

THE ANCIENT WORKS OF THE LEGENDARY PELAGIANS

The Writings of Pelagius, Coelestius, and Julian

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PELAGIUS DEFENSE OF THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

Synopsis: This book was written by Pelagius and explains his beliefs regarding the free will that God has given to mankind. It was a short treatise composed of four books. These fragments are taken from Augustine's two book work entitled "On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin". Unfortunately for those wishing to fully understand Pelagius' views Augustine is not a faithful quoter when it comes to his archenemy's writings. Augustine will quote him in one place, then repeat the quote later in a different way, each time wording it in such a way that best suits his argument. We are left to wonder if he has done this with all of the quotations that he has made from Pelagius' writings, perhaps exaggerating his statements to present them in an extreme light that the original author never meant. This would explain why two ecclesiastical synods, two popes, at least thirty-two bishops and several influential Christians could not find anything wrong with Pelagius' doctrinal stances.

SECTION ONE

THE WORKS OF PELAGIUS

"Now we have implanted in us by God a capacity for either part. It resembles, as I may say, a fruitful and fecund root which yields and produces diversely according to the will of man, and which is capable, at the planter's own choice, of either shedding a beautiful bloom of virtues, or of bristling with the thorny thickets of vices," (from Book 1)

"We distinguish three things, arranging them in a certain graduated order. We put in the first place 'ability'; in the second, 'volition'; and in the third, 'actuality.' The 'ability' we place in our nature, the 'volition' in our will, and the 'actuality' in the effect. The first, that is, the 'ability,' properly belongs to God, who has bestowed it on His creature; the other two, that is, the 'volition' and the 'actuality,' must be referred to man, because they flow forth from the fountain of the will. For his willing, therefore, and doing a good work, the praise belongs to man; or rather both to man, and to God who has bestowed on him the 'capacity' for his will and work, and who evermore by the help of His grace assists even this capacity. That a man is able to will and effect any good work, comes from God alone. So that this one faculty can exist, even when the other two have no being; but these latter cannot exist without that former one. I am therefore free not to

have either a good volition or action; but I am by no means able not to have the capacity of good. This capacity is inherent in me, whether I will or no; nor does nature at any time receive in this point freedom for itself. Now the meaning of all this will be rendered clearer by an example or two. That we are able to see with our eyes is not of us; but it is our own that we make a good or a bad use of our eyes. So again (that I may, by applying a general case in illustration, embrace all), that we are able to do, say, think, any good thing, comes from Him who has endowed us with this 'ability,' and who also assists this 'ability;' but that we really do a good thing, or speak a good word, or think a good thought, proceeds from our own selves, because we are also able to turn all these into evil. Accordingly,--and this is a point which needs frequent repetition, because of your calumination of us,-- whenever we say that a man can live without sin, we also give praise to God by our acknowledgment of the capacity which we have received from Him, who has bestowed such 'ability' upon us; and there is here no occasion for praising the human agent, since it is God's matter alone that is for the moment treated of; for the question is not about 'willing,' or 'effecting,' but simply and solely about that which may possibly be." (from Book 3)

"We are supposed by very ignorant persons to do wrong in this matter to divine grace, because we say that it by no means perfects sanctity in us without our will,--as if God could have imposed any command on His grace, without also supplying the help of His grace to those on whom he imposed His commands, so that men might more easily accomplish through grace what they are required to do by their free will. And this grace we for our part do not, as you suppose, allow to consist merely in the law, but also in the help of God. God helps us by His teaching and revelation, whilst He opens the eyes of our heart; whilst He points out to us the future, that we may not be absorbed in the present; whilst He discovers to us the snares of the devil; whilst He enlightens us with the manifold and ineffable gift of heavenly grace. Does the man who says all this appear to you to be a denier of grace? Does he not acknowledge both man's free will and God's grace?"

"How will this stand consistently with the apostle's words, 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to perfect'? He works in us to will what is good, to will what is holy, when He rouses us from our devotion to earthly desires, and from our love of the present only, after the manner of brute animals, by the magnitude of the future

glory and the promise of its rewards; when by revealing wisdom to us He stirs up our sluggish will to a longing after God; when (what you are not afraid to deny in another passage) he persuades us to everything which is good."

"[James tells us 'Submit yourselves unto God; but resist the devil, and be will flee from you.'] He shows us [here] how we ought to resist the devil, if we submit ourselves indeed to God and by doing His will merit His divine grace, and by the help of the Holy Ghost more easily withstand the evil spirit."

"The man who hastens to the Lord, and desires to be directed by Him, that is, who makes his own will depend upon God's, who moreover cleaves so closely to the Lord as to become (as the apostle says) 'one spirit' with Him, does all this by nothing else than by his freedom of will."

"Whosoever makes a right use of this [freedom of the will] does so entirely surrender himself to God, and does so completely mortify his own will, that he is able to say with the apostle, 'Nevertheless it is already of I that live, but Christ liveth in me;' and 'He placeth his heart in the hand of God, so that He turneth it whithersoever He willeth.'"

"That we are able to do good is of God, but that we actually do it is of ourselves."

"That we are able to make a good use of speech comes from God; but that we do actually make this good use of speech proceeds from ourselves."

"That we are able to think a good thought comes from God, but that we actually think a good thought proceeds from ourselves."

"[When we talk about grace in the New Testament we are talking about a] grace [that] is bestowed in order that what God commands may be the more easily fulfilled. [This "grace" should be understood to be the gift of the Holy Spirit who was not given as an indwelling presence under the Old Testament dispensation.]"

"But while we have within us a free will so strong and so steadfast against sinning, which our Maker has implanted in human nature

generally, still, by His unspeakable goodness, we are further defended by His own daily help." (from Book 1)

"[Grace is sent by God] in order that men may more easily accomplish by grace that which they are commanded to do by free will."

"We hold likewise one baptism, which we aver ought to be administered to infants in the same sacramental formula as it is to adults."

[There is a fictional discussion in Book 3 between Pelagius and an opponent.]

[Opponent: I insist that these words of the apostle, 'For what I would, that do I not' and 'I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind' intimate that man cannot live without sin.]

"[Pelagius:] Now that which you wish us to understand of the apostle himself, all Church writers assert that he spoke in the person of the sinner, and of one who was still under the law,--such a man as was, by reason of a very long custom of vice, held bound, as it were, by a certain necessity of sinning, and who, although he desired good with his will, in practice indeed was hurried headlong into evil. In the person, however, of one man the apostle designates the people who still sinned under the ancient law. This nation he declares was to be delivered from this evil of custom through Christ, who first of all remits all sins in baptism to those who believe in Him, and then urges them by an imitation of Himself to perfect holiness, and by the example of His own virtues overcomes the evil custom of their sins."

"The blessed Bishop Ambrose in whose writings the Roman faith shines forth with especial brightness, and whom the Latin's have always regarded as the very flower and glory of their authors, and who has never found a foe bold enough to censure his faith or the purity of his understanding of the Scriptures." (from Book3)

"Everything good, and everything evil, on account of which we are either laudable or blameworthy, is not born with us but done by us: for we are born not fully developed, but with a capacity for either conduct; and we are procreated as without virtue, so also without

vice; and previous to the action of our own proper will, that alone is in man which God has formed." (from Book 1)

These are some other quotes from Pelagius I thought would be appropriate to add to this section – Jesse Morrell.

"Yet we do not defend the good of nature to such an extent that we claim that it cannot do evil, since we undoubtedly declare also that it is capable of good and evil; we merely try to protect it from an unjust charge, so that we may not seem to be forced to do evil through a fault of our nature, when, in fact, we do neither good nor evil without the exercise of our will and always have the freedom to do one of the two, being always able to do either." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 43, published by The Boydell Press)

"Nothing impossible has been commanded by the God of justice and majesty...Why do we indulge in pointless evasions, advancing the frailty of our own nature as an objection to the one who commands us? No one knows better the true measure of our strength than he who has given it to us nor does anyone understand better how much we are able to do than he who has given us this very capacity of ours to be able; nor has he who is just wished to command anything impossible or he who is good intended to condemn a man for doing what he could not avoid doing." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 53-54, published by The Boydell Press)

"Whenever I have to speak on the subject of moral instruction and conduct of a holy life, it is my practice first to demonstrate the power and quality of human nature and to show what it is capable of achieving, and then to go on to encourage the mind of my listener to consider the idea of different kinds of virtues, in case it may be of little or no profit to him to be summoned to pursue ends which he has perhaps assumed hitherto to be beyond his reach; for we can never end upon the path of virtue unless we have hope as our guide and compassion...any good of which human nature is capable has to be revealed, since what is shown to be practicable must be put into practice." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 36-37, published by The Boydell Press)

"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...he could do either quite naturally and then bend his will in the other direction too. He could not claim to possess the good of his own volition, unless he was the kind of creature that could also have possessed evil. Our most excellent Creator wished us to be able to do either but actually to do only one, that is, good, which he also commanded, giving us the capacity to do evil only so that we might do His will by exercising our own. That being so, this very capacity to do evil is also good - good, I say, because it makes the good part better by making it voluntary and independent, not bound by necessity but free to decide for itself." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 38, published by The Boydell Press)

"Those who are unwilling to correct their own way of life appear to want to correct nature itself instead." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 39, published by The Boydell Press)

"And lest, on the other hand, it should be thought to be nature's fault that some have been unrighteous, I shall use the evidence of the scripture, which everywhere lay upon sinners the heavy weight of the charge of having used their own will and do not excuse them for having acted only under constraint of nature." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 43, published by The Boydell Press)

"Grace indeed freely discharges sins, but with the consent and choice of the believer." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 92, published by The Boydell Press)

"Obedience [and disobedience] results from a decision of the mind, not the substance of the body." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 90, published by The Boydell Press)

PELAGIUS ON NATURE

Synopsis: This book was written by Pelagius and given to two of his disciples, Timasius and Jacobus, who later compared it with some of the writings of Augustine and discovered discrepancies. They then forwarded a copy to Augustine and he replied with a treatise entitled On Nature and Grace from which these fragments come. The purpose of Pelagius' work, according to Augustine, was to substantiate the possibility, not the reality, that a man could have lived without sin from his birth to his death. Nowhere did Pelagius claim to have been one of these people or that those who did sin could receive forgiveness from any other source than the grace of God. No exact title appears to exist for the work and it has been aptly entitled On Nature as this is a central theme of the work and Augustine, in his polemic against it chose the name On Nature and Grace perhaps because he felt that Pelagius was emphasizing nature too much and grace too little. A word of caution must be expressed as these fragments are coming down to us from the pen of an enemy of Pelagius (Augustine) who in the introductory paragraph to his work against it admits that "The book which you sent to me, my beloved sons, Timasius and Jacobus, I have read through hastily."

I now submit to you for the first time that I am aware of the fragments of On Nature.

"It is one thing to inquire whether a thing can be, which has respect to its possibility only; and another thing, whether or not it is."

"We are treating of possibility only; and to pass from this to something else, except in the case of some certain fact, we deem to be a very serious and extraordinary process."

