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JEROME ON SINLESSNESS: A *VIA MEDIA* BETWEEN AUGUSTINE AND PELAGIUS

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This article will explore Jerome's understanding of sinlessness and will argue that he saw himself just as opposed to Augustine as to Pelagius. I begin by exposing Jerome's context in the Pelagian Controversy. I then expose his understanding of sinlessness. Next, I turn to his arguments in *Ep.* 133 and the first two books of his *Dialogi contra Pelagianos*. In book three of that text, we notice a change in his arguments which indicates that Jerome is no longer arguing only against Pelagius; he now disagrees with Augustine as well. I then examine a variety of issues besides sinlessness in the third book of the *Dialogi* that reveal that Jerome disagreed with Augustine on multiple topics, showing that his opposition to Augustine's position on sinlessness was not exceptional. Finally I turn to statements by Jerome that seem to indicate a positive appreciation for the Bishop of Hippo, but which on closer inspection are seen to contain latent criticisms.

INTRODUCTION

Despite cries from Evans, Zednik, Clark, Rackett and Jeanjean that scholars have largely ignored his role in the Pelagian Controversy,¹ Jerome's importance continues to be overshadowed by Augustine.² Because his library was destroyed in 416 by an unidentifiable group of people,³ and he would die shortly after the triple condemnation of Pelagius in 418 by Pope Zosimus, the Council of Carthage, and Emperor Honorius, Jerome was not able to match Augustine's literary output, which may account for his relatively muted influence, despite the fact that he probably detected Pelagius' flaws before Augustine did.⁴ Augustine's larger profile in this debate is likely attributable to his tireless efforts to shape it on his own terms in order to force Pelagius to conform to his understanding of orthodoxy. Furthermore, his international reputation while alive, and Prosper of Aquitaine's efforts to establish him as the standard bearer of orthodoxy after he died, contributed to Augustine's larger reputation.⁵

Jerome's contribution to this debate is important, but for a reason different than Augustine's. As Rackett has pointed out, he was not primarily concerned with the Pelagian understanding of grace – as was Augustine – but with the question of sinlessness.⁶ A thorough investigation of Jerome's understanding of sinlessness must therefore be made. This article will attempt just that. It first will outline Jerome's context; next it will discuss his definition of sinlessness. It will then turn to his initial argument against sinlessness in his *Epistula* 133: *Ad Ctesiphontem* and the first two books of his *Dialogi contra Pelagianos*. As we turn to Book III, his position on sinlessness shifts in a subtle, yet important, way as a reaction against Augustine's. This shift, I argue, is a result of having read several works by Augustine that were delivered to him by the Spanish priest Orosius.⁷ Benoît Jeanjean's claim that *Ep.* 133 and the *Dialogi* 'constituent un

*ensemble cohérent de textes qui présentent un objectif commun – réfuter la thèse pélagienne de l'impeccantia*⁸ is thus not entirely accurate. To support my claim that Augustine was the catalyst which forced Jerome to rethink his critique of sinlessness, we must look at a variety of other issues in Book III, to determine how much of Augustine's influence may be detected. By examining Jerome's discussions of the relationship between grace and free will, his understanding of foreknowledge as opposed to predestination, his hesitancy to claim boldly an Augustinian understanding of original sin, and his lack of interest in the connection between original sin and the origin of souls, it becomes apparent that he placed himself as a *via media* between Pelagius and Augustine. However, Jerome did learn from Augustine that infant baptism was a contentious issue between Augustine and Pelagius. Next, we will take a closer look at the personal statements Jerome makes about Augustine. At first blush it seems as if he praises Augustine for his arguments against Pelagius; on a closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that Jerome was not particularly impressed with Augustine's thought. While he respected Augustine's character, his compliments about Augustine's theology are backhanded.

II. CONTEXT

Ferguson has claimed that Jerome was in Bethlehem waiting for a fight. 'Rufinus was dead', he says, 'and the old lion was looking for some new adversary on whom to sharpen his claws when Pelagius came on the scene. After a long life of disputation, controversy was his meat and drink; to abandon it would mean spiritual starvation'.⁹ The contrary was true: by the time Pelagius fled Rome after 410, and knowledge of his theology began to spread throughout the Mediterranean world, Jerome was nearing the end of his life. He felt pestered by this upstart young man and did not want to be pulled into yet another contest. At the beginning of his *Dialogi*, he tells us that, having written his short *Ep.* 133, 'I received frequent expostulations from the brethren, who wanted to know why I any longer delayed the promised work in which I undertook to answer all the subtleties of the preachers of Impassibility'.¹⁰ Several years later after the Synod at Diospolis (as with the one held in Jerusalem, he did not attend) and after having received two letters from Augustine,¹¹ Jerome was content to bite his tongue; he wrote to Augustine saying that 'a most difficult time has come upon us when it is better for me to be silent than to speak'.¹² Furthermore, his writings against Pelagius do not demonstrate the hallmark Hieronymian invective of his earlier works. In 416, just a few years after his attention was piqued by Pelagius, Jerome's monastery was burned, which surely sucked any motivation out of him.¹³ Jerome was tired and wanted to be left alone.

