What Is the Evil to Be Overcome?

Differences between Augustine's and Pelagius' Views on Christ's Life and Death

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Summary

Significant perspectives on Christ's life and death, which both Pelagius and the Eastern Fathers held, are Christ's victory over the Devil, the continuous creation of humanity, and Christ's redemption of human sin. Imitating Christ's example by exercising free will is the most important Christian response to Christ's victory. Synergism between the exercise of free will and Christ's example as God's grace are located in God's mystical Oikonomia. As seen in their for-knowledge theory concerning the story of Esau's abandonment, Pelagius' synergism was in no way heretical, but rather completely consistent with the Eastern Fathers. On the other hand, the discontinuity in Augustine's soteriology between human nature after the Fall and Christ's redemption as God's grace is significantly different from the continuity evident in Pelagius' and the Eastern Fathers' views. Augustine's logical-philosophical speculation on Esau's abandonment, which was repeated in non-historical contexts, had to come down to his theories of original sin and predestination. The peculiarity of the historical Jesus Christ in God's Oikonomia, as well as the unique, special historicity of every human, was almost absorbed into the universality of Augustine's theories. However, Pelagius as well as Basil and Rufinus thought that in every decision of free will to imitate Christ's life and death, as seen in the same person narrative in Pelagius' Pauline commentary, the grace of God was concretely and livingly expressed in the unique and personal history of believers.

Keywords

Augustine – Pelagius – Christ's life and death

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1 Introduction

When we consider the difference between Pelagius’ and Augustine’s understanding of Christ’s life and death, it would be important and profitable to make clear what the evils to be overcome for both theologians were, and what kind of different ways and processes of thinking were behind their views of Christ and humanity. Obviously, while Augustine emphasized the transmission of original sin and guilt from Adam, particularly the propagation of corrupted human nature, Pelagius and his followers denied such an Augustinian type of original sin. Augustine’s theory of original sin was officially authorized as one of the important creeds of the Western Church. Nevertheless, if we overlook the whole history of creeds, it is apparent that Augustine’s theory of original sin has never been authorized in the Eastern Church. This fact presents a chance to reconsider the problematic dimensions of this theory. In this article, the obvious similarities between Pelagius and the Eastern Fathers particularly Origen and Basil, and the decisive differences between Augustine’s and Pelagius’ views on Christ’s life and death, will be clarified by exploring emerging theological phrases and assertions. In order to make clear the crucial difference between Pelagius’ understanding of Christ’s life and death and that of Augustine, different interpretations about the story of Jacob and Esau, contradictory evaluations on human inward power and ascetical practices, and as a whole, the structural difference in the relationship between the incarnation and the redemption in Christ, that is, their continuity or discontinuity, will be explored in the following sections.

2 Pelagius’ View on Christ’s Life and Death

2.1 Triumph against Sin and Death

It is generally acknowledged that Pelagius used Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s Pauline Expositions, the so-called Origen-Rufinus. Making use of Origen-Rufinus, Pelagius characterized his peculiar key concept of Christ’s example (Exemplum Christi) as triumph against sin and death. On the other hand, Rufinus translated not only Origen’s Pauline Expositions but also the latter’s De Principiis. Although it has not been proved that Pelagius read and used this translation, but we can clearly point out the similarities between Pelagius’ works and De Principiis, regarding the understanding of Christ’s life and death.

2.2 Pelagius’ Pauline Exposition and Origen-Rufinus

Pelagius’ and Pelagians’ most favorite key concept, Christ Example (Exemplum Christi), plays an extremely important role in the history of human salvation.
In the Pauline Expositions, characterizing the Example of Christ as a triumph against sin and death, Pelagius urged his readers to follow the example of Christ's life and death. Particularly in the commentary on Romans 8:3–4, we can find this motif of Christ's triumph with a very Pelagian interpretation of human nature and freewill:

He <Christ> therefore took flesh like the flesh of the rest of humanity[, as far as nature is concerned]. [...] Just as the sacrificial victims that they offered for sin under the law were given the name of sin, although these victims were unacquainted with transgressions, [...] so also Christ's flesh, which was offered for our sins, took the name of sin. Some, in fact, say that by means of the sin of the Jews, whereby they killed the Lord, he condemned through humankind the sin of the Devil, whereby the Devil had deceived humankind; [...] Or: Through the substance of that flesh which previously was slave to sin, he conquered sin by never sinning, and in that same flesh he condemned sin, to show that the will was arraigned, not the nature, which God created in such a way that it [was able] not to sin[, if it so wished]. [...] So that, since it <the righteousness of the law> could not be fulfilled in those in whom carnal habit fights back, it at least may be fulfilled in us, who have mortified the flesh according to Christ's example.¹

The purpose of Christ's whole life and death was to conquer sin, and by so doing, defeat the Devil. Christ won by taking flesh and human nature as slaves to sin, or in spite of that, by never sinning. Christ deceived and defeated the Devil's deceit. It is noteworthy that Pelagius combined the understanding of triumph against sin and death with his typical Pelagian assertion that “the will was arraigned, not nature, which God created in such a way that it [was able] not to sin [, if it so wished].” Nevertheless, in the commentary of Origen-Rufinus for the same Roman verses, we can find almost the same interpretation:

