

I. N. D. N. J. C.

**AN INAUGURAL HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL DISPUTATION ON
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION,**

WHICH,

BY THE GRACE OF GOD,

With the consent of the Venerable Theological Faculty

At the Electoral University of Viadrina,

FOR THE LICENSE

of assuming the Degree of Doctor of Theology,

PRESIDED BY

THE MAGNIFICENT RECTOR,

DN. JOHANN CHRISTOPH BECMANN

Doctor of Sacred Theology & Public Professor in Ordinary,

On the 7th day of April of the year 1698,

In the morning and afternoon hours,

to be publicly debated,

is proposed by

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Perfect in all its aspects, GOD, the Thrice-Good and Great, had created the first Humans perfect in their own kind, i.e., endowed with an integral Mind, a right will, and with all affections composed in obedience to Reason, so that after having rendered to Him perfect obedience, suitable to their perfect state, they might be associated with more perfect Spirits, and be elevated to the most perfect State in the Heavens. But alas for the sorrow! The Perfect did not long persist in that state of perfection; rather, they fell from their Perfection, not driven by any necessity, but freely, and brought upon themselves and their posterity not only the greatest imperfection, but also an impotence for Spiritual Good.

They brought it upon themselves, so that being utterly unfit for doing good, and inclined to evil, they are unable to render perfect Love to GOD and neighbor, and thus to keep the Law of GOD perfectly. But GOD, having mercy on the human race, gave a Mediator to miserable mortals, who by His most perfect obedience and vicarious death, as a piacular and succeeding victim, would not only expiate our sins before GOD and pay our debt; but also obtain the life-giving Spirit for the faithful, through whom He confers on them the strength to render Obedience, by inscribing His law on their hearts according to the sanction of the covenant of Grace, so that they can and may render a true, sincere, and in a certain sense perfect obedience to GOD.

Concerning this Obedience of the Sons of GOD, and its perfection and imperfection, there has been and is today varied contention in the Church, both in the past and now: some asserting the complete Perfection of Christians, others admitting Sincerity joined with imperfection. We, with as much brevity as possible, will first produce the passages of Sacred Scripture dealing with Perfection; next, we will review the various errors and opinions of the Heterodox, and finally, we will present the Judgment of the Catholic Church, and approve it with our own assessment. Let it be so, with Good GOD:

CHAPTER I.

Wherein the passages of Scripture dealing with Christian Perfection are proposed, and it is indicated in how many ways the term Perfection is to be understood here.

§. I.

Sacred Scripture, of both the Old and the New Testament, exhorts and obliges Man under the Covenant of Grace to Perfection. In the Old Testament, GOD Himself addresses Abraham: Gen. 17, 1. *Walk before Me, and be perfect*; which passage the seventy Interpreters rendered: *Εὐαρέσται ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ, καὶ γίνου ἄμεμπτος*. Be pleasing in My sight and be blameless. Lev. 11, 44. GOD says: *I am the Lord your GOD: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy*. Which precept is repeated, Lev. 19, 2. & Chap. 20, 7. And Deut. 6, 5. GOD commands the people of Israel: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*. Ps. 15, 2. David says that he who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart, shall dwell in the tabernacle and abide in the holy hill of GOD, and shall never be moved.

§. II.

In the New Testament, Christ commands in Matthew 5, 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, τέλειοι, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*. Paul in 1 Cor. 2, 6. says, *we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, τελείοις*. Phil. 3, 15. the same Apostle stimulates himself and other Christians to Perfection. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, τέλειοι, be thus minded*. Col. 1, 28. he professes that he and the other Apostles announce Christ, so that *we may present every man perfect, τέλειον, in Christ Jesus*. Ibid. Chap. 3, 14. he calls Charity *σύνδεσμον τῆς τελειότητος*, the bond or chain of perfection. Ibid. Chap. 4, 12. it is said of Epaphras that he is always striving in prayers for the Colossians, that they may stand *perfect, τέλειοι, and complete, πεπληρωμένοι, in all the will of GOD*. 2 Tim. 3, 16, 17. Paul teaches that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, etc.; *that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*. Where in the Original Text, indeed, it is ἄριτος, which word denotes that kind of Perfection by which a thing consists of all the Members that are required for performing a work; yet various Readings note that in some Copies the word τέλειος is found. The Apostle James, chap. 1, 4. says: *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι, wanting nothing*. The Apostle Peter in his 1st Epistle chap. 1, 15, 16. wills that, *as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy*. Heb. 5, 14. the Apostle says that *strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age (perfect), τελείων*.

§. III.

Examples of Perfect Men also occur in the Sacred Writings. Thus Enoch is said to have walked with GOD or before GOD without ceasing, Gen. 5, 22. Concerning Noah, GOD

himself testifies that he was a just and perfect man before him in his generations, Gen. 6, 9. and walked with GOD without ceasing. Concerning Job, GOD himself, addressing Satan, gives this sentence in chap. 1 & 2. *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, אִישׁ כָּמוֹ, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.* That Joshua had fulfilled all the sacred Oracles is testified, which GOD had commanded to Moses and Moses to Joshua: *he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses,* Josh. 11, 15. David not only addresses GOD: *With my whole heart have I sought thee,* Ps. 119, 10. And Ps. 18, 20-24. *The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright (perfect) before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.* But to him also GOD bears witness, 1 Kings 14, 8, when He causes it to be announced to Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah: *And hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes.* And 2 Kings 15, 5. *David did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* Whence Paul in Acts 13, 22, alleges the words of GOD from 1 Sam. 13, 14. *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.* Hezekiah in his mortal illness addresses GOD, 2 Kings 20, 3. and in Isaiah chap. 38. *I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.* Concerning Josiah it is also said: 2 Kings 23, 25. *And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.* No less is it read of Asa and the people in 2 Chron. 15, 15, that they sought GOD with their whole desire and found him. In the New Testament, Zacharias and Elisabeth are said to have been both righteous before GOD, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, Luke 1, 6. Nor is it to be doubted that the same can be affirmed of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the other Prophets.

§. IV.

Therefore, the term for Christian Perfection exists, which we can use without suspicion of heterodoxy, even if others, namely the Novatians and Pelagians, have abused it. For the abuse of the heterodox should not cause the Orthodox for that reason to abstain from an innocuous word and one used in the Scriptures. Certainly, in the age of Justin Martyr, the name of the Perfect was so customary that in his Dialogue with Trypho he himself interprets to *become perfect* as to become a Christian.

§. V.

But the hinge of the Controversy turns on this, in what sense true Christians are, or at least can be, or ought to be, Perfect. Therefore, it will seem worthwhile for our efforts if

we indicate the different acceptations of the word Perfection, and define in what sense it has been used by the Heterodox, and in what sense it has been admitted by the Catholics.

§. VI.

Regarding the former, Perfection is twofold: Legal and Evangelical. Legal is either absolute, or in a certain respect. Absolutely such Legal Perfection consists in the most accurate observance of the Divine Law, so that the Law is satisfied by the powers of Nature, according to its entire rigor and all the finest points of the Divine Precepts, through all differences of time, and there is no sin in any of those things which the Law rigidly understood demands of man, so that the one observing it may, by the force of the Legal covenant, according to the solemn Clause: *Do this, and you shall live*, arrive at Life, and demand the happiness which the Law promises by its own right, without any fear of the punishments which the Law threatens transgressors. Legal perfection, taken in a certain respect, consists in the possible preparation and disposition for Grace from the powers of Nature, and in the observance of the Law through the ordinary aids of Grace at least so accurately that a man can be justified and saved by Works, and even that a man can perform more and more arduous things than the Law demands, namely Works of supererogation, though through Extraordinary and greater Aids of Grace.

§. VII.

Evangelical Perfection, on the contrary, consists in the recognition of our misery, both Corporal and Spiritual, and the necessity of fleeing to the Grace of GOD in Jesus Christ our Propitiator, and in a sincere and ἀνυπόκριτος, that is, undisguised and serious and constant endeavor to serve and obey GOD, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, to be obtained from Him for that purpose by ardent prayers, according to all the commands of the Law, and according to all the faculties of the Soul and Body, and to grow and advance daily more and more in Faith, Charity, Hope, and other Christian Virtues, and to implore pardon for errors and lapses for the sake of the Mediator.

§. VIII.

The former Perfection is rightly called one of Degrees, full, and absolute and consummate in all its parts. The latter is called a Perfection of Parts, Inchoate, and in one word, Sincerity. And it is such, either absolutely without respect to others who are more imperfect; or comparatively with respect to others who are more imperfect and less mature.

§. IX.

With these things noted in advance, it now follows that we should note that the Heterodox have asserted Perfection in the former sense, and who they were; and on the

other hand, we should demonstrate that it has been defended by the Catholic Doctors in the latter sense.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the Heterodox, who formerly established and today establish an absolute Human Perfection.

§. I.

Among those who establish human Perfection, after the ancient Pharisees, the degenerate Jews of today can be referred with great merit, according to the author Johannes Buxtorf in his *Synagoga Judaica*, chap. 3. p. 38, 39, whose Rabbis persuade the common and ignorant multitude that they are that holy and elect people of God, who can observe not only the ten precepts of GOD, but also the entire Law of Moses, distributed into two hundred and forty-eight Affirmative and three hundred and sixty-five Negative Precepts. But, because we have set stricter limits for ourselves, since we have promised to deal with Christian Perfection, having dismissed the Jews, we will investigate and bring forth the opinions of erring Christians.

§. II.

Leading the procession among those who have asserted complete Perfection are, in the second century from the birth of Christ, the followers of the heretics Valentinus and Marcus, likewise the Montanists (also called Cataphrygians and Pepuzians), who proudly and arrogantly proclaimed themselves Perfect, as Tertullian and Epiphanius report, after Irenaeus book 1 against Heresies, chap. 1 & 9.

§. III.

Following them, in the third century, are the Manichaeans, who, as Jerome relates in his letter to Ctesiphon, say that their elect, whom they place among the souls of Plato in the heavens, are free from all sin, and cannot sin even if they wished: for they have transcended to such heights of virtues that they mock the works of the flesh. To these are to be joined the Priscillianists, who, as the same Jerome says in chap. 1, rashly vindicating for themselves the word of Perfection and Knowledge, shut themselves up alone with women and chanted this to them during intercourse and embraces:

Then the almighty Father with fertilizing showers descended into the lap of his joyful spouse, and the great one, mingled with the great body, nourishes all offspring.