Pelagius arrived in Jerusalem and picked a fight with him. He had fled Africa, leaving Caelestius behind, and had become associated with John of Jerusalem.¹⁴ While there, Jerome tells us, he began reviving his old accusations against him. Like Rufinus before him, he had accused Jerome of borrowing from Origen in his *Commentarii in epistolam ad Ephesios*.¹⁵ He also rehashed the critique that Jerome's distaste for marriage in his *Adversus Iovinianum* was too extreme.¹⁶ It would have been counterproductive for Jerome to raise the issue of Origen's orthodoxy once again.¹⁷ He had nothing to gain and everything to lose. He would be forced to fight a new battle in a war that, as he saw it, had ended long before.

After Cassian, Jerome was one of the most important ascetic writers for the west in the early Church.¹⁸ Contrary to Clark who claims that he viewed this debate as a 'continuation of both the ascetic and the Origenist controversies',¹⁹ Jerome did not see this debate through an ascetic lens, though the Origenist flavor is undoubtedly present. Even in his *Ep.* 130 – which was one of his most important discourses on the consecrated life and where one would expect a connection

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between asceticism and Pelagius to be made – his warning to Demetrias was restricted to the dangers of Origenism (such as the preexistence of souls) in new form, but did not accuse Pelagius of rejecting moral hierarchy, which was at the center of his ascetic concerns.²⁰ Perhaps he did not detect any ascetic shading in Pelagius' writings, despite the fact that the bishops at the Synod of Diospolis had done so and addressed Pelagius as a monk (*monachus*) several times.²¹ Perhaps he had known this, but did not see implications for the ascetic life that Pelagius' arguments inevitably harbored. Perhaps he felt that Pelagius was more vulnerable on the charge of distorting the Gospel by introducing the corrupting influence of philosophy, and chose to remain focused on that issue. Regardless of the reasons why, his ascetic preoccupations are curiously absent.

Before we analyze Jerome's writings, we should outline his contribution to the debate.²² In a letter written around 393/4, he mentions a *monachus* who was preaching publically against his arguments on marriage in his *Contra Iovinianum*, and whom he describes as an ignorant rube.²³ Much speculation has been made about this shadowy figure. De Plinval has argued (with Myres, Evans, Kelly, and Rousseau supporting him) that it was Pelagius.²⁴ Ferguson has claimed that De Plinval's analysis is 'plausible', Rees has said that it is 'probable', and Cain has left it open as a possibility.²⁵ Hunter has refused to come down on one side or the other.²⁶ While it is tempting to make such a hypothesis, Duval has convincingly argued that this was an incorrect attribution on De Plinval's part. Jerome's writings, taken in collaboration with Augustine's writings, prove that he was unaware of Pelagius at that time,²⁷ and did not become aware of him until after Pelagius left Rome in 410.

Scholarly consensus states that the first (anonymous) reference to Pelagius by Jerome was in the Prologue of his sixth book of his *Commentarii in Ezechielem*. Written around 412, he made a connection between Pelagius, to whom he refers as a 'new hydra', and Pelagius' predecessor Rufinus, whom he calls a 'serpent'.²⁸

Written approximately two years later, his famous *Epistula 130: Ad Demetriadem* offered another nameless allusion. He had written to this young woman, as both Pelagius and Augustine would do, who was dedicating her life to virginity. Towards the end of this short letter, he established a connection between Pelagius and Origen, claiming that 'the poisonous germs of this heresy [Origenism] still live and sprout in the minds of some to this day'.²⁹ He warned Demetrias to avoid such venom.

The *Ep. 133: Ad Ctesiphontem* was his third text and was written around the same time as *Ep. 130*. It was written to a man about whom we know very little, but he may have been a patron of Pelagius, as it seems that Pelagius was visiting his estate (*illustris domus*) while in Palestine. It is in this short, yet concentrated, letter that Jerome began to develop his arguments. All of the themes that would appear in the first two books of the *Dialogi Contra Pelagianos*, which were the fulfillment of the promise he made to expand his criticisms, may be found in this letter.³⁰

The first four of the six Prologues in the *Praefatio in libro Hieremiae prophetae* anonymously referenced Pelagius, and were begun at the end of 414 or even at the beginning of 415. He defended himself against the accusation of Origenism, accused Pelagius of attempting to be equal with God, claimed that he was a surrogate for the devil, accused him of being a follower of previous Christian heretics, and made the accusation that he taught secret knowledge.³¹ While this commentary contained *ad hominem* attacks on Pelagius, it was at heart, as Rousseau has recently demonstrated, centrally concerned with Christian repentance. It contains his reflections on the Christian *civitas*.³²

He finally made a full onslaught in his *Dialogi Contra Pelagianos*, which was written sometime in the second half the year 415. It is a Socratic dialogue between two fictional characters: Atticus (Jerome's voice) and Critobulus (Pelagius' voice). This text, and his *Ep. 133*,

will be the focus of our investigation because they contain Jerome's substantive arguments, as opposed to the primarily personal attacks found in his first writings.