God sent his own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, that is, through the sacrifice that was offered for sin, he condemned sin. [...] sin took to flight and was destroyed from our flesh, and the justification of the law began to be fulfilled in us, strictly speaking of that law that delights in the law of God, which is fulfilled at the time when the law of sin, which was in our members, no longer strives against it, if only we walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh.2

Just as seen in the result of the critical analysis of the texts by A.J. Smith, it is obvious that Pelagius consulted the phrase of Origen “the sacrificial offering dedicated to sin (hostiam pro peccato oblatam)” for writing his own commentary.3 Nevertheless, it is clear that common to both commentaries, Christ’s example was dedicated to sin as a sacrificial offering, condemned sin by deceiving the Devil’s evil and in the end triumphing against death and sin. It is also apparent in both commentaries that Christ’s example was offered as an example of will being exercised not by flesh but by Spirit. Pelagius also emphasized that not human nature but human will itself was condemned when Christ triumphed against sin. Following Origen’s commentary, Pelagius also pointed out the weakening of the carnal mind by imitating Christ’s example, saying, “if you imitate Christ, the carnal mind, as if dead offers no resistance.”4 Moreover, just in the same interpretation of Origen to the Romans 8:10, “Spirit lives in order to do justification (necessario spiritus ad faciendam justitiam vivit),” Pelagius also added the same commentary to the same verse, “The spirit lives in order to produce righteousness: for the object is not just that we leave off carnal things, but also that we do spiritual things. (Spiritus uiuit ut iustitiam operetur: non enim hoc solum quaeitur ut [a] carnalibus cessemus, sed etiam ut spiritualia faciamus).”5 In short, in both of the interpretations of Pelagius and Origen, it is clear that Christ’s life and death, including incarnation, his teaching on the kingdom of heaven, crucifixion and resurrection, suggested triumph over human sin and death.

In Christ’s life and death, particularly the incarnation of Christ plays not only for Pelagius but also for the Eastern Church Fathers a very significant role.

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4 Pelagius, Expositiones, Rom 8:10 a, ed. Souter, p. 63: “Si Christum imitamini, carnalis sensus quasi mortuus non resistit.”
5 Pelagius, Expositiones, Rom 8:10 b, ed. Souter, p. 63. English translation, de Bruyn, Pelagius’ Commentary, p. 108.
In Pelagius’ view, the redemption of Christ is located in a series of examples of God’s salvation work through Christ, that is, incarnation, his teachings and miraculous healing, his death on the cross and resurrection. In other words, the continuous understanding between incarnation and redemption of Christ was characterized in Pelagius’ view of Christ’s role as well as in the view of Eastern Fathers.

Pelagius’ understanding of Christ’s redemption belongs apparently to the type of so called Devil deceiving redemption theory, if we classify it according to the three types of G. Aulen. Pelagius understood the role of Christ’s incarnation and redemption as condemnation of the Devil’s sin of deceiving human beings through humankind, which Christ received at his birth and which was given the name of sin. Origen also developed just the same understanding of incarnation and redemption, as he compared Christ to a noble king, who tried to rescue his subordinate soldiers. According to Origen’s parable, in order to help the subordinate soldiers escape from the imprisonment of a tyrant, the king wore the same clothes as the soldiers. Pretending to be a soldier, he carried the fight into the camp of the enemy and destroyed the tyrant. Gregory of Nyssa also asserted that the reason for Christ’s incarnation and redemption was to draw the enemy near Christ by showing him wearing the flesh of mankind and so deceiving the enemy. Although Christ was originally without any sin, he received the same flesh as humanity and was given the name of sin. By doing so, Christ condemned the Devil who deceived human beings conversely by deceiving the Devil through the flesh of human beings and moreover by never sinning.

### 2.3 Continuity from Creation to Redemption

The second significant character of the view of Christ’s life and death, which was common between Pelagius and the Eastern Fathers, was the continuity of the creation of human beings and the redemption of their sins through Christ. For example, in the commentary of the Pauline Expositions of Romans 1:16, Pelagius criticized Gentiles and heretics who took Christ’s incarnation and crucifixion to be shameful and not suitable for God. Pelagius asserted that Christ’s incarnation and redemption were necessary for the healing of creatures, because “there is no greater power than that which conquered death

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7 Origenes, *Ad Romanos, 5, 10* = *PG* 14, col. 1051.
8 Gregorius Nyss., *Oratio chatechetica 23* = *PG* 45, col. 61–64.
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and restored to humankind the life it had lost."9 A similar yet more detailed explanation by Pelagius on Christ’s redemption can be found in the commentary to the Romans 3:24:

By <redemption>, he <Christ> has redeemed us with his blood from death. Through sin we had been sold to death – as Isaiah says: ‘You were sold by your sins’ – but Christ, who did not sin, conquered death (Isa 50:1). For we were all condemned to death, to which he handed himself over, through it was not his due, so that he might redeem us with his blood. [...] That is, because you received nothing for yourselves, and have to be redeemed with Christ’s blood. At the same time it should be noted that he did not buy us, but bought us back, [because] previously we were his by nature, although we were alienated from him by our transgressions. If we stop sinning, then indeed will our redemption be profitable.10