"I once more repeat my position: I say that it is possible for a man to be without sin. What do you say? That it is impossible for a man to be without sin? But I do not say that there is a man without sin; nor do you say, that there is not a man without sin. Our contention is about what is possible, and not possible; not about what is, and is not."

"No man indeed is clean from pollution"; and, "There is no man that sinneth not"; and, "There is not a just man upon the earth"; and,

'There is none that doeth good'. There are these and similar passages in Scripture but they testify to the point of not being, not of not being able; for by testimonies of this sort it is shown what kind of persons certain men were at such and such a time, not that they were unable to be something else. Whence they are justly found to be blameworthy. If, however, they had been of such a character, simply because they were unable to be anything else, they are free from blame."

"He is not condemned; because the statement that all sinned in Adam, was not made because of the sin which is derived from one's birth, but because of imitation of him."

"A man, you will say, 'may possibly be [without sin]; but it is by the grace of God.' I thank you for your kindness, because you are not merely content to withdraw your opposition to my statement, which you just now opposed, or barely to acknowledge it; but you actually go so far as to approve it. For to say, 'A man may possibly, but by this or by that, is in fact nothing else than not only to assent to its possibility, but also to show the mode and condition of its possibility. Nobody, therefore, gives a better assent to the possibility of anything than the man who allows the condition thereof; because, without the thing itself, it is not possible for a condition to be."

"But, you will say, 'you here seem to reject the grace of God, inasmuch as you do not even mention it.'"

"Now, is it I that reject grace, who by acknowledging the thing must needs also confess the means by which it may be effected, or you, who by denying the thing do undoubtedly also deny whatever may be the means through which the thing is accomplished?"

"Whether he confesses it to be by grace, or by aid, or by mercy, whatever that be by which a man can be without sin,-every one acknowledges the thing itself."

"If I were to say, man is able to dispute; a bird is able to fly; a hare is able to run; without mentioning at the same time the instruments by which these acts can be accomplished-that is, the tongue, the wings, and the legs; should I then have denied the conditions of the various offices, when I acknowledged the very offices themselves?"

"[Certain persons allege] that some sins are light by their very

frequency, their constant irruption making it impossible that they should be all of them avoided. [It was] proper that they should be censured even as light offences, if they cannot possibly be wholly avoided."

"[It was proposed to me] are you even yourself without sin? [To this I answered] it is rather to be imputed to my own negligence that I am not without sin [as opposed to personal weakness]."

"[I have been told in refutation to my beliefs] that it is nowhere written in so many words, [that] 'A man can be without sin'." [We need to keep in mind] that the question here is not in what precise words each doctrinal statement is made."

"[The Apostle James writes] 'But the tongue can no man tame.' [We need to keep in mind as we interpret this that it must be interpreted] as if it were written by way of reproach; as much as to say: Can no man then, tame the tongue? As if in a reproachful tone, which would say: You are able to tame wild beasts; cannot you tame the tongue? As if it were an easier thing to tame the tongue than to subjugate wild beasts."

"[Concerning sins of ignorance] a man ought to be very careful to avoid ignorance; and that ignorance is blame-worthy for this reason, because it is through his own neglect that a man is ignorant of that which he certainly must have known if he had only applied diligence."

"sins which have been committed do notwithstanding require to be divinely expiated, and that the Lord must be entreated because of them [that is, for the purpose, of course, of obtaining pardon] because that which has been done cannot be undone [by the] power of nature and will of man."

"We have first of all to discuss the position which is maintained, that our nature has been weakened and changed by sin. I think that before all other things we have to inquire what sin is, - some substance, or wholly a name without substance, whereby is expressed not a thing, not an existence, not some sort of a body, but the doing of a wrongful deed. I suppose that this is the case; and if so how could that which lacks all substance have possibly weakened or changed human nature?"

should be unable to exist without sin. [This doesn't make sense. It is] the height of absurdity and folly, that there should have been sin in order that sin might not be; inasmuch as pride is itself, of course, a sin."

"But God is able to heal all things."

"What shall I say more than this [in response to the argument that sin can be cured by sin], that we may believe that fires are quenched by fires, if we may believe that sins are cured by sins?"

"But how shall we separate pride itself from sin? To sin is quite as much to be proud, as to be proud is to sin; for only ask what every sin is, and see whether you can find any sin without the designation of pride."

"Every sin if I mistake not, is a contempt of God, and every contempt of God is pride. For what is so proud as to despise God? All sin, then, is also pride, even as Scripture says, Pride is the beginning of all sin."

"Then again, how can one be subjected to God for the guilt of that sin, which he knows is not his own? For his own it is not, if it is necessary. Or, if it is his own, it is voluntary: and if it is voluntary, it can be avoided."

"[Certain persons advanced against me that I was teaching] that man is placed on equality with God, if he is described as being without sin [but this is not the case]."

"[I resist those who have said to me that] 'What you assert seems indeed to be reasonable, but it is an arrogant thing to allege that any man can be without sin.' [If what I am alleging is true then it cannot be said to be arrogant.] On what side must humility (the opposite of arrogance) be placed? No doubt on the side of falsehood, if you prove arrogance to exist on the side of truth."

"How must we suppose that those holy men quitted this life, with sin, or without sin?"

"[Following is a list of those] who not only lived without [recorded] sin, but are described as having led holy lives, - Abel, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua the son of Nun,

"this sickness [of sin] ought not to have been contracted by [our forefather Adam committing] sins, lest the punishment of sin should amount to this, that more sins should be committed."

"Why seek Him [for infants?]? They are whole (i.e. not affected with an inescapable controlling sinful nature to which they are powerless because of Adam's sin) for whom you seek the Physician. Not even was the first man condemned to die for any such reason [as having an uncontrollable nature], for he did not sin afterwards."

"As to his (Adam's) posterity also not only are they not more infirm than he, but they actually fulfilled more commandments than he ever did, since he neglected to fulfill one."

"The very matter of sin is its punishment, if the sinner is so much weakened that he commits more sins."

"Sin ought not so to have been punished, that the sinner, through his punishment, should commit even more sins."

"[I have actually heard that it was taught that] man was so formed as to be able to pass from righteousness to sin, and yet not able to return from sin to righteousness."

"the Lord was able to die without sin."

"no evil is the cause of anything good."

"[The logical conclusion of assuming that men of necessity must sin is that] sin was necessary in order that there might be a cause for God's mercy."

"God, no doubt, applies His mercy even to this office, whenever it is necessary because man after sin requires help in this way, not because God wished there should be a cause for such necessity. But just in the same way it is the duty of a physician to be ready to cure a man who is already wounded; although he ought not to wish for a man who is sound to be wounded."

"[There are those who say that] it was really necessary to man, in order to take from him all occasion for pride and boasting, that he

Phinehas, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Joseph, Elisha, Micaiah, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishaal, Mordecai, Simeon, Joseph to whom the Virgin Mary was espoused, John, Deborah, Anna the mother of Samuel, Judith, Esther, the other Anna, daughter of Phanuel, Elisabeth, and also the mother of our Lord and Saviour, for of her we must needs allow that her piety had no sin in it."

"But perhaps they will ask me: Could not the Scripture have mentioned sins of all of these? This might be rightly asked of those whom Scripture mentions neither as good nor as bad; but of those whose holiness it commemorates, it would also without doubt have commemorated the sins likewise, if it had perceived that they had sinned in anything."

"But, granted that it has sometimes abstained, in a numerous crowd, from narrating the sins of all; still, in the very beginning of the world, when there were only four persons in existence, what reason have we to give why it chose not to mention the sins of all? Was it in consideration of the vast multitude, which had not yet come into existence? Or because, having mentioned only the sins of those who had transgressed, it was unable to record any of him who had not yet committed sin? It is certain that in the earliest age Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel their sons, are mentioned as being the only four persons then in being. Eve sinned, - the Scripture distinctly says so much; Adam also transgressed, as the same Scripture does not fail to inform us; whilst it affords us an equally clear testimony that Cain also sinned: and of all these it not only mentions the sins, but also indicates the character of their sins. Now if Abel had likewise sinned, Scripture would without doubt have said so. But it has not said so, therefore he committed no sin; nay, it even shows him to have been righteous. What we read, therefore, let us believe; and what we do not read, let us deem it wicked to add."

"What we read, therefore, let us believe; and what we do not read, let us deem it wicked to add; and let it suffice to have said this of all cases."

"[My opponents have presented to me the words of the Apostle when he writes] 'All have sinned.' [What we need to understand is that] the apostle was manifestly speaking of the then existing generation, that is, the Jews and the Gentiles." [In regards to the passage which states 'By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death

passed upon all men; in which all have sinned. As by the offence of one, upon all men [came a bringing] to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One, upon all men [came a bringing] unto justification of life (Rom. 10:3-4). I teach that there can be no doubt that not all men are sanctified by the righteousness of Christ, but only those who are willing to obey Him, and have been cleansed in the washing of His baptism [thus there can be no doubt that not all men are sinners, but only those who are willing to disobey him.]"

"Well, be it so, I agree; he testifies to the fact that all were sinners. He says, indeed, what they have been, not that they might not have been something else. Wherefore if all then could be proved to be sinners, it would not by any means prejudice our own definite position, in insisting not so much on what men are, as on what they are able to be."

"[We must accept] that God is as good as just, and made man such that he was quite able to live without the evil of sin, if only he had been willing."

"That proceeds not from a man's will which he can do by nature."

"As far as the present question is concerned, it is not pertinent to inquire whether there have been or now are any men in this life without sin, but whether they had or have the ability to be such persons."

"But you will tell me this is what disturbs a great many, - that you do not maintain that it is by the grace of God that a man is able to be without sin. What blindness of ignorance, what sluggishness of an un instructed mind, which supposes that that is maintained and held to be without God's grace which it only hears ought to be attributed to God!"

"Now, when it is said that the very ability is not at all of man's will, but of the Author of nature, - that is, God, - how can that possibly be understood to be without the grace of God which is deemed especially to belong to God? That this may become still plainer, we must enter on a somewhat fuller discussion of the point. Now we affirm that the possibility of anything lies not so much in the ability of a man's will as in the necessity of nature. Take for instance, my ability to speak. That I am able to speak is not my own; but that I do

speaking is my own, - that is, of my own will. And because the act of my speaking is my own, I have the power of alternative action, - that is to say, both to speak and to refrain from speaking. But because my ability to speak is not my own, that is, is not of my own determination and will, it is of necessity that I am always able to speak; and though I wished not to be able to speak, I am unable, nevertheless, to be unable to speak, unless perhaps I were to deprive myself of that member whereby the function of speaking is to be performed."

"Whatever is fettered by natural necessity is deprived of determination of will and deliberation. We may perceive the same thing to be true of hearing, smelling, and seeing, - that to hear, and to smell, and to see is of our own power, while the ability to hear, and to smell, and to see is not of our own power, but lies in a natural necessity."

"[Allow me to use an illustration to explain my point.] In like manner, touching the possibility of our not sinning, we must understand that it is of us not to sin, but yet that the ability to avoid sin is not of us. [However if we accept this then we are constrained to say that] inasmuch as not to sin is ours, we are able to sin and to avoid sin. [However, if we take the opposite side we will say that] inasmuch as, however, it is not of us to be able to avoid sin; even if we were to wish not to be able to avoid sin, it is not in our power to be unable to avoid sin." [I think that this illustration will show the logical conclusions of both sides.]

