Letters (part 3 of 3)

Jerome (c. AD 347–420)

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Letter 125. To Rustics.

Rustics, a young monk of Toulouse, (to be carefully distinguished from the recipient of Letter 122.) is advised by Jerome not to become an anchorite but to continue in a community. Rules are suggested for the monastic life and a vivid picture is drawn of the difference between a good monk and a bad. Incidentally Jerome indulges his spleen against his dead opponent Rufinus (§18). The date of the letter is 411 a.d.

1. No man is happier than the Christian, for to him is promised the kingdom of heaven. No man struggles harder than he, for he goes daily in danger of his life. No man is stronger, for he overcomes the Devil. No man is weaker, for he is overcome by the flesh. Both pairs of statements can be proved by many examples. For instance, the robber believes upon the cross and immediately hears the assuring words: "verily I say unto thee, To-day shall thou be with me in paradise:" [Luke 23:43] while Judas falls from the pinnacle of the apostolate into the abyss of perdition. Neither the close intercourse of the banquet nor the dipping of the sop [Joh. 13:26] nor the Lord's gracious kiss [Matt. 26:49] can save him from betraying as man Him whom he had known as the Son of God. Could any one have been viler than the woman of Samaria? Yet not only did she herself believe, and after her six husbands find one Lord, not only did she recognize that Messiah by the well, whom the Jews failed to recognize in the temple; she brought salvation to many and, while the apostles were away buying food, refreshed the Saviour's hunger and relieved His weariness. Was ever man wiser than Solomon? Yet love for women made even him foolish. Salt is good, and every offering must be sprinkled with it. [Lev. 2:13] Wherefore also the apostle has given commandment: "let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt." [Col. 4:6] But "if the salt have lost his savour," it is cast out. [Matt. 5:13] And so utterly does it lose its value that it is not even fit for the dunghill, [Luke 14:35] whence believers fetch manure to enrich the barren soil of their souls.

I begin thus, Rusticus my son, to teach you he greatness of your enterprise and the loftiness of your ideal; and to shew you that only by trampling under foot youthful lusts can you hope to climb the heights of true maturity. For the path along which you walk is a slippery one and the glory of success is less than the shame of failure.

2. I need not now conduct the stream of my discourse through the meadows of virtue, nor exert myself to shew to you the beauty of its several flowers. I need not dilate on the purity of the lily, the modest blush of the rose the royal purple of the violet, or the promise of glowing gems which their various colours hold out. For through the mercy of God you have already put your hand to the plough; [Luke 9:62] you have already gone up upon the housetop like the apostle Peter. [Acts 10:3-16] Who when he became hungry among the Jews had his hunger satisfied by the faith of Cornelius, and stilled the craving caused by their unbelief through the conversion of the centurion and other Gentiles. By the vessel let down from heaven to earth, the four corners of which typified the four gospels, he was taught that all men can be saved. Once more, this fair white sheet which in his vision was taken up again was a symbol of the church which carries believers from earth to heaven, an assurance that the Lord's promise should be fulfilled: "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." [Matt. 5:8]

All this means that I take you by the hand and do my best to impress certain facts upon your mind; that, like a skilled sailor who has been through many shipwrecks, I am anxious to caution an inexperienced passenger of the risks before him. For on one side is the Charybdis of covetousness, "the root of all evil;" [1 Tim. 6:10] and on the other lurks the Scylla of detraction girt with the railing hounds of which the apostle says: "if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." [Gal. 5:15] Sometimes, you must know, the quicksands of vice suck us down as we sail at ease through the calm water; and the desert of this world is not untenanted by venomous reptiles.

3. Those who navigate the Red Sea-where we must pray that the true Pharaoh may be drowned with all his host-have to encounter many difficulties and dangers before they reach the city of Auxuma. Nomad savages and ferocious wild beasts haunt the shores on either side. Thus travellers must be always armed and on the alert, and they must carry with them a whole year's provisions. Moreover, so full are the waters of hidden reefs and impassable shoals that a look-out has constantly to be kept from the masthead to direct the helmsman how to shape his course. They may count themselves fortunate if after six months they make the port of the above-mentioned city. At this point the ocean begins, to cross which a whole year hardly suffices. Then India is reached and the river Ganges-called in holy scripture Pison-"which compasseth the whole land of Havilah" [Gen. 2:11] and is said to carry down with it-from its source in paradise-various dyes and pigments. Here are found rubies and emeralds, glowing pearls and gems of the first water, such as high born ladies passionately desire. There are also mountains of gold which however men cannot approach by reason of the griffins, dragons, and huge monsters which haunt them; for such are the guardians which avarice needs for its treasures.

4. What, you ask, is the drift of all this? Surely it is clear enough. For if the merchants of the world undergo such hardships to win a doubtful and passing gain, and if after seeking it through many dangers they only keep it at risk of their lives; what should Christ's merchant do who "selleth all that he hath" that he may acquire the "one pearl of great price;" who with his whole substance buys a field that he may find therein a treasure which neither thief can dig up nor robber carry away? [Matt. 13:45-46: Matt. 6:19, Matt. 6:20] 5. I know that I must offend large numbers who will be angry with my criticisms as aimed at their own deficiencies. Yet such anger does but shew an uneasy conscience and they will pass a far severer sentence on themselves than on me. For I shall not mention names; or copy the licence of the old comedy which criticized individuals. Wise men and wise women will try to hide or rather to correct whatever they perceive to be amiss in them; they will be more angry with themselves than with me, and will not be disposed to heap curses upon the head of their monitor. For he, although he is liable to the same charges, is certainly superior in this that he is discontented with his own faults.

6. I am told that your mother is a religious woman, a widow of many years' standing; and that when you were a child she reared and taught you herself. Afterwards when you had spent some time in the flourishing schools of Gaul she sent you to Rome, sparing no expense and consoling herself for your absence by the thought of the future that lay before you. She hoped to see the exuberance and glitter of your Gallic eloquence toned down by Roman sobriety, for she saw that you required the rein more than the spur. So we are told of the greatest orators of Greece that they seasoned the bombast of Asia with the salt of Athens and pruned their vines when they grew too fast. For they wished to fill the wine-press of eloquence not with the tendrils of mere words but with the rich grape-juice of good sense. Your mother has done the same thing for you; you should, therefore, look up to her as a parent, love her as a tender nurse, and venerate her as a saint. You must not imitate those who leave their own relations and pay court to strange women. Their infamy is apparent to all, for what they aim at under the pretence of pure affection is simply illicit intercourse.

I know some women of riper years, indeed a good many, who, finding pleasure in their young freedmen, make them their spiritual children and thus, pretending to be mothers to them, gradually overcome their own sense of shame and allow themselves in the licence of marriage. Other women desert their maiden sisters and unite themselves to strange widows. There are some who hate their parents and have no affection for their kin. Their state of mind is indicated by a restlessness which disdains excuses; they rend the veil of chastity and put it aside like a cobweb. Such are the ways of women; not, indeed, that men are any better. For there are persons to be seen who (for all their girded loins, sombre garb, and long beards) are inseparable from women, live under one roof with them, dine in their company,

have young girls to wait upon them, and, save that they do not claim to be called husbands, are as good as married. Still it is no fault of Christianity that a hypocrite falls into sin; rather, it is the confusion of the Gentiles that the churches condemn what is condemned by all good men.

7. But if for your part you desire to be a monk and not merely to seem one, be more careful of your soul than of your property; for in adopting a religious profession you have renounced this once for all. Let your garments be squalid to shew that your mind is white; and your tunic coarse to prove that you despise the world. But give not way to pride lest your dress and language be found at variance. Baths stimulate the senses andmust, therefore, be avoided; for to quench natural heat is the aim of chilling fasts. Yet even these must be moderate, for, if they are carried to excess, they weaken the stomach and by making more food necessary to it promote indigestion, that fruitful parent of unclean desires. A frugal and temperate diet is good for both body and soul. See your mother as often as you please but not with other women, for their faces may dwell in your thoughts and so

A secret wound may fester in your breast.

The maidservants who attend upon her you must regard as so many snares laid to entrap you; for the lower their condition is the more easy is it for you to effect their ruin. John the Baptist had a religious mother and his father was a priest. Yet neither his mother's affection nor his father's wealth could induce him to live in his parents' house at the risk of his chastity. He lived in the desert, and seeking Christ with his eyes refused to look at anything else. His rough garb, his girdle made of skins, his diet of locusts and wild honey [Mark 1:6] were all alike designed to encourage virtue and continence. The sons of the prophets, who were the monks of the Old Testament, built for themselves huts by the waters of Jordan and forsaking the crowded cities lived in these on pottage and wild herbs. As long as you are at home make your cell your paradise, gather there the varied fruits of scripture, let this be your favourite companion, and take its precepts to your heart. If your eye offend you or your foot or your hand, cast them from you. [Matt. 18:8, Matt. 18:9] To spare your soul spare nothing else. The Lord says: "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. [Matt. 5:28] "Who can say," writes the wise man, "I have made my heart clean? [Prov. 20:9] The stars are not pure in the Lord's sight;

how much less men whose whole life is one long temptation. [Job 25:5, Job 25:6] Woe be to us who commit fornication every time that we cherish lust. "My sword," God says, "hath drunk its fill in heaven; [Isa. 34:5, R.V] much more then upon the earth with its crop of thorns and thistles. [Gen. 3:18] The chosen vessel [Acts 9:15] who had Christ's name ever on his lips kept under his body and brought it into subjection. [1 Cor. 9:27] Yet even he was hindered by carnal desire and had to do what he would not. As one suffering violence he cries: "O wretched man that

I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [Rom. 7:24] Is it likely then that you can pass without fall or wound, unless you keep your heart with all diligence, [Prov. 4:23] and say with the Saviour: ”my mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it. [Luke 8:21] This may seem cruelty, but it is really affection. What greater proof, indeed, can there be of affection than to guard for a holy mother a holy son? She too desired your eternal welfare and is content to forego seeing you for a time that she may see you for ever with Christ. She is like Hannah who brought forth Samuel not for her own solace but for the service of the tabernacle. [1 Sam. 1:27, 1 Sam. 1:28]

The sons of Jonadab, we are told, drank neither wine nor strong drink and dwelt in tents pitched wherever night overtook them. [Jer. 35:6. Jer. 35:7] According to the psalter they were the first to undergo captivity; for, when the Chaldaeans began to ravage Judah they were compelled to take refuge in cities. 8. Others may think what they like and follow each his own bent. But to me a town is a prison and solitude paradise. Why do we long for the bustle of cities, we whose very name speaks of loneliness? To fit him for the leadership of the Jewish people Moses was trained for forty years in the wilderness; [Acts 7:29, Acts 7:30] and it was not till after these that the shepherd of sheep became a shepherd of men. The apostles were fishers on lake Gennesaret before they became ”fishers of men.” [Matt. 4:19] But at the Lord’s call they forsook all that they had, father, net, and ship, and bore their cross daily without so much as a rod in their hands.

I say these things that, in case you desire to enter the ranks of the clergy, you may learn what you must afterwards teach, that you may offer a reasonable sacrifice [Rom. 12:1] to Christ, that you may not think yourself a finished soldier while still a raw recruit, or suppose yourself a master while you are as yet only a learner. It does not become one of my humble abilities to pass judgment upon the clergy or to speak to the discredit of those who are ministers in the churches. They have their own rank and station and must keep it. If ever you become one of them my published letter to Nepotian will teach you the mode of life suitable to you in that vocation. At present I am dealing with the forming and training of a monk; of one too who has put the yoke of Christ upon his neck after receiving a liberal education in his younger days.

9. The first point to be considered is whether you ought to live by yourself or in a monastery with others. For my part I should like you to have the society of holy men so as not to be thrown altogether on your resources. For if you set out upon a road that is new to you without a guide, you are sure to turn aside immediately either to the right or to the left, to lay yourself open to the assaults of error, to go too far or else not far enough, to weary yourself with running too fast or to loiter by the way and to fall asleep. In loneliness pride quickly creeps upon a man: if he has fasted for a little while and has seen no one, he fancies himself a person of

some note; forgetting who he is, whence he comes, and whither he goes, he lets his thoughts riot within and outwardly indulges in rash speech. Contrary to the apostle's wish he judges another man's servants, [Rom. 14:4] puts forth his hand to grasp whatever his appetite desires, sleeps as long he pleases, fears nobody, does what he likes, fancies everyone inferior to himself, spends more of his time in cities than in his cell, and, while with the brothers he affects to be retiring, rubs shoulders with the crowd in the streets. What then, you will say? Do I condemn a solitary life? By no means: in fact I have often commended it.

But I wish to see the monastic schools turn out soldiers who have no fear of the rough training of the desert, who have exhibited the spectacle of a holy life for a considerable time, who have made themselves last that they might be first, who have not been overcome by hunger or satiety, whose joy is in poverty, who teach virtue by their garb and mien, and who are too conscientious to invent-as some silly men do-monstrous stories of struggles with demons, designed to magnify their heroes in the eyes of the crowd and before all to extort money from it.

10. Quite recently we have seen to our sorrow a fortune worthy of Croesus brought to light by a monk's death, and a city's alms, collected for the poor, left by will to his sons and successors. After sinking to the bottom the iron has once more floated upon the surface, [2 K. 6:5, 2 K. 6:6] and men have again seen among the palm-trees the bitter waters of Marah. [Ex. 15:23, Ex. 15:27] In this there is, however, nothing strange, for the man had for his companion and teacher one who turned the hunger of the needy into a source of wealth for himself and kept back sums left to the miserable to his own subsequent misery. Yet their cry came up to heaven and entering God's ears overcame His patience. Wherefore, He sent an angel of woe to say to this new Carmelite, this second Nabal, [1 Sam. 25:38] "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee:then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" [Luke 12:20]

11. If I wish you then not to live with your mother, it is for the reasons given above, and above all for the two following. If she offers you delicacies to eat, you will grieve her by refusing them; and if you take them, you will add fuel to the flame that already burns within you. Again in a house where there are so many girls you will see in the daytime sights that will tempt you at night. Never take your hand or your eyes off your book; learn the psalms word for word, pray without ceasing, [1 Thess. 5:17] be always on the alert, and let no vain thoughts lay hold upon you. Direct both body and mind to the Lord, overcome wrath by patience, love the knowledge of scripture, and you will no longer love the sins of the flesh. Do not let your mind become a prey to excitement, for if this effects a lodgment in your breast it will have dominion over you and will lead you into the great transgression. [Ps. 19:13] Always have some work on hand, that the devil may find you busy. If apostles who had the right to live of the Gospel [1 Cor. 9:14] laboured with their

own hands that they might be chargeable to no man, [1 Thess. 2:9.: 1 Cor. 4:12] and bestowed relief upon others whose carnal things they had a claim to reap as having sown unto them spiritual things; [1 Cor. 9:11] why do you not provide a supply to meet your needs? Make creels of reeds or weave baskets out of pliant osiers. Hoe your ground; mark out your garden into even plots; and when you have sown your cabbages or set your plants convey water to them in conduits; that you may see with your own eyes the lovely vision of the poet:

”Art draws fresh water from the hilltop near Till the stream plashing down among the rocks Cools the parched meadows and allays their thirst.” Graft unfruitful stocks with buds and slips that you may shortly be rewarded for your toil by plucking sweet apples from them. Construct also hives for bees, for to these the proverbs of Solomon send you, [Prov. 6:8, LXX] and you may learn from the tiny creatures how to order a monastery and to discipline a kingdom. Twist lines too for catching fish, and copy books; that your hand may earn your food and your mind may be satisfied with reading. For ”every one that is idle is a prey to vain desires.” [Prov. 13:4, LXX] In Egypt the monasteries make it a rule to receive none who are not willing to work; for they regard labour as necessary not only for the support of the body but also for the salvation of the soul. Do not let your mind stray into harmful thoughts, or, like Jerusalem in her whoredoms, open its feet to every chance comer. [Ezek. 16:2]

12. In my youth when the desert walled me in with its solitude I was still unable to endure the promptings of sin and the natural heat of my blood; and, although I tried by frequent fasts to break the force of both, my mind still surged with [evil] thoughts. To subdue its turbulence I betook myself to a brother who before his conversion had been a Jew and asked him to teach me Hebrew. Thus, after having familiarised myself with the pointedness of Quintilian, the fluency of Cicero, the seriousness of Fronto and the gentleness of Pliny, I began to learn my letters anew and to study to pronounce words both harsh and guttural. What labour I spent upon this task, what difficulties I went through, how often I despaired, how often I gave over and then in my eagerness to learn commenced again, can be attested both by myself the subject of this misery and by those who then lived with me. But I thank the Lord that from this seed of learning sown in bitterness I now cull sweet fruits.

13. I will recount also another thing that I saw in Egypt. There was in a community a young Greek the flame of whose desire neither continual fasting nor the severest labour could avail to quench. He was in great danger of falling, when the father of the monastery saved him by the following device. He gave orders to one of the older brothers to pursue him with objurgations and reproaches, and then after having thus wronged him to be beforehand with him in laying a complaint against him. When witnesses were called they spoke always on behalf of the aggressor. On

hearing such falsehoods he used to weep that no one gave credit to the truth; the father alone used cleverly to put in a word for him that he might not be ”swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” [2 Cor. 2:7] To make the story short, a year passed inthis way and at the expiration of it the young man was asked concerning his former evil thoughts and whether they still troubled him. ”Good gracious,” he replied, ”how can I find pleasure in fornication when I am not allowed so much as to live?” Had he been a solitary hermit, by whose aid could he have overcome the temptations that assailed him?

14. The world’s philosophers drive out an old passion by instilling a new one; they hammer out one nail by hammering in another. It was on this principle that the seven princes of Persia acted towards king Ahasuerus, for they subdued his regret for queen Vashti by inducing him to love other maidens. [Esth. 2:1-4] But whereas they cured one fault by another fault and one sin by another sin, we must overcome our faults by learning to love the opposite virtues. ”Depart from evil,” says the psalmist, ”and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” [Ps. 34:14] For if we do not hate evil we cannot love good. Nay more, we must do good if we are to depart from evil. We must seek peace if we are to avoid war. And it is not enough merely to seek it; when we have found it and when it flees before us we must pursue it with all our energies. For ”it passeth all understanding;” [Phil. 4:7] it is the habitation of God. As the psalmist says, ”in peace also is his habitation.” [Ps. 76:2, LXX] The pursuing of peace is a fine metaphor and may be compared with the apostle’s words, ”pursuing hospitality.” [Rom. 12:13, R.V. marg] It is not enough, he means, for us to invite guests with our lips; we should be as eager to detain them as though they were robbers carrying off our savings.

15. No art is ever learned without a master. Even dumb animals and wild herds follow leaders of their own. Bees have princes, and cranes fly after one of their number in the shape of a Y. There is but one emperor and each province has but one judge. Rome was founded by two brothers, but, as it could not have two kings at once, was inaugurated by an act of fratricide. So too Esau and Jacob strove in Rebekah’s womb. [Gen. 25:22] Each church has a single bishop, a single archpresbyter, a single archdeacon; and every ecclesiastical order is subjected to its own rulers. A ship has but one pilot, a house but one master, and the largest army moves at the command of one man. That I may not tire you by heaping up instances, my drift is simply this. Do not rely on your own discretion, but live in a monastery. For there, while you will be under the control of one father, you will have many companions; and these will teach you, one humility, another patience, a third silence, and a fourth meekness. You will do as others wish; you will eat what you are told to eat; you will wear what clothes are given you; you will perform the task allotted to you; you will obey one whom you do not like, you will come to bed tired out; you will go to sleep on your feet and you will be forced to rise before you have had sufficient rest.

When your turn comes, you will recite the psalms, a task which requires not a well modulated voice but genuine emotion. The apostle says: ”I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also,” [1 Cor. 14:15] and to the Ephesians, ”make melody in your hearts to the Lord. [Eph. 5:19] For he had read the precept of the psalmist: ”Sing ye praises with understanding. [Ps. 47:7] You will serve the brothers, you will wash the guests’ feet; if you suffer wrong you will bear it in silence; the superior of the community you will fear as a master and love as a father. Whatever he may order you to do you will believe to be wholesome for you. You will not pass judgment upon those who are placed over you, for your duty will be to obey them and to do what you are told, according to the words spoken by Moses: ”keep silence and hearken, O Israel. [Deut. 27:9, R.V] You will have so many tasks to occupy you that you will have no time for [evil] thoughts; and while you pass from one thing to another and fresh work follows work done, you will only be able to think of what you have it in charge at the moment to do.

16. But I myself have seen monks of quite a different stamp from this, men whose renunciation of the world has consisted in a change of clothes and a verbal profession, while their real life and their former habits have remained unchanged. Their property has increased rather than diminished. They still have the same servants and keep the same table. Out of cheap glasses and common earthenware they swallow gold. With servants about them in swarms they claim for themselves the name of hermits. Others who though poor think themselves discerning, walk as solemnly as pageants through the streets and do nothing but snarl at every one whom they meet. Others shrug their shoulders and croak out what is best known to themselves. While they keep their eyes fixed upon the earth,they balance swelling words upon their tongues. [See also Lactantius, 6:18] Only a crier is wanted to persuade you that it is his excellency the prefect who is coming along. Some too there are who from the dampness of their cells and from the severity of their fasts, from their weariness of solitude and from excessive study have a singing in their ears day and night and turn melancholy mad so as to need the poultices of Hippocrates more than exhortations from me. Great numbers are unable to break free from the crafts and trades they have previously practised. They no longer call themselves dealers but they carry on the same traffic as before;

seeking for themselves not ”food and raiment” [1 Tim. 6:8] as the apostle directs, but money-profits and these greater than are looked for by men of the world. In former days the greed of sellers was kept within bounds by the action of the Aediles or as the Greeks call them market-inspectors, and men could not then cheat with impunity. But now persons who profess religion are not ashamed to seek unjust profits and the good name of Christianity is more often a cloak for fraud than a victim to it. I am ashamed to say it, yet it must be said-we are at least bound to blush for our infamy-while in public we hold out our hands for alms we conceal

gold beneath our rags; and to the amazement of every one after living as poor men we die rich and with our purses well-filled.

But you, since you will not be alone but one of a community, will have no temptation to act thus. Things at first compulsory will become habitual. You will set to work unbidden and will find pleasure in your toil. You will forget things which are behind and will reach forth to those which are before. [Phil. 3:13] You will think less of the evil that others do than of the good you ought to do. 17. Be not led by the multitude of those who sin, neither let the host of those who perish tempt you to say secretly: "What? must all be lost who live in cities? Behold, they continue to enjoy their property, they serve churches, they frequent baths, they do not disdain cosmetics, and yet they are universally well-spoken of." To this kind of remark I have before replied and now shortly reply again that the object of this little work is not to discuss the clergy but to lay down rules for a monk. The clergy are holy men and their lives are always worthy of praise. Rouse yourself then and so live in your monastery that you may deserve to be a clergyman, that you may preserve your youth from defilement, that you may go to Christ's altar as a virgin out of her chamber. See that you are well-reported of without and that women are familiar with your reputation but not with your appearance. When you come to mature years, if, that is, you live so long, and when you have been chosen into the ranks of the clergy either by the people of the city or by its bishop, act in a way that befits a clergyman, and choose for your models the best of your brothers. For in every rank and condition of life the bad are mingled with the good.

18. Do not be carried away by some mad caprice and rush into authorship. Learn long and carefully what you propose to teach. Do not credit all that flatterers say to you, or, I should rather say, do not lend too ready an ear to those who mean to mock you. They will fawn upon you with fulsome praise and do their best to blind your judgment; yet if you suddenly look behind you, you will find that they are making gestures of derision with their hands, either a stork's neck or the flapping ears of a donkey or a thirsty dog's protruding tongue.

Never speak evil of anyone or suppose that you make yourself better by assailing the reputations of others. The charges we bring against them often come home to ourselves; we inveigh against faults which are as much ours as theirs; and so our eloquence ends by telling against ourselves. It is as though dumb persons were to criticize orators. When the grunter wished to speak he used to come forward at a snail's pace and to utter a word now and again with such long pauses between that he seemed less making a speech than gasping for breath. Then, when he had placed his table and arranged on it his pile of books, he used to knit his brow, to draw in his nostrils, to wrinkle his forehead and to snap his fingers, signs meant to engage the attention of his pupils. Then he would pour forth a torrent of nonsense and declaim so vehemently against every one that you would take him for a critic

like Longinus or fancy him a second Cato the Censor passing judgment on Roman eloquence and excluding whom he pleased from the senate of the learned. As he had plenty of money he made himself still more popular by giving entertainments. Numbers of persons shared in his hospitality; and thus it was not surprising that when he went out he was surrounded always by a buzzing throng. At home he was a monster like Nero, abroad a paragon like Cato. Made up of different and opposing natures, as a whole he baffled description. You would say that he was formed of jarring elements like that unnatural and unheard of monster of which the poet tells us that it was 'in front a lion, behind a dragon, in the middle the goat whose name it bears.'

19. Men such as these you must never look at or associate with. Nor must you turn aside your heart unto words of evil [Ps. 141:4, Vulg] lest the psalmist say to you: "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son," [Ps. 50:20] and lest you become as "the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows," [Ps. 57:4] and as the man whose "words were softer than oil yet were they drawn swords. [Ps. 55:21] The Preacher expresses this more clearly still when he says: "Surely the serpent will bite where there is no enchantment, and the slanderer is no better. [Eccl. 10:11, R.V. marg] But you will say, 'I am not given to detraction, but how can I check others who are?' If we put forward such a plea as this it can only be that we may "practise wicked works with men that work iniquity. [Ps. 141:4] Yet Christ is not deceived by this device. It is not I but an apostle who says: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. [Gal. 6:7] "Man looketh upon the outward appearance but the Lord looketh upon the heart. [1 Sam. 16:7] And in the proverbs Solomon tells us that as "the north wind driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

[Prov. 25:23] It sometimes happens that an arrow when it is aimed at a hard object rebounds upon the bowman, wounding the would-be wounder, and thus, the words are fulfilled, "they were turned aside like a deceitful bow," [Ps. 78:57] and in another passage: "whoso casteth a stone on high casteth it on his own head. [Ecclus. 27:25] So when a slanderer sees anger in the countenance of his hearer who will not hear him but stops his ears that he may not hear of blood, [Isa. 33:15] he becomes silent on the moment, his face turns pale, his lips stick fast, hismouth becomes parched. Wherefore the same wise man says: "meddle not with them that are given to detraction: for their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both? [Prov. 24:21, Prov. 24:22 Vulg] of him who speaks, that is, and of him who hears. Truth does not love corners or seek whisperers. To Timothy it is said, "Against an elder receive not an accusation suddenly; but him that sinneth rebuke before all, that others also may fear. [1 Tim. 5:19, 1 Tim. 5:20 (inexact)] When a man is advanced in years you must not be too ready to believe evil of him; his past life is itself a defence, and so also is his rank as an elder.

Still, since we are but human and sometimes in spite of the ripeness of our years fall into the sins of youth, if I do wrong and you wish to correct me, accuse me openly of my fault: do not backbite me secretly. ”Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner enrich my head. [Ps. 141:5. LXX] For what says the apostle? ”Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. [Heb. 12:6] By the mouth of Isaiah the Lord speaks thus: ”O my people, they who call you happy cause you to err and destroy the way of your paths. [Isa. 3:12. LXX] How do you help me by telling my misdeeds to others? You may, without my knowing of it, wound some one else by the narration of my sins or rather of those which you slanderously attribute to me; and while you are eager to spread the news in all quarters, you may pretend to confide in each individual as though you had spoken to no one else. Such a course has for its object not my correction but the indulgence of your own failing.

The Lord gives commandment that those who sin against us are to be arraigned privately or else in the presence of a witness, and that if they refuse to hear reason, the matter is to be laid before the church, and those who persist in their wickedness are to be regarded as heathen men and publicans. [Matt. 18:15-17]

20. I lay great emphasis on these points that I may deliver a young man who is dear to me from the itching both of the tongue and of the ears: that, since he has been born again in Christ, I may present him without spot or wrinkle [Eph. 5:27] as a chaste virgin, [2 Cor. 11:2] chaste in mind as well as in body; that the virginity of which he boasts may be more than nominal and that he may not be shut out by the bridegroom because being unprovided with the oil of good works his lamp has gone out. [Matt. 25:1-10] In Proculus you have a reverend and most learned pre-late, able by the sound of his voice to do more for you than I with my written sheets and sure to direct you on your path by daily homilies. He will not suffer you to turn to the right hand or to the left or to leave the king’s highway; for to this Israel pledges itself to keep in its hasty passage to the land of promise. [Num. 20:17] May God hear the voice of the church’s supplication. ”Lord, ordain peace for us, for thou hast also wrought all our works for us. May our renunciation of the world be made freely and not under compulsion! May we seek poverty gladly to win its glory and not suffer anguish because others lay it upon us!

For the rest amid our present miseries with the sword making havoc around us, he is rich enough who has bread sufficient for his need, and he is abundantly powerful who is not reduced to be a slave. Exuperius the reverend bishop of Toulouse, imitating the widow of Zarephath, [1 Kings 17:8-16] feeds others though hungry himself. His face is pale with fasting, yet it is the cravings of others that torment him most. In fact he has bestowed his whole substance to meet the needs of Christ’s poor. Yet none is richer than he, for his wicker basket contains the body of the Lord,

and his plain glass-cup the precious blood. Like his Master he has banished greed out of the temple; and without either scourge of cords or words of chiding he has overthrown the chairs of them that sell doves, that is, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He has upset the tables of Mammon and has scattered the money of the money-changers; zealous that the house of God may be called a house of prayer and not a den of robbers. [John 2:14-16: Matt. 21:12, Matt. 21:13] In his steps follow closely and in those of others like him in virtue, whom the priesthood makes poor men and more than ever humble. Or if you will be perfect, go out with Abraham from your country and from your kindred, and go whither you know not. [Gen. 12:1, Heb. 11:8] If you have substance, sell it and give to the poor.

If you have none, then are you free from a great burthen. Destitute yourself, follow a destitute Christ. The task is a hard one, it is great and difficult; but the reward is also great.

Letter 126. To Marcellinus and Anapsychia.

Marcellinus, a Roman official of high rank, and Anapsychia his wife had written to Jerome from Africa to ask him his opinion on the vexed question of the origin of the soul. Jerome in his reply briefly enumerates the several views that have been held on the subject. For fuller information he refers his questioners to his treatise against Rufinus and also to their bishop Augustin who will, he says, explain the matter to them by word of mouth. Although it hardly appears in this letter Jerome is a decided creationist (see his Comm. on Eccles. xii. 7=rec 12:7). But, though he vehemently condemns Rufinus (Ap. ii. 10) for professing ignorance on the subject, he assents (Letter 134.) to Augustin (Letter 131.) who similarly professes ignorance but seems to lean to traducianism. The date of writing is a.d. 412. To his truly holy lord and lady, his children worthy of the highest respect and affection, Marcellinus and Anapsychia, Jerome sends greeting.

