

**COMPLETE PHILOSOPHICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL TREATISES
of
ANSELM of CANTERBURY**

Translated
by
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CHAPTER-TITLES
for
De Conceptu Virginali

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**THE VIRGIN CONCEPTION
AND ORIGINAL SIN¹**
*(De Conceptu Virginali et de
Originali Peccato)*

Although if I am able to I wish on all matters to accommodate your religious desire, brother and most beloved son Boso, I certainly count myself especially indebted [to do so] when I understand that this desire is aroused in you by me. For I am certain that upon your reading in the book *Why God Became a [God-]man* (which you more than the others urged me to write, and in which I have cast you in the role of my fellow-disputant) that, in addition to the rationale I offered there, another rationale can be detected for how it was possible for God to assume a sinless human nature

¹Composed in Lyon, France between the summer of 1099 and the summer of 1100.

[*homo*] from the sinful mass of the human race, your alert mind comes to be greatly aroused to ask what this other rationale is. Accordingly, I fear that I may seem to you unjust if I conceal from you, my dear friend, what thoughts I have on this subject. Therefore, I shall briefly state my view in such way as neither to condemn the faithful opinion of anyone else regarding this matter nor stubbornly to defend my own opinion if it can be rationally proven to oppose the truth. Nevertheless, I still think that the account of this which I presented in that same small work is altogether valid and adequate if it is carefully examined. Indeed, nothing prevents this matter from having more than one rationale, each of which can suffice by itself.

CHAPTER ONE

What original and personal justice, and original and personal injustice, are.

To see, then, how it was possible for God to assume from the sinful mass of the human race a sinless human nature, we must first inquire about original sin, because only this doctrine gives rise to the problem at hand. For if we see how Christ could not be subject to *original* sin, then it will be clear how the assumption or conception of this man was free from *all* sin.

Indeed, there is no doubt that the word “original” is derived from the word “origin.” Hence, if original sin is present only in man, it seems to take its name either (1) from reference to the origin of human nature (i.e., from the beginning of human nature)—original in that this sin is contracted at human nature’s origin—or else (2) from reference to the origin (i.e., to the beginning) of each person, because this sin is contracted at each person’s origin. But this sin is seen not to stem from the beginning of human nature, since human nature’s origin was *just*, for our first parents were created just and altogether sinless. Therefore, original sin seems to take the name “original” from reference to the origin of each human person. Yet, if anyone says that original sin is called original because of the fact that individuals acquire it from those from whom they received the origin of their *nature*, I will not object—provided he does not deny that original sin is contracted at the time of the origin of each *person*.

In each man are present together a *nature*, by which he is

human, as are other men, and a *person*, by which he is distinguished from other men, as when he is called “this man” or “that man” or is called by his proper name (e.g., “Adam” or “Abel”). The sin of each man is in both his nature and his person; for example, the sin of Adam was in his humanity (i.e., in his nature) and in the one who was called Adam (i.e., in the person). Nevertheless, there is a sin which each man contracts together with his nature at the time of his origin, and there is a sin which he does not contract with his nature but which he commits after he is already a person distinct from other persons. Now, the sin which is contracted at the time of his origin is called original. (It can also be called natural—not because it comes from the essence of his nature but because it is received together with his nature because of the nature's corruption.) But the sin which each man commits after he is a person can be called personal, because it is committed through the fault of the person.

By similar reasoning justice can be called both original and personal. For indeed, Adam and Eve were *just* originally—i.e., at the time of their beginning, as soon as they existed as human beings and without any intervening time. But justice can be called personal when someone unjust receives the justice which he did not have at the time of his origin.

CHAPTER TWO

How human nature was corrupted.

Therefore, if Adam and Eve had kept their original justice, those who were to be born of them would originally have been just, even as were Adam and Eve. But because Adam and Eve sinned personally—sinned even though originally they were strong and uncorrupted and had the ability always easily to keep justice—their whole being became weakened and corrupted. Indeed, the body [became weakened and corrupted] because after their sin it became like the bodies of brute animals, viz., subject to corruption and to carnal appetites. And the soul [became weakened and corrupted] because as a result of the bodily corruption and the carnal appetites, as well as on account of its need for the goods which it had lost, it became infected with carnal desires. And because the whole of human nature was in Adam and Eve, none of it being outside

of them, human nature as a whole was weakened and corrupted.

Therefore, along with the corruption which human nature incurred as a result of sin, there remained in human nature both an obligation to have the perfect and pure justice it had received and an obligation to make satisfaction for having deserted justice. Accordingly, even as human nature if it had not sinned would have been propagated in the same condition as it was created by God [viz., without corruption], so, having sinned, it is propagated in the condition it brought upon itself through sinning. Consequently, since human nature is unable by itself either to make satisfaction for its sin or to recover its deserted justice, and since “the body which is corrupted burdens the soul”¹ (especially when the body is rather weak—e.g., in infancy or in the mother's womb), so that the soul cannot even understand justice, we see it to be necessary that in infants human nature is born with (1) the obligation to make satisfaction for the first sin, which it was able always to avoid, and with (2) the obligation to possess original justice, which it was able always to keep. Nor in the case of infants does human nature's inability excuse it for its failure in them to discharge its obligations. For human nature brought this inability upon itself by deserting justice in our first parents, in whom it was present as a whole; and it is always under obligation to have the ability that it received for the sake of always keeping justice. Original sin in infants can be seen to be this [condition of obligation and inability]. Let me also add thereto the sins of one's recent ancestors—sins that are reckoned “unto the third and the fourth generation.”² For although it is possible to question whether or not all of these sins are to be understood as included in the notion of original sin, nevertheless so as not to seem to be minimizing the seriousness of original sin for the sake of the topic I am investigating, I shall stipulate that original sin is so grave that no one can show it to be more so.

CHAPTER THREE

Sin is present only in a rational will.

But whether original sin consists of all this or whether it is something less, I think that original sin can in no way be asserted to

¹Wisdom of Solomon 9:15. ²Exodus 20:5.

be in an infant before he has a rational soul—even as justice [cannot be said] to have been in Adam before he became a rational man. Now, if while remaining sinless Adam and Eve had begotten offspring, justice would not and could not have been in the seed prior to the seed's having been formed into a living human being. Therefore, if the seed of a human being cannot admit of justice before becoming a human being, then the seed cannot be subject to original sin before becoming a human being.

Assuredly, we ought not to doubt that original sin is injustice. For if every sin is injustice and if original sin is a sin, then surely original sin is also injustice. But if someone says that not every sin is injustice, let him concede the possibility that a sin is present in someone while at the same time no injustice is there—a view seen to be preposterous. But what if someone says that original sin is not to be called a sin in an unqualified sense but is to be called a sin [only] in conjunction with the qualification “original” (just as a depicted man is not really a man but is a *depicted* man)? Then, to be sure, it would follow that (1) an infant who has no sin except original sin is free of sin, and (2) it is not the case that, among human beings, only the Son of the Virgin was without sin both in His mother's womb and when begotten of His mother, and (3) an infant who dies unbaptized and having no sin except original sin either is not condemned or else is condemned without sin. But we accept none of these consequences. Hence, every sin is injustice, and original sin is a sin in an unqualified sense. And from these two statements it follows that original sin is also injustice. Likewise, if God condemns a man only because of that man's injustice and if He condemns someone because of his original sin, then it follows that original sin is nothing other than injustice. But if this conclusion is true and if injustice is nothing other than the absence of required justice (for injustice is seen to be only in a nature which does not have justice when it ought to), then assuredly [the concept of] original sin is included within the definition of “injustice.”

But if justice is uprightness-of-will which is kept for its own sake and if this uprightness can be present only in a rational nature, then it follows that even as no nature except a rational nature can admit of justice, so no nature except a rational nature ought to have justice. Therefore, since injustice can be present only where

there ought to be justice, original sin—which is injustice—is present only in a rational nature. But only God, angels, and the human soul (by virtue of which a man is called rational, and without which he is not a man) are rational natures. Therefore since original sin is not present in God or in an angel, it is present only in the rational soul of a man.