III. DEFINITION OF SINLESSNESS

Jerome offers a definition of sinlessness that he sees operating in Pelagius' works, which, he believes, is rooted in Stoicism.³³ According to the Stoics, he says, every individual experiences passions (πάθη, *perturbatio*) that must be removed through 'meditation (*meditatio*) on virtue and constant practice (*exercitatio*) of it'.³⁴ If one were ever to achieve this goal, he sees such a person becoming 'either a stone or a God'.³⁵ One may be tempted to see a connection between the Stoic *meditatio*, as described by Jerome here, with Cassian's θεωρία, but we should not see them as synonymous. Jerome is describing a process where the individual brings one, or more than one, virtue to the front of the mind and ponders it, then puts it into action. Such a goal runs counter to Cassian's central concern for two reasons. First, he does not want the ascetic to ponder any idea; he wants all λογισμοί to be removed from the mind, including those about virtues. Second, Jerome's description of constant *exercitatio* of virtue hints at Cassian's πρακτική, which he – like Evagrius – views as the stage prior to θεωρητική.

Jerome then connects this supposed Stoic idea with Pelagius' belief in the possibility of sinlessness. He says:

let those blush then for their leaders and companions who say that a man may be 'without sin' (*sine peccato*) if he will, or, as the Greeks term it ἀναμάρτητος, 'sinless'. As such a statement sounds intolerable to the Eastern churches, they profess indeed only to say that a man may be 'without sin' (*sine peccato*) and do not presume to allege that he may be 'sinless' (ἀναμάρτητος) as well. As if, forsooth, 'sinless' (*sine peccato*) and 'without sin' (ἀναμάρτητος) had different meanings; whereas the only difference between them is the Latin requires two words to express what Greek gives in one. If you adopt 'without sin' (*absque peccato*) and reject 'sinless', (ἀναμάρτητος) then condemn the preachers of sinlessness.³⁶

Elsewhere, he says that ἀναμάρτητος is a synonym for ἀπάθεια, and in a linguistic sleight of hand he connects ἀπάθεια to ἀναμάρτητος then to *sine peccato*.³⁷ By doing so, he associates sinlessness with a pagan philosophical origin.³⁸ The term ἀπάθεια had a turbulent history in the Church because it was a philosophical term that was appropriated, adapted, and used by theologians such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen.³⁹

Jerome also heavily criticized Evagrius (from whom, according to him, Pelagius received this understanding of sinlessness) for using the term, although scholars today disagree if he understood what Evagrius meant by ἀπάθεια.⁴⁰ Driver, for example, claims that his 'description of *apatheia* is little more than a caricature, and his supposed reliance on the ancient philosophers shows that Jerome had little understanding of their views'.⁴¹ Casiday, on the other hand, argues that this 'is actually far more penetrating than it might seem at first. . . . Jerome's anxieties are not as far-fetched as some have suggested, though they may well not have been completely justified by the circumstances'.⁴² I would suggest that, although the relationship between Pelagius and the Stoics has yet to be explored by scholars, Driver rightly rejected his argument of the equivalence of *sine peccato* and ἀπάθεια. Furthermore, I would suggest that Jerome did have a clear understanding of the Stoic definition of ἀπάθεια, but he did not know the writings of Evagrius well enough to realize how Evagrius had adapted the term for Christian usage by making it a means towards the end of a prayerful connection to God.

IV. AD CTESIPHONTEM AND BOOKS I AND II OF *DIALOGI CONTRA PELAGIANOS*

Jerome makes many of the same arguments in Books I and II of the *Dialogi* that were already mentioned in his *Ep.* 133. Unlike Augustine, who minimized the importance of sinlessness and placed grace at the center of the debate, Jerome met his opponents on their own terms.⁴³ He begins both texts with the exact same criticism of Pelagius: the theory of sinlessness blasphemously creates equality between humanity and God. This hubris, he says, summarizes 'into a few words the poisonous doctrines of all the heretics'.⁴⁴ Only Christ, although fully human, was sinless.⁴⁵ Christ, of course, received his humanity from Mary, but we do not find in Jerome mention about the *status* of Mary; he never ponders if Mary sinned and the Christological implications of such a statement. He held the *Theotokos* in the highest regard and famously defended her perpetual virginity against Helvidius, but, strangely, even after he read Augustine's sections about Mary from *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* and *De natura et gratia*, he never felt compelled to address this question. Jerome, furthermore, held that the idea of a sinless individual recklessly establishes that person as superior to the Apostles. How could Pelagius make such a clearly erroneous statement, he wonders? Even the Apostles, who were more virtuous than all of the rest of humanity, were not perfect.⁴⁶ Pelagius' argument inevitably suggests that one may shine brighter than the men chosen by Christ to be his followers.