1. I have at last received from Africa your joint letter and no longer regret the effrontery which led me, in spite of your silence to ply you both with so many missives. I hoped, indeed, by so doing to gain a reply and to learn of your welfare not indirectly from others but directly from yourselves.I well remember your little problem about the nature of the soul; although I ought not to call it little, seeing that it is one of the greatest with which the church has to deal. You ask whether it has fallen from heaven, as Pythagoras, all Platonists, and Origen suppose; or whether it is part of God’s essence as the Stoics, Manes, and the Spanish Priscillianists hint. Whether souls created long since are kept in God’s storehouse as some ecclesiastical writers foolishly imagine; or whether they are formed by God and introduced into bodies day by day according to that saying in the Gospel: ”my Father worketh hitherto and I work; [John 5:17] or whether, lastly, they are transmitted by propagation. This is the view of Tertullian, Apollinaris, and most western writers who hold that soul is derived from soul as body is from body and that the conditions of life are the same for men and brutes. I have given my opinion on the matter in my reply to the treatise which Rufinus presented to Anastasius, bishop of Rome, of holy memory.

He strives in this by an evasive and crafty but sufficiently foolish confession to play with the simplicity of his hearers, but only succeeds in playing with his own faith or rather want of it. My book, which has been published a good while, contains an answer to the calumnies which in his various writings Rufinus has directed against me. Your reverend father Oceanus has, I think, a copy of it. But if you cannot procure it your bishop Augustine is both learned and holy. He will teach you by word of mouth and will give you his opinion, or rather mine, in his own words.

2. I have long wished to attack the prophecies of Ezekiel and to make good the promises which I have so often given to curious readers. When, however, I began to dictate I was so confounded By the havoc wrought in the West and above all by the sack of Rome that, as the common saying has it, I forgot even my own name. Long did I remain silent knowing that it was a time to weep. [Eccl. 3:4] This year I began again and had written three books of commentary when a sudden incursion of those barbarians of whom your Virgil speaks as the ”far-wandering men of Barce” (and to whom may be applied what holy scripture says of Ishmael: ”he shall dwell over against all his brethren” [Gen. 16:12. R.V. marg]) overran the borders of Egypt, Palestine, Phenicia, and Syria, and like a raging torrent carried everything before them. It was with difficulty and only through Christ’s mercy that we were able to escape from their hands. But if, as the great orator says, ”amid the clash of arms law ceases to he heard; how much more truly may it be said that war puts an end to the study of holy scripture. For this requires plenty of books and silence and careful copyists and above all freedom from alarm and a sense of security. I have accordingly only been able to complete two books and these I have sent to my daughter, Fabiola, from whom you can if you like borrow them.

For want of time I have not been able as yet to transcribe the rest. But when you have read these you will have seen the ante-chamber and will easily form from this a notion of the whole edifice. I trust in God’s mercy and believe that, as he has helped me in the difficult opening chapters of the prophecy, so he will help me in the chapters towards the close. These describe the wars of Gog and Magog, and set forth the mode of building, the plan, and the dimensions of the holy and mysterious temple.

3. Our reverend brother Oceanus to whom you desire an introduction is a great and good man and so learned in the law of the Lord that no words of mine are needed to make him able and willing to instruct you both and to explain to you in conformity with the rules which govern our common studies, my opinion and his on all questions arising out of the scriptures. In conclusion, my truly holy lord and lady, may Christ our God by his almighty power have you in his safekeeping and cause you to live long and happily.

Letter 127. To Principia.

This letter is really a memoir of Marcella (for whom see note on Letter 23.) addressed to her greatest friend. After describing her history, character, and favourite studies, Jerome goes on to recount her eminent services in the cause of orthodoxy at a time when, through the efforts of Rufinus, it seemed likely that Origenism would prevail at Rome (§9, 10). He briefly relates the fall of the city and the horrors consequent upon it (§12, 13) which appear to have been the immediate cause of Marcella's death (§14). The date of the letter is 412 a.d.

1. You have besought me often and earnestly, Principia, virgin of Christ, to dedicate a letter to the memory of that holy woman Marcella, and to set forth the goodness long enjoyed by us for others to know and to imitate. I am so anxious myself to do justice to her merits that it grieves me that you should spur me on and fancy that your entreaties are needed when I do not yield even to you in love of her. In putting upon record her signal virtues I shall receive far more benefit myself than I can possibly confer upon others. If I have hitherto remained silent and have allowed two years to go over without making any sign, this has not been owing to a wish to ignore her as you wrongly suppose, but to an incredible sorrow which so overcame my mind that I judged it better to remain silent for a while than to praise her virtues in inadequate language. Neither will I now follow the rules of rhetoric in eulogizing one so dear to both of us and to all the saints, Marcella the glory of her native Rome. I will not set forth her illustrious family and lofty lineage, nor will I trace her pedigree through a line of consuls and praetorian prefects. I will praise her for nothing but the virtue which is her own and which is the more noble, because forsaking both wealth and rank she has sought the true nobility of poverty and lowliness.

2. Her father's death left her an orphan, and she had been married less than seven months when her husband was taken from her. Then as she was young, and highborn, as well as distinguished for her beauty-always an attraction to men-and her self-control, an illustrious consular named Cerealis paid court to her with great assiduity. Being an old man he offered to make over to her his fortune so that she might consider herself less his wife than his daughter. Her mother Albina went

out of her way to secure for the young widow so exalted a protector. But Marcella answered: ”had I a wish to marry and not rather to dedicate myself to perpetual chastity, I should look for a husband and not for an inheritance;” and when her suitor argued that sometimes old men live long while young men die early, she cleverly retorted: ”a young man may indeed die early, but an old man cannot live long.” This decided rejection of Cerealis convinced others that they had no hope of winning her hand.

In the gospel according to Luke we read the following passage: ”there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” [Luke 2:36, Luke 2:37] It was no marvel that she won the vision of the Saviour, whom she sought so earnestly. Let us then compare her case with that of Marcella and we shall see that the latter has every way the advantage. Anna lived with her husband seven years; Marcella seven months. Anna only hoped for Christ; Marcella held Him fast. Anna confessed him at His birth; Marcella believed in Him crucified. Anna did not deny the Child; Marcella rejoiced in the Man as king. I do not wish to draw distinctions between holy women on the score of their merits, as some persons have made it a custom to do as regards holy men and leaders of churches; the conclusion at which I aim is that, as both have one task, so both have one reward.

3. In a slander-loving community such as Rome, filled as it formerly was with people from all parts and bearing the palm for wickedness of all kinds, detraction assailed the upright and strove to defile even the pure and the clean. In such an atmosphere it is hard to escape from the breath of calumny. A stainless reputation is difficult nay almost impossible to attain; the prophet yearns for it but hardly hopes to win it: ”Blessed,” he says, ”are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord.” [Ps. 119:1] The undefiled in the way of this world are those whose fair fame no breath of scandal has ever sullied, and who have earned no reproach at the hands of their neighbours. It is this which makes the Saviour say in the gospel: ”agree with,” or be complaisant to, ”thine adversary whilst thou art in the way with him.” [Matt. 5:25] Who ever heard a slander of Marcella that deserved the least credit? Or who ever credited such without making himself guilty of malice and defamation? No; she put the Gentiles to confusion by shewing them the nature of that Christian widowhood which her conscience and mien alike set forth. For women of the world are wont to paint their faces with rouge and white-lead, to wear robes of shining silk, to adorn themselves with jewels, to put gold chains round their necks, to pierce their ears and hang in them the costliest pearls of the Red Sea, and to scent themselves with musk. While they mourn for the husbands they have lost they rejoice at their own deliverance and freedom to choose fresh partners-not, as God wills, to obey these [Eph. 5:22] but to rule over them.

With this object in view they select for their partners poor men who contented with the mere name of husbands are the more ready to put up with rivals as they know that, if they so much as murmur, they will be cast off at once. Our widow's clothing was meant to keep out the cold and not to shew her figure. Of gold she would not wear so much as a seal-ring, choosing to store her money in the stomachs of the poor rather than to keep it at her own disposal. She went nowhere without her mother, and would never see without witnesses such monks and clergy as the needs of a large house required her to interview. Her train was always composed of virgins and widows, and these women serious and staid; for, as she well knew, the levity of the maids speaks ill for the mistress and a woman's character is shewn by her choice of companions.

4. Her delight in the divine scriptures was incredible. She was for ever singing, "Thy words have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee," [Ps. 119:11] as well as the words which describe the perfect man, "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." [Ps. 1:2] This meditation in the law she understood not of a review of the written words as among the Jews the Pharisees think, but of action according to that saying of the apostle, "whether, therefore, ye eat or drink or what soever ye do, do all to the glory of God." [1 Cor. 10:31] She remembered also the prophet's words, "through thy precepts I get understanding," [Ps. 119:104] and felt sure that only when she had fulfilled these would she be permitted to understand the scriptures. In this sense we read elsewhere that "Jesus began both to do and teach." [Acts 1:1] For teaching is put to the blush when a man's conscience rebukes him; and it is in vain that his tongue preaches poverty or teaches alms-giving if he is rolling in the riches of Croesus and if, in spite of his threadbare cloak, he has silken robes at home to save from the moth.

Marcella practised fasting, but in moderation. She abstained from eating flesh, and she knew rather the scent of wine than its taste; touching it only for her stomach's sake and for her often infirmities. [1 Tim. 5:23] She seldom appeared in public and took care to avoid the houses of great ladies, that she might not be forced to look upon what she had once for all renounced. She frequented the basilicas of apostles and martyrs that she might escape from the throng and give herself to private prayer. So obedient was she to her mother that for her sake she did things of which she herself disapproved. For example, when her mother, careless of her own offspring, was for transferring all her property from her children and grandchildren to her brother's family, Marcella wished the money to be given to the poor instead, and yet could not bring herself to thwart her parent. Therefore she made over her ornaments and other effects to persons already rich, content to throw away her money rather than to sadden her mother's heart.

5. In those days no highborn lady at Rome had made profession of the monastic life, or had ventured-so strange and ignominious and degrading did it then seem-publicly to call herself a nun. It was from some priests of Alexandria, and from pope Athanasius, and subsequently from Peter, who, to escape the persecution of the Arian heretics, had all fled for refuge to Rome as the safest haven in which they could find communion-it was from these that Marcella heard of the life of the blessed Antony, then still alive, and of the monasteries in the Thebaid founded by Pachomius, and of the discipline laid down for virgins and for widows. Nor was she ashamed to profess a life which she had thus learned to be pleasing to Christ. Many years after her example was followed first by Sophronia and then by others, of whom it may be well said in the words of Ennius:

"Would that ne'er in Pelion's woods Had the axe these pinetrees felled." My revered friend Paula was blessed with Marcella's friendship, and it was in Marcella's cell that Eustochium, that paragon of virgins, was gradually trained. Thus it is easy to see of what type the mistress was who found such pupils. The unbelieving reader may perhaps laugh at me for dwelling so long on the praises of mere women; yet if he will but remember how holy women followed our Lord and Saviour and ministered to Him of their substance, and how the three Marys stood before the cross and especially how Mary Magdalen-called the tower from the earnestness and glow of her faith-was privileged to see the rising Christ first of all before the very apostles, he will convict himself of pride sooner than me of folly. For we judge of people's virtue not by their sex but by their character, and hold those to be worthy of the highest glory who have renounced both rank and wealth. It was for this reason that Jesus loved the evangelist John more than the other disciples. For John was of noble birth and known to the high priest, yet was so little appalled by the plottings of the Jews that he introduced Peter into his court, [Joh. 18:15, Joh. 18:16, R.V] and was the only one of the apostles bold enough to take his stand be'fore the cross. For it was he who took the Saviour's parent to his own home; [Joh. 19:26, Joh. 19:27] it was the virgin son who received the virgin mother as a legacy from the Lord.

6. Marcella then lived the ascetic life for many years, and found herself old before she bethought herself that she had once been young. She often quoted with approval Plato's saying that philosophy consists in meditating on death. A truth which our own apostle indorses when he says: "for your salvation I die daily." Indeed according to the old copies our Lord himself says: "whosoever doth not bear His cross daily and come after me cannot be my disciple." [Luke 14:27, cf. Luke 9:23] Ages before, the Holy Spirit had said by the prophet: "for thy sake are we killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." [Ps. 44:22] Many generations afterwards the words were spoken: "remember the end and thou shalt never do amiss," [Ecclus. 7:36] as well as that precept of the eloquent satirist: "live with death in your mind; time flies; this say of mine is so much taken

from it." [Pers. 5:153 Corvington] Well then, as I was saying, she passed her days and lived always in the thought that she must die. Her very clothing was such as to remind her of the tomb, and she presented herself as a living sacrifice, reasonable and acceptable, unto God. [Rom. 12:1]

7. When the needs of the Church at length brought me to Rome in company with the reverend pontiffs, Paulinus and Epiphanius-the first of whom ruled the church of the Syrian Antioch while the second presided over that of Salamis in Cyprus,-I in my modesty was for avoiding the eyes of highborn ladies, yet she pleaded so earnestly, "both in season and out of season" [2 Tim. 4:2] as the apostle says, that at last her perseverance overcame my reluctance. And, as in those days my name was held in some renown as that of a student of the scriptures, she never came to see me that she did not ask me some question concerning them, nor would she at once acquiesce in my explanations but on the contrary would dispute them; not, however, for argument's sake but to learn the answers to those objections which might, as she saw, be made to my statements. How much virtue and ability, how much holiness and purity I found in her I am afraid to say; both lest I may exceed the bounds of men's belief and lest I may increase your sorrow by reminding you of the blessings that you have lost. This much only will I say, that whatever in me was the fruit of long study and as such made by constant meditation a part of my nature, this she tasted, this she learned and made her own.

Consequently after my departure from Rome, in case of a dispute arising as to the testimony of scripture on any subject, recourse was had to her to settle it. And so wise was she and so well did she understand what philosophers call "τό πρέπον", that is, the becoming, in what she did, that when she answered questions she gave her own opinion not as her own but as from me or some one else, thus admitting that what she taught she had herself learned from others. For she knew that the apostle had said: "I suffer not a woman to teach," [1 Tim. 2:12] and she would not seem to inflict a wrong upon the male sex many of whom (including sometimes priests) questioned her concerning obscure and doubtful points.

8. I am told that my place with her was immediately taken by you, that you attached yourself to her, and that, as the saying goes, you never let even a hair's-breadth come between her and you. You both lived in the same house and occupied the same room so that every one in the city knew for certain that you had found a mother in her and she a daughter in you. In the suburbs you found for yourselves a monastic seclusion, and chose the country instead of the town because of its loneliness. For a long time you lived together, and as many ladies shaped their conduct by your examples, I had the joy of seeing Rome transformed into another Jerusalem. Monastic establishments for virgins became numerous, and of hermits there were countless numbers. In fact so many were the servants of God that monasticism which had before been a term of reproach became subsequently one

of honour. Meantime we consoled each other for our separation by words of mutual encouragement, and discharged in the spirit the debt which in the flesh we could not pay. We always went to meet each other's letters, tried to outdo each other in attentions, and anticipated each other in courteous inquiries. Not much was lost by a separation thus effectually bridged by a constant correspondence.

9. While Marcella was thus serving the Lord in holy tranquillity, there arose in these provinces a tornado of heresy which threw everything into confusion; indeed so great was the fury into which it lashed itself that it spared neither itself nor anything that was good. And as if it were too little to have disturbed everything here, it introduced a ship freighted with blasphemies into the port of Rome itself. The dish soon found itself a cover; and the muddy feet of heretics fouled the clear waters [Cf. Ezek. 34:18] of the faith of Rome. No wonder that in the streets and in the market places a soothsayer can strike fools on the back or, Catching up his cudgel, shatter the teeth of such as carp at him; when such venomous and filthy teaching as this has found at Rome dupes whom it can lead astray. Next came the scandalous version of Origen's book On First Principles, and that 'fortunate' disciple who would have been indeed fortunate had he never fallen in with such a master. Next followed the confutation set forth by my supporters, which destroyed the case of the Pharisees and threw them into confusion. It was then that the holy Marcella, who had long held back lest she should be thought to act from party motives, threw herself into the breach. Conscious that the faith of Rome-once praised by an apostle [Rom. 1:8] -was now in danger, and that this new heresy was drawing to itself not only priests and monks but also many of the laity besides imposing on the bishop who fancied others as guileless as he was himself, she publicly withstood its teachers choosing to please God rather than men.

10. In the gospel the Saviour commends the unjust steward because, although he defrauded his master, he acted wisely for his own interests. [Luke 16:8] The heretics in this instance pursued the same course; for, seeing how great a matter a little fire had kindled, [James 3:5] and that the flames applied by them to the foundations had by this time reached the housetops, and that the deception practised on many could no longer be hid, they asked for and obtained letters of commendation from the church, so that it might appear that till the day of their departure they had continued in full communion with it. Shortly afterwards the distinguished Anastasius succeeded to the pontificate; but he was soon taken away, for it was not fitting that the head of the world should be struck off during the episcopate of one so great. He was removed, no doubt, that he might not seek to turn away by his prayers the sentence of God passed once for all. For the words of the Lord to Jeremiah concerning Israel applied equally to Rome: "pray not for this people for their good. When they fast I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and oblation, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword and by the famine and by the pestilence. [Jer. 14:11, Jer. 14:12] You will say, what

has this to do with the praises of Marcella? I reply, She it was who originated the condemnation of the heretics.

She it was who furnished witnesses first taught by them and then carried away by their heretical teaching. She it was who showed how large a number they had deceived and who brought up against them the impious books brOn First Principles, books which were passing from hand to hand after being 'improved' by the hand of the scorpion. She it was lastly who called on the heretics in letter after letter to appear in their own defence. They did not indeed venture to come, for they were so conscience-stricken that they let the case go against them by default rather than face their accusers and be convicted by them. This glorious victory originated with Marcella, she was the source and cause of this great blessing. You who shared the honour with her know that I speak the truth. You know too that out of many incidents I only mention a few, not to tire out the reader by a wearisome recapitulation. Were I to say more, ill natured persons might fancy me, under pretext of commending a woman's virtues, to be giving vent to my own rancour. I will pass now to the remainder of my story.

11. The whirlwind passed from the West into the East and threatened in its passage to shipwreck many a noble craft. Then were the words of Jesus fulfilled: "when the son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" [Luke 18:8] The love of many waxed cold. [Matt. 24:12] Yet the few who still loved the true faith rallied to my side. Men openly sought to take their lives and every expedient was employed against them. So hotly indeed did the persecution rage that "Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation;" nay more he committed murder, if not in actual violence at least in will. Then behold God blew and the tempest passed away; so that the prediction of the prophet was fulfilled, "thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. [Ps. 104:29] In that very day his thoughts perish," [Ps. 146:4] as also the gospel-saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" [Luke 12:20]

12. Whilst these things were happening in Jebus a dreadful rumour came from the West. Rome had been besieged and its citizens had been forced to buy their lives with gold. Then thus despoiled they had been besieged again so as to lose not their substance only but their lives. My voice sticks in my throat; and, as I dictate, sobs choke my utterance. The City which had taken the whole world was itself taken; nay more famine was beforehand with the sword and but few citizens were left to be made captives. In their frenzy the starving people had recourse to hideous food; and tore each other limb from limb that they might have flesh to eat. Even the mother did not spare the babe at her breast. In the night was Moab taken, in the night did her wall fall down. [Isa. 15:1] "O God, the heathen have come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have made Jerusalem an

orchard. [Ps. 79:1. LXX] The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them." [Ps. 79:1-3]

"Who can set forth the carnage of that night? What tears are equal to its agony? Of ancient date a sovran city falls; And lifeless in its streets and houses lie Unnumbered bodies of its citizens." In many a ghastly shape doth death appear. [Virg. A. 2:361]

13. Meantime, as was natural in a scene of such confusion, one of the bloodstained victors found his way into Marcella's house. Now be it mine to say what I have heard, [Virg. A. 6:266] to relate what holy men have seen; for there were some such present and they say that you too were with her in the hour of danger. When the soldiers entered she is said to have received them without any look of alarm; and when they asked her for gold she pointed to her coarse dress to shew them that she had no buried treasure. However they would not believe in her self-chosen poverty, but scourged her and beat her with cudgels. She is said to have felt no pain but to have thrown herself at their feet and to have pleaded with tears for you, that you might not be taken from her, or owing to your youth have to endure what she as an old woman had no occasion to fear. Christ softened their hard hearts and even among bloodstained swords natural affection asserted its rights. The barbarians conveyed both you and her to the basilica of the apostle Paul, that you might find there either a place of safety or, if not that, at least a tomb. Hereupon Marcella is said to have burst into great joy and to have thanked God for having kept you unharmed in answer to her prayer. She said she was thankful too that the taking of the city had found her poor, not made her so, that she was now in want of daily bread, that Christ satisfied her needs so that she no longer felt hunger, that she was able to say in word and in deed: "naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

14. After a few days she fell asleep in the Lord; but to the last her powers remained unimpaired. You she made the heir of her poverty, or rather the poor through you. When she closed her eyes, it was in your arms; when she breathed her last breath, your lips received it; you shed tears but she smiled conscious of having led a good life and hoping for her reward hereafter. In one short night I have dictated this letter in honour of you, revered Marcella, and of you, my daughter Principia; not to shew off my own eloquence but to express my heartfelt gratitude to you both; my one desire has been to please both God and my readers.

Letter 128. To Gaudentius.

Gaudentius had written from Rome to ask Jerome's advice as to the bringing up of his infant daughter; whom after the religious fashion of the day he had dedicated to a life of virginity. Jerome's reply may be compared with his advice to Laeta (Letter 107.) which it closely resembles. It is noticeable also for the vivid account which it gives of the sack of Rome by Alaric in a.d. 410. The date of the letter is a.d. 413.

I. It is hard to write to a little girl who cannot understand what you say, of whose mind you know nothing, and of whose inclinations it would be rash to prophesy. In the words of a famous orator "she is to be praised more for what she will be than for what she is." For how can you speak of self-control to a child who is eager for cakes, who babbles on her mother's knee, and to whom honey is sweeter than any words? Will she hear the deep things of the apostle when all her delight is in nursery tales? Will she heed the dark sayings of the prophets when her nurse can frighten her by a frowning face? Or will she comprehend the majesty of the gospel, when its splendour dazzles the keenest intellect? Shall I urge her to obey her parents when with her chubby hand she beats her smiling mother? For such reasons as these my dear Pacatula must read some other time the letter that I send her now. Meanwhile let her learn the alphabet, spelling, grammar, and syntax. To induce her to repeat her lessons with her little shrill voice, hold out to her as rewards cakes and mead and sweetmeats. [cf. Hor. 1 S. 1:25, 26] She will make haste to perform her task if she hopes afterwards to get some bright bunch of flowers, some glittering bauble, some enchanting doll. She must also learn to spin, shaping the yarn with her tender thumb; for, even if she constantly breaks the threads, a day will come when she will no longer break them. Then when she has finished her lessons she ought to have some recreation. At such times she may hang round her mother's neck, or snatch kisses from her relations. Reward her for singing psalms that she may love what she has to learn. Her task will then become a pleasure to her and no compulsion will be necessary.

2. Some mothers when they have vowed a daughter to virginity clothe her in sombre garments, wrap her up in a dark cloak, and let her have neither linen nor gold ornaments. They wisely refuse to accustom her to what she will afterwards have

to lay aside. Others act on the opposite principle. ”What is the use,” say they, ”of keeping such things from her? Will she not see them with others? Women are fond of finery and many whose chastity is beyond question dress not for men but for themselves Give her what she asks for, but shew her that those are most praised who ask for nothing. It is better that she should enjoy things to the full and so learn to despise them than that from not having them she should wish to have them. ”This,” they continue, ”was the plan which the Lord adopted with the children of Israel. When they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt He sent them flights of quails and allowed them to gorge themselves until they were sick. [Numb. 11:4, Numb. 11:20, Numb. 11:31] Those who have once lived worldly lives more readily forego the pleasures of sense than such as from their youth up have known nothing of desire. For while the former-so they argue-trample on what they know, the latter are attracted by what is to them unknown.

While the former penitently shun the insidious advances which pleasure makes, the latter coquet with the allurements of sense and fancying them to be as sweet as honey find them to be deadly poison. They quote the passage which says that ”the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb; [Prov. 5:3] which is sweet indeed in the eater’s mouth but is afterwards found more bitter than gall. [Rev. 10:9. Rev. 10:10] This they argue, is the reason that neither honey nor wax is offered in the sacrifices of the Lord, [Lev. 2:11] and that oil the product of the bitter olive is burned in His temple. [Ex. 27:20] Moreover it is with bitter herbs that the passover is eaten, [Ex. 12:8] and ”with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. [1 Cor. 5:8] He that receives these shall suffer persecution in the world. Wherefore the prophet symbolically sings: ”I sat alone because I was filled with bitterness. [Jer. 15:17, LXX]

3. What then, I reply? Is youth to run riot that self-indulgence may afterwards be more resolutely rejected? Far from it, they rejoin: ”let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide. [1 Cor. 7:24] Is any called being circumcised,”- that is, as a virgin?-”let him not become uncircumcised” [1 Cor. 7:18] -that is, let him not seek the coat of marriage given to Adam on his expulsion from the paradise of virginity. [Gen. 3:21] ”Is any called in uncircumcision,”-that is, having a wife and enveloped in the skin of matrimony? let him not seek the nakedness of virginity [Gen. 3:25] and of that eternal chastity which he has lost once for all. No, let him ”possess his vessel in sanctification and honour,” [Thess. 4:4] let him drink of his own wells not out of the dissolute cisterns [Jer. 2:13, Cisternas dissipates] of the harlots which cannot hold within them the pure waters of chastity. [Prov. 5:15] The same Paul also in the same chapter, when discussing the subjects of virginity and marriage, calls those who are married slaves of the flesh, but those not under the yoke of wedlock freemen who serve the Lord in all freedom. [1 Cor. 7:21, 1 Cor. 7:22]

What I say I do not say as universally applicable; my treatment of the subject is only partial. I speak of some only, not of all. However my words are addressed to those of both sexes, and not only to "the weaker vessel. [1 Pet. 3:7] Are you a virgin? Why then do you find pleasure in the society of a woman? Why do you commit to the high seas your frail patched boat, why do you so confidently face the great peril of a dangerous voyage? You know not what you desire, and yet you cling to her as though you had either desired her before or, to put it as leniently as possible, as though you would hereafter desire her. Women, you will say, make better servants than men. In that case choose a misshapen old woman, choose one whose continence is approved in the Lord. Why should you find pleasure in a young girl, pretty, and voluptuous? You frequent the baths, walk abroad sleek and ruddy, eat flesh, abound in riches, and wear the most expensive clothes; and yet you fancy that you can sleep safely beside a death-dealing serpent. You tell me perhaps that you do not live in the same house with her. This is only true at night. But you spend whole days in conversing with her. Why do you sit alone with her? Why do you dispense with witnesses?

By so doing if you do not actually sin you appear to do so, and (so important is your influence) you embolden unhappy men by your example to do what is wrong. You too, whether virgin or widow, why do you allow a man to detain you in conversation so long? Why are you not afraid to be left alone with him? At least go out of doors to satisfy the wants of nature, and for this at any rate leave the man with whom you have given yourself more liberty than you would with your brother, and have behaved more immodestly than you would with your husband. You have some question, you say, to ask concerning the holy scriptures. If so, ask it publicly; let your maids and your attendants hear it. "Everything that is made manifest is light. [Eph. 5:13, R. V] He who says only what he ought does not look for a corner to say it in; he is glad to have hearers for he likes to be praised. He must be a fine teacher, on the other hand, who thinks little of men, does not care for the brothers, and labours in secret merely to instruct just one weak woman!

3a. I have wandered for a little from my immediate subject to discuss the procedure of others in such a case as yours; and while it is my object to train, nay rather to nurse, the infant Pacatula, I have in a moment drawn upon myself the hostility of many women who are by no means daughters of peace. But I shall now return to my proper theme.

A girl should associate only with girls, she should know nothing of boys and should dread even playing with them. She should never hear an unclean word, and if amid the bustle of the household she should chance to hear one, she should not understand it. Her mother's nod should be to her as much a command as a spoken injunction. She should love her as her parent, obey her as her mistress, and reverence her as her teacher. She is now a child without teeth and without ideas, but,

as soon as she is seven years old, a blushing girl knowing what she ought not to say and hesitating as to what she ought, she should until she is grown up commit to memory the psalter and the books of Solomon; the gospels, the apostles and the prophets should be the treasure of her heart. She should not appear in public too freely or too frequently attend crowded churches. All her pleasure should be in her chamber. She must never look at young men or turn her eyes upon curled fops; and the wanton songs of sweet voiced girls which wound the soul through the ears must be kept from her. The more freedom of access such persons possess, the harder is it to avoid them when they come; and what they have once learned themselves they will secretly teach her and will thus contaminate our secluded Danaë by the talk of the crowd.

Give her for guardian and companion a mistress and a governess, one not given to much wine or in the apostle's words idle and a tattler, but sober, grave, industrious in spinning wool and one whose words will form her childish mind to the practice of virtue. For, as water follows a finger drawn through the sand, so one of soft and tender years is pliable for good or evil; she can be drawn in whatever direction you choose to guide her. Moreover spruce and gay young men often seek access for themselves by paying court to nurses or dependants or even by bribing them, and when they have thus gently effected their approach they blow up the first spark of passion until it bursts into flame and little by little advance to the most shameless requests. And it is quite impossible to check them then, for the verse is proved true in their case: "It is ill rebuking what you have once allowed to become ingrained. I am ashamed to say it and yet I must; high born ladies who have rejected more high born suitors cohabit with men of the lowest grade and even with slaves. Sometimes in the name of religion and under the cloak of a desire for celibacy they actually desert their husbands in favour of such paramours. You may often see a Helen following her Paris without the smallest dread of Menelaus. Such persons we see and mourn for but we cannot punish, for the multitude of sinners procures tolerance for the sin.

4. The world sinks into ruin: yes! but shameful to say our sins still live and flourish. The renowned city, the capital of the Roman Empire, is swallowed up in one tremendous fire; and there is no part of the earth where Romans are not in exile. Churches once held sacred are now but heaps of dust and ashes; and yet we have our minds set on the desire of gain. We live as though we are going to die tomorrow; yet we build as though we are going to live always in this world. Our walls shine with gold, our ceilings also and the capitals of our pillars; yet Christ dies before our doors naked and hungry in the persons of His poor. The pontiff Aaron, we read, faced the raging flames, and by putting fire in his censer checked the wrath of God. The High Priest stood between the dead and the living, and the fire dared not pass his feet. [Nu. 16:46-48, Vulg] On another occasion God said to Moses, "Let me alone.... that I may consume this people," [Ex. 32:10] shewing by the words "let

me alone" that he can be withheld from doing what he threatens. The prayers of His servant hindered His power. Who, think you, is there now under heaven able to stay God's wrath, to face the flame of His judgment, and to say with the apostle, "I could wish that I myself were accursed for my brethren"?

[Rom. 9:3] Flocks and shepherds perish together, because as it is with the people, so is it with the priest. [Isa. 24:2] Of old it was not so. Then Moses spoke in a passion of pity, "yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin-; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book. [Ex. 32:32] He is not satisfied to secure his own salvation, he desires to perish with those that perish. And he is right, for "in the multitude of people is the king's honour. [Prov. 14:28]

Such are the times in which our little Pacatula is born. Such are the swaddling clothes in which she draws her first breath; she is destined to know of tears before laughter and to feel sorrow sooner than joy. And hardly does she come upon the stage when she is called on to make her exit. Let her then suppose that the world has always been what it is now. Let her know nothing of the past,let her shun the present, and let her long for the future. These thoughts of mine are but hastily mustered. For my grief for lost friends has known no intermission and only recently have I recovered sufficient composure to write an old man's letter to a little child. My affection for you, brother Gaudentius, has induced me to make the attempt and I have thought it better to say a few words than to say nothing at all. The grief that paralyses my will will excuse my brevity; whereas, were I to say nothing, the sincerity of my friendship might well be doubted.