We must also realize that if justice is uprightness-of-will kept for its own sake, then justice can be present only in a will. Therefore, injustice, too, [can be only in a will]. For the absence of justice is called injustice only where justice ought to be. Thus, besides justice or injustice themselves, nothing is said to be just or unjust except either a will or else on account of a just or an unjust will. On account of the will we call a man or an angel just or unjust, and a soul or an action just or unjust.

CHAPTER FOUR

Except for justice or injustice nothing is just or unjust in itself; and nothing is punished except the will.

Considered in itself, not anything—whether it be a substance or an action or something else—is just except justice or is unjust, or a sin, except injustice. Not even the will, in which justice or injustice is present, [is just or unjust in itself]. For the power of soul by which the soul wills something and to which we give the name “will” is one thing. (This power can be called the instrument-for-willing, just as sight can be called the instrument-for-seeing.) And justice—by virtue of whose possession a will is called just, and by virtue of whose deprivation a will is called unjust—is another thing. The affections and uses of this instrument are also called wills; but it would take too long to elaborate these distinctions here.

Considered in themselves, not even those appetites which the apostle calls both “the flesh which lusts against the spirit” and “the law of sin which is in our members, warring against the law of our mind”¹ are just or unjust. For they do not make just or unjust the man who experiences them; but they make unjust only the man who consents to them by an act of will when he ought not to. For the same apostle says, “There is no condemnation to those who

¹Galatians 5:17. Romans 7:25.

are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk in accordance with the flesh”¹—i.e., who do not give consent-of-will to the flesh. Now, if these appetites were to make unjust the one who experienced them without consenting to them, then condemnation *would* result. Hence, it is not a sin to experience these appetites; rather, it is a sin to consent to them [when one ought not to]. For if in themselves these appetites were unjust, then every instance of consenting to them would be an instance when they caused the consentor to be unjust. But when irrational animals consent to them, they are not called unjust. Likewise, if the appetites were sins they would be removed at baptism, when every sin is washed away. But, clearly, this does not at all happen. Therefore, there is not any injustice in the essence of the appetites; rather, there is injustice in a rational will which complies inordinately with them. For when the will resists the appetites by “delighting in the law of God in accordance with the inner man,”² then the will is just. Now, the apostle calls the justice which the law commands both “the law of God,” because it is from God, and “the law of the mind,”³ because it is understood by means of the mind—just as the old law is called both “the law of God,”⁴ because it is from God, and “the law of Moses,”⁵ because it was delivered through Moses.

As for my having said that an action is called unjust not in itself but on account of an unjust will: the truth of this statement is evident in the case of those actions which can at times be done not unjustly—for example, killing a man (as did Phinehas)⁶ or sexual intercourse (as within marriage or among irrational animals). However, the truth of my statement is not so easily recognized in the case of those actions which can never occur other than unjustly—for example, perjury and certain other things which ought not to be named.⁷ Yet, consider a given action by which something is done—an action which exists only while that thing is being done and which upon completion of that thing passes away, so that it no longer exists. Or consider a work which is produced and which remains (for example, when we write what ought not to be written and the act of writing by which the letters are formed ceases but the letters themselves remain). Now, if the action were a sin, then

¹Romans 8:1. ²Romans 7:22. ³Romans 7:23. ⁴1 Esdras 7:21. ⁵Josue (Joshua) 8:31. ⁶Numbers 25:7-11. ⁷See Ephesians 5:3.

when the action passed away so that it no longer existed, the sin would likewise pass away and no longer exist. Or [if the work were a sin, then] as long as the work [e.g., the letters] remained, the sin would not be removed. But we often see cases in which sins are not removed even though the action ceases, as well as cases in which sins are removed even though the work remains. Therefore, neither the action (which passes away) nor the work (which remains) is ever [in itself] a sin.

Furthermore, if the members and the senses are reproved for the voluntary actions which are unjustly done, the members and the senses by which they are done can reply: "God subjected us and the power that is in us to the will, so that in accordance with its command we cannot keep from moving ourselves and from doing what it wills. Indeed, the will moves us as its instruments, and it does the deeds which we seem to do. We cannot resist it by our own power, nor can the works that it does be prevented. Neither ought we nor can we disobey the master whom God has given us. When we obey this master, we are obeying God, who gave us this law." Therefore, what sin is committed by the members or the senses or their works—all of which God thus subjected to the will—if they conform to God's ordinance for them? Hence, whatever they do must be completely imputed to the will.

Since what I have just said is true, someone may possibly wonder why the members and the senses are punished for the will's fault. But in fact they are not punished for it, since only the will is punished. For only what is against one's will is for him a punishment; and only something with a will experiences punishment. Now, the members and the senses will nothing by themselves. Therefore, just as the will acts in the members and the senses, so in them it is tormented or delighted. If someone rejects this statement, let him realize that only the soul (in which the will is present) experiences and acts in the members and the senses; and so, [only the soul] is tormented or delighted in them. However, we are accustomed to call the actions done by an unjust will sins, because in the will by which these actions are done sin is present. Now, to certain actions we give names which signify that the actions are done unjustly—e.g., the names "fornication" and "lying." Still, when we consider the action or the utterance, we understand one thing; and when we consider whether the action or the ut-

terance is done justly or unjustly, we understand another thing.

Finally, every being comes from God, from whom there is nothing unjust. Therefore, in itself no being is unjust.

CHAPTER FIVE

The evil which is identical with sin or injustice is nothing.

Injustice, however, is nothing at all, even as is blindness. For blindness is nothing other than the absence of sight where sight ought to be; and it is no more the case that this absence is something in an eye, where sight ought to be, than it is in a piece of wood, where sight ought not to be. For injustice is not the kind of thing which infects and corrupts the soul in the way that poison infects and corrupts the body; nor does it do something in the way that happens when a wicked man does evil deeds. When a savage beast breaks its bonds and rages about wildly, and when a ship—if the helmsman leaves the rudder and delivers the vessel to the wind and the waves—strays and is driven into dangers of one kind or another, we say that the absence of chains or of a rudder causes these events. [We say this] not because their absence is something or does something but because if they had been present they would have caused the wild animal not to rage and the ship not to perish. By comparison, when an evil man rages and is driven into various dangers to his soul, viz., evil deeds, we declare that injustice causes these deeds. [We say this] not because injustice is a being or does something but because the will (to which all the voluntary movements of the entire man are submitted), lacking justice, driven on by various appetites, being inconstant, unrestrained, and uncontrolled, plunges itself and everything under its control into manifold evils—all of which justice, had it been present, would have prevented from happening.

From these considerations, then, we easily recognize that injustice has no being, even though we are accustomed to give the name “injustice” to an unjust will's affections and acts, which, considered in themselves, are something. By this line of reasoning we understand evil to be nothing. For even as injustice is only the absence of required justice, so evil is only the absence of required good. But no being—even if it is called evil—is nothing; and for it to be evil is not the same thing as for it to be something. Indeed,

for any being to be evil is simply for it to lack the good which it ought to have. But to lack the good which ought to be present is not the same as to be something. Therefore, for any being to be evil is not the same thing as for it to be something.

I have been briefly discussing an evil (viz., injustice) which without doubt is always nothing. But detriment is an evil (and hence things detrimental are called evil) which sometimes is nothing, as in the case of blindness and deafness, but which sometimes is seen to be something, as in the case of pain and grief. However, in the discourse I wrote on *The Fall of the Devil* I have shown adequately, it seems to me, that justice is uprightness-of-will kept for its own sake, that injustice is only the absence of required justice and has no being, and, furthermore, that every being is from God and that only good is from God. But [I have discussed the notion of] justice more fully in the discourse I wrote *On Truth*.

CHAPTER SIX

Nevertheless, when God punishes for sin,
He does not punish for nothing.