"No will can take away that which is proved to be inseparably implanted in nature."

"[Some have asked me] 'Why do you affirm that man without the help of God's grace is able to avoid sin?' [To this I answer] 'The actual capacity of not sinning lies not so much in the power of will as in the necessity of nature. Whatever is placed in the necessity of nature undoubtedly appertains to the Author of nature, that is, God. How then can that be regarded as spoken without the grace of God which is shown to belong in an especial manner to God?'"

"[It must be understood of the nature of man] that it has an inseparable capacity [to do the right thing.]"

"But you will tell me that, according to the apostle, the flesh is

contrary to us (Gal 5:17). How can it be that in the case of any baptized person the flesh is contrary to him, when according to the same apostle he is understood not to be in the flesh? For he says, 'But ye are not in the flesh.'"

"[We see from these numerous passages of the Apostle Paul] that the flesh is often mentioned by him in such a manner as proves him to mean not the substance, but the works of the flesh."

"Who made man's spirit? God, without a doubt. Who created the flesh? The same God, I suppose. Is the God good who created both? Nobody doubts it. Are not both good, since the good Creator made them? It must be confessed that they are. If, therefore, both the spirit is good, and the flesh is good, as made by the good Creator, how can it be that the two good things should be contrary to one another?"

"See what a man will say, who is unwilling to cry out with the apostle, "'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'"

"[The Apostle says in Romans 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'] But why should I so exclaim, who am already baptized in Christ? It is for them to cry out thus who have not yet received so great a benefit, whose words the apostle in a figure transferred to himself, - if indeed even they say so much."

"As we remarked, the passage in which occur the words, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit,' must needs have reference not to the substance, but to the works of the flesh."

"[Some oppose what we are saying because the plain truth is that] the devil opposes us. We must resist him, and he will flee. 'Resist the devil,' says the blessed apostle, 'and he will flee from you.' From which it may be observed, what his harming amounts to against those whom he tees; or what power he is to be understood as possessing, when he prevails only against those who do not resist him."

"[Some indeed will ask] 'And who would be unwilling to be without sin, if it were put in the power of a man?' [To this I answer] that by this very question they acknowledge that the thing is not impossible; because so much as this, many, if not all men, certainly desire."

without sin is His best altar.' [Xystus has also said] 'A man of chastity and without sin has receded power from God to be a son of God.'

"[Jerome has written] 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.' These are they whom no consciousness of sin reproves. The pure man is seen by his purity of heart; the temple of God cannot be defiled.' [He has also said] 'God created us with free will; we are drawn by necessity neither to virtue nor to vice; otherwise, where there is necessity there is no crown.'"

"Bishop Augustine also in his books on Free Will has these words: 'Whatever the cause itself of volition is, if it is impossible to resist it, submission to it is not sinful; if, however, it may be resisted, let it not be submitted to, and there will be no sin. Does it, perchance, deceive the unwary man? Let him then beware that he be not deceived. Is the deception, however, so potent that it is not possible to guard against it? If such is the case, then there are no sins. For who sins in a case where precaution is quite impossible? Sin, however, is committed; precaution therefore is possible.'"

"[Let us now turn our attention to other Christian writers who agree with what I am proposing. Lactantius has said] 'It behooved for the Master and Teacher of virtue to become most like to man, that by conquering sin He might show that man is able to conquer sin.'"

"[Again Lactantius says] 'And again, that by subduing the desires of the flesh He might teach us that it is not of necessity that one sins, but of set purpose and will.'"

"[Hilary has said that] It is only when we shall be perfect in spirit and changed in our immortal state, which blessedness has been appointed only for the pure in heart, that we shall see that which is immortal in God."

"[Again Hilary has said] 'This Job had so effectually read these Scriptures, that was because he worshipped God purely with a mind unmingled with offences: now such worship of God is the proper work of righteousness.'"

"[Hilary, likewise, while expounding that passage of the psalm in which it is written, 'Thou hast despised all those who turn aside from Thy commandments,' says:] 'If God were to despise sinners, He would despise indeed all men, because no man is without sin; but it is those who turn away from Him, whom they call apostates, that He despises.'"

"[Ambrose of Milan has said] 'Inasmuch as the Church has been gathered out of the world, that is, out of sinful men, how can it be unpolluted when composed of such polluted material, except that, in the first place, it be washed of sins by the grace of Christ, and then, in the next place, abstain from sins through its nature of avoiding sin?'"

"[Remember that John Chrysostom has said] 'that sin is not a substance, but a wicked act. And because it is not natural, therefore the law was given against it, and because it proceeds from the liberty of our will.'"

"[Remember what Xystus, bishop of Rome and martyr, has once said] 'God has conferred upon men liberty of their own will, in order that by purity and sinlessness of life they may become like unto God?' [and] 'A pure mind is a holy temple for God, and a heart clean and

PELAGIUS LETTERS

Letter To a Presbyter

Synopsis: This letter, of which only a fragment remains detailed the experience of the Synod held in 415 AD in Diospolis at which Pelagius' doctrinal beliefs were examined.

"By the sentence of fourteen bishops our statement was received with approbation, in which we affirmed that 'a man is able to be without sin, and easily to keep the commandments of God, if he wishes.' This sentence has filled the mouths of the gainsayers with confusion, and has separated asunder the entire set which was conspiring together for evil." (From Augustine of Hippo's On The Proceedings Of Pelagius, Ch. 54)

Letter To Augustine of Hippo

Synopsis: These fragments were apparently from a document that Pelagius sent to Augustine to describe the proceedings of the Synod held in 415. They were delivered by a mutual friend named Charis, a citizen of Hippo but a deacon in the Eastern Church

"That Adam was created mortal, and that he would have died whether he had sinned or not sinned. That Adam's sin injured only himself, and not the human race. That the law, no less than the gospel, leads us to the kingdom. That new-born infants are in the same condition that Adam was before he fell. That, on the one hand, the entire human race does not die owing to Adam's death and transgression; nor, on the other hand, does the whole human race rise again through the resurrection of Christ. That infants, even if they die unbaptized, have eternal life. That rich men, even if they are baptized, unless they renounce and give up all, have, whatever good they may seem to have done, nothing of it reckoned to them; neither shall they possess the kingdom of heaven."

"All these statements have not been made by me, even on their own testimony, nor do I hold myself responsible for them."

"I say again, that these opinions, even according to their own testimony, are not mine; nor, as I have already said, am I to be held

responsible for them. The opinions which I have confessed to be my own, I maintain are sound and correct; those, however, which I have said are not my own, I reject according to the judgment of the holy Church, pronouncing anathema on every man that opposes and gainsays the doctrines of the holy and catholic Church; and likewise on those who by inventing false opinions have excited odium against us." (From Augustine of Hippo's On The Proceedings Of Pelagius, Ch. 57-58)

Letter To Pope Innocent I

Synopsis: Around 417 Pelagius sent this letter with a written statement of faith to Pope Innocent I maintaining that he was orthodox in his faith. The letter only survives in fragments which were collected and quoted by Augustine of Hippo in his two part work "On The Grace Of Christ, And On Original Sin", though the statement of faith is still extant. Innocent died before receiving the letter and his successor Zosimus after reading Pelagius' correspondence and meeting personally with his disciple Coelestius, sent an encyclical letter to Augustine and other North African bishops "censuring them for not having investigated the matter more thoroughly, and for having aspired, in foolish, overcurious controversies, to know more than the Holy Scriptures. At the same time he bore emphatic testimony to the orthodoxy of Pelagius and Coelestius, and described their chief opponents, Heros and Lazarus, as worthless characters, whom he had visited with excommunication and deposition. They in Rome, he says, could hardly refrain from tears, that such men, who so often mentioned the gratia Dei and the adjutorium divinum, should have been condemned as heretics. Finally he entreated the bishops to submit themselves to the authority of the Roman see (Schaff's History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, Ch. 9, Sec. 149)."

"there are certain subjects about which some men are trying to vilify me. One of these is, that I refuse to infants the sacrament of baptism, and promise the kingdom of heaven to some, independently of Christ's redemption. Another of them is, that I so speak of man's ability to avoid sin as to exclude God's help, and so strongly confides in free will that I repudiate the help of divine grace."

"See how this epistle will clear me before your Blessedness; for in it we clearly and simply declare, that we possess a free will which is

unimpaired for sinning and for not sinning; and this free will is in all good works always assisted by divine help."

"Now this power of free will we declare to reside generally in all alike--in Christians, in Jews, and in Gentiles. In all men free will exists equally by nature, but in Christians alone is it assisted by grace."

"We confess free will in such a sense that we declare ourselves to be always in need of the help of God."

"Let them read the epistle which we wrote about twelve years ago to that holy man Bishop Paulinus: its subject throughout in some three hundred lines is the confession of God's grace and assistance alone, and our own inability to do any good thing at all without God."

"Let them also read my epistle to the holy Bishop Constantius, wherein I have--briefly no doubt, but yet plainly--conjoined the grace and help of God with man's free will."

"Let them read moreover what I wrote, when I was in the East, to Christ's holy virgin Demetrias, and they will find that we so commend the nature of man as always to add the help of God's grace."

"Let them also read my recent little treatise which we were obliged to publish a short while ago in defense of free will, and let them acknowledge how unfair is their determination to disparage us for a denial of grace, when we throughout almost the whole work acknowledge fully and sincerely both free will and grace."

"[I have been] defamed by certain persons for [supposedly] refusing the sacrament of baptism to infants, and promising the kingdom of heaven irrespective of Christ's redemption. [I have] never heard even an impious heretic say this about infants. Who indeed is so unacquainted with Gospel lessons, as not only to attempt to make such an

affirmation, but even to be able to lightly say it or even let it enter his thought? And then who is so impious as to wish to exclude infants from the kingdom of heaven, by forbidding them to be baptized and to be born again in Christ?"

"[The Gospel is very clear that] whosoever is not born again of water and the Spirit cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Who indeed is so impious as to have the heart to refuse the common redemption of the human race to an infant of any age whatever? Can any one forbid a second birth to an eternal and certain life, to him who has been born to this present uncertain life?"

PELAGIUS' CHAPTERS

Synopsis: In December of 415 a second synod was held against Pelagius in Diospolis at which certain sentences were read from a book he had written. The synod was investigating whether or not Pelagius had strayed into heresy with what he had written. After examining his book the synod declared him to be orthodox, finding no fault with his theology. In order to fully understand Pelagius' statements, since the complete book is lost, one needs to read his explanations of them in the Synod in Diospolis. These fragments of the book in question are from Augustine of Hippo's "On The Proceedings Of Pelagius" and Jerome's "Against The Pelagians".

"No man can be without sin unless he has acquired a knowledge of the law."

"All men are governed by their own will, and every one is submitted to his own desire...[The Scriptures show this for in the Wisdom of Solomon we see 'I myself also am a mortal man like unto all; and the offspring of him that was first made of the earth,' ...and] 'For all men have one entrance into life, and the like going out there from: wherefore I prayed and understanding was given to me; I called, and the Spirit of Wisdom came into me.'"