He also associates with them in chap. 1 a certain Evagrius the Hyperborean, Jovinian, the Massalians or Euchites, and others. And in the preface to the Dialogues against the Pelagians, he says this is the opinion of all of them: That human Virtue and Knowledge can attain to Perfection, and I will not say a similitude, but an equality with GOD: so that they assert that they cannot sin even in Thought and ignorance, when they have ascended to the summit of Consummation.

§. IV.

Also in the third century, on the occasion of pardon being granted more liberally to the lapsed at the intercession of the Martyrs and Confessors, who had stood in the line of battle and prayed for the deserters, and on the occasion of what they claimed was the excessive ease of Cornelius, the Roman bishop, in receiving the lapsed, Novatus of Carthage and Novatian, a Roman presbyter, created a schism and required complete Perfection in Christians: for they taught that μετὰ τὸ λουτρὸν μηκέτι δόνασθαι ἐλεῖσθαι πεπτωκότα, after the laver of Baptism the lapsed could no longer obtain Mercy, ἑαυτοὺς φήσαντες καθαρούς, they called themselves Pure, nor did they want to have any dealings with penitent lapsed; whence they were called Cathari, i.e., Puritans or the Pure; as Epiphanius reports in Heresy 59. From which name of the Cathari, in later times, all heretics are thought to be called *Kätzer* in German.

§. V.

Following in their footsteps in the fourth century were the Donatists, who, under the authority of Donatus from the Black Houses, a bishop in the African province of Numidia, out of hatred and rivalry for Caecilian, the bishop of Carthage, segregated themselves from his communion and, against the opinion of the Catholic Church, established that the Church consists only of the Perfect; that the Church has perished from the entire world, and therefore those who passed over to them from the Catholics must be rebaptized. Inflated by this opinion of Perfection, Petilianus, a bishop of the Donatists, praises the Perfection of his church with a full mouth, in these words: *The Catholic Church is with me, and our pure Observance and your vices and disgraces make it so. Our entire Church of GOD must be pure, holy, without spot or wrinkle.* Council of Carthage 3, num. 75. Tom. 1. Council VI.

But most of all, in the fifth century, Pelagius, a Scoto-Briton by profession a monk, and from him the Pelagians, boasted of an absolute Christian Perfection. For they taught that the saints can live without sin if they wish, and that some actually live without sin. They confirmed this opinion with the example of those to whom the perfect fulfillment of the Law is attributed in the Scriptures. They distinguished, however, between those who had committed no sin in their entire life, such as Abel was, whose sins are not mentioned in the Sacred Writings; and between those who indeed had sinned at some time, but had ceased to sin and afterward lived perfectly; such they said was Paul, whose conversion and perfection are related in the Scripture of the New Testament.

§. VII.

But since the Divine Law forbids speaking false witness against a neighbor, and under that name is also contained the imputation of heresy without foundation and against the mind of him to whom it is imputed, it will be proper not only to adduce the opinion of the Pelagians from the Orthodox Fathers who confute their errors, but also to bring forward some words of Pelagius himself and the Pelagians, from which the Catholics gathered their erroneous opinion.

§. VIII.

Thus Jerome, against Pelagius to Ctesiphon, introduces Pelagius and the Pelagians saying: *That a man can be without sin, if he wishes*; which the Greeks call ἀναμάρτητον. Indeed, because the ears of the churches throughout the East could not bear it, they were afraid of the term ἀναμαρτησία, and did not dare to say that a man is ἀναμάρτητον; But, as Jerome rightly notes: as if *without sin* were different from ἀναμάρτητον, and the Latin language did not express with two words what is composed in Greek. He adds: *If you say without sin and deny that you say ἀναμάρτητον; condemn therefore those who preach ἀνάμαρτητος*. Furthermore, he warns that the Pelagians taught: *That the commandments of GOD are easy, and that man can be perfect, if he wishes: that GOD has given possible commandments: that they wish this, that he who once has free will does not need the help of GOD, that they boast of a perfect and equal justice to GOD in men and do not confess themselves to be sinners: that they are holy and free from all sin*. Augustine attributes similar things to the Pelagians in *On the Perfection of Justice*.

§. IX.

And that this was not done without reason, the words of the Pelagians to be adduced here can give credence. Pelagius himself, in his letter to Demetrius, says: *He who uses the freedom of his will well, so gives himself entirely to GOD and mortifies all his own will, that he can say with the Apostle: I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*. The same Pelagius, according to Augustine in the book *On Nature and Grace*, chap. 7, is introduced speaking in this manner: *I repeat it again. I say that a man can be without sin. What do you say? That a man cannot be without sin? Yet Pelagius did not assert that men are so without any sin that they have never sinned; but that they can be without sin, so that, although they have sinned at some time, they have ceased to sin and can be without sin in the future*. For thus Pelagius continues in the cited passage: *And I do not say that a man is without sin: nor do you say: that a man is not without sin. We are contending about 'to be able' and 'not to be able', not about 'to be' and 'not to be'*. And after a few lines in the same Chapter, he says: *For no one is clean from filth: and there is no man who does not sin, and there is no just man on earth, and there is none that doeth good: and other similar things, they argue for the 'not being able'*. The same Pelagius, when asked about himself, whether he was without sin, in the same place chap. 13 of *On Nature and Grace*, did not indeed dare to affirm that he was without sin; yet he replied that it should be imputed rather to his own negligence that he was not without sin. In the same book, chap. 36, he prolixly commemorates the examples of perfect men, who are reported not only not to have sinned, but also to have lived justly: Abel, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, Phinehas, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Micah, Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, Misael, Ezekiel, Mordecai, Simeon, Joseph, to whom the Virgin Mary was espoused, John. He also adds women: Deborah, Anna, the mother of Samuel, Judith, Esther, another Anna daughter of Phanuel, Elizabeth, and also the mother of our Lord and Savior herself, whom he says piety requires to be confessed without sin. And objecting in chap. 37, *Could Scripture have commemorated the sins of all?* He replies: *This can be rightly said of*

those of whom scripture is silent concerning both their good and bad deeds. But of those whose justice it mentions, it would without a doubt have also mentioned their sins, if it had sensed that they had sinned in any way. And thereafter in chap. 1, he further supports this opinion: *Certainly, in the first time of Adam and Eve, from whom Cain and Abel were born, only four human beings are reported to have existed: Eve sinned; Scripture has recorded this: Adam also transgressed, the same Scripture did not conceal it. But that Cain also sinned, the same Scripture also testified. Of whom it indicates not only the sins, but also the quality of the sins. For if Abel had sinned, Scripture would have said this also without a doubt, but it did not say so; therefore, he did not sin, but it even shows him to be just. Let us therefore believe what we read, and what we do not read, let us believe it a crime to assert. Since, therefore, Pelagius, as is clear from his cited words, was imbued with this erroneous opinion, that a man can be without sin if he wishes; it is not surprising that he boastfully burst into those words (which Jerome in Book 3 of his Dialogue against Pelagius, and Augustine in *On the Deeds of the Palestinians*, chap. 6, report): He deservedly (in Augustine it reads worthily) lifts his hands to GOD: he pours out prayers with a good conscience, who can say: For you know, Lord, how holy, how innocent, how pure are the hands from all fraud, injustice, and rapine, which I spread out to you; how just, how immaculate are the lips, and free from all falsehood, with which I pour out prayers to you, that you may have mercy on me.*

§. X.

Similar sentiments to Pelagius were held by his disciples Caelestius, and the Pelagian hiding under the name of Critobulus in Jerome, who repeat the same things to the point of nausea, and add others on top. Thus Caelestius in Augustine's book *On the Perfection of Justice*, in his *Ratiocinations*, says: *It must be asked: Should a man be without sin? Undoubtedly, he should. If he should, he can; if he cannot, then he should not. And if a man should not be without sin, then he should be with sin, and it will no longer be a sin, if it is acknowledged to be a duty. Or if this too is absurd to say, it must be confessed that a man ought to be without sin, and it is clear that he ought to do nothing other than what he can.* He most clearly reveals his mind, the same Caelestius, in *Ratiocination 6 & 7*, in which he argues from the precept of GOD and concludes: *Because GOD precepts that we be perfect; therefore, man can be perfect, in this way: It must be asked: Is it commanded for man to be without sin? For either he cannot, and it is not commanded, or because it is commanded, he can. For why would something be commanded that could not be done at all? And in Ratiocination 7. Again it must be asked: Does GOD want man to be without sin? Undoubtedly He wants it, and undoubtedly he can. For who is so mad as to even doubt that what GOD undoubtedly wills can be done? He then divides the precepts of GOD into Affirmative and Negative, or Commanding and Prohibiting, and from this distribution of the Divine Precepts he draws an argument, reasoning in this way (Ratiocination 11): Again it must be asked, in how many ways does all sin consist? In two, if I am not mistaken, if either those things that are prohibited are done, or those things that are commanded are not done. So certainly all those things that are prohibited can*

be avoided, as well as those that are commanded can be fulfilled. For it would be in vain either to be prohibited or to be commanded what could neither be avoided nor fulfilled. And how shall we deny that a man can be without sin, when it must be confessed that he can both avoid all those things which are forbidden, and perform those which are commanded.

§. XI.

