V

THE POLITICS OF PARADISE

ARE HUMAN BEINGS CAPABLE OF governing themselves? Defiant Christians hounded as criminals by the Roman government emphatically answered *yes.* But in the fourth and fifth centuries, after the emperors themselves became patrons of Christianity, the majority of Christians gradually came to say *no.* Early Christian spokesmen, like Jews before them and the American colonists long after, had claimed to find in the biblical creation account divine sanction for declaring their independence from governments they considered corrupt and arbitrary. The Hebrew creation account of Genesis 1, unlike its Babylonian counterpart, claims that God gave the power of earthly rule to *adam*—not to the king or emperor but simply to "mankind" (and some even thought this might include women).[1] Most Christian apologists in the first three centuries would have agreed with Gregory of Nyssa, who followed rabbinic tradition by explaining that after God created the world "as a royal dwelling place for the future king,"[2] he made humanity "as a being fit to exercise royal rule" by creating it "the living image of the universal King."[3] Consequently, Gregory concludes, "the soul immediately shows its royal and exalted character, far removed as it is from the lowliness of private station, in that it owns no master, and is self-governed, ruled autocratically by its own will."[4] Besides dominion over the earth and animals, this gift of sovereignty conveys the quality of moral freedom:

> Preeminent among all is the fact that we are free from any necessity, and not in bondage to any power, but have decision in our own power as we please; for virtue is a voluntary thing, subject to no dominion. Whatever is the result of compulsion and force cannot be virtue.[5]

Many Christian converts of the first three centuries—centuries in which civil authorities treated the church as a subversive sect—regarded the proclamation of αὐτεξουσία—the moral freedom to rule oneself—as virtually synonymous with "the gospel."

Yet with Augustine, in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, this message changed. The work of his later years, in which he radically broke with many of his predecessors, and even with his own earlier convictions, effectively transformed much of the teaching of the Christian faith. Instead of the freedom of the will and humanity's original royal dignity, Augustine emphasizes humanity's enslavement to sin. Humanity is sick, suffering, and helpless, irreparably damaged by the fall,[6] for that "original sin," Augustine insists, involved nothing else than Adam's prideful attempt to establish his own autonomous self-government.[7] Astonishingly, Augustine's radical views prevailed, eclipsing for future generations of western Christians the consensus of more than three centuries of Christian tradition.

As he matured, Augustine repudiated the Manichaean version of Christian doctrine he had embraced as an enthusiastic young seeker, a doctrine that categorically denied the goodness of creation and the freedom of the will. Augustine, the chastened convert, now claimed to accept Catholic orthodoxy, and affirmed both. But, as he grasped for ways to understand his own tumultuous experience, Augustine concluded that the qualities of that original state of creation no longer applied—at least not directly—to human experience in the present. Humanity, once given the unflawed glory of creation and the freedom of the will, actually enjoyed these only in those brief primordial moments in Paradise. Ever since the fall, they have been apprehended only in moments of inspired imagination, and even then but partially. For all practical purposes they are wholly lost.

Given the intense inner conflicts involving his passionate nature and the struggle to control sexual impulses he reveals in his *Confessions,* Augustine's decision to abandon his predecessors' emphasis on free will need not surprise us. Much more surprising, in fact, is the result. Why did the majority of Latin Christians, instead of repudiating Augustine's idiosyncratic views as marginal—or rejecting them as heretical—eventually embrace them? Why did his teaching on "original sin" become the center of western Christian tradition,

displacing, or at least wholly recasting, all previous views of creation and free will?

The political and social situation of Christians in the early centuries had changed radically by Augustine's time. Traditional declarations of human freedom, forged by martyrs defying the emperor as anti-Christ incarnate, no longer fit the situation of Christians who now found themselves, under Constantine and his Christian successors, the emperor's "brothers and sisters in Christ." But Augustine's theory conformed to this new situation and interpreted the new arrangement of state, church, and believer in ways that, many agreed, made religious sense of the new political realities.

Both Augustine and his Christian opponents recognized the political dimensions of the controversy, yet none of them discussed government in what we would consider strictly political terms. Instead, since everyone agreed that the story of Adam and Eve offered a basic paradigm for ordering human society, argument over the role of government most often took the form of conflicting interpretations of that story. Let us consider, then, how Augustine and his predecessors—taking as their representative John Chrysostom—read, in opposite ways, the politics of Paradise.

Both John Chrysostom and Augustine, born around the year 354,[8] had grown up in an empire nominally Christian. During the forty years since Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 313, Christian emperors not only had reversed the orders of persecution but had poured magnanimous benefits upon the Christian churches. John was a young priest in Antioch when a public riot against the emperor's taxation policies had broken out, and angry crowds had smashed the statues of the emperor and his family. Rumors of the emperor's rage and his planned retribution preceded his return to Antioch. Yet John, so famous for his riveting speeches that he was later nicknamed *chrysostom,* "golden mouth," in this time of public crisis boldly declared to the crowds that the right of government belongs not to the emperor alone but to the human race as a whole: "In the beginning, God honored our race with sovereignty." For, John asked rhetorically, what else does it mean that God made us "in his image"? "The image of government [νῆς ἀρχῆς] is what is meant; and as there is no one in the heavens superior to God, so there is no one on earth superior to humankind."[9]

John's listeners, concerned with the immediate political crisis, might have wondered at first what he meant in specific political

terms. Would the priest go on to say that the emperor embodied *in himself* the sovereignty God bestowed upon Adam? Did the emperor now represent God's rule to the rest of humankind, as some Christians previously had argued? John answered no to such questions. Instead he agreed with Gregory of Nyssa, who declared that since "any particular man is limited . . . the entire plentitude of humanity was included" in God's good gift of his own royal image:

> For the image is not in part of our nature, *nor is the divine gift in any single person . . . but this power extends equally to the whole race;* and a sign of this is that the mind is implanted alike in all; for all have the power of understanding and reflecting. . . . *they equally bear within themselves the divine image.*[10]

John wrote:

> For of governments, some are natural [φυσικαί], and others artificial [χειροτονηταί]: natural, such as the rule of the lion over the quadrupeds, or the eagle over the birds; artificial, as of an emperor over us; for he does not reign over his fellow slaves by any natural authority. Therefore it happens that emperors often lose their sovereignty.[11]

As John saw it, imperial rule epitomizes the social consequences of sin. Like his persecuted Christian predecessors, John ridiculed imperial propaganda that claimed that the state rests upon concord, justice, and liberty. On the contrary, he said, the state relies upon force and compulsion, often using these to violate justice and to suppress liberty. But because the majority of humankind followed Adam's example in sinning, government, however corrupt, has become indispensable and, for this reason, even divinely endorsed:

> [God] himself has armed magistrates with power. . . . God provides for our safety through them. . . . If you were to abolish the public court system, you would abolish all order from our life. . . . If you deprive the city of its rulers, we would have to live a life less rational than that of the animals, biting and devouring one another. . . . For what crossbeams are in houses, rulers are in cities, and just as, if you were to take away the former, the walls, being separated, would fall in upon one another, so, if you were to deprive the world of magistrates and the fear that comes from them, houses, cities, and nations would fall upon one another in unrestrained confusion, there being no one to repress, or repel, or persuade them to be peaceful through the fear of punishment.[12]