"[In the Psalms we read] 'He loved cursing, and it shall come upon him; and he willed not blessing, so it shall be far removed from him.'"

"[In Ecclesiasticus we read] 'He hath set fire and water before thee; stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt; before man are good and evil, life and death, and whichever he liketh shall be given to him.'"

"In the day of judgment no forbearance will be shown to the ungodly and the sinners, but they will be consumed in eternal fires."

"the Christian ought to be careful not to have evil thoughts."

"The kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament."

"A man is able, if he likes, to be without sin."

"Even women ought to have a knowledge of the law,"

"Women also should sing unto God."

"The servant of God should utter from his lips no bitterness, but ever that which is sweet and pleasant"

"A priest or doctor ought to watch the actions of all, and confidently rebuke sinners, lest he be responsible for them and their blood be required at his hands."

"A priest or doctor should flatter no one, but boldly rebuke all, lest he destroy both himself and those who hear him."

"All are governed by their own free choice."

[It is written in the one hundred and fourth Psalm,] "Let sinners cease to be in the earth, and the wicked be no more." And in Isaiah, "The wicked and sinners shall be burned up together, and they who forsake God shall be consumed."

"Except a man have learned, he cannot be acquainted with wisdom and understand the Scriptures."

"He that has not been taught, ought not to assume that he knows the law."

"A Christian ought to be so patient that if any one wished to take his property he would let it go with joy."

"The bravery of dress and ornament is an enemy of God."

"We must love our enemies as we do our neighbours"

"We must never believe an enemy."

The hundredth heading runs thus: "A man can be without sin, and easily keep the commandments of God if he chooses,"

"We ought not to commit even light offences."

"We must not even think an evil thought,"

PELAGIUS

Synod Of Lydda Investigates Pelagius' Teachings, 415 AD

Synopsis: *In 415 a second ecclesiastical trial was held against Pelagius, this time being instigated by two deposed Western bishops, Heros of Arles and Lazarus of Aix. The records are lost with only fragments of it remaining and what follows was taken from Augustine of Hippo's "On The Proceedings Of Pelagius". The Synod was presided over*

by Eulogius, bishop of Caesarea and metropolitan and was attended by thirteen other bishops: John of Jerusalem, Ammonianus, Eutonius, two Porphyrys, Fidas, Zomnus, Zoboennus, Nymphidius, Chromatius, Jovinus, Eleutherius, and Clematius. The two accusers were absent from the hearing owing to the illness of one of them, but a document was handed in containing the principal charges. In the end Pelagius was acknowledged as being Orthodox in doctrine and in full communion with the church.

Synod: [Pelagius writes in a certain book of his that] 'No man can be without sin unless he has acquired a knowledge of the law.'

Synod: Did you, Pelagius, express yourself thus?

Pelagius: I certainly used the words, but not in the sense in which they understand them. I did not say that a man is unable to sin who has acquired a knowledge of the law; but that he is by the knowledge of the law assisted towards not sinning, even as it is written, 'He hath given them a law for help'.

Synod: The words which have been spoken by Pelagius are not different from the Church.

Synod: Let another section be read. [It was then read from his book that] 'all men are ruled by their own will.'

Pelagius: This I stated in the interest of free will. God is its helper whenever it chooses good; man, however, when sinning is himself in fault, as under the direction of a free will.

Synod: Nor again is this opposed to the doctrine of the Church.

Synod: [Pelagius has written in his book that] 'In the day of judgment no forbearance will be shown to the ungodly and the sinners, but they will be consumed in eternal fires.' [To this Synod this statement seems to be worded in such a way as to imply that all sinners whatever were to be punished with an eternal punishment, without excepting even

those who hold Christ as their foundation, although 'they build thereupon wood, hay, stubble,' concerning whom the apostle writes: 'If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he shall himself be saved, yet so as by fire.']

Pelagius: I made this assertion in accordance with the Gospel, in which it is written concerning sinners, 'These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' [He] who believes differently is an Origenist.

Synod: [What you are saying then is] not opposed to the Church.

Synod: [Pelagius has written in his book that] 'evil does not enter our thoughts [if we are Christians].'

Pelagius: We made no such statement. What we did say was, that 'the Christian ought to be careful not to have evil thoughts.'

Synod: [What you are saying then is not opposed to the teachings of the Church.]

Synod: [Pelagius has written in his book that] 'The kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament.'

Pelagius: This can be proved by the Scriptures; but heretics, in order to disparage the Old Testament, deny this. I, however, simply followed the authority of the Scriptures when I said this; for in the prophet Daniel it is written: 'The saints shall receive the kingdom of the Most High.'

Synod: Neither is this opposed to the Church's faith.

Synod: [Pelagius has written in his book that] 'A man is able, if he likes, to be without sin' [and in a letter to a certain widow he wrote flatteringly that] 'In thee piety may find a dwelling-place, such as she

finds nowhere else; in thee righteousness, though a stranger, can find a home; truth, which no one any longer recognizes, can discover an abode and a friend in thee; and the law of God, which almost everybody despises, may be honoured by thee alone.' [Elsewhere in this same letter he wrote] 'O how happy and blessed art thou, when that righteousness which we must believe to flourish only in heaven has found a shelter on earth only in thy heart!' [In another work addressed to this same woman Pelagius, after reciting the Lord's prayer and then proceeding to teach her in what manner saints ought to pray, says] 'He worthily raises his hands to God, and with a good conscience does he pour out his prayer, who is able to say, "Thou, O Lord, knowest how holy, and harmless, and pure from all injury and iniquity and violence, are the hands which I stretch out to Thee; how righteous, and pure, and free from all deceit, are the lips with which I offer to Thee my supplication, that Thou wouldst have mercy upon me."'"

Pelagius: We asserted that a man could be without sin, and could keep God's commandments if he wished; for this capacity has been given to him by God. But we never said that any man could be found who at no time whatever, from infancy to old age, had committed sin: but that if any person were converted from his sins, he could by his own labour and God's grace be without sin; and yet not even thus would he be incapable of change ever afterwards. As for the other statements which they have made against us, they are not to be found in our books, nor have we at any time said such things.

Synod: You have denied having ever written such words; are you therefore ready to anathematize those who do hold these opinions?

Pelagius: I anathematize them as fools, not as heretics, for there is no dogma.

Synod: Since now Pelagius has with his own mouth anathematized this vague statement as foolish verbiage, justly declaring in his reply, 'That a man is able with God's assistance and grace to be without sin,' let him now proceed to answer the other heads of accusation against him.

Synod: [Your disciple Coelestius has been charged with making the

following statements:] "Adam was created mortal, and would have died whether he had sinned or not sinned", "that Adam's sin injured only himself and not the human race", "that the law no less than the gospel leads us to the kingdom", "that there were sinless men previous to the coming of Christ", "that new-born infants are in the same condition as Adam was before the fall", [and] "that the whole human race does not, on the one hand, die through Adam's death or transgression, nor, on the other hand, does the whole human race rise again through the resurrection of Christ."

Pelagius: Concerning a man's being able indeed to be without sin, we have spoken already; concerning the fact, however, that before the Lord's coming there were persons without sin, we say now that, previous to Christ's advent, some men lived holy and righteous lives, according to the teaching of the sacred Scriptures. The rest were not said by me, as even their testimony goes to show, and for them, I do not feel that I am responsible. But for the satisfaction of the holy synod, I anathematize those who either now hold, or have ever held, these opinions.

Synod: With regard to these charges aforesaid, Pelagius has in our presence given us sufficient and proper satisfaction, by anathematizing the opinions which were not his.

Synod: [It is reported that you teach] That the Church here is without spot or wrinkle.

Pelagius: It has been asserted by me, -- but in such a sense that the Church is by the laver cleansed from every spot and wrinkle, and in this purity the Lord wishes her to continue.

Synod: Of this also we approve.

Synod: [We would now like to examine certain passages from a book that your disciple Coelestius has written. In the first chapter of his book he has written that] "we do more than is commanded us in the law and the gospel."

Pelagius: This they have set down as my statement. What we said, however, was in keeping with the apostle's assertion concerning virginity, of which Paul writes: 'I have no commandment of the Lord.'

Synod: This also the Church receives.

Synod: [In the third chapter of his book Coelestius has written that] "God's grace and assistance is not given for single actions, but is imparted in the freedom of the will, or in the law and in doctrine...God's grace is given in proportion to our deserts; because, were He to give it to sinful persons, He would seem to be unrighteous...[From these words I infer that] therefore grace itself has been placed in my will, according as I have been either worthy or unworthy of it. For if we do all things by grace, then whenever we are overcome by sin, it is not we who are overcome, but God's grace, which wanted by all means to help us, but was not able...If, when we conquer sin, it is by the grace of God; then it is He who is in fault whenever we are conquered by sin, because He was either altogether unable or unwilling to keep us safe."

Pelagius: Whether these are really the opinions of Coelestius or not, is the concern of those who say that they are. For my own part, indeed, I never entertained such views; on the contrary, I anathematize every one who does entertain them.

Synod: This holy synod accepts you for your condemnation of these impious words.

Synod: [In the fifth chapter of Coelestius' book it is written that] "every individual has the ability to possess all powers and graces," thus taking away that 'diversity of graces', which the apostle teaches.

Pelagius: We have certainly said so much; but yet they have laid against us a malignant and blundering charge. We do not take away the diversity of graces; but we declare that God gives to the person, who has proved himself worthy to receive them, all graces, even as He conferred them on the Apostle Paul.

Synod: You accordingly do yourself hold the doctrine of the Church touching the gift of the graces, which are collectively possessed by the apostle.

Several Bishops: [Bishop John, what proceedings have taken place before yourself concerning Pelagius previous to this trial?]

Bishop John: On the occasion in question (a conference held at

Jerusalem at the end of July in the year 415, as described by Orosius in his Apology), when they (others at the Synod) were importunate and exclaimed, 'He is a heretic, because he says, It is true that a man is able, if he only will, to live without sin;' I censured the statement [about being able to live without sin in our own strength], and reminded them besides, that even the Apostle Paul, after so many labours—not indeed in his own strength, but by the grace of God—said, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me;' and again: 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;' and again: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour but in vain who build it.' And we quoted several other like passages out of the Holy Scriptures. When, however, they did not receive the quotations which we made out of the Holy Scriptures, but continued their murmuring noise, Pelagius said, 'This is what I also believe; let him be anathema, who declares that a man is able, without God's help, to arrive at the perfection of all virtues.' [John possibly made at this point some negative remarks in reference to Heros and Lazarus (the two deposed bishops who had brought charges up against Pelagius) and Orosius, a Spanish disciple of Augustine who was Augustine's representative at the previous Synod held under Bishop John. Orosius left this Synod prematurely due to conflicts with John. Whatever these statements were-Augustine does not record them-he does note that the other bishops who were present did not feel led to rebuke John over the content of them.]

