

**PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI
COMMON PLACES:
ON FREE WILL
& ON THE LAW**

Translated and Edited by Joseph A. Tipton

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Front cover image taken from Hans Asper, *Pietro Vermigli* (1560; National Portrait Gallery, London)

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VOLUME INTRODUCTION

Joseph A. Tipton

THE PRESENT volume comprises chapters two and three of the second book of Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Common Places*.¹ These chapters offer a broad selection of the Italian reformer's thinking on matters pertaining to the topics of free will and the law. Yet it would be unfair to the reformer to attempt to evaluate his thinking on these subjects on the basis of what is contained in these two chapters alone. Being extracts compiled by Robert Masson² for the first edition of the *Common Places* (printed in London in 1576) and taken from various biblical commentaries Vermigli composed throughout his lifetime, they are oriented to specific biblical passages and to questions those passages raised for Vermigli, and at many a point they betray this exegetical orientation. Exegesis is notoriously different than a formal treatment. That said, there still

¹ Vermigli's discussion of free will and the law follows his treatment of original sin in the first chapter. One can see why Vermigli's editors decided upon this sequence, since the idea of the bondage of man's will is the logical result of his fall and subsequent enslavement to sin.

² Robert Masson, or Robert le Maçon, Sieur de la Fontaine, was the Huguenot minister of the French congregation in London at the time. His involvement in the compilation of Vermigli's *Loci* speaks to the latter's influence on both English and French Protestants. For the printing history of the *Loci* see Joseph C. McClelland, "A Literary History of the *Loci Communes*," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. Torrance Kirby, Emilio Campi, and Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 489.

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clearly emerges from these chapters a coherent set of ideas distinctive to Vermigli and his generation of reformers that deserve special attention, especially with regard to free will.

First, Vermigli's method deserves attention. For centuries before Vermigli, western Christianity approached such topics as free will and the law through the analytical apparatus developed by the scholastic theologians of the High Middle Ages. This approach involved the application of rigorous logic within a tight framework of question and response in an effort to reconcile apparent contradictions, especially those between the Bible and what survived of Aristotle's writings, which were transmitted to Europe via Arabic translations. It was a philosophico-theological approach, making use of a special brand of Latin developed to convey the precise jargon scholastic disputations required.

Vermigli, on the other hand, lived and worked on the other side of Italian humanism. This movement, with notable exceptions,³ discarded the scholastic approach in favor of one based on the rhetorical canons of Cicero and Quintilian. The result was not just a more classical Latin, but the use of a wider swathe of source material going far beyond the Aristotelian corpus; a close, philological reading of biblical passages with a view to the context and rhetorical aim of the writer (a technique referred to as "logical analysis" by Irena Backus);⁴ and a preference for commentary over theological treatise, all conveyed in a conversational, yet decidedly rhetorical, tone.⁵ Hence Vermigli shares with his humanist compat-

³ E.g., Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Piero Pomponazzi moved in humanist circles yet continued to employ scholastic method to good effect.

⁴ Irena Backus, "Biblical Hermeneutics and Exegesis," in *OER* 1:152–58. Also, Irena Backus, "Piscator Misconstrued? Some Remarks on Robert Rollock's Logical Analysis of Hebrews IX," in "Text, Translation and Exegesis of Hebrews IX: Papers Presented at a Seminar Held at the IHR, Geneva on 14–15 June 1982," special issue, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Spring 1984): 113–19.

⁵ See, for example, Vermigli's use of *hypophora* and *peritropē* in *On Free Will*,

riots a discursive style that moves easily from topic to topic, question to question.

On the subject of source material, many have observed that the humanists did not fault the scholastics for their slavish obsession with *an* ancient authority, but rather for their slavish obsession with *one* ancient authority. The humanists had this in common with the scholastics: the development of their ideas typically involved analyzing what ancient authorities said rather than blazing new trails. The humanists preferred to range over a wider spectrum of ancient authors instead of fixating on just one or two. This humanist method could manifest itself in various forms. In the hands of thinkers like Lorenzo Valla, it proved to be an incisive tool for examining complex questions, assessing past ideas, and arriving at startlingly novel answers that often problematized an entire tradition. Often, however, it amounted to little more than essays with a wide range of citations lifted from antiquity to serve as proof-texts for one's position.