John believes that because of human sin, fear and coercion have infected the whole structure of human relationships, from family to city and nation. Everywhere he sees the disastrous results: "Now we are subjected to one another by force and compulsion, and every day we are in conflict with one another."[13]

While granting that the imperial system preserves social order, he charges that it tolerates—or, worse, even enforces—injustice, immorality, and inequality. Roman laws, John says, are, "for the most part, corrupt, useless, and ridiculous." They expose to torture or execution the man who steals clothes or money, but they ignore worse crimes: "Who would be considered wiser, by most people, than the persons considered worthy to legislate for the cities and nations? But yet to these wise men sexual immorality is unworthy of punishment; at least, none of the pagan laws . . . bring men to trial for this reason."[14] Chrysostom explains specifically what kind of case he has in mind: "If a married man has intercourse with a female slave, it seems to be nothing to pagan laws, nor to people in general."[15] Most people, he admits, would laugh at anyone who tried to bring such a case to court, and the judge would dismiss it. The same is true for a married man involved with an unmarried woman or with a prostitute. Roman law protects only the man's rights in such cases, but, Chrysostom declares, "we are punished, though not by the Roman laws, yet by God."[16]

Roman laws, John continues, allow dealers to enslave children and to train them in sexual specialties for sale as prostitutes. And pagan tradition praises the legislators as "common benefactors of the city" for instituting public entertainment that features, in the theaters, prostitutes and prostituted children and, in the sports arena, contests between men and wild animals:

> Those places, too, being full of all senseless excitement, train the people to acquire a merciless and savage and inhuman kind of temperament, and give them practice in seeing people torn in pieces, and blood flowing, and the viciousness of wild beasts upsetting everything. Now all these our wise lawgivers introduced from the beginning—so many plagues—and our cities applaud and admire them.[17]

So much for the masses; but what about the few who, chastened by the example of Adam's sin, and recovered from sin through baptism, exercise appropriate restraint over themselves? Such persons, Chrysostom declares, remain exempt from the punishment that

falls upon the corrupt majority—exempt, in fact, from the constraints of human government as a whole: "For those who live in a state of piety require no correction on the part of the magistrates, for 'the law was not made for a righteous man.' But the more numerous, if they had no fear of these hanging over them, would fill the cities with innumerable evils."[18]

The tyranny of external government sharply contrasts with the liberty enjoyed by those capable of autonomous self-rule—above all, by those who, through Christian baptism, have recovered the capacity for self-government.[19] Chrysostom, like the apologists, identifies the former with the Roman Empire and the latter with the emerging new society that constitutes the Christian church: "There, everything is done through fear and constraint; here, through free choice and liberty."[20] The use of force, the driving energy of imperial society, is utterly alien to church government:

> Christians, more than all people, are not allowed to correct by force the faults of those who sin. Secular judges, indeed, when they have captured wrongdoers under the law, demonstrate that their authority is great by preventing them, even against their own will, from following their own desires; but in our case the wrongdoer most be corrected not by force, but by persuasion.[21]

What prevents church leaders from exercising the same authority as imperial magistrates, he explains, has nothing to do with lack of power, much less inferior status. On the contrary, he says, a priest's authority far *surpasses* the emperor's. What restrains a priest from attempting to use such authority, however, is religious principle:

> For neither has the authority of this kind to restrain sinners been given to us by law, *nor, if it had been given, should we have any place to exercise our power,* since God rewards those who abstain from evil out of their own choice, and not out of necessity. . . . If a person wanders away from the right path, great effort, perseverance, and patience are required; for he cannot be dragged back by force, nor restrained by fear, but must be led back by persuasion to the truth from which he originally swerved.[22]

The Christian leader, refraining not only from the use of force but even from the subtler pressures of fear and coercion, must evoke each member's voluntary participation. Failing that, he must respect, however misguided he considers it to be, each member's freedom of choice and action:

> We do not have "authority over your faith," beloved, nor do we command these things as your lords and masters. We are appointed for the teaching of the word, not for power, nor for absolute authority. We hold the place of counsellors to advise you. The counsellor speaks his own opinions, not forcing his listener, but *leaving him full master of his own choice in what is said.* He is blameworthy only in this respect, if he fails to say the things that present themselves.[23]

Church government, unlike Roman government, remains wholly voluntary and, although hierarchically structured, is essentially egalitarian, reflecting, in effect, the original harmony of Paradise.

Yet Chrysostom remains uncomfortably aware that the actual churches he knows in Antioch and Constantinople fall far short of such celestial harmony. Having inherited his vision of the church from such heroic predecessors as Justin, Athenagoras, Clement, and Origen, Chrysostom, measuring the church of his own day against theirs, alternatively grieves and lashes out in anger:

> Plagues, teeming with untold mischiefs, have come upon the churches. The primary offices have become marketable. Hence innumerable evils are arising, and there is no one to redress, no one to reprove them. Indeed, the disorder has taken on a kind of method and consistency of its own.[24]

Excessive wealth, enormous power, and luxury, Chrysostom charges, are destroying the integrity of the churches. Clerics, infected by the disease of "lust for authority," are fighting for candidates on the basis of family prominence, wealth, or partisanship. Others support the candidacy of their friends, relatives, or flatterers, "but no one will look to the man who is really qualified." They ignore, Chrysostom says, the only valid qualification, "excellence of character."[25] Pagans rightly ridicule the whole business: " 'Do you see,' they say, 'how all matters among the Christians are full of vainglory? And there is ambition among them, and hypocrisy. Strip them,' they say, 'of their numbers, and they are nothing.' "[26]

Could the vision forged by the embattled Christians of earlier times, who saw the church as an island of purity in an ocean of corruption, fit the circumstances of a state religion, a church that had come into imperial favor, wealth, and power? Chrysostom saw his church as still contending against powerful rivals.[27] He did not consider the possibility that his vision of the church, sanctioned by nearly four centuries of tradition, might no longer fit the situation of his

fellow Christians at the beginning of the fifth century. Now that the world had invaded the church and the church the world, new questions had arisen: How, for example, were Christians to envision the new role of a Christian emperor and the legitimacy of his rule, not only over unruly pagans, but over Christians themselves (notably including the increasing flood of nominal converts)? And how were Christians to account for the unsettling new prominence of the churches, in which becoming a bishop now guaranteed a man tax exemptions, vastly increased income, social power, and possibly even influence at court?

The traditional Christian answers to the question of power no longer applied by the later fourth century, when not only Constantine but several others, including Theodosius the Great, had ruled as Christian emperors. Augustine's opposite interpretation of the politics of Paradise—and, in particular, his insistence that the whole human race, including the redeemed, remains wholly incapable of self-government—offered Christians radically new ways to interpret this unprecedented situation.

Whereas Chrysostom proclaims human freedom, Augustine reads from the same Genesis story the opposite—human bondage. As for *αὐτεξουσία*, the power to rule oneself, Augustine cannot acknowledge it as a reality, or even a genuine good, in his own experience, let alone for all humanity. And Augustine begins his reflections on government, characteristically, with introspection.