Certain people, when they hear that sin is nothing, are accustomed to ask: "If sin is nothing, then why does God punish a man for sin?—for no one should be punished for nothing." Although this is a lowly question, some answer must be briefly given to these people, because they do not know what they are asking.

Although the absence of justice is nothing both where justice ought to be and, alike, where it ought not to be, nevertheless God rightly punishes sinners for something and not for nothing. For, as I stated in the aforementioned book, God exacts from sinners against their wills the honor due Him which they were unwilling to pay freely, and He separates them from the just by an appropriate arrangement, so that there is nothing disordered in His kingdom. However, God does not punish for their lack of justice—i.e., for nothing—creatures in whom justice ought not to be; for there is not anything that He demands from them, and the fitting order of the universe does not require this punishment. So, then, when God punishes for sin, which is the absence of required justice—an absence which is nothing—He does not at all punish for nothing. And it is true that unless there is something because of which God ought to punish, He does not at all punish for nothing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

How the seed of man is said to be unclean and to be conceived in sins, even though there is no sin in it.

From the things already said it is now clear, I believe, that sin and injustice are nothing, that they are present only in a rational will, and that no being except a will is properly called unjust. Hence, an alternative seems to follow: Either from the very moment of his conception an infant has a rational soul (without which he cannot have a rational will), or else at the moment of his conception he has no original sin. But no human intellect accepts the view that an infant has a rational soul from the moment of his conception. For [from this view] it would follow that whenever—even at the very moment of reception—the human seed which was received perished before attaining a human form, the [alleged] human soul in this seed would be condemned, since it would not be reconciled through Christ—a consequence which is utterly absurd. Thus, this half of the alternative must be completely excluded. But if an infant does not have sin from the moment of his conception, then why does Job inquire of God: “Who can make him clean who was conceived from unclean seed? Is it not You, who alone are?”¹ And how is what David says true?: “I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.”² Therefore, if I am able, I shall inquire as to how it is that infants—in spite of the fact that sin is not in them at the very moment of their conception—are said to be conceived from unclean seed and in iniquities and sins.

Indeed, often something not the case is asserted by Divine Scripture to be the case simply because its future occurrence is certain. Thus, in fact, God says to Adam regarding the forbidden tree: “On whatsoever day you shall eat of it, you shall surely die.”³ [God said this] not because on that day Adam was going to die bodily but because on that day he was going to be placed under the necessity of someday dying. Similarly, because of the necessity of someday dying, Paul says: “If Christ is in you, however, the body is indeed dead because of sin, but the spirit is alive because of justification.”⁴ Now, the bodies of those to whom he was speak-

¹Job 14:4. ²Psalms 50:7 (51:5). ³Genesis 2:17. ⁴Romans 8:10.

ing were not dead; but they were going to die as a result of sin, because “by one man sin entered into this world, and as a result of sin [came] death.”¹ Thus, when Adam sinned, we all sinned in him—not because at that time we ourselves who did not yet exist sinned, but because we were going to exist from Adam and because at the time of his sin there was produced the necessity that we would sin when we existed, since “through one man’s disobedience many were made to be sinners.”²

We can understand in a similar manner [the statement] that a man is conceived from unclean seed and in iniquities and sins i.e., not in the sense that in the seed there is iniquity or sin or the uncleanness of sin, but in the sense that from the seed and from the conception from which a man begins to exist he receives the necessity that when he comes to possess a rational soul, he will have the uncleanness-of-sin, which is nothing other than sin and iniquity. For even if an infant be begotten by a corrupt concupiscence, there is no more fault in the seed than there is in the spittle or the blood should someone malevolently expectorate or malevolently shed some of his own blood. For what is at fault is not the spittle or the blood but the evil will. Therefore, it is clear both how there is no sin in infants from the moment of their conception and how those statements that I adduced from Divine Scripture are true. Indeed, there is no sin in those infants, for they do not have a will, which is a necessary condition for the presence of sin. Nevertheless, sin is said to be in them, since in the seed they contract the necessity of sinning at the time when they will become human beings.

CHAPTER EIGHT

In the seed taken from the Virgin there is neither sin
nor the necessity for future sin.

So if these conclusions are true, as I think they are, then because that which is taken into an offspring from a parent has no will, it has no sin. Hence, it is clear that the stain of sin could not at all have been present in that which the Son of God took into His own person from the Virgin. But I stated that the seed contracted from parents is contracted with the necessity for sin at that future time

¹Romans 5:12. ²Romans 5:19.

when the seed will be enlivened by a rational soul. The only reasons for this necessity are the following: Human nature is born in infants, as I said, with the obligation to make satisfaction for the sin of Adam and (in accordance with what I supposed) of recent ancestors; but it cannot at all make this satisfaction, and as long as it does not do so it is sinning. Furthermore, human nature is not able by itself to re-acquire the justice which it deserted; and the soul, which is burdened by the corrupted body,¹ is not able even to understand justice, which can be neither kept nor possessed without first being understood. Consequently, if the seed taken from the Virgin can be shown to be free of these constraints, we shall see clearly that it did not at all contract the necessity for sin.

If first we repel [from that seed] the necessity by which human nature seems to be obliged to make satisfaction for the sins of both its first and its recent ancestors, then because the assuming and the assumed natures are a oneness of person, we can readily show that the following necessities are foreign to that seed: the necessity by which human nature is unable by itself to recover justice, and the necessity by which the corrupted body so burdens the soul that in the completely formed human being the soul is unable without the assistance of grace to keep justice were it received, and in infants is unable even to understand justice. Now, if that seed can be understood to be free from the obligation of our first parents, then there will be no doubt about the fact that it incurs no obligation from its more recent ancestors. Therefore, with the help of God I will try to ascertain first of all how this point can be known, so that after I have established it, I will not have to go to much trouble to establish the other points.

Chapter NINE

Why the sin by which the human race is condemned
is imputed to Adam rather than to Eve,
even though he sinned after her and because of her.

To the above end, it seems to me especially necessary to ask why the sin by which the human race is condemned is more frequently and more particularly imputed to Adam rather than to Eve, even

¹Wisdom of Solomon 9:15.

though Eve sinned before him and Adam sinned after her and because of her. For the apostle says: "But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin according to the likeness of Adam's transgression."¹ There are also many other texts which are seen to incriminate Adam rather than Eve.

I think this imputation occurs because the whole of that union of two members is signified by the name of the principal member—just as we are accustomed to signify a whole by reference to one of its parts. Or else it occurs because even though Adam's rib was fashioned into a woman, still Adam and his rib together can be called Adam—just as we read that God "created them male and female and blessed them and on the day they were created called their name Adam."² Or it occurs because if Eve alone had sinned and Adam had not sinned, it would have been necessary only for Eve, and not for the whole human race, to be lost. For from Adam, in whom God had created the seed of all mankind, God was able to create another woman; and through her the plan of God could have been brought to completion from Adam. For these same reasons I will refer to both of them by the name "Adam" except for times when it will be necessary to distinguish between them.

CHAPTER TEN

Why men who were not conscious of Adam's sin
are nonetheless weighed down by it.

Indeed, every descendant of Adam is human by virtue of his creation and is Adam by virtue of his propagation and is a person by virtue of the individuation by which he is distinguished from others. Now, he has his humanity through Adam but not on account of Adam. For just as Adam did not make himself human, so he did not create in himself a reproductive nature; rather, God, who created him human, created this reproductive nature in him so that human beings might be propagated from him. But there is no doubt about why each of us is bound by the obligation we are discussing. The reason is not that each of us is human or that each of us is a person. For if each one were bound by this obligation because he is human or is a person, then it would have been necessary for Adam to have been bound by this obligation even

¹Romans 5:14. ²Genesis 5:2.

before he sinned, since he was then both human and a person. But this consequence is utterly absurd. Hence, the remaining alternative is that each one is under this obligation only by virtue of the fact that he is Adam—yet, not simply by virtue of his being Adam, but rather by virtue of his being Adam the sinner. [For were it simply by virtue of being Adam], then, assuredly, it would follow that if Adam had never sinned, those propagated from him would nevertheless be born with this debt—an impious consequence.