Critobulus, in Book I, argues that the ability to be sinless is not tantamount to placing oneself equal to God.⁴⁷ One may not be perfect as God, he argues, but one may be a perfect human being. Atticus admits that there are degrees of righteousness among people, but he criticizes Critobulus' argument as nonsense. He says that one may have a gift that others do not possess, but no one has *all* gifts. Alluding to *1 Corinthians* (12:29), Atticus asks 'are all Apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts'.⁴⁸ It is impossible for anyone to be all things to everyone or perfect in all things. 'All this goes to prove', he says, 'that not only in comparison with Divine majesty are men far from perfection, but also when compared with angels, and other men who have climbed the heights of virtue. You may be superior to someone whom you have shown to be imperfect, and yet be outstripped by another; and consequently may not have true perfection, which, if it be perfect, is absolute'.⁴⁹ Atticus agrees with Critobulus that one may not be perfect compared to God, but he also argues that one may not even be perfect compared to the rest of creation.

Although one may be superior to some and inferior to others, Atticus does allow that one may be perfect in one or two virtues – but no one may be perfect in all virtues.⁵⁰ Very few individuals, however, may be perfect in several of the virtues. He does not allow for just any sinner to be so, but the list of examples that he offers suggests that Jerome sees only the elite to have such gifts. Atticus says that

there will not be merely wisdom in Solomon, sweetness in David, zeal in Elias and [Phinehas], faith in Abraham, perfect love in Peter, to whom it was said, 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou me'? zeal for preaching in the chosen vessel, and two or three virtues each in others, but God will be wholly in all, and the company of the saints will rejoice in the whole band of virtues, and God will be all in all.⁵¹

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

Cassian disagrees. He believes that it is possible that a holy individual, such as Paul, may possess all virtues – such as chastity, abstinence, prudence, hospitality, sobriety, temperance, mercy and justice. In fact, the monk must strive for all of the virtues, not simply one or two,

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because, taken together, they construct a coherent organization.⁵² But, even if the virtues are obtained, one may not be considered sinless because one may not sustain *θεωρία*.⁵³ One's bodily needs always force the individual to turn his or her thoughts away from God towards the created world. Therefore, while Jerome sees that a *sanctus* may have one or two virtues at best, Cassian had no problem admitting that a variety of virtues may be pursued and acquired.

V. A SHIFT BETWEEN BOOKS II AND III OF THE *DIALOGI CONTRA PELAGIANOS*

In 415, Paulus Orosius, a young priest born probably between 380–90, left Spain and arrived on Augustine's doorstep.⁵⁴ Augustine tells us that Orosius was passionate about Scripture and that he had convinced him to continue his journey to Palestine to study under Jerome.⁵⁵ Upon his arrival, Orosius gave Jerome two letters from Augustine (166,7) and, most likely, provided his *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et De baptismo parvulorum*, *De spiritu et littera*, and *De natura et gratia*.⁵⁶ He was called to a council in Jerusalem to discuss the teachings of Pelagius and to give testimony about the concerns of the North Africans.⁵⁷ Pelagius was declared to be orthodox and, later that year, Orosius himself was charged with blasphemy.⁵⁸ He quickly fled Palestine.

Many scholars have noted the importance of Orosius' gifts to Jerome. Kelly, Clark, and Jeanjean have argued that, through his reading of Augustine, Jerome slavishly adopted Augustine's teachings on original sin and infant baptism, becoming nothing more than a crypto-Augustinian.⁵⁹ Others, like McWilliam and Lössl, have argued that while he appreciated Augustine's texts, he could not align himself with Augustine completely.⁶⁰ Ferguson claimed that Jerome preferred to be a 'synergist' between Augustine and Pelagius.⁶¹ No scholar, however, has offered a systematic analysis of the shift in Jerome's thinking because of Augustine's work, which I would suggest he only read between writing Books II and III of his *Dialogi*.

In Book III, he curiously departs from his previous statements that one may not be sinless and qualifies his remarks by stating that, in fact, one may be sinless due to the effort of the individual. Atticus says that 'we, too, say that a man can avoid sinning, if he chooses, according to his local and temporal circumstances and physical weakness, so long as his mind is set upon righteousness and the string is well stretched upon the lyre. But if a man grow[s] a little remiss it is with him as with the boatman pulling against the stream, who finds that, if he slackens but for a moment, the craft glides back and he is carried by the flowing waters whither he would not'.⁶² Jerome allows for the efficacy of the free will to avoid the traps of sin according to the individual's personal strength and the surrounding temptations. He does not allow, however, this sinlessness to remain a permanent state because no matter how strong the will or how few the temptations, one may not avoid sin for the entirety of one's life. Atticus says that

this is what I told you at the beginning – that it rests with ourselves either to sin or not to sin, and to put the hand either to good or evil; and thus free will is preserved, but according to the circumstances, time, and state of human frailty; we maintain, however, that perpetual freedom from sin is reserved for God only, and for Him Who being the Word was made flesh without incurring the defects and the sins of the flesh. And, because I am able to avoid sin for a short time, you cannot logically infer that I am able to do so continually. Can I fast, watch, walk, sing, sit, sleep perpetually?⁶³

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

sinless state is impossible, now claim that it is possible, though only for a short time? This change at the end of Book III, I argue, stems from a rejection of Augustine's position on sinlessness. Jerome read in Augustine's work a theology that he considered to be too pessimistic about the human condition. He felt the need to offer a theological position that attributed more agency to the individual in order to counteract the limitations that Augustine places on the will because of original sin. While it may go too far to call him an optimist, Graves has already correctly claimed that the *Dialogi* are, by Jerome's standards, 'relatively measured'.⁶⁴ This temperate position was a result of his rejection of Augustine on one extreme and, of course, Pelagius on the other.

