-116.

<sup>118</sup> Frederick Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome," *The American Journal of Philology* 105, no. 2 (Summer, 1984): 174-208.

<sup>119</sup> Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*, 114-5.

bases his new argument on a passing statement from Prosper. “I offered up to Your Blessedness’s teachings,” Prosper said, “written with countless, strong proofs from the sacred Scriptures and *I crafted one, following the style of your arguments, by which they would be silenced* (Casiday’s emphasis).”<sup>120</sup> In the paragraph immediately following this, Casiday, not entirely convinced of his own argument, allows that even if it weren’t written against Prosper, it was most likely written against some “homespun Augustiniana”<sup>121</sup> found in Gaul.

Although Prosper may not be eliminated entirely as a possibility, Casiday’s argument is weak and not particularly well argued. He had dismissed the possibility that Prosper had read Cassian’s works and then contacted Augustine, asking “why should we suppose that Prosper immediately received a copy of Cassian’s works and, having read them through voraciously, wrote to Augustine at once to advise him of the content?”<sup>122</sup> In the same vein, why should we suppose that Cassian had read Prosper’s “fiery attack” and assume that *Conf.* 13 was Cassian’s rejoinder? Using Casiday’s standards, there is no evidence to support a claim that Cassian had read Prosper. Moreover, why would Cassian limit himself to the “amateurish theological blathering” of Prosper or other

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<sup>120</sup> Prosper, *Ep ad Aug.* 3; Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*, 117.

<sup>121</sup> Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*, 117.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

anonymous Gallic “Predestinationist tracts”<sup>123</sup> when he could focus his attack on Augustine, Prosper’s acknowledged intellectual superior?

All of these scholars analyze the conference itself to find an answer, but ignore clues found in *De incarnatione*. By turning to *De incarnatione*, we may come to a clearer sense of Cassian’s object of criticism. Cassian, as we have seen, makes two criticisms of Pelagius in this text: a flawed understanding of sinlessness and a deficient Christology. He, however, never once criticizes Pelagius on the relationship between grace and free will.<sup>124</sup> When he did discuss the importance of grace in *De incarnatione* (2 (5-6)), Cassian avoided any reference to Pelagius. If *Conf.* 13 were written against Pelagius, we should expect that Cassian would mention—even if only in passing—Pelagius’ corrupt understanding of grace. Since he does not, we can conclude that it was not written against Pelagius. This leaves three other options. Casiday is correct when he states, referring to the possibility that Cassian was writing against unwritten ideas, that “it may not be satisfactory to posit a non-literary source” as Cassian’s intended target.<sup>125</sup> We should, then, regard this as an unfruitful option. Of the remaining two possibilities, Augustine and Prosper, there are no clear signs that point to one over the other. Casiday leans towards Prosper because both Prosper and Cassian lived in Gaul. Although geographic proximity should not be ignored, Augustine’s international reputation earned years before this debate, as O’Donnell has pointed out, and Cassian’s intimate knowledge

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>124</sup> This, of course, does not mean that he agreed with Pelagius on grace and free will.

<sup>125</sup> Casiday, “Cassian against the Pelagians,” 20.

of Augustine's work, as we have already seen, makes Augustine the more probable target.<sup>126</sup> It is because of his reputation at this time—and because of Prosper's lack of a reputation—that I believe Cassian wrote against Augustine in his most famous *Conference*.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated several crucial aspects of Cassian's rejection of the idea that one may live a life without sin. First, we examined the Evagrian foundation that supports Cassian's intellectual architecture in *Conf.* 23. Evagrius, unfortunately, was not a systematic writer. It was necessary, therefore, to construct a cohesive narrative of the monk's progress toward his goal. This progress is hindered by passions and thoughts, which are caused by memories of past sins, the machinations of demons, and the perception of the senses. Once the mind is correctly ordered through ascetic endeavors (ἀπάθεια), it may obtain a state of pure prayer that permits an undistracted contemplation of the Trinity.<sup>127</sup>

We then discussed Cassian's rejection of sinlessness from a Christological perspective, as seen in *Conf.* 22. Cassian claimed the prerogative of sinlessness only for Christ. By stating that one may be sinless, one claims equality with Christ. While

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<sup>126</sup> James J. O'Donnell, "The Authority of Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991): 14-7.

<sup>127</sup> Evagrius, *Prak.* 37; *Sen. ad virg.* 38; *De ora.* 45, 47; *Prak.* 38; *De ora.* 71, 111; *Antir.* Prol. 5.

Cassian did not mention Pelagius by name in this *Conference*, or his *Conf.* 23, it is clear that Pelagius was the object of his accusation of “criminal and blasphemous pride.”<sup>128</sup>

*Conf.* 23 provided Cassian’s second critique. He transformed his Evagrian understanding of pure prayer and contemplation of the Trinity into an understanding of what it means to be sinless. A sinless monk would be someone who has perfected all of the virtues and is able to turn his mind permanently towards God. This state is impossible, however, because the mind is constantly distracted by the fallen flesh. Towards the end, we saw a connection from this conference to *Conf.* 22 with the word *quisquis*, which was followed, in both cases, by a rejection of Pelagius’ position. Cassian also stood against Jerome’s claim that one may be temporarily sinless for a “single hour” or “single day.”<sup>129</sup>

A reexamination of the *De incarnatione*, in our final section, provided a new perspective on Cassian’s arguments against Pelagius. This section allowed us to see a clear connection between his *Conferences* and his *De incarnatione* that had yet to be appreciated by previous scholarship. Cassian’s discourse on sinlessness also must be used as evidence about the debates over the anonymous target of *Conf.* 13. The *De incarnatione* points to Augustine as Cassian’s object of anonymous criticism.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 22.12 (3).

<sup>129</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.4 (4), 23.11 (1), 23.19 (1), 22.12 (3), 23 (20), 23.5 (4).

<sup>130</sup> *De inc.* 1 (3), 6 (14), 1 (2), 2 (5-6).

As at the end of our last chapter, it is important to take a step back for a moment and see how our chapter on Cassian fits within the larger goals of this dissertation. One of the central aims of this project is to demonstrate the differences between how our authors conceived of the question of the possibility of sinlessness. Although we will construct a systematic analysis later, some differences between Augustine and Cassian are already beginning to emerge. One worth mentioning here is the different way these two men defined their terms. Augustine saw sinlessness as the perfection of virtues, which is impossible. Cassian, on the other hand, believed that perfection of all virtues is not sinlessness. The contemplation of God free of distraction is how Cassian conceived of a sinless life.

Not only do we see a difference between Augustine and Cassian, we also saw that Cassian offered two different responses to Pelagius. Cassian relied on an Evagrian concept of pure prayer and he also rejected the possibility of a sinless life because of the Christological implications that accompany such a claim. These two responses provide further evidence of the variety of ways that our authors reacted to Pelagius.

Finally, we saw that Cassian's main issue with Pelagius was sinlessness. While Cassian did not mention Pelagius explicitly by name in either his *Conf.* 22 or *Conf.* 23, there were clear connections between them and his *De incarnatione*, where Pelagius was named several times. This returns us to one of the central goals of this project: to refashion the standard narrative of this debate around one of the central claims of Pelagius and his supporters, not Augustinian grace.

# **CHAPTER FOUR: JEROME**

## **Introduction**

Jerome is our third and final author. Despite cries from Evans, Zednik, Clark, Rackett and Jeanjean that scholars have largely ignored his role in this debate,<sup>1</sup> Jerome's importance continues to be overshadowed by Augustine.<sup>2</sup> Because his library was destroyed in 416 by an unidentifiable group of people,<sup>3</sup> and he would die shortly after the triple condemnation of Pelagius in 418 by Pope Zosimus, the Council of Carthage, and Emperor Honorius, Jerome was not able to match Augustine's literary output, which may account for his relatively muted influence, despite the fact that he probably detected Pelagius' flaws before Augustine had done so.<sup>4</sup> Augustine's dominance of this debate, however, is most likely attributable to his tireless effort to shape it on his own terms in order to force Pelagius to conform to his understanding of orthodoxy. Furthermore, his international reputation while alive and Prosper of Aquitaine's efforts to establish him as

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, 4; Margaret Jean Zednik, "In Search of Pelagius: A Reappraisal of his Controversy with Augustine" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1975), 11; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 221; Rackett, "What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and his Followers," 228; Benoît Jeanjean, "Le *Dialogus Attici et Critobuli* de Jérôme et la prédication Pélagienne en Palestine entre 411 et 415." In *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings, and Legacy*, (Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 60.

<sup>2</sup> Benoît Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme et l'hérésie* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1999), 245.

<sup>3</sup> Josef Lössl, "Who Attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416 A.D.?", *Augustinianum* 44, no. 1 (2004): 110.

<sup>4</sup> Y.M. Duval, "Pélage en son temps: données chronologiques nouvelles pour une présentation nouvelle." In *Studia Patristica*, ed. M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold (Leuven: Peeters 2001), 112.



the standard bearer of orthodoxy after he had died all helped to contribute to Augustine's primacy.<sup>5</sup>

Jerome's understanding of sinlessness, as we will see, is different from our previous two authors. In our analysis, this chapter will address several tasks. First, we will outline his initial argument against sinlessness in his *Epistula* 133: *Ad Ctesiphontem* and the first two books of his *Dialogi contra Pelagianos*. As we turn to Book III, his position on sinlessness shifts in a subtle, yet important, way as a reaction against Augustine. This shift, I will argue, is a result of having read several works from Augustine that were delivered to him by the Spanish priest Orosius.<sup>6</sup> Benoît Jeanjean's claim, therefore, that *Ep.* 133 and the *Dialogi* "constituent un ensemble cohérent de textes qui présentent un objectif commun—réfuter la thèse pélagienne de l'impeccantia"<sup>7</sup> is not entirely accurate. In order to support the claim that Augustine was the catalyst that forced Jerome to rethink his critique of sinlessness, we must look at a variety of other issues in Book III to determine how much of Augustine's influence may be detected. By looking at Jerome's discussions of the relationship between grace and free will, his understanding of foreknowledge as opposed to predestination, his hesitancy to claim boldly an Augustinian understanding of original sin, and his lack of interest in the

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<sup>5</sup> Although Hwang argues that Prosper gradually moved away from Augustine as the arbiter of orthodoxy toward an understanding that Rome was the center of the Catholic world, Prosper's initial texts had a profound impact on anthropological debates after 430. Alexander Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Y.M. Duval, "La date du *De natura* de Pélagie: les premières étapes de la controverse sur la nature de la grâce," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36 (1990): 259.

<sup>7</sup> Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme et l'hérésie*, 387-8.

connection between original sin and the origin of souls, it will become apparent that he placed himself as a *via media* between Pelagius and Augustine. Jerome, however, did learn from Augustine that infant baptism was a contentious issue between Augustine and Pelagius. Next, we will take a close look at the personal statements that he made about Augustine. At first blush, it seems as if he praises Augustine for his arguments against Pelagius. On a closer look, however, we will see that Jerome was not particularly impressed with Augustine's thought. While Jerome respected Augustine's personal character, his compliments about Augustine's theology were backhanded. Finally, we will address the thorny issue that is at the center of his critique of Pelagius: genealogy. Jerome attempts to discredit Pelagius by placing him in a long line of men who have corrupted the Church. Scholars have offered contradictory answers about the value of his genealogy.

### **Jerome's Contribution to this Debate**

Before we analyze Jerome's writings, we should outline his contribution to the debate.<sup>8</sup> In a letter written around 393/4, he mentions a *monachus* who was preaching publically against his arguments on marriage in his *Contra Iovinianum*, and whom he describes as an ignorant rube.<sup>9</sup> Much speculation has been made about this shadowy figure. De Plinval has argued (with Myres, Evans, Kelly, and Rousseau supporting him)

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<sup>8</sup> For a more complete take on Jerome and Pelagius, see Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 309-23; Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 323-39; John Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 72-92.

<sup>9</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 50 (1).

that it was Pelagius.<sup>10</sup> Ferguson has claimed that De Plinval's analysis is "plausible," Rees has said that it is "probable," and Cain has left open it as a possibility.<sup>11</sup> Although he was well versed in the secondary debate on this issue, Hunter has refused to come down on one side or the other.<sup>12</sup> While it is tempting to make such a hypothesis, Duval has convincingly argued that this was an incorrect attribution on De Plinval's part. Jerome's writings, taken in collaboration with Augustine's writings, prove that he was unaware of Pelagius at that time,<sup>13</sup> and did not become aware of him until after Pelagius left Rome in 410.

Scholarly consensus states that the first (anonymous) reference to Pelagius from Jerome was in the Prologue of his sixth book of his *Commentarii in Ezechielem*. Written around 412, he made a connection between Pelagius, to whom he refers as a "new hydra," and Pelagius' predecessor (as we will see later) Rufinus, whom he calls a "serpent."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> George De Plinval, *Pélage: ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1943), 54; J.N.L. Myres, "Pelagius and the End of Roman Rule in Britain," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 50 Parts 1 and 2 (1960): 22; Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, 31; Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 188; Philip Rousseau, "Jerome's Search for Self-Identity," in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, ed. Pauline Allen (Everton Park, Queensland: Australian Catholic University, 1998), 134-5.

<sup>11</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 77; Rees, "Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic" in *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, 5; Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 216.

<sup>12</sup> David Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 249-50.

<sup>13</sup> Y.M. Duval, "Pélage est-il le censeur inconnu de l'*Adversus Iovinianum* à Rome en 393? Ou: du "portrait-robot" de l'hérétique chez S. Jérôme," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 75 (1980): 530.

<sup>14</sup> Jerome, *Com. in Ez.* 6.

Written approximately two years later, his famous *Epistula 130: Ad Demetriadem* offered another nameless allusion. He had written to this young woman, as both Pelagius and Augustine would do, who was dedicating her life to virginity. Towards the end of this short letter, he established a connection between Pelagius and Origen, claiming that “the poisonous germs of this heresy [Origenism] still live and sprout in the minds of some to this day.”<sup>15</sup> He warned Demetrias to avoid such venom.

The *Ep. 133: Ad Ctesiphontem* was his third text and was written around the same time as *Ep. 130*. It was written to a man about whom we know very little, but he may have been a patron of Pelagius as it seems that Pelagius was visiting his estate (*illustris domus*) while in Palestine. It is in this short, yet concentrated, letter that Jerome began to develop his arguments. All of the themes that would appear in the first two books of his *Dialogi Contra Pelagianos*, which were the fulfillment of his promise he made to expand his criticisms, may be found in this letter.<sup>16</sup>

The first four of the six Prologues in the *Praefatio in libro Hieremiae prophetae* anonymously referenced Pelagius, and were begun at the end of 414 or even at the beginning of 415. He defended himself against the accusation of Origenism, accused Pelagius of attempting to be equal with God, claimed that he was a surrogate for the devil, accused him of being a follower of previous Christian heretics, and made the accusation that he taught secret knowledge.<sup>17</sup> While this commentary contained *ad*

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<sup>15</sup> *Ep. 130* (16).

<sup>16</sup> *Ep. 133* (13).

*hominem* attacks on Pelagius, it was at heart, as Rousseau has recently demonstrated, centrally concerned with Christian repentance. It contains his reflections on the Christian *civitas*.<sup>18</sup>

He finally made his full onslaught in his *Dialogi Contra Pelagianos*, which was written sometime in the second half the year 415. It is a Socratic dialogue between two fictional characters: Atticus (Jerome's voice) and Critobulus (Pelagius' voice). This text, and his *Ep.* 133, will be the focus of our investigation because they contain Jerome's substantive arguments, as opposed to his primarily personal attacks found in his first writings.

### ***Ad Ctesiphontem* and Books I and II of *Dialogi contra Pelagianos***

Jerome makes many of the same arguments in Books I and II of the *Dialogi* that were already mentioned in his *Ep.* 133. Unlike Augustine, who minimized the importance of sinlessness and placed grace at the center of the debate, Jerome met his opponents on their own terms.<sup>19</sup>

He begins both texts with the exact same criticism of Pelagius: the theory of sinlessness blasphemously creates equality between humanity and God. This hubris, he

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<sup>17</sup> Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 326-7.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Rousseau, "Jerome on Jeremiah: Exegesis and Recovery," in *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings, and Legacy*, ed. Andrew Cain and Josef Lössl (Burlington Ashgate, 2009), 74.

<sup>19</sup> Rackett, "Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity," 287.

says, summarizes “into a few words the poisonous doctrines of all the heretics.”<sup>20</sup> Only Christ, although fully human, was sinless.<sup>21</sup> Christ, of course, received his humanity from Mary, but we do not find in Jerome mention about the *status* of Mary; he never ponders if Mary sinned and the Christological implications of such a statement. He held the *Theotokos* in the highest regard and famously defended her perpetual virginity against Helvidius, but, strangely, even after he read Augustine’s sections about Mary from *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* and *De natura et gratia*, he never felt compelled to address this question. Jerome, furthermore, held that the idea of a sinless individual recklessly establishes that person as superior to the Apostles. How could Pelagius make such a clearly erroneous statement, he wonders? Even the Apostles, who were more virtuous than all of the rest of humanity, were not perfect.<sup>22</sup> Pelagius’ argument inevitably suggests that one may shine brighter than the men chosen by Christ to be his followers.

Critobulus, in Book I, argues that the ability to be sinless is not tantamount to placing oneself equal to God.<sup>23</sup> One may not be perfect as God, he argues, but one may be a perfect human being. Atticus admits that there are degrees of righteousness among people, but he criticizes Critobulus’ argument as nonsense. He says that one may have a gift that others do not possess, but no one has *all* gifts. Alluding to 1 *Corinthians*

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<sup>20</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (1).

<sup>21</sup> *Ep.* 133 (8); *Dial.* 1 (9).

<sup>22</sup> *Dial.* 1 (14), 2 (24).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 (16).