It is extremely noteworthy that here Christ’s redemption was understood as the repurchase of human nature which once belonged to Christ but which had been sold over to the Devil. All humanity was sold over to the Devil and death by sinning, but Christ bought their human nature back by bleeding on the cross. By doing so, being given life again, human nature, which had belonged to death, was brought back to Christ. Evans pointed out that such etymological interpretation was peculiar only to Pelagius.11 On the other hand, Garcia made clear that the same kind of etymological understanding on Christ’s redemption was found also in the sermon of Chromatius of Aquileia.12 Nevertheless, apart from the etymological interpretation, we can recognize the continuous understanding of creation and redemption also in the Origen-Rufinus and Origen’s

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10 Pelagius, *Expositiones, Rom 3:24*, ed. Souter, p. 33; English translation, de Bruyn, *Pelagius’ Commentary*, p. 82: “Qua nos redemit anguine suo de morte, cui per peccatum uenditi fueramus, sescundum Isaiam dicentem: ‘peccatis uestris uenundati estis,’ quam mortem Christus euicit, qui non peccaut. Omnes enim rei eramus mortis, cui se ille indebite tradidit, ut nos suo sanguine redimeret. […] hoc est quia nihil pro uobis accepistis et Christi estis sanguine redimendi. Simul illut notandum quia redemit nos, non emit, qui[a] ante per naturam ipius fueramus, licet simus nostris ab eo alienate delictis. Tunc sane fructuosa erit redemption nostra, si peccare cessemus.”


De Principiis translated by Rufinus. After explaining that human nature once belonged to Christ, Origen gives an account of his understanding of Christ’s redemption in the following manner:

But Christ also killed the hostility in his own flesh in this way when, by his endurance of death, he gave men an example which teaches us to resist sins even to the point of death. Not until then, when the hostility has been destroyed in his flesh, did he reconcile men to God through his blood, provided that they keep the covenant of reconciliation inviolate by sinning no longer. Consequently, his death inflicted death to the hostility which was between us and God.\footnote{Origenes, Ad Romanos, 4, 12 = Roemerbriefkommentar II (Fontes Christiani, 2/2), Herder, ss. 298–299, ‘cum morte suscepta exemplum dedit himinibus usque ad mortem resistere adversum peccatum: et ita demum resoluta inimicitia in carne sua, reconciliavit per sanguinem suum homines Deo, eos duntaxat qui inviolatum reconciliationis foedus ultra non peccando custodiant. Igitur mors ejus mortem inimicitiae dedit ei quae erat inter nos et Deum, et recontillationis initium.’}

In book II, chapter 9 of De Principiis, Origen also suggested the continuity between creation and redemption, and he emphasized again and again that all creatures were created by Christ (Logos) and belonged once to Christ. “Then, Christ is as it were, the Word and Wisdom, and so also the Righteousness, it will undoubtedly follow that those things which were created in the Word and Wisdom are said to be created also in that righteousness which is Christ; that in created things there may appear to be nothing unrighteous or accidental, but that all things may be shown to be in conformity in the law of equity and righteousness”.\footnote{Origenes, De Principiis, II, 9, 4 = PG 11, col. 228: ‘Quia ergo Christus sicut Verbum et sapientia est, ita etiam justitia est, consequens sine dubio erit, ut ea quae in Verbo et sapientia facta sunt, etiam ea in justitia quae est Christus, facta est dicantur; quod scilicet in his quae facta sunt, nihil injustum, nihil fortuitum videatur, sed omnia ita esse ut aequitatis ac justitiae regula expetit, doceantur.’} Emphasizing equality and righteousness when all creatures were created by the Logos, Origen showed the continuity between creation and redemption, and he underlined the reconciliation of human beings to the Logos by Christ’s incarnation and his death on the cross.

2.4 Freedom of Human Will in God’s Oikonomia
Continuity from creation to redemption is a significant characteristic of Pelagius’ and Origen’s understanding of Christ’s life and death, so we can recognize
in both their work that human free will is centrally important and is located in God’s mystical *Oikonomia*, which includes Christ’s life and death.

In this context, it is noteworthy that Origen referred to one significant episode in the Old Testament, the selection of Jacob and the abandonment of Esau. Bringing forth a counterargument to the critiques of Malchion, Valentinos and other heretics asserting why some people were borne noble from birth but others not, Origen considered the question of why Jacob was selected but Esau abandoned, before they had committed any merits or sins. Origen stressed strongly from the view of theodicy that there was no injustice on the side of God. Considering both the result of maintaining the justice of God on the one hand and the goodness of human nature and human free will on the other, Origen concluded that the difference between Jacob and Esau was determined by the performance of the free wills of their souls just before they were born.\(^\text{15}\) Origen wanted at any cost to keep the freedom of human will, even if, as he asserted, it was exercised before Jacob’s and Esau’s births when their souls chose their lives by their own free wills.