Letter 130. To Demetrias.

Jerome writes to Demetrias, a highborn lady of Rome who had recently embraced the vocation of a virgin. After narrating her life's history first at Rome and then in Africa, he goes on to lay down rules and principles to guide her in her new life. These which cover the whole field of ascetic practice and include the duties of study, of prayer, of fasting, of obedience, of giving up money for Christ, and of constant industry, are in substance similar to those which thirty years before Jerome had suggested to Eustochium (Letter 22.). The tone of the letter is however milder and less fanatical; the asceticism recommended is not so severe; there is less of rhapsody and more of common sense. This letter should also be compared with the letter addressed to Demetrias by Pelagius, which is given in Vol. xi. of Jerome's works (Migne's Patr. Lat. xxx. ed.). The date is 414 a.d.

I. Of all the subjects that I have treated from my youth up until now, either with my own pen or that of my secretaries I have dealt with none more difficult than that which now occupies me. I am going to write to Demetrias a virgin of Christ and a lady whose birth and riches make her second to none in the Roman world. If, therefore, I employ language adequate to describe her virtue, I shall be thought to flatter her; and if I suppress some details on the score that they might appear incredible, my reserve will not do justice to her undoubted merits. What am I to do then? I am unequal to the task before me, yet I cannot venture to decline it. Her grandmother and her mother are both women of mark, and they have alike authority to command, faith to seek and perseverance to obtain that which they require. It is not indeed anything very new or special that they ask of me; my wits have often been exercised upon similar themes. What they wish for is that I should raise my voice and bear witness as strongly as I can to the virtues of one who-in the words of the famous orator -is to be praised less for what she is than for what she gives promise of being. Yet, girl though she is, she has a glowing faith beyond her years, and has started from a point at which others think it a mark of signal virtue to leave off.

2. Let detraction stand aloof and envy give way; let no charge of self seeking be brought against me. I write as a stranger to a stranger, at least so far as the

personal appearance is concerned. For the inner man finds itself well known by that knowledge whereby the apostle Paul knew the Colossians and many other believers whom he had never seen. How high an esteem I entertain for this virgin, nay more what a miracle of virtue I think her, you may judge by the fact that being occupied in the explanation of Ezekiel's description of the temple-the hardest piece in the whole range of scripture-and finding myself in that part of the sacred edifice wherein is the Holy of Holies and the altar of incense, I have chosen by way of a brief rest to pass from that altar to this, that upon it I might consecrate to eternal chastity a living offering acceptable to God [Rom. 12:1] and free from all stain. I am aware that the bishop has with words of prayer covered her holy head with the virgin's bridal-veil, reciting the while the solemn sentence of the apostle: "I wish to present you all as a chaste virgin to Christ. [2 Cor. 11:2] She stood as a queen at his right hand, her clothing of wrought gold and her raiment of needlework. [Ps. 45:9, Ps. 45:13, Ps. 45:14] Such was the coat of many colours, that is, formed of many different virtues, which Joseph wore;

and similar ones were of old the ordinary dress of king's daughters. Thereupon the bride herself rejoices and says: "the king hath brought me into his chambers," [Cant. 1:4] and the choir of her companions responds: "the king's daughter is all glorious within. [Ps. 45:13] Thus she is a professed virgin. Still these words of mine will not be without their use. The speed of racehorses is quickened by the applause of spectators; prize fighters are urged to greater efforts by the cries of their backers; and when armies are drawn up for battle and swords are drawn, the general's speech does much to fire his soldiers' valour. So also is it on the present occasion. The grandmother and the mother have planted, but it is I that water and the Lord that giveth the increase. [1 Cor. 3:6]

3. It is the practice of the rhetoricians to exalt him who is the subject of their praises by referring to his forefathers and the past nobility of his race, so that a fertile root may make up for barren branches and that you may admire in the stem what you have not got in the fruit. Thus I ought now to recall the distinguished names of the Probi and of the Olybrii, and that illustrious Anician house, the representatives of which have seldom or never been unworthy of the consulship. Or I ought to bring forward Olybrius our virgin's father, whose untimely loss Rome has had to mourn. I fear to say more of him, lest I should intensify the pain of your saintly mother, and lest the commemoration of his virtues should become a renewing of her grief. He was a dutiful son, a loveable husband, a kind master, a popular citizen. He was made consul while still a boy; but the goodness of his character made him more illustrious as a senator. He was happy in his death for it saved him from seeing the ruin of his country; and happier still in his offspring, for the distinguished name of his great grandmother Demetrias has become yet more distinguished now that his daughter Demetrias has vowed herself to perpetual chastity.

4. But what am I doing? Forgetful of my purpose and filled with admiration for this young man, I have spoken in terms of praise of mere worldly advantages; whereas I should rather have commended our virgin for having rejected all these, and for having determined to regard herself not as a wealthy or a high born lady, but simply as a woman like other women. Her strength of mind almost passes belief. Though she had silks and jewels freely at her disposal, and though she was surrounded by crowds of eunuchs and serving-women, a bustling household of flattering and attentive domestics, and though the daintiest feasts that the abundance of a large house could supply were daily set before her; she preferred to all these severe fasting, rough clothing, and frugal living. For she had read the words of the Lord: "they that wear soft clothing are in kings" houses. [Matt. 11:8] She was filled with admiration for the manner of life followed by Elijah and by John the Baptist; both of whom confined and mortified their loins with girdles of skin, [2 Kings 1:8, Matt. 3:4] while the second of them is said to have come in the spirit and power of Elijah as the forerunner of the Lord. [Matt. 11:14, Luke 1:17] As such he prophesied while still in his mother's womb, [Luke 1:41] and before the day of judgment won the commendation of the Judge.

She admired also the zeal of Anna the daughter of Phanuel, who continued even to extreme old age to serve the Lord in the temple with prayers and fastings. [Luke 2:36, Luke 2:37] When she thought of the four virgins who were the daughters of Philip, [Acts 21:9] she longed to join their band and to be numbered with those who by their virginal purity have attained the grace of prophecy. With these and similar meditations she fed her mind, dreading nothing so much as to offend her grandmother and her mother. Although she was encouraged by their example, she was discouraged by their expressed wish and desire; not indeed that they disapproved of her holy purpose, but that the prize was so great that they did not venture to hope for it, or to aspire to it. Thus this poor novice in Christ's service was sorely perplexed. She came to hate all her fine apparel and cried like Esther to the Lord: "Thou knowest that I abhor the sign of my high estate"-that is to say, the diadem which she wore as queen-"and that I abhor it as a menstruous rag. [Esther 14:16] Among the holy and highborn ladies who have seen and known her some have been driven by the tempest which has swept over Africa, from the shores of Gaul to a refuge in the holy places.

These tell me that secretly night after night, though no one knew of it but the virgins dedicated to God in her mother's and grandmother's retinue, Demetrias, refusing sheets of linen and beds of down, spread a rug of goat's hair upon the ground and watered her face with ceaseless tears. Night after night she cast herself in thought at the Saviour's knees and implored him to accept her choice, to fulfil her aspiration, and to soften the hearts of her grandmother and of her mother.

5. Why do I still delay to relate the sequel? When her wedding day was now close at hand and when a marriage chamber was being got ready for the bride and bridegroom; secretly without any witnesses and with only the night to comfort her, she is said to have nerved herself with such considerations as these: ”What ails you, Demetrias? Why are you so fearful of defending your chastity? What you need is freedom and courage. If you are so panic-stricken in time of peace, what would you do if you were called on to undergo martyrdom? If you cannot bear so much as a frown from your own, how would you steel yourself to face the tribunals of persecutors? If men’s examples leave you unmoved, at least gather courage and confidence from the blessed martyr Agnes who vanquished the temptations both of youth and of a despot and by her martyrdom hallowed the very name of chastity. Unhappy girl! you know not, you know not to whom your virginity is due. It is not long since you have trembled in the hands of the barbarians and clung to your grandmother and your mother cowering under their cloaks for safety. You have seen yourself a prisoner and your chastity not in your own power. You have shuddered at the fierce looks of your enemies; you have seen with secret agony the virgins of God ravished. Your city, once the capital of the world, is now the grave of the Roman people;

and will you on the shores of Libya, yourself an exile, accept an exile for a husband? Where will you find a matron to be present at your bridal? Whom will you get to escort you home? No tongue but a harsh Punic one will sing for you the wanton Fescennine verses. Away with all hesitations! ’Perfect love’ of God ’casteth out fear.’ [1 John 4:18] Take to yourself the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, [Eph. 6:14-17] and sally forth to battle. The preservation of your chastity involves a martyrdom of its own. Why do you fear your grandmother? Why do you dread your mother? Perhaps they may themselves wish for you a course which they do not think you wish for yourself. When by these and other arguments she had wrought herself to the necessary pitch of resolution, she cast from her as so many hindrances all her ornaments and worldly attire. Her precious necklaces, costly pearls, and glowing gems she put back in their cases. Then dressing herself in a coarse tunic and throwing over herself a still courser cloak she came in at an unlooked for moment, threw herself down suddenly at her grandmother’s knees, and with tears and sobs shewed her what she really was. That staid and holy woman was amazed when she beheld her granddaughter in so strange a dress. Her mother was completely overcome for joy. Both women could hardly believe that true which they had longed to be true.

Their voices stuck in their throats, and, what with blushing and turning pale, with fright and with joy, they were a prey to many conflicting emotions.

6. I must needs give way here and not attempt to describe what defies description. In the effort to explain the greatness of that joy past all belief, the flow of

Tully's eloquence would run dry and the bolts poised and hurled by Demosthenes would become spent and fall short. Whatever mind can conceive or speech can interpret of human gladness was seen then. Mother and child, grandmother and granddaughter kissed each other again and again. The two elder women wept copiously for joy, they raised the prostrate girl, they embraced her trembling form. In her purpose they recognized their own mind, and congratulated each other that now a virgin was to make a noble house more noble still by her virginity. She had found they said, a way to benefit her family and to lessen the calamity of the ruin of Rome Good Jesus! What exultation there was all through the house! Many virgins sprouted out at once as shoots from a fruitful stem, and the example set by their patroness and lady was followed by a host both of clients and servants. Virginity was warmly espoused in every house and although those who made profession of it were as regards the flesh of lower rank than Demetrias they sought one reward with her, the reward of chastity. My words are too weak. Every church in Africa danced for joy. The news reached not only the cities, towns, and villages but even the scattered huts.

Every island between Africa and Italy was full of it, the glad tidings ran far and wide, disliked by none. Then Italy put off her mourning and the ruined walls of Rome resumed in part their olden splendour; for they believed the full conversion of their fosterchild to be a sign of God's favour towards them. You would fancy that the Goths had been annihilated and that that concourse of deserters and slaves had fallen by a thunderbolt from the Lord on high. There was less elation in Rome when Marcellus won his first success at Nola after thousands of Romans had fallen at the Trebia, Lake Thrasymenus, and Cannae. There was less joy among the nobles cooped up in the capitol, on whom the future of Rome depended, when after buying their lives with gold they heard that the Gauls had at length been routed. The news penetrated to the coasts of the East, and this triumph of Christian glory was heard of in the remote cities of the interior. What Christian virgin was not proud to have Demetrias as a companion? What mother did not call Juliana's womb blessed? Unbelievers may scoff at the doubtfulness of rewards to come. Meantime, in becoming a virgin you have gained more than you have sacrificed. Had you become a man's bride but one province would have known of you; while as a Christian virgin you are known to the whole world.

Mothers who have but little faith in Christ are unhappily wont to dedicate to virginity only deformed and crippled daughters for whom they can find no suitable husbands. Glass beads, as the saying goes, are thought equal to pearls. Men who pride themselves on their religion give to their virgin daughters sums scarcely sufficient for their maintenance, and bestow the bulk of their property upon sons and daughters living in the world. Quite recently in this city a rich presbyter left two of his daughters who were professed virgins with a mere pittance, while he provided his other children with ample means for self-indulgence and pleasure. The same

thing has been done, I am sorry to say, by many women who have adopted the ascetic life. Would that such instances were rare, but unfortunately they are not. Yet the more frequent they are the more blessed are those who refuse to follow an example which is set them by so many.

7. All Christians are loud in their praises of Christ's holy yokefellows, because they gave to Demetrias when she professed herself a virgin the money which had been set apart as a dowry for her marriage. They would not wrong her heavenly bridegroom; in fact they wished her to come to Him with all her previous riches, that these might not be wasted on the things of the world, but might relieve the distress of God's servants. Who would believe it? That Proba, who of all persons of high rank and birth in the Roman world bears the most illustrious name, whose holy life and universal charity have won for her esteem even among the barbarians, who has made nothing of the regular consulships enjoyed by her three sons, Probinus, Olybrius, and Probus,- that Proba, I say, now that Rome has been taken and its contents burned or carried off, is said to be selling what property she has and to be making for herself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that these may receive her into everlasting habitations! [Luke 16:9] Well may the church's ministers, whatever their degree, and those monks who are only monks in name, blush for shame that they are buying estates, when this noble lady is selling them.

Hardly had she escaped from the hands of the barbarians, hardly had she ceased weeping for the virgins whom they had torn from her arms, when she was overwhelmed by a sudden and unbearable bereavement, one too which she had had no cause to fear, the death of her loving son. Yet as one who was to be grandmother to a Christian virgin, she bore up against this death-dealing stroke, strong in hope of the future and proving true of herself the words of the lyric: "Should the round world in fragments burst, its fall May strike the just, may slay, but not appal." [Horace, Carm. 3:3. 7, 8]

We read in the book of Job how, while the first messenger of evil was yet speaking, there came also another; and in the same book it is written: "is there not a temptation"-or as the Hebrew better gives it-"a warfare to man upon earth?" [Job 7:1] It is for this end that we labour, it is for this end that we risk our lives in the warfare of this world, that we may be crowned in the world to come. That we should believe this to be true of men is nothing wonderful, for even the Lord Himself was tempted, [Matt. 4:1, sqq] and of Abraham the scripture bears witness that God tempted him. [Gen. 22:1] It is for this reason also that the apostle says: "we glory in tribulations.... knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed;" [Rom. 5:3-5] and in another passage: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for

the slaughter." [Rom. 8:35, Rom. 8:36] The prophet Isaiah comforts those in like case in these words: "ye that are weaned from the milk, ye that are drawn from the breasts, look for tribulation upon tribulation, but also for hope upon hope." [Isa. 28:9, 10, LXX] For, as the apostle puts it "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." [Rom. 8:18] Why I have here brought together all these passages the sequel will make plain.

Proba who had seen from the sea the smoke of her native city and had committed her own safety and that of those dear to her to a fragile boat, found the shores of Africa even more cruel than those which she had left. For one lay in wait for her of whom it would be hard to say whether he was more covetous or heartless, one who cared for nothing but wine and money, one who under pretence of serving the mildest of emperors stood forth as the most savage of all despots. If I may be allowed to quote a fable of the poets, he was like Orcus in Tartarus. Like him too he had with him a Cerberus, not three headed but many headed, ready to seize and rend everything within his reach. He tore betrothed daughters from their mothers'arms and sold high-born maidens in marriage to those greediest of men, the merchants of Syria. No plea of poverty induced him to spare either ward or widow or virgin dedicated to Christ. Indeed he looked more at the hands than at the faces of those who appealed to him. Such was the dread Charybdis and such the hound-girt Scylla which this lady encountered in fleeing from the barbarians; monsters who neither spared the shipwrecked nor heeded the cry of those made captive. Cruel wretch! at least imitate the enemy of the Roman Empire. The Brennus of our day took only what he found, but you seek what you cannot find.

Virtue, indeed, is always exposed to envy, and cavillers may marvel at the secret agreement by which Proba purchased the chastity of her numerous companions. They may allege that the count who could have taken all would not have been satisfied with a part; and that she could not have questioned his claim since in spite of her rank she was but a slave in his despotic hands. I perceive also that I am laying myself open to the attacks of enemies and that I may seem to be flattering a lady of the highest birth and distinction. Yet these men will not be able to accuse me when they learn that hitherto I have said nothing about her. I have never either in the lifetime of her husband or since his decease praised her for the antiquity of her family or for the extent of her wealth and power, subjects which others might perhaps have improved in mercenary speeches. My purpose is to praise the grandmother of my virgin in a style befitting the church, and to thank her for having aided with her goodwill the desire which Demetrias has formed. For the rest my cell, my food and clothing, my advanced years, and my narrow circumstances sufficiently refute the charge of flattery. In What remains of my letter I shall direct all my words to Demetrias herself, whose holiness ennobles her as much as her rank, and of whom it may be said that the higher she climbs the more terrible will be her fall.

”For the rest This one thing, child of God, I lay on thee; Yea before all, and urge it many times:”

Love to occupy your mind with the reading of scripture. Do not in the good ground of your breast gather only a crop of darnel and wild oats. Do not let an enemy sow tares among the wheat when the householder is asleep [Matt. 13:25] (that is when the mind which ever cleaves to God is off its guard); but say always with the bride in the song of songs: ”By night I sought him whom my soul loveth. Tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; [Cant. 3:1, Cant. 1:7] and with the psalmist: ”my soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me; [Ps. 63:8] and with Jeremiah: ”I have not found it hard.... to follow thee,” [Jer. 17:16, LXX] for ”there is no grief in Jacob neither is there travail in Israel. [Nu. 23:21, LXX] When you were in the world you loved the things of the world. You rubbed your cheeks with rouge and used whitelead to improve your complexion. You dressed your hair and built up a tower on your head with tresses not your own. I shall say nothing of your costly earrings, your glistening pearls from the depths of the Red Sea, your bright green emeralds, your flashing onyxes, your liquid sapphires,-tones which turn the heads of matrons, and make them eager to possess the like. For you have relinquished the world and besides your baptismal vow have taken a new one; you have entered into a compact with your adversary and have said:

”I renounce thee, O devil, and thy world and thy pomp and thy works. Observe, therefore, the treaty that you have made, and keep terms with your adversary while you are in the way of this world. Otherwise he may some day deliver you to the judge and prove that you have taken what is his; and then the judge will deliver you to the officer-at once your foe and your avenger-and you will be cast into prison; into that outer darkness [Matt. 8:12] which surrounds us with the greater horror as it severs us from Christ the one true light. [Joh. 8:12] And you shall by no means come out thence till you have paid the uttermost farthing, [Matt. 5:25, Matt. 5:26] that is, till you have expiated your most trifling sins; for we shall give account of every idle word in the day of judgment. [Matt. 12:36]

8. In speaking thus I do not wish to utter an ill-omened prophecy against you but only to warn you as an apprehensive and prudent monitor who in your case fears even what is safe. What says the scripture? ”If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place. We must always stand under arms and in battle array, ready to engage the foe. When he tries to dislodge us from our position and to make us fall back, we must plant our feet firmly down, and say with the psalmist, ”he hath set my feet upon a rock” [Ps. 40:2] and ”the rocks are a refuge for the conies. [Ps. 104:18] In this latter passage for ’conies’ many read ’hedgehogs.’ Now the hedgehog is a small animal, very shy, and covered over with thorny bristles. When Jesus was crowned with thorns and bore our sins and suffered for us, it

was to make the roses of virginity and the lilies of chastity grow for us out of the brambles and briers which have formed the lot of women since the day when it was said to Eve, ”in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee. [Gen. 3:16] We are told that the bridegroom feeds among the lilies, [Cant. 2:16] that is, among those who have not defiled their garments, for they have remained virgins [Rev. 14:4] and have hearkened to the precept of the Preacher: ”let thy garments be always white.

[Eccles. 9:8] As the author and prince of virginity He says boldly of Himself: ”I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. [Cant. 2:1] ”The rocks” then ”are a refuge for the tonics” who when they are persecuted in one city flee into another [Matt. 10:23] and have no fear that the prophetic words ”refuge failed me” [Ps. 142:4] will he fulfilled in their case. ”The high hills are a refuge for the wildgoats,” [Ps. 104:18] and their food are the serpents which a little child draws out of their holes. Meanwhile the leopard lies down with the kid and the lion eats straw like the ox; [Isa. 11:6-8] not of course that the ox may learn ferocity from the lion but that the lion may learn docility from the OX.

But let us turn back to the passage first quoted, ”If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place,” a sentence which is followed by these words: ”for yielding pacifieth great offences.” [Eccles. 10:4] The meaning is, that if the serpent finds his way into your thoughts you must ”keep your heart with all diligence” [Prov. 4:23] and sing with David, ”cleanse thou me from secret faults keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins,” and come not to ”the great transgression” [Ps. 19:12-14] which is sin in act. Rather slay the allurements to vice while they are still only thoughts; and dash the little ones of the daughter of Babylon against the stones [Ps. 137:9] where the serpent can leave no trail. Be wary and vow a vow unto the Lord: ”let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.” [Ps. 19:13] For elsewhere also the scripture testifies, ”I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.” [Nu. 14:18] That is to say, God will not punish us at once for our thoughts and resolves but will send retribution upon their offspring, that is, upon the evil deeds and habits of sin which arise out of them. As He says by the mouth of Amos: ”for three transgressions of such and such a city and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof.” [Amos 1:3]

9. I cull these few flowers in passing from the fair field of the holy scriptures. They will suffice to warn you that you must shut the door of your breast and fortify your brow by often making the sign of the cross. Thus alone will the destroyer of Egypt find no place to attack you; thus alone will the first-born of your soul escape the fate of the first-born of the Egyptians; [Exod. 12:23, Exod. 12:20] thus alone will you be able with the prophet to say: ”my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp. [Ps.

57:7, Ps. 57:8] For, sin stricken as she is, even Tyre is bidden to take up her harp [Isa. 23:15, Isa. 23:16] and to do penance; like Peter she is told to wash away the stains of her former foulness with bitter tears. Howbeit, let us know nothing of penitence, lest the thought of it lead us into sin. It is a plank for those who have had the misfortune to be shipwrecked; but an inviolate virgin may hope to save the ship itself. For it is one thing to look for what you have cast away, and another to keep what you have never lost. Even the apostle kept under his body and brought it into subjection, lest having preached to others he might himself become a castaway.

[1 Cor. 9:27] Heated with the violence of sensual passion he made himself the spokesman of the human race: ”O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? and again, ”I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do; [Rom. 7:24, Rom. 7:18, Rom. 7:19] and once more: ”they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. [Rom. 8:8, Rom. 8:9]

10. After you have paid the most careful attention to your thoughts, you must then put on the armour of fasting and sing with David: ”I chastened my soul with fasting,” [Ps. 69:10] and ”I have eaten ashes like bread,” [Ps. 102:9] and ”as for me when they troubled me my clothing was sackcloth. [Ps. 35:13, Vulg] Eye was expelled from paradise because she had eaten of the forbidden fruit. Elijah on the other hand after forty days of fasting was carried in a fiery chariot into heaven. For forty days and forty nights Moses lived by the intimate converse which he had with God, thus proving in his own case the complete truth of the saying, ”man doth not live by bread only but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. [Deut. 8:3] The Saviour of the world, who in His virtues and His mode of life has left us an example to follow, [Joh. 13:15, 1 Pet. 2:21] was, immediately after His baptism, taken up by the spirit that He might contend with the devil, [Matt. 4:1] and after crushing him and overthrowing him might deliver him to his disciples to trample under foot. For what says the apostle? ”God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. [Rom. 16:20] And yet after the Saviour had fasted forty days, it was through food that the old enemy laid a snare for him, saying, ”If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

[Matt. 4:3] Under the law, in the seventh month after the blowing of trumpets and on the tenth day of the month, a fast was proclaimed for the whole Jewish people, and that soul was cut off from among his people which on that day preferred self-indulgence to self-denial. [Lev. 23:27, Lev. 23:29] In Job it is written of behemoth that ”his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. [Job 40:16. Cf. Letter XXII] Our foe uses the heat of youthful passion to tempt young men and maidens and ”sets on fire the wheel of our birth. [Jas. 3:6, R.V. marg] He thus fulfils

the words of Hosea, ”they are all adulterers, their heart is like an oven; [Hos. 7:4, Vulg] an oven which only God’s mercy and severe fasting can extinguish. These are ”the fiery darts” [Eph. 6:16] with which the devil wounds men and sets them on fire, and it was these which the king of Babylon used against the three children. But when he made his fire forty-nine cubits high he did but turn to his own ruin [Dan. 4:16, Dan. 4:25, Dan. 4:32] the seven weeks which the Lord had appointed for a time of salvation. [Lev. 25:8] And as then a fourth bearing a form like the son of God slackened the terrible heat [Dan. 3:25] and cooled the flames of the blazing fiery furnace, until, menacing as they looked, they became quite harmless, so is it now with the virgin soul.

The dew of heaven and severe fasting quench in a girl the flame of passion and enable her soul even in its earthly tenement to live the angelic life. Therefore the chosen vessel [Acts 9:15] declares that concerning virgins he has no commandment of the Lord. [1 Cor. 7:25] For you must act against nature or rather above nature if you are to forswear your natural function, to cut off your own root, to cull no fruit but that of virginity, to abjure the marriage-bed, to shun intercourse with men, and while in the body to live as though out of it.

11. I do not, however, lay on you as an obligation any extreme fasting or abnormal abstinence from food. Such practices soon break down weak constitutions and cause bodily sickness before they lay the foundations of a holy life. It is a maxim of the philosophers that virtues are means, and that all extremes are of the nature of vice; and it is in this sense that one of the seven wise men propounds the famous saw quoted in the comedy, ”In nothing too much.” You must not go on fasting until your heart begins to throb and your breath to fail and you have to be supported or carried by others. No; while curbing the desires of the flesh, you must keep sufficient strength to read scripture, to sing psalms, and to observe vigils. For fasting is not a complete virtue in itself but only a foundation on which other virtues may be built. The same may be said of sanctification and of that chastity without which no man shall see the Lord. [Heb. 12:14, R.V] Each of these is a step on the upward way, yet none of them by itself will avail to win the virgin’s crown. The gospel teaches us this in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins; the former of whom enter into the bridechamber of the bridegroom, while the latter are shut out from it because not having the oil of good works they allow their lamps to fail. [Matt. 25:1-12] This subject of fasting opens up a wide field in which I have often wandered myself, and many writers have devoted treatises to the subject. I must refer you to these if you wish to learn the advantages of self-restraint and on the other hand the evils of over-feeding.

12. Follow the example of your Spouse: [Luke 2:51] be subject to your grandmother and to your mother. Never look upon a man, especially upon a young man, except in their company. Never know a man whom they do not know. It is a maxim of the

world that the only sure friendship is one based on an identity of likes and dislikes. [Sall. Cat. 1:20] You have been taught by their example as well as instructed by the holy life of your home to aspire to virginity, to recognize the commandments of Christ, to know what is expedient for you and what course you ought to choose. But do not regard what is your own as absolutely your own. Remember that part of it belongs to those who have communicated their chastity to you and from whose honourable marriages and beds undefiled [Heb. 13:4] you have sprung up like a choice flower. For you are destined to produce perfect fruit if only you will humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, [1 Pet. 5:6] always remembering that it is written: ”God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.” [1 Pet. 5:5] Now where there is grace, this is not given in return for works but is the free gift of the giver, so that the apostles’ words are fulfilled: ”it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” [Rom. 9:16] And yet it is ours to will and not to will; and all the while the very liberty that is ours is only ours by the mercy of God.

13. Again in selecting for yourself eunuchs and maids and servingmen look rather to their characters than to their good looks; for, whatever their age or sex, and even if mutilation ensures in them a compulsory chastity, you must take account of their dispositions, for these cannot be operated on save by the fear of Christ. When you are present buffoonery and loose talk must find no place. You should never hear an improper word; if you do hear one, you must not be carried away by it. Abandoned men often make use of a single light expression to try the gates of chastity. Leave to worldlings the privileges of laughing and being laughed at. One who is in your position ought to be serious. Cato the Censor, in old time a leading man in your city, (the same who in his last days turned his attention to Greek literature without either blushing for himself as censor or despairing of success on account of his age) is said by Lucilius to have laughed only once in his life, and the same remark is made about Marcus Crassus. These men may have affected this austere mien to gain for themselves reputation and notoriety. For so long as we dwell in the tabernacle of this body and are enveloped with this fragile flesh, we can but restrain and regulate our affections and passions; we cannot wholly extirpate them. Knowing this the psalmist says: ”be ye angry and sin not;” [Ps. 4:4, LXX] which the apostle explains thus: ”let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” [Eph. 4:26] For, if to be angry is human, to put an end to one’s anger is Christian.

14. I think it unnecessary to warn you against covetousness since it is the way of your family both to have riches and to despise them. The apostle too tells us that covetousness is idolatry, [Eph. 5:5] and to one who asked the Lord the question: ”Good Master what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? He thus replied: ”If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. [Matt. 19:16, Matt. 19:21] Such is the climax of complete and apostolic virtue-to sell all that one

has and to distribute to the poor, [Luke 18:22. Cf. Letter CXIX] and thus freed from all earthly encumbrance to fly up to the heavenly realms with Christ. To us, or I should rather say to you, a careful stewardship is entrusted, although in such matters full freedom of choice is left to every individual, whether old or young. Christ's words are "if thou wilt be perfect. I do not compel you, He seems to say, I do not command you, but I set the palm before you, I shew you the prize; it is for you to choose whether you will enter the arena and win the crown. Let us consider how wisely Wisdom has spoken. "Sell that thou hast. To whom is the command given? Why, to him to whom it was said, "if thou wilt be perfect. Sell not a part of thy goods but "all that thou hast.

And when you have sold them, what then? "Give to the poor. Not to the rich, not to your kinsfolk, not to minister to self indulgence; but to relieve need. It does not matter whether a man is a priest or a relation or a connexion, you must think of nothing but his poverty. Let your praises come from the stomachs of the hungry and not from the rich banquets of the overfed. We read in the Acts of the Apostles how, while the blood of the Lord was still warm and believers were in the fervour of their first faith, they all sold their possessions and laid the price of them at the apostles' feet (to shew that money ought to be trampled underfoot) and "distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. [Acts 4:34, Acts 4:35] But Ananias and Sapphira proved timid stewards, and what is more, deceitful ones; therefore they brought on themselves condemnation. For having made a vow they offered their money to God as if it were their own and not His to whom they had vowed it; and keeping back for their own use a part of that which belonged to another, through fear of famine which true faith never fears, they drew down on themselves suddenly the avenging stroke, which was meant not in cruelty towards them but as a warning to others. [Acts 5:1-10] In fact the apostle Peter by no means called down death upon them as Porphyry foolishly says.

He merely announced God's judgment by the spirit of prophecy, that the doom of two persons might be a lesson to many. From the time of your dedication to perpetual virginity your property is yours no longer; or rather is now first truly yours because it has come to be Christ's. Yet while your grandmother and mother are living you must deal with it according to their wishes. If, however, they die and rest in the sleep of the saints (and I know that they desire that you should survive them); when your years are riper, and your will steadier, and your resolution stronger, you will do with your money what seems best to you, or rather what the Lord shall command, knowing as you will that hereafter you will have nothing save that which you have here spent on good works. Others may build churches, may adorn their walls when built with marbles, may procure massive columns, may deck the unconscious capitals with gold and precious ornaments, may cover church doors with silver and adorn the altars with gold and gems. I do not blame those who do these things; I do not repudiate them. Everyone must follow his own judgment. And it is

better to spend one's money thus than to hoard it up and brood over it. However your duty is of a different kind.