It is not out of place to repeat here what I have already said, viz., why because each man is propagated from Adam, each is weighed down by Adam's sin, or debt, even though not conscious of this sin. When God created Adam, He created in him a reproductive nature which He subjected to Adam's power, so that Adam might use this nature in accordance with his will as long as he willed to be subject to God. For he would use it in accordance with a rational human will, not in accordance with irrational bestial pleasure. For even as it is proper to beasts to will nothing rationally, so it is proper to men to will nothing irrationally. Men ought always to will rationally, because Adam received and could always have kept the power to do so. Moreover, God gave Adam the following grace: Even as when without the operation of a reproductive nature or a creature's will God created Adam both rational and *just* together, so—provided Adam were not to sin—those whom Adam would beget through the operation of his will and reproductive nature would be *just* at the moment they had rational souls.

Indeed, the same reasoning which shows that rational nature was created just—reasoning which I developed in the aforementioned short work—also proves that those who could have been propagated from sinless human nature would have to have had both justice and rationality alike. For, indeed, He who created the first man by means other than parental generation also creates those who are produced from the first man by means of the created reproductive nature. Hence, if there had been no prior sin, every man would have been both just and rational—even as was Adam. But since Adam was unwilling to be subject to the will of God, his reproductive nature, although not destroyed, was not subject to his will as it would have been had he not sinned. Moreover, he lost the grace which he was able to keep for those to be prop-

agated from him; and all who are propagated by the operation of the nature that Adam had received are born obligated by his debt. Accordingly, since human nature (which as a whole was so present in Adam that none of it was present outside of him) dishonored God by uncoerced sinning and thus was unable to make satisfaction by itself, human nature lost the grace which it had received and which it was able always to keep for those to be propagated from it; and each time it is propagated by the bestowed reproductive nature, it contracts sin together with the accompanying penalty for sin.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Propagation from the Virgin is not subject
to the law and merits of natural propagation.
There are three orders of events.

Now we must carefully consider whether or not this “inheritance,” so to speak, of sin and of the penalty for sin is justly transmitted to the man propagated from Adam through the Virgin. It is certain, indeed, that Adam received a nature which reproduces itself only by means of a man and a woman together. For, indeed, it is not in human nature's power, and it is known to be impossible, that a man alone or a woman alone—simply by the working of his or her nature and will—could beget a human being. For just as the clay of the earth had not received a nature or a will by whose operation the first man would be produced from it (even though the clay was that from which the first man could be created by God), so it was not by the operation of human nature and the human will that a woman was made from a man's rib or that a man was made from a woman alone. Rather, God, by His own power and will, created one man from the clay, created another man from a woman alone, and created a woman from a man alone.

Now, although nothing happens except by the efficient or the permissive will of God, nevertheless (1) certain things are done by His power and will alone, (2) certain things are done by created nature, and (3) still other things are done by the will of the creature. But just as by itself created nature can do nothing except what it has received from the will of God, so by itself the creature's will can do nothing except what nature either assists in or concedes.

(1) In the beginning, the will of God alone created the natures

of things, giving to certain of them wills suitable to each, so that these natures and wills might accomplish their work in the course of things, doing so in accordance with that order which God prescribed for them. And the will of God continues to do many things when from these natures and wills it accomplishes what they themselves would not at all do in accordance with their appointed use and purpose. Indeed, it is the work of God's will alone when the sea offers to a people a dry path within itself, when the dead rise, when water is suddenly changed into wine, when the minds of men are taught by the Holy Spirit things which they did not know either by themselves or from another creature, when under the guidance of grace alone evil wills are converted from their evil impulses unto that which is beneficial, and when many other things are done which neither the creature nor the will of the creature would have done through its usual course of activity. (2) Nature draws what is heavy downward and what is light upward. Nature causes the earth to bring forth countless herbs and trees and causes these to bear fruit; sometimes nature does this by means of a [human] will that first plants and cultivates, and sometimes without the initial working of a will. And nature does many other things which we recognize more readily by witnessing than by being taught. (3) But things of the following kind are attributed to a will: traveling, building, writing, speaking, and similar things which only a will does.

Therefore, since careful examination shows that whatever occurs is done either (1) by the will of God alone or (2) by nature in accordance with the power given to it by God or (3) by the will of a creature (and since things which are done neither by created nature nor by the will of a creature but solely by the will of God are always miracles), there appear to be three orders of events: viz., the miraculous, the natural, and the voluntary.

Indeed, the miraculous is not at all subject to the others or to their law but rules freely. Nor does it do violence to them when it is seen to oppose them; for they have nothing except what they have received from it, and it has given them nothing except what is subordinate to it. Therefore, since the propagation of a man from a virgin alone is neither natural nor voluntary but is miraculous (even as both the propagation which produced a woman from a man alone and the creation of a man from clay are mirac-

ulous), it is clear that this propagation is not at all subject to the laws and merits of propagation effected by both the will and nature, although separately. (For in this work the will does one thing and nature does another thing.) Nevertheless, Adam, [who was begotten] from no other human being, and Jesus, [who was begotten] from a woman alone, and Eve, [who was begotten] from a man alone, are all real human beings—just as any man or woman [who is begotten] from a man and a woman is a real human being. Now, every human being is either Adam or from Adam. But Eve is from Adam alone, and all others are from Adam and Eve. Now, since Mary, from whom alone Jesus is [begotten], is from Adam and Eve, Jesus must be from Adam and Eve. For in this way it was expedient that He who was going to redeem the human race would exist from, and be born from, the father and the mother of all [human beings].

CHAPTER TWELVE

It would not be right for Adam's evils to be transmitted to that man.

So too, it is not difficult to understand why the Son of the Virgin is not subject to Adam's sin, or debt. For, indeed, Adam was created just—free from sin, its oft-mentioned debt, and its penalty. Moreover, he was created happy and with the ability always to keep the justice he had received. And by keeping justice he was able to keep that happiness and freedom just mentioned. Accordingly, since he did *not* keep these goods for himself (although he was easily able always to do so), he removed them from himself and subjected himself to their opposites. Thus, he became a servant of sin, or injustice, and of a debt he was unable to pay, and of an unhappiness consisting in the inability to recover the goods that had been lost. Therefore, just as he was able to remove from himself the goods which he had (and to bring upon himself the evils which he did not have) only by not keeping these goods for himself when he was able to, so he was able to remove these goods from another (and to bring evils upon another) only by not keeping these goods for him for whom he was able to keep them. Now, he was able to keep them only for those whose possibility of generation had been made subject to his will. Therefore, Adam could not transmit the

aforementioned evils to any person (even though propagated from him) with respect to whose generation neither the reproductive nature given to Adam nor Adam's will accomplished or was able to accomplish anything. Therefore, it would be neither reasonable nor right for the aforesaid evils of Adam to be transmitted to the man conceived from the Virgin.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Even if [that man] were not God but were a mere man,
still it would be necessary that he be
like the first man was created to be.

Likewise, if with the pure gaze of reason we carefully examine the wise justice of God, we recognize that it would be utterly absurd for any necessity resulting from another's sin or debt or penalty to pass down to this man by way of that seed which is not produced or inseminated by any created nature, by any creature's will, or by any power given to anyone, but which God's own will alone separates from the Virgin in order by a new power to beget a man free of sin. [And this would hold true] even if the human nature were not assumed into the person of God but were made a mere man. Now, by means of the same reasoning which shows that God ought to have created Adam only just and unburdened by any debt or detriment, a rational mind recognizes clearly that the one whom God likewise begat by His own will and power ought not to be created already subjected to any evil. For it would be totally unfitting to the omnipotent and wise goodness of God for God by His own will alone to create such a rational nature [i.e., a rational nature subjected to evil] from matter in which there is no sin. Anyone who does not understand this fact does not know what is unfitting with respect to God. Therefore, even if God were thus to create a mere man (as I said), it would be necessary that he be endowed with no less justice and happiness than was Adam when he was first created.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Its being written that man is conceived from
unclean seed and in iniquities does not oppose
our proposed argument, even though these texts
properly apply to some cases.