Examining the same question of why Jacob was selected and Esau was abandoned, Pelagius also tried to keep the freedom of human will in the use of the so-called traditional Foreknowledge Theory, not Predestination Theory. For example, to verse 13 in chapter 9 of the Roman Commentary, “As it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,’” Pelagius commented: “This is correctly understood as follows: I will have mercy on him whom I have foreknown will be able to deserve compassion, so that already then I have had mercy on him.”\(^\text{16}\) According to Pelagius’ interpretation, Almighty God foreknows which person will accept God’s grace by his own free will, and God gives grace to that person. After that, when the person decides to accept this grace by his own will, the person performs a merit for the first time. This interpretation based on the God’s foreknowledge was well known at the time of Pelagius, and before the Predestination Theory of Augustine, for example, Origen also used this Foreknowledge Theory, when he argued the question why God hardened the Pharaoh’s heart.\(^\text{17}\)

It is obviously clear in Origen-Rufinus, the translation of *De Principiis* by Rufinus and Pelagius’ Commentary, that preserving the freedom of human will and the Foreknowledge Theory strongly supports the common framework of God’s *Oikonomia*. In other words, the ‘synergeia’ between God’s work, including Christ’s incarnation and redemption, and human work, their good nature

\(^{15}\) Origenes, *De Principiis*, II, 9, 6–7 = *PG* 11, col. 230–232.


\(^{17}\) Origenes, *De Principiis*, III, 1, 7–14 = *PG* 11, 259–275.
and free will, this synergy between God and Humanity, which Pelagius intended to construct, was no heretical understanding at that time, but rather a very common idea of the Eastern Fathers, and Pelagius’ precursor, Rufinus of Aquileia.

3 Inward Power in Believers’ Nature and Ascetical Practices
Concretizing Christ’s Life and Death in Their Peculiar Situation

In the framework of the history of salvation, we made sure the relationships between Origen and Pelagius, more in detail between Origen’s works translated by Rufinus and Pelagian writings. We can recognize, on the other hand, similarities between Basil and Pelagius in more practical phase, that is, ascetical exercises. In this aspect, we cannot ignore the facts that Rufinus of Aquileia translated not only Origen’s works but also Basil’s Regula and some of his other works.

3.1 Basil’s Imitation Theory and Inward Power in Nature

Recently, W. Dunphy made clear the similarities between the translation of Basil’s Regula by Rufinus and the Pelagian way of thinking in their works.18 He supposed that “the Basil’s translation,” we can name it perhaps Basil-Rufinus, “had been circulated independently and anonymously in Latin (without our knowledge of its origin and true location),” and he “hazarded the suggestion that we would list its author among the Anonymi Pelagiani!”19 In fact, comparing both works, Basil’s translations and Pelagian works, we can conclude that Basil and Rufinus were Pelagians before Pelagius, or we could also say that Rufinus and Pelagius were just Basilians in the Latin world. We can explore here two of the similarities: imitation theory and the inward power in nature. Just like Christ’s example and imitating it by believers are quite important for Pelagius, Basil of Caesarea also had developed the very same understanding of the imitation of Christ:

The dispensation of our God and Savior concerning man is a recall from the fall, and a return from the alienation caused by disobedience to close communion with God. This is the reason for the sojourn of Christ in the flesh, the pattern of life described in the Gospels, the sufferings, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection; so that the man who is being saved through

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imitation of Christ receives that old adoption. For perfection of life the imitation of Christ is necessary, not only in the example of gentleness, lowliness, and long suffering set us in His life, but also of His actual death. So Paul, the imitator of Christ, says: ‘being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead’ (Phil 3:10ff).²⁰

Just as Pelagius offered the concept of the example of Christ's life and death to be imitated by believers, for Basil also, Christ's incarnation, his teaching of the kingdom of heaven, Christ's passion, crucifixion and resurrection, and all of the works of Christ in God's Oikonomia should be imitated by Christians. Basil asserted also in the following phrases that Christ's life and death was an example to be imitated and above all for believers “the baptism was the model (Typos) of death and life.”²¹ The same motif of the imitation of Christ is also repeated in Basil's Regula. For example, in chapter 43, “if, indeed, the goal of Christianity is the imitation of Christ according to the measure of His Incarnation, insofar as is conformable with the vocation of each individual, they who are entrusted with the guidance of many others are obliged to animate those still weaker than themselves, by their assistance, to the imitation of Christ, as the blessed Paul says: ‘Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.’”²²

As for the other significant common characteristic in both Pelagius’ and Basil’s theological notions, we can note the inward power which belong to human nature simply due to one's birth. Pelagius urged his followers and explained the inward power in their natures in the following manner, saying, for example, “pursue the love. By all endeavours, pursue the Love, because it belongs to your abilities.”²³ We can find in Basil’s Regula the same understanding about the inward power in human nature:

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21 Ibid., p. 177.
First, however, we shall establish the fact that we have already received from God the power to fulfill all the commandments given us by Him, so that we may not take our obligation in bad part, as though something quite strange and unexpected were being asked of us, and that we may not become filled with conceit, as if we were paying back something more than had been given us. By means of this power, rightly and properly used, we pass our entire lives holily and virtuously, but through a perverted use of it we gradually fall prey to vice. [...] Having received therefore, a command to love God, we have possessed the innate power of loving from the first moment of our creation. Of this, no external proof is required, since anyone can discover it of himself and within himself. We are by nature desirous of the beautiful, even though individual conceptions of the beautiful differ widely. Furthermore, we possess – without being taught – a love for those who are near and dear to us, and we spontaneously render to our benefactors a full measure of good will.24