Critobulus, the Pelagian, has things that are twins to these in his Dialogues with Atticus, the Catholic; for thus at the very beginning, when Atticus, the Catholic, asks: *Tell me, Critobulus, is it true what I hear written by you: That a man can be without sin if he wills, and that the precepts are easy?* Critobulus the Pelagian responds without ambiguity: *It is true, Atticus, but it is not received in the same sense by our rivals as it was said by me.* After a few interjections, to Atticus asking: whether a man can be without sin forever, or only for a short time? Critobulus retorts: *This I assert: He who can abstain from sin for one day, can also for a second; he who for two, can also for three; he who for three, can also for thirty and in this order can also for three hundred, and for three thousand, as long as he wishes to abstain.* When Atticus insisted that he should frankly confess; that we can do all that we will, he indeed denies that he can do whatever he wills; but he immediately adds: *But this alone I say: That a man can be without sin, if he wishes.* When Atticus alleged his own weakness, by which it happened that even if he wished and desired enough not to sin, yet he transgressed, he says this happens because the will is imperfect, and adds: *For if you truly willed, you truly would not sin.* When Atticus asked: *Whether he himself (Critobulus, the Pelagian) is without sin?* he responds: *As if I were speaking of myself, whom I confess to be a sinner, and not of the few and rare, if any should wish not to sin.* Lest, however, Atticus should conclude from the confession of both speakers, namely Atticus and Critobulus, that they are sinners: Therefore they themselves cannot be without sin; he immediately adds: *But we can not be sinners, if we wish. The fact that we are not without sin is because we do not fully wish it.* When Atticus asked for examples of such perfect men who are or have been without sin to be given to him; he said: *This indeed is not easy to show. For when I say that a man can be without sin, if he wishes; I am not contending that any have been, but simply that it is possible to be, if one wishes. For it is one thing to be able to be, which is called in Greek (δύναμις), and another thing to be, which they themselves call ἐνέργεια. I can be a doctor, but in the meantime I am not. I can be a craftsman, but I have not yet learned. Whatever, therefore, I can do, although I am not yet, yet I will be, if I shall have wished.* Yet, wishing to show that examples of perfect men were not lacking to him, he bursts into these words: *Why do I discourse further? You must be overcome by the authority of the Scriptures. To omit other things: will not silence be imposed on you by these two testimonies: in which Job and Zacharias and Elizabeth are praised?*

§. XII.

From which words of the Pelagians, adduced as a specimen, it is clearer than the midday light that the Pelagians established that a man can be without sin, i.e., ἀναμάρτητον, if he wishes. But because the Catholics did not simply deny this either, but the hinge of the controversy turned on this: Whether a man, by the powers of nature, without the grace of GOD, could be without sin, and therefore ἀναμάρτητος and Perfect; it will have to be proved by us next: that the Pelagians not only affirmed: That a man can be without sin, if he wishes; but also that they derived that complete perfection from the powers of nature, whose corruption and depravation they denied.

§. XIII.

Indeed, Pelagius and the Pelagians often confessed that man does whatever he does through grace, and therefore can also be perfect, or without sin, through the grace of GOD. This is manifest from the words of Pelagius or some Pelagian in Augustine's *On Nature and Grace*, chap. 10, where the Pelagian is introduced speaking in this manner: *But you (Catholic) will say: In this place you seem to deny the grace of GOD, since you do not mention it?* To which he responds: *Do I deny it, who by confessing the thing must necessarily confess also that by which the thing can be effected: or is it you who by denying the thing, also undoubtedly deny whatever it is by which the thing is said to be effected?* By which words, he professes to be so far from denying or excluding the grace of GOD, by which they can be without sin, when he asserts that men can be without sin if they wish, that rather his adversary, Augustine, seems to him to deny the grace of GOD, by denying that man can be without sin if he wishes. He says therefore, Augustine being the interpreter, chap. 1, whether by grace, or by help, or by mercy, and whatever it is by which a man can be without sin, whoever acknowledges the thing itself, confesses it. Augustine himself in the same place, chap. 11, confesses that he was filled with great joy when he read these things, because he did not deny the grace of GOD.

§. XIV.

In the same way, Critobulus the Pelagian, in his first Dialogue with Atticus the Catholic, distinctly pronounces: *I, Atticus, said that a man can be without sin, if he wishes, not as some slanderers calumniate, without the grace of GOD (which is a sacrilege even to think), but simply that he can, if he wishes, so that it is understood, with the grace of GOD.* And a little later: *The good that I do, it is mine that I should do it, and His that He should help.* Also: *I said that a man can be without sin, if he wishes. Did I add: without the grace of GOD?* When Atticus imputed the same fault to him, that he had not added this restriction, *by the grace of GOD;* for by this omission he seemed to deny grace; he himself infers the contrary: *Indeed, from the fact that I did not deny it, I must be considered to have said it. For we are not to think we deny whatever we do not say.* Indeed, not only does he confess it in the same place, but he also freely proclaims that a man can be without sin, if he wishes, with the grace of GOD, and that those who take away the grace of GOD are in error. Then, when Atticus asked: *This very thing, which you assert is by the grace of GOD, whether you refer it to the benefit of the Creator: or do you think it is*

in the individual things we do, so that we use His help in all things: or, having been once created by Him with free will, do we act by our own will and powers, as we wish? For I know that most of you refer all things to the grace of GOD in such a way that they understand the power not in parts, but in general; that is, not at all in individual things, but in the condition of the will; He replies: It is not so, as you suppose, but both are said by me: both that it is by the grace of an that we were created, and that in every single work, we are supported by His aid.

§. XV.

But in truth, even if the Pelagians with the cited words seem to admit grace and to derive Christian perfection not from natural powers but from grace, in reality they are deceptive and play with the word grace. Which imposture the strenuous defenders of Divine Grace, Jerome and Augustine, long ago observed. Whence the former, in his letter to Ctesiphon, refutes these tricks of theirs thus: *That which they afterwards adapted to this opinion to deceive any man whatsoever, 'not without the grace of GOD,' although it deceives the reader at first sight, cannot deceive when inspected and most diligently examined: for they posit the grace of GOD in such a way that we do not strive and are not governed by his help in individual works, but they refer it to free will and to the precepts of the law, positing that saying of Isaiah (for GOD has placed the law as a help), that in this, grace is to be referred to GOD, that He created us such that by our own will we can both choose good and avoid evil; and they do not understand, saying these things, that through their mouths the Devil hisses an intolerable blasphemy.* Augustine, however, after he had said in his book *On Nature and Grace*, chap. 11, that he was filled with joy when he read that they did not deny the grace of GOD, immediately adds: *But proceeding to read the rest, I first began to be suspicious from the similar things given; for he says: Now if I say; a man can dispute, a bird can fly, a hare can run, and do not also mention by what means these things can be effected; that is, the tongue, wings, feet, have I denied the qualities of the functions, when I have confessed the functions themselves?* It certainly seems that he has mentioned these things which are valid by nature: for these members were created for such natures, the tongue, wings, feet; he did not posit something such as we wish to be understood by grace, without which a man is not justified, where it is a matter of healing natures, not of instituting them. Hence, therefore, I began to read the rest solicitously, and I found that I was not falsely suspicious. That is to say, Pelagius, having been rebuked by the Catholic Doctors, in order to avoid odium, began to use the appellation of grace, but by it he understood nothing other than that GOD created us with free will, which is evident not only from the cited words of Jerome and Augustine, but also from the words of Critobulus, in Jerome's Book 1 of the Dialogues against the Pelagians: *The help of GOD is not taken away, when the creature is preserved by the grace of the once-given free will.* And in book 3 of the same: *I do not take away the help of GOD: for by whose grace we can do everything we can: but we define each by its own limits, so that it is both of GOD's grace that He has given the power of free will, and of our will, to do or not to do something.* But when he perceived that these things offended the minds of

the Catholics, he indeed confessed a supernatural grace, but first the external grace of the Law, and that by which sins are remitted to those who had previously sinned (: which, however, he did not think necessary for all, since in his mind either not all had sinned, or they could be immune from sin:). And when this did not satisfy the Catholics, he added the grace of Christ, by which he implied the doctrine and example of Christ: Finally, he admitted also the internal grace of the Holy Spirit, but that which only illuminates the intellect, not that which moves and bends the will. But whatever words he gave, the Catholics were certainly persuaded that Pelagius believed that men, by the sole powers of nature, could be without sin, keep the precepts of GOD, and be perfect. See Gerh. Joh. Vossius, *History of Pelagianism*, book 3, part 2, p. 294.

§. XVI.

And that this was the opinion of the Pelagians is concluded from the very fact that they denied Original Sin, and consequently the corruption of human nature. Concerning this matter, see Gerh. Joh. Vossius, *History of Pelagianism*, Book 2, part 2, from p. 182. Whence Caelestius in Augustine's book, *On the Perfection of Justice*, in the first place reasons: *before all things, he who denies that man can be without sin must be asked: what is any sin? Is it that which can be avoided, or that which cannot be avoided? If it is that which cannot be avoided, it is not a sin: if it is that which can be avoided, man can be without sin, which can be avoided. For no reason or justice permits it to be called a sin at all, which can in no way be avoided. And in Ratiocination 3: Again it must be asked, what is sin? Is it natural or accidental? If natural, it is not a sin. But if it is accidental, it can recede. And what can recede, can be avoided; and what can be avoided, man can be without that which can be avoided.*

§. XVII.

Indeed, they are so far from having judged the help of Divine Grace necessary for individual good works, that they rather thought that opinion absurd, perversely, and falsely ridiculed it, as the following words of the Pelagians in Jerome to Ctesiphon prove: *If I do nothing without the help of GOD, and in every single work, all that I accomplish is His: Therefore it is not I who labor, but the help of GOD in me will be crowned, and in vain did He give the power of the will, which I cannot fulfill, unless He Himself always helps me. For the will is destroyed, which needs the help of another. But GOD gave free will, which will not otherwise be free, unless I do what I will. And through this he says: Either I use my power once given to me, so that free will may be preserved, or if I need the help of another, the freedom of the will is destroyed in me. To which also pertains the sarcasm of Critobulus in Jerome in the first Dialogue with Atticus: If in every single thing we do, we must use the help of GOD; then also to sharpen a pen for writing, to rub the sharpened pen with pumice, and to adapt the hand to the letters, to be silent, to speak, to sit, to stand, to walk, to run, to eat, to fast, to weep, to laugh, and other such things, we will not be able to do unless GOD helps. Many other such things could be adduced here, but since it is*

abundantly clear from what has been said that the Pelagians believed complete perfection to be possible, we shall refrain from bringing forward more.

§. XVIII.