Now, if anyone's mind (1) does not grasp what I said about man's seed—viz., that in it there is no sin before there is a rational soul but that the seed can be called contaminated with sin and iniquity because of that future uncleanness when the seed will have developed into a completed human being—and (2) thinks that the seed is unclean in its conception, because of the fact that he reads: "Who can make him clean who is conceived from unclean seed?"¹ and "I was conceived in iniquities, and in sin did my mother conceive me"² (texts which I have cited against myself): I make no protracted effort here (because none is required of me) to get him to understand what he cannot comprehend. But I do ask him to attend to what I shall say briefly.

Assuredly, those who have made these statements [in Scripture] meant them to be understood either (1) of every man's seed or (2) only of that seed which is inseminated with the sense of pleasure that would have characterized only brute animals if man had not sinned. But if such great men meant these texts to apply to every man's seed, then they were maintaining that the seed taken from the Virgin herself was unclean—an impious belief. Hence, they were not writing these things about every man's seed. But if they were writing this about a man's seed in accordance with the second sense, then they wanted the texts to be understood only of that seed which is conceived with the aforementioned pleasure. But this sense does not at all oppose our argument, which asserts that the seed taken from the Virgin is clean, even though it is from the sinful mass.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

How the sinful mass is not sinful as a whole.

Although a man is called blind, blindness is not in any part of him except in the eye, where sight ought to be; for blindness is not in the hand or in the foot. And when a man is called deaf, deafness is nowhere except in the ear. Similarly, even though the mass of the human race is called sinful, sin is not in any part of the human race except (as I have said) in the will; and the seed is known not to have a will at the moment of human conception. Therefore, if the arguments given above are

¹Job 14:4. ²Psalms 50:7 (51:5).

pondered, then since no true or seemingly true reasoning contradicts them, we can now freely conclude that no reason, no truth, and no understanding allows that anything pertaining to the sin of the sinful mass either could have, or should have, affected the man who was conceived from the Virgin alone—even though He was assumed from the sinful mass and even were He not God.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Why John [the Baptist] and others who were likewise conceived miraculously are not originally free from sin.

But suppose that by way of objection I am referred to John the Baptist and to others who were propagated from sterile parents and from parents in whom the reproductive nature was dead even before old age. And suppose that on account of an argument similar, as it were, to mine someone thinks that because these individuals were conceived miraculously they ought to have been born without sin and the penalty for sin. Assuredly, the argument which shows that the virgin conception was free from all necessity for sin must be understood to be completely irrelevant to the case of these individuals. For it is one thing to do something new and unexpected and unprecedented within nature; and it is another thing to heal a nature enfeebled by either old age or some defect and to recall it to its proper working. Now, if Adam had not sinned, then just as he would have remained unweakened by old age and by any infirmity, so the reproductive nature which had been created in him and (as I have already said) placed in his power to use would not have been impeded from its natural course by any fall. Therefore, in the case of John and the others like him there is not something new given to Adamic nature, as there is in the case of the Son of the Virgin; [in their case] what was weakened by natural causes is known to have been restored. Therefore, since these individuals were begotten by means of the reproductive nature given to Adam, they neither can be nor ought to be at all likened—with respect to the miracle of conception, and in such way that they can be shown to be free from the bond of original sin—to Him of whom we are discoursing.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Why God became incarnate even though He was able to make from Adam as many sinless and non-divine beings as was sufficient [to complete the Heavenly City].

Perhaps someone will ask: "If, as you maintain, someone who was merely human without being also divine could have been made from Adam without any taint of sin, then why was it necessary that God be incarnated? For either God was able to redeem sinners through one such man who was without any sin, or else by a similar miracle God was able to create as many men as were necessary to complete the Heavenly City."

To this question I give the following brief response. God became a man¹ because a man who was not God would not be able to redeem other men, as I have shown in that oft-mentioned short work. Moreover, He did not create as many such men as were necessary, lest, if none of Adam's natural progeny would be saved, God would appear to have created Adam's reproductive nature in vain and to have corrected, so to speak, what He had created imperfectly. And it does not befit Supreme Wisdom to do this with regard to any nature.

A little ways back I proposed to investigate how the seed taken from the Virgin—seed in which there was shown to be no sin—could be understood to be free from the aforesaid necessities in which I supposed all other men to be conceived. I was confident that if first of all the necessity for sin and the necessity of [having] the debt of Adam and of recent ancestors would be rationally excluded from that seed, then because that man was God His seed could be freed (1) from the necessity by which human nature is unable by itself to recover the justice it has deserted and (2) from the necessity by which the "corrupted body burdens the soul,"² especially in the case of infants. Thus, I began by asking how the foregoing could be understood regarding the necessity of sin and the necessity of [having] Adam's debt, so that afterwards the answer I was seeking would be easier to ascertain with respect to the other necessities. And by the abundant grace of that man the sinlessness of whose conception we are discussing, the following result oc-

¹"... became a man": i.e., became a human being. ²Wisdom of Solomon 9:15.

curred: Not only was He recognized to be free from all sin and debt and from the aforementioned necessities, but in addition we even proved rationally that a man thus conceived—even were He not God but a mere man—ought to be endowed with no less justice and happiness than was characteristic of the state in which Adam was created. For, indeed, both of the following [suppositions] were seen to be equally unreasonable: (1) By means of such a propagation sin or the penalty for sin descends from any ancestors down to that man; and (2) God freely creates a rational nature unjust, or creates it unhappy when it has no demeriting injustice.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

God was conceived from a just virgin—not out of necessity,
as if He could not be conceived from a sinful virgin,
but rather because such a conception was fitting.

Although, then, the Son of God was most truly conceived from a most pure virgin, nevertheless this was done not of necessity, as if it were rationally impossible for a just offspring to be begotten from a sinful parent by this kind of propagation. But [it was done] because it was fitting that the conception of that man be accomplished from a most pure mother. Assuredly, it was fitting that the Virgin be beautified with a purity than which a greater cannot be conceived, except for God's. For, toward her, God the Father was so disposed to give His only Son—whom He begot as equal with Himself and whom from His own heart He loved as Himself—that the Son was naturally one and the same common Son of God the Father and of the Virgin. And she was the one whom the Son chose to make substantially His mother. And with respect to her the Holy Spirit willed, and from her He was going to accomplish, that the very one from whom He Himself proceeded would be conceived and begotten. Now, I have already spoken of how the Virgin was cleansed by faith before this conception; but there I presented a different argument concerning the topic being discussed here.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

How the argument here and the one given there
are alike, and how they differ.

As I see it, either of these two arguments is sufficient by itself for

[settling] the present question; but jointly they fully satisfy a mind that is seeking both rigor of reasoning and fittingness of action. Moreover, although the two arguments move toward the same conclusion, nevertheless they differ in the following respect: The one which I have here presented shows (with no reason opposing it) that even from the substance of a sinful virgin God by such a propagation ought to produce a just offspring (indeed, only a just offspring) since sin is nowhere except in the will; but the other argument proves that even if sin were in the entire being of the Virgin, nevertheless (regarding the purity of such a conception) her entire being was able to be purified by faith. Moreover, in the present argument all necessity of death and of any kind of corruption or travail is clearly excluded from that man, whereas in the other argument a question about these is seen to arise but is settled by sufficient reasoning, as careful examination will reveal. Therefore, from both arguments it is evident that in all the things that our Lord and Redeemer suffered, He endured everything only by His gracious will.

CHAPTER TWENTY

He who was born of the Virgin had original justice in place of original sin.

Now, regarding original sin, I think that I have adequately shown, just as I proposed to, how this sin could not in any respect be passed down from His ancestors to the man conceived from the Virgin but how, instead, He ought to have been made just and happy, as reason requires. Therefore, since from a just Father with respect to His divine nature and from a just mother with respect to His human nature He was born *just* from the time of His very “origin,” so to speak, it is not unfitting that He should be said to have original justice in place of the original injustice which all other sons of Adam have from the time of their origin.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Why He could not have had personal injustice.