Vermigli discusses free will and the law in this humanist strain. He examines a long list of patristic writers and what they said on any given subject, and, in the end, he expresses his agreement with one. This approach is effective to varying degrees. It sometimes involves grappling with a single text and evaluating its importance, or even authenticity, along philological lines, as when Vermigli discusses a homily supposed to be by Chrysostom but whose authenticity he doubts because it is both self-contradictory and inconsistent with other works agreed to be by Chrysostom (*On Free Will*, section 14). Alternatively, it at times involves nothing more than citing authorities secondhand through Peter Lombard or the *Decretum Gratiani* (cf. chapter 3, section 9) and weighing what one Father said over against another.

Thus, when it comes to locating the *form* Vermigli's discourse takes, he is to be placed within this broad humanist exegetical tradi-

section 9, and *prosopopoeia* in *On Free Will*, section 21 (and the footnotes accompanying those sections).

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tion. On the other hand, when it comes to locating the tradition within which his *thought* should be placed, the situation becomes a little more complicated. While thinking in the West on free will is a subject of enormous dimensions, a useful paradigm was offered by the German historian of philosophy Heinz Heimsoeth in the first quarter of the twentieth century.⁶ Heimsoeth categorized the major western philosophical traditions according to their response to the problem of the individual's decision-making. They either privileged the intellect or regarded the will as the primary organ of human deliberation, and so of action, too. Heimsoeth quite naturally places the Greeks squarely in the intellectual tradition. In general, they regarded all human decision-making as ratiocinative. Given the requisite data, the mind chooses a course of action based on that information, and the will follows obediently; in fact, it "automatically abides by the outcome."⁷ So subservient and passive was the role the will was relegated to that in many of their discussions it often amounts to little more than desire, or a certain species of desire, rather than a discrete function of human psychology.⁸ This general attitude manifests itself specifically in Socrates's dictum that "nobody errs willingly" (on the grounds that everybody aims at the good; if anybody chooses a course of action that leads to what is detrimental, the cause must have been ignorance, because no one would willfully invite harm to oneself), as well as Aristotle's explanation of *akrasia* (the phenomenon of deciding to do something against one's better judgement) as failure to rightly apply the minor premise in a practical syllogism. For instance, if the major premise is, "Things sweet are to be avoided," and the minor premise is,

⁶ *Die Sechs Grossen Themen des Abendländischen Metaphysik und der Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Berlin: G. Stilke, 1922), 279–343, translated into English as Heinz Heimsoeth, *The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics and the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Ramon Betanzos (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 224–68. Any citations to this work will be in the more recent English translation.

⁷ Heimsoeth, *The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics*, 225.

⁸ Heimsoeth, *The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics*, 243.

“This particular thing is sweet,” the conclusion is, “This particular thing is to be avoided.” If one admits the veracity of the major premise, yet gobbles down a candy bar anyway, they, according to Aristotle, have experienced an intellective problem concerning the minor premise.⁹ In this way the Greek tradition on this topic was heavily weighted towards the primacy of the intellect over a very downgraded conceptualization of the will.