It is yours to clothe Christ in the poor, to visit Him in the sick, to feed Him in the hungry, to shelter Him in the homeless, particularly such as are of the household of faith, [Gal. 6:10] to support communities of virgins, to take care of God's servants, of those who are poor in spirit, who serve the same Lord as you day and night, who while they are on earth live the angelic life and speak only of the praises of God. Having food and raiment they rejoice and count themselves rich. They seek for nothing more, contented if only they can persevere in their design. For as soon as they begin to seek more they are shewn to be undeserving even of those things that are needful.

The preceding counsels have been addressed to a virgin who is wealthy and a lady of rank.

15. But what I am now going to say will be addressed to the virgin alone. I shall take into consideration, that is, not your circumstances but yourself. In addition to the rule of psalmody and prayer which you must always observe at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, at evening, at midnight, and at dawn, you should determine how much time you will bind yourself to give to the learning and reading of scripture, aiming to please and instruct the soul rather than to lay a burthen upon it. When you have spent your allotted time in these studies, often kneeling down to pray as care for your soul will impel you to do; have some wool always at hand, shape the threads into yarn with your thumb, attach them to the shuttle, and then throw this to weave a web, or roll up the yarn which others have spun or lay it out for the weavers. Examine their work when it is done, find fault with its defects, and arrange how much they are to do. If you busy yourself with these numerous occupations, you will never find your days long; however late the summer sun may be in setting, a day will always seem too short on which something remains undone. By observing such rules as these you will save yourself and others, you will set a good example as a mistress, and you will place to your credit the chastity of many. For the scripture says: "the soul of every idler is filled with desires.

[Prov. 13:4, LXX. comp. Letter CXXV] Nor may you excuse yourself from toil on the plea that God's bounty has left you in want of nothing. No; you must labour with the rest, that being always busy you may think only of the service of the Lord. I shall speak quite plainly. Even supposing that you give all your property to the poor, Christ will value nothing more highly than what you have wrought with your own hands. You may work for yourself or to set an example to your virgins; or you may make presents to your mother and grandmother to draw from them larger sums for the relief of the poor.

16. I have all but passed over the most important point of all. While you were still quite small, bishop Anastasius of holy and blessed memory ruled the Roman church. In his days a terrible storm of heresy came from the East and strove first to corrupt and then to undermine that simple faith which an apostle has praised. [Rom. 1:8] However the bishop, rich in poverty and as careful of his flock as an apostle, at once smote the noxious thing on the head, and stayed the hydra's hissing. Now I have reason to fear-in fact a report has reached me to this effect-that the poisonous germs of this heresy still live and sprout in the minds of some to this day. I think, therefore, that I ought to warn you, in all kindness and affection, to hold fast the faith of the saintly Innocent, the spiritual son of Anastasius and his successor in the apostolic see; and not to receive any foreign doctrine, however wise and discerning you may take yourself to be. Men of this type whisper in corners and pretend to inquire into the justice of God. Why, they ask, was a particular soul born in a particular province? What is the reason that some are born of Christian parents, others among wild beasts and savage tribes who have no knowledge of God? Wherever they can strike the simple with their scorpion-sting and form an ulcer fitted to their purpose, there they diffuse their venom.

"Is it for nothing, think you,"-thus they argue-"that a little child scarcely able to recognize its mother by a laugh or a look of joy, [Virg. Ecl. 4:60] which has done nothing either good or evil, is seized by a devil or overwhelmed with jaundice or doomed to bear afflictions which godless men escape, while God's servants have to bear them? Now if God's judgments, they say, are "true and righteous altogether," [Ps. 19:9] and if "there is no unrighteousness in Him," [Ps. 92:15] we are compelled by reason to believe that our souls have pre-existed in heaven, that they are condemned to and, if I may so say, buried in human bodies because of some ancient sins, and that we are punished in this valley of weeping [Ps. 84:6, R.V] for old misdeeds. This according to them is the prophet's reason for saying: "Before I was afflicted I went astray," [Ps. 119:67] and again, "Bring my soul out of prison. [Ps. 142:7] They explain in the same way the question of the disciples in the gospel: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? [John 9:2] and other similar passages.

This godless and wicked teaching was formerly ripe in Egypt and the East; and now it lurks secretly like a viper in its hole among many persons in those parts, defiling the purity of the faith and gradually creeping on like an inherited disease till it assails a large number. But I am sure that if you hear it you will not accept it. For you have preceptresses under God whose faith is a rule of sound doctrine. You will understand what I mean, for God will give you understanding in all things. You must not ask me on the spot to give you a refutation of this dreadful heresy and of others worse still; for were I to do so I should "criticize where I ought to forbid," and my present object is not to refute heretics but to instruct a virgin. However, I have defeated their wiles and counterworked their efforts to undermine the truth

in a treatise which by God's help I have written; and if you desire to have this, I shall send it to you promptly and with pleasure. I say, if you desire to have it, for as the proverb says, wares proffered unasked are little esteemed, and a plentiful supply brings down prices, which are always highest where scarcity prevails.

17. Men often discuss the comparative merits of life in solitude and life in a community; and the preference is usually given to the first over the second. Still even for men there is always the risk that, being withdrawn from the society of their fellows, they may become exposed to unclean and godless imaginations, and in the fulness of their arrogance and disdain may look down upon everyone but themselves, and may arm their tongues to detract from the clergy or from those who like themselves are bound by the vows of a solitary life. Of such it is well said by the psalmist, "as for the children of men their teeth are spears and arrows and their tongue a sharp sword. [Ps. 57:4] Now if all this is true of men, how much more does it apply to women whose fickle and vacillating minds, if left to their own devices, soon degenerate. I am myself acquainted with anchorites of both sexes who by excessive fasting have so impaired their faculties that they do not know what to do or where to turn, when to speak or when to be silent. Most frequently those who have been so affected have lived in solitary cells, cold and damp. Moreover if persons untrained in secular learning read the works of able church writers, they only acquire from them a wordy fluency and not, as they might do, a fuller knowledge of the scriptures.

The old saying is found true of them, although they have not the wit to speak, they cannot remain silent. They teach to others the scriptures that they do not understand themselves; and if they are fortunate enough to convince them, they take upon themselves airs as men of learning. In fact, they set up as instructors of the ignorant before they have gone to school themselves. It is a good thing therefore to defer to one's betters, to obey those set over one, to learn not only from the scriptures but from the example of others how one ought to order one's life, and not to follow that worst of teachers, one's own self-confidence. Of women who are thus presumptuous the apostle says that they "are carried about with every wind of doctrine, [Eph. 4:14] ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. [2 Tim. 3:7]

18. Avoid the company of married women who are devoted to their husbands and to the world, that your mind may not become unsettled by hearing what a husband says to his wife, or a wife to her husband. Such conversations are filled with deadly venom. To express his condemnation of them the apostle has taken a verse of a profane writer and has pressed it into the service of the church. It may be literally rendered at the expense of the metre: "evil communications corrupt good manners." No; you should choose for your companions staid and serious women, particularly widows and virgins, persons of approved conversation, of few words,

and of a holy modesty. Shun gay and thoughtless girls, who deck their heads and wear their hair in fringes, who use cosmetics to improve their skins and affect tight sleeves, dresses without a crease, and dainty buskins; and by pretending to be virgins more easily sell themselves into destruction. Moreover, the character and tastes of a mistress are often inferred from the behaviour of her attendants. Regard as fair and lovable and a fitting companion one who is unconscious of her good looks and careless of her appearance; who does not expose her breast out of doors or throw back her cloak to reveal her neck; who veils all of her face except her eyes, and only uses these to find her way.

19. I hesitate about what I am going to say but, as often happens, whether I like it or not, it must be said; not that I have reason to fear anything of the kind in your case, for probably you know nothing of such things and have never even heard of them, but that in advising you I may warn others. A virgin should avoid as so many plagues and banes of chastity all ringletted youths who curl their hair and scent themselves with musk; to whom may well be applied the words of Petronius Arbiter, ”too much perfume makes an ill perfume.” I need not speak of those who by their pertinacious visits to virgins bring discredit both on themselves and on these; for, even if nothing wrong is done by them, no wrong can be imagined greater than to find oneself exposed to the calumnies and attacks of the heathen. I do not here speak of all, but only of those whom the church itself rebukes, whom sometimes it expels, and against whom the censure of bishops and presbyters is not seldom directed. For, as it is, it is almost more dangerous for giddy girls to shew themselves in the abodes of religion than even to walk abroad. Virgins who live in communities and of whom large numbers are assembled together, should never go out by themselves or unaccompanied by their mother. A hawk often singles out one of a flight of doves, pounces on it and tears it open till it is gorged with its flesh and blood. Sick sheep stray from the flock and fall into the jaws of wolves. I know some saintly virgins who on holy days keep at home to avoid the crowds and refuse to go out when they must either take a strong escort, or altogether avoid all public places.

It is about thirty years since I published a treatise on the preservation of virginity, in which I felt constrained to oppose certain vices and to lay bare the wiles of the devil for the instruction of the virgin to whom it was addressed. My language then gave offence to a great many, for everyone applied what I said to himself and instead of welcoming my admonitions turned away from me as an accuser of his deeds. Was it any use, do you ask, thus to arm a host of remonstrants and to show by my complaints the wounds which my conscience received? Yes, I answer, for, while they have passed away, my book still remains. I have also written short exhortations to several virgins and widows, and in these smaller works I have gathered together all that there is to be said on the subject. So that I am reduced to the alternative of repeating exhortations which seem superfluous or of omitting them

to the serious injury of this treatise. The blessed Cyprian has left a noble work on virginity; and many other writers, both Greek and Latin, have done the same. Indeed the virginal life has been praised both with tongue and pen among all nations and particularly among the churches. Most, however, of those who have written on the subject have addressed themselves to such as have not yet chosen virginity, and who need help to enable them to choose aright. But I and those to whom I write have made our choice;

and our one object is to remain constant to it. Therefore, as our way lies among scorpions and adders, among snares and banes, let us go forward staff in hand, our loins girded and our feet shod; [Exod. 12:11] that so we may come to the sweet waters of the true Jordan, and enter the land of promise and go up to the house of God. Then shall we sing with the prophet: ”Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thine honour dwelleth; [Ps. 26:8] and again: ”one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. [Ps. 27:4]

Happy is the soul, happy is the virgin in whose heart there is room for no other love than the love of Christ. For in Himself He is wisdom and chastity, patience and justice and every other virtue. Happy too is she who can recall a man’s face without the least sigh of regret, and who has no desire to set eyes on one whom, after she has seen him, she may find herself unwilling to give up. Some there are, however, who by their ill-behaviour bring discredit on the holy profession of virginity and upon the glory of the heavenly and angelic company who have made it. These must be frankly told either to marry if they cannot contain, or to contain if they will not marry. It is also a matter for laughter or rather for tears, that when mistresses walk abroad they are preceded by maids better dressed than themselves; indeed so usual has this become that, if of two women you see one less neat than the other, you take her for the mistress as a matter of course. And yet these maids are professed virgins. Again not a few virgins choose sequestered dwellings where they will not he under the eyes of others, in order that they may live more freely than they otherwise could do. They take baths, do what they please, and try as much as they can to escape notice. We see these things and yet we put up with them; in fact, if we catch sight of the glitter of gold, we are ready to account of them as good works.

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

Letter 131. From Augustine.

At the suggestion of Jerome, Marcellinus (for whom see Letter 126.) had consulted Augustine on the difficult question of the origin of the soul but had failed to get any definite opinion from this latter. Augustine now writes to Jerome confessing his inability to decide the question and asking for advice upon it. He begins by reciting-and justifying-his own belief that the soul is immortal and incorporeal and that its fall into sin is due not to God but to its own free choice. He then goes on to say that he is quite ready to accept creationism as a solution of the difficulty if Jerome will shew him how this theory is reconcilable with the church's condemnation of Pelagius and its assertion of the doctrine of original sin. The damnation of unbaptized infants is assumed throughout. The date of the letter is 415 a.d. Sometimes numbered as Augustine letter 166.

A Treatise on the Origin of the Human Soul, Addressed to Jerome.

1. Unto our God, who has called us unto His kingdom and glory, [1 Thessalonians 2:12] I have prayed, and pray now, that what I write to you, holy brother Jerome, asking your opinion in regard to things of which I am ignorant, may by His good pleasure be profitable to us both. For although in addressing you I consult one much older than myself, nevertheless I also am becoming old; but I cannot think that it is at anytime of life too late to learn what we need to know, because, although it is more fitting that old men should be teachers than learners, it is nevertheless more fitting for them to learn than to continue ignorant of that which they should teach to others. I assure you that, amid the many disadvantages which I have to submit to in studying very difficult questions, there is none which grieves me more than the circumstance of separation from your Charity by a distance so great that I can scarcely send a letter to you, and scarcely receive one from you, even at intervals, not of days nor of months, but of several years; whereas my desire would be, if it were possible, to have you daily beside me, as one with whom I could converse on any theme. Nevertheless, although I have not been able to do all that I wished, I am not the less bound to do all that I can.

2. Behold, a religious young man has come to me, by name Orosius, who is in the bond of Catholic peace a brother, in point of age a son, and in honour a fellow pres-

byter — a man, of quick understanding, ready speech, and burning zeal, desiring to be in the Lord's house a vessel rendering useful service in refuting those false and pernicious doctrines, through which the souls of men in Spain have suffered much more grievous wounds than have been inflicted on their bodies by the sword of barbarians. For from the remote western coast of Spain he has come with eager haste to us, having been prompted to do this by the report that from me he could learn whatever he wished on the subjects on which he desired information. Nor has his coming been altogether in vain. In the first place, he has learned not to believe all that report affirmed of me: in the next place, I have taught him all that I could, and, as for the things in which I could not teach him, I have told him from whom he may learn them, and have exhorted him to go on to you. As he received this counsel or rather injunction of mine with pleasure, and with intention to comply with it, I asked him to visit us on his way home to his own country when he comes from you.

On receiving his promise to this effect, I believed that the Lord had granted me an opportunity of writing to you regarding certain things which I wish through you to learn. For I was seeking some one whom I might send to you, and it was not easy to fall in with one qualified both by trustworthiness in performing and by alacrity in undertaking the work, as well as by experience in travelling. Therefore, when I became acquainted with this young man, I could not doubt that he was exactly such a person as I was asking from the Lord.

3. Allow me, therefore, to bring before you a subject which I beseech you not to refuse to open up and discuss with me. Many are perplexed by questions concerning the soul, and I confess that I myself am of this number. I shall in this letter, in the first place, state explicitly the things regarding the soul which I most assuredly believe, and shall, in the next place, bring forward the things regarding which I am still desirous of explanation. The soul of man is in a sense proper to itself immortal. It is not absolutely immortal, as God is, of whom it is written that He "alone has immortality," [1 Timothy 6:16] for Holy Scripture makes mention of deaths to which the soul is liable — as in the saying, "Let the dead bury their dead;" [Matthew 8:22] but because when alienated from the life of God it so dies as not wholly to cease from living in its own nature, it is found to be from a certain cause mortal, yet so as to be not without reason called at the same time immortal.

The soul is not a part of God. For if it were, it would be absolutely immutable and incorruptible, in which case it could neither go downward to be worse, nor go onward to be better; nor could it either begin to have anything in itself which it had not before, or cease to have anything which it had within the sphere of its own experience. But how different the actual facts of the case are is a point requiring no evidence from without, it is acknowledged by every one who consults his own consciousness. In vain, moreover, is it pleaded by those who affirm that the soul

is a part of God, that the corruption and baseness which we see in the worst of men, and the weakness and blemishes which we see in all men, come to it not from the soul itself, but from the body; for what matters it whence the infirmity originates in that which, if it were indeed immutable, could not, from any quarter whatever, be made infirm? For that which is truly immutable and incorruptible is not liable to mutation or corruption by any influence whatever from without, else the invulnerability which the fable ascribed to the flesh of Achilles would be nothing peculiar to him, but the property of every man, so long as no accident befell him. That which is liable to be changed in any manner, by any cause, or in any part whatever, is therefore not by nature immutable; but it were impiety to think of God as otherwise than truly and supremely immutable: therefore the soul is not a part of God.

4. That the soul is immaterial is a fact of which I avow myself to be fully persuaded, although men of slow understanding are hard to be convinced that it is so. To secure myself, however, from either unnecessarily causing to others or unreasonably bringing upon myself a controversy about an expression, let me say that, since the thing itself is beyond question, it is needless to contend about mere terms. If matter be used as a term denoting everything which in any form has a separate existence, whether it be called an essence, or a substance, or by another name, the soul is material. Again, if you choose to apply the epithet immaterial only to that nature which is supremely immutable and is everywhere present in its entirety, the soul is material, for it is not at all endowed with such qualities. But if matter be used to designate nothing but that which, whether at rest or in motion, has some length, breadth, and height, so that with a greater part of itself it occupies a greater part of space, and with a smaller part a smaller space, and is in every part of it less than the whole, then the soul is not material.

For it pervades the whole body which it animates, not by a local distribution of parts, but by a certain vital influence, being at the same moment present in its entirety in all parts of the body, and not less in smaller parts and greater in larger parts, but here with more energy and there with less energy, it is in its entirety present both in the whole body and in every part of it. For even that which the mind perceives in only a part of the body is nevertheless not otherwise perceived than by the whole mind; for when any part of the living flesh is touched by a fine pointed instrument, although the place affected is not only not the whole body, but scarcely discernible in its surface, the contact does not escape the entire mind, and yet the contact is felt not over the whole body, but only at the one point where it takes place. How comes it, then, that what takes place in only a part of the body is immediately known to the whole mind, unless the whole mind is present at that part, and at the same time not deserting all the other parts of the body in order to be present in its entirety at this one? For all the other parts of the body in which no such contact takes place are still living by the soul being present with them.

And if a similar contact takes place in the other parts, and the contact occur in both parts simultaneously, it would in both cases alike be known at the same moment, to the whole mind. Now this presence of the mind in all parts of the body at the same moment, so that in every part of the body the whole mind is at the same moment present, would be impossible if it were distributed over these parts in the same way as we see matter distributed in space, occupying less space with a smaller portion of itself, and greater space with a greater portion. If, therefore, mind is to be called material, it is not material in the same sense as earth, water, air, and ether are material. For all things composed of these elements are larger in larger places, or smaller in smaller places, and none of them is in its entirety present at any part of itself, but the dimensions of the material substances are according to the dimensions of the space occupied. Whence it is perceived that the soul, whether it be termed material or immaterial, has a certain nature of its own, created from a substance superior to the elements of this world — a substance which cannot be truly conceived of by any representation of the material images perceived by the bodily senses, but which is apprehended by the understanding and discovered to our consciousness by its living energy.

These things I am stating, not with the view of teaching you what you already know, but in order that I may declare explicitly what I hold as indisputably certain concerning the soul, lest any one should think, when I come to state the questions to which I desire answers, that I hold none of the doctrines which we have learned from science or from revelation concerning the soul.

5. I am, moreover, fully persuaded that the soul has fallen into sin, not through the fault of God, nor through any necessity either in the divine nature or in its own, but by its own free will; and that it can be delivered from the body of this death neither by the strength of its own will, as if that were in itself sufficient to achieve this, nor by the death of the body itself, but only by the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ; [Romans 7:24-25] and that there is not one soul in the human family to whose salvation the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, is not absolutely necessary. Every soul, moreover, which may at any age whatsoever depart from this life without the grace of the Mediator and the sacrament of this grace, departs to future punishment, and shall receive again its own body at the last judgment as a partner in punishment. But if the soul after its natural generation, which was derived from Adam, be regenerated in Christ, it belongs to His fellowship, and shall not only have rest after the death of the body, but also receive again its own body as a partner in glory. These are truths concerning the soul which I hold most firmly.

6. Permit me now, therefore, to bring before you the question which I desire to have solved, and do not reject me; so may He not reject you who condescended to be rejected for our sakes! I ask where can the soul, even of an infant snatched

away by death, have contracted the guilt which, unless the grace of Christ has come to the rescue by that sacrament of baptism which is administered even to infants, involves it in condemnation? I know you are not one of those who have begun of late to utter certain new and absurd opinions, alleging that there is no guilt derived from Adam which is removed by baptism in the case of infants. If I knew that you held this view, or, rather, if I did not know that you reject it, I would certainly neither address this question to you, nor think that it ought to be put to you at all. Since, however, we hold on this subject the opinion consonant with the immoveable Catholic faith, which you have yourself expressed when, refuting the absurd sayings of Jovinian, you have quoted this sentence from the book of Job: "In your sight, no one is clean, not even the infant, whose time of life on earth is a single day," adding, "for we are held guilty in the similitude of Adam's transgression," — an opinion which your book on Jonah's prophecy declares in a notable and lucid manner, where you affirm that the little children of Nineveh were justly compelled to fast along with the people, because merely of their original sin, — it is not unsuitable that I should address to you the question — where has the soul contracted the guilt from which, even at that age, it must be delivered by the sacrament of Christian grace?

7. Some years ago, when I wrote certain books concerning Free Will, which have gone forth into the hands of many, and are now in the possession of very many readers, after referring to these four opinions as to the manner of the soul's incarnation —(1) that all other souls are derived from the one which was given to the first man; (2) that for each individual a new soul is made; (3) that souls already in existence somewhere are sent by divine act into the bodies; or (4) glide into them of their own accord, I thought that it was necessary to treat them in such a way that, whichever of them might be true, the decision should not hinder the object which I had in view when contending with all my might against those who attempt to lay upon God the blame of a nature endowed with its own principle of evil, namely, the Manichæans; for at that time I had not heard of the Priscillianists, who utter blasphemies not very dissimilar to these.

As to the fifth opinion, namely, that the soul is a part of God — an opinion which, in order to omit none, you have mentioned along with the rest in your letter to Marcellinus (a man of pious memory and very dear to us in the grace of Christ), who had consulted you on this question, — I did not add it to the others for two reasons, first — because, in examining this opinion, we discuss not the incarnation of the soul, but its nature; secondly, because this is the view held by those against whom I was arguing, and the main design of my argument was to prove that the blameless and inviolable nature of the Creator has nothing to do with the faults and blemishes of the creature, while they, on their part, maintained that the substance of the good God itself is, in so far as it is led captive, corrupted and oppressed and brought under a necessity of sinning by the substance of evil, to which they ascribe

a proper dominion and principalities. Leaving, therefore, out of the question this heretical error, I desire to know which of the other four opinions we ought to choose. For whichever of them may justly claim our preference, far be it from us to assail this article of faith, about which we have no uncertainty, that every soul, even the soul of an infant, requires to be delivered from the binding guilt of sin, and that there is no deliverance except through Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

8. To avoid prolixity, therefore, let me refer to the opinion which you, I believe, entertain, viz. that God even now makes each soul for each individual at the time of birth. To meet the objection to this view which might be taken from the fact that God finished the whole work of creation on the sixth day and rested on the seventh day, you quote the testimony of the words in the gospel, "My Father works hitherto, and I work." [John 5:17] This you have written in your letter to Marcellinus, in which letter, moreover, you have most kindly condescended to mention my name, saying that he had me here in Africa, who could more easily explain to him the opinion held by you. But had I been able to do this, he would not have applied for instruction to you, who were so remote from him, though perhaps he did not write from Africa to you. For I know not when he wrote it; I only know that he knew well my hesitation to embrace any definite view on this subject, for which reason he preferred to write to you without consulting me. Yet, even if he had consulted me, I would rather have encouraged him to write to you, and would have expressed my gratitude for the benefit which might have been conferred on us all, had you not preferred to send a brief note, instead of a full reply, doing this, I suppose, to save yourself from unnecessary expenditure of effort in a place where I, whom you supposed to be thoroughly acquainted with the subject of his inquiries, was at hand. Behold, I am willing that the opinion which you hold should be also mine; but I assure you that as yet I have not embraced it.

9. You have sent to me scholars, to whom you wish me to impart what I have not yet learned myself. Teach me, therefore, what I am to teach them; for many urge me vehemently to be a teacher on this subject, and to them I confess that of this, as well as of many other things, I am ignorant, and perhaps, though they maintain a respectful demeanour in my presence, they say among themselves: "Are you a master in Israel, and know not these things?" [John 3:10] a rebuke which the Lord gave to one who belonged to the class of men who delighted in being called Rabbi; which was also the reason of his coming by night to the true Teacher, because perchance he, who had been accustomed to teach, blushed to take the learner's place. But, for my own part, it gives me much more pleasure to hear instruction from another, than to be myself listened to as a teacher. For I remember what He said to those whom, above all men, He had chosen: "But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ." [Matthew 23:8] Nor was it any other teacher who taught Moses by Jethro, [Exodus 18:14-25] Cornelius by Peter the earlier apostle, [Acts 10:25-48] and Peter himself by Paul the later apostle; [Galatians 2:11-21] for

by whomsoever truth is spoken, it is spoken by the gift of Him who is the Truth. What if the reason of our still being ignorant of these things, and of our having failed to discover them, even after praying, reading, thinking, and reasoning, be this: that full proof may be made not only of the love with which we give instruction to the ignorant, but also of the humility with which we receive instruction from the learned?

10. Teach me, therefore, I beseech you, what I may teach to others; teach me what I ought to hold as my own opinion; and tell me this: if souls are from day to day made for each individual separately at birth, where, in the case of infant children, is sin committed by these souls, so that they require the remission of sin in the sacrament of Christ, because of sinning in Adam from whom the sinful flesh has been derived? Or if they do not sin, how is it compatible with the justice of the Creator, that, because of their being united to mortal members derived from another, they are so brought under the bond of the sin of that other, that unless they be rescued by the Church, perdition overtakes them, although it is not in their own power to secure that they be rescued by the grace of baptism? Where, therefore, is the justice of the condemnation of so many thousands of souls, which in the deaths of infant children leave this world without the benefit of the Christian sacrament, if being newly created they have, not through any preceding sin of their own, but by the will of the Creator, become severally united to the individual bodies to animate which they were created and bestowed by Him, who certainly knew that every one of them was destined, not through any fault of its own, to leave the body without receiving the baptism of Christ?

Seeing, therefore, that we may not say concerning God either that He compels them to become sinners, or that He punishes innocent souls and seeing that, on the other hand, it is not lawful for us to deny that nothing else than perdition is the doom of the souls, even of little children, which have departed from the body without the sacrament of Christ, tell me, I implore you, where anything can be found to support the opinion that souls are not all derived from that one soul of the first man, but are each created separately for each individual, as Adam’s soul was made for him.

11. As for some other objections which are advanced against this opinion, I think that I could easily dispose of them. For example, some think that they urge a conclusive argument against this opinion when they ask, how God finished all His works on the sixth day and rested on the seventh day, [Genesis 2:2] if He is still creating new souls. If we meet them with the quotation from the gospel (given by you in the letter to Marcellinus already mentioned), ”My Father works hitherto,” they answer that He ”works” in maintaining those natures which He has created, not in creating new natures; otherwise, this statement would contradict the words of Scripture in Genesis, where it is most plainly declared that God finished all His

works. Moreover, the words of Scripture, that He rested, are unquestionably to be understood of His resting from creating new creatures, not from governing those which He had created; for at that time He made things which previously did not exist, and from making these He rested because He had finished all the creatures which before they existed He saw necessary to be created, so that thenceforward He did not create and make things which previously did not exist, but made and fashioned out of things already existing whatever He did make. Thus the statements, "He rested from His works," and, "He works hitherto," are both true, for the gospel could not contradict Genesis.

12. When, however, these things are brought forward by persons who advance them as conclusive against the opinion that God now creates new souls as He created the soul of the first man, and who hold either that He forms them from that one soul which existed before He rested from creation, or that He now sends them forth into bodies from some reservoir or storehouse of souls which He then created, it is easy to turn aside their argument by answering, that even in the six days God formed many things out of those natures which He had already created, as, for example, the birds and fishes were formed from the waters, and the trees, the grass, and the animals from the earth, and yet it is undeniable that He was then making things which did not exist before. For there existed previously no bird, no fish, no tree, no animal, and it is clearly understood that He rested from creating those things which previously were not, and were then created, that is to say, He ceased in this sense, that, after that, nothing was made by Him which did not already exist.

But if, rejecting the opinions of all who believe either that God sends forth into men souls existing already in some incomprehensible reservoir, or that He makes souls emanate like drops of dew from Himself as particles of His own substance, or that He brings them forth from that one soul of the first man, or that He binds them in the fetters of the bodily members because of sins committed in a prior state of existence, if, I say, rejecting these, we affirm that for each individual He creates separately a new soul when he is born, we do not herein affirm that He makes anything which he had not already made. For He had already made man after His own image on the sixth day; and this work of His is unquestionably to be understood with reference to the rational soul of man. The same work He still does, not in creating what did not exist, but in multiplying what already existed. Wherefore it is true, on the one hand, that He rested from creating things which previously did not exist, and equally true, on the other hand, that He continues still to work, not only in governing what He has made, but also in making (not anything which did not previously exist, but) a larger number of those creatures which He had already made.

Wherefore, either by such an explanation, or by any other which may seem better, we escape from the objection advanced by those who would make the fact that God

rested from His works a conclusive argument against our believing that new souls are still being daily created, not from the first soul, but in the same manner as it was made.

13. Again, as for another objection, stated in the question, "Wherefore does He create souls for those whom He knows to be destined to an early death? we may reply, that by the death of the children the sins of the parents are either reproved or chastised. We may, moreover, with all propriety, leave these things to the disposal of the Lord of all, for we know that he appoints to the succession of events in time, and therefore to the births and deaths of living creatures as included in these, a course which is consummate in beauty and perfect in the arrangement of all its parts; whereas we are not capable of perceiving those things by the perception of which, if it were attainable, we should be soothed with an ineffable, tranquil joy. For not in vain has the prophet, taught by divine inspiration, declared concerning God, "He brings forth in measured harmonies the course of time. For which reason music, the science or capacity of correct harmony, has been given also by the kindness of God to mortals having reasonable souls, with a view to keep them in mind of this great truth.

For if a man, when composing a song which is to suit a particular melody, knows how to distribute the length of time allowed to each word so as to make the song flow and pass on in most beautiful adaptation to the ever-changing notes of the melody, how much more shall God, whose wisdom is to be esteemed as infinitely transcending human arts, make infallible provision that not one of the spaces of time alloted to natures that are born and die — spaces which are like the words and syllables of the successive epochs of the course of time — shall have, in what we may call the sublime psalm of the vicissitudes of this world, a duration either more brief or more protracted than the foreknown and predetermined harmony requires! For when I may speak thus with reference even to the leaves of every tree, and the number of the hairs upon our heads, how much more may I say it regarding the birth and death of men, seeing that every man's life on earth continues for a time, which is neither longer nor shorter than God knows to be in harmony with the plan according to which He rules the universe.