It now remains for us to briefly examine whether there are not also in our time those who believe that a perfection absolute in all respects is possible, either by the sole powers of nature, or by the ordinary aids of Divine Grace. And indeed, today no one seems to want to assert absolute perfection by the sole powers of nature; on the contrary, all assertors of Christian perfection confess with one voice that Christian perfection exceeds the natural powers of men, and that Divine aid is necessary if anyone wishes to attain the summit of perfection. However, since some of them harbor such hypotheses from which it is elicited by good consequence that perfection is possible from the powers of nature. Among these, we rightly grant the first place to the Socinians, since, because of their denial of original sin and the corruption of human nature that arose from it, they come very close to the Pelagians: for thus in the Racovian Catechism, Sect. 6, Chap. 9, which is on Faith, to the Question: *what then is this Obedience?* Resp. *That under the Gospel it is that, having been adopted by GOD as sons, and endowed with the Filial Spirit, as it befits obedient sons, we should conduct ourselves, with all our strength from the heart, doing those things which we know our heavenly Father wills, and taking every care not to offend Him in anything, that is, that we should put off the old man with his works and desist from all past sin, and that we should not walk according to the flesh; but by the Spirit mortify the works of the flesh: in sum, that we should be held by the habit of no sin, but be endowed with all Christian virtues, so that if any transgression intervenes in the course of piety, it does not happen from any habit or custom, but from a certain weakness of human nature or some ignorance; all of which Scripture is accustomed to comprehend under the name of repentance, and because such obedience is filial and liberal, not servile, therefore also far more perfect duties of piety are required from the free under the Gospel than the Law once required, or could require, from slaves, whom it was fitting to be treated harshly.* Then in chap. 10 on Free Will, asking: *Is it then in our power to obey GOD in that manner?* Resp. *It is, with the addition of Divine help, and that Filial Spirit of which we have spoken: For it is certain that the first man was so created by GOD that he was endowed with free will; nor is there any cause why GOD, after his fall, should have deprived him of it: and neither equity and justice, nor the righteousness of GOD, permits that He should deprive man of the will and faculty of acting rightly, especially since after that time He nevertheless requires him to will and act rightly, under the threat of punishment, Deut. 30, 19. nor is there any mention of such a penalty among the penalties with which GOD punished Adam's sin.* Finally, asking: *Has not this free will been vitiated by the sin of origin?* Resp. *What the sin of origin is, has not yet been agreed upon among the authors themselves. This is certain, that by the fall of Adam human nature has by no means been so vitiated that in those things which GOD requires of him, and that under threat of punishment or promise of reward, he has been deprived of the liberty and will to obey or not to obey GOD. Nor can it be taught by any saying of Scripture*

that the matter is otherwise, since there are innumerable sayings of it which demonstrate the contrary more clearly than the sun. And the fall of Adam, since it was a single act, could not have had the force to deprave the very nature of Adam, much less that of his posterity. Besides, the same authors in the same place, Sect. 6, chap. 8, judge the dogma of Christ's satisfaction for our sins to be both fallacious and erroneous, and very pernicious. Whence, what the opinion of the Socinians concerning Christian perfection is, can be easily judged; namely, so constituted that for its cause there is no need to resort to the merits and satisfaction of another, as Jonas Schlichtingius says in his *Disp. pro Socin. contra Meisn. de Duabus Quaestionibus*. p. 160. Not far from these are those of the Arminians who, in theological dogmas, have departed further from Arminius than Arminius from the Reformed.

§. XIX.

And the Anabaptists do not differ much from them; for they too deny original sin; and not only that, but they contend that such great powers remain in unregenerate man that he can prepare himself for conversion and the acceptance of GOD's grace, and act well before GOD; but also, attributing to their good works the power of justifying before GOD, they suspend the gift of eternal life on their own justice, and boast of an absolute perfection of works, and call the sins of the saints slight faults and blemishes which do not of themselves stain, but sprinkle the Christian life with a very fine rain.

§. XX.

To the class of perfectionists, we also rightly refer the Weigelians, Schwenckfeldians, and their new offspring, the Quakers, who not only deny the imputed righteousness of Christ, but also advocate for the perfection of our own righteousness. Weigel, following Andreas Osiander as his leader, denies the imputed righteousness of Christ, part 1 of his *Postils*, page 173, where he calls imputed righteousness a dogma of the Antichrist. He inculcates the perfection of our righteousness in part 2 of his *Postils*, pages 239, 240, and in his *Dialogue on Christianity*, page 70. Akin to their opinion is the opinion of the Quakers, which Robert Barclay expounds and defends in his *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, where on page 130 he affirms that the works of the faithful are pure and perfect, since they proceed from a pure and holy birth (of Christ in the faithful), and he pronounces their opinion false and contrary to the truth, who say that the most holy works of the saints are polluted and stained with the blemish of sin. On page 134, he rejects the imputed righteousness of Christ. On page 152 and following, he has this thesis, the eighth in number, and confirms the possibility of not sinning with several arguments. *In whom this holy and immaculate birth is fully brought forth, the body of sin and death is crucified and removed, and their hearts become subject to the Truth and united with it, so that they obey no suggestions and temptations of the Devil, and are freed from actual sin and from transgressing the Law of GOD, and in that respect they become perfect: yet this perfection always admits of increase, and there always remains, in some*

part, a possibility of sinning, when the mind does not attend most diligently and vigilantly to GOD.

§. XXI.

The Pontiffs did not define badly in the Council of Trent, Session VI, Canons 1 & 3: *If anyone shall say that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the strength of human nature, or through the teaching of the law, without the divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema*.¹ *If anyone shall say that without the prevenient inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and without His help, man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent as he ought, so that the grace of Justification may be bestowed upon him, let him be anathema.* In the meantime, however, not only before but also after the Council, many Pontifical theologians have maintained that man, by the powers of nature and without the special help of GOD, at least by acting morally well, can prepare and dispose himself proximately for grace, not only actual and prevenient, but also habitual and justifying, and that he can merit it, if not *de condigno* (of worth), then at least *de congruo* (of fittingness), by performing those things to which the moral law obligates, and by loving God above all things; and after violating the law, by sorrowing out of love for GOD, because GOD was offended, and by undertaking a firm purpose to avoid sin in the future. See the most learned Ludovicus le Blanc, *Theological Theses*, p. 622 sqq. and 644 sqq. And although it is not to be denied that many Doctors of the Roman Church object to these and hold the contrary, yet all promiscuously teach that the Precepts of GOD can be kept not only by the Ordinary aids of Grace, according to the Canon of Session 6 of the Council of Trent, the eighteenth: *If anyone shall say that the commandments of God are impossible to observe, even for a man who is justified and established under grace, let him be anathema*; but also that they can be so kept that the good Works of the Just are meritorious of eternal Life before GOD. See Martin Becan, *Compendium Manual of Controversies*, Book 1, chap. 19, p. 435 sqq. Indeed, works of supererogation, though by a more special grace of GOD, can be done by some. Whence they are inserted into the roll of the Perfectionists with no injustice.

CHAPTER III.

The Opinion of the Orthodox and Catholic Fathers concerning Christian Perfection.

§. I.

From what has already been produced, it has become clear that Sacred Scripture exhorts us to Perfection, and how others understand those places of the Sacred Writings, and explain them concerning an absolute Perfection. It now follows that in Chapter III we should briefly recall to memory the description of Legal and Evangelical Perfection, brought forth above in Chapter I, §. VI, VII, and briefly expound our opinion on each, and confirm it by the suffrage of the Catholic Church and the Catholic Fathers.

§. II.

GOD, as Legislator and Judge in the covenant of Works, gave to our first Parents the law of perfect and most absolute obedience, which required an obedience, or conformity to the Law, most absolute and therefore a perfection not only of parts, but also of degrees, and under the condition of this perfect and in all respects absolute obedience, He promised them Life and happiness, and therefore in the state of Innocence, they could not expect Life except by rendering perfect obedience to the Law. For whoever does not fulfill the prescribed federal condition, he also falls short of the proposed reward, and on the contrary, becomes guilty of the Penalty, established by the Legislator against the violators of the Covenant. And not only were the Protoplasts commanded to render full and exact obedience in the Covenant of Works; but they were also able to render the same, being instructed by GOD for this purpose with sufficient powers. But by sinning, they made that Covenant of Works void, and ruined themselves and their posterity, and brought upon themselves and them a complete impotence of doing and perfecting any spiritual good.

§. III.

Whence now after the Fall in the state of corruption no man, I do not say without Divine Grace, but not even by the ordinary aids of Divine Grace can perfectly fulfill the Law of GOD, be ἀναμάρτητος, i.e. without sin, and attain Legal Perfection or that of Degrees. For even if GOD confers not insignificant gifts of the Holy Spirit on his faithful under the covenant of Grace, sanctified and confirmed by the blood of His Son; yet such is the Nature of the Obedience and Perfection, which the Law requires as absolute, meritorious, total, constant, and continuous, that no mortal can equal it in the state of defection, both because of the remnants of evil concupiscence, which adhere even to the regenerate through the fault of the flesh (Rom. 7), and because of the constant struggle between the Flesh and the Spirit, about which Paul speaks in Gal. 5:17. *The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;* and also because of the state and manner of their regeneration in this life, which is so constituted that it can receive new increments daily, according to the doctrine of Paul, who says: *Though our outward man*

perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). And chap. 7:1. *Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* For if our inward man must be renewed daily, and if our sanctification remains to be brought to an end, it will not yet be absolute and consummate in all its parts.

§. IV.