(12:29), Atticus asks “are all Apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts.”<sup>24</sup> It is impossible for anyone to be all things to everyone or perfect in all things. “All this goes to prove,” he says, “that not only in comparison with Divine majesty are men far from perfection, but also when compared with angels, and other men who have climbed the heights of virtue. You may be superior to someone whom you have shown to be imperfect, and yet be outstripped by another; and consequently may not have true perfection, which, if it be perfect, is absolute.”<sup>25</sup> Atticus agrees with Critobulus that one may not be perfect compared to God, but he also argues that one may not even be perfect compared to the rest of creation. Although one may be superior to some and inferior to others, Atticus does allow that one may be perfect in one or two virtues—but no one may be perfect in all virtues.<sup>26</sup> Very few individuals, however, may be perfect in several of the virtues. He does not allow for just any sinner to be so, but the list of examples that he offers suggests that Jerome sees only the elite to have such gifts. Atticus says that

there will not be merely wisdom in Solomon, sweetness in David, zeal in Elias and [Phinehas], faith in Abraham, perfect love in Peter, to whom it was said, “Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?” zeal for preaching in the chosen vessel, and two or three virtues each in others, but God will be wholly in all, and the company of the saints will rejoice in the whole band of virtues, and God will be all in all.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 1 (16).

<sup>25</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 1 (17).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1 (21).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1 (18).

Because the great figures of the Christian past were only blessed with one or two virtues, he argues that it would be impossible for anyone—other than Jesus—to be sinless.

We saw in the last chapter that Cassian disagrees. He believes that it is possible that a holy individual, such as Paul, may possess all virtues—such as chastity, abstinence, prudence, hospitality, sobriety, temperance, mercy and justice. In fact, the monk must strive for all of the virtues, not simply one or two, because, taken together, they construct a coherent organization.<sup>28</sup> But, even if the virtues are obtained, one may not be considered sinless because one may not sustain θεωρία.<sup>29</sup> One's bodily needs always force the individual to turn his or her thoughts away from God towards the created world. Therefore, while Jerome sees that a *sanctus* may have one or two virtues at best, Cassian had no problem admitting that a variety of virtues may be pursued and acquired.

### **A Shift between Books II and III of the *Dialogi contra Pelagianos***

In 415, Paulus Orosius, a young priest born probably between 380-90, left Spain and arrived on Augustine's doorstep.<sup>30</sup> Augustine tells us that Orosius was passionate about Scripture and that he had convinced him to continue his journey to Palestine to study under Jerome.<sup>31</sup> Upon his arrival, Orosius gave Jerome two letters from Augustine

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<sup>28</sup> Rousseau, "Cassian and Perverted Virtue," 8.

<sup>29</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.2 (2).

<sup>30</sup> Craig L. Hanson, "Introduction," in *Iberian Fathers: Pacian of Barcelona; Orosius of Braga*, ed. Thomas P. Halton (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 97.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 169 (13).



(166,7) and, most likely, provided his *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*, *De spiritu et littera*, and *De natura et gratia*.<sup>32</sup> He was called to a council in Jerusalem to discuss the teachings of Pelagius and to give testimony about the concerns of the North Africans.<sup>33</sup> Pelagius was declared to be orthodox and, later that year, Orosius himself was charged with blasphemy.<sup>34</sup> He quickly fled Palestine. Many scholars have noted the importance of Orosius' gifts to Jerome. Kelly, Clark, and Jeanjean have argued that, through his reading of Augustine, Jerome slavishly adopted Augustine's teachings on original sin and infant baptism, becoming nothing more than a crypto-Augustinian.<sup>35</sup> Others, like McWilliam and Lössl, have argued that while he appreciated Augustine's texts, he could not align himself with Augustine completely.<sup>36</sup> Ferguson claimed that Jerome preferred to be a "synergist" between Augustine and Pelagius.<sup>37</sup> No scholar, however, has offered a systematic analysis of the shift in Jerome's thinking because of Augustine's work, which I would suggest he only read between writing Books II and III of his *Dialogi*.

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<sup>32</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 317-18.

<sup>33</sup> Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 323-7.

<sup>34</sup> Hanson, "Introduction," 104.

<sup>35</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 320; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 221-26; Benoît Jeanjean, "Le *dialogus Attici et Critobuli* de Jérôme et la prédication pélagienne en palestine entre 411 et 415," 61-9.

<sup>36</sup> Joanne McWilliam, "Letters to Demetrias: A Sidebar in the Pelagian Controversy Helenae, amicae meae," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2000): 136; Josef Lössl, "Who Attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416 A.D.?", *Augustinianum* 44 no. 1 [2004]: 94.

<sup>37</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 79.

In Book III, he curiously departs from his previous statements that one may not be sinless and qualifies his remarks by stating that, in fact, one may be sinless due to the effort of the individual. Atticus says that “we, too, say that a man can avoid sinning, if he chooses, according to his local and temporal circumstances and physical weakness, so long as his mind is set upon righteousness and the string is well stretched upon the lyre. But if a man grow[s] a little remiss it is with him as with the boatman pulling against the stream, who finds that, if he slackens but for a moment, the craft glides back and he is carried by the flowing waters whither he would not.”<sup>38</sup> Jerome allows for the efficacy of the free will to avoid the traps of sin according to the individual’s personal strength and the surrounding temptations. He does not allow, however, this sinlessness to remain a permanent state because no matter how strong the will or how few the temptations, one may not avoid sin for the entirety of one’s life. Atticus says that

this is what I told you at the beginning—that it rests with ourselves either to sin or not to sin, and to put the hand either to good or evil; and thus free will is preserved, but according to the circumstances, time, and state of human frailty; we maintain, however, that perpetual freedom from sin is reserved for God only, and for Him Who being the Word was made flesh without incurring the defects and the sins of the flesh. And, because I am able to avoid sin for a short time, you cannot logically infer that I am able to do so continually. Can I fast, watch, walk, sing, sit, sleep perpetually?<sup>39</sup>

We should not be seduced by his claim that “this is what I told you at the beginning.” He now allows for the sinlessness of an individual, for a “short time,” which Jerome had not done in either Book I or Book II. Why would he, who had gone through great pains to

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<sup>38</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (4).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (12).

claim that a sinless state is impossible, now claim that it is possible, though only for a short time? This change at the end of Book III, I argue, stems from a rejection of Augustine's position on sinlessness. Jerome read in Augustine's work a theology that he considered to be too pessimistic about the human condition. He felt the need to offer a theological position that attributed more agency to the individual in order to counteract the limitations that Augustine places on the will because of original sin. While it may go too far to ever call him an optimist, Graves has already correctly claimed that the *Dialogi* are, by Jerome's standards, "relatively measured."<sup>40</sup> This temperate position was a result of his rejection of Augustine on one extreme and, of course, Pelagius on the other.

What is even more noteworthy than Jerome's revised position on sinlessness is what he ignored in Augustine. Rackett has argued that he was heavily influenced by Augustine, but we will see that the opposite is actually the case.<sup>41</sup> Earlier in this dissertation, we saw that Augustine made a distinction between the hypothetical possibility of a sinless life (which is possible) and an historical example of sinlessness (which cannot be given). In Book III of his *Dialogi*, Jerome did not even bother to address this issue, despite the fact that in Book I Atticus had excoriated Critobulus for the exact same position.<sup>42</sup> There, he felt that such a distinction was absurd. If he were

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Graves, introduction to *Commentary on Jeremiah*, by Jerome (Downers Grove: 2011), xxix. See also Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 319; Ferguson also says that "the temper of the work is less bitter than many of his controversial writings." Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 79.

<sup>41</sup> Michael R. Rackett, "What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and His Followers," 229.

<sup>42</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 1 (9).

simply Augustine's attack dog, in Book III he would have felt compelled to mitigate his criticism from Book I. Jerome's refusal to do so shows that he held firm to his criticism of Pelagius, and, by extension, now of Augustine.

Other evidence supports the claim that Jerome rejected Augustine's thought. This evidence will demonstrate that the shift from Books II and III regarding sinlessness was not simply a coincidence, but part of a pattern of thinking that opposed Augustine's ideas. Just as he ignored much of what he read in Augustine's text regarding sinlessness, he also ignored his thinking on the relationship between grace and free will. In his *Ep.* 133 and Books I and II of his *Dialogi*, he offers an understanding of this relationship that would have made Augustine nervous. While he rejects Pelagius' understanding of grace, as Augustine had done, he saw the free will as possessing more agency than did Augustine.<sup>43</sup> Jerome understood the necessity of God's aid for the will, but he also believed that the will must search (*petere*) for that assistance.<sup>44</sup> Free will and grace work in a symbiotic relationship with each other.<sup>45</sup> For example, he says that "to will and to run is ours, but the carrying into effect our willing and running pertains to the mercy of God, and is so effected that on the one hand in willing and running free will is preserved; and on the other, in consummating our willing and running, everything is left to the

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<sup>43</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (5).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, (6).

<sup>45</sup> Although both men understood the necessity of both grace and free will, there was a different emphasis between Augustine and Jerome. Augustine made a sharp distinction which Jerome arguably did not make, or at least not to the same extent. This distinction was between having a free will (*liberum arbitrium*) and the freedom (*libertas*) to execute that desires of the will.

power of God.”<sup>46</sup> After having read the texts that Orosius had brought from Hippo that show Augustine’s thoughts about the impotence of the will to do good without grace, he stands firm in his understanding of the efficacy of the free will.<sup>47</sup> He never feels the need to alter his position so that it is in concert with Augustine.<sup>48</sup>

There are also several topics that Jerome only discussed in Book III that seem to be prompted by his reading of Augustine, but he rejects Augustine’s ideas. First, he briefly discussed his understanding of foreknowledge and, by implication, rejected the Augustinian understanding of predestination. According to Atticus, God

does not make use of His foreknowledge to condemn a man though He knows that he [any individual] will hereafter displease Him; but such is His goodness and unspeakable mercy that He chooses a man who, He perceives, will meanwhile be good, and who, He knows, will turn out badly, thus giving him the opportunity of being converted and of repenting.<sup>49</sup>

Jerome rejects the concept of predestination as calling into question justice, God’s autonomy, and goodness. This is a direct response to Augustine, not Pelagius. Pelagius never showed any interest in the debate between foreknowledge and predestination. Although Augustine does not mention predestination in these texts as much as he will

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<sup>46</sup> *Dial.* 1 (5). See also *Ep.* 133 (5-6, 10). This statement from Jerome comes from his interpretation of Rom. 9:16, which is a passage that can be found in Augustine’s writings against Pelagius. For example, *C. Jul. imp.* 1 (38), 1 (141), 3 (177).

<sup>47</sup> Jerome became familiar with Augustine’s understanding of the free will when he read *Spir. et litt.* 33 (57-60).

<sup>48</sup> Jerome mentions free will a few times in Book III, but only in passing: 3 (5), 3 (11), 3(15).

<sup>49</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (6).

towards the end of his life,<sup>50</sup> and does not yet articulate his own position with precision, predestination does arise three times in the texts Jerome had read. Augustine believes that God has foreknowledge of the deeds of every individual. But, he goes farther than Jerome because he also believes predestination to be taught by the Church. He says that “they [human beings] were, after all, predestined either to be damned on account of their sinful pride or to face judgment and correction for their pride, if they are children of mercy.”<sup>51</sup> He will later articulate the necessity of predestination as the only theologically consistent position with salvation by grace.<sup>52</sup>

Towards the end of Book III—just before his explicit mention of Augustine—Jerome draws a connection between the sinfulness of humanity and our first parents. “But all men,” he says “are held liable either on account of their ancient forefather Adam, or on their own account. He that is an infant is released in baptism from the chain (*vinculum*) which bound his father. He who is old enough to have discernment is set free from the chain of his own or another’s sin by the blood of Christ.”<sup>53</sup> Several scholars have found a latent Augustinianism in this quote; Kelly, for example, went so far as to say that this passage shows that Augustine “had converted him to the strict doctrine of

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<sup>50</sup> See Augustine, *Praed. sanct.* 10 (19).

<sup>51</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.17 (26). See also: *Spir. et litt.* 5 (7); *Nat. et gr.* 5 (5).

<sup>52</sup> Gerald Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine’s Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 97-117.

<sup>53</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (18).

original sin.”<sup>54</sup> Augustine himself even suggests that Jerome believes original sin to be true.<sup>55</sup> While it would be foolish to deny Augustine’s fingerprints here, I would suggest that scholars have overstated Augustine’s influence and, therefore, have made Jerome out to be Augustine’s theological puppet. It should be noted that Jerome never used the Augustinian terms *massa*, or *peccatum originale*.<sup>56</sup> He could have used Augustine’s shorthand to describe the state of humanity after the exile of Adam and Eve from the garden, but he used his own vocabulary, *vinculum*.<sup>57</sup> While it may be tempting to read *vinculum* as a theological equivalent to *peccatum originale*, it is much more likely that he could not stomach Augustine’s “strict” doctrine of original sin and consciously resisted it by ignoring Augustine’s language.

At the very end of the text, Jerome gives us another clue that he does not embrace fully original sin and places himself between Augustine and Pelagius. He says that “infants also should be baptized for the remission of sins after the likeness of the transgression of Adam (*in similitudinem praevaricationis Adam*).”<sup>58</sup> The term *in similitudinem*, I believe, is used as a third option for the relationship between the sin of

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<sup>54</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies*, 320. See also, Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 221.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 3.6 (12)-7 (14).

<sup>56</sup> For Augustine’s use of the term ‘*massa*,’ Jerome would have read it in *Nat. et gr.* 5 (5). See also, Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 326-8. For *peccatum originale*, see *Nat. et gr.* 3 (3).

<sup>57</sup> This word is used throughout Augustine’s *Confessions*, but there is no evidence that Jerome read that text. Augustine, *Conf.* 3.1 (1), 3.8 (16), 5.9 (16), 6.10 (16), 6.12 (22), 7.7 (11), 8.1 (1), 8.6 (13), 8.8 (19), 8.11 (25), 9.1 (1), 9.3 (5), 9.12 (32), 9.13 (36).

<sup>58</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (19).

Adam and the sin of his descendants. Augustine did not believe that the relationship between the two was *similitudo*. Rather, he insisted that sin was passed from Adam to the rest of humanity by way of propagation (*propagatio*). This was a direct response to Pelagius' belief that humanity sins out of imitation (*imitatio*).<sup>59</sup> Jerome's phrase, then, shows that he certainly rejected Pelagius' *imitatio*, but could not embrace Augustine's *propagatio*.

A related issue to original sin that was important for Augustine, but entirely ignored by Jerome in Book III, was the question of the origin of souls.<sup>60</sup> Augustine had written to Jerome and asked him to explain how individual souls are infected by original sin if they are created individually for each person, as opposed to the Origenist theory of the preexistence of souls.<sup>61</sup> This issue was not a speculative exercise for Augustine; he understood that this connection was foundational for his argument of original sin against Pelagius.<sup>62</sup> It is noteworthy that Jerome did not include a discussion about this relationship in Book III, despite the fact that he already had made a connection between Pelagius and Origen's theory of the preexistence of souls.<sup>63</sup> Clark offered the explanation that Jerome simply could not offer an answer to Augustine's inquiry:

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<sup>59</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 1.9 (9).

<sup>60</sup> For a discussion of Augustine's position on the origin of souls, see Mathijs Lamberigts, "Julian and Augustine on the Origin of the Soul," *Augustiniana* 46 (1996): 243-60.

<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166.4 (8).

<sup>62</sup> *Ep.* 166.3 (6).

<sup>63</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 130 (16).



I suspect that Jerome did not *know* the answer to Augustine's question; from his writings, we would gather that he had not even considered the issue problematic. It is highly significant that Augustine here presses Jerome hard on the notion of the souls' origin: Augustine has sensed that this question *must* be answered by anyone seeking to uphold creationism and original sin at the same time. Since Jerome did both, Augustine apparently—and incorrectly—assumed that he had considered the links between the two theories. Jerome, I think, had not. So Augustine was thrown back onto his own resources.<sup>64</sup>

Jerome, I think, did not ignore Augustine's question because he did not know the answer.

He, rather, did not see that there was a link to be made. As discussed above, too much has been made of Augustine's influence on Jerome regarding original sin. As he did not fully accept this Augustinian assumption, he did not share Augustine's desire to establish a clear relationship between original sin and the origin of souls.

We should not disregard entirely Augustine's influence on Jerome. Prior to reading Augustine, he did not know that the theology supporting infant baptism was in question.<sup>65</sup> At the end of Book III, he had learned his interlocutors were claiming that babies who were born of baptized parents do not need to be baptized.<sup>66</sup> Jerome, like Augustine, defended the Church's practice of baptizing babies, but he did not come to the conclusion of the necessity of infant baptism from Augustine, as he had written about it over a decade earlier. Laeta, the daughter-in-law of Paula, wrote to Jerome asking him

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<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, "From Origenism to Pelagianism: Elusive Issues in an Ancient Debate," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 12.3 (1991): 298.

<sup>65</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 79; Benoît Jeanjean, "Le *dialogus Attici et Critobuli* de Jérôme et la prédication pélagienne en palestine entre 411 et 415," 61.

<sup>66</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.25 (39).

for a “*programme d’éducation*” for her daughter, Paula.<sup>67</sup> Still bitter about his exile from Rome by the “senate of Pharisees,”<sup>68</sup> he instructed Laeta to send Paula from Rome to Bethlehem for proper formation to become a consecrated virgin.<sup>69</sup> In this letter, we see that he had already insisted on the necessity of baptism for infants.<sup>70</sup> Augustine’s influence, then, did not change his thinking about baptism, but it did bring to his attention an element of this debate about which he had previously been ignorant.<sup>71</sup>

If he rejected Augustine’s theology, why did he praise him at the end of Book III? “That holy man (*vir sanctus*) and eloquent bishop (*eloquens episcopus*) Augustine,” he said, “not long ago wrote to Marcellinus two treatises on infant baptism.” He also would say that “we must either say the same as he [Augustine] does, and that would be superfluous; or, if we wished to say something fresh, we should find our best points anticipated by that splendid genius (*ingenium*).”<sup>72</sup> Shortly after writing Book III, he wrote a letter to Augustine stating that “even in the dialogue that I recently published, I was mindful (*recordor*), as was proper, of Your Beatitude.”<sup>73</sup> Because of these comments, scholars have argued that he made a volte-face from his previous contempt for

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<sup>67</sup> Ferdinand Cavallera, “Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite,” *Revue d’Ascétique et de Mystique* 2 (1921): 118.

<sup>68</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 113.

<sup>69</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 107 (13).

<sup>70</sup> *Ep.* 107 (6).