Synod: [In the sixth chapter of Coelestius' work there is laid down this position:] "Men cannot be called sons of God, unless they have become entirely free from all sin." [In the seventh chapter he makes this statement:] "Forgetfulness and ignorance have no connection with sin, as they do not happen through the will, but through necessity;" [In his tenth Chapter he says:] "Our will is free, if it needs the help of God; inasmuch as every one in the possession of his proper will has either something to do or to abstain from doing." [In the twelfth he says:] "Our victory comes not from God's help, but from our own free will." [Coelestius drew this conclusion in the following terms:] "The victory is ours, seeing that we took up arms of our Own will; just as, on the other hand, being conquered is our own, since it was of our own will that we neglected to arm ourselves." ...[Coelestius has noted that in the epistle of the blessed Apostle Peter we read that we might be] "partakers of the divine nature" [and he has made the following argument from this passage:]

"Now if our spirit or soul is Unable to be without sin, then even God is subject to sin, since this part of Him, that is to say, the soul, is exposed to sin." [In his thirteenth chapter he says:] "That pardon is not given to penitents according to the grace and mercy of God, but according to their own merits and effort, since through repentance they have been worthy of mercy."

Synod: What says the monk Pelagius to all these heads of opinion which have been read in his presence? For this holy synod condemns the whole, as does also God's Holy Catholic Church."

Pelagius: I say again, that these opinions, even according to their own testimony, are not mine; nor for them, as I have already said, ought I to be held responsible. The opinions which I have confessed to be my own, I maintain are sound; those, however, which I have said are not my own, I reject according to the judgment of this holy synod, pronouncing anathema on every man who opposes and gainsays the doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church. For I believe in the Trinity of the one substance, and I hold all things in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Catholic Church. If indeed any man entertains opinions different from her, let him be anathema.

Synod: Now since we have received satisfaction on the points which have come before us touching the monk Pelagius, who has been present; since, too, he gives his consent to the pious doctrines, and even anathematizes everything that is contrary to the Church's faith, we confess him to belong to the communion of the Catholic Church.

[At one point Pelagius read private letters from Augustine and others at this trial.]

"To my most beloved lord, and most longed-for brother Pelagius, Augustin sends greeting in the Lord. I thank you very much for the pleasure you have kindly afforded me by your letter, and for informing me of your good health. May the Lord requite you with blessings, and may you ever enjoy them, and live With Him for evermore in all eternity, my most beloved lord, and most longed-for brother. For my own part, indeed, although I do not admit your high encomiums of me, which the letter of your Benignity conveys, I yet cannot be insensible of the benevolent view you entertain towards my poor deserts; at the same time requesting you to pray for me, that the Lord would make me such a man as you suppose me to be already."

Then, in another hand, it follows: "Be mindful of us; may you be safe, and find favour with the Lord, my most beloved lord, and most longed-for brother."

-Augustine to Pelagius, Letter 146

PELAGIUS WRITTEN ANATHEMA

Synopsis: Around 418 Pelagius was asked by Albina, Pinianus, and Melania, wealthy Roman converts to Christianity, to provide a written condemnation of all that had been alleged against him. In response he provided the following anathema in their presence. It is unclear whether this is the complete written statement or just a fragment. It is found quoted in Augustine of Hippo's two part work "On The Grace Of Christ, And On Original Sin".

"I anathematize the man who either thinks or says that the grace of God, whereby 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' is not necessary not only for ever hour and for every moment, but also for every act of our lives: and those who endeavor to disannul it deserve everlasting punishment."

-Signed by Pelagius

THE UNNAMED BOOKS OF COELESTIUS

Introduction: It seems uncertain just how many books Coelestius wrote or the names of them. Augustine mentions several works and tracts that he is familiar with (*On The Grace of Christ*, 32). These would include the book that he quoted during his hearing with Pope Zosimus (*Ibid*, 36), the book of his that was quoted at the Council of Diospolis (*Lydda*) against Pelagius, a book that Augustine mentions reading (*Concerning Man's Perfection In Righteousness*, Ch. 1), and a book which Jerome quoted from in his letter to Cresiphon (*Epistle 133*). Whether these are one in the same is hard to say. Gennadius informs us that as a young man Coelestius "wrote to his parents three epistles *On monastic life*, written as short books, and containing moral maxims suited to every one who is seeking God (*Supplement To Jerome's Lives of Illustrious Men*, Ch. 45)."

SECTION TWO

I. The Book Quoted At The Council Of Diospolis (*Lydda*) Against Pelagius

THE WORKS OF COELESTIUS

Background: In his work "On The Proceedings Of Pelagius" Augustine of Hippo refers to a book "which bears no title of its author, but is commonly reported to be the work of Coelestius." This book was read at the Council of Diospolis against Pelagius and referred

to as a work of Coelestius, though Pelagius himself appeared to not be familiar with the work stating that "Whether these are really the opinions of Coelestius or not" he could not say.

Chapter 1: "we do more than is commanded us in the law and the gospel."

Chapter 3: "God's grace and assistance is not given for single actions, but is imparted in the freedom of the will, or in the law and in doctrine... God's grace is given in proportion to our deserts; because, were He to give it to sinful persons, He would seem to be unrighteous... [From these words I infer that] therefore grace itself has been placed in my will, according as I have been either worthy or unworthy of it. For if we do all things by grace, then whenever we are overcome by sin, it is not we who are overcome, but God's grace, which wanted by all means to help us, but was not able... If, when we conquer sin, it is by the grace of God; then it is He who is in fault whenever we are

conquered by sin, because He was either altogether unable or unwilling to keep us safe."

Chapter 5: "every individual has the ability to possess all powers and graces, thus taking away that 'diversity of graces', which the apostle teaches."

Chapter 6: "Men cannot be called sons of God, unless they have become entirely free from all sin."

Chapter 7: "Forgetfulness and ignorance have no connection with sin, as they do not happen through the will, but through necessity."

Chapter 10: "Our will is free, if it needs the help of God; inasmuch as every one in the possession of his proper will has either something to do or to abstain from doing."

Chapter 11: "[In the epistle of the blessed Apostle Peter we read that we might be] 'partakers of the divine nature' ...Now if our spirit or soul is Unable to be without sin, then even God is subject to sin, since this part of Him, that is to say, the soul, is exposed to sin...Now how can anybody become a partaker of the thing from the condition and power of which he is distinctly declared to be a stranger?"

Chapter 12: "Our victory comes not from God's help, but from our own free will...The victory is ours, seeing that we took up arms of our Own will; just as, on the other hand, being conquered is our own, since it was of our own will that we neglected to arm ourselves."

Chapter 13: "pardon is not given to penitents according to the grace and mercy of God, but according to their own merits and effort, since through repentance they have been worthy of mercy."

2. The Book Quoted By Jerome In His Letter To Ctesiphon

Background: In 415AD Jerome wrote a letter to Ctesiphon explaining his disagreements with Pelagius' theology. In it he quotes a work by "a disciple of Pelagius, or rather one who is the teacher and commander of his whole army," a clear reference to Coelestius. Jerome's letter to Ctesiphon is letter number 133 in his collected epistles.

"If I do nothing without the help of God and if all that I do is His act, I cease to labour and the crown that I shall win will belong not to me but to the grace of God. It is idle for Him to have given me the power of choice if I cannot use it without His constant help. For will that requires external support ceases to be will. God has given me freedom of choice, but what becomes of this if I cannot do as I wish?"

"Either once for all I use the power which is given to me, and so preserve the freedom of my will; or I need the help of another, in which case the freedom of my will is wholly abrogated."

"Suppose that I want to bend my finger or to move my hand, to sit, to stand, to walk, to run to and fro, to spit or to blow my nose, to perform the offices of nature; must the help of God be always indispensable to me?"

"To be sinless is one thing, to be able to be so is another. The first is not in our power, the second generally is. For though none ever has been sinless, yet, if a man wills to be so, he can be so."

3. The Book Presented To Pope Zosimus During His Hearing

Background: In 417 Coelestius was given the opportunity to defend himself before Pope Zosimus. At this meeting he explained his doctrinal beliefs and presented a written statement of faith and produced a book from which the following quotes are taken. These fragments are from Augustine of Hippo's two part work entitled "On the Grace of

Christ, and on Original Sin". After examining Coelestius and examining his writings Zosimus could find no fault with his theology and pronounced him to be orthodox in his faith.

1. "infants too are baptized for the remission of sins..."

2. "[but we deny] that they have any original sin."

THE DEFINITIONS, SO IT IS SAID, OF COELESTIUS

Synopsis: *Around 415 AD Augustine was given a short book entitled 'The definitions, so it is said, of Coelestius,' who was an associate of Pelagius. In response he wrote a treatise entitled 'Concerning Man's Perfection in Righteousness' from which these fragments come. Whether Coelestius actually wrote this document is the matter of some debate. Augustine himself felt that he was not the original author based upon the title of the book. One theory, which appears to have never really been investigated is whether this document was actually written by an opponent of Coelestius in order to fully, yet briefly, explain what it was that he taught. Regardless of the author, Augustine maintained, "That these views are, however, his, or those of some associates of his, we, too, can well believe. For the above-mentioned brief definitions, or rather propositions, are by no means at variance with his opinion, such as I have seen it expressed in another work, of which he is the undoubted author." The astute student will keep in mind though, that we are reading these fragments from the writings of a man who was determined to rid the world of Pelagianism.*

I. The Definitions Of Coelestius

1. First of all he must be asked who denies man's ability to live without sin, what: every sort of sin is,-is it such as can be avoided? or is it unavoidable? If it is unavoidable, then it is not sin; if it can be avoided, then a man can live without the sin which can be avoided. No reason or justice permits us to designate as sin what cannot in any way be avoided.
2. We must next ask whether sin comes from will, or from necessity? If from necessity, it is not sin; if from will, it can be avoided.
3. Again we must ask what sin is,-natural? or accidental? If natural, it is not sin; if accidental, it is separable; and if it is separable, it can be avoided; and because it can be avoided, man can be without that which can be avoided.
4. We must ask, again what is sin,-an act, or a thing? If it is a thing, it must have an author; and if it be said to have an

author, then another besides God will seem to be introduced as the author of a thing. But if it is impious to say this, we are driven to confess that every sin is an act, not a thing. If therefore it is an act, for this very reason, because it is an act, it can be avoided.