This truth, namely, that men in this mortal life, even through the ordinary helps of Grace, cannot attain the Perfection of Degrees and the Legal Perfection, nor be justified by the Law (which, however, should happen if we could be ἀναμάρτητος and fully perfect), the whole of Holy Scripture proclaims and it is the unanimous confession of all the Saints. Hence it is that David ingenuously confesses: *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults, GOD. Ps. 19:12. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Ps. 130:3. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. Ps. 143:2.* To which Solomon agrees: *There is no man that sinneth not: 1 Kings 8:46.* Christ appeals to the conscience of the Jews: *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? John 7:19.* And he commanded his disciples to pray: *Forgive us our debts, Matth. 6:12.* Paul, omitting circumlocutions, states the matter: *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses, Acts 13:38-39.* Indeed, he says with express words that this was the ἀδυναμία, the impotence of the Law, Rom. 8:3, that man could not be justified by it. Whence he does not hesitate to pronounce: *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, Gal. 3:10.* Likewise, *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain, Gal. 2:21.* To which James subscribes, chap. 2:10: *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* And the same man complains: *For in many things we offend all, James 3:2.* The opinion of all of whom John confirms in his 1st Epistle 1:7: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* These and similar places of Holy Scripture the ancient doctors of the Church also produced against the Pelagians, as can be seen in Jerome's Epistle to Ctesiphon and his Dialogues against the Pelagians, book 2, and in Augustine's *On Nature and Grace* and *On the Perfection of Justice*, and elsewhere throughout. And that opinion was confirmed by synodal authority, in the Council of Milevis, where in Chapter 6 the Fathers thus conclude: *Likewise, it was pleasing that what the holy Apostle John says: If we should say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; whoever should think it should be taken so as to say that because of humility it ought to be said that we have sin, not because it is the truth, let him be anathema.* For the Apostle follows and adds: *But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Where it sufficiently appears that this is said not only humbly, but also truthfully. For the Apostle could have said: *If we should say that we have no sin, we exalt ourselves, and humility is not in us; but when he says: We deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, he sufficiently shows that he who should say he has no sin speaks not the truth, but a falsehood.* And in Canon 7 they

continue: *Likewise, it was pleasing that whoever should say that the Saints say in the Lord's Prayer: Forgive us our debts, not for themselves, because that petition is no longer necessary for them, but for others who are sinners in their people, and therefore each of the Saints does not say: Forgive me my debts, but forgive us our debts, so that the just man may be understood to ask this for others rather than for himself, let him be anathema.* For the Apostle James was holy and just when he said: *For in many things we all offend.* For why was it added, *all*, unless that this opinion should agree also with the Psalm, where it is read: *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no living man be justified?* And in the prayer of the most wise Solomon: *There is no man who does not sin.* And in the book of Job: *He sealeth up the hand of every man, that every man may know his own infirmity.* Whence also Daniel, holy and just, when in prayer he said in the plural: *We have sinned, we have done iniquity,* and the rest, which he there confesses truthfully and humbly, lest it should be thought, as some feel, that he said these new things not of his own sins, but rather of the sins of the people, he afterwards said: *While I was praying, and confessing my sins and the sins of my people to the Lord our God, he did not want to say our sins, but he said the sins of his people,* and because he, as a Prophet, foresaw that those who would understand so badly would come.

§. V.

Nor does any example exist in the Sacred Writings of a man who was absolutely perfect, and who attained a complete or gradual Perfection. Wherefore Jerome rightly says in his Epistle to Ctesiphon: *You say the commandments of GOD are easy, and yet you can produce no one who has fulfilled them all.* Likewise, I ask, *what sort of argumentation is this? That something can be, which has never been? That something can be done, which you testify no one has done? To attribute this to anyone, when you are ignorant whether he will exist in the future, and to give to I know not whom what you cannot approve to have been in the Patriarchs and Prophets and Apostles.* The examples brought forth in Chap. 1, §. 3, and Chap. 2, §. 9, rather prove the contrary and confirm the Orthodox opinion, namely that ἀναμαρτησία or sinlessness is impossible in this life. For who does not know that those holy men praised by us above, all to a one, were not without their own blemishes and confessed their own imperfection? For thus Job, adorned with the eulogy of GOD Himself, denies absolute perfection to himself: *I know it is so of a truth; for how should mortal man be just, compared with GOD? if he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand,* chap. 9, 2-3. David, no less commended by GOD Himself, had nevertheless stained himself with the gravest sins, namely with anger and injustice in the case of Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. 16, 1 sqq., with adultery with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, and his murder, 2 Sam. 11, and with ambition and curiosity in numbering the people without just cause, 2 Sam. 24. whence he is so far from attributing to himself ἀναμαρτησία or sinlessness and absolute perfection in the places cited in c. 1, §. 3, that he rather acknowledged himself to be no common sinner more than once, and wept for his sins with most bitter tears. To which refer, besides the places cited in the preceding paragraph, Psalms 32 and 51, in the former of which he publishes this confession of his

sin: *I will make known my sin to thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said: I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.* In the other, however, he not only complains that he was shaped in iniquity and that his mother conceived him in sin, v. 7, but also deploras the adultery committed by him with many tears: *I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest,* v. 5-6. Solomon, the wisest of kings, judges it absurd to boast of absolute perfection, since no one is found free from all sin: *Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?* Prov. 20, 9. Nor was Asa immune from all sin, for he did not remove the high places, 1 Kings 15, 14. That this omission was a sin, no one will deny. As for Jehoshaphat and Josiah, Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were inscribed above in the catalog of the perfect, Jerome, at the end of his Epistle to Ctesiphon, judges them thus: *And Zacharias is condemned by his silence, and Job is reprov'd by his speech, and Jehoshaphat and Josiah, who are undoubtedly called just, are narrated to have done things that displeas'd the Lord: of whom one brought aid to the impious and was corrected by a Prophet: the other, against the precept of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, met Necho king of Egypt and was killed, and yet both are called just.* Paul likewise, and indeed not undeservedly counted in the number and catalog of the perfect, was nevertheless not immune from every stain nor simply perfect; which he himself does not deny: for though he was conscious of nothing to himself, yet he writes that he was not justified by this. 1 Cor. 4, 4. and he denies in express words that he has apprehended the goal, or been made perfect. Phil. 3, 12. Whence the Fathers of the Council of Milevis, Chap. 8, defined that one must pray not only humbly, but seriously and truthfully: *Forgive us our debts;* for thus it is there: *Likewise it was resolv'd, that whoever wishes the very words of the Lord's Prayer, where we say: Forgive us our debts, to be said by the Saints in such a way that this is said humbly, not truthfully, let him be anathema. For who can bear one who prays and lies not to men, but to the Lord Himself, who says with his lips he wishes his debts to be forgiven, and says in his heart that he has no debts to be forgiven him.*

§. VI.

Nor, however, because it is impossible for corrupt man, whether by the powers of nature or aided by grace, to keep the Law of GOD exactly, and thus to be absolutely perfect, does it follow that GOD can be accused of injustice when He demands exact obedience from man. For in the Divine Law, man is considered not as he now is, but as he ought to have remained, just as a creditor does not lose his right to demand a debt, even if the prodigal debtor is no longer able to pay. The Law for man in the state of corruption is not the measure of his remaining natural powers, but the norm of his duty. For the divine word provokes to perfection, so that each one of us, according to our powers, may be stretched as much as he can, if in some way he can attain and comprehend the prize of the high calling, says Jerome on Phil. 3. For if the Law, inasmuch as it demands from man an obedience perfect in every respect, had no binding force on us at all, and had been made entirely void, no defect would have a place in the faithful, nor would it be

considered an imperfection that they do not attain that absolute perfection, nor would it be necessary to flee to the Divine mercy and humbly deprecate the severe judgment of GOD on account of Christ. Since this is not the case, it is easy to infer from this that the Law under the Covenant of Grace also obliges the faithful to absolutely perfect obedience.

§. VII.

Although man after the Fall cannot render that strict and exact obedience to his Creator, so that neither in deed, nor word, nor thought does he depart a hair's breadth from the rigor of the Law; yet he can, not indeed by the powers of Nature, but by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, if he does not fail in his duty, render that obedience of the Law which the Gospel or the Covenant of Grace requires of us as precisely necessary for salvation, and so far truly and sincerely keep all the commandments of GOD, that they are pleasing to GOD in Christ, and for Christ's sake, who is our righteousness, and in all Christian virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity, Humility, Justice, Temperance, Chastity, etc., so grow and advance, and so ardently implore from GOD pardon for errors, blemishes, and lapses for Christ's sake, that on that account he can not absurdly be called Evangelically Perfect. For all commandments are counted as done, when whatever is not done is forgiven, says Augustine in Book 1 of his *Retractations*, chap. 19. Not only do all those sayings and examples of Holy Scripture, cited by us above in Chap. 1, clearly prove that this kind of Christian perfection is not only possible through the grace of Christ, but also absolutely necessary for all Christians who by age can strive for it, so that without it they cannot be eternally saved; (among which sayings is also the one in Matthew 5:48, concerning which it must be observed that not an absolute equality, but a similitude, and that not a perfect one, but an affected one, yet a true one, is indicated;) but other places of the Sacred Writings also invincibly demonstrate it. For thus GOD speaks of the New Covenant, to be entered into in Christ, in Ezekiel Chap. 36, 25 sqq. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your GOD.* With which are consonant those things which are found in Jeremiah, Chap. 31, 31 sqq. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their GOD, and they shall be my people.* And chap. 32, 38, 39, 40. Which perfection Moses also had foretold in Deut. 30:6, saying, *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine*

heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And a little after, v. 8. *And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day; and the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand.* To which promises of the Old Testament correspond the words of Christ, Matth. 11:30. *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* And of John, 1 John 5:3: *His commandments are not grievous.* And Phil. 4:13. *I can do all things through him who strengtheneth me, namely Christ.* To the same purpose point all those places in which GOD promises His grace and eternal life to those who keep His covenant and guard the divine commandments. E.g., Ps. 25:10, 12, 13; Ps. 103:11, 12, 13; Ez. 18:21; Apoc. 22:14; 1 John 2:3, 4, 5, 17; & chap. 3:22, 24. All of which our Brandenburg and Polish theologians in their Thorn Declaration, chap. 4, § 10, have most wholesomely taught against the criminations of the Pontiffs: *We are falsely accused, they say, as if we hold that the precepts of Christ can in no way be kept by the faithful. When, however, we teach that they can be kept not indeed by one's own strength, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and not only can be kept, but also ought to be kept by all, and that not only in vow and inefficacious purpose, but also in deed itself and by a true, sincere, and persevering endeavor of the whole life. Although in this life they are not so perfectly kept by anyone, nor can be kept, that we satisfy the Law of GOD by our works and fulfill it in all things, but that at the same time, from the sense of our own imperfection and infirmity, we have need to daily and humbly ask pardon from GOD for various lapses and offenses.*

§. VIII.