14. As to the assertion that everything which has begun to exist in time is incapable of immortality, because all things which are born die, and all things which have grown decay through age, and the opinion which they affirm to follow necessarily from this, viz. that the soul of man must owe its immortality to its having been created before time began, this does not disturb my faith; for, passing over other examples, which conclusively dispose of this assertion, I need only refer to the body of Christ, which now "dies no more; death shall have no more dominion over it." [Romans 6:9]

15. Moreover, as to your remark in your book against Ruffinus, that some bring forward as against this opinion that souls are created for each individual separately at birth the objection that it seems worthy of God that He should give souls to the offspring of adulterers, and who accordingly attempt to build on this a theory that souls may possibly be incarcerated, as it were, in such bodies, to suffer for the deeds of a life spent in some prior state of being, — this objection does not disturb me, as many things by which it may be answered occur to me when I consider it. The answer which you yourself have given, saying, that in the case of stolen wheat, there is no fault in the grain, but only in him who stole it, and that the earth is not under obligation to refuse to cherish the seed because the sower may have cast it in with a hand defiled by dishonesty, is a most felicitous illustration. But even before I had read it, I felt that to me the objection drawn from the offspring of adulterers caused no serious difficulty when I took a general view of the fact that God brings many good things to light, even out of our evils and our sins. Now, the creation of any living creature compels every one who considers it with piety and wisdom to give to the Creator praise which words cannot express;

and if this praise is called forth by the creation of any living creature whatsoever, how much more is it called forth by the creation of a man! If, therefore, the cause of any act of creative power be sought for, no shorter or better reply can be given than that every creature of God is good. And [so far from such an act being unworthy of God] what is more worthy of Him than that He, being good, should make those good things which, no one else than God alone can make?

16. These things, and others which I can advance, I am accustomed to state, as well as I can, against those who attempt to overthrow by such objections the opinion that souls are made for each individual, as the first man’s soul was made for him.

But when we come to the penal sufferings of infants, I am embarrassed, believe me, by great difficulties, and am wholly at a loss to find an answer by which they are solved; and I speak here not only of those punishments in the life to come, which are involved in that perdition to which they must be drawn down if they depart from the body without the sacrament of Christian grace, but also of the sufferings which are to our sorrow endured by them before our eyes in this present life, and which are so various, that time rather than examples would fail me if I were to attempt to enumerate them. They are liable to wasting disease, to racking pain, to the agonies of thirst and hunger, to feebleness of limbs, to privation of bodily senses, and to vexing assaults of unclean spirits. Surely it is incumbent on us to show how it is compatible with justice that infants suffer all these things without any evil of their own as the procuring cause. For it would be impious to say, either that these things take place without God’s knowledge, or that He cannot resist those who cause them, or that He unrighteously does these things, or permits them to be done.

We are warranted in saying that irrational animals are given by God to serve creatures possessing a higher nature, even though they be wicked, as we see most plainly in the gospel that the swine of the Gadarenes were given to the legion of devils at their request; but could we ever be warranted in saying this of men? Certainly not. Man is, indeed, an animal, but an animal endowed with reason, though mortal. In his members dwells a reasonable soul, which in these severe afflictions is enduring a penalty. Now God is good, God is just, God is omnipotent— none but a madman would doubt that he is so; let the great sufferings, therefore, which infant children experience be accounted for by some reason compatible with justice. When older people suffer such trials, we are accustomed, certainly, to say, either that their worth is being proved, as in Job's case, or that their wickedness is being punished, as in Herod's; and from some examples, which it has pleased God to make perfectly clear, men are enabled to conjecture the nature of others which are more obscure; but this is in regard to persons of mature age. Tell me, therefore, what we must answer in regard to infant children; is it true that, although they suffer so great punishments, there are no sins in them deserving to be punished? For, of course, there is not in them at that age any righteousness requiring to be put to the proof.

17. What shall I say, moreover, as to the [difficulty which besets the theory of the creation of each soul separately at the birth of the individual in connection with the] diversity of talent in different souls, and especially the absolute privation of reason in some? This is, indeed, not apparent in the first stages of infancy, but being developed continuously from the beginning of life, it becomes manifest in children, of whom some are so slow and defective in memory that they cannot learn even the letters of the alphabet, and some (commonly called idiots) so imbecile that they differ very little from the beasts of the field. Perhaps I am told, in answer to this, that the bodies are the cause of these imperfections. But surely the opinion which we wish to see vindicated from objection does not require us to affirm that the soul chose for itself the body which so impairs it, and, being deceived in the choice, committed a blunder; or that the soul, when it was compelled, as a necessary consequence of being born, to enter into some body, was hindered from finding another by crowds of souls occupying the other bodies before it came, so that, like a man who takes whatever seat may remain vacant for him in a theatre, the soul was guided in taking possession of the imperfect body not by its choice, but by its circumstances. We, of course, cannot say and ought not to believe such things. Tell us, therefore, what we ought to believe and to say in order to vindicate from this difficulty the theory that for each individual body a new soul is specially created.

18. In my books on Free Will, already referred to, I have said something, not in regard to the variety of capacities in different souls, but, at least, in regard to the pains which infant children suffer in this life. The nature of the opinion which

I there expressed, and the reason why it is insufficient for the purposes of our present inquiry, I will now submit to you, and will put into this letter a copy of the passage in the third book to which I refer. It is as follows:— "In connection with the bodily sufferings experienced by the little children who, by reason of their tender age, have no sins— if the souls which animate them did not exist before they were born into the human family— a more grievous and, as it were, compassionate complaint is very commonly made in the remark, 'What evil have they done that they should suffer these things?' as if there could be a meritorious innocence in any one before the time at which it is possible for him to do anything wrong!

Moreover, if God accomplishes, in any measure, the correction of the parents when they are chastised by the sufferings or by the death of the children that are dear to them, is there any reason why these things should not take place, seeing that, after they are passed, they will be, to those who experienced them, as if they had never been, while the persons on whose account they were inflicted will either become better, being moved by the rod of temporal afflictions to choose a better mode of life, or be left without excuse under the punishment awarded at the coming judgment, if, notwithstanding the sorrows of this life, they have refused to turn their desires towards eternal life? Morever, who knows what may be given to the little children by means of whose sufferings the parents have their obdurate hearts subdued, or their faith exercised, or their compassion proved? Who knows what good recompense God may, in the secret of his judgments, reserve for these little ones? For although they have done no righteous action, nevertheless, being free from any transgression of their own, they have suffered these trials. It is certainly not without reason that the Church exalts to the honourable rank of martyrs those children who were slain when Herod sought our Lord Jesus Christ to put Him to death."

19. These things I wrote at that time when I was endeavouring to defend the opinion which is now under discussion. For, as I mentioned shortly before, I was labouring to prove that whichever of these four opinions regarding the soul's incarnation may be found true, the substance of the Creator is absolutely free from blame, and is completely removed from all share in our sins. And, therefore, whichever of these opinions might come to be established or demolished by the truth, this had no bearing on the object aimed at in the work which I was then attempting, seeing that whichever opinion might win the victory over all the rest, after they had been examined in a more thorough discussion, this would take place without causing me any disquietude, because my object then was to prove that, even admitting all these opinions, the doctrine maintained by me remained unshaken. But now my object is, by the force of sound reasoning, to select, if possible, one opinion out of the four; and, therefore, when I carefully consider the words now quoted from that book, I do not see that the arguments there used in defending the opinion which we are now discussing are valid and conclusive.

20. For what may be called the chief prop of my defense is in the sentence, ”Moreover, who knows what may be given to the little children, by means of whose sufferings the parents have their obdurate hearts subdued, or their faith exercised, or their compassion proved? Who knows what good recompense God may, in the secret of His judgments, reserve for these little ones?” I see that this is not an unwarranted conjecture in the case of infants who, in any way, suffer (though they know it not) for the sake of Christ and in the cause of true religion, and of infants who have already been made partakers of the sacrament of Christ; because, apart from union to the one Mediator, they cannot be delivered from condemnation, and so put in a position in which it is even possible that a recompense could be made to them for the evils which, in diverse afflictions, they have endured in this world. But since the question cannot be fully solved, unless the answer include also the case of those who, without having received the sacrament of Christian fellowship, die in infancy after enduring the most painful sufferings, what recompense can be conceived of in their case, seeing that, besides all that they suffer in this life, perdition awaits them in the life to come? As to the baptism of infants, I have, in the same book, given an answer, not, indeed, fully, but so far as seemed necessary for the work which then occupied me, proving that it profits children, even though they do not know what it is, and have, as yet, no faith of their own; but on the subject of the perdition of those infants who depart from this life without baptism, I did not think it necessary to say anything then, because the question under discussion was different from that with which we are now engaged.

21. If, however, we pass over and make no account of those sufferings which are of brief continuance, and which, when endured, are not to be repeated, we certainly cannot, in like manner, make no account of the fact that ”by one man death came, and by one man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. [1 Corinthians 15:21-22] For, according to this apostolic, divine, and perspicuous declaration, it is sufficiently plain that no one goes to death otherwise than through Adam, and that no one goes to life eternal otherwise than through Christ. For this is the force of all in the two parts of the sentence; as all men, by their first, that is, their natural birth, belong to Adam, even so all men, whoever they be, who come to Christ come to the second, that is, the spiritual birth. For this reason, therefore, the word all is used in both clauses, because as all who die do not die otherwise than in Adam, so all who shall be made alive shall not be made alive otherwise than in Christ. Wherefore whosoever tells us that any man can be made alive in the resurrection of the dead otherwise than in Christ, he is to be detested as a pestilent enemy to the common faith.

Likewise, whosoever says that those children who depart out of this life without partaking of that sacrament shall be made alive in Christ, certainly contradicts the apostolic declaration, and condemns the universal Church, in which it is the practice to lose no time and run in haste to administer baptism to infant children,

because it is believed, as an indubitable truth, that otherwise they cannot be made alive in Christ. Now he that is not made alive in Christ must necessarily remain under the condemnation, of which the apostle says, that "by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation. [Romans 5:18] That infants are born under the guilt of this offense is believed by the whole Church. It is also a doctrine which you have most faithfully set forth, both in your treatise against Jovinian and your exposition of Jonah, as I mentioned above, and, if I am not mistaken, in other parts of your works which I have not read or have at present forgotten. I therefore ask, what is the ground of this condemnation of unbaptized infants? For if new souls are made for men, individually, at their birth, I do not see, on the one hand, that they could have any sin while yet in infancy, nor do I believe, on the other hand, that God condemns any soul which He sees to have no sin.

22. Are we perchance to say, in answer to this, that in the infant the body alone is the cause of sin; but that for each body a new soul is made, and that if this soul live according to the precepts of God, by the help of the grace of Christ, the reward of being made incorruptible may be secured for the body itself, when subdued and kept under the yoke; and that inasmuch as the soul of an infant cannot yet do this, unless it receive the sacrament of Christ, that which could not yet be obtained for the body by the holiness of the soul is obtained for it by the grace of this sacrament; but if the soul of an infant depart without the sacrament, it shall itself dwell in life eternal, from which it could not be separated, as it had no sin, while, however, the body which it occupied shall not rise again in Christ, because the sacrament had not been received before its death?

23. This opinion I have never heard or read anywhere. I have, however, certainly heard and believed the statement which led me to speak thus, namely, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life,"— the resurrection, namely, of which it is said that "by one man came the resurrection of the dead," and in which "all shall be made alive in Christ,"— "and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. [John 5:29] Now, what is to be understood regarding infants which, before they could do good or evil, have quitted the body without baptism? Nothing is said here concerning them. But if the bodies of these infants shall not rise again, because they have never done either good or evil, the bodies of the infants that have died after receiving the grace of baptism shall also have no resurrection, because they also were not in this life able to do good or evil. If, however, these are to rise among the saints, i.e. among those who have done good, among whom shall the others rise again but among those who have done evil— unless we are to believe that some human souls shall not receive, either in the resurrection of life, or in the resurrection of damnation, the bodies which they lost in death? This opinion, however, is condemned, even before it is formally refuted, by its absolute novelty;

and besides this, who could bear to think that those who run with their infant children to have them baptized, are prompted to do so by a regard for their bodies, not for their souls? The blessed Cyprian, indeed, said, in order to correct those who thought that an infant should not be baptized before the eighth day, that it was not the body but the soul which behooved to be saved from perdition — in which statement he was not inventing any new doctrine, but preserving the firmly established faith of the Church; and he, along with some of his colleagues in the episcopal office, held that a child may be properly baptized immediately after its birth.

24. Let every man, however, believe anything which commends itself to his own judgment, even though it run counter to some opinion of Cyprian, who may not have seen in the matter what should have been seen. But let no man believe anything which runs counter to the perfectly unambiguous apostolic declaration, that by the offense of one all are brought into condemnation, and that from this condemnation nothing sets men free but the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone life is given to all who are made alive. And let no man believe anything which runs counter to the firmly grounded practice of the Church, in which, if the sole reason for hastening the administration of baptism were to save the children, the dead as well as the living would be brought to be baptized. 25. These things being so, it is necessary still to investigate and to make known the reason why, if souls are created new for every individual at his birth, those who die in infancy without the sacrament of Christ are doomed to perdition; for that they are doomed to this if they so depart from the body is testified both by Holy Scripture and by the holy Church. Wherefore, as to that opinion of yours concerning the creation of new souls, if it does not contradict this firmly grounded article of faith, let it be mine also; but if it does, let it be no longer yours.

26. Let it not be said to me that we ought to receive as supporting this opinion the words of Scripture in Zechariah, ”He forms the spirit of man within him,” [Zechariah 12:1] and in the book of Psalms, ”He forms their hearts severally. We must seek for the strongest and most indisputable proof, that we may not be compelled to believe that God is a judge who condemns any soul which has no fault. For to create signifies either as much or, probably, more than to form [fingere]; nevertheless it is written, ”Create in me a clean heart, O God,” and yet it cannot be supposed that a soul here expresses a desire to be made before it has begun to exist. Therefore, as it is a soul already existing which is created by being renewed in righteousness, so it is a soul already existing which is formed by the moulding power of doctrine. Nor is your opinion, which I would willingly make my own, supported by that sentence in Ecclesiastes, ”Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it. [Ecclesiastes 12:7] Nay, it rather favours those who think that all souls are derived from one;

for they say that, as the dust returns to the earth as it was, and yet the body of which this is said returns not to the man from whom it was derived, but to the earth from which the first man was made, the spirit in like manner, though derived from the spirit of the first man, does not return to him but to the Lord, by whom it was given to our first parent. Since, however, the testimony of this passage in their favour is not so decisive as to make it appear altogether opposed to the opinion which I shall gladly see vindicated, I thought proper to submit these remarks on it to your judgment, to prevent you from endeavouring to deliver me from my perplexities by quoting passages such as these. For although no man's wishes can make that true which is not true, nevertheless, were this possible, I would wish that this opinion should be true, as I do wish that, if it is true, it should be most clearly and unanswerably vindicated by you.

27. The same difficulty attends those also who hold that souls already existing elsewhere, and prepared from the beginning of the works of God, are sent by Him into bodies. For to these persons also the same question may be put: If these souls, being without any fault, go obediently to the bodies to which they are sent, why are they subjected to punishment in the case of infants, if they come without being baptized to the end of this life? The same difficulty unquestionably attaches to both opinions. Those who affirm that each soul is, according to the deserts of its actions in an earlier state of being, united to the body alloted to it in this life, imagine that they escape more easily from this difficulty. For they think that to "die in Adam" means to suffer punishment in that flesh which is derived from Adam, from which condition of guilt the grace of Christ, they say, delivers the young as well as the old. So far, indeed, they teach what is right, and true, and excellent, when they say that the grace of Christ delivers the young as well as the old from the guilt of sins. But that souls sin in another earlier life, and that for their sins in that state of being they are cast down into bodies as prisons, I do not believe: I reject and protest against such an opinion.

I do this, in the first place, because they affirm that this is accomplished by means of some incomprehensible revolutions, so that after I know not how many cycles the soul must return again to the same burden of corruptible flesh and to the endurance of punishment — than which opinion I do not know that anything more horrible could be conceived. In the next place, who is the righteous man gone from the earth about whom we should not (if what they say is true) feel afraid lest, sinning in Abraham's bosom, he should be cast down into the flames which tormented the rich man in the parable? [Luke 16:22-23] For why may the soul not sin after leaving the body, if it can sin before entering it? Finally, to have sinned in Adam (in regard to which the apostle says that in him all have sinned) is one thing, but it is a wholly different thing to have sinned, I know not where, outside of Adam, and then because of this to be thrust into Adam — that is, into the body, which is derived from Adam, as into a prison-house. As to the other opinion mentioned

above, that all souls are derived from one, I will not begin to discuss it unless I am under necessity to do so; and my desire is, that if the opinion which we are now discussing is true, it may be so vindicated by you that there shall be no longer any necessity for examining the other.

28. Although, however, I desire and ask, and with fervent prayers wish and hope, that by you the Lord may remove my ignorance on this subject, if, after all, I am found unworthy to obtain this, I will beg the grace of patience from the Lord our God, in whom we have such faith, that even if there be some things which He does not open to us when we knock, we know it would be wrong to murmur in the least against Him. I remember what He said to the apostles themselves: ”I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” [John 16:12] Among these things, so far at least as I am concerned, let me still reckon this, and let me guard against being angry that I am deemed unworthy to possess this knowledge, lest by such anger I be all the more clearly proved to be unworthy. I am equally ignorant of many other things, yea, of more than I could name or even number; and of this I would be more patiently ignorant, were it not that I fear lest some one of these opinions, involving the contradiction of truth which we most assuredly believe, should insinuate itself into the minds of the unwary. Meanwhile, though I do not yet know which of these opinions is to be preferred, this one thing I profess as my deliberate conviction, that the opinion which is true does not conflict with that most firm and well grounded article in the faith of the Church of Christ, that infant children, even when they are newly born, can be delivered from perdition in no other way than through the grace of Christ’s name, which He has given in His sacraments.

Letter 132. From Augustine.

In this letter Augustine deals with the statement of James 2:10 (”whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”) and explains it by saying that every breach of the law is a breach of love. He also takes occasion to criticise two doctrines of the schools then prevalent, (2) that all sins are equal and (2) that he who has one virtue has all and that all virtues are wanting to him who lacks one. The date of the letter is 415 a.d. Sometimes numbered as Augustine letter 167. 1. My brother Jerome, esteemed worthy to be honoured in Christ by me, when I wrote to you propounding this question concerning the human soul — if a new soul be now created for each individual at birth, whence do souls contract the bond of guilt which we assuredly believe to be removed by the sacrament of the grace of Christ, when administered even to new-born children?— as the letter on that subject grew to the size of a considerable volume, I was unwilling to impose the burden of any other question at that time; but there is a subject which has a much stronger claim on my attention, as it presses more seriously on my mind. I therefore ask you, and in God’s name beseech you, to do something which will, I believe, be of great service to many, namely, to explain to me (or to direct me to any work in which you or any other commentator has already expounded) the sense in which we are to understand these words in the Epistle of James, ”Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” [James 2:10] This subject is of such importance that I very greatly regret that I did not write to you in regard to it long ago.

2. For whereas in the question which I thought it necessary to submit to you concerning the soul, our inquiries were engaged with the investigation of a life wholly past and sunk out of sight in oblivion, in this question we study this present life, and how it must be spent if we would attain to eternal life. As an apt illustration of this remark let me quote an entertaining anecdote. A man had fallen into a well where the quantity of water was sufficient to break his fall and save him from death, but not deep enough to cover his mouth and deprive him of speech. Another man approached, and on seeing him cries out in surprise: ”How did you fall in here? He answers: ”I beseech you to plan how you can get me out of this, rather than ask how I fell in. So, since we admit and hold as an article of the Catholic faith,

that the soul of even a little infant requires to be delivered out of the guilt of sin, as out of a pit, by the grace of Christ, it is sufficient for the soul of such a one that we know the way in which it is saved, even though we should never know the way in which it came into that wretched condition.

But I thought it our duty to inquire into this subject, lest we should incautiously hold any one of those opinions concerning the manner of the soul's becoming united with the body which might contradict the doctrine that the souls of little children require to be delivered, by denying that they are subject to the bond of guilt. This, then, being very firmly held by us, that the soul of every infant needs to be freed from the guilt of sin, and can be freed in no other way except by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, if we can ascertain the cause and origin of the evil itself, we are better prepared and equipped for resisting adversaries whose empty talk I call not reasoning but quibbling; if, however, we cannot ascertain the cause, the fact that the origin of this misery is hid from us is no reason for our being slothful in the work which compassion demands from us. In our conflict, however, with those who appear to themselves to know what they do not know, we have an additional strength and safety in not being ignorant of our ignorance on this subject. For there are some things which it is evil not to know; there are other things which cannot be known, or are not necessary to be known, or have no bearing on the life which we seek to obtain;

but the question which I now submit to you from the writings of the Apostle James is intimately connected with the course of conduct in which we live, and in which, with a view to life eternal, we endeavour to please God.

3. How, then, I beseech you, are we to understand the words: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"? Does this affirm that the person who shall have committed theft, nay, who even shall have said to the rich man, "Sit here" and to the poor man, "Stand there," is guilty of homicide, and adultery, and sacrilege? And if he is not so, how can it be said that a person who has offended in one point has become guilty of all? Or are the things which the apostle said concerning the rich man and the poor man not to be reckoned among those things in one of which if any man offend he becomes guilty of all? But we must remember whence that sentence is taken, and what goes before it, and in what connection it occurs. "My brethren," he says, "have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and you have respect to him that wears the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand there, or sit here under my footstool; are you not then partial in yourselves, and have become judges of evil thoughts?

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him? But you have despised the poor," [James 2:1-6] — inasmuch as you have said to the poor man, "Stand there," when you would have said to a man with a gold ring, "Sit here in a good place. And then there follows a passage explaining and enlarging upon that same conclusion: "Do not rich men oppress you by their power, and draw you before the judgment-seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which you are called? If you fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well: but if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. [James 2:6-9] See how the apostle calls those transgressors of the law who say to the rich man, "Sit here," and to the poor, "Stand there. See how, lest they should think it a trifling sin to transgress the law in this one thing, he goes on to add: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if you do not kill, yet, if you commit adultery, you have become a transgressor of the law," according to that which he had said: "You are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Since these things are so, it seems to follow, unless it can be shown that we are to understand it in some other way, that he who says to the rich man, "Sit here," and to the poor, "Stand there," not treating the one with the same respect as the other, is to be judged guilty as an idolater, and a blasphemer, and an adulterer, and a murderer — in short — not to enumerate all, which would be tedious — as guilty of all crimes, since, offending in one, he is guilty of all.

4. But has he who has one virtue all virtues? And has he no virtues who lacks one? If this be true, the sentence of the apostle is thereby confirmed. But what I desire is to have the sentence explained, not confirmed, since of itself it stands more sure in our esteem than all the authority of philosophers could make it. And even if what has just been said concerning virtues and vices were true, it would not follow that therefore all sins are equal. For as to the inseparable co-existence of the virtues, this is a doctrine in regard to which, if I remember rightly, what, indeed, I have almost forgotten (though perhaps I am mistaken), all philosophers who affirm that virtues are essential to the right conduct of life are agreed. The doctrine of the equality of sins, however, the Stoics alone dared to maintain in opposition to the unanimous sentiments of mankind: an absurd tenet, which in writing against Jovinianus (a Stoic in this opinion, but an Epicurean in following after and defending pleasure) you have most clearly refuted from the Holy Scriptures. In that most delightful and noble dissertation you have made it abundantly plain that it has not been the doctrine of our authors, or rather of the Truth Himself, who has spoken through them, that all sins are equal. I shall now do my utmost in endeavouring, with the help of God, to show how it can be that, although the doctrine of philosophers concerning virtues is true, we are nevertheless not compelled to admit the

Stoics' doctrine that all sins are equal. If I succeed, I will look for your approbation, and in whatever respect I come short, I beg you to supply my deficiencies.

5. Those who maintain that he who has one virtue has all, and that he who lacks one lacks all, reason correctly from the fact that prudence cannot be cowardly, nor unjust, nor intemperate; for if it were any of these it would no longer be prudence. Moreover, if it be prudence only when it is brave, and just, and temperate, assuredly wherever it exists it must have the other virtues along with it. In like manner, also, courage cannot be imprudent, or intemperate, or unjust; temperance must of necessity be prudent, brave, and just; and justice does not exist unless it be prudent, brave, and temperate. Thus, wherever any one of these virtues truly exists, the others likewise exist; and where some are absent, that which may appear in some measure to resemble virtue is not really present.

6. There are, as you know, some vices opposed to virtues by a palpable contrast, as imprudence is the opposite of prudence. But there are some vices opposed to virtues simply because they are vices which, nevertheless, by a deceitful appearance resemble virtues; as, for example, in the relation, not of imprudence, but of craftiness to the said virtue of prudence. I speak here of that craftiness which is wont to be understood and spoken of in connection with the evilly disposed, not in the sense in which the word is usually employed in our Scriptures, where it is often used in a good sense, as, "Be crafty as serpents," [Matthew 10:16] and again, to give craftiness to the simple. [Proverbs 1:4] It is true that among heathen writers one of the most accomplished of Latin authors, speaking of Catiline, has said: "Nor was there lacking on his part craftiness to guard against danger," using "craftiness" (astutia) in a good sense; but the use of the word in this sense is among them very rare, among us very common. So also in regard to the virtues classed under temperance. Extravagance is most manifestly opposite to the virtue of frugality; but that which the common people are wont to call niggardliness is indeed a vice, yet one which, not in its nature, but by a very deceitful similarity of appearance, usurps the name of frugality. In the same manner injustice is by a palpable contrast opposed to justice;

but the desire of avenging oneself is wont often to be a counterfeit of justice, but it is a vice. There is an obvious contrariety between courage and cowardice; but hardihood, though differing from courage in nature, deceives us by its resemblance to that virtue. Firmness is a part of virtue; fickleness is a vice far removed from and undoubtedly opposed to it; but obstinacy lays claim to the name of firmness, yet is wholly different, because firmness is a virtue, and obstinacy is a vice.

7. To avoid the necessity of again going over the same ground, let us take one case as an example, from which all others may be understood. Catiline, as those who have written concerning him had means of knowing, was capable of enduring cold, thirst, hunger, and patient in fastings, cold, and watchings beyond what any one

could believe, and thus he appeared, both to himself and to his followers, a man endowed with great courage. But this courage was not prudent, for he chose the evil instead of the good; was not temperate, for his life was disgraced by the lowest dissipation; was not just, for he conspired against his country; and therefore it was not courage, but hardihood usurping the name of courage to deceive fools; for if it had been courage, it would not have been a vice but a virtue, and if it had been a virtue, it would never have been abandoned by the other virtues, its inseparable companions.

8. On this account, when it is asked also concerning vices, whether where one exists all in like manner exist, or where one does not exist none exist, it would be a difficult matter to show this, because two vices are wont to be opposed to one virtue, one that is evidently opposed, and another that bears an apparent likeness. Hence the hardihood of Catiline is the more easily seen not to have been courage, since it had not along with it other virtues; but it may be difficult to convince men that his hardihood was cowardice, since he was in the habit of enduring and patiently submitting to the severest hardships to a degree almost incredible. But perhaps, on examining the matter more closely, this hardihood itself is seen to be cowardice, because he shrunk from the toil of those liberal studies by which true courage is acquired. Nevertheless, as there are rash men who are not guilty of cowardice, and there are cowardly men who are not guilty of rashness, and since in both there is vice, for the truly brave man neither ventures rashly nor fears without reason, we are forced to admit that vices are more numerous than virtues.

9. Accordingly, it happens sometimes that one vice is supplanted by another, as the love of money by the love of praise. Occasionally, one vice quits the field that more may take its place, as in the case of the drunkard, who, after becoming temperate in the use of drink, may come under the power of niggardliness and ambition. It is possible, therefore, that vices may give place to vices, not to virtues, as their successors, and thus they are more numerous. When one virtue, however, has entered, there will infallibly be (since it brings all the other virtues along with it) a retreat of all vices whatsoever that were in the man; for all vices were not in him, but at one time so many, at another a greater or smaller number might occupy their place.

10. We must inquire more carefully whether these things are so; for the statement that ”he who has one virtue has all, and that all virtues are awanting to him who lacks one,” is not given by inspiration, but is the view held by many men, ingenious, indeed, and studious, but still men. But I must avow that, in the case — I shall not say of one of those from whose name the word virtue is said to be derived, but even of a woman who is faithful to her husband, and who is so from a regard to the commandments and promises of God, and, first of all, is faithful to Him, I do not know how I could say of her that she is unchaste, or that chastity is no virtue or

a trifling one. I should feel the same in regard to a husband who is faithful to his wife; and yet there are many such, none of whom I could affirm to be without any sins, and doubtless the sin which is in them, whatever it be, proceeds from some vice. Whence it follows that though conjugal fidelity in religious men and women is undoubtedly a virtue, for it is neither a nonentity nor a vice, yet it does not bring along with it all virtues, for if all virtues were there, there would be no vice, and if there were no vice, there would be no sin; but where is the man who is altogether without sin?

Where, therefore, is the man who is without any vice, that is, fuel or root, as it were, of sin, when he who reclined on the breast of the Lord says, ”If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”? [1 John 1:8] It is not necessary for us to urge this at greater length in writing to you, but I make the statement for the sake of others who perhaps shall read this. For you, indeed, in that same splendid work against Jovinianus, have carefully proved this from the Holy Scriptures; in which work also you have quoted the words, ”in many things we all offend,” [James 3:2] from this very epistle in which occur the words whose meaning we are now investigating. For though it is an apostle of Christ who is speaking, he does not say, ”ye offend,” but, ”we offend; and although in the passage under consideration he says, ”Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,” [James 2:10] in the words just quoted he affirms that we offend not in one thing but in many, and not that some offend but that we all offend.

11. Far be it, however, from any believer to think that so many thousands of the servants of Christ, who, lest they should deceive themselves, and the truth should not be in them, sincerely confess themselves to have sin, are altogether without virtue! For wisdom is a great virtue, and wisdom herself has said to man, ”Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. Far be it from us, then, to say that so many and so great believing and pious men have not the fear of the Lord, which the Greeks call εὐσέβεια, or more literally and fully, θεοσέβεια . And what is the fear of the Lord but His worship? And whence is He truly worshipped except from love? Love, then, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, is the great and true virtue, because it is ”the end of the commandment. [1 Timothy 1:5] Deservedly is love said to be ”strong as death,” [Song of Songs 8:6] because, like death, it is vanquished by none; or because the measure of love in this life is even unto death, as the Lord says, ”Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; [John 15:13] or, rather, because, as death forcibly separates the soul from the senses of the body, so love separates it from fleshly lusts.

Knowledge, when it is of the right kind, is the handmaid to love, for without love ”knowledge puffs up,” [1 Corinthians 8:1] but where love, by edifying, has filled

the heart, there knowledge will find nothing empty which it can puff up. Moreover, Job has shown, what is that useful knowledge by defining it where, after saying, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" he adds "and to depart from evil, that is understanding. [Job 28:28] Why do we not then say that the man who has this virtue has all virtues, since "love is the fulfilling of the law? [Romans 13:10] Is it not true that, the more love exists in a man the more he is endowed with virtue, and the less love he has the less virtue is in him, for love is itself virtue; and the less virtue there is in a man so much the more vice will there be in him? Therefore, where love is full and perfect, no vice will remain.