5. We must again inquire whether a man ought to be without sin. Beyond doubt he ought. If he ought, he is able; if he is not able, then he ought not. Now if a man ought not to be without sin, it follows that he ought to be with sin,-and then it ceases to be sin at all, if it is determined that it is owed. Or if it is absurd to say this, we are obliged to confess that man ought to be without sin; and it is clear that his obligation is not more than his ability.
6. Again we have to inquire whether man is commanded to be without sin; for either he is not able, and then he is not commanded; or else because he is commanded, he is able. For why should that be commanded which cannot at all be done?
7. The next question we shall have to propose is, whether God wishes that man be without sin. Beyond doubt God wishes it; and no doubt he has the ability. For who is so foolhardy as to hesitate to believe that to be possible, which he has no doubt about God's wishing?
8. Again, this question must be asked, how God wishes man to be,-with sin, or without sin? Beyond doubt, He does not wish him to be with sin. We must reflect how great would be the impious blasphemy for it to be said that man has it in his power to be with sin, which God does not wish; and for it to be denied that he has it in his power to be without sin, which God wishes: just as if God had created any man for such a result as this,-that he should be able to be what He would not have him, and unable to be what He would have him; and that he should lead an existence contrary to His will, rather than one which should be in accordance therewith.
9. The next question we shall require to be solved is this: By what means is it brought about that man is with sin?-by the necessity of nature, or by the freedom of choice? If it is by the necessity of nature, he is blameless; if by the freedom of

choice, then the question arises, from whom he has received this freedom of choice. No doubt, from God. Well, but that which God bestows is certainly good. This cannot be gainsaid. On what principle, then, is a thing proved to be good, if it is more prone to evil than to good? For it is more prone to evil than to good if by means of it man can be with sin and cannot be without sin.

10. Since God made man good and, besides making him good, further commanded him to do good, how impious it is for us to hold that man is evil, when he was neither made so, nor so commanded; and to deny him the ability of being good, although he was both made so, and commanded to act so!

11. The next question which must be put is, in how many ways all sin is manifested? In two, if I mistake not: if either those things are done which are forbidden, or those things are not done which are commanded. Now, it is just as certain that all things which are forbidden are able to be avoided, as it is that all things which are commanded are able to be effected. For it is vain either to forbid or to enjoin that which cannot either be guarded against or accomplished. And how shall we deny the possibility of man's being without sin, when we are compelled to admit that he can as well avoid all those things which are forbidden, as do all those which are commanded?

12. Again the question arises how it is that man is unable to be without sin, -by his will, or by nature? If by nature, it is not sin; if by his will, then will can very easily be changed by will.

13. The next question we have to ask is this: If man cannot be without sin, whose fault is it, -man's own, or someone else's? If man's own, in what way is it his fault if he is not that which he is unable to be?

14. Again the question must be asked 'If man's nature is good, as nobody but Marcion or Manichaeus will venture to deny, in what way is it good if it is impossible for it to be free from evil? For that all sin is evil who can gainsay?'

15. And this, moreover, has to be said: God is certainly righteous; this cannot be denied. But God imputes every sin to man. This

too, I suppose, must be allowed, that whatever shall not be imputed as sin is not sin. Now if there is any sin which is unavoidable, how is God said to be righteous, when He is supposed to impute to any man that which cannot be avoided?"

2. A Dialogue Between Coelestius And An Examiner

Examiner: "Show me the man who is without sin."

Coelestius: "I show you one who is able to be without sin."

Examiner: "And who is he?"

Coelestius: "You are the man. But if you were to say, 'I, at any rate, cannot be without sin,' then you must answer me, 'Whose fault is that?' If you then were to say, 'My own fault,' you must be further asked, 'And how is it your fault, if you cannot be without sin?'"

Examiner: "Are you yourself without sin, who say that a man can be without sin?"

Coelestius: "Whose fault is it that I am not without sin? But if he had said in reply, 'The fault is your own,' then the answer would be, 'How my fault, when I am unable to be without sin?'"

3. Passages Which Clearly Show That Man Is Commanded To (And Able To) Live Above Sin

1. There are passages which prove that man is commanded to be without sin. In Deuteronomy, 'Thou shalt be perfect before the Lord thy God.' Again, in the same book, 'There shall be not an imperfect man among the sons of Israel.' In like manner the Savior says in the Gospel, 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' So the apostle, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, says: 'Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect.' Again, to the Colossians he writes: 'Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.' And so to the Philippians: 'Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless, and harmless, as the immaculate sons of God.' In like manner to the Ephesians he writes: 'Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.' Then again to the Colossians

he says in another passage: 'And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death; present yourselves holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight.' In the same strain, he says to the Ephesians: 'That He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.' So in his first Epistle to the Corinthians he says 'Be ye sober, and righteous, and sin not.' So again in the Epistle of St. Peter it is written 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is offered to you . . . as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.' Whence blessed David likewise says: 'O Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest on Thy holy mountain? He that walketh without blame, and worketh righteousness.' And in another passage: 'I shall be blameless with Him.' And yet again: 'Blessed are the blameless in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.' To the same effect it is written in Solomon: 'The Lord loveth holy hearts, and all they that are blameless are acceptable unto Him.'

2. Because God's commandments are not only not impossible, but they are not even grievous. In Deuteronomy: 'The Lord thy God will again turn and rejoice over thee for good, as He rejoiced over thy fathers, if ye shall hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments, and His ordinances, and His judgments, written in the book of this law; if thou turn to the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and With all thy soul. For this command, which I give thee this day, is not grievous, neither is it far from thee: it is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who will ascend into heaven, and obtain it for us, that we may hear and do it? neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who will cross over the sea, and obtain it for us, that we may hear and do it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thine heart, and in thine hands to do it.' In the Gospel likewise the Lord says: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and

lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' So also in the Epistle of Saint John it is written: 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.'

4. An Examination Of Scripture Passages Presented In Argument Against The Views Of The Pelagians And Scripture Passages Presented In Counter-Argument

1. For there are passages of Scripture which are in opposition to those who ignorantly suppose that they are able to destroy the liberty of the will, or the possibility of not sinning, by the authority of Scripture. For they are in the habit of quoting against us what holy Job said: 'Who is pure from uncleanness? Not one; even if he be an infant of only one day upon the earth.'" [These people need to keep in mind that Job himself also referred to himself as an innocent man without sin when he said] 'For although I am a righteous and blameless man, I have become a subject for mockery,' and 'Behold, I am very near my judgment, and I know that I shall be found righteous.' Now this is the judgment of which it is said in another scripture: 'And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.'
2. [Remember that Job has also said] 'For many bruises hath He inflicted upon me without a cause', 'For I have kept His ways, and have not turned aside from His commandments, nor will I depart from them', and 'My heart shall not reproach me in all my life'.
3. They (our opponents) are in the habit of next quoting, the passage: 'Every man is a liar.' We tell them in answer, how in the book of Numbers it is said, 'Man is true.' While of holy Job this eulogy is read: 'There was a certain man in the land of Ausis, whose name was Job; that man was true, blameless, righteous, and godly, abstaining from every evil thing.'
4. Moreover, in Job himself it is said: 'And he maintained the miracle of a true man.' Again we read in Solomon, touching wisdom: 'Men that are liars cannot remember her, but men of truth shall be found in her.' Again in the Apocalypse: 'And in

their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault.'

5. [Our opponents quote to us that] 'There is none that doeth good, no, not one.' [But this is a generalized statement for in Scripture we see that there are men who certainly do do good.] Holy David indeed says, 'Hope thou in the Lord and be doing good.' Holy Tobit also said, 'Fear not, my son, that we have to endure poverty; we shall have many blessings if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good.'
6. They (our opponents) likewise quote what the Saviour says: 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good save one, that is, God?' We must answer this text with another, in which the same Lord says, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.' And again: 'He maketh His sun to rise on the good and on the evil.' Then in another passage it is written, 'For the good things are created from the beginning,' and yet again, 'They that are good shall dwell in the land.'
7. This is another text of theirs: 'Who will boast that he has a pure heart?' The Savior in the gospel declares, 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.' David also says, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that is innocent in his hands, and pure in his heart;' and again in another passage, 'Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good and upright in heart.' So also in Solomon: 'Riches are good unto him that hath no sin on his conscience;' and again in the same book, 'Leave off from sin, and order thine hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from wickedness.' So in the Epistle of John, 'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of Him.'
8. [This is another text that they quote:] 'For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' [To this we would answer how] the Lord says concerning holy Job, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job? For there is none like him upon earth, a man who is blameless, true, a worshipper of God, and abstaining from every evil thing.'
9. They also quote the text: 'For in thy sight shall no man living

be justified.' We must confront them with this answer, from the testimony of the evangelist concerning holy Zacharias and Elisabeth, when he says, 'And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' And the blessed apostle says, 'That we should be holy, and without blame before Him.'

10. They also quote this passage, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' The same St. John in this very epistle says, 'This, however, brethren, I say, that ye sin not. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin.' Also elsewhere: 'Whosoever is born of God sinneth not; because his being born of God preserveth him, and the evil one toucheth him not.' And again in another passage, when speaking of the Savior, he says: 'Since He was manifested to take away sins, whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.' And yet again: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope towards Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.'
11. This passage, too, is quoted by them: 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' [To this we answer with another of the same apostle's words when he says] 'Let him do what he will.' and 'Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.' Likewise, in Deuteronomy: 'Life and death hath He set before thee, and good and evil . . . choose thou life, that thou mayest live.' So in the book of Solomon: 'God from the beginning made man, and left him in the hand of His counsel; and He added for him commandments and precepts: if thou wilt-to perform acceptable faithfulness for the time to come, they shall save thee. He hath set fire and water before thee: stretch forth thine hand unto whether thou wilt. Before man are good and evil, and life and death; poverty and honour are from the Lord God.' So again in Isaiah we read: 'If ye be willing, and hearken unto

me, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye be not willing, and hearken not to me, the sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken this.'

12. If any one say, 'May it possibly be that a man sin not even in word?' then the answer, which must be given is, 'Quite possible, if God so will; and God does so will, therefore it is possible.'

COELESTIUS WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Synopsis: *In 417AD Coelestius appeared before Pope Zosimus and handed him a written statement of faith, fragments of which are below. These fragments were collected in Augustine of Hippo's two part work entitled "On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin". After examining Coelestius and reading his statement of belief Zosimus could find nothing heretical about his beliefs and pronounced him to be orthodox in his faith.*

1. "If, indeed, any questions have arisen beyond the compass of the faith, on which there might be perhaps dissension on the part of a great many persons, in no case have I pretended to pronounce a decision on any dogma, as if I possessed a definitive authority in the matter myself; but whatever I have derived from the fountain of the prophets and the apostles, I have presented for approbation to the judgment of your apostolic office; so that if any error has crept in among us, human as we are, through our ignorance, it may be corrected by your sentence."
2. "[I maintain] that original sin binds no single infant."
3. "That infants, however, ought to be baptized for the remission of sins, according to the rule of the Church universal, and according to the meaning of the Gospel, we confess. For the Lord has determined that the kingdom of heaven should only be conferred on baptized persons; and since the resources of nature do not possess it, it must necessarily be conferred by the gift of grace."
4. "That infants, however, must be baptized for the remission of sins, was not admitted by us with the view of our seeming to affirm sin by transmission. This is very alien from the catholic meaning, because sin is not born with a man,-- it is subsequently committed by the man for it is shown to be a fault, not of nature, but of the will. It is fitting, therefore, to confess this, lest we should seem to make different kinds of baptism; it is, moreover, necessary to lay down this preliminary safeguard, lest by the occasion of this mystery evil should, to the disparagement of the Creator, be said to be conveyed to man by nature, before that it has been committed by man."

