

John: 9:1–41

From Catena Aurea:

1. And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.
2. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?
3. Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.
4. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.
5. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
6. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,
7. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvi. 1) The Jews having rejected Christ's words, because of their depth, He went out of the temple, and healed the blind man; that His absence might appease their fury, and the miracle soften their hard hearts, and convince their unbelief. And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. It is to be remarked here that, on going out of the temple, He betook Himself intently to this manifestation of His power. He first saw the blind man, not the blind man Him: and so intently did He fix His eye upon him, that His disciples were struck, and asked, Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 1, 2) For the blind man here is the human race. Blindness came upon the first man by reason of sin: and from him we all derive it: i. e. man is blind from his birth.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 1, 2) Rabbi is Master. They call Him Master, because they wished to learn: they put their question to our Lord, as to a Master.

THEOPHYLACT. This question does not seem a proper one. For the Apostles had not been taught the fond notion of the Gentiles, that the soul has sinned in a previous state of existence. It is difficult to account for their putting it.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. liv. 1. c. 5) They were led to ask this question, by our Lord having said above, on healing the man sick of the palsy, Lo, thou art made whole; sin no more. Thinking from this that the man had been struck with the palsy for his sins, they ask our Lord of the blind man here, whether he did sin, or his parents; neither of which could have been the reason of his blindness; the former, because he had been blind from his birth; the latter, because the son does not suffer for the father.

Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xliv. 3) Was he then born without original sin, or had he never added to it by actual sin? Both this man and his parents had sinned, but that sin was not the reason why he was born blind. Our Lord gives the reason; viz. That the works of God should be made manifest in him.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvi. 1, 2) He is not to be understood as meaning that others had become blind, in consequence of their parents' sins: for one man cannot be punished for the sin of another. But had the man therefore suffered unjustly? Rather I should say that that blindness was a benefit to him: for by it he was brought to see with the inward eye. At any rate He who brought him into being out of nothing, had the power to make him in the event no loser by it. Some too say, that the that here, is expressive not of the cause, but of the event, as in the passage in Romans, The law entered that sin might abound; (Rom. 5:20) the effect in this case being, that our Lord by opening the closed eye, and healing other natural infirmities, demonstrated His own power.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. liv. 2) That the glory of God should be made manifest, He saith of Himself, not of the Father; the Father's glory was manifest already. I must work the works of Him that sent Me: i. e. I must manifest Myself, and shew that I do the same that My Father doeth.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xliv. 4) By His saying, Who sent Me, He gives all the glory to Him from Whom He is. The Father hath a Son Who is from Him, but hath none from whom He Himself is.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvi. 2) While it is day, He adds; i. e. while men have the opportunity of believing in Me; while this life lasts; The night cometh, when none can work. Night here means that spoken of in Matthew, Cast him into outer darkness. (Mat. 22:13) Then will there be night, wherein none can work,

but only receive for that which he has worked. While thou livest, do that which thou wilt do: for beyond it is neither faith, nor labour, nor repentance.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 5) But if we work now, now is the day time, now is Christ present; as He says, As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. This then is the day. The natural day is completed by the circuit of the sun, and contains only a few hours: the day of Christ's presence will last to the end of the world: for He Himself has said, Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. (Mat. 28:20)

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvi. 2) He then confirms His words by deeds: When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. He who had brought greater substances into being out of nothing, could much more have given sight without the use of any material: but He wished to shew that He was the Creator, Who in the beginning used clay for the formation of man. (Hom. lvii. 1). He makes the clay with spittle, and not with water, to make it evident that it was not the pool of Siloam, whither He was about to send him, but the virtue proceeding from His mouth, which restored the man's sight. And then, that the cure might not seem to be the effect of the clay, He ordered the man to wash: And He said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. The Evangelist gives the meaning of Siloam, which is by interpretation, Sent, to intimate that it was Christ's power that cured him even there. As the Apostle says of the rock in the wilderness, that that Rock was Christ, (1 Cor. 10:14) so Siloam had a spiritual character: the sudden rise of its water being a silent figure of Christ's unexpected manifestation in the flesh. But why did He not tell him to wash immediately, instead of sending him to Siloam? That the obstinacy of the Jews might be overcome, when they saw him going there with the clay on his eyes. Besides which, it proved that He was not averse to the Law, and the Old Testament. And there was no fear of the glory of the case being given to Siloam: as many had washed their eyes there, and received no such benefit. And to shew the faith of the blind man, who made no opposition, never argued with himself, that it was the quality of clay rather to darken, than give light, that He had often washed in Siloam, and had never been benefited; that if our Lord had the power, He might have cured him by His word; but simply obeyed: he went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. (Hom. lvi. 2). Thus our Lord manifested His glory: and no small glory it was, to be proved the Creator of the world, as He was proved to be by this miracle. For on the principle that the greater contains the less, this act of creation included in it every other. Man is the most honourable of all creatures; the eye the most honourable member of man, directing the movements, and giving him sight. The eye is to the body, what the sun is to the universe; and therefore it is placed aloft, as it were, upon a royal eminence.