Recalling in the *Confessions* his own experience, Augustine instinctively identifies the question of self-government with rational control over sexual impulses. Describing his struggle to be chaste, Augustine recalls how, "in the sixteenth year of the age of my flesh . . . the madness of raging lust exercised its supreme dominion over me."[28] Augustine was powerless, a captive and victim. Through sexual desire, he says, "my invisible enemy trod me down and seduced me."[29] Of his sexual involvements he admits, "I drew my shackles along with me, terrified to have them knocked off."[30] Acknowledging that his friend was "amazed at my enslavement," Augustine reflects that "what made me a slave to it was the habit [*consuetudo*] of satisfying an insatiable lust."[31]

Had Augustine confessed as much to a spiritual advisor such as John Chrysostom, he would have been urged to undo the chains that bound him to bad habits and to recover and strengthen, like unused muscles, his own neglected capacity for moral choice. But Augustine in his *Confessions* came directly to challenge such assumptions. Free

will is only an illusion—an illusion that Augustine himself once shared: "As for continence, I imagined it to be in the liberty of our own power, which I, for my part, felt I did not have."[32] As he grew older, Augustine changed his mind. Instead of indicting his own lack of faith in the power of free will, Augustine came to lash out at those who falsely assume that they *do* possess such power: "What man is there, who, being aware of his own weakness, dares so much as to attribute his chastity and innocence to his own virtue?"[33] The aging Augustine then takes his own experience as paradigmatic for all human experience—indeed, for Adam's: "Being a captive," he says, "I feigned a show of counterfeit liberty,"[34] as, he says, Adam had done, bringing upon himself and his progeny an avalanche of sin and punishment.

No wonder, then, that the Manichaean theory of human origins, which had "explained" the sense of helplessness he experienced, had at first attracted Augustine. He identified, too, with the way the Manichaeans interpreted the tendency to sin not simply as human weakness but (as the rabbis had taught of the "evil impulse," *yetser hara'*) as an internal energy actively resisting God's will. When he abandoned Manichaean theology, Augustine admitted he was at a loss to understand the Christian teaching on free will. Later he would claim, of course, that in denying the power of the will he was only repeating what Paul had said long before ("I do not do what I will, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it"; see Romans 7:15–25). Many Christians ever since—including that famous Augustinian monk Martin Luther—would find Augustine's interpretation of Paul's words persuasive. Yet such recent scholarly studies as the work of Peter Gorday confirm an impression that Augustine effectively *invented* this interpretation of Paul's words, by daring to apply them to the baptized Christian.[35] Augustine's Christian predecessors, including John Chrysostom and Origen, had assumed that Paul's statements about the will's incapacity applied only to those who lacked the grace of Christian baptism. Augustine himself acknowledged this and worked hard, he says, to understand the Catholic teaching (in his words) "that free will is the cause of our doing evil. . . . But I was not able to understand it clearly." Once he began to recognize the power of his own will, he says, "I knew that I had a will . . . and when I did either will or nill anything, I was more sure of it, that I and no other did will or nill; and here was the cause of my sin, as I came to perceive."[36] Yet far from relinquishing entirely the role of victim, Augustine says, "But

what I did *against* my will, that I seemed to suffer rather than do. That I considered not to be my fault, but my punishment."[37]

Through the agonizing process of his conversion Augustine claims to have discovered that he was bound by conflict within his own will:

> I was bound, not with another man's chains, but with my own iron will. The enemy held my will, and, indeed, made a chain of it for me, and constrained me. Because of a perverse will, desire was made; and when I was enslaved to desire [*libido*] it became habit; and habit not restrained became necessity. By which links . . . a very hard bondage had me enthralled.[38]

Augustine came to see his own will, then, divided and consequently impotent: "Myself I willed it, and myself I nilled it: it was I myself. I neither willed entirely, nor nilled entirely. Therefore I was in conflict with myself, and . . . was distracted by my own self."[39] How did he account for such conflict? Augustine insists that, since he suffered much of this "against my own will, . . . I was not, therefore, the cause of it, but the 'sin that dwells in me': from the punishment of that *more voluntary sin, because I was a son of Adam.*"[40]

In his earlier writings, as Edward Cranz points out, Augustine expresses views on human freedom and self-government that virtually echo those of his predecessors, such as Chrysostom.[41] But in the fourteenth chapter of *The City of God* Augustine seems intent on proving that, even if Adam once had free will, he himself had never received it. Even in his account of Adam's case Augustine betrays his own ambivalence or, indeed, outright hostility toward the possibility of human freedom. What earlier apologists had celebrated as God's greatest gift to humankind—free will, liberty, autonomy, self-government—Augustine characterizes in surprisingly negative terms. Adam had received freedom as his birthright, but nonetheless, as Augustine tells it, the first man "conceived a desire for freedom,"[42] and his desire became, in Augustine's eyes, the root of sin, betraying nothing less than contempt for God. The desire to master one's will, far from expressing what Origen, Clement, and Chrysostom consider the true nature of rational beings, becomes for Augustine the great and fatal temptation: "The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is personal control over one's own will" *(proprium voluntatis arbitrium).*[43] Augustine cannot resist reading that desire for self-government as total, obstinate perversity: "The soul, then, delighting in its own freedom *to do wickedness,* and scorning to serve God

. . . willfully deserted its higher master."[44] Seduced by this desire for autonomy, Adam entered into a "life of cruel and wretched slavery instead of the freedom for which he had conceived a desire."[45]

Uncomfortably aware of a contradiction in his argument, Augustine explains that obedience, not autonomy, should have been Adam's true glory, "since man has been naturally so created that it is advantageous for him to be submissive, but disastrous for him to follow his own will, and not the will of his creator."[46] Admitting that "it does, indeed, seem something of a paradox,"[47] Augustine resorts to paradoxical language to describe how God "sought to impress upon this creature, for whom free slavery [*libera servitus*] was expedient, that he was the Lord."[48] Augustine insists, however, that whatever the constraints upon Adam's freedom, the first man was more free than any of his progeny, for only the story of Adam's misuse of free will can account for the contradictions he discovered within himself, his own will caught in perpetual conflict, "much of which I suffered against my own will, rather than did by my will."[49]

Augustine knows that most of his Christian contemporaries would find this claim incredible, if not heretical. John Chrysostom, indeed, warns the fainthearted not to blame Adam for their own transgressions. Answering one who asks, "What am I to do? Must I die because of him?," he replies, "It is not because of him; for you yourself have not remained without sin. Even though it is not the same sin, you have, at any rate, committed others."[50] That Adam's sin brought suffering and death upon humankind most Christians, like their Jewish predecessors and contemporaries, would have taken for granted. But most Jews and Christians would also have agreed that Adam left each of his offspring free to make his or her own choice of good or evil. The whole point of the story of Adam, most Christians assumed, was to warn everyone who heard it not to misuse that divinely given capacity for free choice.

But Augustine, intending to prove the opposite point, laboriously attempts to show that Adam, far from being the single individual Chrysostom envisioned, was instead a corporate personality. Pointing out that Adam's genesis from earth differs essentially from that of any of his progeny born through childbirth, Augustine declares:

> The entire human race that was to pass through woman into offspring was contained in the first man when that married couple received the divine sentence condemning them to punishment,

> and *humanity produced what humanity became, not what it was when created, but when, having sinned, it was punished.*[51]

The punishment itself, Augustine continues, "effected in their original nature a change for the worse." Augustine derived the nature of that change from an idiosyncratic interpretation of Romans 5:12.