<sup>71</sup> It is very possible that Jerome’s understanding on infant baptism came from Origen. See Origen, *Com. Rom.* 5 (9).

<sup>72</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (19).

<sup>73</sup> *Ep.* 172 (1).

Augustine. Ferguson, for example, said that “after an initial misunderstanding, [Jerome] formed a liaison with Augustine founded on a large and genuine mutual respect.”<sup>74</sup>

There are several hints here, however, that point to the idea that he was only half-heartedly praising Augustine. First, although he called Augustine a *vir sanctus*, this is only a comment about his character, not his theology. Second, he called Augustine an *eloquens episcopus*, which seems to praise Augustine but should be not read as laudatory. Goodrich has shown how, in antiquity, the accusation of eloquence was actually an insult. “The eloquent,” Goodrich says, “with their rhetorical tricks, could make falsehoods seem plausible, but the writer with truth to offer could rely on an unadorned simplicity.”<sup>75</sup>

Jerome’s backhanded compliment, then, suggests that Augustine was a master of rhetoric, but his theology was lacking.<sup>76</sup> Third, he used the word *ingenium* to describe Augustine’s thought. We saw in an earlier chapter that he elsewhere had used this same word as an insult. Fourth, his use of the word *recordor* implies that Augustine’s writings had come to mind while he was writing, but that he did not draw on Augustine as a source. Jerome, it must be noted, is known for previously having given backhanded compliments. Neil Adkin has demonstrated that, years earlier, his choice of three verbs (*exquirere, ordinare, exprimere*) in his *Ep. 22* was a latent charge that Ambrose’s recent

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<sup>74</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 75.

<sup>75</sup> Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian, Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*, 69-70.

<sup>76</sup> Later, we will discuss that Jerome’s opinions of Augustine did soften right before he died. Jerome, *Ep. 141*.

text on virginity was plagiarized.<sup>77</sup> A precedent has been set by Jerome of seeming to offer compliments, but, in reality, he was cryptically disparaging his interlocutor.

### **Jerome's Genealogy of Sinlessness**

Jerome's main weapon of attack on Pelagius' theory of sinlessness was to paint him as an intellectual descendent of heterodox Christians who infected Christianity with non-Christian ideas.<sup>78</sup> He mentioned, in passing, a number of men, or groups of men, whom he held responsible, either directly or indirectly, for attempting to corrupt the Church, such as the New Academics, Peripatetics, Gnostics, Basilides, Priscillian, Evagrius, Xystus, Massalians, Mani, Arians, and Marcion.<sup>79</sup> The majority of his time was spent linking Pelagius with the Stoics, Jovinian, Rufinus, and, most importantly, Origen.<sup>80</sup> He felt that if he could connect Pelagius' idea of sinlessness through Origen back to the Greek philosophy that he would be able to discredit his opponent and win the day.<sup>81</sup> In typical style for Jerome, he was less interested in constructing a nuanced argument and was content to find guilt by association.<sup>82</sup> Of course, one should keep in mind that this ploy was endemic to classical argumentation.

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<sup>77</sup> Adkin, "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot," 364-76.

<sup>78</sup> Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992), 219.

<sup>79</sup> For example: Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (1), 133 (3); *Dial.* 1 (1), 1 (20), 1 (19).

<sup>80</sup> For example: *Dial.* 3 (15), 1 (2), 3 (19).

<sup>81</sup> Elm, "The Polemical use of Genealogies: Jerome's Classification of Pelagius and Evagrius Ponticus," 311-18.

This lack of interest in connecting the dots has left scholars to debate the merits of his genealogy. While all agree that it was absurd of him to link Pelagius with the New Academics, Peripatetics, Gnostics, Basilides, Priscillian, Massalians, Mani, Arians, and Marcion, a disagreement has arisen about the influence that the Stoics, Evagrius, Xystus, Jovinian, Rufinus, and Origen had on Pelagius. Driver has argued that his entire genealogy is “of little worth.”<sup>83</sup> Most scholars, however, have not made such a broad, sweeping claim and have chosen to be more focused in their assessments. Marcia Colish has argued that he incorrectly sensed an influence from the Stoics.<sup>84</sup> McWilliam and Lamberigts agree with Colish. McWilliam adds that Origen, too, was incorrectly seen as an influence.<sup>85</sup> Years before either of them, Cavallera, Ferguson and Brown claimed that the Stoics had influenced Pelagius.<sup>86</sup> Kelly believes that Origen (through Rufinus) and Xystus did influence Pelagius, but the influence from Jovinian is unfounded.<sup>87</sup> Duval and Hunter have argued that Jovinian, indeed, influenced Pelagius, but Pelagius was

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<sup>82</sup> Jerome, for example, had accused Jovinian of being a heretic by associating his name with Epicurus and Seneca. *C. Iov.* 1 (1), 1 (49).

<sup>83</sup> Driver, “From Palestinian Ignorance to Egyptian Wisdom: Jerome and Cassian on the Monastic Life,” 307.

<sup>84</sup> Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition From Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century*, vol. II (New York: Brill, 1990), 78.

<sup>85</sup> Joanne McWilliam, “Letters to Demetrias: A Sidebar in the Pelagian Controversy *Helenae, Amicae Meae*,” 135-6; Mathijs Lamberigts, “Competing Christologies: Julian and Augustine on Jesus Christ,” *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005): 164. See also Rackett, Michael R. “What’s Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and His Followers,” 228.

<sup>86</sup> Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 323; Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 78; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 369.

<sup>87</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 315-6.

attempting to strike a balance between him and Jerome.<sup>88</sup> Of all of these scholars, Bostock has given the most detailed argument and shows that Jerome correctly detected Origen's influence.<sup>89</sup> The connection between the two is now indisputable.

While much scholarly research has been written on the relationship between Stoicism and Christianity in general, specific work has yet to be done with respect to Pelagius and the Stoics. Colish's impressive work on Stoicism and Christianity up to the medieval period, for example, lucidly demonstrates Jerome's odd relationship with Stoicism.<sup>90</sup> But, she offered little insight into the theology that Pelagius derived from them. While it is outside the scope of this dissertation to offer a detailed analysis of the relationship between Pelagius and the Stoics, I would argue that he was, in fact, influenced by them. One does not read in Pelagius any direct quotation from them, but Jerome correctly detects some similar foundational assumptions. Pelagius most likely had stewed in the Stoic *milieu* during the years he was among the Roman elite before 410. Stoicism had been popular in Rome before Constantine and many of the first Christians after Constantine, especially ascetics engaged in the life of *otium*, had been influenced by it.<sup>91</sup> Staniforth has said that Stoicism was "a code which was manly,

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<sup>88</sup> Y.M. Duval, *L'affaire Jovinien: d'une crise de la société romaine à une crise de la pensée chrétienne à la fin du IVe et au début du Ve siècle*, (Rome: Institutum patristicum Augustinianum, 2003), 284-365; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy*, 259-68.

<sup>89</sup> Gerald Bostock, "The Influence of Origen on Pelagius and Western Monasticism," in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, ed. W.A. Bienert and Kühbeweg (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 385-6.

<sup>90</sup> Colish, *The Stoic Tradition From Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century*, 70-91.

rational, and temperate, a code which insisted on just and virtuous dealing, self-discipline, unflinching fortitude, and complete freedom from the storms of passion [that] was admirably suited to the Roman character.”<sup>92</sup> Such a statement could have been made about Pelagius’ thought.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Jerome’s understanding of sinlessness subtly changed between Books II and III of his *Dialogi*, because he was no longer exclusively engaged in conversation with Pelagius; after having read several of Augustine’s works, Jerome set his view apart from Augustine and established his conception of sinlessness between Pelagius and Augustine. We can only imagine how he felt, as a controversialist, to know that he was not facing one opponent, but two. He certainly never had any admiration for Pelagius, nor does he seem particularly worried about Pelagius’ responses to his attacks, although his absences at the informal gathering in Jerusalem, and the Synod of Diospolis in 415, do betray his fear of John of Jerusalem and Pelagius’ other supporters.

His thoughts on Augustine must have been much more complicated. Years earlier, in 404, he had recognized that Augustine was a bishop “*notissimus*” and by this point, over ten years later, Jerome undoubtedly knew that Augustine’s reputation had

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<sup>91</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans., Michael Chase (Malden: Blackwell, 1995), 126-44.

<sup>92</sup> Maxwell Staniforth, "Introduction," in *Marcus Aurelius: Meditations* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), 10.

grown even more.<sup>93</sup> He must have known that to make any overt criticisms of Augustine would only cause himself more drama and conflict, something, as we will see in our next chapter, he did not want at the end of his life. This certainly was the cause of his attempt to mask his criticisms of Augustine, an attempt that, until now, had been successful. He, also, was aware that, despite his criticisms of Augustine, Augustine had expressed himself as an admirer—although at times critical—of Jerome’s work, something Pelagius had never done.<sup>94</sup> Such affection must have muddled his attitude when writing Book III. It is only later, at the end of his life that he offers, what seems to be a genuine expression of affection for Augustine, forgetting his criticisms of him from only a few years earlier.<sup>95</sup>

We also saw in Book III that Jerome now allows that one may be sinless for a short time, something he had not done earlier. Furthermore, he stood by his earlier critique of the distinction made by Pelagius between theoretical and historical sinlessness. By not changing his opinion in Book III after having read Augustine’s work, we can be sure that he his criticism would also have included Augustine, too. We also saw that his views on such issues as the relationship between grace and free will, foreknowledge, original sin, the origin of souls, and infant baptism clearly indicate that Augustine’s writings against Pelagius did not resonate with Jerome. Then, we turned to his statements

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<sup>93</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 112 (5).

<sup>94</sup> Squires, “Jerome’s Animosity against Augustine,” 181.

<sup>95</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 143.



about Augustine and saw that his praise was only directed at Augustine's character and did not extend to his thought. Finally, his use of genealogy was explored.

Before moving to our next chapter, we must first place this chapter into the larger context of this project. Although overshadowed by Augustine over the past 1600 years, his rejection of Pelagius—which was initially conducted without any knowledge of Augustine's writings—clearly displays an entirely different understanding than our previous two authors. While Augustine viewed Pelagius' claims to be a new heresy that cannot be traced to the antiquity of the Gospel message, Jerome saw Pelagius' claim to be a disease that had infected the Body of Christ from Greek philosophy. His approach shows a marked difference from Augustine and Cassian. Having closely investigated all three of our authors, we may now turn to a systematic comparison of their unique personal contexts that informed their understanding of sinlessness, their definitions of sinlessness, and how it related to their meta-critique of Pelagius and his followers.

# **CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEXTS, DEFINITIONS, AND CRITIQUES**

## **Introduction**

Our investigation does not end there. We now must place the arguments of our three authors into a larger picture. We will look at three key issues. These issues, in many ways, dictate why they differed so significantly from each other. First, their contexts must be considered. Although there are many different ways of viewing Augustine's contexts, we will look at two of his other important theological contemporary controversies—against the Manichees and the Donatists—because they show what was swirling in his mind at the time he was writing against Pelagius. Cassian's understanding of *θεωρία*, and the inability to sustain it, cannot be separated from his understanding of the larger function of ascetic practice. Although Jerome also was an ascetic writer, his stance against sinlessness was predominantly informed by the battles he recently survived over the orthodoxy of Origen's writings. Thus, we must see how Jerome's participation in the Origenist debate shaped his life before he confronted Pelagius.

Second, we must look closely at how they define sinlessness, because the way that one does so shapes the argument itself. Our authors define sinlessness in different ways.

Finally, we must see how their critiques of sinlessness fit in their larger critiques of Pelagius. As each one conceived what was the heart of the threat posed by Pelagius, they connected their critiques of sinlessness to the larger anthropological and soteriological questions in startlingly different ways.

### **Context: Augustine**

After having been an *auditor* for nine years,<sup>1</sup> Augustine engaged the Manichees in disputation through public debate and in writing. He could not even wait until he left Rome for Africa to begin his assault on his former colleagues; he wrote his first texts, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* and *De moribus Manichaeorum*, in Rome in 388 while waiting for passage back to Carthage,<sup>2</sup> whence he had fled only a few short years earlier because of the civil persecution of the Manichees.<sup>3</sup> Over the next sixteen years, he would write a variety of texts criticizing them for their beliefs in—among others ideas—two gods, the rejection of the Old Testament and, most importantly for him, their understanding of evil. His final text written against them, *De Actis cum Felice*

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<sup>1</sup> Jason BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body: In Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 26-30; Augustine, *Conf.* 5.6 (10).

<sup>2</sup> *Retract.* 1.7 (1).

<sup>3</sup> Jason BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, I: Conversion and Apostasy, 373-388 C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 136.

*Manichaeo*, was a retelling of his two-day public dispute in December, 404 with Felix, a more impressive opponent than Fortunatus, despite his lack of a liberal education.<sup>4</sup>

What is important for the purposes of our project is the Manichees' understanding of sin. Because of their belief that humans are a product of the God of Light (soul) and the God of Darkness (flesh), everyone sins necessarily.<sup>5</sup> In his public debate with Augustine, Fortunatus claimed that "if the soul, to which as you [Augustine] say God has given free will, having been constituted in the body, dwells alone, it would be without sin, nor would it become involved in sin."<sup>6</sup> But, of course, everyone *is* involved in sin. The Manichees claim that one does not sin simply by the movement of the free will toward evil because, if humans were created good by one God who is himself good, then the individual would never turn toward evil. As everyone does so, the syllogism concludes, humanity must be—at least in part—evil.<sup>7</sup> Humans, therefore, can never be sinless.<sup>8</sup>

It was explicitly against this understanding that Pelagius constructed his theological anthropology. Long before he was locked in struggle with our authors, he

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Retract.* 2 (8).

<sup>5</sup> Iain Gardner and Samuel Lieu, eds. *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 182; Kam-Iun E. Lee, "Augustine, Manichaeism and the Good" (Ph.D. diss., Saint Paul University, 1996), 94.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *C. Fort.* 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Haer.* 46 (19). See also, Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 36 and 45; O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography*, 50; Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the Manichees thought the good God was material as well.

had attacked the Manichees in his *Expositiones xiii epistularum Pauli*.<sup>9</sup> He felt that their view compromised the idea that God had given humanity free will, which was one of his chief concerns.<sup>10</sup> In his *Expositio ad Romanos*, he commented on Paul's statement that the flesh was a slave to sin but that Christ liberated humanity for righteousness (Rom. 6:19-20). He said that "it is not the case, as the Manichaeans say, that it was the nature of the body to have sin mixed in ... since you are in no way slaves to sin inwardly, so now also become free from every sin."<sup>11</sup> Because there is only one God, and that God is good, humanity must be good. It is only through the movement of the free will that an individual turns toward sin. The Manichees, he said, made the fundamental error of misdiagnosing the nature of sin as ontological.<sup>12</sup> Here, at least, he and Augustine agree.<sup>13</sup>

A second context that must be discussed is Augustine's dispute with the Donatists. By the time he joined the fray with his first (and lost) treatise against them—*Contra epistulam Donati haeretici, liber unus*—in 393, Christianity in North Africa had been in schism for almost a century.<sup>14</sup> Although the Donatists had been condemned at a council in Carthage in 411 through the efforts of his friend Marcellinus and in 412 the

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<sup>9</sup> Pelagius wrote his *Expositiones xiii epistularum Pauli* after 405 and before leaving Rome in 410. Theodore De Bruyn, "General Introduction," in *Pelagius's Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Henry Chadwick and Rowan Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine's Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom*, 72.

<sup>11</sup> Pelagius, *Expos. (ad Romanos)* 6 (19-20). See also, 1 (2), 7 (7), 8 (7).

<sup>12</sup> De Bruyn, "General Introduction," 16 and 45.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* 4.15 (24).

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Retract.* 1 (21).

Emperor Honorius issued anti-Donatist edicts, it was not until his last work against them, *Contra Gaudentium* in 420, that he finally concluded his longest running theological debate.<sup>15</sup> The Donatists had dominated the towns important to him, including Hippo,<sup>16</sup> and had been the majority in Thagaste during Monica's childhood. This has led O'Donnell to claim that she probably had been one as a child.<sup>17</sup> A passing reference in the *Confessiones*, however, may lead us to a different conclusion. Augustine says that Monica "was trained 'in your fear' (Ps. 5:8) by the discipline of your Christ, by the government of your only Son in a believing household through a good member of your Church (*in domo fidei, bono membro ecclesiae tuae*)," and that it was a "Christian household (*in domo Christiana*)."<sup>18</sup> One could speculate that Augustine was tweaking his mother's history to present her in a positive light. But, in the subsequent section, he airs her dirty laundry by confessing her childhood "weakness for wine,"<sup>19</sup> upon which Julian would later seize for ridicule.<sup>20</sup> Monica, it seems, had been a Catholic her entire life.

The Donatists believed that they were superior to their opponent because of their purity and holiness. They had not become *traditores* under the persecution of Diocletian

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<sup>15</sup> *Retract.* 2 (59).

<sup>16</sup> Geoffrey Grimshaw Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 29.

<sup>17</sup> O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography*, 212-14.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* 9.8 (17).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.8 (18).

<sup>20</sup> *C. Jul. imp.* 1 (68).

by handing over sacred texts to government authorities. Some bishops, they claimed, had done so, while others, such as Mensurius, the Bishop of Carthage, had surrendered heretical texts. After the Edict of Milan of 313 that legalized Christianity in the west and the east, and all other religions, under the Emperors Constantine and Licinius, they declared that only their bishops were legitimate because they had remained faithful to the Church. Anyone who received baptism from a *traditor* must be baptized a second time.<sup>21</sup>

We can see here that there are some important similarities between the Donatists and Pelagius. Both placed purity at the center of their thought. While it was Petilian who said that “you should not call yourselves holy, in the first place, I declare that no one has holiness (*sanctitas*) who has not led a life of innocence (*innocens*),”<sup>22</sup> this could easily have been said by Pelagius.<sup>23</sup> Both optimistically believed in the goodness of humanity. Both—Augustine would say—tended towards pride in these two beliefs. There are, however, some differences between them. First, the Donatists claimed that their purity is obtainable in this life, while Pelagius said it is possible, but it has not been achieved by anyone.<sup>24</sup> A second, and related, difference was that, for the Donatists, purity rests at the corporate level. Purity in the Church was defined as not having been a *traditor*, and maintaining that a Church containing *traditores* was *ipso facto* rendered impure.