THEOPHYLACT. Some think that the clay was not laid upon the eyes, but made into eyes.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 2) Our Lord spat upon the ground, and made clay of the spittle, because He was the Word made flesh. The man did not see immediately as he was anointed; i. e. was, as it were, only made a catechumen. But he was sent to the pool which is called Siloam, i. e. he was baptized in Christ; and then he was enlightened. The Evangelist then explains to us the name of this pool: which is by interpretation, Sent: for, if He had not been sent, none of us would have been delivered from our sins.

9:8–17

8. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9. Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

10. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

11. He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

12. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

13. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

14. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

16. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

17. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvii. s. 1) The suddenness of the miracle made men incredulous: The neighbours therefore, and they which had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Wonderful clemency and condescension of God! Even the beggars He heals with so great considerateness: thus stopping the mouths of the Jews; in that He made not the great, illustrious, and noble, but the poorest and meanest, the objects of His providence. Indeed He had come for the salvation of all. Some said, This

is he. The blind man having been clearly recognised in the course of his long walk to the pool; the more so, as people's attention was drawn by the strangeness of the event; men could no longer say, This is not he; Others said, Nay, but he is like him.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 8) His eyes being opened had altered his look. But he said, I am he. He spoke gratefully; a denial would have convicted Him of ingratitude.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvii. s. 2) He was not ashamed of his former blindness, nor afraid of the fury of the people, nor averse to shew himself, and proclaim his Benefactor. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? How they were, neither he nor any one knew: he only knew the fact; he could not explain it. He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes. Mark his exactness. He does not say how the clay was made; for he could not see that our Lord spat on the ground; he does not say what he does not know; but that He anointed him he could feel. And said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash. This too he could declare from his own hearing; for he had heard our Lord converse with His disciples, and so knew His voice. Lastly, he shews how strictly he had obeyed our Lord. He adds, And I went, and washed, and received sight.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. s. 8) Lo, he is become a proclaimer of grace, an evangelist, and testifies to the Jews. That blind man testified, and the ungodly were vexed at the heart, because they had not in their heart what appeared upon his countenance. Then said they unto him, Where is He?

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvii. 2) This they said, because they were meditating His death, having already begun to conspire against Him. Christ did not appear in company with those whom He cured; having no desire for glory, or display. He always withdrew, after healing any one; in order that no suspicion might attach to the miracle. His withdrawal proved the absence of all connexion between Him and the healed; and therefore that the latter did not publish a false cure out of favour to Him. He said, I know not.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 8) Here he is like one anointed, but unable yet to see: he preaches, and knows not what he preaches.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvii. 2) The Jews, whom they asked, Where is He? were desirous of finding Him, in order to bring Him to the Pharisees; but, as they could not find Him, they bring the blind man. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind; i. e. that they might examine him still more closely. The Evangelist adds, And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes; in order to expose their real design, which was to accuse Him of a departure from the law, and thus detract from

the miracle: as appears from what follows, Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. But mark the firmness of the blind man. To tell the truth to the multitude before, from whom he was in no danger, was not so great a matter: but it is remarkable, now that the danger is so much greater, to find him disavowing nothing, and not contradicting any thing that he said before: He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. He is more brief this time, as his interrogators were already informed of the matter: not mentioning the name of Jesus, nor His saying, Go, and wash; but simply, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see; the very contrary answer to what they wanted. They wanted a disavowal, and they receive a confirmation of the story.