What is even more noteworthy than Jerome's revised position on sinlessness is what he ignored in Augustine. Rackett has argued that he was heavily influenced by Augustine, but we will see that the opposite is actually the case.⁶⁵ Augustine made a distinction between the hypothetical possibility of a sinless life (which is possible) and an historical example of sinlessness (which cannot be given).⁶⁶ In Book III of his *Dialogi*, Jerome did not even bother to address this issue, despite the fact that in Book I Atticus had excoriated Critobulus for the exact same position.⁶⁷ There, he felt that such a distinction was absurd. If he were simply Augustine's attack dog, in Book III he would have felt compelled to mitigate his criticism from Book I. Jerome's refusal to do so shows that he held firm to his criticism of Pelagius, and, by extension, now of Augustine.

Other evidence supports the claim that Jerome rejected Augustine's thought. This evidence will demonstrate that the shift from Books II and III regarding sinlessness was not simply a coincidence, but part of a pattern of thinking that opposed Augustine's ideas. Just as he ignored much of what he read in Augustine's text regarding sinlessness, he also ignored his thinking on the relationship between grace and free will. In his *Ep.* 133 and Books I and II of his *Dialogi*, he offers an understanding of this relationship that would have made Augustine nervous. While he rejects Pelagius' understanding of grace, as Augustine had done, he saw the free will as possessing more agency than did Augustine.⁶⁸ Jerome understood the necessity of God's aid for the will, but he also believed that the will must search (*petere*) for that assistance.⁶⁹ Free will and grace work in a symbiotic relationship with each other.⁷⁰ For example, he says that 'to will and to run is ours, but the carrying into effect [of] our willing and running pertains to the mercy of God, and is so effected that on the one hand in willing and running free will is preserved; and on the other, in consummating our willing and running, everything is left to the power of God'.⁷¹ After having read the texts that Orosius had brought from Hippo that show Augustine's thoughts about the impotence of the will to do good without grace, he stands firm in his understanding of the efficacy of the free will.⁷² He never feels the need to alter his position so that it is in concert with Augustine.⁷³

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

does not make use of His foreknowledge to condemn a man though He knows that he [any individual] will hereafter displease Him; but such is His goodness and unspeakable mercy that He chooses a man who, He perceives, will meanwhile be good, and who, He knows, will turn out badly, thus giving him the opportunity of being converted and of repenting.⁷⁴

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

mention predestination in these texts as much as he will towards the end of his life,⁷⁵ and does not yet articulate his own position with precision, predestination does arise three times in the texts Jerome had read. Augustine believes that God has foreknowledge of the deeds of every individual. But, he goes farther than Jerome because he also believes predestination to be taught by the Church. He says that 'they [human beings] were, after all, predestined either to be damned on account of their sinful pride or to face judgment and correction for their pride, if they are children of mercy'.⁷⁶ He will later articulate the necessity of predestination as the only theologically consistent position with salvation by grace.⁷⁷

Towards the end of Book III – just before his explicit mention of Augustine – Jerome draws a connection between the sinfulness of humanity and our first parents. 'But all men', he says 'are held liable either on account of their ancient forefather Adam, or on their own account. He that is an infant is released in baptism from the chain (*vinculum*) which bound his father. He who is old enough to have discernment is set free from the chain of his own or another's sin by the blood of Christ'.⁷⁸ Several scholars have found a latent Augustinianism in this quote; Kelly, for example, went so far as to say that this passage shows that Augustine 'had converted him to the strict doctrine of original sin'.⁷⁹ Augustine himself even suggests that Jerome believes original sin to be true.⁸⁰ While it would be foolish to deny Augustine's fingerprints here, I would suggest that scholars have overstated Augustine's influence and, therefore, have made Jerome out to be Augustine's theological puppet. It should be noted that Jerome never used the Augustinian terms *massa*, or *peccatum originale*.⁸¹ He could have used Augustine's shorthand to describe the state of humanity after the exile of Adam and Eve from the garden, but he used his own vocabulary, *vinculum*.⁸² While it may be tempting to read *vinculum* as a theological equivalent to *peccatum originale*, it is much more likely that he could not stomach Augustine's 'strict' doctrine of original sin and consciously resisted it by ignoring Augustine's language.