12. The Stoics, therefore, appear to me to be mistaken in refusing to admit that a man who is advancing in wisdom has any wisdom at all, and in affirming that he alone has it who has become altogether perfect in wisdom. They do not, indeed, deny that he has made progress, but they say that he is in no degree entitled to be called wise, unless, by emerging, so to speak, from the depths, he suddenly springs forth into the free air of wisdom. For, as it matters not when a man is drowning whether the depth of water above him be many stadia or only the breadth of a hand or finger, so they say in regard to the progress of those who are advancing towards wisdom, that they are like men rising from the bottom of a whirlpool towards the air, but that unless they by their progress, so escape as to emerge wholly from folly as from an overwhelming flood, they have not virtue and are not wise; but that, when they have so escaped, they immediately have wisdom in perfection, and not a vestige of folly whence any sin could be originated remains.

13. This simile, in which folly is compared to water and wisdom to air, so that the mind emerging, as it were, from the stifling influence of folly breathes suddenly the free air of wisdom, does not appear to me to harmonize sufficiently with the authoritative statement of our Scriptures; a better simile, so far, at least, as illustration of spiritual things can be borrowed from material things, is that which compares vice or folly to darkness, and virtue or wisdom to light. The way to wisdom is therefore not like that of a man rising from the water into the air, in which, in the moment of rising above the surface of the water, he suddenly breathes freely, but, like that of a man proceeding from darkness into light, on whom more light gradually shines as he advances. So long, therefore, as this is not fully accomplished, we speak of the man as of one going from the dark recesses of a vast cavern towards its entrance, who is more and more influenced by the proximity of the light as he comes nearer to the entrance of the cavern; so that whatever light he has proceeds from the light to which he is advancing, and whatever darkness still remains in him proceeds from the darkness out of which he is emerging. Therefore it is true that in the sight of God "shall no man living be justified," and yet that "the just shall live by his faith." [Habakkuk 2:4] On the one hand, "the saints are clothed with righteousness," [Job 29:14] one more, another less; on the other hand, no one lives here wholly without sin— one sins more, another less, and the best is the man who sins least.

14. But why have I, as if forgetting to whom I address myself, assumed the tone of a teacher in stating the question regarding which I wish to be instructed by you? Nevertheless, as I had resolved to submit to your examination my opinion regarding the equality of sins (a subject involving a question closely bearing on the matter on which I was writing), let me now at last bring my statement to a conclusion. Even though it were true that he who has one virtue has all virtues, and that he who lacks one virtue has none, this would not involve the consequence that all sins are equal; for although it is true that where there is no virtue there is nothing right, it by no means follows that among bad actions one cannot be worse than another, or that divergence from that which is right does not admit of degrees.

I think, however, that it is more agreeable to truth and consistent with the Holy Scriptures to say, that what is true of the members of the body is true of the different dispositions of the soul (which, though not seen occupying different places, are by their distinctive workings perceived as plainly as the members of the body), namely, that as in the same body one member is more fully shone upon by the light, another is less shone upon, and a third is altogether without light, and remains in the dark under some impervious covering, something similar takes place in regard to the various dispositions of the soul. If this be so, then according to the manner in which every man is shone upon by the light of holy love, he may be said to have one virtue and to lack another virtue, or to have one virtue in larger and another in smaller measure. For in reference to that love which is the fear of God, we may correctly say both that it is greater in one man than in another, and that there is some of it in one man, and none of it in another; we may also correctly say as to an individual that he has greater chastity than patience, and that he has either virtue in a higher degree than he had yesterday, if he is making progress, or that he still lacks self-control, but possesses, at the same time, a large measure of compassion.

15. To sum up generally and briefly the view which, so far as relates to holy living, I entertain concerning virtue —virtue is the love with which that which ought to be loved is loved. This is in some greater, in others less, and there are men in whom it does not exist at all; but in the absolute fullness which admits of no increase, it exists in no man while living on this earth; so long, however, as it admits of being increased there can be no doubt that, in so far as it is less than it ought to be, the shortcoming proceeds from vice. Because of this vice there is ”not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not;” [Ecclesiastes 5:7] because of this vice, ”in God’s sight shall no man living be justified.” On account of this vice, ”if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” [1 John 1:8] On account of this also, whatever progress we may have made, we must say, ”Forgive us our debts,” [Matthew 6:12] although all debts in word, deed, and thought were washed away in baptism. He, then, who sees aright, sees whence, and when, and where he must hope for that perfection to which nothing can be added. Moreover, if there had been no commandments, there would have been no means whereby a

man might certainly examine himself and see from what things he ought to turn aside, whither he should aspire, and in what things he should find occasion for thanksgiving or for prayer. Great, therefore, is the benefit of commandments, if to free will so much liberty be granted that the grace of God may be more abundantly honoured.

16. If these things be so, how shall a man who shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, be guilty of all? May it not be, that since the fulfilling of the law is that love wherewith we love God and our neighbour, on which commandments of love "hang all the law and the prophets," [Matthew 22:40] he is justly held to be guilty of all who violates that on which all hang? Now, no one sins without violating this love; "for this, you shall not commit adultery; you shall do no murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Love works no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." [Romans 13:9-10] No one, however, loves his neighbour who does not out of his love to God do all in his power to bring his neighbour also, whom he loves as himself, to love God, whom if he does not love, he neither loves himself nor his neighbour. Hence it is true that if a man shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he becomes guilty of all, because he does what is contrary to the love on which hangs the whole law. A man, therefore, becomes guilty of all by doing what is contrary to that on which all hang.

17. Why, then, may not all sins be said to be equal? May not the reason be, that the transgression of the law of love is greater in him who commits a more grievous sin, and is less in him who commits a less grievous sin? And in the mere fact of his committing any sin whatever, he becomes guilty of all; but in committing a more grievous sin, or in sinning in more respects than one, he becomes more guilty; committing a less grievous sin, or sinning in fewer respects, he becomes less guilty — his guilt being thus so much the greater the more he has sinned, the less the less he has sinned. Nevertheless, even though it be only in one point that he offend, he is guilty of all, because he violates that love on which all hang. If these things be true, an explanation is by this means found, clearing up that saying of the man of apostolic grace, "In many things we offend all." [James 3:2] For we all offend, but one more grievously, another more slightly, according as each may have committed a more grievous or a less grievous sin; every one being great in the practice of sin in proportion as he is deficient in loving God and his neighbour, and, on the other hand, decreasing in the practice of sin in proportion as he increases in the love of God and of his neighbour. The more, therefore, that a man is deficient in love, the more is he full of sin. And perfection in love is reached when nothing of sinful infirmity remains in us.

18. Nor, indeed, in my opinion, are we to esteem it a trifling sin "to have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons," if we take the difference between sitting and standing, of which mention is made in the context, to refer to ecclesiastical honours; for who can bear to see a rich man chosen to a place of honour in the Church, while a poor man, of superior qualifications and of greater holiness, is despised? If, however, the apostle speaks there of our daily assemblies, who does not offend in the matter? At the same time, only those really offend here who cherish in their hearts the opinion that a man's worth is to be estimated according to his wealth; for this seems to be the meaning of the expression, "Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and have become judges of evil thoughts?"

19. The law of liberty, therefore, the law of love, is that of which he says: If you fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well: but if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. [James 2:8-9] And then (after the difficult sentence, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," concerning which I have with sufficient fullness stated my opinion), making mention of the same law of liberty, he says: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." And as he knew by experience what he had said a little before, "in many things we offend all," he suggests a sovereign remedy, to be applied, as it were day by day, to those less serious but real wounds which the soul suffers day by day, for he says: "He shall have judgment without mercy that has showed no mercy." [James 2:13] For with the same purpose the Lord says: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you." [Luke 6:37-38] After which the apostle says: "But mercy rejoices over judgment:" it is not said that mercy prevails over judgment, for it is not an adversary of judgment, but it "rejoices" over judgment, because a greater number are gathered in by mercy; but they are those who have shown mercy, for, "Blessed are the merciful, for God shall have mercy on them." [Matthew 5:7]

20. It is, therefore, by all means just that they be forgiven, because they have forgiven others, and that what they need be given to them, because they have given to others. For God uses mercy when He judges, and uses judgment when He shows mercy. Hence the Psalmist says: "I will sing of mercy and of judgment unto You, O Lord. For if any man, thinking himself too righteous to require mercy, presumes, as if he had no reason for anxiety, to wait for judgment without mercy, he provokes that most righteous indignation through fear of which the Psalmist said: "Enter not into judgment with Your servant. For this reason the Lord says to a disobedient people: Wherefore will you contend with me in judgment? For when the righteous King shall sit upon His throne, who shall boast that he has a pure heart, or who shall boast that he is clean from sin? What hope is there then unless mercy shall "rejoice over" judgment? But this it will do only in the case of those who have showed mercy, saying with sincerity, "Forgive us our debts, as we

forgive our debtors," and who have given without murmuring, for "the Lord loves a cheerful giver. [2 Corinthians 9:7] To conclude, St.

James is led to speak thus concerning works of mercy in this passage, in order that he may console those whom the statements immediately foregoing might have greatly alarmed, his purpose being to admonish us how those daily sins from which our life is never free here below may also be expiated by daily remedies; lest any man, becoming guilty of all when he offends in even one point, be brought, by offending in many points (since "in many things we all offend"), to appear before the bar of the Supreme Judge under the enormous amount of guilt which has accumulated by degrees, and find at that tribunal no mercy, because he showed no mercy to others, instead of rather meriting the forgiveness of his own sins, and the enjoyment of the gifts promised in Scripture, by his extending forgiveness and bounty to others.

21. I have written at great length, which may perhaps have been tedious to you, as you, although approving of the statements now made, do not expect to be addressed as if you were but learning truths which you have been accustomed to teach to others. If, however, there be anything in these statements — not in the style of language in which they are expounded, for I am not much concerned as to mere phrases, but in the substance of the statements — which your erudite judgment condemns, I beseech you to point this out to me in your reply, and do not hesitate to correct my error. For I pity the man who, in view of the unwearied labour and sacred character of your studies, does not on account of them both render to you the honour which you deserve, and give thanks unto our Lord God by whose grace you are what you are. Wherefore, since I ought to be more willing to learn from any teacher the things of which to my disadvantage I am ignorant, than prompt to teach any others what I know, with how much greater reason do I claim the payment of this debt of love from you, by whose learning ecclesiastical literature in the Latin tongue has been, in the Lord's name, and by His help, advanced to an extent which had been previously unattainable. Especially, however, I ask attention to the sentence: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, is guilty of all." If you know any better way, my beloved brother, in which it can be explained, I beseech you by the Lord to favour us by communicating to us your exposition.

Letter 133. To Ctesiphon.

Ctesiphon had written to Jerome for his opinion on two points in the teaching of Pelagius, (1) his quietism and (2) his denial of original sin. Jerome now refutes these two doctrines and points out that Pelagius has drawn them partly from the philosophers and partly from the heretics. He censures Rufinus. who had died 5 years before, for attributing to Sixtus bishop of Rome a book which is really the work of Xystus a Pythagorean, and for passing off as the composition of the martyr Pamphilus a panegyric of Origen really due to his friend Eusebius. In both these assertions, however. Jerome is more wrong than right. (See Prolegomena to the works of Rufinus.) The letter concludes with a promise to deal more fully with the heresy of Pelagius at some future time, a promise afterwards redeemed by the publication of a 'dialogue against the Pelagians.' The date of the letter is 415 a.d.

I. In acquainting me with the new controversy which has taken the place of the old you are wrong in thinking that you have acted rashly, for your conduct has been prompted by zeal and friendship. Already before the arrival of your letter many in the East have been deceived into a pride which apes humility and have said with the devil: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the Most High. [Isa. 14:13, Isa. 14:14] Can there be greater presumption than to claim not likeness to God but equality with Him, and so to compress into a few words the poisonous doctrines of all the heretics which in their turn flow from the statements of the philosophers, particularly of Pythagoras and Zeno the founder of the Stoic school? For those states of feeling which the Greeks call "πάθη" and which we may describe as "passions," relating to the present or the future such as vexation and gladness, hope and fear,-these, they tell us, it is possible to root out of our minds; in fact all vice may be destroyed root and branch in man by meditation on virtue and constant practice of it. The position which they thus take up is vehemently assailed by the Peripatetics who trace themselves to Aristotle, and by the new Academics of whom Cicero is a disciple; and these overthrow not the facts of their opponents-for they have no facts-but the shadows and wishes which do duty for them.

To maintain such a doctrine is to take man's nature from him, to forget that he is constituted of body as well as soul, to substitute mere wishes for sound teaching For the apostle says:- "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [Rom. 7:24] But as I cannot say all that I wish in a short letter I will briefly touch on the points that you must avoid. Virgil writes:-

"Thus mortals fear and hope, rejoice and grieve, And shut in darkness have no sight of heaven." [Virgil. aeneid. 6:733, 734] For who can escape these feelings? Must we not all clap our hands when we are joyful, and shrink at the approach of sorrow? Must not hope always animate us and fear put us in terror? So in one of his Satires the poet Horace, whose words are so weighty, writes: "From faults no mortal is completely free; He that has fewest is the perfect man." [Horace, Sat. I. 3:68, 69]

2. Well does one of our own writers say: "the philosophers are the patriarchs of the heretics." It is they who have stained with their perverse doctrine the spotlessness of the Church, not knowing that of human weakness it is said: "Why is earth and ashes proud?" [Ecclus. 10:9] So likewise the apostle: "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity"; [Rom. 7:23] and again, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do." [Rom. 7:19] Now if Paul does what he wills not, what becomes of the assertion that a man may be without sin if he will? Given the will, how is it to have its way when the apostle tells us that he has no power to do what he wishes? Moreover if we ask them who the persons are whom they regard as sinless they seek to veil the truth by a new subterfuge. They do not, they say, profess that men are or have been without sin; all that they maintain is that it is possible for them to be so. Remarkable teachers truly, who maintain that a thing may be which on their own shewing, never has been; whereas the scripture says:-"The thing which shall be, it is that which hath been already of old time."

I need not go through the lives of the saints or call attention to the moles and spots which mark the fairest skins. Many of our writers, it is true, unwisely, take this course; however, a few sentences of scripture will dispose alike of the heretics and the philosophers. What says the chosen vessel? "God had concluded all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all; [Rom. 11:32] and in another place, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The preacher also who is the mouthpiece of the Divine Wisdom freely protests and says: "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not: [Eccles. 7:20] and again, "if thy people sin against thee, for there is no man that sinneth not: [1 K. 8:46] and "who can say, I have made my heart clean? [Prov. 20:9] and "none is clean from stain, not even if his life on earth has been but for one day. David insists on the same thing when he says: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me; [Ps. 51:5] and in another psalm, "in thy sight shall no man living be justified. [Ps. 143:2] This last passage they try to explain away from motives of

reverence, arguing that the meaning is that no man is perfect in comparison with God. Yet the scripture does not say: ”in comparison with thee shall no man living be justified” but ”in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

And when it says ”in thy sight” it means that those who seem holy to men to God in his fuller knowledge are by no means holy. For ”man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. [1 S. 16:7] But if in the sight of God who sees all things and to whom the secrets of the heart lie open [Ps. 44:21, Heb. 4:13] no man is just; then these heretics instead of adding to man’s dignity, clearly take away from God’s power. I might bring together many other passages of scripture of the same import; but were I to do so, I should exceed the limits I will not say of a letter but of a volume.

3. It is with no new doctrines that in their self-applauding perfidy they deceive the simple and untaught. They cannot, however, deceive theologians who meditate in the law of the Lord day and night. [Ps. 1:2] Let those blush then for their leaders and companions who say that a man may be ”without sin” if he will, or, as the Greeks term it ”αναμάρτητος”, ”sinless.” As such a statement sounds intolerable to the Eastern churches, they profess indeed only to say that a man may be ”without sin” and do not presume to allege that he may be ”sinless” as well. As if, forsooth, ”sinless” and ”without sin” had different meanings; whereas the only difference between them is that Latin requires two words to express what Greek gives in one. If you adopt ”without sin” and reject ”sinless,” then condemn the preachers of sinlessness. But this you cannot do. You know very well what it is that you teach your pupils in private; and that while you say one thing with your lips you engrave another on your heart. To us, ignorant outsiders you speak in parables; but to your own followers you avow your secret meaning. And for this you claim the authority of scripture which says: ”to the multitudes Jesus spake in parables;” but to his own disciples He said: ”it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” [Matt. 13:3, Matt. 13:11]

But to return; I will shortly set forth the names of your leaders and companions to shew you who those are of whose fellowship you make your boast. Manichaeus says of his elect-whom he places among Plato’s orbits in heaven-that they are free from all sin, and cannot sin even if they will. To so great heights have they attained in virtue that they laugh at the works of the flesh. Then there is Priscillian in Spain whose infamy makes him as bad as Manichaeus, and whose disciples profess a high esteem for you. These are rash enough to claim for themselves the twofold credit of perfection and wisdom. Yet they shut themselves up alone with women and justify their sinful embraces by quoting the lines: ”The almighty father takes the earth to wife; Pouring upon her fertilizing rain, That from her womb new harvest he may reap.”

These heretics have affinities with Gnosticism which may be traced to the impious teaching of Basilides. It is from him that you derive the assertion that without knowledge of the law it is impossible to avoid sin. But why do I speak of Priscillian who has been condemned by the whole world and put to death by the secular sword? Evagrius of Ibera in Pontus who sends letters to virgins and monks and among others to her whose name bears witness to the blackness of her perfidy, has published a book of maxims on apathy, or, as we should say, impassivity or imperturbability; a state in which the mind ceases to be agitated and-to speak simply-becomes either a stone or a God. His work is widely read, in the East in Greek and in the West in a Latin translation made by his disciple Rufinus. He has also written a book which professes to be about monks and includes in it many not monks at all whom he declares to have been Origenists, and who have certainly been condemned by the bishops. I mean Ammonius, Eusebius, Euthymius, Evagrius himself, Horus, Isidorus, and many others whom it would be tedious to enumerate. He is careful, however, to do as the physicians, of whom Lucretius says: [Lucretius, 1:935-937]

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

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

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

4. Such being the state of the case, what object is served by "silly women laden with sins, carried about with every wind of doctrine, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth? [Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 3:6, 2 Tim. 3:7] Or how is the cause helped by the men who dance attendance upon these, men with itching ears [2 Tim. 4:3] who know neither how to hear nor how to speak? They confound old mire with new cement and, as Ezekiel says, daub a wall with untempered mortar; so that, when the truth comes in a shower, they are brought to nought. [Ezek. 13:10-16] It was with the help of the harlot Helena that Simon Magus founded his sect. Bands of women accompanied Nicolas of Antioch that deviser of all uncleanness. Marcion sent a woman before him to Rome to prepare men's minds to fall into his snares. Apelles possessed in Philumena an associate in his false doctrines. Montanus, that mouthpiece of an unclean spirit, used two rich and high born ladies Prisca and Maximilla first to bribe and then to pervert many churches. Leaving ancient history I will pass to times nearer to our own. Arius intent on leading the world astray began by misleading the Emperor's sister. The resources of Lucilla helped Donatus to defile with his polluting baptism many unhappy persons throughout Africa. In Spain the blind woman Agape led the blind man Elpidius into the ditch.

He was followed by Priscillian, an enthusiastic votary of Zoroaster and a magian before he became a bishop. A woman named Galla seconded his efforts and left a gadabout sister to perpetuate a second heresy of a kindred form. Now also the mystery of iniquity is working. [2 Th. 2:7] Men and women in turn lay snares for each other till we cannot but recall the prophet's words: "the partridge hath cried aloud, she hath gathered young which she hath not brought forth, she getteth riches and not by right; in the midst of her days she shall leave them, and at her end she shall be a fool. [Jer. 17:11, Vulg]

5. The better to deceive men they have added to the maxim given above the saving clause "but not without the grace of God; and this may at the first blush take in some readers. However, when it is carefully sifted and considered, it can deceive nobody. For while they acknowledge the grace of God,they tell us that our acts do not depend upon His help. Rather, they understand by the grace of God free will and the commandments of the Law. They quote Isaiah's words: "God hath given the law to aid men," [Isa. 8:20, LXX] and say that we ought to thank Him for having created us such that of our own free will we can choose the good and avoid the evil. Nor do they see that in alleging this the devil uses their lips to hiss out an intolerable blasphemy. For if God's grace is limited to this that He has formed us with wills of our own, and if we are to rest content with free will, not seeking

the divine aid lest this should be impaired, we should cease to pray; for we cannot entreat God's mercy to give us daily what is already in our hands having been given to us once for all. Those who think thus make prayer impossible and boast that free will makes them not merely controllers of themselves but as powerful as God. For they need no external help. Away with fasting, away with every form of self-restraint!

For why need I strive to win by toil what has once for all been placed within my reach? The argument that I am using is not mine; it is that put forward by a disciple of Pelagius, or rather one who is the teacher and commander of his whole army. This man, who is the opposite of Paul for he is a vessel of perdition, roams through thickets-not, as his partisans say, of syllogisms, but of solecisms, and theorizes thus: "If I do nothing without the help of God and if all that I do is His act, I cease to labour and the crown that I shall win will belong not to me but to the grace of God. It is idle for Him to have given me the power of choice if I cannot use it without His constant help. For will that requires external support ceases to be will. God has given me freedom of choice, but what becomes of this if I cannot do as I wish? Accordingly he propounds the following dilemma: "Either once for all I use the power which is given to me, and so preserve the freedom of my will; or I need the help of another, in which case the freedom of my will is wholly abrogated."

6. Surely the man who says this is no ordinary blasphemer; the poison of his heresy is no common poison. Since our wills are free, they argue, we are no longer dependent upon God; and they forget the Apostle's words "what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? [1 Cor. 4:7] A nice return, truly, does a man make to God when to assert the freedom of his will he rebels against Him! For our parts we gladly embrace this freedom, but we never forget to thank the Giver; knowing that we are powerless unless He continually preserves in us His own gift. As the apostle says, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. [Rom. 9:16] To will and to run are mine, but they will cease to be mine unless God brings me His continual aid. For the same apostle says "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do. [Phil. 2:13] And in the Gospel the Saviour says: "my Father worketh hitherto and I work. [John 5:17] He is always a giver, always a bestower. It is not enough for me that he has given me grace once; He must give it me always. I seek that I may obtain, and when I have obtained I seek again. I am covetous of God's bounty;

and as He is never slack in giving, so I am never weary in receiving. The more I drink, the more I thirst. For I have read the song of the psalmist: "O taste and see that the Lord is good. [Ps. 34:8] Every good thing that we have is a tasting of the Lord. When I fancy myself to have finished the book of virtue, I shall then only be at the beginning. For "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"

[Ps. 111:10] and this fear is in its turn cast out by love. [1 Joh. 4:18] Men are only perfect so far as they know themselves to be imperfect. ”So likewise ye,” Christ says, ”when ye shall have done alI those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. [Luke 17:10] If he is unprofitable who has done all, what must we say of him who has failed to do so? This is why theApostle declares that he has attained in part and apprehended in part, that he is not yet perfect, and that forgetting those things which are behind he reaches forth unto those things which are before. [Phil. 3:12, Phil. 3:13] Now he who always forgets the past and longs for the future shews that he is not content with the present.

They are for ever objecting to us that we destroy free will. Nay, we reply, it is you who destroy it; for you use it amiss and disown the bounty of its Giver. Which really destroys freedom? the man who thanks God always and traces back his own tiny rill to its source in Him? or the man who says: ”come not near to me, for I am holy; [Isa. 65:5, LXX] I have no need of Thee. Thou hast given me once for all freedom of choice to do as I wish. Why then dost Thou interfere again to prevent me from doing anything unless Thou Thyself first makest Thy gifts effective in me?” To such an one I would say: ”your profession of belief in God’s grace is insincere. For you explain this of the state in which man has been created and you do not look for God to help him in his actions. To do this, you argue, would be to surrender human freedom. Thus disdaining the aid of God you have to look to men for help.”

7. Listen, only listen, to the blasphemer. ”Suppose,” he avers, ”that I want to bend my finger or to move my hand, to sit, to stand, to walk, to run to and fro, to spit or to blow my nose, to perform the offices of nature; must the help of God be always indispensable to me?” Thankless, nay blasphemous wretch, hear the apostle’s declaration: ”whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” [1 Cor. 10:31] Hear also the words of James: ”go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.” [Jas. 4:13-16] You fancy that a wrong is inflicted on you and your freedom of choice is destroyed if you are forced to fall back on God as the moving cause of all your actions, if you are made dependent on His Will, and if you have to echo the psalmist’s words: ”mine eyes are ever toward the Lord: for it is he that shall pluck my feet out of the net.” [Ps. 25:15] And so you presume rashly to maintain that each individual is governed by his own choice. But if he is governed by his own choice, what becomes of God’s help? If he does not need Christ to rule him, why does Jeremiah write: ”the way of man is not in himself” [Jer. 10:23] and ”the Lord directeth his steps.” [Prov. 16:9]

You say that the commandments of God are easy, and yet you cannot produce any one who has fulfilled them all. Answer me this: are they easy or are they difficult? If they are easy, then produce some one who has fulfilled them all. Explain also the words of the psalmist: ”thou dost cause toil by thy law,” [Ps. 94:20, LXX and Vulg] and ”because of the words of thy lips I have kept hard ways.” [Ps. 17:4, LXX] And make plain our Lord’s sayings in the gospel: ”enter ye in at the strait gate;” [Matt. 7:13] and ”love your enemies;” and ”pray for them which persecute you.” [Matt. 5:44] If on the other hand the commandments are difficult and if no man has kept them all, how have you presumed to say that they are easy? Do not you see that you contradict yourself? For either they are easy and countless numbers have kept them; or they are difficult and you have been too hasty in calling them easy.

8. It is a common argument with your party to say that God’s commandments are either possible or impossible. So far as they are the former you admit that they are rightly laid upon us; but so far as they are the latter you allege that blame attaches not to us who have received them but to God who has imposed them on us. What! has God commanded me to be what He is, to put no difference between myself and my creator, to be greater than the greatest of the angels, to have a power which no angels possess? Sinlessness is made a characteristic of Christ, ”who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth.” [1 Pet. 2:22] But if I am sinless as well as He, how is sinlessness any longer His distinguishing mark? for if this distinction exists, your theory becomes fatal to itself.

You assert that a man may be without sin if he will; and then, as though awakening from a deep sleep, you try to deceive the unwary by adding the saving clause ”yet not without the grace of God. For if by his own efforts a man can keep himself without sin, what need has he of God’s grace? If on the other hand he can do nothing without this, what is the use of saying that he can do what he cannot do? It is argued that a man may be without sin and perfect if he only wills it. What Christian is there who does not wish to be sinless or who would reject perfection if, as you say, it is to be had for the wishing, and if the will is sure to be followed by the power? There is no Christian who does not wish to be sinless; wishing to be so, therefore, they all will be so. Whether you like it or not you will be caught in this dilemma, that you can produce nobody or hardly anybody who is without sin, yet have to admit that everybody may be sinless if he likes. God’s commandments, it is argued, are possible to keep. Who denies it? But how this truth is to be understood the chosen vessel thus most clearly explains: ”what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;

[Rom. 8:3] and again: ”by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified. [Rom. 3:20] And to shew that it is not only the law of Moses that is meant or

all those precepts which collectively are termed the law, the same apostle writes: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Other words of his further explain his meaning: "we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I know not: for what I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it: but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [Rom. 7:14-20]

9. But you will demur to this and say that I follow the teaching of the Manichaeans and others who make war against the church's doctrine in the interest of their belief that there are two natures diverse from one another and that there is an evil nature which can in no wise be changed. But it is not against me that you must make this imputation but against the apostle who knows well that God is one thing and man another, that the flesh is weak and the spirit strong. [cf. Matt. 26:41] "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. [Gal. 5:17] But from me you will never hear that any nature is essentially evil. Let us learn then from him who tells us so in what sense the flesh is weak. Ask him why he has said: "the good that I would, I do not; the evil which I would not, that I do. [Rom. 7:19] What necessity fetters his will? What compulsion commands him to do what he dislikes? And why must he do not what he wishes but what he dislikes and does not wish? He will answer you thus: "nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? [Rom. 9:20, Rom. 9:21] Bring a yet graver charge against God and ask Him why, when Esau and Jacob were still in the womb, He said: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. [Mal. 1:2, Mal. 1:3. Rom. 9:13] Accuse Him of injustice because, when Achan the son of Carmi stole part of the spoil of Jericho, He butchered so many thousands for the fault of one. Ask Him why for the sin of the sons of Eli the people were well-nigh annihilated and the ark captured. And why, when David sinned by numbering the people, so many thousands lost their lives. Or lastly make your own the favorite cavil of your associate Porphyry, and ask how God can be described as pitiful and of great mercy

when from Adam to Moses and from Moses to the coming of Christ He has suffered all nations to die in ignorance of the Law and of His commandments. For Britain, that province so fertile in despots, the Scottish tribes, and all the barbarians round about as far as the ocean were alike without knowledge of Moses and the prophets. Why should Christ's coming have been delayed to the last times? Why should He not have come before so vast a number had perished?

Of this last question the blessed apostle in writing to the Romans most wisely disposes by admitting that he does not know and that only God does. Do you too, then, condescend to remain ignorant of that into which you inquire. Leave to God His power over what is His own; He does not need you to justify His actions. I am the hapless being against whom you ought to direct your insults, I who am for ever reading the words: "by grace ye are saved," [Eph. 2:5] and "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. [Ps. 32:1] Yet, to lay bare my own weakness, I know that I wish to do many things which I ought to do and yet cannot. For while my spirit is strong and leads me to life my flesh is weak and draws me to death. And I have the warning of the Lord in my ears: "watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. [Matt. 26:41]

10. It is in vain that you misrepresent me and try to convince the ignorant that I condemn free will. Let him who condemns it be himself condemned. We have been created endowed with free will; still it is not this which distinguishes us from the brutes. For human free will, as I have said before, depends upon the help of God and needs His aid moment by moment, a thing which you and yours do not choose to admit. Your position is that, if a man once has free will, he no longer needs the help of God. It is true that freedom of the will brings with it freedom of decision. Still man does not act immediately on his free will, but requires God's aid who Himself needs no aid. You yourself boast that a man's righteousness may be perfect and equal to God's; yet you confess that you are a sinner. Answer me this, then; do you or do you not wish to be free from sin? If you do, why on your principle do you not carry out your desire? And if you do not, do you not prove yourself a despiser of God's commandments? If you are a despiser, then you are a sinner. And if you are a sinner, then the scripture says: "unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee.

[Ps. 50:16, Ps. 50:17] So long as you are unwilling to do what God commands, so long do you cast His words behind you. And yet like a new apostle you lay down for the world what to do and what not to do. However, your words and your thoughts by no means correspond. For when you say that you are a sinner-yet that a man may be without sin if he will, you wish it to be understood that you are a saint and

free from all sin. It is only out of humility that you call yourself a sinner; to give you a chance of praising others while you depreciate yourself.