Therefore said some of the Pharisees.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 9) Some, not all: for some were already anointed. But they, who neither saw, nor were anointed, said, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Rather He kept it, in that He was without sin; for to observe the sabbath spiritually, is to have no sin. And this God admonishes us of, when He enjoins the sabbath, saying, In it thou shalt do no servile work. (Exod. 20:10) What servile work is, our Lord tells us above, Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. (c. 8:34) They observed the sabbath carnally, transgressed it spiritually.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvii. 2) Passing over the miracle in silence, they give all the prominence they can to the supposed transgression; not charging Him with healing on the sabbath, but with not keeping the sabbath. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? They were impressed by His miracles, but only in a weak and unsettled way. For whereas such might have shewn them, that the sabbath was not broken; they had not yet any idea that He was God, and therefore did not know that it was the Lord of the sabbath who had worked the miracle. Nor did any of them dare to say openly what his sentiments were, but spoke ambiguously; one, because he thought the fact itself improbable; another, from his love of station. It follows, And there was a division among them. That is, the people were divided first, and then the rulers.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 4, 5) It was Christ, who divided the day into light and darkness.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 1) Those who said, Can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? wishing to stop the others' mouths, make the object of our Lord's goodness again come forward; but without appearing to take part with Him themselves: They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes?

THEOPHYLACT. See with what good intent they put the question. They do not say, What sayest thou of Him that keepeth not the sabbath, but mention the miracle, that He hath opened thine eyes; meaning it would seem, to draw out the healed man himself; He hath benefited them, they seem to say, and thou oughtest to preach Him.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xliv. 9) Or they sought how they could throw reproach upon the man, and cast him out of their synagogue. He declares however openly what he thinks: He said, He is a Prophet. Not being anointed yet in heart, he could not confess the Son of God; nevertheless, he is not wrong in what he says: for our Lord Himself says of Himself, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country. (Luke 4:24)

9:18–23

18. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

19. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

20. His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21. But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

22. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 1) The Pharisees being unable, by intimidation, to deter the blind man from publicly proclaiming his Benefactor, try to nullify the miracle through the parents: But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they had called the parents of him that had received his sight.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xliv. s. 10) i. e. had been blind, and now saw.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 3) But it is the nature of truth, to be strengthened by the very snares that are laid against it. A lie is its own antagonist, and by its attempts to injure the truth, sets it off to greater advantage: as is the case now. For the argument which might otherwise have been urged, that the neighbours knew nothing for certain, but spoke from a mere resemblance, is cut off by introduction of

the parents, who could of course testify to their own son. Having brought these before the assembly, they interrogate them with great sharpness, saying, Is this your son, (they say not, who was born blind, but) who ye say was born blind? Say. Why what father is there, that would say such things of a son, if they were not true? Why not say at once, Whom ye made blind? They try two ways of making them deny the miracle: by saying, Who ye say was born blind, and by adding, How then doth he now see?

THEOPHYLACT. Either, say they, it is not true that he now sees, or it is untrue that he was blind before: but it is evident that he now sees; therefore it is not true that he was born blind.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 2) Three things then being asked,—if he were their son, if he had been blind and how he saw,—they acknowledge two of them: His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But the third they refuse to speak to: But by what means he now seeth, we know not. The enquiry in this way ends in confirming the truth of the miracle, by making it rest upon the incontrovertible evidence of the confession of the healed person himself; He is of age, they say, ask him; he can speak for himself.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 10) As f to say, We might justly be compelled to speak for an infant, that could not speak for itself: but he, though blind from his birth, has been always able to speak.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lvii. 2) What sort of gratitude is this in the parents; concealing what they knew, from fear of the Jews? as we are next told; These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews. And then the Evangelist mentions again what the intentions and dispositions of the Jews were: For the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 10) It was no disadvantage to be put out of the synagogue: whom they cast out, Christ took in.

Therefore said his parents, He is of age, ask him.

THEOPHYLACT. For they were fainthearted; not like their son, that intrepid witness to the truth, the eyes of whose understanding had been enlightened by God.

9:24–34

24. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

25. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

26. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

27. He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

28. Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

29. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

30. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

31. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

34. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 2) The parents having referred the Pharisees to the healed man himself, they summon him a second time: Then again called they the man that was blind. They do not openly say now, Deny that Christ has healed thee, but conceal their object under the pretence of religion: Give God the praise, i. e. confess that this man has had nothing to do with the work.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xliv. s. 11) Deny that thou hast received the benefit. This is not to give God the glory, but rather to blaspheme Him.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 2) Why then did ye not convict Him, when He said above, Which of you convinceth Me of sin? (c. 8:46)