At the very end of the text, Jerome gives us another clue that he does not embrace fully original sin and places himself between Augustine and Pelagius. He says that 'infants also should be baptized for the remission of sins after the likeness of the transgression of Adam (*in similitudinem praevaricationis Adam*)'.⁸³ The term *in similitudinem*, I believe, is used as a third option for the relationship between the sin of Adam and the sin of his descendants. Augustine did not believe that the relationship between the two was *similitudo*. Rather, he insisted that sin was passed from Adam to the rest of humanity by way of propagation (*propagatio*). This was a direct response to Pelagius' belief that humanity sins out of imitation (*imitatio*).⁸⁴ Jerome's phrase, then, shows that he certainly rejected Pelagius' *imitatio*, but could not embrace Augustine's *propagatio*.

A related issue to original sin that was important for Augustine, but entirely ignored by Jerome in Book III, was the question of the origin of souls.⁸⁵ Augustine had written to Jerome and asked him to explain how individual souls are infected by original sin if they are created individually for each person, as opposed to the Origenist theory of the preexistence of souls.⁸⁶ This issue was not a speculative exercise for Augustine; he understood that this connection was foundational for his argument of original sin against Pelagius.⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that Jerome did not include a discussion about this relationship in Book III, despite the fact that he already had made a connection between Pelagius and Origen's theory of the preexistence of souls.⁸⁸ Clark offered the explanation that Jerome simply could not offer an answer to Augustine's inquiry:

I suspect that Jerome did not *know* the answer to Augustine's question; from his writings, we would gather that he had not even considered the issue problematic. It is highly significant that Augustine here presses Jerome hard on the notion of the souls' origin: Augustine has sensed that this question *must* be answered by anyone seeking to uphold creationism and original sin

at the same time. Since Jerome did both, Augustine apparently – and incorrectly – assumed that he had considered the links between the two theories. Jerome, I think, had not. So Augustine was thrown back onto his own resources.⁸⁹

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

We should not disregard entirely Augustine's influence on Jerome. Prior to reading Augustine, he did not know that the theology supporting infant baptism was in question.⁹⁰ At the end of Book III, he had learned his interlocutors were claiming that babies who were born of baptized parents do not need to be baptized.⁹¹ Jerome, like Augustine, defended the Church's practice of baptizing babies, but he did not come to the conclusion of the necessity of infant baptism from Augustine, as he had written about it over a decade earlier. Laeta, the daughter-in-law of Paula, wrote to Jerome asking him for a '*programme d'éducation*' for her daughter, Paula.⁹² Still bitter about his exile from Rome by the 'senate of Pharisees',⁹³ he instructed Laeta to send Paula from Rome to Bethlehem for proper formation to become a consecrated virgin.⁹⁴ In this letter, we see that he had already insisted on the necessity of baptism for infants.⁹⁵ Augustine's influence, then, did not change his thinking about baptism, but it did bring to his attention an element of this debate about which he had previously been ignorant.⁹⁶

If he rejected Augustine's theology, why did he praise him at the end of Book III? 'That holy man (*vir sanctus*) and eloquent bishop (*eloquens episcopus*) Augustine', he said, 'not long ago wrote to Marcellinus two treatises on infant baptism'. He also would say that 'we must either say the same as he [Augustine] does, and that would be superfluous; or, if we wished to say something fresh, we should find our best points anticipated by that splendid genius (*ingenium*)'.⁹⁷ Shortly after writing Book III, he wrote a letter to Augustine stating that 'even in the dialogue that I recently published, I was mindful (*recordor*), as was proper, of Your Beatitude'.⁹⁸ Because of these comments, scholars have argued that he made a volte-face from his previous contempt for Augustine. Ferguson, for example, said that 'after an initial misunderstanding, [Jerome] formed a liaison with Augustine founded on a large and genuine mutual respect'.⁹⁹

There are several hints here, however, that point to the idea that he was only half-heartedly praising Augustine. First, although he called Augustine a *vir sanctus*, this is only a comment about his character, not his theology. Second, he called Augustine an *eloquens episcopus*, which seems to praise Augustine but should be not read as laudatory. Goodrich has shown how, in antiquity, the accusation of eloquence was actually an insult. 'The eloquent', Goodrich says, 'with their rhetorical tricks, could make falsehoods seem plausible, but the writer with truth to offer could rely on an unadorned simplicity'.¹⁰⁰ Jerome's backhanded compliment, then, suggests that Augustine was a master of rhetoric, but his theology was lacking.¹⁰¹ Third, he used the word *ingenium* to describe Augustine's thought, which was often an insult in antiquity describing that one must rely on one's own intellect rather than experience.¹⁰² Fourth, his use of the word *recordor* implies that Augustine's writings had come to mind while he was writing, but that he did not draw on Augustine as a source. Jerome, it must be noted, is known for previously having given backhanded compliments. Neil Adkin has demonstrated that, years earlier, his choice of three verbs (*exquirere, ordinare, exprimere*) in his *Ep. 22* was a latent charge that Ambrose's recent text on virginity was plagiarized.¹⁰³ A precedent has been set by Jerome of seeming to offer compliments, but, in reality, he was cryptically disparaging his interlocutor.