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<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *C. litt. Pet.* 2.22 (49).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.48 (111).

<sup>23</sup> For example, “how much more possible must we believe that to be after the light of his coming, now that we have been instructed by the grace of Christ and reborn as better men: purified and cleansed by his blood, encouraged by his example to pursue perfect righteousness.” Pelagius, *Ad. Dem.* 8 (4).

<sup>24</sup> For example, Augustine, *C. litt. Pet.* 2.35 (81); Pelagius, *Ad. Dem.* 27 (3).

Tolerance for the Circumcellions shows that engaging in violence did not pollute one's holiness.<sup>25</sup> Pelagius' focus on purity, on the other hand, was on the individual level. He felt that each person must strive for holiness and through the aggregate effort of individuals the Church will be holy.<sup>26</sup> Third, the Donatist focus on purity caused them to set themselves apart from their opponent.<sup>27</sup> Pelagius, on the other hand, was not trying to segregate the Church. In fact, he was uncomfortable with laxity that had been increasing since the early fourth century.<sup>28</sup> His goal was to transform the entire Body of Christ into one without spot or wrinkle.<sup>29</sup>

What is both shocking and fascinating is how little the Manichees and the Donatists make appearances in Augustine's writings against Pelagius. Prior to his exchange with Julian, the Manichees are mentioned only as a passing thought in a direct quotation from Caelestius and, paired with Marcion, as those who rejected the Old Testament.<sup>30</sup> Their anthropology is avoided entirely. At any time, Augustine could have contrasted Pelagius as precisely the opposite of Mani: while Mani pessimistically condemned creation (and, therefore, placed asceticism at the center of concern),<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 117-8; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 215.

<sup>26</sup> Pelagius, *Ad. Dem.* 17 (2).

<sup>27</sup> Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 28 and 108.

<sup>28</sup> Pelagius, *Vit. Christ.* 6 (2).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 (3).

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Perf. iust.* 6 (14); *Gest. Pel.* 5 (15).



Pelagius optimistically praised it to the other extreme (and, therefore, was not interested in establishing any ascetic communities). But, he did not. Why not? Why would he purposefully avoid such an obviously effective attack strategy? It is impossible to say for certain, but he was probably concerned that if he were to juxtapose Pelagius and Mani he would open to ridicule his own position on *peccatum originale* as a vestige of his past.<sup>32</sup> He had already been accused of being a Manichee by the Donatists Petilian and Cresconius and probably was sensitive to the charge.<sup>33</sup> In his silence, he was foreshadowing the onslaught from Julian to come.

When Julian began to excoriate him as a crypto-Manichee,<sup>34</sup> Augustine had lost the ability to attack his opponents as the opposite extreme of the Manichees, and he was left reeling on his heels and playing catch-up.<sup>35</sup> Throughout their debate, Julian

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<sup>31</sup> Jason BeDuhn, "The Battle for the Body in Manichaean Asceticism," in *Asceticism*, ed. Wimbush, Vincent L. and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 513.

<sup>32</sup> Although Julian, as we will see, charged Augustine as a crypto-Manichee, Augustine never believed that his own views were ontologically dualist.

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *C. litt. Pet.* 3.10 (11); *Cresc.* 3.80 (92).

<sup>34</sup> Lössl, *Julian von Aeclanum: Studien zu seinem Leben, seinem Werk, seiner Lehre und ihrer Überlieferung*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> For Julian of Eclanum, see: François Refoulé, "Julien d'Éclane, Théologien et Philosophe," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 52 (1964): 42-84; 233-47; Alister McGrath, "Divine Justice and Divine Equity in the Controversy between Augustine and Julian of Eclanum," *The Downside Review* 101, no. 345 (1983): 312-19; Barclift, "In Controversy with Saint Augustin: Julian of Eclanum on the Nature of Sin," 5-20; Mathijs Lamberigts, "Augustine and Julian of Aeclanum on Zosimus," *Augustiniana* 42 (1992): 311-30; Lamberigts, "Julian of Aeclanum on Grace: Some Considerations," 342-9; Mathijs Lamberigts, "Recent Research into Pelagianism with Particular Emphasis on the Role of Julian of Aeclanum," *Augustiniana* 52 (2002): 175-98; Lamberigts, "Competing Christologies: Julian and Augustine on Jesus Christ," 159-94; Josef Lössl, "Julian of Aeclanum's 'Prophetic Exegesis'," in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003*, ed. M. Edwards and P. Parvis F. Young (Leuven: Peeters, 2006): 409-21; Lössl, "Augustine, 'Pelagianism', Julian of Aeclanum and Modern Scholarship," 129-50.

repeatedly accused him of bringing those views into the Christian faith and infecting it with heresy. Despite these accusations that Julian leveled against him *ad nauseam*, Brown takes these accusations lightly and gives them only secondary importance. He says that “Julian accused Augustine of being a Manichee, of preaching fatalism—these were merely conventional bogeys.”<sup>36</sup> We see in *Contra Iulianum* and *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, however, that Julian’s accusations are more than “conventional bogeys.” They are at the heart of his concern by calling into question Augustine’s understanding of creation, evil, and, ultimately, the inability to be free of sin.<sup>37</sup> He did not simply slap him with these accusations in an attempt to strike fear in the hearts of Augustine’s supporters, or as an attempt at character assassination. To disregard Julian’s accusations as simply a rhetorical maneuver is too dismissive.

By the time he returns Julian’s volleys, Augustine’s fall flat. Strangely, he does not contrast Julian and Mani as opposite extremes; rather, he compares them as bedfellows. Although he does not accuse Julian of being a Manichee outright, he argues that his understanding of evil assists them. Julian had accused him of being a Manichee because Augustine said that evil arose from the changeable good of God’s creation. Evil could not come from God himself but, since God had given humanity free will to choose between good and evil, one had the capacity to choose evil. He claimed that this implicates God in the sin of humanity and, therefore, it is blasphemous to say that

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<sup>36</sup> Peter Brown, “Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment,” in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 202.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *C. Jul.* 4.3 (28-9).

anything God creates must be the author of sin. Augustine retorted by stating that, if sin did not come from God's creation, the only conclusion is that it must come from outside of God's creation. He took Julian's argument to its extreme that this only leaves the possibility that evil comes from an eternal and equally powerful force competing with God. This was Mani's position.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, Augustine shows that he was hypersensitive to the charge of being a Manichee, and his attempt to paint Julian as a Manichee feels contrived and hollow. His admissions in his *Confessiones* about his former life were coming back to haunt him, and he knew it.

The almost complete absence of the Donatists in this debate is as startling as his treatment of the Manichees, and just as startling as their entire absence in his *Confessiones*. As both they and Pelagius laid claim to a purity superior to their opponents, one would expect Augustine to associate them as common enemies of the Church, a rhetorical strategy that Cassian employed and Jerome had mastered.<sup>39</sup> It is only in *De gestis Pelagii* that he finally connects the two together, but, despite Markus' insistence that Augustine "seized on the affinity he detected between Pelagian and Donatist teaching,"<sup>40</sup> he shows little interest in developing this angle in his subsequent works.<sup>41</sup> As Pelagius had fled Rome to Carthage, he undoubtedly learned Donatist

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<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *C. Jul.* 1.8 (41).

<sup>39</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 1 (1-3); Elm, "The Polemical use of Genealogies: Jerome's Classification of Pelagius and Evagrius Ponticus," 311-18.

<sup>40</sup> Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 51-3.

ecclesiology during the preparations for the council of 411, which was convened shortly after he left town (did he do so because he saw similarities with his and their positions and wanted to avoid condemnation?).<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, as this council condemned the Donatists and the full force of the imperial legal system now supported his cause, it would make even more sense that Augustine would draw a direct line connecting the two. We must once again ask: why did he not do it? As with our discussion of the Manichees, no easy answers reveal themselves. The most likely answer is that he did not want to associate them because while Pelagius' ideas were being spread throughout the entire Mediterranean, the Donatists were a local phenomenon. While it is true that the Donatists had a bishop in Rome, they had very few non-African converts, and the movement never made its way to the Greek-Christian world.<sup>43</sup> To accuse Pelagius of being a cousin of the Donatists would limit the gravity of his critique to those in Africa who had an intimate knowledge of the Donatists and who would understand the correlation he was attempting to make. In order to appeal to a wider demographic, he preferred to slander them as enemies of grace, an issue that concerned all Christians.

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<sup>41</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 12 (7). See also: *Gest. Pel.* 22 (46); *C. Jul.* 3.1 (5), 3.17 (31); *C. Jul. imp.* 1.75 (2). For an excellent exposition on the correspondence between Augustine and Pelagius, see Duval, "La correspondance entre Augustin et Pélage," 363-84. For a recent understanding of Pelagius in light of recent scholarship, see Duval "Pélage en son temps: données chronologiques nouvelles pour une présentation nouvelle," 95-118.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 22 (46).

<sup>43</sup> Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 9-17.

### Context: Cassian

Cassian's critique of Pelagius must be understood within the context of his ascetic life. This section will show the connection of these two by demonstrating that many of his claims made in *Conf.* 22 and 23 may be found throughout the rest of his ascetic corpus. By seeing this connection, it will become clear that Cassian's criticism of Pelagius grew out of his ascetic agenda; they cannot be separated from each other.<sup>44</sup> It is important to make this link because it gives us insight into how Cassian situated Pelagius' idea of sinlessness in his own mind.

His ascetic life began in Bethlehem around 378-80.<sup>45</sup> There, he sought entrance into a Greek-speaking community near the cave of the Nativity.<sup>46</sup> Years later, he would declare the form of asceticism he found there to be inferior to the asceticism in Egypt.<sup>47</sup> He believed that the monks of Palestine were stubbornly rigid in their flawed teachings.<sup>48</sup> His companion, Germanus, and he were only in Bethlehem a few years and probably left around 385 to sit at the feet of the great ascetic teachers in Egypt.<sup>49</sup> As he made no

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<sup>44</sup> Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 150.

<sup>45</sup> Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 6; Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 120.

<sup>46</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 8; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 17 (23).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 (26).

<sup>49</sup> Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 7.

reference to Jerome, one can safely conclude that he left Bethlehem before Jerome's arrival in 386.<sup>50</sup>

They left Bethlehem and arrived in the port town of Thennesus.<sup>51</sup> He then brought the wisdom he learned in Egypt to the west and modified it for the good of his Gallic audience.<sup>52</sup> Scholars have debated how long these men lived among the fabled ascetic communities of the Nile Delta, Scetis, and Kellia. Chadwick argued that they were in Egypt for a minimum of seven years;<sup>53</sup> Rousseau has argued that we can only be certain of two years, but possibly longer;<sup>54</sup> Stewart and Goodrich believe that they probably stayed up to 15 years.<sup>55</sup> The only thing that we may say for sure is that he was in Egypt in 399 when Theophilus' yearly letter at Easter was issued.<sup>56</sup> Scholarly consensus holds that they left soon afterwards, probably with the Tall Brothers and a group of other monks because of the so-called "Anthropomorphite Controversy."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cavallera, "Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite," 101; Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 11; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 11 (1).

<sup>52</sup> *Inst.* Pre (9).

<sup>53</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 169.

<sup>55</sup> Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 8; Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and the Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 10 (2).

<sup>57</sup> Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 169.

After leaving the desert, Cassian travelled to Constantinople, where he was ordained a deacon by Chrysostom and later a presbyter,<sup>58</sup> although that may have happened in Rome.<sup>59</sup> He eventually left Constantinople, with possible brief stays in Palestine,<sup>60</sup> Antioch,<sup>61</sup> and arrived in Rome. It does not seem that he engaged in any more ascetic activities during this time, as his *Institutes* and *Conferences* only sang the praises of the Egyptian ascetic communities.

He arrived in Gaul around 415-17, where he would stay until his death in the mid-430s.<sup>62</sup> It is unclear why he went there, although he may have been returning to the place of his birth, or he may have been convinced by Lazarus that the ascetic-minded Proculus would welcome him.<sup>63</sup> Regardless of his motivation, it is here that he returned to the ascetic life—as Gennadius would later note—by establishing two monasteries, one for

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<sup>58</sup> Rousseau, "Cassian: Monastery and World," 69; Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 121.

<sup>59</sup> Gennadius, *De vir. inlustr.* 61.

<sup>60</sup> Marrou, Henri Irénée Marrou, "Jean Cassien à Marseille," *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 1 (1945), 21-26.

<sup>61</sup> E. Griffe, "Cassien a-t-il été Prêtre d'Antioche?" *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 55 (1954): 240-44.

<sup>62</sup> Rousseau, "Cassian: Monastery and World," 68; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 16, 24; Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 122-4..

<sup>63</sup> Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, 292; K. Suso Frank, "John Cassian on John Cassian," in *Studia Patristica: Augustine and his Opponents, Jerome, other Latin Fathers after Nicaea, Orientalia*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 422; E. Griffe, "Cassien a-t-il été Prêtre d'Antioche?," 240-4; Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, 17-9; Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*, 22-5; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 16; Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 122.

men and one for women.<sup>64</sup> Undoubtedly because Cassian had been a student in the center of that ascetic world and had marinated in its teachings, he was asked to write about the “holy souls that shine in the fullness of innocence, righteousness, and chastity and that bear within themselves the indwelling Christ the king.”<sup>65</sup> His writings solidified him as one of the most important ascetic thinkers in Christianity, but he did not import the ascetic life to Gaul; he transformed the practices already in place.<sup>66</sup> Rousseau has rightly pointed to the reality that, in the fourth and fifth centuries, the relationship between the “laity” and “religious” was more fluid and that the “monastic” life was less teleologically institutional than our understanding of it today.<sup>67</sup>

Cassian, as we have seen, defined sinlessness as a state of *θεωρία*. This *finis* of the monk, however, was more than a part of his critique of Pelagius, it was also central to his ascetic agenda.<sup>68</sup> His discussion of *θεωρία* within the context of this agenda may be seen most explicitly in *Conf. 3, De tribus abrenuntiationibus*. In this *Conference*, he and Germanus dialogue with Paphnutius, who was a priest (*presbyter*) blessed with unsurpassed knowledge (*scientia*) in Scetis. He entered a *coenobium* at a young age (*adulescentia*) and quickly conquered all vices and achieved perfection in every virtue. Having accomplished everything he could in the *coenobium*, Paphnutius left for the desert

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<sup>64</sup> Gennadius, *De vir. illustr.* 61; Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: the Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, 118-9.

<sup>65</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pre (3).

<sup>66</sup> Rousseau, “Cassian: Monastery and World,” 69-70.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-9, 78.

<sup>68</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 23.10 (2).



and surpassed the anchorites in his desire for θεωρία.<sup>69</sup> Rumor had it that Paphnuitus had reached such heights that he enjoyed the company of angels and, therefore, was given the nickname *bubalus*, translated by Edgard Gibson and Ramsey as a “buffalo,” and by Colm Luibheid as “the wild roamer,” although it may be more accurately translated as a type of deer.<sup>70</sup>

Paphnutius describes three renunciations that monks pursue: the first is the renunciation of material possessions; the second is internal distractions, such as vices; the third—which is important for our purposes—is the mind’s abandonment of visible things for that which is invisible.<sup>71</sup> These three renunciations are not their own ends; rather, Cassian holds that they lead to the contemplation of God, which is the final phase of the ascetic life.<sup>72</sup> As Byrne has pointed out, “renunciation exists for the sake of prayer. Cassian sees prayer as a progressive movement toward simplicity until at last the state of pure prayer is reached.”<sup>73</sup> He would make explicit this connection between renunciation and *contemplatio Dei*. “We shall deserve to attain to the true perfection,” he says, “of the

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<sup>69</sup> Although this gives the impression that Cassian believed that the solitary life is superior to the communal life, Driver has shown that Cassian did not make such a distinction. Steven Driver, “A Reconsideration of Cassian’s Views on the Communal and Solitary Lives,” in *Religion, Text, and Society in Medieval Spain and Northern Europe: Essays in Honor of J.N. Hillgarth* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2002), 277-301.

<sup>70</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 3 (1-2). For Gibson, see *NPNF*. For Ramsey, see *ACW*. For Luibheid, see *CWS*.

<sup>71</sup> Cassian, *Coll.*, 3.6 (1).

<sup>72</sup> Philip Rousseau, “Cassian, Contemplation and the Coenobitic Life,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* XXVI, no. 2 (1975): 114; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 47; Boniface Ramsey, “General Introduction,” in *John Cassian: The Conferences*, ed. John Dillon, Dennis D. McManus, and Walter J. Burghardt (New York: Newman Press, 1997), 20.

<sup>73</sup> Byrne, “Cassian and the Goals of Monastic Life,” 14.

third renunciation ... once it [the mind] has been planed by a careful filing, it will have passed over so far from earthly affection and characteristic to those things which are invisible, thanks to the ceaseless meditation on divine realities and to spiritual theoria.”<sup>74</sup> Whether writing against Pelagius and Jerome in *Conf.* 23, or describing every monk’s proximate goal in *Conf.* 3, all of his trails ultimately lead back to θεωρία.

We also saw in *Conf.* 23 that the monk cannot permanently sustain his gaze on God because his mind is constantly being distracted.<sup>75</sup> This key idea, too, may be most clearly seen in his *Conf.* 7: *De animae mobilitate et spiritalibus nequitiis*. In this *Conference*, he and Germanus met Serenus, who will appear again in *Conf.* 8. Serenus was known for such holiness that he did not even suffer from the stirrings of the flesh in his sleep. He prayed for chastity and continence daily and nightly until lust (*concupiscentia*) was extinguished from his heart. With this physical craving set aside, he began to pursue the purity of the spirit more vigilantly and, because of this purity, he had a vision (*visio*) in which an angel came to him in the night. In this vision, the angel “seemed to open his belly, pull out a kind of fiery tumor (*struma*) from his bowels, cast it away, and restore all his entrails to their original place.”<sup>76</sup> This vision signified that Serenus had successfully eliminated all bodily desires.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 3.7 (3). See also, 3.6 (4), 3.7 (5), 3.10 (4).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.5 (3), 23.5 (7-8), 23.13 (20).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.2 (2).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.1-2 (3).