Heimsoeth then explores the early Christian, and specifically New Testament, view of decision-making and finds it to be a complete reversal of the Greek tradition. There the phenomenon of acting against one’s better judgement, of knowing what the good thing to do is, yet *willfully* refusing to do it (cf. Romans 7), indicates that early Christian thinking elevated the will and the role it plays in the human psychology not only to the status of a discrete function, but even gave it primacy over the intellect. Knowing what the good is offers little benefit; what matters is that one *want* it, and only God’s active intervention to reorient the individual’s will can cause him to want it. On a related note, Heimsoeth finds that the New Testament privileging of love over knowledge, *agape* over *gnosis*, is of a piece with this new emphasis on the will, since now the end-goal of life is not idle contemplation, but active communion with others and with God.¹⁰

After discussing how thinkers in the post-apostolic age reverted to the Greek tradition and their prioritizing the intellective side of deliberation, where pride of place goes to Origen, he dwells at length on Augustine, whose thinking on the will brought fundamental changes not just to theology, but to all subsequent Western thought. In short, Augustine restored New Testament anthropology to Christianity. Determining that *omnes nihil aliud quam voluntates sunt* (all people are nothing but wills), he completely inverted the relationship of willing and knowing. Whereas the Greek tradition

⁹ Cf. Risto Saarinen, *The Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 9–10.

¹⁰ Heimsoeth, *The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics*, 227–28.

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regarded action as resulting from the mind's reaching a verdict on a given set of data, then relaying to the will what the appropriate steps to take are, Augustine regarded the will as the primary driver of virtually all of human action—even to the point of determining what the mind knows. “A person does not love what he has come to know correctly, but rather,” Heimsoeth interprets Augustine, “he tries to know whatever he inwardly inclines toward.”¹¹ This means that the will is extremely influential on, if not determinative of, what the mind knows, as it plays a decisive role in selecting and directing what the mind will apprehend.¹² Therefore, the will is not only a discrete, but indeed an independent function that is not worked upon by the intellect or any other organ; it is a spontaneous power working upon the intellect.

Thus, in one sense, the will for Augustine is absolutely free, the prime mover of all the individual's affections, intellections, and actions. Yet it is this very absolute freedom that, paradoxically, explains the will's bondage. Due to original sin, the will has been re-oriented away from God, a movement that means the individual is completely alienated from God, since returning to God would require the will to cease to be the will. Needless to say, the individual's noetic powers cannot help, since they are powerless against the will; indeed, they are subordinate to it (thus authenticating the phenomenon of *akrasia* and the experience described by Paul in Romans 7 much more than previous thinking on the subject). So complete is this alienation from God that it is irreversible *as far as the individual's own powers are concerned*. Therefore, the only possibility of reorienting the individual back to God is God's grace—hence that heavy emphasis on grace in Augustine that earned him the moniker *doctor gratiae*. Yet it is to be noted that this robust doctrine

¹¹ Heimsoeth, *The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics*, 232.

¹² Heimsoeth, *The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics*, 232: This being the case, Heimsoeth remarks, knowledge requires less understanding and more attention (*Aufmerksamkeit*) to focus the mind on the data from which learning is to take place. Needless to say, Heimsoeth does not see Buridan's ass posing any real paradox for Augustine.

of grace and election is intimately linked to Augustine's construal of the relationship between intellect and will, will having the clear upper hand.

For Heimsoeth, Western thought eventually reverted to an intellectualist construal of decision-making in the scholastic system of Thomas Aquinas. Whereas thinkers such as Henry of Ghent, the Victorines, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham represent important developments in voluntaristic interpretation of both human and divine deliberation, it was Aristotelian Thomism that carried the day.¹³

Now, to return to Vermigli and his treatment of the will, his approach is perhaps best characterized as eclectic, a blend of the Aristotelian intellectualist construal with the Augustinian voluntarism. He begins his discussion of the will in good form with a definition:

Accordingly, the will is free when it embraces, as it likes, those decisions which are approved by the cognitive part of the mind. Thus, the nature of free will, while most evident in volition, has its roots in reason and those who wish to use this faculty correctly must above all see to it that there occur no error in their reasoning. Error usually occurs in two ways: We either fail to see what is just and unjust in the performance of our actions; or, if we see it, we err in our examination of the reasons that are brought forward for either side, for desire in us nearly always favors the weaker argument. This is why the stronger and better position is often dismissed and rejected. We see this sometimes happening in debates: Those who wish to defend the weaker side tend to adorn it with every sort of rhetorical flourish and embellishment so that the audience will be attracted to the polish and allure and not weigh the strength and soundness of the reasoning (*On Free Will*, section 1).