In the following many phrases, Basil argued the inward power in natures, which were given at their creation by God. For Basil also as well as for Pelagius, the most important responsibility of humanity is to use such inward power in human nature for a good purpose, which God indicated through Christ’s example, by exercising their free will. At the same time, for both churchmen, it is evil and sinful to misuse this power by ignoring Christ’s example or by deviating from the course of synergetic *Oikonomia* between God and human beings.25

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25 Basilius Caesariensis, *Regulae fuius tractatae*, 2 = PG 31, col. 911: “Quare quidquid voluntate nostra recte perficitur, inest nobis naturaliter, si saltem cogitationes nostras non perverterit nequitia. Itaque Dei amor ceu necessarium debitum a nobis reposcitur, cujus privatio animae est malorum omnium gravissimum. Nam abalienatio et avervio a Deo malum est futuris etiam Gehennae suppliciis intollerabilius, eique cui contingit, gravius, non secus ac oculo luminis privatio, etiamsi dolor non adsit, et animali, ademptio vitae.” English translation by Wagner, in: Saint Basil, *Ascetical Works*, pp. 235: “So then, whatever is rightly done of free choice is also in us naturally, at least, in the case of those who have not perverted their rational faculty by iniquity. The love of God is, therefore, demanded of us as a strict obligation, and for a soul to fail in this is the most unendurable of all evils. Separation and estrangement from God are more unbearable than the punishment reserved for
3.2 Apatheia (imperturbabilitas) and Metriopatheia

Not only in the view of *Oikonomia* and human nature, but also in ascetical practices, we can show the definitive similarities between Basil's *Regula* translated by Rufinus on the one hand and Pelagian writings on the other. The requirements of abstinence, continence and fasting are all asked for Christians in both Basil-Rufinus and Pelagian works. Pelagius emphasized consequently purity in body and mind, saying “because God is pure and sacred in everything, the believers as children of God also should not be corrupted and unclean.”

Based on this notion, Pelagius thought that “the purity of body and mind was difficult to be kept without abstinences,” and he encouraged his followers to exercise ascetical practices. For example, in *De virginitate* he states, “The mind, which desires to be the dwelling place of God, should be quiet, tranquil and peaceful and far removed from anger’s furious rages (*ab omni perturbatione furoris alienam***).” Also in the Letter to Celantia (*Ad Celantiam*), where he encourages the need to set oneself in serenity, he states:

Choose a convenient place, a little removed from the noise of household, to which you can betake yourself as if to a harbour out of a great storm of cares and there, in the peace of inner seclusion, calm the turbulent waves of thoughts outside.

Not only Pelagius but also Basil stressed the necessity of abstinence, continence and fasting, citing many biblical phrases and requiring ascetical practices, for example in the sixteenth question of his *Regula* as follows:

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It is evident that the practice of continency is essential; first, from the fact that the Apostle includes continency among the fruits of the spirit and, second, from his saying that a blameless ministry is achieved through this virtue, [...] and again: ‘And everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things.’ (1 Cor 9:25) Chastisement of the body and bringing it under subjection are achieved by no other means as successfully as by the practice of continency; for the effervescent fires of youth, whose leapings can scarcely be controlled, are held in restraint by continency as with a bridle. According to Solomon, ‘Delicacies are not seemly for a fool.’ (Prov 19:10) and what is more foolish than for the flesh to indulge itself in delights and for youth to whirl about at will! [...] Moreover, the example of the delights enjoyed by the rich man show that continency is necessary for us, that we may never hear what was said to the rich man: ‘thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime.’ (Luke 16:25)30

Basil emphasized the importance of ascetic exercises and he concluded that “the continency betokens the man who has died with Christ and who mortifies his members that are upon the earth.”31 Basil finally cited the biblical phrase which played a tremendously significant role for Eastern monasticism, even now. However, it was put in parentheses as a different reading, that is, in Mathew 17:21 saying, “From this virtue even the demons fly, as the Lord Himself teaches, saying ‘this kind doesn’t go out except by prayer and fasting’”32

Nevertheless, although both Basil-Rufinus and Pelagius also asserted strongly the necessity of abstinence, continence and fasting for so called *apatheia*, it

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is noteworthy that both insisted upon this concept rather metriopatheia in their ascetic practices. In general, the Greek concept apatheia is translated into Latin as impassibilitas or imperturbabilitas. Pelagius also accepted the Greek ascetical concept apatheia, but he used the word impassibilitas only for God’s character.33 Pelagius preferred the concept imperturbabilitas but in the meaning of metriopatheia that is, “moderation.”34

By the way, Jerome regarded the Pelagian understanding of sinlessness (impeccantia) in terms of the Stoic concept of apatheia. He condemned as heretics not only Rufinus and Evagrius but also the Pelagians for accepting this Stoic concept. Jerome asserted that they should all insist in their monastic teaching on eradicating the four emotions (pathê) from men’s minds: sorrow, joy, hope and fear. However, by confusing the Stoic understanding with that of the Peripatetics, Jerome ignored a defining difference between the Stoics and Peripatetics.35 In the Stoic understanding, apatheia indicates the extermination of the four emotions. In the Peripatetic interpretation, on the other hand, the same word indicates controlling and utilizing these emotions in other ways.36 Therefore, we should look to the Peripatetic notion of metriopatheia rather than the Stoic teaching on apatheia.37 It is clear that Pelagius used the concept of imperturbabilitas in the meaning of the metriopatheia of the Peripatetic interpretation. For example, after emphasizing the necessity of fasting and abstinence in the Letter to Demetrias, Pelagius states:

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33 Pelagius, Expositiones, Rom 1:16, ed. Souter, p. 12: “...maxime cum ipse (deo) per haec naturae suae detrimentum quasi inpassibilis sentire non possit.”