The Greek text reads, "Through one man [or "because of one man," δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου] sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and thus death came upon all men, *in that* [ἐφ' ᾧ] all sinned." John Chrysostom, like most Christians, took this to mean that Adam's sin brought death into the world, and death came upon all because "*all* sinned." But Augustine read the passage in Latin, and so either ignored or was unaware of the connotations of the Greek original; thus he misread the last phrase as referring to Adam. Augustine insisted that it meant that "death came upon all men, *in whom* all sinned"—that the sin of that "one man," Adam, brought upon humanity not only universal death, but also universal, and inevitable, sin. Augustine uses the passage to deny that human beings have free moral choice, which Jews and Christians had traditionally regarded as the birthright of humanity made "in God's image." Augustine declares, on the contrary, that the whole human race inherited from Adam a nature irreversibly damaged by sin. "For we all were in that one man, since all of us were that one man who fell into sin through the woman who was made from him."[52]

How can one imagine that millions of individuals not yet born were "in Adam" or, in any sense, "were" Adam? Anticipating objections that would reduce his argument to absurdity, Augustine declares triumphantly that, although "we did not yet have individually created and apportioned forms in which to live as individuals," what did exist already was the "nature of the semen from which we were to be propagated."[53] That semen itself, Augustine argues, already "shackled by the bond of death," transmits the damage incurred by sin.[54] Hence, Augustine concludes, every human being ever conceived through semen already is born contaminated with sin. Through this astonishing argument,[55] Augustine intends to prove that every human being is in bondage not only from birth but indeed from the moment of conception. And since he takes Adam as a corporate personality, Augustine applies his account of Adam's experience, disrupted by the first sin, to every one of his offspring (except, of course, to Christ, conceived, Augustine ingeniously argued, without semen).

When he describes the onset of original sin in Adam, Augustine chooses political language—and specifically the language of sexual politics.[56] He describes his experience of passion in political metaphors—as "rebellion" against the mind's governance. For in the beginning, when there was only one man in the world, Adam discovered within himself the first government—the rule of the rational soul, the "better part of a human being," over the body, the "inferior part." Augustine, influenced, no doubt, by his study of Platonic philosophy, characterizes their respective roles in political terms: the soul by divine right is to subjugate every member of its "lower servant," the body, to the ruling power of its will. Within Adam as within Eve both soul and body originally obeyed the authority of rational will: "Although they bore an animal body, yet they felt in it no disobedience moving against themselves. . . . Each received the body as a servant . . . and the body obeyed God . . . in an appropriate servitude, without resistance."[57]

But the primal couple soon experienced within themselves not only the first government on earth but also the first revolution. Adam's assertion of his own autonomy was, Augustine insists, tantamount to rebellion against God's rule. Augustine appreciates the aptness with which the punishment for this uprising fits the crime: "The punishment for disobedience was nothing other than disobedience. For human misery consists in nothing other than man's disobedience to himself."[58] Augustine stresses, however, that the penalty for sin involves more than bodily impulses rebelling against the mind. Instead, the "flesh" that wars against the "law of the mind" includes, he says, the "whole of one's natural being."[59] The commonest experiences of frustration—mental agitation, bodily pain, aging, suffering, and death—continually prove to us our incapacity to implement the rule of our will, for who would undergo any of these, Augustine asks, if our nature "in every way and every part obeyed our will?"[60]

But what epitomizes our rebellion against God, above all, is the "rebellion in the flesh"—a spontaneous uprising, so to speak, in the "disobedient members":

> After Adam and Eve disobeyed . . . they felt for the first time a movement of disobedience in their flesh, as punishment in kind for their own disobedience to God. . . . The soul, which had taken a perverse delight in its own liberty and disdained to serve God, was now deprived of its original mastery over the body.[61]

Specifically, Augustine concludes, "the sexual desire [*libido*] of our disobedient members arose in those first human beings as a result of the sin of disobedience . . . and because a shameless movement [*impudens motus*] resisted the rule of their will, they covered their shameful members."[62] At first, the Adam and Eve whom God had created enjoyed mental mastery over the procreative process: the sexual members, like the other parts of the body, enacted the work of procreation by a deliberate act of will, "like a handshake." Ever since Eden, however, spontaneous sexual desire is, Augustine contends, the clearest evidence of the effect of original sin: this, above all, manifests passion's triumph. What impresses Augustine most is that such arousal functions independently of the will's rightful rule: "Because of this, these members are rightly called *pudenda* [parts of shame] because they excite themselves just as they like, in opposition to the mind which is their master, as if they were their own masters."[63] Sexual excitement differs from other forms of passion, Augustine contends, since in the case of anger and the rest, it is not the impulse that moves any part of the body but the will, which remains in control and consents to the movement. An angry man makes a decision whether or not to strike; but a sexually aroused man may find that erection occurs with alarming autonomy. Augustine considers this irrefutable evidence that lust *(libido),* having wrested the sexual organs from the control of the will, now has "brought them so completely under its rule that they are incapable of acting if this one emotion [*libido*] is lacking."[64] So disjoined is will from desire that even a man who wills to be sexually aroused may find that *libido* deserts him.

> At times, the urge intrudes uninvited; at other times, it deserts the panting lover, and, although desire blazes in the mind, the body is frigid. In this strange way, desire refuses service, not only to the will to procreate, but also to the desire for wantonness; and though for the most part, it solidly opposes the mind's command, at other times it is divided against itself, and, having aroused the mind, it fails to arouse the body.[65]

The experience of arousal apart from any action taken, Augustine insists, itself is sin: "Such disobedience of the flesh as this, which lies in the very excitement, even when it is not allowed to take effect, did not exist in the first man and woman."[66] Augustine admits, however, that

> the trouble with the hypothesis of a passionless procreation controlled by the will, as I am here suggesting it, is that it has never

> been verified in experience, not even in the experience of those who could have proved that it was possible. In fact, they sinned too soon, and brought upon themselves exile from Eden.[67]

But Augustine believes that each person *can* verify from experience the radical leap to which his own inner turmoil impelled him—the leap that identifies sexual desire itself as evidence of, and penalty for, original sin. That each of us experiences desire spontaneously *apart* from will means, Augustine assumes, that we experience it *against* our will. Hence, he continues, sexual desire naturally involves shame: "A man by his very nature is ashamed of sexual desire."[68] What proves the truth of such assertions, Augustine believes, is the universal practice of covering the genitals and of shielding the act of intercourse from public view.[69]

One might, of course, ask the obvious question: Is it not possible to experience desire *in accordance with the will* (as, for example, when engaging in intercourse for the purpose of procreation)? Chrysostom would say yes; but Augustine's very definition of sexual desire excludes that possibility. Having entered into human experience through an act of rebellion against the will, desire can never cooperate with will to form, so to speak, a coalition government. For Augustine, "lust is an usurper, defying the power of the will, and tyrannizing the human sexual organs."[70]

Augustine believes that by defining spontaneous sexual desire as the proof and penalty of original sin he has succeeded in implicating the whole human race, except, of course, for Christ. Christ alone of all humankind, Augustine explains, was born without *libido*—being born, he believes, without the intervention of semen that transmits its effects. But the rest of humankind issues from a procreative process that, ever since Adam, has sprung wildly out of control, marring the whole of human nature.

