

## Response to *On Christian Teaching*

### Book One

p. 10

So in this mortal life we are like travellers away from our Lord [2 Cor 5:6]: if we wish to return to the homeland where we can be happy we must use this world [cf. 1 Cor. 7:31], not enjoy it, in order to discern 'the invisible attributes of God, which are understood through what has been made' [Rom. 1:20] or, in other words, to derive eternal and spiritual value from corporeal and temporal things.

p. 27

In a liar there is a desire to say what is false, and that is why we find many who want to lie to nobody but nobody who wants to be misled. Since a person lies knowingly but is misled unknowingly, it is clear enough that in any given situation the person misled is better than the one who lies, since it is better to suffer injustice than to commit it.

### Book Two

p.40

Not that such translations are adequate, but they may be used to control the freedom or error of others who in their translations have chosen to follow the ideas rather than the words.

p. 47

We were not wrong to learn the alphabet just because they say that the god Mercury was its patron... A person who is a good and a true Christian should realize that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever it is found, gathering and acknowledging it even in pagan literature, but rejecting superstitious vanities and deploring and avoiding those who 'though they knew God did not glorify him as God or give thanks but became enfeebled in their own thoughts and plunged their senseless minds into darkness.'

### Book Three

p. 73

That is why the people who resolutely held fast to these signs were unable, when the time had come for them to be explained, to tolerate the Lord who disregarded them; and that is why the leaders engineered false accusations against him because he healed on the sabbath [Matt. 12:1-14; Luke 6:1-11], and why the people, devoted to signs as if they were things, did not believe that he was God or that he had come from God, since he refused to follow these practices in the way that they were observed by the Jews.

p. 76

But since the human race is prone to judge sins not by the strength of the actual lust, but rather by the standard of its own practices, people generally regard as culpable only such actions as men of their own time and place tend to blame and condemn, and regard as

commendable and praiseworthy only such actions as are acceptable within the conventions of their society.

#### Book Four

p. 105

We often have to take bitter medicines, and we must always avoid sweet things that are dangerous: but what better than sweet things that give health, or medicines that are sweet? The more we are attracted by sweetness, the easier it is for medicine to do its healing work.

p. 116

So the speaker's sensitivity must come to the aid of the silent listener. A crowd that is eager to learn tends to show by its movements whether it has understood. Until it does show this, the topic must be rolled around in a variety of different ways – this is not possible for those who deliver prepared or memorized speeches – but when it is clear that it has been understood, the sermon should be brought to an end or a transition made to another topic.

#### Questions

1. Where did the concept of a return to home originate? How can a person or soul return home if he or she has never been there?
2. Why is suffering an injustice better than committing it? Is Augustine using the present time as his frame of reference or eternity?
3. Are the strengths of lusts a function of the culture in which people live? Does God measure the degree of the lust or the actual act? Do the changing cultures impact this measurement? For example, would the receiver of the scarlet letter be given the same scarlet letter today?