35 Hieronymus, Dialogus adversus Pelagianos, Prologus 1 = cc, sl, 80, 3: “Nulli enim est dubium, quin Stoicorum et Peripateticorum, hoc est, veteris Academiae ista contentio sit, quod ali eorum asserant παθη, quas nos perturbationes possumus dicere: aegritudinem, gaudium, spem, timorem eradicari et exstirpari posse de mentibus hominum.” For the English translation, see W.H. Fremantel, The Principal Works of St. Jerome, (NPNF, Second Series, 6), p. 272: “For those states of feeling which the Stoics and Peripatetics, that is, the old Academy, some of them call Pathe and which we may describe as ‘passions’, relating to the present or the future such as vexation and gladness, hope and fear, – these, they tell us, it is possible to root out of our minds.”


Love of chastity must avoid anything that has the power to inflame the body or supplies fuel to pleasure. Yet... there are many who, through the excessive ardour of their mind, fail to calculate the extent of their own strength and, suddenly tumble to the ground. [...] Moderation is best in everything and due sense of proportion is praiseworthy in all circumstances; the body has to be controlled, not broken. Therefore, let holiness be sought in moderation and fastings, which so weaken the body, be practiced in uncomplicated ways and with all humility of mind.38

Pelagius’ ascetic practices were clearly not so severe ones as those of Jerome, as Pelagius refuted neither excessive abstinences nor excessive intemperance. For example, as evidence of the latter, he says in his Pauline Commentary, that “even excessive incontinence can be taken for impurity,”39 and that “both eating and drinking are permitted for us, but if we submit ourselves excessively to our abdomen, even permitted matters draw us to unpermitted ones, that is, fornications. Therefore, it should be considered that everything can grasp the occasion of sin, although it is not sin itself.”40

The very same argument of metriopatheia in ascetic exercises can be found also in Basil’s Regula. Basil argued strongly not to be excessive in ascetic practices just like Pelagius. Concerning food and eating, Basil advised a moderate intake citing the words of Proverb, “Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only what is necessary and sufficient...”and saying, “thus representing riches as satiety, poverty as a complete lack of the necessities of life, and sufficiency as a state both free from want and without superfluity. [...] In every case, care must be taken for a good table, yet without overstepping the limits of the actual need. [...] unnecessary expenditure, however, is misuse.”41

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40 Pelagius, Expositiones, 1 Cor 6:12, ed. Souter, p. 156: “Licit nobis manducare et bibere, sed, si nimium uentri subditi fuerimus, ipsum licitum traheet nos ad illicitum, hoc est ad fornicationem. ita et de omnibus intellegendum quae, cum peccata non sint, occasiones [tamen] possunt capere delictorum.”

Basil also instructed the moderate function of medical techniques, which happened to be one of Basil’s typical allegorical expressions of God’s grace in nature. “In as much as our body is susceptible to various hurts, some attacking from without and some from within by reason of the food we eat, and since the body suffers affliction from both excess and deficiency, the medical art has been vouchsafed us by God, who directs our whole life, as a model for the cure of the soul, to guide us in the removal of what is superfluous and in the addition of what is lacking.”\footnote{Basilius Caesariensis, \textit{Regulae fuaius tractatae}, 55 = \textit{PG} 31, col. 1043–1051, “Cum enim corpus nostrum, utpote morbis obnoxium, variis incommodis, tum extrinsecus advenientibus, tum intrinsecus ab alimentis proficiscentibus subjacet, et modo redundantia, modo defectu afflictetur, ars medica pro exemplo medelae ejus, quae animo curando adhibenda sit, nobis a totius vitae nostrae moderatore Deo concessa est, cujus ductu quod superfluum est rescinderetur, et quod deest, adjiceretur.”} In the letter, which was written for the completion of monastic life, also, Basil’s ascetical advice was focused on the \textit{metriopatheia}, “He ought not to be beguiled by over eating, whence come dreams in the night. He ought not to be distracted by immoderate toil, nor overstep the bounds of sufficiency, as the apostle says, ‘having food and raiment let us be therewith content’ (1 Tim 6:8) unnecessary abundance gives the appearance of covetousness, and covetousness is condemned as idolatry.”\footnote{Basilius Caesariensis, \textit{Epistula 22} = \textit{PG} 32, col. 294: “Non oportet distrahi opere immoderato, nec debet, quiquam frugalitatis terminos excedere, secundum Apostolum dicentem: Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti erimus; propertia quod copia ultra necessitatem perducta imaginem avaritiae exhibit, avaritia idololatriae nomine damnatur.”} In sum, Basil as well as Pelagius had in their mind that the believers could participate in God’s \textit{Oikonomia} just by adjusting the ascetic exercises through working their own free will. For both, any excessive achievements in every matter could be occasions leading to sin.