What, then, can remedy human misery? How can anyone achieve internal balance, much less establish social and political harmony between man and woman, man and man? Augustine's whole theology of the fall depends upon his radical claim that no human power can effect such restoration. Knowing, however, that many philosophically minded people (including philosophically educated Christians from Justin Martyr through Chrysostom) stand against him and would invoke against his argument the evidence of all who successfully practice self-control—pagan philosophers and Christian ascetics alike—Augustine seizes the offensive. There are, he admits, a

few people who restrain their passions through self-control, leading temperate, just, and holy lives. But while others honor such people for their achievement, Augustine accuses them, in effect, of neurosis: "This is by no means a healthy state due to nature [*sanitas ex natura*], but an illness due to guilt [*languor ex culpa*]."[71] For not only the "common mass of men, but even the most godly and righteous," he insists, are ravaged by sin and dominated by passion. The Stoic attempt to achieve *apatheia*—mastery of passion—he dismisses as leading its practitioners into arrogance and isolation from the rest of humanity, "not tranquility."[72] Thus ridiculing such efforts to reassert the power of the will, Augustine concludes that the "rebellion in our members, . . . that proof and penalty of man's rebellion against God," is not only universal but also ineradicable. Part of our nature stands in permanent revolt against the "law of the mind"—even among the philosophers, even among the baptized and the saints. And since, he insists, everyone, even the most advanced ascetic, confronts the same continual insurrection within, Augustine concludes that humankind has wholly lost its original capacity for self-government.

Augustine draws so drastic a picture of the effects of Adam's sin that he embraces human government, even when tyrannical, as the indispensable defense against the forces sin has unleashed in human nature. His analysis of internal conflict, indeed, leads directly into his view of social conflict in general. The war within us drives us into war with one another—and no one, pagan or Christian, remains exempt. So, he explains, "while a good man is progressing to perfection, one part of him can be at war with another of his parts; hence, two good men can be at war with one another."

In the beginning, Augustine agrees with Chrysostom, politics began at home:

> The union of male and female is the seed-bed, so to speak, from which the city must grow. . . . Since, then, a man's home [*hominis domus*] ought to be the beginning or elementary constituent of the city, and every beginning serves some end of its own, and every part serves the integrity of the whole of which it is a part, it follows clearly enough that domestic peace serves civic peace, that is, that the ordered agreement of command and obedience among those who live together in a household serves the ordered agreement of command and obedience among citizens.[73]

Recognizing that Adam and Eve originally were created to live together in a harmonious order of authority and obedience, superi-

ority and subordination, like soul and body, "we must conclude," says Augustine, "that a husband is meant to rule over his wife as the spirit rules the flesh." But once each member of the primal couple had experienced that first internal revolt in which the bodily passions arose against the soul, they experienced analogous disruption in their relationship with one another. Although originally created equal with man in regard to her rational soul, woman's formation from Adam's rib established her as the "weaker part of the human couple."[74] Being closely connected with bodily passion, woman, although created to be man's helper, became his temptress and led him into disaster.[75] The Genesis account describes the result: God himself reinforced the husband's authority over his wife, placing divine sanction upon the social, legal, and economic machinery of male domination.

Apart from the relationship between the sexes, however, Augustine again agrees with Chrysostom that "God did not want a rational being, made in his image, to have dominion over any except irrational creatures; not man over men, but man over the beasts."[76] Unlike man's dominion over woman, man's dominion over other men violates their original equality; hence, "such a condition as slavery could only have arisen as a result of sin."[77] Augustine diverges sharply from Chrysostom, however, when he traces how sin, transmitted from the primal parents through sexual reproduction, infected their offspring, so that now "everyone, arising as he does from a condemned stock, is from the first necessarily evil and carnal through Adam."[78] So Cain, when another form of carnal desire, envy, overcame his rational judgment, murdered his brother, exemplifying the lust for power that now dominates and distorts the whole structure of human relationships.

Those who share Augustine's vision of the disastrous results of sin must, he believes, accept as well the rule of one man over others—master over slave, ruler over subjects—as the inescapable necessity of our universal fallen nature:

> Such, as men are now, is the order of peace. Some are in subjection to others and, while humility helps those who serve, pride harms those in power. But as men once were, when their nature was as God created it, no man was a slave either to man or to sin. However, *slavery is now penal in character, and planned by that law which commands the preservation of the natural order and forbids its disturbance.*[79]

Human nature, Augustine explains, instinctively desires social harmony: "By the very laws of his nature man is, so to speak, forced into social relationships and peace [*societatem pacemque*] with other men, so far as possible."[80] Yet sin distorts this universal impulse, turning it instead into the enforced order that constitutes "earthly peace."

Certain scholars have emphasized—quite rightly—how carefully Augustine qualifies his affirmation of secular government. The Dutch scholar Henrik Berkhof, writing during the Second World War, takes Augustine as representing what he calls the "theocratic" view, which subordinates the interests of the state to those of the church. Wilhelm Kamlah, writing in Germany after the war, declares that Augustine's theory deprives the state of any claim to ultimate religious value, regarding it, in effect, as a "necessary evil."[81] R. Markus points out that as Augustine matured, he decisively rejected the classical belief—earlier shared even by Christians who were enamored of the "Christian empire"—that the state and its power served humanity's ultimate good. Augustine expresses no illusions, certainly, about the rulers' motives for enforcing peace. Even a solitary criminal, he says, "demands peace in his own home, and, if need be, gets it by sheer brutality. He knows that the price of peace is to have everyone subject to some one head—in this case, to himself."[82] Should such a man gain power over a larger society, Augustine continues, he would rule through the same brutal impulse:

> Thus it is that all men want peace in their own society, and they all want it on their own terms. When they go to war, what they want is to make, if they can, their enemies their own, and to impose on them the victor's will, and call it a peace. . . . Sinful man hates the equality of all men under God, and, as though he were God, loves to impose his own sovereignty upon his fellow men.[83]

Such pragmatic and negative assessments of the function of government are not, of course, original with Augustine. As we have seen, Justin Martyr, addressing the emperors Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus two and a half centuries earlier, had borrowed an image from philosophical tradition[84] to say that those who rule by brute force "have just as much power as robbers in a desert."[85] Marcus Aurelius used the same image in his own *Meditations*[86]—as, indeed, does Augustine in another famous passage:

"Without justice, what then are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves but little kingdoms?"[87] No more original is Augustine's insistence that political authority is not natural to man but a result of his sinful condition.[88] Justin's younger colleague Irenaeus had described how

> God imposed upon humankind the fear of men since they did not acknowledge the fear of God, so that, being subject to human authority and kept under restraints by their laws, they might attain to some degree of justice. . . . Earthly rule, therefore, has been appointed by God, and not by the devil, for the benefit of nations . . . so that, under fear of human rule, people may not devour one another like fishes.[89]

Irenaeus was drawing in turn upon much older tradition—using, in fact, a rabbinic image to interpret Paul's warning to Christians about the positive uses of governmental coercion (Romans 13:1–6).

Yet Augustine's predecessors Justin and Irenaeus had affirmed the necessity of coercive government only for "those outside." Both, like Chrysostom, clearly discriminate between the coercive government necessary for outsiders and the internal rule of the church. Baptized Christians, Justin and Irenaeus agree, essentially have recovered from the damage inflicted by sin. Baptism transforms converts from their former state as "children of necessity and ignorance . . . to become children of choice and knowledge," washed clean of sin, illuminated, and, Justin says, "by our deeds, too, found to be good citizens and keepers of the commandments."[90]

Augustine agreed with his predecessors in delineating two distinct modes of relationship—one motivated by impulses of domination and submission, the other by mutually affirming love. But what sets Augustine's mature position apart from that of his predecessors is his refusal simply to identify the first with the state and the second with the church. As he redefines them, the "city of man" and the "city of God" cut across both categories. Even baptized Christians are not exempt from either the war of conflicting impulses or the need for external government.

Augustine insists, on the contrary, that all government remains only a superstructure imposed upon the internal rebellion that sin has instigated within everyone, pagan and Christian alike. Consequently he believes the situation of the baptized Christian is far more complex than Chrysostom imagined. The Christian, like the unbeliever, has to contend against the enemy within that holds power over his

will; hence he, too, needs the help of external discipline. So even in his domestic life, Augustine says, although the Christian longs for heaven,

> where there will be no further need for giving orders to other human beings, . . . meanwhile, in case anyone in the household breaks its peace by disobedience, he is disciplined by words or whipping or other kinds of punishment lawful and licit in human society, and for his own good, to readjust to the peace he has abandoned.[91]

If Christians cannot even be trusted to govern themselves, how are they to approach church government? Later in his life Augustine came to endorse, for the church as well as the state, the whole arsenal of secular government that Chrysostom had repudiated—commands, threats, coercion, penalties, and even physical force. Whereas Chrysostom had defined his own role as that of advisor, not ruler, Augustine, like Ignatius of Antioch, sees the bishop as ruling "in God's place." One of Augustine's favorite images for church leaders, as for their model, Christ, is that of the physician, ministering to those who have been baptized but, like himself, are still sick, each one infected with the same ineradicable disease contracted through original sin.[92] Augustine tends, consequently, to discount the patients' opinions. It is the physician's responsibility not only to administer to sick and suffering humanity the life-giving medication of the sacraments, but also to carry out, when necessary, disciplinary procedures as a kind of surgery.

This vision of the church, advocated by others, such as Augustine's close friend and fellow bishop Alypius, corresponds in a sense to Augustine's own experience. In his *Confessions* he admits how desperately lost, sick, and helpless he felt, believing his will to be morally paralyzed, as he awaited the revelation of grace mediated through the church to penetrate him from without and effect his healing.[93] But other Christians surely would not have recognized their own experiences in his account. The British monk Pelagius, for one, sharply objected, criticizing Augustine's *Confessions* for popularizing a kind of pious self-indulgence. How, then, did Augustine's idiosyncratic views on the effects of original sin—and hence on the politics of the church and state—come to be accepted in the fifth and sixth centuries, first by the leadership of the Catholic church and then by the majority of its members? The question is, of course, wildly ambitious; but let us attempt to sketch out the beginning of an answer.

Let us consider first how the conflicting views of Chrysostom and Augustine might sound to their contemporaries. By the beginning of the fifth century Catholic Christians lived as subjects of an empire they could no longer consider alien, much less wholly evil. Having repudiated the patronage of the traditional gods some two generations earlier, the emperors now sometimes used military force to help stamp out pagan worship. Furthermore, the two sons of Theodosius the Great, reigning since his death in 395 as emperors of East and West, continued their father's policy of withdrawing patronage from Arian Christians and placing themselves wholly in alliance with the Catholic bishops and clergy. An earlier generation of Christian bishops, including Eusebius of Caesarea, deeply impressed by the events they had witnessed and convinced that they lived at a turning point in history, had hailed Constantine and his successors as God's chosen rulers. Augustine, like most of his fellow Christians, once had shared that conviction. But after two generations the Christian empire and its rulers, if no longer alien, remained in many respects all too human. By the beginning of the fifth century few who dealt with the government firsthand—certainly not Chrysostom and finally not Augustine either—would have identified it with God's reign on earth.[94]

The mature Augustine offers a theology of politics far more complex and compelling than any of its rivals. Chrysostom claimed that imperial rule is unnecessary for believers, but Augustine insists that God has placed everyone, whether pagan or priest, equally in subjection to external government. Yet Augustine's reasoning diverges sharply from the naïve endorsement of Constantine's court theologian, Eusebius. Augustine's dark vision of a human nature ravaged by original sin and overrun by lust for power rules out uncritical adulation and qualifies his endorsement of imperial rule.[95] That same dark vision impels him to reject Chrysostom's more optimistic premise that imperial power is necessary for pagans, but, in effect, superfluous in the lives of pious citizens. Augustine, on the contrary, places secular government at the center of human society, indispensable for the best as well as the worst among its members. For a Christian, civic obligations rank second, certainly, to one's obligation to God (or, as this usually meant in practice, to the church). Yet apart from direct conflict of interest, even the bishop must render appropriate obedience to secular authority.[96] Augustine acknowledges the emperor's rule, however limited (or even however brutal), to be, nevertheless, as permanent and ineradicable—in this world, at

least—as the effects of original sin. More effectively than either Eusebius on the one hand or Chrysostom on the other, Augustine's theory enabled his contemporaries to come to terms both with the fact of Christian empire and with its intractably human nature.

For if the fifth-century state no longer looked so evil as it once had, the church, in turn, no longer looked so holy. Chrysostom, holding to his by now essentially sectarian theory, deplored what had happened to the church since imperial favor first shone upon Christians: first, the massive influx of nominal converts; and second, the way that a shower of imperial privileges had radically changed the dynamics—and raised the stakes—of ecclesiastical politics. But what Chrysostom could only denounce, Augustine could interpret. Challenging the traditional model of the church and the assumption on which it rested—free will—Augustine's theory of original sin could make theologically intelligible not only the state's imperfections but the church's imperfections as well.

Secondly, while changing the way Catholic Christians understood the psychological and religious meaning of freedom (*libertas*), Augustine's theory bore the potential for changing as well their understanding of, and relationship to, political liberty. Throughout the Roman republic men of wealth and power tended to agree that *libertas* meant living under the rule of a "good governor," that is, an emperor of whom the senate approved.[97]

We have seen, however, that certain Christians, among others, despised the patricians' version of *liberty*, regarding it as a euphemism for *slavery*—that is, for political subjugation induced by the totalitarian rule of the later Caesars. For some people, *liberty* meant freedom from superior authority and freedom from constraint—including, for example, freedom of speech.

We have seen, too, how Christians, so long as they remained a persecuted, illegal, and minority sect, sided with the latter position. We recall how Minucius Felix, writing c. 200 C.E., rhetorically described the Christian who, undergoing torture for his faith, maintains his *libertas:*

> "How beautiful is the spectacle to God when a Christian does battle with pain, when he is brought up against threats, and punishment, and torture; when, mocking the noise of death, he treads underfoot the horror of the executioner; when *he raises up his liberty against kings and princes,* and yields to God alone . . . when, triumphant and victorious, he tramples on the very one who has passed sentence upon him."[98]

Repudiating the charge that Christians were afraid for superstitious reasons to offer pagan sacrifice, Minucius Felix had declared that "it is not a confession of fear, but an assertion of our true liberty."[99] Tertullian, Minucius's contemporary, when he challenged imperial authority in the name of that "liberty which is [the individual's] right,"[100] had assumed that the term meant freedom from superior authority.[101]

Augustine, on the contrary, having denied that human beings possess any capacity whatever for free will, accepts a definition of liberty far more agreeable to the powerful and influential men with whom he himself wholeheartedly identifies. As Augustine tells it, it is the *serpent* who tempts Adam with the seductive lure of liberty. The forbidden fruit symbolizes, he explains, "personal control over one's own will."[102] Not, Augustine adds, "that it is evil in itself, but it is placed in the garden to teach him the primary virtue"—obedience. So, as we noted above, Augustine concludes that humanity never was really meant to be, in any sense, truly free. God allowed us to sin in order to prove to us from our own experience that "our true good is free slavery"[103]—slavery to God in the first place and, in the second, to his agent, the emperor. Idiosyncratic as it sounds, Augustine's paradox finds a parallel in the political rhetoric of his contemporaries. Claudian, pagan court poet and propagandist in the service of Stilicho and of Honorius, the Christian emperor of the West, challenges those who call the emperor's rule slavery (*servitium*): "Never is liberty more appreciated than under a good king!"[104] During the following centuries a similar view was incorporated into the imperial Catholic mass, which directs the priest to pray that, "the enemies of peace being overthrown, Roman liberty may serve Thee in security" (*secura tibi serviat Romana libertas*).[105]

Finally, anyone observing the contrast between the careers of the two bishops might well conclude that Augustine's version of the politics of Paradise proved effective in dealing with the politics of the fifth-century Roman Empire, whereas Chrysostom's version failed. Both Augustine, born in Tagaste, North Africa, in 354, and John Chrysostom, born in Antioch either the same year or a few years earlier,[106] grew up in a world ruled for more than a generation by Christian emperors—a succession interrupted only by Julian's abrupt two-year reversion to imperial patronage of paganism. But Augustine's responses to the new constellation of imperial power were very different from Chrysostom's.

Chrysostom lost his father at a young age, was raised with his

sister by his Christian mother, was baptized at the age of eighteen, and became a monk. In one of his first publications, *Comparison Between a King and a Monk,* written at a time when the world, the imperial court, and the church were mingling in unprecedented ways, Chrysostom passionately defended sacred against secular power—a theme that would preoccupy him throughout his lifetime. Some twelve years later, as we noted earlier, after the people of Antioch had rioted and smashed the imperial statues in protest against the emperor, John Chrysostom addressed an audience waiting in terror of imperial reprisals, and dared proclaim, not, as Augustine might have, that even the Christian is subject to the emperor, but that the emperor himself needs the priest and is subject to the priest's superior authority: "He is himself a ruler, and a ruler of greater dignity than the other; for the sacred laws place under his hands even the royal head."[107] When the bishop intervened with the emperor to settle the crisis, John said that those events proved to unbelievers "that the Christians are the saviors of the city; that they are its guardians, its patrons, and its teachers. . . . Let all unbelievers learn that the fear of Christ is a bridle to every kind of authority."[108]

In 397 Chrysostom received an unexpected summons to Constantinople, the eastern capital of the empire. Hurrying there in secret, he was surprised to find himself appointed bishop of Constantinople, a position near the pinnacle of ecclesiastical power. By canon law of 391, the bishop of Constantinople ranked second only to the bishop of Rome; but often a man in that position, as chief spiritual advisor to the emperor, to the imperial family, and to the whole court, surpassed all others in actual influence. Eutropius, the brilliant and powerful eunuch who controlled much of court politics for the emperor Arcadius, his ineffectual young charge, had arranged for the appointment. Eutropius probably guessed that the pious and eloquent Chrysostom had neither the taste nor the talent for court politics. Eutropius was right; Chrysostom was so impolitic, so concerned with his responsibilities as moral advisor to the powerful, advocate for the destitute and oppressed, and austere guardian of clerical discipline, that within three years he had offended virtually everyone who had once welcomed his appointment. His acts of social conscience turned powerful people among the court and clergy against him. And his attempt to build a hospital for lepers directly outside the city walls set off a "war" of protest that ended with his expulsion from office.[109] One historian concludes that Chrysostom "proudly disdained the favor of the court, on which the high position

of his episcopate alone rested, by his foolish idealism."[110] Another wonders whether he deserves to be revered as a saint and martyr or condemned "comme un idéaliste dépourvu de finesse diplomatique, un zélote sans tact, ou un fanatique incapable de nuances et victime de son emportement."[111] John's admirers attributed the bishop's actions to his deep religious convictions and to his uncompromising moral consciousness. Yet even they could see how those very qualities had led to accusations of "hardness and rudeness," and of arrogance intolerable in a man in his position, and so played into the hands of his enemies.

After six years in office Chrysostom learned that his enemies had prevailed over his former supporters: deposed from episcopal office, perhaps narrowly escaping death, he began under heavy guard the arduous journey into exile. Ill and alone, defended and consoled by a few loyal friends, he lived only three years longer. But Chrysostom's convictions never swerved: secular and spiritual powers are antithetical and mutually exclusive. From exile he wrote to his close woman friend and supporter, the deaconess Pentadia, words that no doubt express his reflections upon his own sufferings, as well as upon hers:

> I rejoice . . . and find the greatest consolation, in my solitude, in the fact that you have been so manly and steadfast, and that you have not allowed yourself to do wrong. . . . Be glad, therefore, and rejoice over your victory. For they have done everything they could against you. You, who knew only the church and your monastic cell, they have dragged out into the public eye, from there to the court, and from court to prison. They have brought false witnesses, have slandered, murdered, shed streams of blood . . . and left nothing undone to terrify you, and to obtain from you a lie. . . . But you have brought them all to shame.[112]

Now consider Augustine. Born into a nonpatrician family, Augustine tells us that his pagan father, Patricus, a man habitually unfaithful to Augustine's mother, not only failed to "root out the brambles of lust" from his son but expressed pleasure in his adolescent son's sexual appetite. (Perhaps Augustine had his hot-tempered father somehow in mind when he complained that "traditional education taught me that Jupiter punishes the wicked with his thunderbolts, and yet commits adultery himself!") His Christian mother, Monica, patiently endured her husband's infidelities, Augustine says, but "most earnestly implored me not to commit fornication." As a

young man he would have been embarrassed to take such "womanish" advice; much later, looking back, he came to believe that God had spoken to him through his mother, and that "when I disregarded her, I disregarded [God]." Augustine sought a secular career with intense ambition and plunged into the life of the city—theatrical performances, dinner parties, rhetorical competition, many friendships. After various earlier sexual relationships he lived for years with a lower-class woman who engaged his passions and bore him a son, but then he abandoned her for the sake of a socially advantageous marriage his mother arranged for him. Yet once he had become a successful rhetor, Augustine found himself divided. Although attracted to philosophical and religious contemplation, he was unwilling to give up marriage and career. Then, at the age of thirty-two, spurred by stories of the desert solitaries, he renounced the world and was baptized. Three years later, having "given up all hope in this world," Augustine went to Hippo to set up the communal monastic life he intended to enter. Later he protested to his congregation that he had had no intention whatever of seeking church office and expressed ambivalence about his successful ecclesiastical career: "I was grabbed, I was made a priest . . . and, from there, I became your bishop."[113]

The church that Augustine chose to join, as Peter Brown points out, "was not the old church of Cyprian"—not, that is, the select community of the holy, willing to risk persecution and death or, lacking the opportunity for martyrdom, eager to leave the world;

> it was the new, expanding church of Ambrose, rising above the Roman world like "a moon waxing in its brightness." It was a confident, international body, established in the respect of Christian emperors, sought out by noblemen and intellectuals, capable of bringing to the masses of the known civilized world the esoteric truths of the philosophy of Plato, a church set no longer to defy society but to master it.[114]

As Augustine understood their task, having learned it from Ambrose, church leaders participate in the divinely ordained work of government: "You teach kings to rule for the benefit of their people; and it is you who warn the people to be subservient to their kings."[115] At the time of Augustine's baptism, the Catholic church was in the process of consolidating its identification with imperial rule. Armed with support from the emperor Honorius, the leaders of the western church, intent on preventing a rival group of Chris-

tians from returning to favor, committed themselves to the policy of implementing imperial authority and so, in the process, asserting and consolidating the primacy of Catholicism over all its Christian rivals.

Augustine's position as bishop of a provincial North African city can scarcely be compared with Chrysostom's far more prominent position three years later in the capital city of the eastern empire. Still, in accepting the episcopate, Augustine, too, became a public figure and ruler of a community. When his authority was challenged by the rival church of Donatists, Augustine came to appreciate—and manipulate—the advantages of his alliance with the repressive power of the state. His opponents were Christians who had refused to acknowledge the episcopacy of Caecilian, elected bishop of Carthage in 311, on the grounds that Caecilian had allowed Roman government authorities to confiscate and destroy his church's copies of the Scriptures during the Great Persecution of 303–304. Called Donatists after one of their leaders, Donatus of Casae Nigrae, these Christians identified with the "church of the martyrs." Donatist Christians denounced the "unholy alliance" between Catholic Christians and the Roman state. Echoing Chrysostom's principle, they insisted that the church must employ only spiritual sanctions and not force.

Yet Augustine abandoned the policy of toleration practiced by the previous bishop of Carthage and pursued the attack on the Donatists. Like Chrysostom, he praised the church's use of persuasion, not force; yet he himself, after beginning with polemics and propaganda, turned increasingly to force. First came laws denying civil rights to non-Catholic Christians; then the imposition of penalties, fines, eviction from public office; and finally, denial of free discussion, exile of Donatist bishops, and the use of physical coercion. According to Catholic historians, the Donatist cause became increasingly identified with active resistance to authority, including outbreaks of violence.[116] Despite his earlier misgivings, Augustine came to find military force "indispensable" in suppressing the Donatists and "wrote the only full justification, in the history of the early church, of the right of the state to suppress non-Catholics."[117] He came to realize, he explained, that fear and coercion, which Chrysostom had considered necessary only to govern outsiders, were necessary within the church as well; many Christians as well as pagans, he noted regretfully, respond only to fear.[118]

After Augustine had spent more than thirty years battling the Donatists, he was dismayed to confront Christians he called the Pelagians who, despite many differences, as we shall see in Chapter 6, shared with the Donatists both a sectarian view of the church and an insistence on free will. When his own party was outvoted in the Christian synods, Augustine unhesitatingly allied himself with imperial officials against the clergy who defended Pelagius. In 416 Innocent, bishop of Rome, received from African synods two condemnations of Pelagian ideas, together with a long personal letter from Augustine and his closest associates as well as an open letter from Augustine challenging Pelagius. The documents went beyond a condemnation of Pelagius and his followers. They went on to warn, in Peter Brown's words, that

> the ultimate consequence of [Pelagian] ideas . . . cut at the roots of episcopal authority. . . . The documents claimed that by appeasing the Pelagians the Catholic church would *lose the vast authority it had begun to wield as the only force that could "liberate" men from themselves.*[119]

Pelagius's supporters would make the counterclaim (and with reason) that they were following ancient tradition concerning the church and human nature—tradition most recently championed by John Chrysostom himself. But the declarations of the African synods, engineered primarily by Augustine and his associates, signaled a major turning point in the history of western Christianity. They offered to the bishop of Rome and to his imperial patrons a clear demonstration of the political efficacy of Augustine's doctrine of the fall. By insisting that humanity, ravaged by sin, now lies helplessly in need of outside intervention, Augustine's theory could not only validate secular power but justify as well the imposition of church authority—by force, if necessary—as essential for human salvation.

Augustine, having outlived by twenty-seven years his exiled and disgraced colleague, achieved, unlike John Chrysostom, a position of extraordinary power and influence in the Roman world, until his death on 28 August 430. Augustine's ideas certainly did not win immediate or universal acceptance. Throughout the following century, until the Council of Orange in 529, Augustine's views were ardently debated. Even in the centuries following that council, which endorsed Augustine's views, many theologians held—or were accused of holding—"semi-Pelagian" views. Yet far beyond his lifetime, even for a millennium and a half, the influence of Augustine's teaching throughout western Christendom has surpassed that of any other church father. There are many reasons for this, but I suggest, as primary among them, the following: It is Augustine's theology of

the fall that made the uneasy alliance between the Catholic churches and imperial power palatable—not only justifiable but necessary—for the majority of Catholic Christians. Augustine's doctrine, of course, was not, either for him or for the majority of his followers, a matter of mere expedience. Serious believers concerned primarily with the deeper questions of theology, as well as those concerned with political advantage, could find in Augustine's theological legacy ways of making sense out of a situation in which church and state had become inextricably interdependent.

The eventual triumph of Augustine's theology required, however, the capitulation of all who held to the classical proclamation concerning human freedom, once so widely regarded as the heart of the Christian gospel. By the beginning of the fifth century those who still held to such archaic traditions—notably including those the Catholics called Donatists and Pelagians—came to be condemned as heretics. Augustine's theory of Adam's fall, once espoused in simpler forms only by marginal groups of Christians, now moved, together with the imperially supported Catholic church that proclaimed it, into the center of western history.

VI

THE NATURE OF NATURE

WE HAVE SEEN HOW Christian perspectives on freedom and the power of the will changed as the situation of Christians changed from that of persecuted sectarians to that of the emperor's coreligionists. In this chapter I wish to point out another element of Augustine's theology that accompanied this enormous transformation: the holistic view of nature that came to dominate Christian thought, and whose first principle is that human beings wield—or once did, through Adam—great power over nature (an apparent paradox, given Augustine's conviction that human beings, whose common ancestor had the power to transform nature, now are powerless to evade the consequences of that transformation).

For millennia, Jews and Christians have attempted to explain the mystery of human suffering as moral judgment—the price of Adam and Eve's sin. The creation story of Genesis, addressing the question Why do we suffer and why do we die?, makes the empirically absurd claim that death does not constitute the natural end of all lives but intruded upon our species solely because Adam and Eve made the wrong choice. According to Genesis, God said to the woman,

> "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; . . . In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return