While most *Conferences* are dialogues primarily between Germanus and the Abba, *Conf. 7* does not follow this pattern. It begins with both men asking Serenus to expound on the problem of the mind's inability to remain focused on its proper object.<sup>78</sup> The mind, they say, is too often distracted by trivial matters to rest in prayer. The impossibility of permanent prayer leads them to despair of ever reaching their goal, and to blame the problem not on themselves but on nature.<sup>79</sup> Serenus agrees that the mind is changeable. But, because of practice and training, one may harness the restlessness of the mind so that it will remain fixed on God. One must not attribute the problems of the mind to nature (and, indirectly, to God as the Creator of nature). The activities of the mind are under the control of the monk. Where they turn is under his power. It is necessary for Cassian that thoughts may be controlled because of the soteriological implications at stake; if they may not, then condemnation of any sinner would be unjust, not to mention the fact that ascetic effort would be rendered pointless.<sup>80</sup>

### **Context: Jerome**

The context surrounding Jerome's participation in this debate is entirely different from Augustine and Cassian. Ferguson has claimed that he was in Bethlehem waiting for a fight. "Rufinus was dead," he says, "and the old lion was looking for some new

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<sup>78</sup> Here, Cassian uses the first person plural.

<sup>79</sup> Cassian, *Coll. 7.3* (1-5).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.4 (1)-6 (4).

adversary on whom to sharpen his claws when Pelagius came on the scene. After a long life of disputation controversy was his meat and drink; to abandon it would mean spiritual starvation.”<sup>81</sup> Quite the contrary was true. By the time Pelagius fled Rome after 410 and knowledge of his theology began to spread throughout the Mediterranean world, Jerome was nearing the end of his life. He felt pestered by this upstart young man and did not want to be pulled into yet another contest. At the beginning of his *Dialogi*, he tells us that, having written his short *Ep.* 133, “I received frequent expostulations from the brethren, who wanted to know why I any longer delayed the promised work in which I undertook to answer all the subtleties of the preachers of Impassibility.”<sup>82</sup> Several years later after the Synod at Diospolis (like the one held in Jerusalem, he did not attend) and after having received two letters from Augustine,<sup>83</sup> he was content to bite his tongue; he wrote to Augustine saying that “a most difficult time has come upon us when it is better for me to be silent than to speak.”<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, his writings against Pelagius do not demonstrate the expected Hieronymian invective of his earlier works. In 416, just a few years after his attention was piqued by Pelagius, Jerome’s monastery was burned, which surely sucked any motivation right out of him.<sup>85</sup> Jerome was tired and wanted to be left alone.

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<sup>81</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 77.

<sup>82</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* Pro (1).

<sup>83</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166 (7).

<sup>84</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 134 (1). I am using Teske’s translation from the Augustinian corpus (*Ep.* 172).

Pelagius arrived in Jerusalem and picked a fight with him. He had fled Africa, leaving Caelestius behind, and had become associated with John of Jerusalem.<sup>86</sup> While there, Jerome tells us, he began resurrecting old accusations against him. He, like Rufinus before him, had accused Jerome of borrowing from Origen in his *Commentarii in epistolam ad Ephesios*.<sup>87</sup> He also rehashed the critique that Jerome's distaste for marriage in his *Adversus Iovinianum* is too extreme.<sup>88</sup> It would have been counterproductive for Jerome to have raised the issue of Origen's orthodoxy once again.<sup>89</sup> He had nothing to gain and everything to lose. He was forced to fight a new battle in a war that, as he saw it, ended long ago.

Jerome, like Cassian, was one of the most important ascetic writers for the west in the early Church.<sup>90</sup> But, contrary to Clark who claims that he viewed this debate as a "continuation of both the ascetic and the Origenist controversies,"<sup>91</sup> he did not see this debate through an ascetic lens, though the Origenist flavor is undoubtedly present. Even

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<sup>85</sup> *Ep.* 136 (7); Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 66; Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 327-32; Lössl, "Who Attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416 A.D.?", 91-112.

<sup>86</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 72.

<sup>87</sup> Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 326.

<sup>88</sup> Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, 8; Jerome, *Praef in lib. Hier.* Prol (3), 4 (41); Prol. (4). 3 (60).

<sup>89</sup> Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, 8-17; Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, 54-55.

<sup>90</sup> Cavallera, "Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite," 101-4; Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*, 78.

<sup>91</sup> Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 221.

in his *Ep.* 130—which was one of his most important discourses on the consecrated life and where one would expect a connection between asceticism and Pelagius to be made—his warning to Demetrias was restricted to the dangers of Origenism (such as the preexistence of souls) in new form, but did not accuse Pelagius of rejecting moral hierarchy, which was at the center of his ascetic concerns.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps he did not detect any ascetic shading in Pelagius' writings, despite the fact that the bishops at the Synod of Diospolis had done so and addressed Pelagius as a monk (*monachus*) several times.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps he had known this, but did not see the implications for the ascetic life that Pelagius' arguments inevitably caused, as Cassian would do later. Perhaps he felt that Pelagius was more vulnerable on the charge of distorting the Gospel by introducing the corrupting influence of philosophy and chose to remain focused on that front. Regardless of the reasons why, his ascetic preoccupations are curiously absent.

It is impossible to talk about his context without mentioning the many fights in his life. He battled men like Jovinian, Vigilantius and Helvidius. The most important one, without question, concerned Origen. Origen was mentioned in our earlier chapter on Jerome and we saw that Jerome correctly detected his influence on Pelagius. It is important to offer an outline of this episode in Jerome's life because, as Clark has pointed

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<sup>92</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 130 (16).

<sup>93</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 14 (36), 19 (43), 20 (44), 35 (60). Orosius, however, claims that Pelagius was a layman. Orosius, *Lib. Apol.* 5.

out, Jerome's understanding of Pelagius' agenda cannot be removed from his understanding of what transpired just a few years earlier in the Origenist Controversy.<sup>94</sup>

This phase of the so-called "Origenist Controversy" began, for our purposes, in 393.<sup>95</sup> While Clark has detailed the different concerns that the authors who participated in this debate had with Origen's theology (or their own personal axes to grind), we will limit ourselves to surveying the characters involved.<sup>96</sup> Epiphanius, the bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, believed that Origen's thought had contaminated ascetic communities throughout Palestine with non-Christian ideas and he sent Atarbius and a group of monks to the monasteries of Jerome and Rufinus and demanded they denounce Origen.<sup>97</sup> Jerome did so immediately while Rufinus refused to meet them.<sup>98</sup> Later that year, Epiphanius visited Jerusalem and preached a homily that challenged Origen's theology, drawing contempt from Bishop John. That afternoon, John took his turn and subtly

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<sup>94</sup> Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 221. For excellent discussions of this controversy in addition to Clark's text, see also: Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, 6-25; Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 195-258.

<sup>95</sup> Although we are avoiding the use of the term "Pelagian Controversy" in this dissertation, the "Origenist Controversy" should not be automatically dismissed for the same reasons. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to debate the merits of this term.

<sup>96</sup> Clark has shown that Epiphanius changed his critiques of Origen from his comments in the 370s to the 390s when he became preoccupied with "the heightened debate over asceticism;" Theophilus "engaged contemporary concern over 'the body' as well as the texts of Origen;" Jerome bludgeoned his enemies with accusations of being followers of Origen while reasserting his central preoccupation with 'asceticism and moral hierarchy.'" Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 85.

<sup>97</sup> Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 203-27.

<sup>98</sup> Jerome, *Apol.* 3 (33).

mocked Epiphanius.<sup>99</sup> A few days later, Epiphanius left Jerusalem for the monastery in Besanduc that he had founded. The following year, a group of monks from Bethlehem—including Jerome’s brother Paulinian—visited Besanduc and Epiphanius forcibly ordained Paulinian.<sup>100</sup> John’s response was to excommunicate Paulinian, Jerome and the monks in Bethlehem,<sup>101</sup> which lasted for several years until Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria, brokered a peace between John and Jerome.<sup>102</sup>

Shortly after this, Rufinus left Jerusalem and moved to Italy which, one would speculate, should have eased the tensions between Rufinus and Jerome, but their lifelong friendship was about to implode. While there, Macarius, “a man of distinction from his faith, his learning, his noble birth and his personal life,”<sup>103</sup> told Rufinus that he had had a dream that someone from overseas would help him with the problem of fatalism with which he had been struggling. To assist him, Rufinus translated Pamphilus’ *Apologia pro Origene*, wrote a preface, and wrote his *De adulteratione librorum Origenis*, in which he argued that Origen’s works had been distorted by heretics. He then rendered Origen’s *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* into Latin, which one cannot actually call a translation but “a free paraphrase”<sup>104</sup> that changed any theologically questionable passages. Rufinus claimed

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<sup>99</sup> *C. Ioan*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> *Ep.* 51 (1).

<sup>101</sup> *C. Ioan*, 41-3.

<sup>102</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 208-9.

<sup>103</sup> Jerome, *Apol. C. Hier.* 1 (11).

<sup>104</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 230.



that, in doing so, he was following the precedent set by Jerome. When Jerome had learned about Rufinus' project and had received a draft of the translation, he was furious and began his own translation of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* that “should neither add nor subtract but should preserve in Latin in its integrity the true sense of the Greek (*nec adderem quid nec demerem graecam que fidem latina integritate seruarem*).”<sup>105</sup> In doing so, he was exposing all of Origen's dirty laundry. He also wrote a public letter (*Ep.* 84) in which he defended himself against Rufinus' implicit claim that he was a student of Origen. He also wrote a private letter (*Ep.* 81) to Rufinus with a warning of caution. It never reached him.<sup>106</sup>

Around the same time, Theophilus changed his position and became a firm anti-Origenist and expelled from Nitria the Tall Brothers—leaders of a group of monks who favored Origen—and other monks sympathetic toward Origen. He also enlisted the help of Anastatius, the new Pope, in his campaign against Origen and they began to apply pressure to Rufinus. Rufinus had received Jerome's *Ep.* 84 and replied with his *Apologia contra Hieronymum*. Jerome had caught wind of it before it had even been published and set out immediately to write two books of his own *Apologia*.<sup>107</sup> Although we do not have a response to this scathing diatribe against Rufinus, he was surely devastated. A mutual friend, Bishop Chromatius, stepped in and Rufinus restrained himself from making a

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<sup>105</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 85 (3). In recent decades, Rufinus' translation has been rehabilitated, to a great extent, in the minds of many scholars and they believe that Rufinus was maligned. See also: Jerome, *Ep.* 124.

<sup>106</sup> Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 229-255.

<sup>107</sup> Jerome, *Apol.* 1 (1).

public response and only sent a personal letter to Jerome.<sup>108</sup> Jerome's response to this private correspondence was to add a third book to his *Apologia*. Rufinus did not dignify this addition with a response and their public soap opera fizzled to a close.<sup>109</sup> Although officially over, Jerome could not resist attacking his friend even long after he had died. In his battle with Pelagius, Jerome leveled more *ad hominem* attacks on Rufinus, such as calling him a pig (Grunnius), as the pressure continued in his later and greater commentaries.<sup>110</sup>

### **Definition of Sinlessness: Augustine**

Of our three authors, Augustine's definition of sinlessness is the most difficult to determine because, unlike Cassian and Jerome, he does not provide for us a clearly worded statement. His definition is further complicated by the fact that he uses a variety of terms as synonyms for sinlessness, such as: perfect in full righteousness (*perfectus in plenitudine iustitiae*), true righteousness (*vera iustitia*), complete perfection (*plena perfectio*), spotless (*immaculatus*), eternal perfection (*perfectio aeterna*), and pure of heart (*mundus corde*).<sup>111</sup> He also obfuscates his meaning by using *iustitia* in different

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 3 (2).

<sup>109</sup> Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I: 280-6.

<sup>110</sup> Jerome, *Praef in lib. Hier.* 1; Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, 207-8.

ways—sometimes he uses it as a synonym for *sine peccato* while, at other times, he distinguishes the two.<sup>112</sup> We, therefore, are forced to distill a definition by closely examining several of his texts to determine what, exactly, he means.

His definition may only be appreciated in light of his understanding of sin.<sup>113</sup> James Wetzel has succinctly stated that, for Augustine, “sin (*peccatum*) refers to the willful misdirection of the love that is fundamental to the life of the soul.”<sup>114</sup> This willful misdirection is caused by desire (“no sin is committed without desire”),<sup>115</sup> which comes from concupiscence in the flesh that has been passed down from our first parents after their prideful disobedience.<sup>116</sup> Sin is the turn inward towards the self and outwards toward contingent reality.

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<sup>111</sup> Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.13 (20); *Nat. et gr.* 13 (14), 60 (70), 63 (75); *Perf. ius.* 14 (32), 15 (36). Although Augustine uses the term pure of heart, there is no indication that he understood this term in the same Evagrian sense that Cassian would later understand it. It is clear that he only has Mt. 5:8 in mind.

<sup>112</sup> In *Pec. merr.* 2.12 (17), Augustine uses *iustitia* as a synonym for *sine peccato*, while in 2.9 (11) he does not.

<sup>113</sup> For extended discussions of Augustine’s definition of sin, see: Malcom E. Alflatt, “The Responsibility for Involuntary Sin in Saint Augustine,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975): 171-86; Malcom E. Alflatt, “The Development of the Idea of Involuntary Sin in St. Augustine,” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 20 (1974): 113-34; William Babcock, “Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (1988): 28-55; Barclift, “In Controversy with Saint Augustin: Julian of Eclanum on the Nature of Sin,” 5-20; Ernesto Bonaiuti, “The Genesis of St. Augustine’s Idea of Original Sin,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1917): 159-75; William Mann, “Augustine on Evil and Original Sin,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 40-58.

<sup>114</sup> Wetzel, “Sin,” in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 800.

<sup>115</sup> Augustine, *Spir. et litt.* 4 (6).

<sup>116</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.23 (37); *Spir. et litt.* 36 (65).

We continue with his understanding of *iustitia*. In Book II of *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, Augustine detailed how Job was righteous, but not sinless. In this exposition, he said that a righteous person was one who “has so developed in moral goodness that no one can equal him.”<sup>117</sup> This moral goodness does not mean that the righteous person is without sin because he always struggles to maintain it. Later, in his *De natura et gratia*, he says that the sinless individual is one who does not need to wage such interior moral battles because he has overcome the concupiscence of the flesh.<sup>118</sup> The first element to his definition, then, is that a sinless person is one who has reached an unsurpassed level of moral purity by not even being tempted by the desires of the flesh.

The second element of his definition is that a sinless person would be perfect in all respects. Some men and women, such as Paul, can claim truthfully that they are perfect in one respect (Phil 3:15), but nobody may claim to be perfect in all. One may be a perfect student of wisdom, he says for example, but may not be a perfect teacher of it; one could have a perfect knowledge of righteousness, but not practice it; one may be perfect in loving one’s enemies, but not in accepting their injustices.<sup>119</sup>

The third element of his definition is love. While sin is love misdirected, a sinless individual would be one who has rightly ordered love. This proper love is not turned inwards towards the self, but turned upwards towards God, which will overflow onto the

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<sup>117</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.12 (17).

<sup>118</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 62 (72).

<sup>119</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.15 (22).

rest of humanity. He says that “He [Jesus] said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul and your whole mind’ and ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37.39).’ What could be truer than that, when we have fulfilled these, we have fulfilled all righteousness?”<sup>120</sup> Only when one is able to follow this greatest of all commandments may the sinless individual entirely love God with heart, soul, and mind.<sup>121</sup>

We cannot achieve perfect morality, be perfect in all respects, or have a properly ordered love of God and neighbor in this life. Such a reality is reserved for the end of the journey (*cursus*), in the resurrected body.<sup>122</sup> But, one may make a certain level of progress.<sup>123</sup> This progress—as one would expect from Augustine—may only be achieved through God’s gracious assistance.<sup>124</sup> We now may construct his definition of sinlessness as one who would no longer have a flesh that is disordered by concupiscence, would not struggle with morality, would be perfect in every single respect, would follow Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor properly.

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<sup>120</sup> Augustine, *Spir. et. litt.* 36 (63). See also: *Nat. et gr.* 70 (84); *Perf. ius.* 3 (8).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 (19).

<sup>122</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 2.13 (20).

<sup>123</sup> *Perf. ius.* 13 (31).

<sup>124</sup> *Spir. et. litt.* 2 (4).

### Definition of Sinlessness: Cassian

As we have already given Cassian's definition of sinlessness in detail because it was impossible to speak of his critique of Pelagius without doing so, we do not need to repeat it here. It is sufficient to recall that, in a previous chapter, he saw life without sin defined as θεωρία, the permanent contemplation of God.<sup>125</sup> This contemplation, however, cannot be maintained permanently as the needs of the flesh inevitably will distract the mind from its goal. Even Paul, the greatest of Apostles, could not remain sinless.<sup>126</sup> Cassian's definition, as I already have argued, comes from Evagrius, his intellectual master.

### Definition of Sinlessness: Jerome

Jerome offers a definition of sinlessness that he sees operating in Pelagius' works, which, he believes, is rooted in Stoicism.<sup>127</sup> According to the Stoics, he says, every individual experiences passions (πάθη, *perturbatio*) that must be removed through "meditation (*meditatio*) on virtue and constant practice (*exercitatio*) of it."<sup>128</sup> If one were ever to achieve this goal, he sees such a person becoming "either a stone or a God."<sup>129</sup> One may be tempted to see a connection between the Stoic *meditatio*, as described by

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<sup>125</sup> For the definition that Cassian makes between the idea of sinlessness and θεωρία, recall: *Coll.* 23.1 (1)-8 (1).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.5 (1-6).

<sup>127</sup> Cavallera, "Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite," 127

<sup>128</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (1).

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, (3).

Jerome here, with Cassian's θεωρία, but we should not see them as synonymous. Jerome is describing a process where the individual brings one, or more than one, virtue to the front of the mind and ponders it, then puts it into action. Such a goal runs counter to Cassian's central concern for two reasons. First, he does not want the ascetic to ponder any idea, he wants all λογισμοί to be removed from the mind, including those about virtues. Second, Jerome's description of constant *exercitatio* of virtue hints at Cassian's πρακτική, which, as we have seen, he—like Evagrius—views as the stage prior to θεωρητική.