But since a human nature was always in Him concomitantly with the divine nature, and since His soul was never against His will burdened or at all hindered by a corruptible body, it is superflu-

ous to argue the point that personal injustice did not touch Him. Since that soul—or, rather, since that whole man, who is Word of God and God—always existed as one person, He was never without perfect justice, wisdom, and power, all of which He always had from Himself in accordance with His person as God, even though with regard to His natures what His human nature had it received from His divine nature.

I do not deny that in addition to the argument presented here and the other one presented elsewhere there may be some other deeper rationale for how it was possible for God to assume a sinless human nature from the sinful mass, as something unleavened is taken from something leavened. If this other rationale is shown to me, I will gladly accept it; and if my accounts can be shown to be opposed to the truth—which I do not think they can be—I will abandon them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO The magnitude of original sin.

Furthermore, original sin can be neither more nor less than I said it is, because as soon as an infant becomes rational the human nature in him lacks the justice which it received in Adam and which it ought always to possess; nor does human nature's inability excuse its not having justice, as I stated above. Nevertheless, I think that original sin is not altogether as grave as I assumed earlier. Since I wanted to show that original sin does not pertain to a man conceived from a virgin, I stipulated it to be so grave that nothing more could be added to it. [I made this assumption] so as not to seem, as I said, to be minimizing the gravity of original sin for the sake of the topic I was investigating. I shall briefly disclose my present view on the matter.

Although because of Adam's sin it happened that no infant can be born without sin, which is followed by condemnation, I do not think that Adam's sin passes down to infants in such way that they ought so to be punished for it as if each one of them had committed it personally, as did Adam. For when the apostle says that “death reigned from Adam unto Moses, even over those who did not sin according to the likeness of Adam's transgression,”¹ he is

¹Romans 5:14.

clearly seen to signify that neither Adam's transgression nor anything equally great is imputed to them personally, even though [elsewhere] in his writings he calls all the sons of Adam (except for the Son of the Virgin) "sinners" and "sons of wrath."¹ For when he says "even over those who did not sin according to the likeness of Adam's transgression," he can be understood to mean: even over those who did not sin as much as Adam sinned when he transgressed. And when the apostle says "But the law entered in so that the offense might abound"²: either we shall understand that the sin in those who did not sin according to the likeness of Adam's transgression was, prior to the law, less than Adam's sin; or else, if not less, then sin abounded in them, subsequent to the law, in excess of Adam's sin—an alternative which, when I reflect upon it, I cannot understand [to be true]. In *Why God Became a [God-]man* I set forth my views on the weight of Adam's sin and on the satisfaction for that sin, as you have already read. Still, the fact remains that no one is restored to that state for which man was created and for which a reproductive nature was given to him—nor is anyone rescued from the evils into which human nature fell—except through [the making of] satisfaction for that sin by which human nature precipitated itself into these very evils.

But someone will ask: "If individuals do not have the sin of Adam, how can you maintain that no one is saved without there being satisfaction for Adam's sin? For how can a just God demand from them satisfaction for a sin which they do not have?" But God does not demand from any sinner more than he owes; indeed, since no one can pay as much as he owes, Christ by Himself made payment for all who are saved, paying even more than they owe—as I have already said in the oft-cited short work.

Moreover, in still another way we must see for what reason the sin in infants is less than the sin in Adam, even though it passes down from Adam to all infants. For "by one man," viz., by Adam, "sin entered into this world, and as a result of sin [came] death."³

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Why and how [sin] is transmitted to infants.

However, unless we understand why and how [sin] is present [in

¹Romans 5:8. Ephesians 2:3. ²Romans 5:20. ³Romans 5:12.

infants], we do not know why it is less [in them than in Adam]. Although I have discussed this point above to the extent required by my investigation, it will not be superfluous to repeat it briefly here. Assuredly, one cannot deny that infants existed in Adam when he sinned. Now, in him they existed causally or materially as in a seed; but in themselves they exist personally. For in him they were his very seed; but in themselves they are individual and distinct persons. In him they were not distinct from him; but in themselves they are distinguished from him. In him they were himself; but in themselves they are themselves. Therefore, they existed in him, but not as themselves, since they did not yet exist as themselves.

Perhaps someone will say: "The existence by virtue of which other men are said to have existed in Adam is something vacuous, and is as nothing, and ought not to be called existence." Then, let him claim to have been nothing or vacuous or unreal that existence by which Christ existed seminally in Abraham and David and His other forefathers. And [let him term nothing that existence] by which all things that come from seeds were in those seeds. And [let him say] that God created nothing when He created first in the seeds themselves all the things which are derived from seeds. And let him say to be nothing or to be something vacuous that which if it did not really exist then the things which we see to be existing would not exist. For were it not true that those things which nature produces from seeds were first of all something in those seeds, then they would not at all exist from them. But if it is utterly foolish to say these things, then the existence by virtue of which all other men were in Adam was not unreal or vacuous, but was real and genuine, and God did not create something vacuous when He created all other men to be in Adam. But as I said, in Adam they were not distinct from Adam; and thus they existed far differently from the way they exist in themselves.

But although it has been established that all other men were in Adam, nevertheless the Son of the Virgin alone was in Adam in a way vastly different from that of other men. Indeed, all others [except Him] were in Adam in such a way that they would exist from him by means of the reproductive nature, which was subject to his power and will. But only the Son of the Virgin did not exist in Adam in such way that He would be derived from Adam by

means of Adam's nature or will. For at the time Adam sinned he had already received, with respect to these others, the power to be the one from whom they would exist and the power to cause them to exist from him. But with respect to the Son of the Virgin, [Adam had received the power] to be the one from whom He would exist but [had] not [received the power to cause] Him to exist from him, because it was not in Adam's power that the Son of the Virgin be propagated from him. But neither was it in Adam's power that the Son of the Virgin be derived from some other being or be made from nothing. Hence, it was not in Adam's power that the Son of the Virgin should in any way exist. For it was neither in the power of Adam's nature nor in the power of Adam's will that the Son of the Virgin should in any way exist. Nevertheless, there was in Adam the nature from which the Son of the Virgin was to be propagated—propagated, though, by the power of God, not by the power of Adam. It is true that in the lineage of ancestors down to the Virgin Mother the will motivated and the nature beget, so that partly by the natural order and partly by the voluntary order the Virgin herself derived her own existence from Adam, just like all the others. Nevertheless, in the Virgin herself neither did the will of the creature motivate the production of an offspring nor did the nature beget an offspring, but the “Holy Spirit” and “the Power of the Most High”¹ miraculously beget a man from the Virgin Woman.

Therefore, with respect to the others, it was in Adam—i.e., it was in his power—that they would exist from him. But with respect to the Son of the Virgin, it was not in Adam's power that He in any way exist (just as it was not in the power of the clay from which the first man was created that the first man exist miraculously from it, and just as it was not in Adam's power that Eve exist from him in the manner she did). Nor is it the case that His existence was in the power of any of the ancestors in whom He existed from Adam to Mary. Nevertheless, He did exist in them, because that from which He was to be assumed existed in them (just as that from which the first man was created existed in the clay, and just as that from which Eve was created existed in Adam), although He was in them not by the will or power of the creature but sole-

¹Luke 1:35.

ly by the power of God. But the more the Son of the Virgin's having been made a God-man surpasses Adam and Eve's having been made mere human beings, the more the grace and miracle of His assumption [surpasses that of their creation]. Therefore, He was in Adam, when Adam sinned, in a vastly different way from that of these others who are procreated by the voluntary and the natural orders. Hence, in a certain sense Adam produces those whom the human will by motivating, and human nature by begetting, procreate through the power they both have received. But only God fashioned the Son of the Virgin (although He fashioned Him from Adam), because God made Him not through Adam but through Himself and, as it were, from Himself.