¹³ Heimsoeth, *The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics*, 238–44.

**PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI:
SECOND PART OF THE
COMMON PLACES**

SECOND CHAPTER

On free will

[Chapter 1: Free Will]

1. IT WILL now be worthwhile to discuss briefly the freedom of our will. For the moment we shall consider what degree of freedom has been left to us by the innate depravity resulting from original sin, especially since we are told to attribute completely to the grace of God whatever upright action we perform.

While the term *free will* does not occur in Scripture, the idea itself should not be considered fabricated or made up. The Greeks call it *αὐτεξούσιον*, which means *in one's own power* or *under one's own control*. Latin-speakers express the same idea when they say *arbitrii libertas*, that is, *freedom of will*. *Free* means that which does not follow the will of another, but its own, while *will* is thought to consist in our following, as we deem fit, the decisions we arrived at by reason. Accordingly, the will is free when it embraces, as it likes,¹ those decisions which are approved by the cognitive part of the mind. Thus, the nature of free will, while most evident in volition, has its roots in reason, and those who wish to use this faculty correctly must above all see to it that there occurs no error in their reasoning. Error usually occurs in two ways: We either fail to see what is just and unjust in the performance of our actions; or, if we see it, we err in our examination of the reasons that are brought forward for either side, for desire in us nearly always favors the weaker argument. This is why the stronger and better position is often dismissed and rejected. We see this sometimes happening in debates: Those who wish to defend the weaker side tend to adorn it with every sort of rhetorical flourish and embellishment so that the au-

¹ In saying *free* and *as it likes*, Vermigli is making use of an etymological argument, since in Latin the former is *libera* and the latter is *prout libuerit*.

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dience will be attracted to the polish and allure and not weigh the strength and soundness of the reasoning.

Furthermore, one should recognize that deliberation² does not address just any issue, but only those issues that are called *performative* (πρακτικά), that is, actions to be performed by us. Not everything that we pursue or reject requires deliberation. Some things are so clearly and undoubtedly good that it is enough for them to be proposed, for they are immediately either chosen or rejected, such as happiness, unhappiness, life, death, and whatever else is in this class. Other things are less clear, or rather occupy middle ground. It is about these that people tend to deliberate. Everybody admits without hesitation that God is to be worshiped. However, *how* he is to be worshiped and in what ceremonies is the subject of the greatest controversy. Everybody knows that it is expedient for people to come together in cities and cultivate community with each other, but by what laws they are to be governed and what form of government they should use are questions that often give rise to deep uncertainty. It is in these and similar questions that free will applies.

2. I define free will as follows: It is the faculty by which we either espouse or reject, as we like, those decisions that have been made by reason. Now, it cannot be laid out in one simple response whether or not men have such a faculty, or how it operates in them. It is first necessary to determine man's state and condition. At least four different states are found in man: One state, and far different, was Adam's when he was created in the beginning. There was another after he fell. This is the current state of his entire progeny. Further, those who have been reborn in Christ enjoy a much better state than those who live outside of Christ. Yet we are going to enjoy the happiest and freest of states when we put off this mortal body. We will therefore respond to the proposed question in the context of these four conditions.

² I.e., deliberation as the exercise and activity of the human will.

[Chapter 2: The States of the Will]

WE MUST believe that from the first moment of his creation Adam was free. Before this idea can be fleshed out, a distinction must be made among three types of actions that take place in us. Of these actions some are natural, as being sick, being healthy, being nourished, digesting food, and other such things. In these actions, while the first man enjoyed a much more blessed existence than we do at present, he was still subject to a kind of necessity, for he had to eat and be nourished and consume food, yet he was exempt from all the adversities that could cause death. There are other actions that, from a civil or moral perspective, are either just or unjust. The third type is those actions that are pleasing and gratifying to God.