Jerome then connects this supposed Stoic idea with Pelagius' belief in the possibility of sinlessness. He says:

let those blush then for their leaders and companions who say that a man may be 'without sin' (*sine peccato*) if he will, or, as the Greeks term it ἀναμάρτητος, 'sinless.' As such a statement sounds intolerable to the Eastern churches, they profess indeed only to say that a man may be 'without sin' (*sine peccato*) and do not presume to allege that he may be 'sinless' (ἀναμάρτητος) as well. As if, forsooth, 'sinless' (*sine peccato*) and 'without sin' (ἀναμάρτητον) had different meanings; whereas the only difference between them is the Latin requires two words to express what Greek gives in one. If you adopt 'without sin' (*absque peccato*) and reject 'sinless,' (ἀναμάρτητος) then condemn the preachers of sinlessness.<sup>130</sup>

Elsewhere, he says that ἀναμάρτητος is a synonym for ἀπάθεια, and in a linguistic sleight of hand he connects ἀπάθεια to ἀναμάρτητος then to *sine peccato*.<sup>131</sup> By doing so, he associates sinlessness with a pagan philosophical origin.<sup>132</sup> The term ἀπάθεια, which we

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<sup>130</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (3).

<sup>131</sup> *Praef in lib. Hier.* 4.

have already encountered in the chapter on Cassian, had a turbulent history in the Church because it was a philosophical term that was appropriated, adapted, and used by theologians such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen.<sup>133</sup>

Jerome also heavily criticized Evagrius (from whom, according to him, Pelagius received this understanding of sinlessness) for using the term, although scholars today disagree if he understood what Evagrius meant by ἀπάθεια.<sup>134</sup> Driver, for example, claims that his “description of *apatheia* is little more than a caricature, and his supposed reliance on the ancient philosophers shows that Jerome had little understanding of their views.”<sup>135</sup> Casiday, on the other hand, argues that this “is actually far more penetrating than it might seem at first. . . . Jerome’s anxieties are not as far-fetched as some have suggested, though they may well not have been completely justified by the

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<sup>132</sup> Benoît Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme et l’hérésie* (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 1999), 395-7; Rackett, “Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity,” 283-4.

<sup>133</sup> For discussions about ἀπάθεια concerning Clement and Origen, see: Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 42; Nicholas Groves, “Mundicia Cordis: A Study of the Theme of Purity of Heart in Hugh of Pontigny and the Fathers of the Undivided Church,” in *One yet Two: Monastic Tradition East and West. Orthodox—Cistercian Symposium. Oxford University: 26 August-1 September 1973* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1976): 312; Jeremy Driscoll, “Apatheia and Purity of Heart in Evagrius Ponticus,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 157.

<sup>134</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (3).

<sup>135</sup> Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, 303; See also, David Bell, “Apatheia: The Convergence of Byzantine and Cistercian Spirituality,” *Cîteaux* 38 (1987): 48; Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 315; Rackett, “What’s Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and His Followers,” 231; Somos, “Origen, Evagrius Ponticus and the Ideal of Impassibility,” 372; Colish, *The Stoic Tradition From Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century*, 78.



circumstances.”<sup>136</sup> I would suggest that, although the relationship between Pelagius and the Stoics has yet to be explored as we have already stated, Driver rightly rejected his argument of the equivalence of *sine peccato* and ἀπάθεια. Furthermore, I would suggest that he did have a clear understanding of the Stoic definition of ἀπάθεια, but he did not know the writings of Evagrius well enough to realize how Evagrius had adapted the term for Christian usage by making it a means towards the end of a prayerful connection to God. Cassian, on this point at least, understood Evagrius better than Jerome.<sup>137</sup>

With these definitions of sinlessness now clearly established, we see how radically different were their starting points. Both Cassian and Jerome rejected Pelagius’ idea of sinlessness, but they did so from opposing positions. Cassian stood firmly on an Evagrian foundation while Jerome rejected Pelagius from an anti-Evagrian position. This point cannot be overstated. For Cassian, Pelagius was, we can say, “not Evagrian enough” while Jerome thought that Pelagius was “too Evagrian.” It was irrelevant for both of these men that Pelagius may never have read Evagrius. What was of central importance was their own relationships with Greek philosophy and the Christian appropriation of that philosophy. These relationships colored their rejection of Pelagius. Cassian, with his dependence on Evagrius and his praise of the ascetic practices of the Egyptian fathers, constructed a definition of sinlessness that echoed the σκοπός of the

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<sup>136</sup> Casiday, “Apatheia and Sexuality in the Thought of Augustine and Cassian,” 370-2.

<sup>137</sup> Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, 67-71.

desert monks.<sup>138</sup> Jerome, with his scorn for the “asps” of Nitria and their appropriation of Greek philosophy through Origen and Evagrius, constructed a definition that (indirectly) assailed those whom he had once praised.<sup>139</sup>

Augustine—because he was not as well versed in eastern Christian thought as Jerome and Cassian had been—did not construct a definition in dialogue with the east.<sup>140</sup> For him, the inability to overcome concupiscence determines the inability to remain free from sin. Baptism does not remove concupiscence, it only removes the guilt (*reatus*) of concupiscence.<sup>141</sup> Although our other two authors also realize that the “flesh lusts against the spirit” (Gal 5:7), Augustine’s definition leads to his understanding of the necessity of Christ’s sacrifice. It is because of the weakness of the flesh that Christ’s sacrifice is absolutely necessary for the salvation of humanity.<sup>142</sup> He understood better than Cassian or Jerome—who never seem to make the connection between the implications of a sinless life and salvation—that the claim to the possibility of sinlessness calls into question the necessity of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection.

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<sup>138</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 1.8 (1).

<sup>139</sup> Driver, “From Palestinian Ignorance to Egyptian Wisdom: Jerome and Cassian on the Monastic Life,” 293.

<sup>140</sup> Augustine did not know Greek well enough to read Origen’s works. He had asked Jerome to continue translating Origen so that he would be able to read him. *Ep.* 28.2 (2).

<sup>141</sup> *Pecc. mer.* 1.24 (34).

<sup>142</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 9 (10).

### Larger Critique: Augustine

We now must turn our attention to see how our authors situated their assessment of sinlessness in their larger critiques of Pelagius. While we may be specific about Cassian and Jerome because their evaluations of Pelagius were limited in scope, we cannot say the same about Augustine. As we have seen, his point of departure was grace, but he also touched on almost every single anthropological issue one can imagine. It would be impossible, therefore, to detail each argument he made. We will limit ourselves to tracking the issues at stake to see which ones took center stage at what given moment.

In the beginning, sinlessness was the main event. Since, when he responded to an inquiry from Marcellinus he had not read any works by his opponents, Augustine had yet to play his signature card. *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptism parvulorum*, and *De spiritu et littera*, should be thought of as companion pieces—although they are never discussed as such—because they were both written in response to inquiries from the same friend.

*De spiritu et littera* is much more narrowly focused as Augustine was responding to another letter from Marcellinus who had been confused by his previous reply and needed several points clarified. There are, however, a few new issues that are introduced here. He offers his first extended discussion of God's help (*adiutorium*) by criticizing his opponents' definition of it as the gift of the free will, commandments, and teachings.<sup>143</sup> He is clearly disturbed by this definition, as we also will see with Jerome. These two

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<sup>143</sup> Augustine, *Spir. et litt.* 2 (4).

men entirely agree that this definition is too flat and does not adequately appreciate God's work in every action. Predestination is introduced for the first time,<sup>144</sup> although it does not reach full blossom until the end of his life.<sup>145</sup> The main thrust of the text is the necessity of the presence of the Spirit when obeying the law.<sup>146</sup> This gift of the Spirit does not destroy free will, which he insists is itself a gift from God,<sup>147</sup> but strengthens it.<sup>148</sup> At the end of the text, he calls his opponents *inimici gratiae Dei* for the very first time,<sup>149</sup> which he will do throughout the rest of his works.<sup>150</sup>

Augustine finally gains access to Pelagius' writings and we see, in his *De natura et gratia*, yet another subtle shift in his argument. He begins the text with an overview of the differences between his and Pelagius' foundational thought, and then returns to the question of sinlessness, which ended his discussion in *De spiritu et littera*. Indeed, it is in this text that our question receives his most sustained attention.<sup>151</sup> Many of the issues already discussed may be found here. In fact, it is quite impressive how consistent his arguments were in *De natura et gratia* with the arguments he had made in *De*

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 5 (7).

<sup>145</sup> *Praed. sanct.* 10 (19-21, 43).

<sup>146</sup> *Spir. et litt.* 13 (22).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 33 (57).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 30 (52).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 35 (63).

<sup>150</sup> For example: Augustine, *C. ep. Pel.* 1.7 (12), 3.5 (11); *C. Jul.* 4.3 (15), 4.3 (16), 6.14 (44). *C. Jul. imp.* 1.68 (3), 1.134 (1). Augustine only used the phrase "enemies of grace" three times before the Council of Diospolis, but more than 50 times after it.

<sup>151</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 7 (8-18, 20), 33 (37-44,51), 48 (56-60,70).

*peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum* and *De spiritu et littera* without having their texts in hand.

We come to his newest contribution at the end of his text. In his *De natura*, Pelagius had quoted several thinkers (Lactantius, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, Xystus, Jerome, and Augustine himself) to prove his argument for the possibility of sinlessness. These quotations did not bother Augustine, because he said that they were “neutral, neither against our view nor against his. He cited them, not from the canonical scriptures, but from some writings of Catholic commentators, in order to answer those who said that he was the only one who held these views.”<sup>152</sup> He brushed aside Pelagius’ appeal to these authorities as superfluous at best and a sign of weakness at worst.<sup>153</sup> This is noteworthy because, later, in his rantings against Julian when his civility was exhausted and his frustration may be sensed on every page, he was the one defensively evoking earlier Church Fathers to support his claims.<sup>154</sup> “I first show,” he will later say in his *Contra Iulianum*, “the intolerable injustice you [Julian] do not hesitate to do to great and good teachers of the Catholic Church by labeling them Manichees. For you hurl your sacrilegious weapons at them, though you are aiming at me.”<sup>155</sup> Unlike in *De natura et gratia*, he wants to emphasize the importance of the union

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 61 (71).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>154</sup> Even in his *De natura et gratia*, Augustine is still trying to show signs of civility towards Pelagius. He said that “out of a feeling of friendship I do not want the man [Pelagius] who paid me this honor [of quoting Augustine’s *De libero arbitrio*] to be in error.” *Nat. et gr.* 61 (71).

of belief of all the non-canonical Catholic writers to show that he was not the one introducing novelty.<sup>156</sup>

In his *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*, he responds to a text attributed to Caelestius. As he quotes most—if not the entirety—of Caelestius’ *Liber definitionum*, we confidently may deduce that Caelestius had a narrower set of interests than Pelagius.<sup>157</sup> The main topics were: (1) a correct definition of sin, (2) that the commandments are not burdensome, and (3) that everyone is a liar. Once again, predestination makes an appearance. At the forefront of Caelestius’ mind, though, is sinlessness. The similarities between the substance of his and Pelagius’ arguments, unfortunately, do not help answer the daunting question that has plagued recent scholars: who was the teacher and who was the student? Most scholars have argued that Pelagius was the teacher,<sup>158</sup> while others have argued it was Caelestius.<sup>159</sup> Some have argued that

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<sup>155</sup> Augustine, *C. Jul.* 1.1 (3).

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.10 (37).

<sup>157</sup> Roland Teske, "Introduction," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Answer to the Pelagians: I*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1997), 270.

<sup>158</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 343; Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 327; Henri Rondet, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background*, trans., Cajetan Finegan (Shannon: Ecclesia Press, 1972), 125; Gustave Bardy, "Greco et Latins dans les Premières Controverses Pélagiennes," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 49 (1948): 7; Lamberigts, "Caelestius," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 114; Rackett, "What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and His Followers," 223; Jean Chéné, "Saint Augustin enseigne-t-il dans le *De Spiritu et Littera* l'universalité de la volonté salvifique de Dieu?," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 47 (1959): 218; J.H. Koopsmans, "Augustine's First Contact with Pelagius and the Dating of the Condemnation of Caelestius at Carthage," *Vigiliae Christianae* 8 (1954): 151; Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine*, 70.

<sup>159</sup> Georges De Plinval, *Pélage: ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme*; Guido Honnay, "Caelestius, Discipulus Pelagii," *Augustiniana* 44 (1994): 271.

it was Rufinus the Syrian,<sup>160</sup> Dunphy has argued that it was Rufinus of Aquileia,<sup>161</sup> and Rees has argued there was no founder.<sup>162</sup> The differences in the style of their arguments, however, are noteworthy. Caelestius relies much more heavily on philosophy—specifically, syllogistic thinking.<sup>163</sup> This suggests, I would argue, that while he was probably the student and certainly was younger than Pelagius, he most likely had a superior education. It may have been this education that gave him the confidence to proclaim his position much more boldly and strongly than Pelagius, which landed him in trouble much earlier, in the Council of Carthage of 411, than his mentor.

*De gestis Pelagii* offers a fascinating juxtaposition of different views of Pelagius' and Caelestius' faults. By this time, in late 417 after he had received the minutes of the Synod of Diospolis, Augustine was almost singly focused on *gratia* as the core issue.<sup>164</sup> The Synod, on the other hand, brought a bevy of charges against Pelagius, *gratia* only being tertiary. This text can be broken down into three sections. First, six objections were brought to Pelagius from his own works, two of which are related to our topic: the

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<sup>160</sup> Gerald Bonner, "Rufinus of Syria and African Pelagianism," *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970): 38; Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 280; François Refoulé, "Datation du premier concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus Fidei* de Rufin," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 9 (1963): 49.

<sup>161</sup> Dunphy makes it clear that he is not sure that Rufinus would have actually agreed with the theological anthropology of Pelagius and his group. However, he believes that Rufinus the Syrian was actually Rufinus of Aquileia and that his translations gave Pelagius and others the courage to proclaim what they did. Dunphy, "Rufinus the Syrian: Myth and Reality," 157.

<sup>162</sup> Rees, "Introduction," 20-5.

<sup>163</sup> Augustine, *Perf. iust.* 1-7 (16).

<sup>164</sup> *Gest. Pel.* 30 (55).

first that “only one who has knowledge of the law can be without sin,” and the sixth that “human beings can be without sin, if they want.”<sup>165</sup> The second objection, referencing free will, does not come as a surprise to us.<sup>166</sup> The third, that “on the day of judgment the wicked and sinners are not to be spared; rather they are to be burned with eternal fire,”<sup>167</sup> is noteworthy because—as Pelagius himself points out<sup>168</sup>— it is a direct refutation of Origen; we have already seen how Jerome tirelessly attempts to link Pelagius and Origen together.<sup>169</sup> The fourth, clearly coming from the influence of Jerome who traced this idea to Origen,<sup>170</sup> was an objection that “evil does not even enter one’s thoughts.”<sup>171</sup> The fifth is that “the kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament.”<sup>172</sup> This, like the third objection, cannot be traced to Augustine or Jerome, nor found in Orosius’ work. It is impossible to say whence these objections originated, but they probably came from Heros and Lazarus. I would suggest, therefore, that Jerome was not necessarily the driving force behind Diospolis, as previous scholars have claimed.<sup>173</sup> It becomes clear, once again, that there was a panoply of concerns over Pelagius’ thought.

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 1.2, 6 (16).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 3 (5).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 3 (9).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 3 (10).

<sup>169</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 130 (16).

<sup>170</sup> *Ep.* 133 (3).

<sup>171</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 4 (12).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 5 (13).



The second section of objections raised against Pelagius came from those issues that condemned Caelestius in Carthage. Of these six, only one pertains to our question, that before Christ there were human beings without sin.<sup>174</sup> Pelagius distanced himself from Caelestius and anathematized his ideas.<sup>175</sup> Added to these objections were three raised by Augustine in his *Ep.* 157 to Hilary of Syracuse, one of which dealt with sinlessness, but not *gratia*.<sup>176</sup>

The third section forced Pelagius to address three objections that came from Caelestius' *Liber definitionum*. In addition to claiming that "we do more than is prescribed in the law and the gospel," Caelestius was accused of having claimed that "God's grace and help is not given for individual actions, but consists in free choice or in the law and teaching," and that "everyone can have all the virtues and graces and that they destroy the diversity of graces which the apostle teaches."<sup>177</sup> Here we see, at long last, that *gratia* makes an appearance at a council, but not, importantly as a single reality.

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<sup>173</sup> Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, 85-6.

<sup>174</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 11 (23). The remaining five: "Adam was created mortal so that he would die whether he sinned or did not sin ... the sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race ... the law leads to the kingdom just as the gospel does ... newly born infants are in the same state in which Adam was before his transgression ... the whole human race does not die through the death or transgression of Adam, nor does the whole human race rise through the resurrection of Christ." *Gest. Pel.* 11 (23); Rackett, "What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine, and Jerome on the Danger of Pelagius and his Followers," 24-8.

<sup>175</sup> Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 19 (43).

<sup>176</sup> "Human beings can be without sin if they want. ... Infants attain eternal life, even if they are not baptized. ... If wealthy persons who have been baptized do not renounce all their possessions, they have no merit, even if they seem to do something good, and they cannot possess the kingdom of God." *Gest. Pel.* 11 (23).

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 (32).

Pelagius easily deflects these accusations by once again distancing himself from Caelestius.<sup>178</sup> Diospolis, then, offers a wide ranging assortment of charges against Pelagius. Of the 18 objections raised, four of them treated sinlessness, only two treated grace.

As we noted in an earlier chapter, when he writes *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*, sinlessness has almost become irrelevant for Augustine, and so he drops it almost entirely from view.<sup>179</sup> He radically narrows the focus of his attack to primarily two issues: the definition of grace as a single concept and the existence of original sin.<sup>180</sup> It cannot be said that he makes any profoundly new arguments, but he does go into greater detail of his opponents' views.

### **Larger Critique: Cassian**

While the question of sinlessness was one of many topics that Augustine addressed, Cassian showed no interest in the multitude of issues at stake. Rather, he confined his critique to the question of sinlessness and one other problem: Christology. As we have already extensively discussed his understanding of sinlessness, we will limit ourselves here to the second criticism. Although several examinations of the

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 32 (58).