Therefore, what is more suitable for showing the magnitude of God's goodness and the plenitude of grace that He granted to Adam than that those whose existence was so in Adam's power that through him they would be what by nature he was, would likewise have their existence so within the scope of his freedom of choice that he would beget them as just and happy as himself? Hence, this [prerogative] was given to him. But even though he was situated in the loftiness of such grace, he freely deserted the goods which he had received to keep for himself and his offspring. For this reason his descendants lost that which their father, although able to give them by keeping, took away from them by not keeping. This seems to me to be a sufficient reason—provided we consider the matter from the viewpoint of pure justice alone and carefully bracket off our inclinations, which frequently and extensively impede the mind from understanding what is right—for why the sin and the evils of Adam pass down to infants. However, I shall say a few words about how Adam's sin seems to me to descend to infants.

As I have said, there is a sin which derives from a nature, and there is a sin which derives from a person. Thus, the sin which derives from a person can be called personal sin; and the sin which derives from a nature can be called natural sin. (It is also called original sin.) Now, just as the personal sin passes over to the nature, so the natural sin passes over to the person. For example, Adam's nature required that he eat, because his nature was created in such way as to have this need. But that he ate from the forbidden tree was the doing not of his natural will but of his per-

sonal will—i.e., of his own will. Nevertheless, that which was done by the person was not done without the nature. For the person was what was called Adam; and the nature was what was called man. Therefore, the person made the nature sinful, because when Adam sinned, the man [i.e., the nature] sinned. Indeed, it was not because he was a man that he was impelled to partake of what was forbidden; rather, he was drawn to this by his own act-of-will, which his nature did not require but which the person fancied. A converse but similar thing happens in the case of infants. Assuredly, the fact that the justice which they should have is not in them does not result from their personal willing, as it did in Adam's case, but results from a natural deprivation which their nature has received from Adam. For in Adam, outside of whom no part of [human] nature existed, [human] nature was stripped of the justice which it possessed; and it always lacks justice unless assisted [to regain it]. Accordingly, since [human] nature exists in persons and since persons do not exist without a nature, the nature makes the persons of infants sinful. Thus, in Adam the person deprived the nature of the good of justice; and the nature, having become impoverished, causes all the persons whom it procreates from itself to be sinful and unjust because of the lack of justice. In this way, the personal sin of Adam passes over to all who are naturally propagated from him; and in them it is natural, or original, sin.

But clearly there is a great difference between Adam's sin and infants' sin. For Adam sinned of his own will, but his progeny sin by the natural necessity which his own personal will has merited. Although no one thinks that equal punishment follows unequal sins, nevertheless the condemnation of personal and of original sin is alike in that no one is admitted to the Kingdom of God (for which man was made) except by means of the death of Christ, without which the debt for Adam's sin is not paid. Yet, not all individuals deserve to be tormented in Hell in equal degree. Now, after the Day of Judgment every angel and every man will be either in the Kingdom of God or in Hell, So, then, the sin of infants is less than the sin of Adam; and yet, no one is saved without the universal satisfaction through which sin, both great and small, is forgiven. However, in the aforementioned book I have already asked and answered, as God enabled me, the question why

there is no human salvation without Christ's death and how man's salvation occurs by means of His death.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The sins of ancestors after Adam are not reckoned
in the original sin of their descendants.

But I do not think that the sins of recent ancestors pertain to original sin. Indeed, had Adam not been able to transmit his own justice to those whom he was going to generate, then he would not at all have been able to transmit his own injustice to them. Accordingly, since no one subsequent to Adam was able to keep his own justice for his own descendants, I see no reason why the sins of recent ancestors ought to be imputed to the souls of their descendants. Furthermore, no one doubts that infants do not keep uprightness-of-will for the sake of uprightness itself. Therefore, all infants are equally unjust in that they do not have the justice which every human being ought to have. This utter lack of justice passes down from Adam—in whom human nature despoiled itself of this justice—to all infants. Now, although in Adam human nature retained some justice, so that it kept an upright will in some respects, nonetheless it was so deprived of the gift of being able to keep justice for itself in Adam's posterity that it is not able to propagate itself with any justice in any of them. Surely, human nature was not able to remove from itself in infants more than all justice, together with all the happiness which is given to no one who in any degree lacks the required justice.

However, it does not seem possible that the injustice of [an infant's] recent ancestors could increase his deprivation of justice—a deprivation than which none greater can descend from the sin of Adam to infants. For where there is no justice, no justice can be taken away. And where no justice can be removed, no injustice can be added. Therefore, unjust ancestors are not able to add to their own infant offspring any injustice that exceeds the aforementioned deprivation of justice. But where there is no justice, nothing prevents some justice from being bestowed. Therefore, if unjust ancestors are said to add some injustice to their infant offspring, then it would seem more likely and more possible that just ancestors could give some justice to their own infant offspring. But

if this were to happen, the infants of just ancestors would have some justice. And if so, then should they die without having been baptized, they would be condemned less severely than the infants of unjust ancestors. Or else if they were saved, then they would be elected with regard to some antecedent merit of theirs. But this is denied by the Apostle Paul where he proves by reference to Jacob and Esau that no one is saved except by a grace which is antecedent to the merits of each individual.¹ Therefore, since just ancestors do not give justice to their own infant offspring before [their offspring's] baptism, surely unjust ancestors do not add any injustice to their own infant offspring.

But someone may say:

Unjust ancestors do not add [numerically] any injustice to their own infant offspring, from whom they are not able to remove any justice. However, these ancestors do aggravate the original injustice which their infant offspring have from Adam. So also, then, just ancestors mitigate the original injustice in their infant offspring. Consequently, if the infant offspring of just ancestors are less unjust than those of unjust ancestors, the former ought to be condemned less than the latter.

Let him say this who dares to and who can prove it. But I do not dare to, since I see that a mixture of infants of just and unjust ancestors is elected to and reprobated from the grace of baptism. Still, even were someone to make the above claim, he could not prove it. Indeed, even as only someone who more resolutely desires or avoids what he ought to is thereby more just than someone else who is just, so only someone who more intensely loves or despises what he ought not to is more unjust than someone else who is unjust. Therefore, if it cannot be shown that once infants have souls the one in greater or lesser degree wills what he ought to or what he ought not to, then no one can prove that in the case of infants one infant is born more just or more unjust than another. It seems equally true, then, that just ancestors by means of their justice do not mitigate the original injustice in their infant offspring and that unjust ancestors by their injustice do not aggravate the original injustice in their infant offspring. Hence, if by their own sinfulness unjust ancestors are not able to increase, either in number or in magnitude, original sin in their infant prodigy, then it seems to me that the sins of ancestors since Adam

¹Romans 9:10-13.

are not reckoned in the original sin of their infant prodigy.

I do not deny that because of the positive merits of ancestors many and great benefits of body and of soul are imparted to their offspring. [Nor do I deny that] because of the sins of ancestors their children and grandchildren “unto the third and fourth generation,”¹ and perhaps even beyond, are scourged with various tribulations in this life and lose the goods—even goods of soul—which they might have obtained through their ancestors, had these latter been just. (It would take too long to introduce examples of such cases here.) But I do maintain that original sin is present equally in all infants who are conceived naturally—just as the sin of Adam, which is the cause of infants' being born in original sin, pertains equally to them all.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

How [the sins of ancestors] harm the souls
of their [descendants].