For the question between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants is not simply: Whether the Law can be fulfilled by the grace of GOD, but whether it can be fulfilled perfectly? This was observed by the most learned theologians, Martin Chemnitz in his *Examination of the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent*, and David Pareus in his *On Justification*, Book 4, chap. 10, pp. 1059-1060. Also Lud. le Blanc, *Theological Theses*, p. 564, Theses 26, 27, 28, 29. Especially worthy of note are the words of John Davenant, sometime Bishop of Salisbury, in his *On Actual Justice*, C. 47. where, examining Canon 18 of Session 6 of the Council of Trent, he makes these annotations: *Observe, I pray you, the papistical art in fabricating this Canon. Our adversaries know that we do not deny to the regenerate the diligent observation of the divine precepts, but we deny that perfect and absolute observation which so cumulatively satisfies the Law that it violates none of its jots, which so fulfills the Legal pact that by the benefit of the same it obtains eternal life. In vain, therefore, are these thunderbolts of anathemas hurled against the Protestants, who do not assert that it is impossible for the regenerate to observe the precepts of GOD: for they diligently exercise themselves in the observation of all of them; but that it is impossible by observing to equal the righteousness of the Law and to escape all ἀνομία (lawlessness). Indeed, all Protestants concede with both hands that the regenerate fulfill the Law of GOD inchoately and imperfectly, and keep the commandments of the Divine Law not indeed absolutely and consummately, but inchoately and imperfectly, yet sincerely and integrally. They profess with Jerome to Ctesiphon: *When I shall think I have reached the**

end of virtues, then I shall have the beginning. Also, This is the only perfection for men, if they know themselves to be imperfect.

§. IX.

By no means, however, is it to be thought that it is the mind of the genuine Evangelicals that this inchoate and imperfect fulfillment of the Divine Law and observation of the Divine Commandments should always remain at the beginning, take no increase, nor receive any maturity in this life. Rather, they acknowledge that this spiritual life, where it is truly present, demands progress. They cry out that that man is a monster of a man who, as his years increase, does not increase in stature; nor are they to be called by the name of Christian man who do not advance in the spiritual life, in vigor, in motion, and in every good and every kind of virtue. For Christians do not remain in the same state, but either advance or fall back, grow or decrease. Indeed, not to progress on the way of piety is to retrogress. For just as a traveler tending towards a certain goal, having once entered upon the way, does not stop, but always progresses and continues, and makes no end until he has completed the journey and reached the goal; so spiritual travelers, Christians, having once entered the stadium of the Christian profession, do not languish in idleness, but go from virtue to virtue, Ps. 84:7, nor do they desist or cease to advance in the knowledge of GOD and His will and in all virtues, until they reach and attain the goal of perfection. And just as in animal life, infancy is succeeded by childhood, childhood by adolescence, adolescence by youth, youth by mature age and perfection: so the sons of GOD in the spiritual life are first infants, then children, then adolescents, and youths, and finally mature and perfect men in the knowledge of GOD, and they become so. 1 John 2:12, 13, 14. or in the style of Paul, they gradually grow, with the increase of GOD, until at last they come into a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, Eph. 4:13, 14; Col. 2:19. They consider it a disgrace to themselves if, when by reason of time and age they ought to be teachers of others, they are found to be aged men still at the alphabet, who have barely learned the first elements of Christian piety, concerning the denial of self and the crucifixion of the Old Adam, for whom solid food is not yet needed, but milk, Heb. 5:12. For they are not sanctified to a fixed measure, but just as they have received from the Apostles how they ought to walk and to please GOD, so they strive to excel more and more, 1 Thess. 4:1, and have nothing more in their prayers than to obey the command of Christ: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Matth. 5, v. 16, and the warnings of the holy Apostles: *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. 3:18. *He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still*, Apoc. 22:11. *Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge self-control; and to self-control patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. 1:5-7. Indeed, contrary to the nature of animal life, they grow even in old age itself, and surpass former times in progress. For the just shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon, planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish in

the courts of our GOD. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing. Ps. 92:12-14. Not inappropriately with J. A. Comenius, in his treatise *The One Thing Necessary*, Chap. 6, §. 23, p. 45, you may establish three degrees of those who are advancing, the first of which is, as it were, the apprenticeship of Christianity, the second the warfare itself, the third victory and triumph. Or (adapting ancient types here), in the first degree are conceived the Levites, ministering in the court of the Temple: in the second, as priests serving in the sanctuary: in the third, every perfect Christian, conformed to Christ, as a high priest prepared to enter the Holy of Holies itself, Heaven, in the beauty of holiness.

§. X.

In this increase and progress of Christian virtues, St. Augustine places Christian perfection with us, in Book 2 of *On the Merits and Remission of Sins*, chap. 15. He is perfect, not because there is nowhere for him to advance, but because he has advanced for the most part, he is held worthy of this name. And in the book *On the Perfection of Justice*, in the response to Caelestius's Ratiocination 7: *If GOD did not want man to be without sin, He would not have sent His Son without sin, who would heal men from sins. This happens in believers and in those who are progressing by the renewal of the inner man, day by day, until perfect justice is achieved, like full health.* The same things he inculcates in the response to Ratiocination 11, not far from the end. And in the same place, in the response to Ratiocination 17: *As long, therefore, as we are pilgrims from the Lord, we walk by faith, not by sight (whence it is said, the just shall live by faith); this is our justice in this pilgrimage itself, that we should now strive with the very rectitude and perfection of our course toward that perfection and fullness of justice, where there will be full and perfect charity in the sight of His beauty, now by chastising our body and bringing it into subjection, and by cheerfully and from the heart giving alms in bestowing benefits and forgiving sins committed against us, and by insisting unceasingly on prayers, and by doing this in sound doctrine, by which right faith, firm hope, and pure charity are built up. This is now our justice, by which we run, hungering and thirsting for the perfection and fullness of justice, so that we may afterwards be satisfied with it.* To which subscribes Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, Epistle 253 to Garinus: *An unwearied study of advancing and a constant effort toward perfection is reputed as perfection. For if to study perfection is to be perfect, surely not to want to advance is to fail.*

§. XI.

Nor do we only hold that Christian perfection increases daily, but also that it is conformed and integral to the entire Divine Law, as to the sincerity of the mind and all parts of obedience, and constitutes such a justice that pleases and is approved by GOD, which GOD will one day benignly reward. This is evident not only from the examples of the Saints, brought forward in Chapter 1, who are certainly to be considered not to have been hypocrites, but to have served GOD with a sincere and whole heart, and to have instituted their life according to all the precepts of GOD, and thence always to have had

the justice of their cause against their adversaries. But also from the words of James, chapter 2, 10. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* For GOD does not wish, as Calvin rightly says, to be worshipped with exception, or to so divide with us that it is lawful for us to cut off from His law whatever pleases us less or is convenient. It is a mark of sincerity not to choose a part and repudiate the rest, but to abominate and detest all evil, and to embrace all good. The whole law is one copulative proposition: now in a copulative proposition the truth of all parts is required, just as in a disjunctive, that of any one part. The Law is like a chain, which, if one link or connection is broken, is entirely broken. It is like a harmony in music, which, if even a single chord is dissonant, is corrupted and disturbed. The company of virtues is indivisible, and he who has one vice, has all, according to the judgment of Seneca.

§. XII.

It is so far from being the case that the Fathers of the Primitive Church condemned this Christian perfection asserted by us in the Pelagians and other perfectionists, that they rather manfully defended it against all heretics and spurred us on to defend it. Thus Clement of Alexandria: *Therefore, all indeed (with the help of GOD's grace) are apt to acquire virtue; but one indeed comes to discipline and exercise more, another truly less. Wherefore some indeed have arrived even to perfect virtue, others truly to some degree.* Basil the Great, in his Homily on that of Moses, *Attend to thyself*, rejects as impious and by no means to be tolerated the opinion of those who affirm that the commandments of the divine law are impossible to keep. His words are: Ἀσεβὲς μὲν τὸ λέγειν, ἀδύνατα εἶναι τὰ τῷ πνεύματι προστάγματα. *It is impious to assert that the precepts of the Spirit are impossible to observe.* Chrysostom, in Homily 18 on Matthew, says: Μὴ τοίνυν ἀδύνατα εἶναι νομίζωμεν τὰ ἐπιτάγματα. Καὶ γὰρ μετὰ τοῦ συμφέροντος σφόδρα ἐστὶν εὐκόλα, ἐὰν νήφωμεν. *Let us not therefore think that the commandments are impossible, for indeed they are both useful to us and very easy, if we are entirely vigilant in mind.* And not only those Fathers who lived before the heresy of Pelagius arose, but also those who most sharply attacked Pelagius and the Pelagians, asserted this Christian perfection. For thus Augustine, in Book 2 of *On the Merits and Remission of Sins*, chap. 6: *Those who say that a man can be without sin in this life are not to be opposed with incautious temerity forthwith. For if we deny that it can be, we shall derogate both from the free will of man, who strives for this by willing, and from the power or mercy of GOD, who effects this by helping.* But it is another question whether it can be; another whether it is; another if it is not, although it can be, why it is not; another whether anyone who has ever had absolutely no sin, not only is, but also could ever be or can be. In this four-part proposition of questions, if I am asked whether a man can be without sin in this life, I will confess that it is possible by the grace of GOD and his free will: and I do not doubt that free will itself also pertains to the grace of GOD, that is, to the gifts of GOD, not only that it should exist, but also that it should be good: that is, that it should be turned to doing the commandments of the Lord: and thus the grace of GOD not only shows what is to be done, but also helps so