<sup>179</sup> It is mentioned a few times in this text, often when quoting Pelagius or Caelestius. Augustine, *Gr. et pecc. or.* 1.3 (3), 1.4 (5), 1.30 (32), 1.43 (47), 1.48 (53), 1.49 (54), 2.11 (12)-12 (13), 2.38 (43).

<sup>180</sup> He does discuss, in a very limited way, several issues we have seen before: baptism 1.32 (35), 2.39 (45), the relationship between Adam and Christ 2.24 (28), the goodness of marriage 2.33 (38-39).

Christological aspect of this debate have been done in the past few decades, scholars have largely ignored Cassian's critique of Pelagius.<sup>181</sup> When scholars do analyze his *De incarnatione* for its Christological aspects, the analyses address his Christology, as well as his understanding of Nestorius' Christology. It is my contention that he offers an insightful critique of Pelagius' Christology that needs a fresh look.

Cassian claims that Pelagius believes that Christ is merely an example for humanity to emulate in the quest for sinlessness, saying that

if Christ who was born of Mary is not the same Person as He who is of God, you [Nestorius] certainly make two Christs; after the manner of that abominable error of Pelagius, which in asserting that a mere man was born of the Virgin, said that he was the teacher rather than the redeemer of mankind; for he did not bring to men redemption of life but only an example (*exemplum*) of how to live.<sup>182</sup>

For Cassian, as with our other authors, Christ is more than an example to imitate. He is the savior of humanity. Pelagius had mentioned several times the importance of Christ as an example to be followed. In his *Expositiones ad Romanos*, he says of Romans 5:12 (just as through one person sin came into the world, and through sin death), that sin and death happen "by example or by pattern. Just as through Adam sin came at a time when it did not yet exist, so in the same way through Christ righteousness was recovered at a

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<sup>181</sup> Joanne Dewart, "The Christology of the Pelagian Controversy," in *Studia Patristica*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 1221-41; Robert Dodaro, "Sacramentum Christi: Augustine on the Christology of Pelagius," in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1991: Cappadocian Fathers, Greek Authors after Nicaea, Augustine, Donatism, and Pelagianism*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 274-80; Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 72-133; Lamberigts, "Competing Christologies: Julian and Augustine on Jesus Christ," 159-94; William E. Phipps, "The Heresiarch: Pelagius or Augustine?," *Anglican Theological Review* LXII, no. 2 (1980): 125; Rees, "Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic" in *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, 25.

<sup>182</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 6 (14). See also 1 (2).

time when it survived in almost no one. And just as through the former's sin death came in, so also through the latter's righteousness life was regained."<sup>183</sup> Later, in the same text, he said that "He [Christ] offered, by way of grace to overcome sin, teaching [and] example."<sup>184</sup> Cassian, and more recently Hanby,<sup>185</sup> understood the Christological implications of Pelagius' belief of Christ as *exemplum*.<sup>186</sup> To say that Christ is simply an exemplar to emulate is to call into question Christ's role as mediator between God and humanity. Neither Augustine nor Jerome were disturbed by the Christological implications of Pelagius' theological anthropology.<sup>187</sup> Augustine, certainly, engaged Julian in debate over the person and natures of Christ, but their exchange orbited around the question of Christ's virility.<sup>188</sup> While Cassian has been accused of being a second-rate theologian, he was, on this point at least, more astute than our other two authors.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Pelagius, *Expos. (ad Romanos)* 5:12. and 8 (3); *Ad Dem.* 8 (4).

<sup>184</sup> *Expos. (ad Romanos)* 6:14.

<sup>185</sup> Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 73-81. Although Hanby attributes to Augustine a correct assessment of Pelagius' Christology, he does not recognize that Cassian understood this problem as well. Hanby sees Cassian as almost as dangerous as Pelagius.

<sup>186</sup> Casiday, I argue, does not adequately grasp the soteriological problems attaching to Pelagius' Christology. He claims that "In their defense, it should be acknowledged that they espoused a broadly sacramental view of salvation that belies Cassian's insinuation about the Pelagian Christ being merely a teacher." While Casiday is right to point towards the Pelagian belief in the necessity of baptism, he overestimates the sacramental value of Pelagius' understanding of baptism. Baptism for Pelagius was an entrance into the Christian community for both babies and adults and a washing away of sins in adults. Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*, 111. For Pelagius' understanding of baptism, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 370-1.

<sup>187</sup> Augustine detected the Christological problem in Pelagius, but he only mentioned in passing. He did not spend any significant time correcting Pelagius: *Gr. et pecc. or.* 1.2 (2). Jerome never addressed this problem.

<sup>188</sup> See, for example: Augustine, *C. Jul.* 5 (55).

While Cassian's analysis is keenly insightful, he then attributes to Pelagius two Christological statements that are not found in his writings. First, he claims that Pelagius believed that Jesus became Christ only after his baptism;<sup>190</sup> then, he states that he became God only after the resurrection.<sup>191</sup> The implication of these claims is that, ontologically, Jesus was only human, but that through grace he received (*suscipere*) God.<sup>192</sup> As Pelagius never made such claims, we are left to ponder why Cassian would make such a fallacious statement. The most likely reason is that he confused, misattributed, or even purposefully ascribed these ideas to Pelagius under the influence of, or with the encouragement of, Leporius, a man who had recently recanted his previous Christological views.

Leporius, according to Cassian, was one of the first and most zealous students of Pelagius in Gaul.<sup>193</sup> Gennadius, later, would make the same claim.<sup>194</sup> It is clear, however, that Gennadius received this idea from Cassian because his and Cassian's words are eerily similar. Cassian claimed that Leporius was "a monk, now presbyter, who followed the teaching or rather the evil deeds of Pelagius" (*enim tunc monachus,*

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<sup>189</sup> Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 23. See also: Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 468; Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 157.

<sup>190</sup> Cassian may have had Photinus on his mind and may have been attempting to use the same ploy of "guilt by association" that he uses with Pelagius and Nestorius.

<sup>191</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 1 (3), 5 (1-4), 6 (14), 7 (21).

<sup>192</sup> See also: Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 156-7; Casiday, "Cassian Against the Pelagians," 16.

<sup>193</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 1 (4).

<sup>194</sup> Gennadius, *De vir. inlustr.* 59.

*modo presbyter, qui ex Pelagii*), while Gennadius said that he was “formerly a monk afterwards presbyter, relying on purity, through his own free will and unaided effort, instead of depending on the help of God, began to follow the Pelagian doctrine” (*adhuc monachus, postea presbyter, praesumens de puritate vitae, quam arbitrio tantum et conatu proprio, non Dei se adiutorio obtinuisse crediderat, Pelagianum dogma coeperat sequi*).<sup>195</sup> We, therefore, may dismiss Gennadius as an independent source.

In an *epistula* from 418 written to Proculus, bishop of Marseilles, and Cillenius, a bishop of southern Gaul, Augustine and several other North African bishops tell a different story.<sup>196</sup> In this description of Leporius’ recantation, there is no indication that he was ever a follower of Pelagius.<sup>197</sup> If he had been his disciple, we should expect to find Leporius claim that Christ was only an *exemplum*.<sup>198</sup> But, he never does so. Indeed, when Cassian himself quotes his *deploratio*,<sup>199</sup> there is in it nothing remotely reminiscent of Pelagius.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, as this *epistula* is dated from the height of this debate when Pelagius would be condemned three times, we should expect Augustine to make a

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<sup>195</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 1 (4); Gennadius, *De vir. illustr.* 59.

<sup>196</sup> For the debate over the dating of this letter, see Teske’s note in: Augustine, *Letters: 211-270, 1\*-29\**, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans., Roland Teske. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2005), 69 n. 1.

<sup>197</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 219.

<sup>198</sup> Torsten Krannich, *Von Leporius bis zu Leo dem Großen: Studien zur lateinischsprachigen Christologie im fünften Jahrhundert nach Christus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 58-60.

<sup>199</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 1 (5).

<sup>200</sup> Krannich, *Von Leporius bis zu Leo dem Großen: Studien zur lateinischsprachigen Christologie im fünften Jahrhundert nach Christus*, 104-6.

connection between Pelagius and Leporius, if such a connection were to exist. As none is made, we may dismiss these criticisms of Pelagius as erroneous. It is most likely that Cassian linked them together on purpose in order to discredit them both and, throughout the rest of the text, discredit Nestorius.<sup>201</sup>

### **Larger Critique: Jerome**

Jerome has a much narrower set of concerns than most scholars believe. In our previous chapter, we saw in Book III of his *Dialogi* that he addressed such issues as predestination, infant baptism, and the transmission of sin. Those attacks, however, were aimed at Augustine, not Pelagius. He seems to be troubled by only two other issues: Pelagius' definition of grace and his understanding of free will. It is important to note that grace and free will are not discussed independently; both are secondary and are always in service of sinlessness.<sup>202</sup> In other words: does humanity have the free will to be sinless, what role does grace play in the exercise of free will in such a case, and what role does it play in a sinless life? He, then, was closer to Cassian than to Augustine in that he understood that sinlessness was the key to entering Pelagius' thought.

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<sup>201</sup> Chadwick, John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism, 158; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 22.

<sup>202</sup> Rackett, "What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and His Followers," 231.

While acknowledging that Pelagius recognizes its importance,<sup>203</sup> Jerome feels that Pelagius' definition of grace is far too narrow.<sup>204</sup> In his *Ep.* 133, he indicates that Pelagius defines grace as the gifts of the commandments of the Law and free will.<sup>205</sup> Later, in his *Dialogi*, he expands the definition of grace to include all of creation (*conditio*).<sup>206</sup> He is also deeply troubled by Pelagius' claim that God's grace has provided the ability (*potestas*) to avoid sin.<sup>207</sup> But Pelagius, he believes, does not adequately appreciate the need for God's grace in every moment and, thereby, demonstrates a flawed understanding of the sinfulness of humanity.<sup>208</sup>

This stands in a different light than Augustine's critique of Pelagius' idea of grace in two ways. First, Augustine's critique of Pelagius rested on the claim that works cause grace to be bestowed on the individual. In his *Ad Demetriadem*, Pelagius claims that "by doing his [God's] will, [one is able] to merit divine grace also and to resist the evil spirit more easily with the aid of the Holy Spirit."<sup>209</sup> Augustine would rail against this claim in

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<sup>203</sup> Jerome, *Dial.* 1 (2).

<sup>204</sup> Cavallera, "Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite," 102.

<sup>205</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (5); *Dial.* 1 (1).

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (11).

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (2-7).

<sup>208</sup> Rousseau, "Jerome on Jeremiah: Exegesis and Recovery," 76.

<sup>209</sup> Pelagius, *Ad Dem.* 25 (3). How these men define grace is one of the most important and slippery issues in the entire debate. They all believed in the necessity and efficacy of grace. What that exactly means for each one of them is the heart of the dispute of grace. Here, we see that Jerome (and Augustine would also do) acknowledges that Pelagius stressed grace, but how Pelagius defined grace was problematic, to say the least, for Jerome.



his *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*. Grace, he claims, can never be earned.<sup>210</sup>

Jerome, on the other hand, was never concerned with the order of grace and merits.

Although we saw earlier that he claims that we should strive for grace, we should not conclude that he favored Pelagius on this issue. Like many other theological issues, it seems that he was just not interested in writing about such questions. Once again, Jerome shows that he is theologically less probing than Augustine.

Also, Augustine is much more detailed than Jerome in his critique of Pelagius' idea that God's grace rests in the ability to be free of sin, but not the will or the action. For Pelagius, God's grace extends only to the ability to be free of sin. The will to be sinless and the action of being sinless rest with the individual alone. God will never compel anyone either to commit sin or to be sinless.<sup>211</sup> For Augustine, in order for an individual to avoid sin, God's grace must be present in all three stages.<sup>212</sup> To say that ability alone is all that is necessary demonstrates a fundamental error in comprehending humanity's postlapsarian reliance on God. Jerome, however, never explores Pelagius' scheme in such a fashion.<sup>213</sup>

Jerome's second worry was Pelagius' emphasis on the free will. Pelagius insisted on the autonomy of the will because to say that it has lost its freedom implies several

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<sup>210</sup> Augustine, *Gr. et pecc. or.* 1.23 (24).

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 1.3 (4).

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 1.25 (26).

<sup>213</sup> Jerome recognizes that Pelagius makes this three-fold distinction, but does not attack it as Augustine did. Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (5).

points. First, Genesis (1:26) states that humans are created in the image and likeness of God.<sup>214</sup> If the will is impaired by the sin of Adam and Eve, such a claim would render the biblical claim invalid. Such a stand is blasphemous. Second, if the will is not truly free, then there is no difference between Christians and the Manichees, which we have already discussed.<sup>215</sup> Finally, the will must be free to choose either good or evil because if it is not, one must accuse God of being the author of sin.<sup>216</sup> Jerome's responses to these concerns are disappointing. He entirely ignores the charges that, in his scheme, the image and likeness of the soul is warped, and he also ignores the charge that he supports the Manichees, (a possible foreshadowing of the accusations thrown back and forth between Augustine and Julian?). He does respond to the third charge by throwing it back at Pelagius. In Pelagius' line of thinking, God must also be credited as the author of sin because of his refusal to act in human affairs. "It is an old maxim," he says, "that if a man can deliver another from death and does not, he is a homicide."<sup>217</sup> God is damned if He does, or not.

Jerome is offended by Pelagius' will on three fronts. Why would anyone ever pray, he asks, if the movement of the will permits sinlessness? He suggests that such a free will implies that humanity is equal to God because it does not need any assistance

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 1 (1).

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 3 (5).

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 3 (6).

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 3 (6).

from Him.<sup>218</sup> He is also concerned with the inevitable implication that by stressing the importance of the will, Pelagius diminishes God's power. Jerome wants to preserve both it and the free will; but, Pelagius, he believes, favors the latter over the former. Finally, he feels that Pelagius does not adequately appreciate the influence that the body has over the soul. Pelagius certainly acknowledges that the flesh lusts against the spirit, but he believes that through the determination of the will, the flesh can be conquered. Jerome, on the other hand, had a keener understanding of the danger that the flesh always poses to the spirit.<sup>219</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has situated the arguments found in our previous chapters into the biographical contexts of our authors that informed how they approached their opponents, the way they understood sinlessness, and how their criticisms of sinlessness related to their overall critiques of Pelagius. Augustine's battles with the Manichees and the Donatists both informed his approach to Pelagius, and were evoked thereafter in unexpected and counterintuitive ways. Cassian, the consummate monk, so seamlessly wove his critique into his ascetic context that few scholars have recognized his *Conf.* 23 as anything other than an elaboration of the ascetic agenda. Haunted by the ghosts of his past, Jerome only viewed Pelagius as Origen echoing down through time to the fifth

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<sup>218</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (5).

<sup>219</sup> *Dial.* 3 (12).

century in the “Albine dog.”<sup>220</sup> Their starting points—the definitions of sinlessness—were so dissimilar that their subsequent arguments ended with equally dissimilar conclusions. We also saw how their critiques of sinlessness were located in their larger agenda. Augustine brushed aside sinlessness as a footnote that distracted from his main concern. Cassian and Jerome, on the other hand, took the center of Pelagius’ anthropology much more seriously. Cassian saw this as one of the two main flaws in Pelagius’ thinking, the other being Christological. Jerome, finally, was worried about Pelagius’ definitions of grace and free will, both in service to the possibility of living a sinless life.

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<sup>220</sup> *Praef in lib. Hier.* 3.

# **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

## **Topics for Future Research**

Orosius, whom we have mentioned in passing, deserves more attention than we have been able to give him here and, in fact, more attention than scholars have given him in general. Twenty years ago, Bonner correctly pointed to the important (yet ultimately futile) role that he played in Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Little work, however, has been done since.<sup>2</sup> Orosius often is considered to have been a student of both Augustine and Jerome;<sup>3</sup> Augustine tells us that he instructed him as best he could, and Orosius tells us that Augustine sent him to Palestine to sit at Jerome's feet.<sup>4</sup> Such statements have often been taken to imply that he was simply a puppet for the two theological giants, which, I would argue, is not necessarily the case. While Orosius certainly had been influenced by them, he was his own man.

The first, and most important, accusation that he brought against Pelagius at the Synod of Jerusalem was that Pelagius claimed that a person could be without sin and that God's commandments were easy to follow. Orosius reported that at the Synod "Pelagius told me that he was teaching that a person could be without sin and could easily observe

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<sup>1</sup> Bonner, "Pelagianism Reconsidered," 238.

<sup>2</sup> Lacroix's text remains foundational for our understanding of Orosius. Bonner, however, wrote 28 years after him, and work remains to be done. Benoît Lacroix, *Orose et ses idées* (Montréal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Adalbert Hamman, "Orosius de Braga et le Pélagianisme," *Bracara Augusta* 21 (1968): 347-8.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166 (2); Orosius, *Lib. Apol.* 3.

God's commandments if he so wished."<sup>5</sup> In response, Pelagius said that "I cannot deny that I both said this and still am saying it."<sup>6</sup> This accusation is in harmony with the theme of this dissertation and, as such, the obvious next step would be to investigate Orosius' understanding of sinlessness.

Orosius also says that "[sinlessness] is the doctrine, as you [John of Jerusalem] have heard, to which Bishop Augustine reacted with horror (*exhorrescere*) in his treatises."<sup>7</sup> This, as we have seen, is not correct. At this point in the debate, Augustine's reaction may be characterized, at worst, as mildly indifferent.<sup>8</sup> Why, then, would Orosius make such a claim?<sup>9</sup> His statement leads us to two important points. First, Orosius, like Jerome but unlike Augustine, put the question of sinlessness at the forefront of Pelagius' heretical claims. This shows that although Augustine had influenced him, he diverged from Augustine on his understanding of Pelagius' error. Second, his distortion of Augustine's texts also points to a crafty willingness to put to use Augustine's reputation—which he had so loudly proclaimed—for his own agenda.<sup>10</sup> This may have led to the cooling of the relationship between the two, about which scholars have

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<sup>5</sup> Orosius, *Lib. Apol.*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *Nat. et gr.* 60 (70).

<sup>9</sup> It is possible that in private conversations Augustine expressed emotions to Orosius that are different from the texts we have. Unfortunately, we can never know what went on in those dialogues.