COELESTIUS' TRIEL AT CARTHAGE 411 or 412AD

Synopsis: *In 411 or 412AD Coelestius was put on trial in Carthage for his doctrinal views. There are only two fragments of the council preserved in Augustine of Hippo's two part work "On The Grace Of Christ, and On Original Sin", Book 2:2-3 and in Marius Mercator's "Commonitorium super Nomine Coelestii". Deacon Paulinus prepared a written list of accusations against Coelestius and handed it to Aurelius, the president of the synod. (See Mercator's "Subnotationes in Verba Juliani" for a slightly different version of Paulinus' accusations.) Augustine's fragments provide a partial transcript of Coelestius' questioning regarding points two and three.*

Deacon Paulinus Of Milan's Points Of Accusation Handed To Bishop Aurelius

1. Adam would have died, even if he had not sinned.
2. The sin of Adam injured himself alone, and not all mankind.
3. New-born children are in the same condition in which Adam was before the Fall.
4. It is not true that because of the death and sin of Adam all mankind die; neither is it true that because of Christ's resurrection all men rise again.
5. The Law leads to heaven as well as the Gospel.
6. Even before the coming of Christ there were men who were entirely without sin.

Transcripts Of The Synod

Fragment One: Discussion Of Point Two

Bishop Aurelius: 'Let what follows be recited.'

Anonymous Reciter(s): 'That the sin of Adam was injurious to him alone, and not to the human race.'

Coelestius: 'I said that I was in doubt about the transmission of sin, but so as to yield assent to any man whom God has gifted with the grace of knowledge; for I have heard different opinions from those who have been even appointed presbyters in the Catholic Church.'

Deacon Paulinus: 'Tell us their names.'

Coelestius: 'The holy presbyter Rufinus, who lived at Rome with the holy Pammachius. I have heard him declare that there is no transmission of sin.'

Deacon Paulinus: 'Is there any one else?'

Coelestius: 'I have heard more say the same.'

Deacon Paulinus: 'Tell us their names.'

Coelestius: 'Is not one priest enough for you?'

Fragment Two: Discussion Of Point Three

Bishop Aurelius: 'Let the rest of the accusation be read.'

Anonymous Reciter(s): 'That infants at their birth are in the same state that Adam was before the transgression...' [they continued reading to the very end of the brief accusation which had been previously put in.]

Bishop Aurelius: 'Have you, Coelestius, taught at any time, as the deacon Paulinus has stated, that infants are at their birth in the same state that Adam was before his transgression?'

Coelestius: 'Let him explain what he meant when he said, "before the transgression."' "

Deacon Paulinus: 'Do you on your side deny that you ever taught this doctrine? It must be one of two things: he must either say that he never so taught, or else he must now condemn the opinion.'

Coelestius: I have already said, Let him explain the words he mentioned, "before the transgression."

Deacon Paulinus: ' You must deny ever having taught this.'

Bishop Aurelius: I ask, What conclusion I have on my part to draw from this man's obstinacy; my affirmation is, that although Adam, as created in Paradise, is said to have been made immortal at first, he afterwards became corruptible through transgressing the commandment. Do you say this, brother Paulinus?'

Deacon Paulinus: ' I do, my lord.'

Bishop Aurelius: 'As regards the condition of infants before baptism at the present day, the deacon Paulinus wishes to be informed whether it is such as Adam's was before the transgression; and whether it derives the guilt of transgression from the same origin of sin from which it is born?'

Deacon Paulinus: 'Let him deny whether he taught this, or not.'

Coelestius: 'As touching the transmission of sin, I have already asserted, that I have heard many persons of acknowledged position in the catholic Church deny it altogether; and on the other hand, others affirm it: it may be fairly deemed a matter for inquiry, but not a heresy. I have always maintained that infants require baptism, and ought to be baptized. What else does he want?'

[Nothing more exact is known of the transactions of the Synod; but Marius Mercator adds that the assembled bishops had demanded that Coelestius should recant, and as he refused this, they had pronounced excommunication upon him, but that he appealed to Rome. Coelestius immediately went to Ephesus where he was able to obtain ordination to the priesthood without any problem.]

SECTION THREE

THE WORKS OF JULIAN

JULIAN OF ECLANUM LETTER TO ROME

Synopsis: *This letter was a defense against the doctrines of the established church and a statement of faith of the Pelagian Christians. It was sent to Rome, as a defense of sorts as well as a warning against what they understood to be Augustine's infusion of Manichaean thought into Christian theology. It is preserved only in fragments of Augustine's critique of it. These fragments can be divided into three parts: 1.) The doctrines of the non-Pelagian Church (at least how they understood them to be), 2.) The doctrines of the Pelagians, and 3.) A conclusion.*

I. The Doctrines of Augustine, As The Pelagians Understood Them

“Those Manicheans (Julian refers to the non-Pelagians, whose chief theologian has become Augustine, as Manicheans, a clear intimidation that he has sensed a carry over of Manichean thought from Augustine into the Christian Church. Augustine was a Manichaean himself for about nine years) say with whom now we do not communicate,—that is, the whole of them with whom we differ,—that by the sin of the first man, that is, of Adam, free will perished: and that no one has now the power of living well, but that all are constrained into sin by the necessity of their flesh.”

“They say also that those marriages which are now celebrated were not appointed by God, and this is to be read in Augustine's book, against which I replied in four books. And the words of this Augustine our enemies have taken up by way of hostility to the truth.”

“They say also that sexual impulse and the intercourse of married people were devised by the devil, and that therefore those who are born innocent are guilty, and that it is the work of the devil, not of God, that they are born of this diabolical intercourse. And this, without any ambiguity, is Manichaeism.”

“They say that the saints in the Old Testament were not without sins,—that is that they were not free from crimes even by amendment, but they were seized by death in their guilt.”

“They say that even the Apostle Paul, even all the apostles, were always polluted by immoderate lust.”

“[Augustine says] that Christ even was not free from sins, but that, from the necessity of the flesh, He spoke falsely, and was stained with other faults,”

“They also say that baptism does not give complete remission of sins, nor take away crimes, but that it shaves them off, so that the roots of all sins are retained in the evil flesh.”

II. A Doctrinal Statement of the Pelagians

“In opposition to these things we daily argue, and we are unwilling to yield our consent to transgressors, because we say that free will is in all by nature, and could not perish by the sin of Adam; which assertion is confirmed by the authority of all Scriptures.”

“We say that that marriage which is now celebrated throughout the earth was ordained by God, and that married people are not guilty, but that fornicators and adulterers are to be condemned.”

“We say that the sexual impulse—that is, that the virility itself, without which there can be no intercourse—is ordained by God.”

“We maintain that men are the work of God, and that no one is forced unwillingly by His power either into evil or good, but that man does either good or ill of his own will; but that in a good work he is always assisted by God's grace, while in evil he is incited by the suggestions of the devil.”

“We say that the saints of the Old Testament, their righteousness being perfected here, passed to eternal life,—that is, that by the love of virtue they departed from all sins; because those whom we read of as having committed any sin, we nevertheless know to have amended themselves.”

“We confess that the grace of Christ is necessary to all, both to grown-up people and to infants; and we anathematize those who say that a child born of two baptized people ought not to be baptized.”

“We condemn those who affirm that baptism does not do away

all sins, because we know that full cleansing is conferred by these mysteries.”

III. Conclusion

“Let no one therefore seduce you, nor let the wicked deny that they think these things. But if they speak the truth, either let a hearing be given, or let those very bishops who now disagree with me condemn what I have above said that they hold with the Manicheans, as we condemn those things which they declare concerning us, and a full agreement shall be made; but if they will not, know ye that they are Manicheans, and abstain from their company.”

(Preserved in Augustine of Hippo's Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, Bk. 2)

SECTION FOUR

WORKS OF AN UNKNOWN PELAGIAN

"Is it possible then possible for a man not to sin? Such a claim is indeed a hard one and a bitter pill for sinners to swallow; it pains the ears of all who desire to live unrighteous. Who will find it easy now to fulfill the demands of righteousness, when there are some who find it hard even to listen to them?" (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 167, published by The Boydell Press)

"When will a man guilty of any crime or sin accept with a tranquil mind that his wickedness is a product of his own will, not of necessity, and allow what he now strives to attribute to nature to be ascribed to his own free choice? It affords endless comfort to transgressors of the divine law if they are able to believe that their failure to do something is due to inability rather than disinclination, since they understand from their natural wisdom that no one can be judged for failing to do the impossible and that what is justifiable on grounds of impossibility is either a small sin or none at all." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 167-168, published by The Boydell Press)

"Under the plea that it is impossible not to sin, they are given a false sense of security in sinning...Anyone who hears that it is not possible for him to be without sin will not even try to be what he judges to be impossible, and the man who does not try to be without sin must perforce sin all the time, and all the more boldly because he enjoys the false security of believing that it is impossible for him not to sin...But if he were to hear that he is able not to sin, then he would have exerted himself to fulfill what he now knows to be possible when he is striving to fulfill it, to achieve his purpose for the most part, even if not entirely." (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 168, published by The Boydell Press)

"Consider first whether that which is such that a man cannot be without it ought to be described as sin at all; for everything which cannot be avoided is now put down to nature but it is impious to say that sin is inherent in nature, because in this way the author of nature is being judged at fault... how can it be proper to call sin by that name if, like other natural things, it cannot be avoided, since all sin is to be attributed to the free choice of the will, not to the defects of nature?" (The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 168-169, published by The Boydell Press)

SECTION FIVE

FORMER PELAGIANS

TIMASIUS AND JACOBUS

Letter To Augustine of Hippo

Synopsis — *Timasius and Jacobus were disciples of Pelagius who had compared Pelagius work "On Nature" with some of the writings of Augustine and upon discovering discrepancies forwarded a copy of "On Nature" to Augustine. Augustine then replied with a work entitled "On Nature And Grace" to which Jacobus and Timasius are here writing back to him their thoughts upon his rebuttal of Pelagius. This letter is number 168 in the collected letters of Augustine.*

"To his lordship, the truly blessed and deservedly venerable father, Bishop Augustin, Timasius and Jacobus send greeting in the Lord. We have been so greatly refreshed and strengthened by the grace of God, which your word has ministered to us, my lord, our truly blessed and justly venerated father, that we may with the utmost sincerity and propriety say, He sent His word and healed them." We have found, indeed, that your holiness has so thoroughly sired the contents of his little book as to astonish us with the answers with which even the slightest points of his error have been confronted, whether it be on matters which every Christian ought to rebut, loathe, and avoid, or on those in which he is not with sufficient certainty found to have erred, -although even in these he has, with incredible subtlety, suggested his belief that God's grace should be kept out of sight. There is, however, one consideration which affects us under so great a benefit,--that this most illustrious gift of the grace of God has, however slowly, so fully shone out upon us, If, indeed, it has happened that some are removed from the influence of this clearest light of truth, whose blindness required its illumination, yet even to them, we doubt not, the same grace will find its steady way, however late, by the merciful favour of that God 'who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' As for ourselves, indeed, thanks to that loving spirit which is in you, we have, in consequence of your instruction, some time since thrown off our subjection to his errors; but we still have even now cause for continued gratitude in the fact that, as we have been informed, the false opinions which we formerly believed are now becoming apparent to others--a way of escape opening out to them in the extremely precious discourse of your holiness," Then, in another hand: "May the mercy of our God keep your blessedness in safety, and mindful of us, for His eternal glory."