that what it has shown can be done. And after a few interjections: *By these and innumerable other testimonies of this kind, I cannot doubt, neither that GOD has commanded anything impossible for man, nor that anything is impossible for GOD to help so that what he commands may be done: and by this a man can, if he wishes, be without sin, being helped by GOD.* But if it be asked, what I placed in the second place: *Whether there is such a one? I do not believe there is.* And in the book *On Nature and Grace*, C. 42, after he had related that Pelagius contended that between the Catholics and himself the only question was about the very possibility of not sinning; he responds: *In which (question) we have no need to contend against him. For I am not too concerned whether there have been here any, or are, or can be, who have had, or have, or will have, that perfect charity of GOD to which nothing could be added.* For that is the truest, fullest, most perfect justice, and since I confess and defend that it can be done by the will of man, aided by the grace of GOD, I ought not to contend too much when, or where, or in whom it is done. Nor do I contend about the possibility itself, since, with the will of man healed and aided, the possibility itself, together with the effect, comes about in the Saints, while the charity of GOD, as much as our healed and purified nature can most fully receive, is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us. And in the same book, Chap. 43: *Therefore GOD does not command impossible things; but by commanding He admonishes you both to do what you can, and to ask for what you cannot.* And again, Chap. 69: *By the very fact that it is most firmly believed that the just and good GOD could not have commanded impossible things, we are admonished both what to do in easy matters and what to ask for in difficult ones. For all things become easy for charity, for which alone the burden of Christ is light, according to this saying: And His precepts are not grievous.* Where the following things also deserve to be noted. Likewise, in the book *On Grace and Free Will*, Chap. 16: *The Pelagians think they know something great when they say God would not command what He knew could not be done by man; who does not know this? But He commands some things that we cannot do for this reason, that we may know what we ought to ask from Him: for it is faith itself which by praying obtains what the Law commands.* And in the book *On the Perfection of Justice*, in response to the first Ratiocination of Caelestius, he says: *We respond that sin can be overcome, if a vitiated nature is healed by the grace of GOD through Jesus Christ our Lord.* And to the 5th Ratiocination, he responds with the same similitude with which we have already responded above. *For when we see a lame man who can be healed, we rightly say, this man ought to be without lameness: and if he ought, he can: yet he cannot immediately when he wills, but when, a cure having been applied, he is healed, and medicine has aided his will.* This is done in the inner man, as far as it pertains to sin, as to its lameness, through His grace who came not to call the righteous, but sinners: because the healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. And to the 16th Ratiocination: *We respond that there should be no conflict with them, the Pelagians, concerning these words, because he did not dare to say that a man is without sin, or anyone, or himself, but only responded that it is possible, which we do not deny.* But when it might be possible, and through whom it might be possible, this I ask. Jerome at the beginning of Book 3 against the Pelagians: *GOD has commanded possible things: of this no one is in doubt.* Indeed, the same Jerome in Book 1

against the Pelagians taught that the precepts of GOD are possible for the whole Church, but not for individuals, in these words: *You see that GOD has commanded possible things: and yet that which is possible, no one can fulfill by nature? Therefore He gave different precepts, and various virtues, which we cannot all have at the same time. And so it happens that what in one is either first or whole, in another is present in part, and yet he is not in crime who does not have all, nor is he condemned for what he does not have, but is justified by what he possesses.* And after a few lines: *GOD has commanded possible things, and I confess it. But all these possible things we individuals cannot have, not because of the weakness of nature, that you may bring a calumny against GOD, but because of the custom of the mind, which cannot have all virtues at the same time and always.* But Augustine sharply criticizes this opinion in Sermon 191 on Time: *We also execrate the blasphemy of those who say that something impossible has been commanded to man by GOD, and that the commandments of GOD can be kept not by individuals, but by all in common.*

§. XIII.

Not only was that opinion defended by private Doctors of the Church, but it was also confirmed by Councils. The African Canons, Canon 113, denounce an anathema on those who say that the grace of GOD through Jesus Christ, *μόνην ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν ἰσχύειν τῶν ἤδη πεπλημμελημένων, ἀλλὰ μὴ παρέχειν ἔτι τὴν βοήθειαν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἕτερα πλημμελεῖσθαι*, i.e., is valid only for the remission of sins already committed, and does not further provide help against committing other sins. Likewise, they strike with anathema those who teach concerning the grace of Christ: *οὐ δι' αὐτῆς ἡμῖν παρέχεται, ἵνα ὅπερ γινώμεν ποιητέον, καὶ ποιῆσαι ἔτι μὲν ἀγαπήσωμεν καὶ ἰσχύσωμεν*, i.e., that through it it is not provided to us that we may love and be able to do what we have known should be done. Thus the Second Council of Orange, held against the Pelagians, in its last Canon, defined: *This also we believe according to the Catholic faith, that having received grace through baptism, all the baptized (with Christ helping and cooperating) can and ought (if they are willing to labor faithfully) to fulfill those things which pertain to salvation.*

§. XIV.

Indeed, the Christians of the first ages were so inflamed with the study of perfection that they were not content to have warned in general precepts that Christian perfection is possible, but they in fact showed and proved that perfection by a more exact and strict life. Hence it is that, among other things, they condemned stage plays, and condemned the remaining pomp of the world and the signs of vanity, and sharply reprehended the luxury of dress in the gentler sex. They also took upon themselves to undertake, as if they were common and necessary and to be followed by everyone, those things which were proposed as exceptional and singular, and only for those instructed by extraordinary gifts from GOD, and then only with a certain respect and in a limited way; thus, for example, many abstained from private revenge, they abhorred forensic disputes, not a few disapproved of oaths, they refused praetorships, they did not seek

aedileship, they tempered themselves from second marriages, and they did not engage in warfare. See Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*, Book 1, c. 2, §. 3. To which practice of the early Christians the practice of the Waldensians (which we also note in passing) corresponds.

§. XV.

Protestant theologians also urge this Christian perfection and require it from their hearers: whence in the Augsburg Confession, art. 16, it is read: *They condemn also those who place evangelical perfection not in the fear of GOD and in faith, but in forsaking civil offices, because the Gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart.* Again in abuse 6: *The precepts of GOD and the true worship of GOD are obscured when men hear that only monks are in a state of perfection, because Christian perfection is to fear GOD seriously, and again to conceive great faith, and to trust that for Christ's sake we have a reconciled GOD, to ask of GOD and certainly to expect help in all things to be done, according to one's calling. In the meantime, to diligently do good works outwardly, and to serve one's calling. In these things is true perfection, and the true worship of GOD, not in celibacy, or in mendicancy, or in a squalid garment.* They add later: *Before these times, Gerson reprehended the error of the monks concerning perfection, and testifies that in his times it was a new saying that the monastic life is a state of perfection.* Similar things are found in the Apology. *Christian perfection is situated not in the contempt of civil ordinances, but in the motions of the heart, in great fear of GOD, in great faith, just as Abraham and David, even in great wealth and empires, were no less perfect than any hermits.* In the same, n. 13, on Monastic Vows: *It is a most pernicious error to feel that evangelical perfection is in human traditions. For then also the monks of the Mohammedans could glory that they have evangelical perfection. Nor is justice in the observations of other things which are called ἀδιάφορα (indifferent), but because the Kingdom of GOD is righteousness and life in the hearts; therefore perfection is to grow in the fear of GOD, in the confidence of mercy promised in Christ, and in the care of obeying one's calling, just as Paul also describes perfection: We are transformed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, etc.* John Davenant, sometime Bishop of Salisbury, in his *On Actual Justice*, chap. 51, writes that *we have never denied that the regenerate and those imbued with the spirit of charity can love even their enemies, and can also do the other acts which are commanded in the Decalogue, but that in doing these works they attain only that which theologians call the perfection of parts, not the perfection of degrees.* To which Pareus adds, Book 4, chap. 11, *On Justification*, against Bellarmine, p. 1075, where, to Bellarmine saying that love is so perfect that it suffices to fulfill the precept, he responds: *This is true of the fulfillment of the command that is sincere and inchoate, such as we, with Scripture, attribute to the saints; but it is false of the absolute fulfillment of the command.* Ibid. p. 1076, he says: *Those who truly and sincerely love Christ and keep his commandments are disciples and friends of Christ.* Likewise: *The promise, that you may love GOD with your whole heart, speaks either of the right, how we ought to love GOD, namely sincerely and perfectly; or of sincerity, that the saints love not hypocritically, but truly, and not with a divided, but with*

a whole heart, although imperfectly. And ibid. p. 1077, he has these words: In the alleged places which attribute perfection to some, or require it from all, perfection is understood not of degrees (that is, that degree of obedience which the ἀκρίβεια (precision) of the law requires), but perfection of parts, or integrity, opposed to hypocrisy, that is, a true and not a feigned affection and desire of obeying GOD and of resisting cupidities, and the beginning of obedience according to all the commandments of GOD. The Leiden theologians teach things consonant with these in their Synopsis of Purer Theology, Disp. 34, th. 27, p. 460. Where they say that the integrity of good works is that by which we perform all that GOD demands of us in His Law, from a pure and whole heart and with all our strength, which by another name is called the perfection of integrity and of parts. And in Disp. 32, after they had established different degrees of the regenerate, and had warned that regeneration not only represses the nature of the old man, as some wrongly think, but also abolishes it and substitutes true holiness and justice in its place, which also shines forth in the fruits of repentance; they add in Theses 15 and 16: But just as children, although they express it more imperfectly, yet have the complete form of a man consisting of all its parts; so we acknowledge no one to be truly repentant or regenerate, unless he possesses the complete form of regeneration, with the perfection, as they say, of parts, although he must daily advance in the perfection of degrees. This essential perfection consists first in this, that all the faculties of the human soul are renewed, the intellect, the will, and the affections, according to all the precepts of GOD; then, that they are renewed to such an extent that sin does not reign in them, Rom. 6, and that they do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, Rom. 8:1. And this is that perfection which GOD requires of all the faithful, in the places cited in Chap. 1, and by which the saints praised there were illustrious.

§. XVII.

But such is the ἐπιείκεια (equity) of the Covenant of Grace that it promises and grants pardon for errors and lapses, even of the most grievous sins, committed not only before but also after receiving its grace, to those who sincerely repent and return to a better way of life. That the remission of all, even the most grievous sins, is promised in the Gospel to all who repent is beyond controversy among all Christians. But whether the Gospel also promises remission of those sins, and indeed grave ones, which are committed after receiving the grace of the Gospel, was disputed of old between the Catholics and the Novatians. The aforementioned Novatians denied this, in chap. 2, §. IV, and for that reason were called by the Catholics not only deserters of the Church, but also enemies of mercy, murderers of penitence, teachers of pride, corrupters of truth, and destroyers of charity. And indeed, the Catholics not without reason sharply inveighed against the Novatians for denying pardon to the penitent lapsed; for it would be a miserable perishing for all sinners, unless the Covenant of Grace gave hope of pardon for sins committed after this covenant was undertaken. It will therefore be worthwhile to prove in a few words that under the Covenant of Grace, there remains hope of pardon for lapsed sinners. And indeed, in Jer. 3:1, 2, 7, 12, 13, 14, 22, GOD, through

the prophet Jeremiah, invites His people, with whom He had made a covenant and whom He had bound to Himself by various and very great benefits, who had fallen into horrendous idolatry and other atrocious sins, to repentance with pathetic words and many most serious arguments, promising them most certainly pardon for their admitted sins and reception into grace. To what purpose can Ez. 18 and 33 also refer?

§. XVIII.