As far as all of these types are concerned, man was from the beginning created free, since he was made in the image of God, for whom nothing is more fitting than true and genuine freedom. Also, it is written about him, “God crowned him with glory and honor” [Psalm 8:5], and “though he was honored, he did not understand” [Psalm 48:21]. Now, what honor can there be when there is no freedom? Finally, God put what he had created under man’s control. If he had been created a slave to his passions and desires, he could certainly have never exercised true dominion over them in right reason. However, since Scripture leaves us in the dark concerning what that state was, nothing can be determined with certainty. In his *On Rebuke and Grace* Augustine says, “The aid of God’s grace was conferred on Adam, yet such was the aid that he

could relinquish it, when he wished, and could remain in it, if he wished, yet it could not bring about his wishing.”¹

On this score, Augustine goes so far as to set the grace that we now possess through Christ above the grace that Adam had in paradise, for now by the grace of Christ we not only persevere, provided we are willing, but, as Paul says, thanks to it, we also possess both the willing and its accomplishment, since the heart of believers is changed and they are transformed from those who do not will into those who do; by contrast, in the first man, the capacity to will depended on his will alone and was not brought about in him by God’s grace. Explaining why God bestowed free will on Adam when he was first created, Augustine says in book two of *On Free Will* that God had ordained to demonstrate his goodness and justice towards him. He intended to show his goodness towards him if he acted rightly, a thing of course he could not have done unless he had been free; if, on the other hand, he acted shamefully and badly, God intended to exercise the severity of his justice towards him. As it turned out, in his freedom he fell miserably.² Just as Christ tells how a man coming down from Jerusalem to Jericho came upon robbers and was terribly beaten by them, likewise Adam was left in a half-dead and desperate state, not only losing his garment and ornaments of distinction, but receiving many wounds as well.

3. Consequently, we assert that, as far as the second state is concerned, since we are alienated from Christ, we retain very little freedom, for we are subject to the necessities of nature and, whether we wish it or not, are afflicted by diseases and finally subdued by death. There is, however, a degree of freedom, as far as civil and moral actions are concerned, as these fall within natural knowledge and do not exceed the powers of our will, even though in the case of these actions, too, people experience considerable distress be-

¹ Augustine, *De correptione et gratia* 31 (*On Rebuke and Grace*, NPNF 1/5:484).

² Vermigli appears to be paraphrasing Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 2.204–[205](#).

cause their mad desires work against moral uprightness. Enticements and delights constantly batter our senses. These are compounded by wicked persuaders. Satan also constantly prods and pushes. Envying humanity's advantages and aware that civilization is held together by moral actions, he is eager to overturn them by all means.

And yet the many good laws issued by Lycurgus, Solon, Numa, and others show that man's powers are quite efficacious in this civil sphere, at least as far as his judgement is concerned. Similarly, Paul says to the Romans, "Do you think, O man, that you will escape God's judgment, when you commit the same acts that you judge?" [Rom. 2:3]. There are, moreover, two considerations in this sphere that must not be overlooked. The first is that God makes full use of men's will for the purposes that he himself ordains. The second, which follows from the previous one, is that the outcomes aimed at by those engaged in civil affairs are not realized, for often entirely different outcomes come about than they would have ever imagined. This frequently caused pagans a great deal of distress. Pompey, Cato, and Cicero thought they had devised outstanding courses of action, but when they came to nothing, nothing was left to their devisers but despair. Foiled in their plans, they blamed the entire failure on fortune and chance.

But Jeremiah declares that the issue of actions and the outcome of plans are in God's hands, when he says, "The way of man is not his own, nor is it in the power of a man to direct his steps" [10:23]. The Jews interpret this passage as relating to Nebuchadnezzar. They say that he set out to wage war against the Ammonites, not against the Jews, as is related in Ezekiel 21 [v. 20–21]. However, when he came to where two ways met, he began to deliberate, consulted entrails, teraphim, and lots by the gleam of a sword,³ and having gained guidance in this way, disregarded the Ammonites, invaded Judaea, and laid siege to Jerusalem.