VI. CONCLUSION

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

His thoughts on Augustine must have been much more complicated. Years earlier, in 404, he had recognized that Augustine was a bishop *'notissimus'* and by this point, over ten years later, Jerome undoubtedly knew that Augustine's reputation had grown even more.¹⁰⁴ He must have known that to make any overt criticisms of Augustine would only cause himself more drama and conflict, something he did not want at the end of his life. This certainly was the cause of his attempt to mask his criticisms of Augustine, an attempt that, until now, has been successful. He, also, was aware that, despite his criticisms of Augustine, Augustine had expressed himself as an admirer – although at times critical – of Jerome's work, something Pelagius had never done.¹⁰⁵ Such affection must have muddied his attitude when writing Book III. It is only later, at the end of his life that he offers, what seems to be a genuine expression of affection for Augustine, forgetting his criticisms of him from only a few years earlier.¹⁰⁶

We also saw in Book III that Jerome allows that one may be sinless for a short time, something he had not done earlier. His views on such issues as the relationship between grace and free will, foreknowledge, original sin, the origin of souls, and infant baptism clearly indicate that Augustine's writings against Pelagius did not resonate with Jerome. We then turned to his statements about Augustine and saw that his praise was directed only at Augustine's character and did not extend to his thought.

Notes

1 Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), p. 4; M. Zednik, 'In Search of Pelagius: A Reappraisal of his Controversy with Augustine' (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1975), p. 11; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 221; M. Rackett, 'What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and his Followers', *Augustinian Studies* 33 (2002), p. 228; B. Jeanjean, 'Le *Dialogus Attici et Critobuli* de Jérôme et la prédication Pélagienne en Palestine entre 411 et 415'. In *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings, and Legacy*, (Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p. 60.

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

3 J. Lössl, 'Who Attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416 A.D.?', *Augustinianum* 44, no. 1 (2004), p. 110.

4 Y.M. Duval, 'Pélagie en son temps: données chronologiques nouvelles pour une présentation nouvelle' in M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica* (Leuven: Peeters 2001), p. 112.

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

6 Rackett, 'What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and his Followers', pp. 228–32.

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9 John Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons LTD, 1956), p. 77.

10 Jerome, *Dial. Pro* (1). All translations for Jerome come from the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.

11 Augustine, *Ep.* 166 (7). All translations for Augustine come from *The Works of Saint Augustine*.

12 Jerome, *Ep.* 134 (1). I am using Teske's translation from the Augustinian corpus (*Ep.* 172).

13 *Ep.* 136 (7); Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 66; Ferdinand Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I, (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1922), pp. 327–32; Lössl, 'Who Attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416 A.D.?', pp. 91–112.

14 Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, p. 72.

15 Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I, pp. 326.

16 Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, p. 8; Jerome, *Praef in lib. Hier. Prol* (3), 4 (41); *Prol.* (4). 3 (60).

17 Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, pp. 8–17; Steven Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 54–5.

18 Cavallera, 'Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite', pp. 101–4; Richard J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 78.

19 Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, p. 221.

20 Jerome, *Ep.* 130 (16).

21 Augustine, *Gest. Pel.* 14 (36), 19 (43), 20 (44), 35 (60). Orosius, however, claims that Pelagius was a layman. Orosius, *Lib. Apol.* 5.

22 For a more complete take on Jerome and Pelagius, see JND Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), pp. 309–23; Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I, pp. 323–39; John Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, pp. 72–92.

23 Jerome, *Ep.* 50 (1).

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

25 Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, p. 77; BR Rees, 'Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic' in *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), p. 5; Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 216.

26 David Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 249–50.

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

28 Jerome, *Com. in Ez.* 6.

29 Jerome, *Ep.* 130 (16).

30 Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (13).

31 Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, vol. I, pp. 326–7.

32 P. Rousseau, 'Jerome on Jeremiah: Exegesis and Recovery', in Andrew Cain and Josef Lössl (eds.) *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings, and Legacy* (Burlington Ashgate, 2009), p. 74.

33 Cavallera, 'Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite', p. 127.

34 Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (1).

35 Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (3).

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37 Jerome, *Praef in lib. Hier.* 4.

38 Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme et l'hérésie*, pp. 395–7; Rackett, 'Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity', PhD Diss. (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2002) pp. 283–4.

39 For discussions about ἀπάθεια concerning Clement and Origen, see: Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 42; N. Groves, 'Mundicia Cordis: A Study of the Theme of Purity of Heart in Hugh of Pontigny and the Fathers of the Undivided Church', in *One yet Two: Monastic Tradition East and West. Orthodox – Cistercian Symposium. Oxford University: 26 August–1 September 1973*