4 Augustine’s Turning to Predestination Theory and His Theory of Original Sin

4.1 \textit{Philosophical Speculation on Esau’s Abandonment}

In this article, it is neither impossible nor necessary for us to trace all of the processes and problematic situations until the establishment of Augustine’s...
theories of predestination and original sin. We can here only bring into relief the definitive differences of Augustine’s thinking process of the origin of evil and the understanding of Christ’s life and death. For this purpose, it would be profitable for us to investigate Augustine’s interpretation of the story of Jacob and Esau in the Old Testament and to compare it with those of Origen and Pelagius, which were already introduced above.

Augustine still maintained a traditional understanding about the fall of humanity until 395, just as he developed his notion of human free will in *De libero arbitrio*. The human free will distorted by repeated bad habits was a crucial point and the cause of evil at the time of Augustine. Nevertheless, after that, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum libri duo*, written in 397, represented a decisive turning point in his anthropological way of thinking. In this work, Augustine constructed his Predestination Theory, which began from the question why Jacob was selected and Esau was abandoned in spite of the latter’s innocence. Primarily, in the modern exegesis of the Bible, Jacob’s selection and Esau’s abandonment are only a kind of tentative episode before the testament for all humanity, and this episode should be seen as one scene of the history of Salvation, that is, God’s *Oikonomia*. Nevertheless, in the thinking of Augustine, his interest was focused not on this tentative selection in the horizontal historical stage of salvation, but on the selection itself only of the vertical relationship between God and the person who stands before God. Augustine argued here not theologically but rather logical-philosophically and he did not care that the story occupied only one episode in God’s historical *Oikonomia*.

Augustine asked again and again why Esau was abandoned without committing any sins. At the same time, Augustine repeated the major premise of theodicy that there was no injustice on the side of God. It seems that, until this point here, that the starting point was quite the same as those of Pelagius and Origen-Rufinus, except for one matter. Namely, for Augustine, the definitive problem was why one was selected and the other abandoned, not the question why the person Jacob himself was selected and why Esau himself had to be abandoned in the historical mystical *Oikonomia* of God. In the eyes of Augustine, neither the fact that Jacob and Esau were finally reconciled in the story of the Old Testament, nor God’s care and final acknowledgement of the history of Islael, could be seen at all. Augustine’s interest was strongly concentrated only on the reason why one was selected and the other was abandoned. In this phase, Augustine could adopt neither the idea that both Jacob and Esau chose the every way by their free wills before their births, just like Origen thought, nor the Foreknowledge Theory indicated in Origen-Rufinus and the Pelagian writings. At this point, Augustine could not evaluate the freedom of human will any more.
4.2 Theory of Original Sin and Nature Lacking God's Grace

From the question of why Esau was abandoned and the major premise of theodicy that there was no injustice on the side of God, Augustine concluded consequently that the very guilt of Adam, that is, original sin was the cause of Esau's abandonment. “If that is so, actual willing is certainly within our power; that it is not in our power to do that which is good is part of the deserts of original sin. This is not the original nature of man, but the penalty of his guilt, whereby mortality was brought in as a second nature, from which the grace of our Creator sets us free, if we submit ourselves to him by faith.” 44 Of course, Augustine did not deny the existence of human free will, but he asserted strongly, that humanity was in the situation that they could not do good at all, if distorted free will could not be healed, and if free will became liberated free will, because human free will was corrupted completely by Adam's original sin. After the fall of Adam, the only way remaining for human beings was to beg in prayer that free will would be healed and liberated. “In this mortal life one thing remains for free will, not that a man may fulfill righteousness when he wishes, but that he may turn with suppliant piety to him who can give the power to fulfill it.” 45

For Augustine, the inward turning to God should be the only deed which was possible for humanity, and this was not any merit of the side of human beings at all. Faith itself was a grace from God, any humanity should be punished, if he remained in his natural condition, because they were all received not only as a result of Adam's fall but also by the guilt of Adam as their debts were redeemed. 46 Augustine repeated again and again that even infants were born not only bearing the results of Adam's fall but also with the guilt of


45 Augustinus, Ad Simplic. 1.1.14 = CCL, 44, p. 18.247–250: “Hoc enim restat in ista mortali uita libero arbitrio, non ut impleat homo iustitiam cum uoluerit, sed ut se supplici pietate convertat ad eum cuius dono eam possit implere.”

46 Augustinus, Ad Simplic. 1.2.16 = CCL 44, p. 41.467–42.470: “Sunt igitur restat in ista mortali uita libero arbitrio, non ut impleat homo iustitiam cum uoluerit, sed ut se supplici pietate convertat ad eum cuius dono eam possit implere.”
primitive sin, so the souls of infants who died without baptism would fall into hell.\footnote{Augustinus, \textit{De pecc. mer. et remm. III}, 4, 8 = CSEL, 60, p. 134.4–26; \textit{ibid., I, 24, 34} = p. 34.5–21; \textit{ibid., III, 6, 12} = p. 139.12–13; \textit{Sermo 294, 3} = PL 38, col. 1337.} This was the crucial point, which caused a furious debate between Augustine and Julian of Eclanum one of the disciples of Pelagius in later years.