³ In the reading "lots by the gleam of the sword" in Ezekiel 21:21 (v. 26 in the Hebrew Bible), one gets insight into Vermigli's use of Hebrew and the rabbinic tradition in studying the Bible. For the Masoretic קלקל בחצים,

These two ideas, that God is the author of plans and gives what outcome he wants to actions, are not lost on the godly. Accordingly, they do not make any decisions touching upon themselves without adding the proviso “if God wishes,” a thing James teaches should be done. Similarly, in his letter to the Romans, Paul says that he desires to have a favorable journey to them, yet according to God’s will [Rom. 1:10]. For this reason, if matters turn out otherwise than they hoped, they have consolation, knowing that God their excellent Father makes better provisions for his kingdom and their own welfare than they themselves could have done. They always have on their lips what David sang, “Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it have labored in vain” [Psalm 127:1]. They are therefore concerned to adapt their plans to God’s Word. They commit the outcome to God, and thus they live unperturbed from every direction.

4. However, since men are alienated from God, they have no freedom when it comes to actions that are to be pleasing and approved before him. Hence Augustine says in his *Enchiridion*, that man destroyed both himself and his free will by misusing his free will, for sin won the contest and reduced man to servitude.⁴ I know that there are some who interpret Augustine’s statement as saying Adam lost free will as far as grace and glory are concerned, but not

the Vulgate reads “mixing up arrows” (*commiscens sagittas*), while the LXX reads, evidently, “tossing up a staff” (τοῦ ἀναβράσαι ῥάβδον). It is customarily rendered in English translations as “shaking arrows.” The fact that Vermigli interprets it as taking “lots by the gleam of a sword” (*sortes ex fulgore gladii*) betrays his use of the thirteenth-century Provençal Jewish Rabbi David Kimhi, who mentions this divinatory practice in his commentary on Ezekiel. See David b. Joseph Kimhi, “Commentary on Ezekiel,” in ספר יחזקאל [Mikra’ot Gedolot ‘Haketer’: A Revised and Scientific of ‘Mikra’ot Gedolot,’ Based on the Aleppo Codex and Early Medieval MSS: Ezekiel], ed. Menachem Cohen (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2000), 137–38. For more on Vermigli’s activity in Hebraic studies, see Max Engammare, “Humanism, Hebraism, and Scriptural Hermeneutics,” in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. Torrance Kirby et al., 161–74.

⁴ Augustine, *Enchiridion* 30 (*Enchiridion*, NPNF 1/3:247).

as concerns his nature. I am not, to be sure, going to take great pains here to deny that reason and will—which are parts of our nature—have been left to man after the fall; but they themselves cannot deny that that same nature is crippled and wounded. This even the teacher of the *Sentences* asserts in book two, distinction twenty-five.⁵ He says that now after the fall man is in the position where he can sin and, what is more, cannot not sin. And even if Augustine and others had not made this assertion, a compelling argument could demonstrate it: Godly actions result from two sources, knowledge and appetite. Regarding knowledge Paul says, “The natural man does not comprehend the things that belong to the spirit of God; indeed, he is not even able, since they are foolishness to him” [1 Cor. 2:13]. Now, if we do not perceive⁶ what we are to do and what is pleasing to God, how indeed are we able to carry it out in action?

Furthermore, it is clear from Genesis 6 how our appetite and knowledge are related to them (i.e., the things of the spirit of God). God says, “My spirit will not contend with man forever, because he is flesh” [Gen. 6:3]; and a little later, “God saw that great was men’s wickedness and everything produced in the thoughts of his heart aimed at only evil all his days” [Gen. 6:5]; and in chapter 8: “What is produced by the heart of man is evil right from his infancy” [Gen. 8:21]. It is God himself who says these things, and on the topic of our powers we are to believe nobody more than our Potter, whenever he bears testimony about his handiwork. In Jeremiah 18, the people say, “We will follow our thoughts” [v. 12]. Commenting on this passage Jerome writes, “Therefore, without God’s grace, where is the power of free will and the judgment of one’s own volition, seeing that following one’s own thoughts and carrying out the will of a depraved heart is an outrageous offense against

⁵ Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 2.25.