- (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1976), p. 312; J. Driscoll, 'Apatheia and Purity of Heart in Evagrius Ponticus', in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 157.
- 40 Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (3).
- 41 Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, p. 303; See also, D. Bell, 'Apatheia: The Convergence of Byzantine and Cistercian Spirituality', *Cîteaux* 38 (1987), p. 48; Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, p. 315; Rackett, 'What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and His Followers', p. 231; R. Somos, 'Origen, Evagrius Ponticus and the Ideal of Impassibility', in W.A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg (eds.), *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in Den Auseinandersetzungen Des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 372; Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition From Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* Vol. II. (New York: Brill, 1990), p. 78.
- 42 A. Casiday, 'Apatheia and Sexuality in the Thought of Augustine and Cassian', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 45 (2001), pp. 370–2.
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- 44 Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (1).
- 45 Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (8); *Dial.* 1 (9).
- 46 Jerome, *Dial.* 1 (14), 2 (24).
- 47 Jerome, 1 (16).
- 48 Jerome, 1 (16).
- 49 Jerome, *Dial.* 1 (17).
- 50 Jerome, 1 (21).
- 51 Jerome, 1 (18).
- 52 P. Rousseau, 'Cassian and Perverted Virtue', Tenth Annual Lecture as Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Professor of Early Christian Studies. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, Thursday, September 17, 2009). P. 8.
- 53 Cassian, *Coll.* 23.2 (2). All translations for Cassian come from *Ancient Christian Writers*.
- 54 C. Hanson, 'Introduction', in Thomas P. Halton (ed.) *Iberian Fathers: Pacian of Barcelona; Orosius of Braga* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 97.
- 55 Augustine, *Ep.* 169 (13).
- 56 Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, pp. 317–18.
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- 58 Hanson, 'Introduction', p. 104.
- 59 Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, p. 320; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, pp. 221–26; Jeanjean, 'Le dialogus Attici et Critobuli de Jérôme et la prédication pélagienne en palestine entre 411 et 415', pp. 61–9.
- 60 J. McWilliam, 'Letters to Demetrias: A Sidebar in the Pelagian Controversy Helena, amicae meae', *Toronto Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2000), p. 136; J. Lössl, 'Who Attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416 A.D.?', *Augustinianum* 44 no. 1 (2004), p. 94.
- 61 Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, p. 79.
- 62 Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (4).
- 63 Jerome, 3 (12).
- 64 Michael Graves, 'Introduction' in *Commentary on Jeremiah*, by Jerome (Downers Grove: 2011), p. xxix. See also Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, p. 319; Ferguson also says that 'the temper of the work is less bitter than many of his controversial writings'. Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, p. 79.
- 65 Rackett, 'What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and His Followers', p. 229.
- 66 Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.6.7–2.7.8.
- 67 Jerome, *Dial.* 1 (9).
- 68 Jerome, *Ep.* 133 (5).
- 69 Jerome, (6).
- 70 Although both men understood the necessity of both grace and free will, there was a different emphasis between Augustine and Jerome. Augustine made a sharp distinction which Jerome arguably did not make, or at least not to the same extent. This distinction was between having a free will (*liberum arbitrium*) and the freedom (*libertas*) to execute the desires of the will.

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

72 Jerome became familiar with Augustine's understanding of the free will when he read *Spir. et litt.* 33 (57–60).

73 Jerome mentions free will a few times in Book III, but only in passing: 3 (5), 3 (11), 3(15).

74 Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (6).

75 Augustine, *Praed. sanct.* 10 (19).

76 Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.17 (26). See also: *Spir. et litt.* 5 (7); *Nat. et gr.* 5 (5).

77 Gerald Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine's Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), pp. 97–117.

78 Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (18).

79 Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies*, p. 320. See also, Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, p. 221.

80 Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 3.6 (12)–7 (14).

81 For Augustine's use of the term 'massa', Jerome would have read it in *Nat. et gr.* 5 (5). See also, Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, pp. 326–8. For *peccatum originale*, see *Nat. et gr.* 3 (3).

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

83 Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (19).

84 Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 1.9 (9).

85 For a discussion of Augustine's position on the origin of souls, see M. Lamberigts, 'Julian and Augustine on the Origin of the Soul', *Augustiniana* 46 (1996), pp. 243–60.

86 Augustine, *Ep.* 166.4 (8).

87 *Ep.* 166.3 (6).

88 Jerome, *Ep.* 130 (16).

89 E. Clark, 'From Origenism to Pelagianism: Elusive Issues in an Ancient Debate', *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 12.3 (1991), p. 298.

90 Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, p. 79; Jeanjean, 'Le dialogus Attici et Critobuli de Jérôme et la prédication pélagienne en palestine entre 411 et 415', p. 61.

91 Augustine, *Pecc. mer.* 2.25 (39).

92 F. Cavallera, 'Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 2 (1921), p. 118.

93 Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, p. 113.

94 Jerome, *Ep.* 107 (13).

95 Jerome, *Ep.* 107 (6).

96 It is very possible that Jerome's understanding on infant baptism came from Origen. See Origen, *Com. Rom.* 5 (9).

97 Jerome, *Dial.* 3 (19).

98 Jerome, *Ep.* 172 (1).

99 Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*, p. 75.

100 Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian, Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*, pp. 69–70.

101 Jerome's opinions of Augustine did soften right before he died. Jerome, *Ep.* 141.

102 Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*, p. 71.

103 Adkin, 'Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot', *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993), pp. 364–376.

104 Jerome, *Ep.* 112 (5).

105 S. Squires, 'Jerome's Animosity against Augustine', *Augustiniana* 58, no. 3 (2008), p. 181.

106 Jerome, *Ep.* 143.

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