4.3 Definitive Change of the Character of Human Nature and Christ’s Redemption

After 397, even if Augustine referred to Christ’s life and death in his earthly lifetime, the redemptive work and function of Christ’s cross and the healing of human nature through pouring God’s love into human hearts were pushed definitively to the front stage. On the other hand, all of the teachings and activities of historical Jesus, which could be seen as “examples” for all humankind, were withdrawn far into the background.

Above all after 411, the year of the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine viewed human nature as lacking any of God’s grace. On the other hand, Pelagius, Rufinus of Aquileia and Basil also understood human nature as including human free will as nature-given God’s grace and as always holding God’s grace. Not being able to find in Pelagius’ words any reference to the most important God’s grace to heal corrupted nature. Augustine could not evaluate Pelagius’ key concept Christ’s example as God’s grace at all:

Perhaps, however, he thinks the name of Christ to be necessary on this account, that by His gospel we may learn how we ought to live; but not that we may be also assisted by His grace, in order withal to lead good lives. [...] This is that wisdom of word, whereby the cross of Christ is rendered of none effect. [...] For if natural capacity, by help of free will, is in itself sufficient both for discovering how one ought to live, and also for leading a holy life, then ‘Christ died in vain,’ and therefore also ‘the offence of the cross is ceased.’ [...] For even as ‘Christ is the end of the law,’ so likewise is He the Saviour of man’s corrupted nature, ‘for righteousness to everyone that believeth.’\footnote{Augustinus, \textit{De natura et gratia} 47, 40 = CSEL 60, p. 267.27–268.18: “Sed putat fortasse ideo necessarium esse Christi nomen, ut per eius euangelium discamus quemadmodum uiuere debeamus, non etiam ut eius adiuuemur gratia, quo bene uiuamus. [...] haec est sapientia urbi, qua euacuatur crux Christi. [...] si enim possibiltas naturalis per liberum arbitrium et ad cognoscendum quomodo uiuere debet et ad bene uiuendum sufficit sibi, ‘ergo Christus gratis mortuus est; ergo euacuatrum est scandalum crucis.’ [...] sicut enim finis legis, ita etiam naturae humanae uitiosae salvator Christus est ad iustitiam omni credenti.”}
It is as clear as day that in Augustine’s understanding of nature, there is no continuity from creation to redemption as asserted by Pelagius and Basil. Although Pelagius also emphasized the redemption of Christ, Christ’s redemption was related closely to human nature and free will as gifts from God, because Christ’s redemption was “red-emit (re-purchase)” of human nature. It is also very clear that for Augustine, nature without being healed and liberated was only the corrupted nature; its inward power which Pelagius and Basil evaluated had nothing to do with Augustine.

Augustine’s establishment of the theory of original sin and his very negative evaluation of human nature and original human free will brought, in my analysis, another decisively important theological change. When Augustine blocked by his theory of original sin the very continuity between Christ’ incarnation and redemption, and between the creation of human nature and the redemption of their sins through Christ, and when Augustine constrained all of Jesus’ specific earthly history including his concrete life and death into the universal work of redemption of all humankind, not only the earthly history of Jesus Christ but also the specific, the very special concrete condition of every believer disappeared behind the theory of original sin and healing theory of Christ’ special inward grace. The peculiarity of historical Jesus including his life and death in the mystical history of God’s Oikonomia as well as the very unique, special historicity of every human was almost absorbed into the universality of theories of original sin and healing grace.

4.4 Pelagius Intention of Same-person Narrative in his Pauline Commentary

In Pelagius’ Pauline Commentary, using the same person narrative, Pelagius overlaid the subject of himself on the subject of Paul’s text and moreover he laid the third subject of the text-readers. This same person narrative of Pelagius I introduced in another article, particularly in the context of equality of man and woman.⁴⁹ In the commentary concerning Christ’s life and death, Pelagius’ same-person-narrative, that is, threefold-subject commentary, should also be pointed out. For example, to Paul’s text about the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans, Pelagius commented, “So that each one seeks the salvation of the other as his own, in the same way that Christ saved everyone from death by his own death. […] He took us upon himself while we were ungodly;

how much more, then, should we who are like one another, support each other?"50 The reader of the commentary, read the subject of ‘we’ here as ‘we’ of Paul and his disciples and as ‘we’ of Pelagius and his followers, and moreover as ‘we’ of the readers themselves. It is obvious that Pelagius aimed with this same-person narrative for the very awakening of the spontaneity of the Christian readers in their unique, specific, personal conditions of their concrete histories.

Decisively different from Augustine’s emphasis of universality of corrupted human nature and Christ as its redemptor, Pelagius as well as Basil and Rufinus thought that in the every decision by every human free will to imitate Christ’s life and death as an example, the grace from God was concretely and livingly expressed in the unique, specific and personal history of believers. For Pelagius, the imitating of Christ, that is theosis, and various ascetical exercises, all of which were achieved by free will as the expression of God’s grace on every individual’s human nature as well as God’s grace itself, all represent human participation in making concrete the mystique of Christ’s incarnation, that is, our personal unique participation in God’s Oikonomia.

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