SECTION SIX AGAINST PELAGIANISM

CANONS OF THE COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE, MAY 1, 418AD

Translated By The Right Rev. Charles Joseph Hefele, D.D. & Henry Nutcombe Oxenham, M.A.

Edited By Rev. Daniel R. Jennings, M.A.

Synopsis: *After Coelestius appeared before Pope Zosimus for examination and was vindicated and after reading the letter and confession of faith that Pelagius had sent him Zosimus sent letters to the North African bishops declaring Coelestius and Pelagius to be orthodox, criticizing the African bishops conduct, and representing Heros and Lazarus (the two deposed bishops who had brought charges up against Pelagius for his Diospolis (Lydda) trial) as being wicked men, whom he had punished with excommunication and deposition. In response to these letters the African bishops assembled sometime around the end of 417 or beginning of 418 and in a Synodal letter to Zosimus declared "that he should hold to the sentence pronounced by Pope Innocent against Pelagius and Coelestius until both of them distinctly acknowledged that for every single good action we need the help of the grace of God through Jesus Christ; and this not only to perceive what is right, but also to practise it, so that without it we can neither possess, think, speak, or do anything really good and holy." Zosimus responded by affirming that he had already given the affair of the Pelagians his mature consideration, but added that he had transmitted all the documents to the Africans for the purpose of common consultation. This letter reached the hands of the Africans towards the end of April 418, and on the 1st of May they opened a new great or General Synod in the Secretarium of the Basilica of Faustus at Carthage. Bishops were present not only from all the provinces of Africa, but even from Spain, in all no less than two hundred. They composed eight or nine canons against Pelagianism, and eleven others, partly directed against the Donatists and partly concerning general matters.*

Can. 1 "If any man says that Adam, the first man, was created mortal, so that whether he sinned or not he would have died, not as the wages of sin, but through the necessity of nature, let him be anathema."

Can. 2 "If any man says that new-born children need not be baptized,

or that they should indeed be baptized for the remission of sins, but that they have in them no original sin inherited from Adam which must be washed away in the bath of regeneration, so that in their ease the formula of baptism 'for the remission of sins' must not be taken literally, but figuratively, let him be anathema; because, according to Romans 5:12, the sin of Adam (in quo omnes peccaverunt) has passed upon all."

Can. 3.1 "If any man says that in the kingdom of heaven or elsewhere there is a certain middle place, where children who die unbaptized live in bliss (beate vivant), whereas without baptism they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, that is, into eternal life, let him be anathema." [The authenticity of this canon has been brought into question, though there is some reason to believe that it was part of the original canon listing. In some manuscripts Canon 3.2, listed below, is listed here.]

Can. 3.2 "If any man says that the grace of God, by which man is justified through Jesus Christ, is only effectual for the forgiveness of sins already committed, but is of no avail for avoiding sin in the future, let him be anathema."

Can. 4 "If any man says that this grace only helps not to sin, in so far that by it we obtain a better insight into the Divine commands, and learn what we should desire and avoid, but does not also give the power gladly to do and to fulfill what we have seen to be good, let him be anathema."

Can. 5 "If any man says that the grace of justification was given us in order that we might the more easily fulfill that which we are bound to do by the power of free will, so that we could, even without grace, only not so easily, fulfill the Divine commands, let him be anathema."

Can. 6 "If any man understands the words of the Apostle: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,' to mean that we must acknowledge ourselves to be sinners only out of humility, not because we are really such, let him be anathema."

Can. 7 "If any man says that the saints pronounce the words of the Lord's Prayer, 'forgive us our trespasses,' not for themselves, because for them this petition is unnecessary, but for others, and that therefore it is, 'forgive us,' not 'me,' let him be anathema."

means, and is opposed by another, he thereby forfeits his claim.”

Can. 13 “If a bishop takes no pains to win over to Catholic unity those places which belong to his jurisdiction, he shall be exhorted to do so by the neighboring bishops. If he does not do so within six months from this warning, they shall belong to the bishop who wins them to the Church...In disputed cases, arbiters shall be chosen by the primate or by the parties themselves.”

Can. 14 “There can be no further appeal from judges who have been unanimously elected.”

Can. 15 “If the bishop of a mother-diocese shows no zeal against the heretics, he shall be warned by the neighboring bishops; and if in six months from that time he does not bring back the heretics, although those deputed to carry out the Imperial decree of union have been in his province, he shall be deprived of communion until he does so.”

Can. 16 “If, however, he falsely asserts that he has brought back the heretics into communion, when this is not true, he forfeits his See.”

Can. 17 “If priests, deacons, and inferior clerics complain of a sentence of their own bishop, they shall, with the consent of their bishop, have recourse to the neighboring bishops, who shall settle the dispute. If they desire to make a further appeal, it must only be to their primates or to African Councils. But whoever appeals to a court on the other side of the sea (Rome), may not again be received into communion by any one in Africa.”

Can. 18 “If a virgin is in danger of losing her virginity, because a great man demands her in marriage, or some one desires to violate her, or because she fears to die before receiving the veil, and the bishop, at the desire of her parents, gives her the veil before she has reached the age of twenty-five, the synodal decision with regard to this age shall not hinder him.”

Can. 19 “In order that all the bishops present at the Council should not be detained too long, it was decided that the General Council should make choice of three persons invested with full powers from each province. From the province of Carthage were chosen Vincent, Fortunatian, and Clarus; from Numidia, Alypius, Augustine, and Restitutus; from the Byzacene province, besides the saintly old man,

Can. 8 “If any man says that the saints only pronounce these words, ‘forgive us our trespasses,’ out of humility, not in their literal meaning, let him be anathema.”

Can. 9 “It has already been ordered by a former plenary Council, that those communities which became Catholic before the Imperial laws against the Donatists were issued by Honorius, are to remain in the dioceses of those bishops through whom they became Catholic; but that if they entered into communion with the Church after the publication of those laws, they shall be made over to that diocese to which they, while they were still Donatists, belonged (de jure). But as many disputes have arisen and do arise among the bishops from this cause, it is now decided that if in any place a Donatist and a Catholic community have existed side by side, and belonged to different dioceses, both shall be made over to the diocese to which the Catholic section belonged, whether the conversion of the Donatists took place before or after the publication of those Imperial decrees.”

Can. 10 “If the Donatist bishop has himself become Catholic, the two bishops (he and the Catholic one) shall divide equally between them the two communities now united, so that one portion of the towns shall belong to one, and the other to the other bishop. The bishop who has been longest in office shall make the division, but the other shall have the choice. If there is only one township of this description, then it shall belong to whichever See is nearest to it; but if there are two equally near, the people shall decide it by the majority of votes. If the votes are equal, the elder bishop has the preference. If, however, the towns to which both parties belonged are of unequal number, so that they cannot be equally divided, the remaining one shall be dealt with as was prescribed above, in the preceding canon, with regard to a single town.”

Can. 11 “If, after the publication of this edict, a bishop has brought back a place to Catholic unity, and has held undisputed jurisdiction over it for three years, it may not be taken away from him. But if a Donatist bishop is converted, no disadvantage shall accrue to him from this arrangement, but for three years after his conversion he has the right of demanding back those places which belonged to his See.”

Can. 12 “If a bishop seeks to get into his power a diocese to which he thinks he has a claim, not through an episcopal decision, but by other

the Primate Donatian, the Bishops Cresconius, Jocundus, and Aemilianus; from Mauretania Sitifensis, Severian, Asiaticus, and Donatus; from the province of Tripoli, as usual only one, Plautius. These, with the senex, namely, the Primate Aurelius, shall decide everything. The Synod also prayed that Aurelius would sign all the documents to be published.”

SECTION SEVEN

QUOTES FROM THE

EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Theodorite said, "For how can He punish [with endless torments] a nature which had no power to do good, but was bound in the hands of wickedness?" (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, pg 62, published by Truth in Heart)

Clement said, "Neither praise nor condemnation, neither reward nor punishments, are right if the soul does not have the power of choice and avoidance, if evil is involuntary." (Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up, by David Bercot, pg 71, printed by Scroll Publishing)

Jerome said, "God has bestowed us with free will. We are not necessarily drawn either to virtue or vice. For when necessity rules, there is no room left either for damnation or the crown." (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, pg 62, published by Truth in Heart)

Archelaus said, "All the creatures that God made, He made very good. And He gave to every individual the sense of free will, by which standard He also instituted the law of judgment... And certainly whoever will, may keep the commandments. Whoever despises them and turns aside to what is contrary to them, shall yet without doubt have to face this law of judgment... There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he pleases." (Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up, by David Bercot, pg 71, printed by Scroll Publishing)

Tertullian said, "I find, then, that man was constituted free by God. He was master of his own will and power... For a law would not be imposed upon one who did not have it in his power to render that obedience which is due to law. Nor again, would the penalty of death be threatened against sin, if a contempt of the law were impossible to man in the liberty of his will... Man is free, with a will either for obedience or resistance." (c.207, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 288, published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Justin the Martyr said, "Every created being is so constituted as to be capable of vice and virtue. For he can do nothing praiseworthy, if he had not the power of turning either way." (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, pg 61, published by Truth in Heart)

Origen said, "It is our responsibility to live righteously. God asks this of us, not as though it were dependent on Him, nor on any other, or upon fate (as some think), but as being dependent on us... We have freedom of the will and that we ourselves are the cause of our own ruin or our salvation." (Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up, by David Bercot, pg 74, printed by Scroll Publishing)

Melito said, "There is, therefore, nothing to hinder you from changing your evil manner to life, because you are a free man." (c.170, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 286, published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Irenaeus said, "But man, being endowed with reason, and in this respect similar to God, having been made free in his will, and with power over himself, is himself his own cause that sometimes he becomes wheat, and sometimes chaff." (c.180, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 286, published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Irenaeus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds'... And 'Why call me, Lord, Lord, and do not do the things that I say?'... All such passages demonstrate the independent will of man... For it is in man's power to disobey God and to forfeit what is good." (c.180, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Clement of Alexandria said, "We... have believed and are saved by voluntary choice." (c.195, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Clement of Alexandria said, "Each one of us who sins with his own free will, chooses punishment. So the blame lies with him who chooses. God is without blame." (c.195, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Clement of Alexandria said, "To obey or not is in our own power, provided we do not have the excuse of ignorance." (c.195, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, published by Hendrickson Publishers)

Justin the Martyr said, “unless we suppose man has the power to choose the good and refuse the evil, no one can be accountable for any action whatever.” (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, pg 61, published by Truth in Heart)

Turtullian said, “No reward can be justly bestowed, no punishment can be justly inflicted, upon him who is good or bad by necessity, and not by his own choice.” (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, pg 61, published by Truth in Heart)

Origen said, “The soul does not incline to either part out of necessity, for then neither vice nor virtue could be ascribed to it; nor would its choice of virtue deserve reward; nor its declination to vice punishment.” (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, pg 62, published by Truth in Heart)

Origen said, “How could God require that of man which he [man] had not power to offer Him?” (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, pg 62, published by Truth in Heart)