<sup>10</sup> Orosius, *Lib. Apol.* 4.

speculated.<sup>11</sup> One may suspect also that Jerome had something to do with it. Orosius' failure to achieve Augustine's desires to stem Pelagius' influence in Palestine, however, also must have disappointed Augustine and led to their break.

Several questions, then, need to be pursued in future research. While he was a student of both Jerome and Augustine, who influenced him more? Or, better yet, what influence did he have on either of them? Did the student become the teacher? How are his criticisms of sinlessness similar to Jerome's? More importantly, how are they different? What sour taste did he leave in the mouth of John of Jerusalem that poisoned him and his fellow bishops? What influence did he have on the Synod of Diospolis? How do the Synods of Jerusalem and Diospolis compare? Such an important voice has been marginalized for too long.

Another issue—unrelated to Orosius and his relationships—that needs more exploration deals with the founder of the school of thought that is associated with Pelagius' name. Scholars have attempted to determine who “really” was the intellectual progenitor of this loose confederation of men. This question, I would argue, is impossible to answer based on the extant materials, and is the wrong one to ask. A more productive study would result from investigating each of our three authors to see whom *they* believed was the leader of this group. Such an investigation in relation to Augustine would need to follow a similar method of tracking his thought over time as was done in these pages because, on a cursory survey, it seems that Augustine's thoughts on this issue

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<sup>11</sup> Hanson, “Introduction,” 106.

changed over time. What caused such changes? When did he start grouping these men together as a coherent group of “new heretics?”<sup>12</sup> What was his agenda in doing so? How did these changes dictate how his arguments were constructed?

Our other two authors offer their own insights. Such an inquiry of Cassian would lead to very little as he never names anyone other than Pelagius, whom he clearly sees as being the instigator.<sup>13</sup>

Jerome, though, offers a more puzzling case. When he criticizes his opponents either directly or indirectly, he aims his attacks at Pelagius. In the middle of his *Ep.* 133, however, he seems to make a reference to Caelestius that muddies the waters. “This argument [that people do not need external help] is not mine,” he says, “it is from his disciple (*discipulus*), rather the teacher and leader (*magister et ductor*) of the entire army (*exercitus*).”<sup>14</sup> This leads to several questions: should *magister* and *ductor* be interpreted to mean that he thought Caelestius was the teacher and Pelagius was the student? Is it, in fact, Caelestius whom he calls a *discipulus*? If so, why does he immediately call him the *magister*? If he does believe that Caelestius is the teacher, why does he spend the next few years criticizing Pelagius and not Caelestius? What are the implications of such a belief? His elaborate genealogies of antecedents and dependents in his *Praefatio in libro Hieremiae prophetae* and his *Dialogi* only confuse the issue more. Later, in a letter

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<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *C. ep. Pel.* 3.9 (25).

<sup>13</sup> Cassian, *De inc.* 1 (3), 5 (2), 5 (4), 6 (14).

<sup>14</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (5). English translation mine.



written to Alypius and Augustine just before he died, he congratulated them on defeating the “Caelestial heresy,” without mentioning Pelagius at all.<sup>15</sup>

### **Implications for Scholarship: General**

The broadest—and most important—implication that this dissertation has for scholarship is that this debate in the early fifth century now must be seen in a new and different way, because this project investigated our three authors from a perspective that had not been done previously. While Rackett and Löhr have demonstrated how central the question of sinlessness was for Pelagius and his band, the question still remained how Pelagius’ interlocutors reacted to it. By investigating these authors through this lens, the classic Augustinian narrative of grace becomes qualified, and we are left with a different assessment of the actors and issues.

We saw that Augustine did not find sinlessness a particularly convincing avenue by which to attack his opponents. He opens himself up to criticism for this because he betrays that he was not interested in engaging them on their own terms. He, rather, was more interested in the question of grace, which, for Pelagius, was simply a means to the end of sinlessness. This should lead us to look more suspiciously at Augustine’s agenda and to question how honest was his portrayal of his opponents. Augustine’s analysis of Pelagius’s threat to Christianity, in the end, is disappointing because it does not seem as if he ever grasped what was most important for Pelagius.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ep.* 143 (1).

While Cassian was more willing to take the issue of sinlessness head-on, we must be suspicious of his conclusions as well because his definition of sinlessness did not come from Pelagius' writings. His equation of sinlessness with Evagrian θεωρία distorts the issue at hand just as much as Augustine had done by diminishing its importance. Cassian's use of Evagrius does not seem applicable to Pelagius as he had likely never read Evagrius. It should be noted here that although Cassian connected sinlessness and θεωρία, Evagrius did not do so. This association was an innovation from Cassian. Furthermore, Jerome's equation of sinlessness with Stoic ἀπάθεια was just as misleading. Although Pelagius most likely had been influenced by certain aspects of Stoicism, it was unfair of Jerome to assume that Pelagius understood sinlessness through a Stoic perspective. We must conclude that, ultimately, our three authors and Pelagius were not engaged in theological conversations but, rather, were engaged in dueling monologues; that is to say, they were speaking past each other, not to each other.

This dissertation also demonstrated that this debate was not two sides in opposition; our three authors also attempted to set themselves apart from each other. During the short period of time that Augustine believed that one may be sinless, he still was wary of Jerome's position.<sup>16</sup> Cassian, on the other hand, was much more willing to challenge Augustine and Jerome. He, we saw, wrote his *Conf.* 13 against Augustine, not Pelagius as many contemporary scholars believe. His *Conf.* 23, furthermore, was written not only against Pelagius but, also, Jerome. Jerome's Book III of his *Dialogi* was written primarily against Augustine, not Pelagius. These examples must force scholars to

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<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *Perf. ius.* 21 (44).

reconsider that there are many more nuanced positions than previously have been acknowledged.

### **Implications for Scholarship: Augustine**

This dissertation has several implications for Augustinian scholarship. It has offered a coherent picture of Augustine's understanding of sinlessness—a topic not hitherto investigated either extensively or systematically. This fact is quite surprising in light of the immensity of his influence for the history of the development of western thought. Such a comprehensive view of sinlessness gives us a more complete picture of his thought as a whole. This more complete picture will help theologians and historians gain a clearer insight into the development of the Christian understanding of the human person and of salvation.

Specifically, this dissertation has demonstrated that Augustine's thinking about sinlessness (cyclically) changed over time, in opposition to such scholars as Bonner who claimed that it only changed in emphasis, not substance. Recently, Carol Harrison has argued that Augustine's anthropology and soteriology did not change in 397; they remained constant since his early Cassiciacum dialogues.<sup>17</sup> Chad Tyler Gerber, in his recent book on Augustine's pneumatology, has stated that Augustine's understanding of the Holy Spirit was firmly Nicene in his early years.<sup>18</sup> This dissertation has shown that,

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<sup>17</sup> Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, vi.

<sup>18</sup> Chad Tyler Gerber, *The Spirit of Augustine's Early Theology: Contextualizing Augustine's Pneumatology* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 5.

at least for the question of sinlessness, Bonner's, Harrison's, and Gerber's, arguments cannot account for the entirety of Augustine's thinking. The debate must continue, then, about the development of Augustine's thought. Is there an "early" Augustine and a "late" Augustine? Or, is the change demonstrated in this project the exception to the rule and that, overall, Augustine's thought remained constant since the time of his conversion?

Another issue that scholars must face is Augustine's responses to others whom he believed contaminated Christianity. As Augustine established the terms of the debate to fit his interests, scholars must investigate to see if similar patterns may be found in his writings against other groups, such as the Manichees, Donatists, and others. BeDuhn has demonstrated that Augustine did not fully understand the teachings of the Manichees.<sup>19</sup> We must ask, then, if Augustine unintentionally, or even intentionally, misrepresented them in his treatises. While Augustine had been a Manichee, he never had been a Donatist. If he did not fully understand the Manichees, one wonders how well he knew the Donatists and, by extension, how accurately he portrayed them in his writings. In the end, did Augustine, in a sense, "miss the point," or even purposefully ignore the point of these groups?

### **Implications for Scholarship: Cassian**

The sections on Cassian in this dissertation contain the most important implications for scholarship. First, and most generally, the connections made here

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<sup>19</sup> BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, I: Conversion and Apostasy, 373-388 C.E.*, 102-4.

demonstrate that Cassian was not writing in a vacuum, against some Gallic authors, or against a select few texts from Augustine that were divorced from Augustine's writings against Pelagius. Nor should his arguments be considered as a "Semi-Pelagian" afterthought. He saw himself as fully engaged in the debates against Pelagius and his cohort. We now see that his *Conf.* 13, *Conf.* 23 and his *De incarnatione* had critiqued Pelagius, Augustine, and Jerome. Scholars now reorient their thinking about the false division between the "Pelagian Controversy" and the "Semi-Pelagian Controversy." One distinction that should still remain, I argue, is the one caused by Augustine's *Ep.* 194 that frazzled the monks of Hadrumetum. As they had no knowledge of Pelagius or the drama that he caused, they should not be considered part of this debate. Furthermore, they should not be lumped together in the "Semi-Pelagian Controversy" (as has often been done since the post-Reformation period) with the Gallic monks because there was no connection between the two groups.<sup>20</sup> This pairing, unfortunately, continues until the present. Even Teske, who refuses to use the terms "Semi-Pelagian," "Massilian," and "remnants of the Pelagians," still combines them together, described as "the monks of Hadrumetum and Provence," in his fourth volume of translations of Augustine's *Answer to the Pelagians*.<sup>21</sup> If it is absolutely necessary to give this controversy a title (and I am

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<sup>20</sup> Roland Teske, General Introduction to *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Answer to the Pelagians: IV*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, 26. Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1997, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Teske, "Introduction" to *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Answer to the Pelagians: IV*, 35 n. 1.

not sure that it is), I would suggest that scholars begin using the phrase “The Hadrumetum Controversy.”<sup>22</sup>

Another implication results from the argument that the end of *Conf.* 22 and all of *Conf.* 23 were written against Pelagius. This argument must force scholars to reconsider Cassian’s later ones, which receive much less attention than his earlier. While previous scholars viewed *Conf.* 23 as an unremarkable biblical commentary, or have largely ignored it because they view it as simply rehashing the *telos* of the ascetic life that had been discussed in earlier writings such as *Conf.* 1, we have seen here that it is much more layered than has previously been thought. It is both a description of the ascetic life and, simultaneously, an attack (primarily) on Pelagius and (secondarily) on Jerome. Scholars, then, also must investigate, in a more nuanced way, how Cassian constructs the relationship between his ascetic agenda and his apologetic agenda in his writings. Furthermore, picking up on the implication made earlier that Cassian must be deemed a partner with Augustine and Jerome against Pelagius, these two texts must be included in any new drawing of the theological landscape of this early fifth-century debate.

Yet another implication from this dissertation arises from the relationship between Evagrius and Cassian. While scholars have recognized the influence that Evagrius had on Cassian since Marsili and Olphe-Galliard in 1936, recent scholarship has tended to focus on Cassian’s transformation of Evagrius’ term ἀπάθεια—which we earlier saw

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<sup>22</sup> After introducing the issue at hand in the first chapter of this dissertation, I did not use the term “Pelagian Controversy” or “Pelagianism” because, as I stated earlier, it oversimplifies the complexity of thought of the individuals involved. As the monks of Hadrumetum do not present a similar issue, I have no problem using the phrase “Hadrumetum Controversy.”

Raasch, Ousley, and Clark describe as simultaneously the end of *πρακτική* and the beginning of *θεωρητική*—into the more biblical phrase *puritas cordis*, in order to purge it of any suspicious connotations. In addition to this instance, we saw here that Evagrius also asserted considerable influence on Cassian’s understanding of *θεωρία*, which is the end of *θεωρητική*. Cassian refashioned Evagrius’ *θεωρία* into *impeccantia* and then said, against Pelagius, that such a state is impossible to achieve. This project, therefore, points to the need for scholars to branch outside the *ἀπάθεια* / *puritas cordis* issue, which, in recent decades, has drawn a tremendous amount of scholarly attention, and to continue to explore what other ideas Cassian borrowed from Evagrius, even if he did not use Evagrius’ exact same vocabulary.

This dissertation did not commence the debate about the intended target of Cassian’s *Conf.* 13, nor will it put it to rest. Several implications, however, do arise from the arguments made here. As we have seen, over the past fifty years or so, there have been many arguments made that contradict the tradition, established by Prosper of Aquitaine, that Cassian wrote it against Augustine, claiming that it was written against Pelagius, Prosper himself, or even anonymous Gallic authors. The pendulum, it seems, has swung too far and is beginning to come back. Scholars now must reconsider Augustine as Cassian’s anonymous interlocutor, because we have seen that Cassian was also critical of Jerome, Jerome disapproved of Augustine, and Augustine was cautious about Jerome. These three men were almost as critical of each other as they were of Pelagius. Why, then, should we not suppose that *Conf.* 13 was written against Augustine? Also, scholars must look outside of *Conf.* 13 when searching for an answer

to this question. What about other ones? Cassian's *De incarnatione* shed significant light on this question when we saw that his criticisms of Pelagius dealt with the questions of sinlessness and Christology, not the definition of grace. How can the *De institutis coenobiorum* help address this issue? What other pieces of evidence may be gleaned from outside of Cassian's *oeuvre*? There are many more avenues to explore.

The final implication for Cassian is in reference to our exploration of his critique of Pelagius' Christology. Very little work has been done in this area and there is much room for elaboration.<sup>23</sup> We saw that neither Augustine nor Jerome made any serious charges that Pelagius had a deficient Christology. Cassian, however, keenly saw the Christological implications of Pelagius' theological anthropology. In fact, there is much more to be said about Christology, in general, in this debate. Dewart has argued that Christology was not an issue,<sup>24</sup> but evidence indicates that it played a much larger role in this debate than scholars have appreciated.<sup>25</sup> While there is no doubt that the central issues in this debate were anthropological and soteriological, Christology has been an underappreciated element for far too long. Even Cassian's own Christology deserves a fresh look, if it is taken on its own terms. While most scholars have dismissed it,<sup>26</sup> it can

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<sup>23</sup> Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, 73-81.

<sup>24</sup> Dewart, "The Christology of the Pelagian Controversy," 1240.

<sup>25</sup> Dodaro, "Sacramentum Christi: Augustine on the Christology of Pelagius," 274-80; Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, 72-133; Lamberigts, "Competing Christologies: Julian and Augustine on Jesus Christ," 159-94; William E. Phipps, "The Heresiarch: Pelagius or Augustine?," 125; Rees, "Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic" in *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, 25.

<sup>26</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 153-67; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 468-72; Rousseau, "Cassian: Monastery and World," 84; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 31.



give us a picture of a pre-Chalcedonian Christology by someone who has been influenced by the east and was writing in the west.<sup>27</sup> Despite the fact that he rightly should be criticized for writing *De incarnatione* without having a clear understanding of Nestorius' thought, this should not inhibit us from considering it as a worthy object of study.

### **Implications for Scholarship: Jerome**

This dissertation has implications for Hieronymian scholarship as well. The first addresses the relationship between Augustine and Jerome, continuing a theme on which I have published elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> As we saw earlier, scholars have previously argued that Jerome's animosity against Augustine during their correspondence at the turn of the fifth century had abated, and that he had grown fond of Augustine. This certainly is not the case. Jerome's personal feelings against Augustine had not changed, and he thought Augustine's theology was suspect. Although he did not believe that Augustine was as dangerous as Pelagius, and at the very end of his life did seem to warm to Augustine (a deathbed conversion?),<sup>29</sup> at the time of this debate Jerome believed that Augustine misunderstood some fundamental aspects of the Gospel message.

Furthermore, our argument that Book III of the *Dialogi* was written against Augustine, not Pelagius, calls into question Jerome's view of Augustine, and forces scholars to reconsider Jerome's role in this debate. We saw earlier that many scholars

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<sup>27</sup> Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*, 215-58.

<sup>28</sup> Squires, "Jerome's Animosity against Augustine," 181-99.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 202.

have pointed to the fact that he has been ignored in favor of Augustine. Now, we must conclude that, in addition to this, Jerome's writings have not been understood properly, as it had been assumed that he stood in harmony with Augustine against Pelagius. Scholars, then, must continue to investigate the nuances of the relationship between these two Latin doctors of the Church, as there are few examples in history, Christian or otherwise, when two towering figures of this quality danced with each other in such an awkward fashion. What else can we learn about their interactions with each other, either through their theological treatises or their correspondence? How does this relationship (or lack thereof) shape our understanding of the Church Fathers?<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, we know from Augustine's earliest letters to Jerome that he had read several texts of his and was an admirer.<sup>31</sup> Jerome's intellectual prowess had been well known since his days in Rome.<sup>32</sup> How did Jerome's writings shape Augustine's understanding of the Bible? Augustine's main influences generally are listed as Ambrose, Ambrosiaster, the "books of the Platonists," and Tyconius. Jerome is almost never included. Although he was not as much of an influence as these authors mentioned, I speculate that Jerome was a larger influence on Augustine than previously acknowledged.

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<sup>30</sup> Carolinne White and Andrew Cain have explored this question, but I believe that more questions need to be answered. White, *The Correspondence (394-419) Between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo*; Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity*.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 28, for example.

<sup>32</sup> Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 81-3.

## Conclusion

We have seen in this conclusion that there is work left to be done. There are issues—such as the role that Orosius of Braga played, and the question of who our authors thought was the founding thinker of Pelagius’ circle—that need much more attention. Furthermore, this dissertation has implications for wider scholarly endeavors. We should now be suspicious of how these three authors portrayed their interlocutors; we saw that they thought in different ways on the of question sinlessness, including how our authors conceived of the issue from the start; how they challenged each other, which resulted in an understanding that they did not stand together as a unified whole; that the question of the arc of Augustine’s intellectual growth is still open for discussion; that we now must be cautious of Augustine’s portrayal of all of his opponents, not just Pelagius; that Cassian should not be exiled to the “Semi-Pelagian” debate; that *Conf.* 13 was written against Augustine, while *Conf.* 23 was written against Pelagius; that Christology, in this debate, needs to be studied much more closely; that the relationship between Augustine and Jerome is far from clear, Jerome’s exact role in this debate, and the question of Jerome’s influence on Augustine. The implications of this dissertation extend beyond the question of sinlessness. They penetrate into our overall understanding of these three authors, and how their influence shaped the subsequent thinking of the Church.

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