⁶ Vermigli’s language strengthens his argument. In saying “if we do not perceive,” he uses the word *cognoscimus*, which recalls the “knowledge,” *cognitio*, mentioned just above.

God?”⁷ Christ teaches us in John that we are subject to servitude: “He who commits sin is a slave to sin” [John 8:34]. Therefore, since we commit many sins and bear sin innately from our mother’s womb, we must necessarily admit that we are slaves. But we will truly be free if the Son sets us free; otherwise, we are slaves in the bitterest of slaveries. For this reason Paul said he was sold under sin [Rom. 7:14]—so sold as to confess that nothing good inhabited his flesh—and did what he did not want and what he hated [Rom. 7:18–19]; he sensed another law in his limbs, opposing the law of his mind and taking him captive to the law of sin [Rom. 7:23]. To the Galatians he says the flesh fights against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that we do not do what we want [Gal. 5:17].

If this is true in the case of so great an apostle and in the case of holy individuals born again through Christ, what is one to think of the ungodly who do not belong to Christ? They cannot approach him unless they are drawn. Christ says, “Nobody can come to me, unless My Father draws him” [John 6:44]. Augustine makes the point that a person who wants to come beforehand of his own volition is not *drawn*, but *led*. Therefore, if we have to be *drawn* to Christ, we do not wish it beforehand, which is a very serious sin. And we do not wish, because the wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; indeed, it is not even able to be subject [Rom. 8:7]. All who have not been liberated through Christ live under the law and, as Paul adds in Galatians, under a curse [3:10]. This would not be true if they were able to obey God’s law, since only those who transgress the law become liable to a curse. Moreover, Paul clearly states, “It is not of the one who wills or runs, but of God who has mercy” [Rom. 9:16]. Our salvation is *his* work, not our ability’s. He is the one who works in us both the will and its accomplishment [Phil. 2:13]. Before he brings that about, if he has any interaction with us either through the law or through the teaching of his Word, it is with

⁷ Jerome, *Commentarii in Jeremiam Prophetam* 4.18.11–13 (PL 24:797B).

stones that he has interaction. Our hearts are stone, unless Christ transforms them into flesh. In Ezekiel he promises that he will do this, and that he will cause us to walk in his precepts [11:12].

And clearly if we were able to live justly and rightly without grace, we would also be able to be justified by our works, an idea that is flatly rejected by both Paul and all of Scripture. Jeremiah says, “Turn me, LORD, and I will be turned” [Jer. 31:18]. David says, “Create in me a clean heart, God” [Psalm 51:10]. From chapter 29 of Deuteronomy we realize that this is not done in everybody’s case, where it is written, “The LORD did not give you all eyes to see or an ear to hear or a heart to understand” [v. 4]. In chapter 30, God promises to circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their seed so that they can walk in his precepts [v. 6]. He both begins and completes our salvation. Paul says to the Philippians, “I expect that He who began [a good work]⁸ in you will see it through to the day of Christ” [Phil. 1:6]. Realizing this, holy men pray with David, “Incline my heart to your statutes” [Psalm 119:36], and with Solomon, “May the LORD incline our hearts so that we walk in His ways” [1 Kings 8:58], and with Paul to the Thessalonians, “May God direct your hearts in patience and anticipation of Christ” [2 Thess. 3:5]. Similarly, Solomon says in Proverbs, “The heart of a king is in God’s hand; he will direct it wherever he wishes” [Prov. 21:1]. These passages are sufficient to show that our turning to him and doing good are the work of God.

⁸ These words are omitted in Vermigli’s quotation.