11. Another of your arguments is also intolerable, one which runs thus: "To be sinless is one thing, to be able to be so is another. The first is not in our power, the second generally is. For though none ever has been sinless, yet, if a man wills to be so, he can be so." What sort of reasoning, I ask, is this? that a man can be what a man never has been! that a thing is possible which according to your own admission, no man has yet achieved! You are predicating of man a quality which, for aught you know, he may never possess! and you are assigning to any chance person a grace which you cannot shew to have marked patriarchs, prophets, or apostles. Listen to the Church's words, plain as they may seem to you or crude or ignorant. And speak what you think; preach publicly what secretly you tell your disciples. You profess to have freedom of choice; why do you not speak your thoughts freely? Your secret chambers hear one doctrine, the crowd around the platform hear another. The uneducated throng, I suppose, is not able to digest your esoteric teaching. Satisfied with the milk-diet of an infant it cannot take solid food. [cf. 1 Cor. 3:2]

I have written nothing yet, and still you menace me with the thunders of a reply; hoping, I suppose, that I may be scared by your terrors and may not venture to open my mouth. You fail to see that my purpose in writing is to force you to answer and to commit yourself plainly to doctrines which at present you maintain or ignore, as time, place, and person require. One kind of freedom I must deny to you, the freedom to deny what you have once written. An open avowal on your part of the opinions that you hold will be a victory for the church. For either the language of your reply will correspond to mine, in which case I shall count you no longer as opponents but as friends; or else you will gainsay my doctrine, in which case the making known of your opinion to all the churches will be a triumph for me. To have brought your tenets to light is to have overcome them. Blasphemy is written on the face of them, and a doctrine, which in its very statement is blasphemous, needs no refutation. You threaten me with a reply, but this nobody can escape except the man who does not write at all. How do you know what I am going to say that you talk of a reply? Perhaps I shall take your view and then you will have sharpened your wits to no purpose. Eunomians, Arians, Macedonians-all these, unlike in name, alike in impiety, give me no trouble.

For they say what they think. Yours is the only heresy which blushes openly to maintain what secretly it does not fear to teach. But the frenzy of the disciples exposes the silence of the masters; for what they have heard from them in the closet they preach upon the housetop. If their auditors like what they say, their masters get the credit; and if they dislike it, only the disciples are blamed, the masters go free. In this way your heresy has grown and you have deceived many;

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

12. From my youth up until now I have spent many years in writing various works and have always tried to teach my hearers the doctrine that I have been taught publicly in church. I have not followed the philosophers in their discussions but have preferred to acquiesce in the plain words of the apostles. For I have known that it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent," and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men. [1 Cor. 1:25] This being the case, I challenge my opponents thoroughly to sift all my past writings and, if they can find anything that is faulty in them, to bring it to light. One of two things must happen. Either my works will be found edifying and I shall confute the false charges brought against me; or they will be found blameworthy and I shall confess my error. For I would sooner correct an error than persevere in an opinion proved to be wrong. And as for you, illustrious doctor, go you and do likewise: either defend the statements that you have made, and support your clever theories with corresponding eloquence, and do not when the whim takes you disown your own words; or if, as a man may do, you have made a mistake, confess it frankly and restore harmony where there has been disagreement. Recall to mind how even the soldiers did not rend the coat of the Saviour.

[Joh. 19:23, Joh. 19:24] When you see brothers at strife you laugh; and are glad that some are called by your name and others by that of Christ. Better would it be to imitate Jonah and say: "If it is for my sake that this great tempest is upon you, take me up and cast me forth into the sea. [Jon. 1:12] He in his humility was thrown into the deep that he might rise again in glory to be a type of the Lord. [Matt. 12:39, Matt. 12:40] But you are lifted up in your pride to the stars, only that of you too Jesus may say: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. [Luke, 10:18]

13. It is true that in the holy scriptures many are called righteous, as Zacharias and Elizabeth, Job, Jehosaphat, Josiah, and many others who are mentioned in the sacred writings. Of this fact I shall, if God gives me grace, give a full explanation in the work which I have promised ; in this letter it must suffice to say that they are called righteous, not because they are faultless but because their

faults are eclipsed by their virtues. In fact Zacharias is punished with dumbness, [Luke 1:20-22] Job is condemned out of his own mouth, [Job 42:6] and Jehoshaphat and Josiah who are beyond a doubt described as righteous are narrated to have done things displeasing to the Lord The first leagued himself with the ungodly Ahab and brought upon himself the rebuke of Micaiah; [1 Kings 22:19] and the second-though forbidden by the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah-went against Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, and was slain by him. [2 Chr. 35:20-24] Yet they are both called righteous. Of the rest this is not the time to write; for you have asked me not for a treatise but for a letter. For a complete refutation I require leisure and then I hope to destroy all their cavils by the help of Christ. For this purpose I shall rely on the holy scriptures in which God every day speaks to those who believe.

And this is the warning which I would give through you to all who are assembled within your holy and illustrious house, that they should not allow one or at the most three mannikins to taint them with the dregs of so many heresies and with the infamy-to say the least-attaching to them. A place once famous for virtue and holiness must not be defiled by the presumption of the devil and by unclean associations. And let those who supply money to such men know that they are adding to the ranks of the heretics, raising up enemies to Christ and fostering his avowed opponents. It is idle for them to profess one thing with their lips when by their actions they are proved to think another.

Letter 134. To Augustine.

Jerome acknowledges the receipt of Letters 131 and 132 and excuses himself from answering the questions raised in them on the twofold ground (1) that the times are evil and (2) that it is inexpedient that he should be supposed to differ from Augustine. He prays for the speedy extinction of Pelagianism, regrets that he cannot send Augustine a critical Latin text of the O.T., and concludes with a number of salutations from himself and those with him. The date of the letter is 416 a.d. Sometimes numbered as Augustine letter 172. To Augustine, My Truly Pious Lord and Father, Worthy of My Utmost Affection and Veneration, Jerome Sends Greeting in Christ.

1. That honourable man, my brother, and your Excellency's son, the presbyter Orosius, I have, both on his own account and in obedience to your request, made welcome. But a most trying time has come upon us, in which I have found it better for me to hold my peace than to speak, so that our studies have ceased, lest what Appius calls "the eloquence of dogs" should be provoked into exercise. For this reason I have not been able at the present time to give to those two books dedicated to my name — books of profound erudition, and brilliant with every charm of splendid eloquence — the answer which I would otherwise have given; not that I think anything said in them demands correction, but because I am mindful of the words of the blessed apostle in regard to the variety of men's judgments, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Certainly, whatever can be said on the topics there discussed, and whatever can be drawn by commanding genius from the fountain of sacred Scripture regarding them, has been in these letters stated in your positions, and illustrated by your arguments. But I beg your Reverence to allow me for a little to praise your genius. For in any discussion between us, the object aimed at by both of us is advancement in learning. But our rivals, and especially heretics, if they see different opinions maintained by us, will assail us with the calumny that our differences are due to mutual jealousy.

For my part, however, I am resolved to love you, to look up to you, to reverence and admire you, and to defend your opinions as my own. I have also in a dialogue, which I recently published, made allusion to your Blessedness in suitable terms. Be

it ours, therefore, rather to rid the Church of that most pernicious heresy which always feigns repentance, in order that it may have liberty to teach in our churches, and may not be expelled and extinguished, as it would be if it disclosed its real character in the light of day.

2. Your pious and venerable daughters, Eustochium and Paula, continue to walk worthy of their own birth and of your counsels, and they send special salutations to your Blessedness: in which they are joined by the whole brotherhood of those who with us labour to serve the Lord our Saviour. As for the holy presbyter Firmus, we sent him last year to go on business of Eustochium and Paula, first to Ravenna, and afterwards to Africa and Sicily, and we suppose that he is now detained somewhere in Africa. I beseech you to present my respectful salutations to the saints who are associated with you. I have also sent to your care a letter from me to the holy presbyter Firmus; if it reaches you, I beg you to take the trouble of forwarding it to him. May Christ the Lord keep you in safety, and mindful of me, my truly pious lord and most blessed father.

[Postscript] We suffer in this province from a grievous scarcity of clerks acquainted with the Latin language; this is the reason why we are not able to comply with your instructions, especially in regard to that version of the Septuagint which is furnished with distinctive asterisks and obelisks; for we have lost, through some one’s dishonesty, the most of the results of our earlier labour.

Letter 135. From Pope Innocent to Aurelius.

Shortly after the synod of Diospolis the Pelagians exulting in their success made an attack upon Jerome’s monasteries at Bethlehem which they pillaged and partially burned. This gained for him the sympathy of Innocent who now (a.d. 417) asks Aurelius to transmit to him the letter which follows this. Innocent to his most esteemed friend and brother Aurelius. Our fellow-presbyter Jerome has informed us of your most dutiful desire to come to see us. We suffer with him as with a member of our own flock. We have been swift also to take such measures as have appeared to us expedient and practicable. As you count yourself one of us, most dear brother, make haste to transmit the following letter to the aforesaid Jerome.

Letter 136. From Pope Innocent to Jerome

Innocent expresses his sympathy with Jerome and promises to take strong measures to punish his opponents if he will bring specific charges against them. The date of the letter is a.d. 417. Innocent to his most esteemed son, the presbyter Jerome. The apostle [Tit. 3:10, Tit. 3:11] bears witness that contention has never done good in the church; and for this reason he gives direction that heretics should be admonished once or twice in the beginning of their heresy and not subjected to a long series of rebukes. Where this rule is negligently observed, the evil to be guarded against so far from being evaded is rather intensified. Your grief and lamentation have so affected us that we can neither act nor advise.

To begin however, we commend you for the constancy of your faith. To quote your own words spoken many times in the ears of many, a man will gladly face misrepresentation or even personal danger on behalf of the truth; if he is looking for the blessedness that is to come. We remind you of what you have yourself preached although we are sure that you need no reminder. The spectacle of these terrible evils has so thoroughly roused us that we have hastened to put forth the authority of the apostolic see to repress the plague in all its manifestations; but as your letters name no individuals and bring no specific charges, there is no one at present against whom we can proceed. But we do all that we can; we sympathize deeply with you. And if you will lay a clear and unambiguous accusation against any persons in particular we will appoint suitable judges to try their cases; or if you, our highly esteemed son, think that it is needful for us to take yet graver and more urgent action, we shall not be slow to do so. Meantime we have written to our brother bishop John advising him to act more considerately, so that nothing may occur in the church committed to him which it is his duty to foresee and to prevent, and that nothing may happen which may subsequently prove a source of trouble to him.

Letter 137. From Pope Innocent to John, Bishop of Jerusalem

Innocent censures John for having allowed the Pelagians to effuse the disturbance at Bethlehem mentioned in the two preceding letters and exhorts him to be more watchful over his diocese in future. The date of the letter is a.d. 417. This was the year of the death of both John and Innocent, and it is probable that John never received the letter. Innocent to his most highly esteemed brother John.

The holy virgins Eustochium and Paula have deplored to me the ravages, murders, fires and outrages of all kinds, which they say that the devil has perpetrated in the district belonging to their church; for with wonderful clemency and generosity they have left untold the name and motive of his human agent. Now although there can be no doubt as to who is the guilty person; yet you, my brother, ought to have taken precautions and to have been more careful of your flock so that no disturbance of the kind might arise; for others suffer by your negligence, and you encourage men by it to make havoc of the Lord’s flock till His tender lambs, fleeced and weakened by fire, sword and persecution, their relations murdered and dead, are, as we are informed, themselves scarce alive. Does it not touch your sacred responsibility as a priest that the devil has shewn himself so powerful against you and yours? Against you, I say; for surely it speaks ill of your capacity as a priest that a crime so terrible should have been committed in the pale of your church. Where were your precautions? Where, after the blow had been struck, were your attempts at relief? Where too were your words of comfort? These ladies tell me that up to the present they have been in a state of too great apprehension to complain of what they have already suffered. I should judge more gravely of the matter had they spoken to me concerning it more freely than they have.

Beware then, brother, of the wiles of the old enemy, and in the spirit of a good ruler be vigilant either to correct or to repress such evils. For they have reached my ears in the shape of rumours rather than as specific accusations. If nothing is done, the law of the Church on the subject of injuries may compel the person who has failed to defend his flock to shew cause for his negligence.

Letter 138. To Riparius.

Jerome praises Riparius for his zeal on behalf of the Catholic faith and for his efforts to put down the Pelagians. He then describes the attack made by these heretics upon the monasteries of Bethlehem. Now, he is glad to say, they have at last been driven from Palestine. Most of them, that is, for some still linger at Joppa including one of their chief leaders. The date is a.d. 417.

That you fight Christ's battles against the enemies of the Catholic Faith your own letters have informed me as well as the reports of many persons, but I am told that you find the winds contrary and that those who ought to have been the world's champions have backed the cause of perdition to each other's ruin. You are to know that in this part of the world, without any human help and merely by the decree of Christ, Catiline has been driven not only from the capital but from the borders of Palestine. Lentulus, however, and many of his fellow-conspirators still linger to our sorrow in Joppa. I myself have thought it better to change my abode than to surrender the true faith; and have chosen to leave my pleasant home rather than to suffer contamination from heresy. For I could not communicate with men who would either have insisted on my instant submission or would else have summoned me to support my opinions by the sword. A good many, I dare say, have told you the story of my sufferings and of the vengeance which Christ's uplifted hand has on my behalf taken upon my enemies. I would beg of you, therefore, to complete the task which you have taken up and not, while you are in it, to leave Christ's church without a defender. Every one knows the weapons that must be used in this warfare; and you, I feel sure will ask for no others. You must contend with all your might against the foe;

but it must be not with physical force but with that spiritual charity which is never overcome. The reverend brothers who are with me, unworthy as I am, salute you warmly. The reverend brother, the deacon Alentius, is sure to give you, my worshipful friend, a faithful narrative of all the facts. May Christ our Lord, of His almighty power, keep you safe and mindful of me, truly reverend sir and esteemed brother.

Letter 139. To Apronius.

Of Apronius nothing is known; but from the mention of Innocent (for whom see Letter 143.) it seems a fair inference that he lived in the West. Jerome here congratulates him on his steadfastness in the faith and exhorts him to come to Bethlehem. He then touches on the mischief done by Pelagius and complains that his own monastery has been destroyed by him or by his partisans. The date of the letter is a.d. 417. I know not by what wiles of the devil it has come to pass that all your toil and the efforts of the reverend presbyter Innocent and my own prayers and wishes seem for the moment to produce no effect. God be thanked that you are well and that the fire of faith glows in you even when you are in the midst of the devil's wiles. My greatest joy is to hear that my spiritual sons are fighting in the cause of Christ; and assuredly He in whom we believe will so quicken this zeal of ours that we shall be glad freely to shed our blood in defence of His faith.

I grieve to hear that a noble family has been subverted, for what reason I cannot learn; for the bearer of the letter could give me no information. We may well grieve over the loss of our common friends and ask Christ the only potentate and Lord [1 Tim. 6:15] to have mercy upon them. At the same time we have deserved to receive punishment at God's hand for we have harboured the enemies of the Lord. The best course you can take is to leave everything and to come to the East, before all to the holy places; for everything is now quiet here. The heretics have not, it is true, purged the venom from their breasts, but they do not venture to open their impious mouths. They are "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear." [Ps. 58:4] Salute your reverend brothers on my behalf. As for our house, so far as fleshly wealth is concerned, it has been completely destroyed by the onslaughts of the heretics; but by the mercy of Christ it is still filled with spiritual riches. To live on bread is better than to lose the faith.

Letter 141. To Augustine

A short note in which Jerome praises Augustine for the determined stand which he has made against heresy and speaks of him as ”the restorer of the ancient faith.” The allusion seems to be to his action in the Pelagian controversy. If so, the date is probably 418 a.d. Sometimes numbered as Augustine letter 195. To His Holy Lord and Most Blessed Father, Augustine, Jerome Sends Greeting. At all times I have esteemed your Blessedness with becoming reverence and honour, and have loved the Lord and Saviour dwelling in you. But now we add, if possible, something to that which has already reached a climax, and we heap up what was already full, so that we do not suffer a single hour to pass without the mention of your name, because you have, with the ardour of unshaken faith, stood your ground against opposing storms, and preferred, so far as this was in your power, to be delivered from Sodom, though you should come forth alone, rather than linger behind with those who are doomed to perish. Your wisdom apprehends what I mean to say. Go on and prosper! You are renowned throughout the whole world; Catholics revere and look up to you as the restorer of the ancient faith, and - which is a token of yet more illustrious glory - all heretics abhor you. They persecute me also with equal hatred, seeking by imprecation to take away the life which they cannot reach with the sword. May the mercy of Christ the Lord preserve you in safety and mindful of me, my venerable lord and most blessed father.

Letter 142. To Augustine.

There is good ground for supposing this to form part of the previous letter. If so, Jerome speaks in a figure of the success gained by Pelagianism in Palestine. ”Jerusalem,” he says, ”is in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and will not heed the voice of Jeremiah,” that is, as the context shews, Jerome himself. Date uncertain, possibly 410 a.d. Sometimes numbered as Augustine letter 123. [From Jerome to Augustine.] There are many who go halting upon both feet, and refuse to bend their heads even when their necks are broken, persisting in adherence to their former errors, even though they have not their former liberty of proclaiming them. Respectful salutations are sent to you by the holy brethren who are with your humble servant, and especially by your pious and venerable daughters. I beg your Excellency to salute in my name your brethren my lord Alypius and my lord Evodius. Jerusalem is held captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and refuses to listen to the counsels of Jeremiah, preferring to look wistfully towards Egypt, that it may die in Tahpanhes, and perish there in eternal bondage.

Letter 143. To Alypius and Augustine.

In this letter Jerome congratulates Alypius and Augustine on their success in strangling the heresy of Caelestius, the co-adjutor of Pelagius, and states that, if he can find time and secretaries, he hopes to write a refutation of the absurd errors of the Pelagian pseudodeacon Annianus. The date is 419 a.d. Sometimes numbered as Augustine letter 202. To the Bishops Alypius and Augustine, My Lords Truly Holy, and Deservedly Loved and Reverenced, Jerome Sends Greeting in Christ. 1. The holy presbyter Innocentius, who is the bearer of this letter, did not last year take with him a letter from me to your Eminences, as he had no expectation of returning to Africa. We thank God, however, that it so happened, as it afforded you an opportunity of overcoming [evil with good in requiting] our silence by your letter. Every opportunity of writing to you, revered fathers, is most acceptable to me. I call God to witness that, if it were possible, I would take the wings of a dove and fly to be folded in your embrace. Loving you, indeed, as I have always done, from a deep sense of your worth, but now especially because your co-operation and your leadership have succeeded in strangling the heresy of Celestius, a heresy which has so poisoned the hearts of many, that, though they felt they were vanquished and condemned, yet they did not lay aside their venomous sentiments, and, as the only thing that remained in their power, hated us by whom they imagined that they had lost the liberty of teaching heretical doctrines.

2. As to your inquiry whether I have written in opposition to the books of Annianus, this pretended deacon of Celedæ, who is amply provided for in order that he may furnish frivolous accounts of the blasphemies of others, know that I received these books, sent in loose sheets by our holy brother, the presbyter Eusebius, not long ago. Since then I have suffered so much through the attacks of disease, and through the falling asleep of your distinguished and holy daughter Eustochium, that I almost thought of passing over these writings with silent contempt. For he flounders from beginning to end in the same mud, and, with the exception of some jingling phrases which are not original, says nothing he had not said before. Nevertheless, I have gained much in the fact, that in attempting to answer my letter he

has declared his opinions with less reserve, and has published to all men his blasphemies; for every error which he disowned in the wretched synod of Diospolis he in this treatise openly avows. It is indeed no great thing to answer his superlatively silly puerilities, but if the Lord spare me, and I have a sufficient staff of amanuenses, I will in a few brief lucubrations answer him, not to refute a defunct heresy, but to silence his ignorance and blasphemy by arguments: and this your Holiness could do better than I, as you would relieve me from the necessity of praising my own works in writing to the heretic. Our holy daughters Albina and Melania, and our son Pinianus, salute you cordially. I give to our holy presbyter Innocentius this short letter to convey to you from the holy place Bethlehem. Your niece Paula piteously entreats you to remember her, and salutes you warmly. May the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve you safe and mindful of me, my lords truly holy, and fathers deservedly loved and reverenced.

Letter 144. From Augustine to Optatus

Augustine writes to Optatus, bishop of Milevis, to say that he cannot send him a copy of his letter to Jerome on the origin of the soul (Letter 131.) as it is incomplete without Jerome's reply which he has not yet received. He then criticises the arguments with which Optatus combats traducianism and points out that his reasoning is inconclusive. The date of the letter is a.d. 420. The letter has been somewhat compressed in translation: the involved sentences of the original have been simplified and its redundancies curtailed. To the blessed lord and brother, sincerely loved and longed-for, his fellow-bishop Optatus, Augustine [sends] greeting in the Lord.

1. By the hand of the reverend presbyter Saturninus I have received a letter from you, venerable sir, in which you earnestly ask me for what I have not yet got. You thus shew clearly your belief that I have already had a reply to my question on the subject. Would that I had! Knowing the eagerness of your expectation, I should never have dreamed of keeping back from you your share in the gift; but if you will believe me, dear brother, it is not so. Although five years have elapsed since I despatched to the East my letter (which was one of inquiry, not of assertion), I have so far received no reply, and am consequently unable to untie the knot as you wish me to do. Had I had both letters, I should gladly have sent you both; but I think it better not to circulate mine by itself lest he to whom it is addressed and who may still answer me as I desire should prove displeased. If I were to publish so elaborate a treatise as mine without his reply to it, he might be justly indignant, and suppose me more intent on displaying my talents than on promoting some useful end. It would look as if I were bent on starting problems too hard for him to solve. It is better to wait for the answer which he probably means to send. For I am well aware that he has other subjects to occupy him which are more serious and urgent than this question of mine. Your holiness will readily understand this if you read what he wrote to me a year later when my messenger was returning. The following is an extract from his letter:

"A most trying time has come upon us in which I have found it better to hold my peace than to speak. Consequently my studies have ceased, that I may not give occasion to what Appius calls 'the eloquence of dogs.' For this reason I have not been able to send any answer to your two learned and brilliant letters. Not, indeed, that I think anything in them needs correction, but that I recall the Apostle's words: 'One judges in this way, another in that; let every man give full expression to his own opinion.' [Suo sensu abundet. Rom. 14:5, Vulg] All that a lofty intellect can draw from the well of holy scripture has been drawn by you. So much your reverence must allow me to say in praise of your ability. But though in any discussion between us our joint object is the advancement of learning, our rivals and especially the heretics will ascribe any difference of opinion between us to mutual jealousy. For my part, however, I am resolved to love you, to look up to you, to reverence and admire you, and to defend your opinions as my own. I have also in a dialogue which I have recently brought out made allusion to your holiness in suitable terms. Let us, rather, then, strain every nerve to banish from the churches that most pernicious heresy, which feigns repentance that it may have liberty to teach in our churches. For were it to come out into the light of day, it would be expelled and die."

2. You can see, worshipful brother, from this reply that my friend does not refuse to answer my inquiry; he postpones it because he is condemned to give his time to more urgent matters. Moreover, that he is well disposed towards me is clear from his friendly warning that a controversy between us begun in all charity and in the interests of learning may be misconstrued by jealous and heretical persons as due to mutual illfeeling. No; it will be better for the public to have both together, his explanation as well as my inquiry. For, as I shall have to thank him for instructing me if he is able to explain the matter, the discussion will be of no small advantage when it comes to the knowledge of the world. Those who come after us will not only know what view they ought to take of a subject thus fully argued but will also learn how under the divine mercy brothers in affection may dispute a difficult question and yet preserve each other's esteem.

3. On the other hand, if I were to publish the letter in which I raise this obscure point without the reply in which it may be set at rest, it might circulate widely and reach men who "comparing themselves," as the Apostle says, "with themselves," [2 Cor. 10:12] would misconstrue a motive which they could not understand, and would explain my feeling towards one whom I love and esteem for his immense services not as it would appear to them (for it would be invisible to them) but as their own fancy and malice would dictate. Now this is a danger which, so far as in me lies, I am bound to guard against. But if a document which I am unwilling to publish is published without my consent and placed in hands from which I would withhold it, then I shall have to resign myself to the will of God. Indeed, had I wished to keep my words permanently undivulged I should never have sent them to any one. For if (though I hope it may not be so) chance or necessity shall prevent

any reply being ever given me, my letter of inquiry is still bound sooner or later to come to light. Nor will it be useless to those who read it; for, although they will nor find what they seek, they will learn how much better it is, when one is uninformed, to put questions than to make assertions;

and in the meantime those whom they consult will work out the points raised by me, laying aside contention and in the interests of learning and charity trying to obtain sound opinions about them. Thus they will either arrive at the solutions they desire, or their faculties will be quickened and they will learn from the investigation that farther inquiry is useless. At present, however, as I have no reason to despair of an answer from my friend I have decided not to publish the letter I have sent him, and I trust, my dear comrade, that this decision may commend itself to you. It should do so, for you have not asked for my letter so much as for the answer to it; and this I would gladly send you if I had it to send. It is true that in your epistle you speak of ”the lucid demonstration of my wisdom which in virtue of my life the Giver of light has bestowed upon me”; and if by this you mean not the way in which I have stated the problem but a solution which I have obtained of the point in question, I should like to gratify your wish. But I must admit that I have so far failed to discover how the soul can derive its sin from Adam (a truth which it is unlawful to question) and yet not itself be derived from Adam. At present I think it better to sift the matter farther than to dogmatize rashly.

4. Your letter speaks of ”many old men and persons educated by learned priests whom you have failed to recall to your modest way of thinking, and to a statement of the case which is truth itself.” You do not, however, explain what this mode of expression is. If your old men hold fast what they have received from learned priests, how comes it that you are troubled by a boorish mob of unlettered clerics? On the other hand, if the old men and the unlettered clerics have wickedly departed from the priests’ teachings, surely these latter are the persons to correct them and restrain them from controversial excesses. Again when you say that ”you as a new-fledged and inexperienced teacher have been afraid to tamper with the doctrines handed down by great and famous bishops, and that you have been loth to draw men into a better path lest you should cast discredit on the dead,” do you not imply that in refusing to agree with you the objects of your solicitude are but preferring the tradition of great and famous bishops to the views of a new-fledged and inexperienced teacher? Of their conduct in the matter I say nothing, but I am most anxious to learn that ”mode ofexpression which is truth itself,” not the thing expressed, but the mode of expression.

5. For you have made it sufficiently plain to me that you disapprove of those who assert that men’s souls are derived from that of the protoplast and propagated from one generation to another; but as your letter does not inform me, I have no means of knowing on what grounds and from what passages of scripture you have shewn

this view to be false. What does commend itself to you is not clear either from your letter to the brothers at Caesarea or from that which you have lately addressed to me. Only I see that you believe and write that ”God has been, is, and will be the maker of men, and that there is nothing either in heaven or on earth which does not owe its existence wholly to Him. This is of course a truism which nobody can call in question. But as you affirm that souls are not propagated, you ought to explain out of what God makes them. Is it out of some pre-existing material, or is it out of nothing? For it is impossible that you should hold the opinion of Origen, Priscillian, and other heretics that it is for deeds done in a former life that souls are confined in earthly and mortal bodies. This opinion is, indeed, flatly contradicted by the apostle who says of Jacob and Esau that before they were born they had done neither good nor evil.

[Rom. 9:11] Your view of the matter, then, is known to me though only partially, but of your reasons for supposing it to be true I know nothing. This was why in a former letter I asked you to send me your confession of faith, the one which you were vexed to find that one of your presbyters had signed dishonestly. I now again ask you for this, as well as for any passages of scripture which you have brought to bear on the question. For you say in your letter to the brothers at Caesarea that you ”have resolved to have all definitions of dogma reviewed by lay judges, sitting by general invitation, and investigating all points touching the faith. And you continue: ”the divine mercy has made it possible for them to put forward their views in a positive and definite form, which your modest ability has reinforced with a great weight of evidence. Now it is this ”great weight of evidence” which I am so anxious to obtain. For, so far as I can see, your one aim has been to refute your opponents when they deny that our souls are the handiwork of God. If they hold such a view, you are right in thinking that it should be condemned. Were they to say the same thing of our bodies, they would be forced to retract it, or else be held up to execration. For what Christian can deny that every single human body is the work of God?

Yet when we admit that they are of divine origin we do not mean to deny that they are humanly engendered. When therefore it is asserted that our souls are procreated from a kind of immaterial seed, and that they, like our bodies, come to us from our parents, yet are made souls by the working of God, it is not by human guesses that the assertion is to be refuted, but by the witness of divine scripture. Numbers of passages may indeed be quoted from the sacred books which have canonical authority, to prove that our souls are God’s handiwork. But such passages only refute those who deny that each several human soul is made by God; not at all those who while they admit this contend that, like our bodies, they are formed by divine agency through the instrumentality of parents. To refute these you must look for unmistakable texts; or, if you have already discovered such, shew your affection

by communicating them to me. For though I seek them most diligently I fail to find them.

As stated shortly by yourself (at the end of your letter to the brothers at Caesarea) your dilemma is as follows: ”inasmuch as I am your son and disciple and have but recently by God’s help come to consider these mysteries, I beg you with your priestly wisdom to teach me which of two opposite views I ought to hold. Am I to maintain that souls are transmitted by generation, and that they are derived in some mysterious way from Adam our first-formed father? [Wisdom 10:1] Or am I with your brothers and the priests who are here to hold that God has been, is, and will be the author and maker of all things and all men?”

6. Of the two alternatives which you thus put forward you wish to be urged to choose one or other; and this would be the course of wisdom if your alternatives were so contrary that the choice of one would involve the rejection of the other. But as it is, instead of selecting one of them a man may say that they are both true. He may maintain that the souls of all mankind are derived from Adam our first-formed father, and yet believe and assert that God has been, is, and will be the author and maker of all things and all men. How on your principles is such a man to be confuted? Shall we say: ”If they are transmitted by generation God is not their author, for He does not make them?” In that case he will reply: ”Bodies too are engendered and not made by God; on your shewing, then He is not their author.” Will any one maintain that God is the maker of no bodies but Adam’s which He made out of the dust and Eve’s which He formed out of Adam’s side; and that other bodies are not made by Him because they are engendered by human parents?

7. If your opponents go so far in maintaining the derivation of souls as to deny that they are made and formed by God, you may use this argument as a weapon to confute them so far as God’s help enables you. But if, while they assert that the soul’s beginnings come from Adam first and then from a man’s parents, they at the same time hold that the soul in every man is created and formed by God the author of all things, they can only be confuted out of scripture. Search therefore till you find a passage that is neither obscure nor capable of a double meaning; or if you have already found one, hand it on to me as I have begged you to do. But if, like myself, you have so far failed to discover any such passage, you must still strain every nerve to confute those who say that souls are in no sense God’s handiwork. This seems to be your opponents

position, for in your first letter you write that ”they have secretly whispered scandalous doctrines and have forsaken your communion and the obedience of the church on account of this foolish, nay impious opinion. Against such men defend and uphold by every possible expedient the doctrine you have laid down in the same letter, that God has been, is, and will be the maker of souls; and that everything in heaven and on earth owes its existence wholly to Him. For this is true of every

creature; and as such is to be believed, asserted, defended, and proved. God has been, is, and will be the author and maker of all things and all men as you have told your fellow-bishops of the province of Caesarea, exhorting them to adopt the doctrine by the example of your brothers and fellow-priests. But there are two quite distinct dilemmas: (1) Is God the author and maker of all souls and bodies (the true view), or is there something in nature which He has not made (a view which is wholly erroneous)? If souls are undoubtedly God's handiwork, does He make them directly, or indirectly by propagation? It is in dealing with this second dilemma that I would have you to be sober and vigilant. Else in refuting the propagation-theory you may fall incautiously into the heresy of Pelagius. Everybody knows that human bodies are propagated by generation;

yet if we are right in saying that all human souls-and not only those of Adam and Eve-are created by God, it is clear that to assert their transmission by generation is not to deny their divine origin. For in this view God makes the soul as He makes the body, indirectly by a process of generation. If the truth condemns this as an error, some fresh argument must be sought to confute it. No persons could better advise you on the point (if only they were within reach) than those dead worthies whom you feared to discredit by drawing men away from them into a better path. They were, you said, great and famous bishops while you were a new-fledged and inexperienced teacher; thus you were loth to tamper with their doctrines. Would that I could know on what passages these great men rested their opinion that souls are transmitted! For in your letter to the brothers at Caesarea, you speak of their view with a total disregard of their authority, as a new invention, an unheard-of doctrine; though we all know that, error as it may be, it is no novelty but old and of ancient date.