But if the sins of ancestors sometimes harm the souls of their descendants, then I think that this happens, rather, in the following manner: It is not that God imputes these sins to them or that on account of their ancestors He leads them into any transgressions but rather that even as God often rescues from sin the descendants of the just because of the merits of their ancestors, so He sometimes leaves in their sins the descendants of the unjust because of the demerits of their ancestors. For since no one is free from sin unless God sets him free, when God does not set him free from sin, He is said to lead him into it; and when He does not soften, He is said to harden. For it seems much more acceptable that on account of the sins of ancestors God leaves a sinful soul (to which He owes nothing except punishment) in its own sins, so that it is punished for its own sins, than that He burdens it with others' sins, so that it is tormented for their sins. Thus, then, the following statements are consistent with one another: Original sin is the same in all individuals, and “the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father,”² and “each one shall bear his own burden,”³ and each one shall receive “according as he has done” in the body, “whether it be good or evil,”⁴ and “unto the third and fourth gen-

¹Exodus 20:5. ²Ezekiel 18:20. ³Galatians 6:5. ⁴II Corinthians 5:10.

eration”¹ God visits the sins of the parents on their children (even if this occurs with respect to their souls), and whatever else we read which is seen to signify that the sins of ancestors harm the souls of their descendants. Indeed, the soul of the son dies not because of the sin of the father but because of its own sin. And when anyone is left in his own iniquity, he bears his own iniquity, not the iniquity of his father; and he bears his own burden, not another's burden. And he receives according as he has done in the body, not according as his father has done. But since on account of the sins of his ancestors he is not set free from his own iniquities, the iniquities which he bears are ascribed to the sins of his ancestors.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

How, nevertheless, everyone bears his own sin,
not the sin of his father.

Perhaps someone may argue that all who are not saved by faith in Christ bear the iniquity and burden of Adam, but may so argue with the intent of proving thereby that either infants ought likewise to bear the iniquity of their other ancestors or else they ought not to bear Adam's iniquity. But let this objector consider carefully that infants bear their own sin, not Adam's sin. For Adam's sin was one thing, and infants' sin is another thing, because these sins differ, as was stated. For the former was a cause, whereas the latter is an effect. Adam was deprived of required justice because he himself (and not because someone else) deserted it; but infants are deprived because someone else (and not because they themselves) deserted it. Therefore, Adam's sin and infants' sin are not the same thing. Moreover, when the apostle says (as I mentioned above) that “death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin according to the likeness of Adam's transgression,”² just as he signifies that the sin of infants is less than the sin of Adam, so he indicates clearly that the sin of infants is distinct from the sin of Adam.

Accordingly, when an infant is condemned on account of original sin, he is condemned not on account of Adam's sin but on account of his own. For if he did not have sin of his own, he would not be condemned. So, then, he bears his own iniquity and not Adam's, even though he is said to bear Adam's iniquity because the

¹Exodus 20:5. ²Romans 5:14.

iniquity of Adam was the cause of his own sin. However, this cause of infants' being born in sin—a cause which was in Adam—is not in the other ancestors, because human nature in them does not have the power (as I said) to propagate descendants who are just. Hence, it does not follow that sin is in infants because of the sin of their ancestors, as [it does follow that it is there] because of the sin of Adam.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

What original sin is. It is equal in all [human beings].

Therefore, I understand original sin to be nothing other than that sin which is in an infant as soon as he has a rational soul—irrespective of what may have happened to his body (e.g., the corruption of its members) before it was thus animated, or irrespective of what may happen to either his body or his soul afterwards. And on the basis of the foregoing reasons I think that in all infants who are naturally propagated original sin is equal and that all who die with only this sin are equally condemned. Indeed, whatever sin accrues to a man over and above original sin is personal sin. And just as the person is born sinful because of the nature, so the nature is made more sinful because of the person, since when any person sins, his human nature (*homo*) sins.

I can understand this sin (which I am calling original sin) to be nothing else in these infants except the above-mentioned deprivation of required justice which was caused by Adam's disobedience and through which all men are sons of wrath.¹ For the voluntary desertion of justice which the nature caused in Adam accuses the nature, and the inability to recover justice does not excuse the persons (as I have already said). This inability is also accompanied by the deprivation of happiness, so that even as men are without any justice, so they are without any happiness. Because of these two deprivations men in the exile of this life are exposed to, and subject to, sins and miseries which constantly befall them everywhere, attacking them on all sides—except insofar as they are protected by divine providence.

¹Ephesians 2:3.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT
Against those who think that infants
ought not to be condemned.

There are those whose mind resists accepting [the view] that infants dying unbaptized ought to be condemned solely on account of the injustice of which I have spoken. Their reasons are (1) that no man judges infants to be blameworthy as the result of another person's sin, (2) that in such a state infants are not yet just and discerning, and (3) that God (so they think) ought not to judge innocent infants more severely than men judge them. These people must be told that God ought to act toward infants in one way and man [ought to act toward them] in another way. For man ought not to demand from a nature what he has not bestowed and what is not owed to him. Nor does one man justly reproach another man for being born with a fault with which he himself is born and from which he himself is healed only by someone else. But God does rightly demand from a nature what He bestowed on it and what is rightly owed to Him.

But if we consider the matter, even this judgment by which infants are condemned is not much different from the judgment of men. For take the case of a man and his wife who not by their own merit but by favor alone (*gratia sola*) have been elevated to some great dignity and estate, and who together commit an unpardonably serious crime, and who on account of this crime are justly cast down and reduced to servitude. Who will say that the children whom they beget after their condemnation ought not to be subject to the same servitude but ought rather to be gratuitously restored to the goods which their parents rightfully lost? Such is the case with our first parents and with the descendants whom they—justly sentenced because of their own fault to [be cast down] from happiness into misery—beget into their own exile. Therefore, there ought to be like judgment for like cases; but in the case of our first parents the more reprehensible their crime can be shown to be, the more severely [it ought to be judged].

In last analysis, every man is either saved or condemned. But everyone who is saved is admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven; and everyone who is condemned is excluded therefrom. Now, assuredly, he who is admitted is elevated to the likeness of those an-

gels in whom there never was and never will be any sin—something which cannot happen as long as there is any taint of sin in him. Thus, a man with any sin at all—even a small sin—cannot be saved. Hence, if what I have termed original sin is a sin, then it is necessary that every man who is born with it and does not have it forgiven is condemned.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE
How the inability to have justice excuses
infants after their baptism.

I have said that the inability to have justice does not excuse the injustice of infants. Perhaps, then, someone will ask:

If there is sin, i.e., injustice, in an infant before his baptism, and if (as you say) the inability to have justice is no excuse, and if in baptism only sin which was prior thereto is remitted, then since after baptism an infant, for as long as he is an infant, lacks justice and cannot even understand the justice which he should keep (if indeed justice is uprightnes-of-will kept for its own sake), why is he not also unjust after having been baptized? Thus, if a baptized infant dies in infancy (though not immediately after baptism) before he knows how to repent, then since he does not have the required justice, and since his inability does not excuse him, he passes from this life unjust (even as he would have done before his baptism), and he is not admitted into the Kingdom of God, into which no one who is unjust is received. But the Catholic Church does not hold to this view. Now, if in baptism a subsequent sin within infancy is remitted to infants, then why [are] not also those sins which are committed at a later stage of development [forgiven at the time of baptism]?

To this question I give the following answer. In baptism the sins which were present before baptism are completely blotted out. Accordingly, the original inability to have justice is not reckoned as sin in the case of those who have already been baptized—as [it is reckoned to them] prior [to their baptism]. Hence, just as prior to their baptism this inability could not excuse the absence of justice, since the inability was culpable, so after their baptism the inability completely excuses the absence of justice, because although the inability remains it is without any culpability. Thus it happens that the justice which before their baptism was required of infants, without any excuse on their part, is after their baptism not demanded of them as their requirement. Therefore, as long as it is only because of the original inability that they do not have justice, they

are not unjust, since there is no absence in them of *required* justice. For what is both impossible and free of all culpability is not required. Therefore, if infants die in such a condition, then because they are not unjust they are not condemned; rather, by the justice of Christ, who gave Himself for them, and by the justice of faith on the part of the Church, their mother, which believes on their behalf, they are saved, [being reckoned] as just.

In accordance with the capacity of my understanding I have briefly made these statements about original sin—not so much by way of asserting them as by way of provisionally inferring them—until God shall somehow reveal to me something better. But if someone has a different view, I do not reject anyone's opinion provided it can be proved to be true.