2. In the New Testament, there is a universal and most exquisite promulgation of Divine grace, made to the faithful who have fallen into sin after faith and baptism, which is found in 1 John 2:1-2. *My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins, etc.* where the circumstances of the text prove that John is not speaking only of sins of infirmity, but is speaking promiscuously of sins, of whatever kind they may be, and seems to be saying as much as: *I warn you, my little children, who have now been made partakers of Divine grace, to be carefully on your guard, lest you relapse into your former sins; but if it should happen that any of you should fall into some more grievous sin, I do not wish you to despair, and to cast away all hope: for we have an advocate with the Father, the righteous one, the expiator of our sins.*
3. The same is proved by the express commands of repentance made to gravely lapsed Christians in the New Testament: which would be void and fruitless, if all hope of pardon were cut off for the repentant. To which class belongs that of Apoc. 2:5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* But to this purpose especially pertains the warning given to the angel of the church of Thyatira in the same chapter, v. 20, 21, 22. *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.* For whether you hold with some of the ancients that this Jezebel was the wife of the bishop, similar to that wife of Ahab in cunning and wickedness, a mistress of evil things; or whether by that woman you mystically understand the entire synagogue of pseudo-apostles, or of the Jews, or the order of doctors who taught these things there, and whom John calls by the name of a woman because they were unworthy of the name of men; or, with others, the heresy of the Nicolaitans or Gnostics, those monsters of men; or even some man, whom he calls a woman on account of the softness of his sin (for to examine this more prolixly is foreign to our purpose). 1. Yet it is certain that the crimes were atrocious, which were perpetrated by that woman and tolerated by the bishop, namely fornication, adultery, and idolatry. 2. Not only had she herself perpetrated

those heinous crimes, but she had also instigated and seduced others to perpetrate them. 3. What is the chief point, she had perpetrated these wicked deeds after receiving the faith of Christ, since she was still usurping the office of teaching and prophesying in the Thyatiran church. 4. Nevertheless, this Jezebel with her accomplices in crime is most benignly invited to repentance by the Lord. To whom also, without a doubt, He would have granted pardon for their admitted offenses, if they had repented. After they had abused the divine clemency and long-suffering for a long enough time, and had hardened themselves in their sins against the warnings of Christ and their own conscience, the Lord indeed denounces their destruction, yet not absolutely and peremptorily, but with the exception of penitence, *unless they repent of their deeds*. That threat, therefore, by which eternal death is denounced upon sinners under the Covenant of Grace, is not absolute and peremptory concerning the event, but only concerning what is due.

4. There are also examples in the sacred writings of those who, having lapsed after receiving grace, were received back into grace, most splendidly those of David and Peter, and of that incestuous man among the Corinthians. 1 Cor. 5:1 sqq.
5. GOD also confirmed this truth by the sacraments of the New Testament: for just as sins committed before receiving the grace of the Gospel are washed away by Baptism, so in the Holy Supper the remission of sins committed after Baptism is sealed and conferred upon lapsed believers who repent. But just as those sins were avoidable and therefore most grievous, so too must repentance, i.e., amendment, be thorough and perfectly practical, that is, it must issue in a real and actual cessation from all sins of this kind.

§. XVIII.

The contrary opinion of the Novatians is not supported by the two passages in Hebrews 6:4-6 and chap. 10:26-27, frequently brought up by them for the defense of their opinion. For they do not deal with just any sins committed after Baptism, however grievous, but with a universal, total, and malicious defection from the Gospel. Whence in the former passage, those apostates are said to crucify Christ anew, to hold him up to show, i.e., to ridicule, signifying that they are persuaded that Jesus was an impostor, and therefore worthy of the cross and all ignominy; and in the latter passage they are said to trample under foot the Son of GOD, to hold the blood of the Testament, by which they were sanctified, as a profane thing, and to do despite unto the Spirit of grace, by which words their immense hatred toward Christ is denoted, which never allows them to repent, because they maliciously cast away the one and only means of repentance and salvation, and thus, as much as in them lies, they crucify Christ anew, because, by denying him once crucified, they are unwilling to be saved by his death, and therefore if they were to be saved, Christ would have to be crucified anew, which cannot be done. Therefore, they cannot repent and be saved.

§. XIX.

And just as the Pelagian errors were condemned not only by the doctors of the Church—Jerome, Augustine, and others—but also by the Councils of Carthage, Diospolis, Milevis, Africa, Orange, and others: so also this error of the Novatians was condemned not only by the Emperor Constantine, who, among other things, addressed Acesius, who was pertinaciously denying pardon to the lapsed, saying: "Set up a ladder for yourself, Acesius, and ascend to heaven alone"; but also by the doctors of the Church—Cyprian of Carthage, Cornelius of Rome, Dionysius of Alexandria, Firmilian of Cappadocia, Helenus of Tarsus, Theoctistus of Caesarea, bishops, and others—in synods held at Nicaea, Carthage, Rome, and Antioch. Gregory Nazianzen, in Oration 14, which is the 3rd on peace, [calls it] the impure purity of Novatus, enticing the multitude with the elegance of the name; and in Oration 39 on the Holy Lights, he thus addresses Novatus: "Show a specimen of purity, and then I will approve your audacity. But now I fear that you, being full of ulcers yourself, may induce an inability to heal." Also emphatic are the words of Pacian of Barcelona, Epistle 3 to Sympronian the Novatian, Tom. 2, Bibl. M. Patrum: "Behold, one who trusts to bear himself openly and to purge the threshing floor of the Lord! Have mercy on yourself, brother Sympronian, lest Novatian deceive you under this guise, so that he may be thought more just because he has despised the rest by comparison with himself. Audacity often feigns confidence, and a false image of a good conscience flatters even desperate sinners." Epiphanius, Heresy 59, of the Cathari, num. 6: "These, while they proclaim themselves pure, by that very dogma of theirs make themselves impure. For whoever pronounces himself pure, condemns himself of extreme impurity by his own judgment."

§. XX.

From what has been said, it is also easily understood that the Church militant on this earth does not consist solely of the perfect, which was the error of the Donatists. For although the Catholic Church is holy, not only by the holiness of its institution, but also by the imputed holiness of Christ, and indeed by an inherent, personal holiness, and that a true and real one, yet it does not consist solely of the perfect. For besides the fact that among adult Christians there are different degrees, as was shown above; and the infants themselves, baptized and unbaptized, belong to the Church and the family of GOD, to whom Christian perfection can hardly, if at all, be attributed; the Church militant on earth is also compared to a threshing floor, containing both chaff and wheat (Matthew 3:12), to a net, containing good and bad fish (Matthew 13:47), to a field, bearing not only wheat but also tares (Matthew 13), to a wedding feast, in which not all the guests appear clothed in a wedding garment (Matthew 22:1), and to a company of virgins, partly wise, partly foolish. From all of which it is manifest that in the external communion of the Church are found not only the truly faithful, but also hypocrites, who only simulate and feign piety. This is that great house containing not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth (2 Tim. 2:20). Many are called in the Church, but few are chosen. Furthermore, the examples of the Corinthian, Galatian, Hebrew, and Asian churches, to which the Epistles of the Apocalypse 2 & 3 were written, and in which there

were many things worthy of reprehension, sufficiently show that the Christian Church does not consist solely of the perfect. And these and similar sayings the Catholics also urged against the Donatists; whence Fulgentius to Peter, chap. 43: "Hold most firmly and in no way doubt that the threshing floor of GOD is the Catholic Church, and within it, until the end of the age, chaff is contained mixed with the wheat, that is, the bad are mixed with the good in the communion of the sacraments." And Jerome, Dialogue against the Luciferians: "The ark of Noah is a type of the Church: as in it were all kinds of animals, so also in this are men of all nations and customs, as there the leopard and the kid, the wolf and the lambs, so also here the just and sinners, that is, vessels of gold and silver are mentioned with those of wood and clay." The Donatists, in the conference at Carthage held with the Catholics, pressed by the alleged testimonies of Scripture, were themselves forced to confess that in the Church the bad are mixed with the good. Whence Augustine, after the conference, chap. 9, exclaims: "Behold, even they, compelled by evangelical truth, have been forced to confess nothing other than that the bad are now mixed with it, as good and bad fish are caught in the same net, which cannot distinguish the bad from the good." And Chap. 10, he draws this conclusion from their confession: "If therefore he compared the Church to nets gathering good and bad because he wished it to be understood that the bad in the Church are not manifest, but hidden, whom the priests do not know, just as the fishermen do not know what they have caught beneath the waves. Therefore, it is also compared to a threshing floor, so that it might be foretold that even manifest evil men would be with the good in it. For the chaff, which is mixed with the grain on the threshing floor, is not itself hidden beneath the waves, which is so conspicuous to the eyes of all, that rather the grains in it are hidden, while it itself is manifest."

§. XXI.

And the Catholics rightly inveighed against the Donatists, because they made a schism and separated themselves from the Catholic Church. Augustine in Epistle 164 not only invites Emeritus the Donatist to give the reason for which the Donatists made the schism, but also provokes Cresconius the Grammarian to state that reason; against whom, in the second book, chap. 34, he alleges the words of Cyprian from the 3rd Epistle to the presbyter Maximus and the others, in which he congratulates them on returning to the Church from schismatic error: *Although tares seem to be in the Church, yet neither our faith nor our charity ought to be hindered, so that because we see tares to be in the Church, we ourselves should withdraw from the Church. Nor should anyone claim for himself what the Father has attributed to the Son alone, that he should think himself able either to carry the fan now for winnowing the threshing floor and purging the chaff, or to separate all the tares from the wheat by human judgment. That obstinacy is proud, and a sacrilegious presumption, which a perverse madness assumes for itself. And while some always demand more for themselves than mild justice requires, they perish from the Church, and while they insolently exalt themselves, blinded by their own swelling, they lose the light of truth.* And in the book *On Faith and Good Works*, chap. 4: *Even if they were*

evil, on account of whom you are not in the Church, you nevertheless ought to have remained in the Church by bearing with those whom you could by no means amend or segregate.

It is our duty to give immortal thanks to GOD, THE THRICE-GOOD AND GREAT, that He has called us to the Holy, Catholic Church out of His infinite mercy, and to strive that we may daily grow in Christian perfection and attain the due maturity. And at last, having completed the course of this life, may we be gathered to the spirits of the perfected in the heavens! For the rest, may the GOD of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us! To Him be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen!