

"Now the daily prayer of the believer makes satisfaction for those sins of a momentary and trivial kind which are necessary incidents of this life. For he can say, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' seeing that to such a Father he is now born again of water and of the Spirit; and this prayer certainly takes away the very small sins of daily life."

It will be noticed from this quotation that the chief, if not the only, improvement more modern religious teachers have made upon his deliverance is to so write as to only hint at or imply what Augustine boldly and pointedly declares.

As usual, we found traces of some far-off ideal indistinctly or fitfully accepted as a possible reality. He tells of a barbarian slave who had become a convert to Christianity, and who, greatly desiring to read the Bible, spent three days in praying for this thing, and had his prayer answered, being ever after able to read fluently.

In one place he teaches that he who is mature in faith, hope and love, needs Scripture no longer. "Accordingly," he adds, "many live without copies of the Scripture, even in solitude, on the strength of these three graces."

Augustine is chiefly known as a controversial writer, his delight was to scent out heresy, and bring his logical batteries against it in every direction. As usual, with such controversial writings, we found it impossible to get at the definite creeds of the heretics he denounces. It would seem, however, that the sin question had largely to do with the difference between them.

Augustine writes: "But no man in this life can so keep the commandments, which prescribe holiness of life, as to be beyond the necessity of using this prayer for his sins, 'Forgive us our trespasses.' It is in direct opposition to these principles that they (the Pelagians) have derived their new heresy."

Again, Augustine gives the following teachings as those of Pelagius, and pronounces upon them as deadly errors: "Now we have affirmed that a man is able, if he likes, to live without sin and keep the commandments of God, inasmuch as God gives him this ability. But we have not said that any man can be

found, who, from infancy to old age, has never committed sin; but that if any person were converted from his sins, he could, by his own exertions and God's grace, live without sin. Nobody, however, even thus was ever rendered incapable of change afterwards."

"That a man is able to live without sin if he likes." "That infants, even if they die unbaptized, have eternal life. That rich men, even if they are baptized, unless they renounce and give up all, cannot possess the kingdom of God."

These quotations are given by Augustine as the very words spoken by Pelagius at his first trial. The *heresy* in them does not look very formidable, and yet Augustine thought it of so serious a character as to call for an immense amount of controversial writing on his part, and so the name of Pelagius has been handed down the ages branded with the most opprobrious epithet the Church could invent, and to-day it is presumed that if the dreaded name Pelagianism can by any ingenuity be attached to any teaching, it would as certainly ensure its destruction as will the name *mad dog* secure the death of any canine to which it is attached.

Well, as hinted before, we cannot learn with certainty what were the real teachings of Pelagius, in their completeness. That he seemed to gather from his study of Christianity that it was intended that man, after his acceptance of Christ as his Saviour, should live the Christ-life, that is, do God's will on earth perfectly, is evident; but as to whether or no he discovered the connection of this with the walk in the Spirit, we failed to learn. The probabilities are that it was held more as a speculation, a logical sequence of the teachings of Christ, than as an experience personally realized and exemplified, and thence taught both by precept and example.

If so, then, of course, the controversy between them was only a strife about words, and in no respect touched the vitals of Christianity. Granted even that Pelagius at the beginning of his career walked in the Spirit, and so caught a glimpse of the *promised land*, yet, so legalistic was the whole trend of his age that the best that can be said of him and