8. Now when we have reason to be doubtful about a point, we need not doubt that we are right in doubting. There is no doubt but that we ought to doubt things that are doubtful. For instance, the Apostle has no doubt about doubting whether he was in the body or out of the body when he was carried up into the third heaven. [2 Cor. 12:4] Whether it was thus or thus, he says, I know not; God knows. Why may not I, then, so long as I have no light, doubt whether my soul comes to me by generation or unengendered? Why may I not be doubtful about this, so long as I do not doubt that in either case it is the work of God most high? Why may I not say; "I know that my soul owes its existence to God and is altogether His handiwork; but whether it comes by generation, as the body does, or unengendered, as was Adam's soul, I know not; God knows. You wish me to assert positively one view or the other. I might do so if I knew which was right. You may have some light on the point, and if so you will find me keener to learn what I know not than to teach what I know. But if, like myself, you are in the dark, you should pray, as I do, that either through one of His servants, or with His own lips, He would teach us who said to His disciples:

"Be not ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ. [Matt. 23:10] Yet such knowledge is only expedient for us when He knows it to be expedient who knows both what He has to teach and what we ought to learn. Nevertheless, to you, my dear friend, I confess my eagerness. Still much as I desire to know this after which you seek, I would sooner know when the desire of all nations shall come and when the kingdom of the saints will be set up, than how my soul has come to its earthly abode. But when His disciples (who are our apostles) put this question to the all-knowing Christ, they were told: "It is not yours to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. [Acts 1:7] What if Christ, who knows what is expedient for us, knows this knowledge not to be expedient? Through Him I know that it is not ours to know the times which God has placed in His own power; but concerning the origin of souls, I am ignorant whether it is or is not ours to know. If I could be sure that such knowledge is not for us, I should cease not only to dogmatize, but even to inquire. As it is, though the subject is so deep and dark that my fear of becoming a rash teacher is almost greater than my eagerness to learn the truth, I still wish to know it if I can do so.

It may be that the knowledge for which the psalmist prays: "Lord, make me to know mine end," [Ps. 39:4] is much more necessary; yet I would that my beginning also might be revealed to me.

9. But even as touching this I must not be ungrateful to my Master. I know that the human soul is spiritual not corporeal, that it is endowed with reason and intelligence, and that it is not of God's essence but a thing created. It is both mortal and immortal: the first because it is subject to corruption and separable from the life of God in which it is alone blessed, the second because its consciousness must ever continue and form the source of its happiness or woe. It does not, it is true, owe its immersion in the flesh to acts done before the flesh; yet in man it is never without sin, not even when "its life has been but for one day." [Job 14:5, LXX] Of those engendered of the seed of Adam no man is born without sin, and it is necessary even for babes to be born anew in Christ by the grace of regeneration. All this I know concerning the soul, and it is much; the greater part of it, indeed, is not only knowledge but matter of faith as well. I rejoice to have learned it all and I can truly say that I know it. If there are things of which I am still ignorant (as whether God creates souls by generation or apart from it-for that He does create them I have no doubt) I would sooner know the truth than be ignorant of it. But so long as I cannot know it I had rather suspend my judgment than assert what is plainly contrary to an indisputable truth.

10. You, my brother, ask me to decide for you whether men's souls as made by the Creator come like their bodies by generation from Adam, or whether like his soul they are made without generation and separately for each individual. For in one way or the other we both admit that they are God's handiwork. Suffer me then

in turn to ask you a question. Can a soul derive original sin from a source from which it is not itself derived? For unless we are to fall into the detestable heresy of Pelagius, we must both of us allow that all souls do derive original sin from Adam. And if you cannot answer my question, pray give me leave to confess my ignorance alike of your question and of my own. But if you already know what I ask, teach me and then I will teach you what you wish to know. Pray do not be displeased with me for taking this line, for though I have given you no positive answer to your question, I have shewn you how you ought to put it. When once you are clear about that, you may be quite positive where you have been doubtful.

This much I have thought it right to write to your holiness seeing that you are so sure that the transmission of souls is a doctrine to be rejected. Had I been writing to maintainers of the doctrine I might perhaps have shewn how ignorant they are of what they fancy they know and how cautious they should be not to make rash assertions. It may perhaps perplex you that in my friend’s answer as I have quoted it in this letter he mentions two letters of mine to which he has no time to reply. Only one of these deals with the problem of the soul; in the other I have asked light on another difficulty. Again when he urges me to take more pains for the removal from the church of a most pernicious heresy, he alludes to the error of the Pelagians which I earnestly beg you, my brother, at all hazards to avoid. In speculating or arguing on the origin of the soul you must never give place to this heresy with its insidious suggestions. For there is no soul, save that of the one Mediator, which does not derive original sin from Adam. Original sin is that which is fastened on the soul at its birth and from which it can only be freed by being born again.

Letter 145. To Exuperantius.

Jerome advises Exuperantius, a Roman soldier, to come to Bethlehem and with his brother Quintilian to become a monk. According to Palladius (H. L. c. lxxx.) Exuperantius came to Jerome but went away again 'unable to endure his violence and ill-will.' The date of the letter is unknown. Among all the favours that my friendship with the reverend brother Quintilian has conferred upon me the greatest is this that he has introduced me in the spirit to you whom I do not know personally. Who can fail to love a man who, while he wears the cloak and uniform of a soldier does the work of a prophet, and while his outer man gives promise of quite a different character, overcomes this by the inner man which is formed after the image of the creator. I come forward therefore to challenge you to an interchange of letters and beg that you will often give me occasion to reply to you that I may for the future feel less constraint in writing.

For the present I will content myself by suggesting to your discretion that you should bear in mind the apostle's words: "Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife; [1 Cor. 7:27] that is, seek not that binding which is contrary to loosing. He who has contracted the obligations of marriage, is bound, and he who is bound is a slave; on the other hand he who is loosed is free. Since therefore you rejoice in the freedom of Christ, since your life is better than your profession, since you are all but on the housetop of which the Saviour speaks; you ought not to come down to take your clothes, [Matt. 24:17, Matt. 24:18] you ought not to look behind you, you ought not having put your hand to the plough, then to let it go. [Luke 9:62] Rather, if you can, imitate Joseph and leave your garment in the hand of your Egyptian mistress, [Gen. 39:12] that naked you may follow your Lord and Saviour. For in the gospel He says: "Whosoever doth not leave all that he hath and bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. [Luke 14:26, Luke 14:27] Cast from you the burthen of the things of this world, and seek not those riches which in the gospel are compared to the humps of camels. Naked and unencumbered fly up to heaven; masses of gold will but impede the wings of your virtue.

I do not speak thus because I know you to be covetous, but because I have a notion that your object in remaining so long in the army is to fill that purse which the Lord has commanded you to empty. For they who have possessions and riches are bidden to sell all that they have and to give to the poor and then to follow the Saviour. [Matt. 19:21] Thus if your worship is rich already you ought to fulfil the command and sell your riches; or if you are still poor you ought not to amass what you will have to pay away. Christ accepts the sacrifices made for him [2 Cor. 8:12] according as he who makes them has a willing mind. Never were any men poorer than the apostles; yet never any left more for the Lord than they. The poor widow in the gospel who cast but two mites into the treasury was set before all the men of wealth because she gave all that she had. [Luke 21:1-4] So it should be with you. Seek not for wealth which you will have to pay away; but rather give up that which you have already acquired that Christ may know his new recruit to be brave and resolute, and then when you are a great way off His Father will run with joy to meet you. He will give you a robe, will put a ring upon your finger. and will kill for you the fatted calf.

[Luke 15:20-23] Then when you are freed from all encumbrances God will soon make a way for you to cross the sea to me with your revereZnd brother Quintilian. I have now knocked at the door of friendship: if you open it to me you will find me a frequent visitor.

Letter 146. To Evangelus.

Jerome refutes the opinion of those who make deacons equal to presbyters, but in doing so himself makes presbyters equal to bishops. The date of the letter is unknown.

1. We read in Isaiah the words, ”the fool will speak folly,” [Isa. 32:6, RV] and I am told that some one has been mad enough to put deacons before presbyters, that is, before bishops. For when the apostle clearly teaches that presbyters are the same as bishops, must not a mere server of tables and of widows [Acts 6:1, Acts 6:2] be insane to set himself up arrogantly over men through whose prayers the body and blood of Christ are produced? Do you ask for proof of what I say? Listen to this passage: ”Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons. [Ph. 1:1] Do you wish for another instance? In the Acts of the Apostles Paul thus speaks to the priests of a single church: ”Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. [Acts 20:28, RV] And lest any should in a spirit of contention argue that there must then have been more bishops than one in a single church, there is the following passage which clearly proves a bishop and a presbyter to be the same. Writing to Titus the apostle says: ”For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain presbyters in every city, as I had appointed thee:

if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God. [Tit. 1:5-7] And to Timothy he says: ”Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. [Tim. 4:14] Peter also says in his first epistle: ”The presbyters which are among you I exhort, who am your fellow-presbyter and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of Christ ...taking the oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly, according unto God. In the Greek the meaning is still plainer, for the word used is ”episkopountej”, that is to say, overseeing, and this is the origin of the name overseer or bishop. But perhaps the

testimony of these great men seems to you insufficient. If so, then listen to the blast of the gospel trumpet, that son of thunder, [Mark 3:17] the disciple whom Jesus loved [Joh. 13:23] and who reclining on the Saviour's breast drank in the waters of sound doctrine. One of his letters begins thus: "The presbyter unto the elect lady and her children whom I love in the truth; and another thus: "The presbyter unto the well-beloved Gains whom I love in the truth.

When subsequently one presbyter was chosen to preside over the rest, this was done to remedy schism and to prevent each individual from rending the church of Christ by drawing it to himself. For even at Alexandria from the time of Mark the Evangelist until the episcopates of Heraclas and Dionysius the presbyters always named as bishop one of their own number chosen by themselves and set in a more exalted position, just as an army elects a general, or as deacons appoint one of themselves whom they know to be diligent and call him archdeacon. For what function, excepting ordination, belongs to a bishop that does not also belong to a presbyter? It is not the case that there is one church at Rome and another in all the world beside. Gaul and Britain, Africa and Persia, India and the East worship one Christ and observe one rule of truth. If you ask for authority, the world outweighs its capital. Wherever there is a bishop, whether it be at Rome or at Engubium, whether it be at Constantinople or at Rhegium, whether it be at Alexandria or at Zoan, his dignity is one and his priesthood is one. Neither the command of wealth nor the lowliness of poverty makes him more a bishop or less a bishop. All alike are successors of the apostles.

Letter 147. To Sabinianus

Jerome writes in severe but moderate language to Sabinianus, a deacon, calling on him to repent of his sins. Of these he recounts at length the two most serious, an act of adultery at Rome and an attempt to seduce a nun at Bethlehem. The date of the letter is uncertain.

1. Of old, when it had repented the Lord that he had anointed Saul to be king over Israel, [1 Sam. 15:11, 1 Sam. 15:17] we are told that Samuel mourned for him; and again, when Paul heard that there was fornication among the Corinthians and such fornication as was not so much as named among the gentiles, [1 Cor. 5:1] he besought them to repent with these tearful words: ”lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed. [2 Cor. 12:21] If an apostle or a prophet, themselves immaculate, could speak thus with a clemency embracing all, how much more earnestly should a sinner like me plead with a sinner like you. You have fallen and refuse to rise; you do not so much as lift your eyes to heaven; having wasted your father’s substance you take pleasure in the husks that the swine eat; [Luke 16:13, Luke 16:16] and climbing the precipice of pride you fall headlong into the deep. You make your belly your God instead of Christ; you are a slave to lust; your glory is in your shame; [Phil. 3:19] you fatten yourself like a victim for the slaughter, and imitate the lives of the wicked, careless of their doom. ”Thou knowest not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath. [Rom. 2:4, Rom. 2:5] Or is it that your heart is hardened, as Pharaoh’s was, because your punishment is deferred and you are not smitten at the moment? The ten plagues were sent upon Pharaoh not as by an angry God but as by a warning father, and his day of grace was prolonged until he repented of his repentance. Yet doom overtook him when he pursued through the wilderness the people whom he had previously let go and presumed to enter the very sea in the eagerness of his pursuit. For only in this one way could he learn the lesson that He is to be dreaded whom even the elements obey. He had said: ”I know not

the Lord, neither will I let Israel go; [Ex. 5:2] and you imitate him when you say: ”The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. [Ezek. 12:27, Ezek. 12:28] Yet the same prophet confutes you with these words: ”Thus saith the Lord God, There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done. David too says of the godless (and of godlessness you have proved yourself not a slight but an eminent example), that in this world they rejoice in good fortune and say: ”How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?

Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. [Ps. 73:11, Ps. 73:12] Then almost losing his footing and staggering where he stands he complains, saying ”Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. [Ps. 73:13] For he had previously said: ”I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no regard for death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men are; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. [Ps. 73:3-9]

2. Does not this whole psalm seem to you to be written of yourself? Certainly you are hale and strong; and like a new apostle of Antichrist, when you are found out in one city, you pass to another. [Cf. Matt. 10:23] You are in no need of money, no crushing blow strikes you down, neither are you plagued as other men who are not like you mere brute beasts. Therefore you are lifted up into pride, and lust covers you as a garment. Out of your fat and bloated carcass you breathe out words fraught with death. You never consider that you must some day die, nor feel the slightest repentance when you have satisfied your lust. You have more than heart can wish; and, not to be alone in your wrongdoing, you invent scandals concerning those who are God’s servants. Though you know it not, it is against the most High that you are speaking iniquity and against the heavens that you are setting your mouth. It is no wonder that God’s servants small and great are blasphemed by you, when your fathers did not scruple to call even the master of the house Beelzebub. ”The disciple is not above his master nor the servant above his lord. [Matt. 10:24, Matt. 10:25] If they did this with the green tree, what will you do with me, the dry? [Luke 23:31] Much in the same way also the offended believers in the book of Malachi gave expression to feelings like yours;

for they said, ”It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Yet the Lord afterwards threatens them with a day

of judgment; and announcing beforehand the distinction that shall then be made between the righteous and the unrighteous, speaks to them thus: ”Return ye, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. [Mal. 3:14, Mal. 3:15, Mal. 3:18]

3. All this may perhaps seem to you matter for jesting, seeing that you take so much pleasure in comedies and lyrics and mimes like those of Lentulus; although so blunted is your wit that I am not disposed to allow that you can understand even language so simple. You may treat the words of prophets with contempt, but Amos will still make answer to you: ”Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions and for four shall I not turn away from him? [Am. 1:3, LXX] For inasmuch as Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, the Ammonites and the Moabites, the Jews also and the children of Israel, although God had often prophesied to them to turn and to repent, had refused to hear His voice, the Lord wishing to shew that He had most just cause for the wrath that he was going to bring upon them used the words already quoted, ”For three transgressions and for four shall I not turn away from them? It is wicked, God says, to harbour evil thoughts; yet I have allowed them to do so. It is still more wicked to carry them out; yet in My mercy and kindness I have permitted even this. But should the sinful thought have become the sinful deed? Should men in their pride have trampled thus on my tenderness? Nevertheless ”I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;

[Ezek. 33:11] and as it is not they that are whole who need a physician but they that are sick, [Luke 5:31] even after his sin I hold out a hand to the prostrate sinner and exhort him, polluted as he is in his own blood, [Cf. Ezek. 16:6] to wash away his stains with tears of penitence. But if even then he shews himself unwilling to repent, and if, after he has suffered shipwreck, he refuses to clutch the plank which alone can save him, I am compelled at last to say: ”Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions and for four shall I not turn away from him? For this ”turning away” God accounts a punishment, inasmuch as the sinner is left to his own devices. It is thus that he visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation; [Ex. 20:5] not punishing those who sin immediately but pardoning their first offences and only passing sentence on them for their last. For if it were otherwise and if God were to stand forth on the moment as the avenger of iniquity, the church would lose many of its saints; and certainly would be deprived of the apostle Paul. The prophet Ezekiel, from whom we have quoted above, repeating God’s words spoken to himself speaks thus: ”Open thy mouth and eat what I shall give thee. And behold,” he says, ”an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me;

and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and a song, and woe. [Ezek. 3:1, Ezek. 2:9, 10, Vulg] The first of these three belongs to you if you prove willing, as a sinner, to repent of your sins. The second

belongs to those who are holy, who are called upon to sing praises to God; for praise does not become a sinner's mouth. And the third belongs to persons like you who in despair have given themselves over to uncleanness, to fornication, to the belly, and to the lowest lusts; men who suppose that death ends all and that there is nothing beyond it; who say: "When the overflowing scourge shall pass through it shall not come unto us. [Is. 28:15] The book which the prophet eats is the whole series of the Scriptures, which in turn bewail the penitent, celebrate the righteous, and curse the desperate. For nothing is so displeasing to God as an impenitent heart. Impenitence is the one sin for which there is no forgiveness. For if one who ceases to sin is pardoned even after he has sinned, and if prayer has power to bend the judge; it follows that every impenitent sinner must provoke his judge to wrath. Thus despair is the one sin for which there is no remedy. By obstinate rejection of God's grace men turn His mercy into sternness and severity. Yet, that you may know that God does every day call sinners to repentance, hear Isaiah's Words:

"In that day," he says, "did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. After these words filled with the recklessness of despair the Scripture goes on to say: "And it was revealed in my ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die. [Isa. 22:12-14] Only when they become dead to sin, will their sin be forgiven them. For, so long as they live in sin, it cannot be put away.

4. Have mercy I beseech you upon your soul. Consider that God's judgment will one day overtake you. Remember by what a bishop you were ordained. The holy man was mistaken in his choice; but this he might well be. For even God repented that he had anointed Saul to be king. [1 Sam. 15:11] Even among the twelve apostles Judas was found a traitor. And Nicolas of Antioch-a deacon like yourself [Acts 6:5] -disseminated the Nicolaitan heresy and all manner of uncleanness. [Rev. 2:6, Rev. 2:15] I do not now bring up to you the many virgins whom you are said to have seduced, or the noble matrons who have suffered death because violated by you, or the greedy profligacy with which you have hied through dens of sin. For grave and serious as such sins are in themselves, they are trivial indeed when compared with those which I have now to narrate. How great must be the sin beside which seduction and adultery are insignificant? Miserable wretch that you are! when you enter the cave wherein the Son of God was born, where truth sprang out of the earth and the land did yield her increase, [Ps. 85:11, Ps. 85:12] it is to make an assignation. Have you no fear that the babe will cry from the manger, that the newly delivered virgin will see you, that the mother of the Lord will behold you?

The angels cry aloud, the shepherds run, the star shines down from heaven, the wise men worship, Herod is terrified, Jerusalem is in confusion, and meantime

you creep into a virgin's cell to seduce the virgin to whom it belongs. I am filled with consternation and a shiver runs through me, soul and body, when I try to set before your eyes the deed that you have done. The whole church was keeping vigil by night and proclaiming Christ as its Lord;? one spirit though in different tongues the praises of God were being sung. Yet you were squeezing your love-notes into the openings of what is now the altar, as it was once the manger, of the Lord, choosing this place in order that your unhappy victim might find and read them when she came to kneel and worship there. Then you took your place among the singers, and with impudent nods communicated your passion to her.

5. Oh! crying shame! I can go no farther. For sobs anticipate my words, and indignation and grief choke me in the act of utterance. Oh! for the sea of Tully's eloquence! Oh! for the impetuous current of the invective of Demosthenes! Yet in this case I am sure you would both be dumb; your eloquence would fail you. A deed has been disclosed which no rhetoric can explain; a crime has been discovered which no mime can represent, nor jester play, nor comedian describe. It is usual in the monasteries of Egypt and Syria for virgins and widows who have vowed themselves to God and have renounced the world and have trodden under foot its pleasures, to ask the mothers of their communities to cut their hair; not that afterwards they go about with heads uncovered in defiance of the apostle's command, [1 Cor. 11:5, 1 Cor. 11:6] for they wear a close-fitting cap and a veil. No one knows of this in any single case except the shearers and the shorn, but as the practice is universal, it is almost universally known. The custom has in fact become a second nature. It is designed to save those who take no baths and whose heads and faces are strangers to all unguents, from accumulated dirt and from the tiny creatures which are sometimes generated about the roots of the hair.

6. Let us see then, my good friend, how you acted in these surroundings. You promised to marry your unhappy victim; and then in that venerable cave you took from her, either as securities for her fidelity or as a pledge of the engagement, some locks of hair, some handkerchiefs, and a girdle, swearing at the same time that you would never love another as you loved her. Then you ran to the place where the shepherds were watching their flocks when they heard the angels singing over head, and there again you plighted your troth. I say no more; I do not accuse you of kissing her or of embracing her. Although I believe that there is nothing of which you are not capable, still the sacred character of stable and field forbids me to suppose you guilty except in will and determination. Unhappy man! When you first stood beside the virgin in the cave, surely a mist must have dimmed your eyes, your tongue must have been paralysed, your arms must have fallen to your sides, your chest must have heaved, your gait must have become unsteady. She had assumed the bridal-veil of Christ in the basilica of the apostle Peter and had vowed to live henceforth in the monastery, in the spots consecrated by the Lord's Cross, His Resurrection, and His Ascension; and yet after all this you dared to accept that

hair, which at Christ's command she had cut off in the cave of His birth, as a token of her readiness to sleep with you.

Again you used to sit beneath her window from the evening till the morning; and because owing to its height you could not come to close quarters with her, you conveyed things to her and she in her turn to you by the aid of a cord. How careful the lady superior must have been is shewn by the fact that you never saw the virgin except in church; and that, although both of you had the same inclination, you could find no means of conversing with each other except at a window under cover of night. As I was afterwards told you used to be quite sorry when the sun rose. Your face looked bloodless, shrunken, and pale; and to remove all suspicion, you used to be for ever reading Christ's gospel as if you were a deacon indeed. I and others used to attribute your paleness to fasting, and to admire your bloodless lips-so unlike the brilliant colour which they generally shewed-in the belief that they were caused by frequent vigils. You were already preparing ladders to fetch the unhappy virgin from her cell; you had already arranged your route, ordered vessels, settled a day, and thought out the details of your flight, when, behold, the angel who kept the door of Mary's chamber, who watched over the cradle of the Lord and who bore in his arms the infant Christ, in whose presence you had committed these great sins, himself and none other, betrayed you.

7. Oh! my unlucky eyes! Oh! day worthy of the most solemn curse, on which with utter consternation I read your letters, the contents of which I am forced to remember still! What obscenities they contained! What blandishments! What exultant triumph in the prospect of the virgin's dishonour. A deacon should not have even known such things, much less should he have spoken of them. Unhappy man! where can you have learned them, you who used to boast that you had been reared in the church. It is true, however, that in these letters you swear that you have never led a chaste life and that you are not really a deacon. If you try to disown them your own handwriting will convict you, and the very letters will cry out against you. But meantime you may make what you can of your sin, for what you have written is so foul that I cannot bring it up as evidence against you.

8. You threw yourself down at my knees, you prostrated yourself, you begged me-I use your own words-to spare "your half-pint of blood." Oh! miserable wretch! you thought nothing of God's judgment, and feared no vengeance but mine. I forgave you, I admit; what else being a Christian could I do? I urged you to repent, to wear sackcloth, to roll in ashes, to seek seclusion, to live in a monastery, to implore God's mercy with constant tears. You however showed yourself a pillar of confidence, and excited as you were by the viper's sting you became to me a deceitful bow; you shot at me arrows of reviling. I am become your enemy because I tell you the truth. [Gal. 4:16] I do not complain of your calumnies; everyone knows that you only praise men as infamous as yourself. What I lament is that you do not lament yourself, that you

do not realize that you are dead, that, like a gladiator ready for Libitina, you deck yourself out for your own funeral. You wear not sackcloth but linen, you load your fingers with rings, you use toothpowder for your teeth, you arrange the stray hairs on your brown skull to the best advantage. Your bull's neck bulges out with fat and droops no whit because it has given way to lust. Moreover you are redolent of perfume, you go from one bath to another, you wage war against the hair that grows in spite of you, you walk through the forum and the streets a spruce and smooth-faced rake. Your face has become the face of a harlot: you know not how to blush. [Jer. 3:3] Return, unhappy man, to the Lord, and He will return to you. [Mal. 3:7] Repent, and He will repent of the evil that He has purposed to bring upon you.

9. Why is it that you disregard your own scars and try to defame others? Why is it that when I give you the best advice you attack me like a madman? It may be that I am as infamous as you publicly proclaim; in that case you can at least repent as heartily as I do. It may be that I am as great a sinner as you make me out; if so, you can at least imitate a sinner's tears. Are my sins your virtues? Or does it alleviate your misery that many are in the same plight as yourself? Let a few tears fall on the silk and fine linen which make you so resplendent. Realize that you: are naked, torn, unclean, a beggar. [Rev. 3:17] It is never too late to repent. You may have gone down from Jerusalem and may have been wounded on the way; yet the Samaritan will set you upon his beast, and will bring you to the inn and will take care of you. [Luke 10:30-34] Even if you are lying in your grave, the Lord will raise you though your flesh may stink. [Joh. 11:39, Joh. 11:44] At least imitate those blind men for whose sake the Saviour left His home and heritage and came to Jericho. They were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death when the light shone upon them. [Luke 1:79] For when they learned that it was the Lord who was passing by they began to cry out saying:

"Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. [Matt. 9:27, cf. Luke 18:35-38] You too will have your sight restored; if you cry to Him, and cast away your filthy garments at His call. [Mark 10:50] "When thou shalt turn and bewail thyself then shalt thou be saved, and then shalt thou know where thou hast hitherto been. [Isa. 30:15, LXX] Let Him but touch your scars and pass his hands over your eyeballs; and although you may have been born blind from the womb and although your mother may have conceived you in sin, he will purge you with hyssop and you shall be clean, he will wash you and you shall be whiter than snow. [Ps. 51:5, Ps. 51:7] Why is it that you are bowed together and bent down to the ground, why is it that you are still prostrate in the mire? She whom Satan had bound for eighteen years came to the Saviour; and being cured by Him was made straight so that she could once more look up towards heaven. [Luke 13:11-13] God says to you what He said to Cain: "Thou hast sinned: hold thy peace. [Gen. 4:7, LXX] Why do you flee from the face of God and dwell in the land of Nod? Why do you struggle in the waves when you

can plant your feet upon the rock? See to it that Phinehas does not thrust you through with his spear while you are committing fornication with the Midianitish woman.

[Num. 25:6-8] Amnon did not spare Tamar, [2 Sam. 13:14] and you her brother and kinsman in the faith have had no mercy upon this virgin. But why is it that when you have defiled her you change into an Absalom and desire to kill a David who mourns over your rebellion and spiritual death? The blood of Naboth [1 Kings 21:13] cries out against you. The vineyard also of Jezreel, that is, of God'sseed, demands due vengeance upon you, seeing that you have turned it into a garden of pleasures and made it a seed-bed of lust. God sends you an Elijah to tell you of torment and of death. Bow yourself down therefore and put on sackcloth for a little while; then perhaps the Lord will say of you what He said of Ahab: "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, [1 Kings 21:29] I will not bring the evil in his days."

10. But possibly you flatter yourself that since the bishop who has made you a deacon is a holy man, his merits will atone for your transgressions. I have already told you that the father is not punished for the son nor the son for the father. "The soul that sinneth it shall die. [Ezek. 18:4] Samuel too had sons who forsook the fear of the Lord and "turned aside after lucre" and iniquity. [1 Sam. 8:3] Eli also was a holy priest, but he had sons of whom we read in the Hebrew that they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of God, and that like you they shamelessly claimed for themselves the right to minister in His sanctuary. [1 Sam. 2:12-17, 1 Sam. 2:22] Wherefore the tabernacle itself was overthrown and the holy place made desolate by reason of the sins of those who were God's priests. And even Eli himself offended God by shewing too great leniency to his sons; therefore, so far from the righteousness of your bishop being able to deliver you, it is rather to be feared that your wickedness may hurl him from his seat and that falling on his back like Eli he may perish irretrievably. [1 Sam. 4:18] If the Levite Uzzah was smitten merely because he tried to hold up from falling the ark which it was his special province to carry;

[2 Sam. 6:6, 2 Sam. 6:7] what punishment, think you, will be inflicted upon you who have tried to overthrow the Lord's ark when standing firm? The more estimable the bishop is who ordained you, the more detestable are you who have disappointed the expectations of so good a man. His long ignorance of your misdoings is indeed easy to account for; as it generally happens that we are the last to know the scandals which affect our homes, and are ignorant of the sins of our children and wives even when our neighbors talk of nothing else. At all events all Italy was aware of your evil life; and it was everywhere a subject of lamentation that you should still stand before the altar of Christ. For you had neither the cunning nor the forethought to conceal your vices. So hot were you, so lecherous, and so wanton, so entirely

under the sway of this and that caprice of self-indulgence, that, not content with satisfying your passions, you gloried in each intrigue as a triumph and emerged from it bearing palms of victory.

11. Once more the fire of unchastity seized you, this time among savage swords and in the quarters of a married barbarian of great influence and power. You were not afraid to commit adultery in a house where the injured husband might have punished you without calling in a judge's aid. You found yourself attracted and drawn to suburban parks and gardens; and, in the husband's absence behaved as boldly and madly as if you supposed your companion to be not your paramour but your wife. She was at last captured, but you escaped through an underground passage and secretly made your way to Rome. There you hid yourself among some Samnite robbers; and on the first hint that the aggrieved husband was coming down from the Alps like a new Hannibal in search of you, you did not think yourself safe till you had taken refuge on shipboard. So hasty indeed was your flight that you chose to face a tempest at sea rather than take the consequences of remaining on shore. Somehow or other you reached Syria, and on arriving there professed a wish to go on to Jerusalem and there to serve the Lord. Who could refuse to welcome one who declared himself to be a monk; especially if he were ignorant of your tragical career and had read the letters of commendation which your bishop had addressed to other prelates? Unhappy man! you transformed yourself into an angel of light; [2 Cor. 11:14, 2 Cor. 11:15] and while you were in reality a minister of Satan, you pretended to be a minister of righteousness. You were only a wolf in sheep's clothing; [Matt. 7:15] and having played the adulterer once towards the wife of a man, you desired now to play the adulterer to the spouse of Christ.

12. My design in recounting these events has been to sketch for you the picture of your evil life and to set your misdeeds plainly before your eyes. I have wished to prevent you from making God's mercy and His abundant tenderness an excuse for committing new sins and to save you from crucifying to yourself the son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame. For you may do these things if you do not read the words which follow the passage to which I have alluded. They are these: "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessings from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." [Heb. 6:6, Heb. 6:7-8]

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