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 2) But how comes this, whether He be a sinner, I know not, from one who had said, He is a Prophet? did the blind fear? far from it: he only thought that our Lord's defence lay in the witness of the fact, more than in another's pleading. And he gives weight to his reply by the mention of

the benefit he had received: One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see: as if to say, I say nothing as to whether He is a sinner; but only repeat what I know for certain. So being unable to overturn the fact itself of the miracle, they fall back upon former arguments, and enquire the manner of the cure: just as dogs in hunting pursue wherever the scent takes them: Then said they to him again, What did He do to thee? How opened He thine eyes? i. e. was it by any charm? For they do not say, How didst thou see? but, How opened He thine eyes? to give the man an opportunity of detracting from the operation. So long now as the matter wanted examining, the blind man answers gently and quietly; but, the victory being gained, he grows bolder: He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? i. e. Ye do not attend to what is said, and therefore I will no longer answer you vain questions, put for the sake of cavil, not to gain knowledge: Will ye also be His disciples?

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xliv. s. 11) Will ye also? i. e. I am already, do ye wish to be? I see now, but do not envy (video, non invideo). He says this in indignation at the obstinacy of the Jews; not tolerating blindness, now that he is no longer blind himself.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 2) As then truth is strength, so falsehood is weakness: truth elevates and ennobles whomever it takes up, however mean before: falsehood brings even the strong to weakness and contempt.

Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art His disciple.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xliv. 12) A malediction only in the intention of the speakers, not in the words themselves. May such a malediction (ἐλοιδόρησαν, maledixerunt, Vulg.) be upon us, and upon our children! It follows: But we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses. But ye should have known, that our Lord was prophesied of by Moses, after hearing what He said, Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me. (c. 5:46) Do ye follow then a servant, and turn your back on the Lord? Even so, for it follows: As for this fellow, we know not whence He is.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. s. 3) Ye think sight less evidence than hearing; for what ye say, ye know, is what ye have heard from your fathers. But is not He more worthy of belief, who has certified that He comes from God, by miracles which ye have not heard only, but seen? So argues the blind man: The man answered and said, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes. He brings in the miracle every where, as evidence which they could not invalidate: and, inasmuch as they had said that a man that was a sinner could not do such miracles, he turns their

own words against them; Now we know that God heareth not sinners; as if to say, I quite agree with you in this opinion.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. s. 13) As yet however He speaks as one but just anointed¹, for God hears sinners too. Else in vain would the publican cry, God be merciful to me a sinner. (Luke 18:13) By that confession he obtained² justification, as the blind man had his sight.

THEOPHYLACT. Or, that God heareth not sinners, means, that God does not enable sinners to work miracles. When sinners however implore pardon for their offences, they are translated from the rank of sinners to that of penitents.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 3) Observe then, when he said above, Whether He be a sinner, I know not, it was not that he spoke in doubt; for here he not only acquits him of all sin, but holds him up as one well pleasing to God: But if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. It is not enough to know God, we must do His will. Then he extols His deed: Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind: as if to say, If ye confess that God heareth not sinners; and this Man has worked a miracle, such an one, as no other man has; it is manifest that the virtue whereby He has wrought it, is more than human: If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 13) Freely, stedfastly, truly. For how could what our Lord did, be done by any other than God, or by disciples even, except when their Lord dwelt in them?

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 3.) So then because speaking the truth he was in nothing confounded, when they should most have admired, they condemned him: Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 14) What meaneth altogether? That he was quite blind. Yet He who opened his eyes, also saves him altogether.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lviii. 3) Or, altogether, that is to say, from thy birth thou art in sins. They reproach his blindness, and pronounce his sins to be the cause of it; most unreasonably. So long as they expected him to deny the miracle, they were willing to believe him, but now they cast him out.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 14) It was they themselves who had made him teacher; themselves, who had asked him so many questions; and now they ungratefully cast him out for teaching.

35. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36. He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

37. And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

38. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

39. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

40. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

41. Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see: therefore your sin remaineth.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lix. 1) Those who suffer for the truth's sake, and confession of Christ, come to greatest honour; as we see in the instance of the blind man. For the Jews cast him out of the temple, and the Lord of the temple found him; and received him as the judge doth the wrestler after his labours, and crowned him: Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He saith unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? The Evangelist makes it plain that Jesus came in order to say this to him. He asks him, however, not in ignorance, but wishing to reveal Himself to him, and to shew that He appreciated his faith; as if He said, The people have cast reproaches on Me, but I care not for them; one thing only I care for, that thou mayest believe. Better is he that doeth the will of God, than ten thousand of the wicked.

HILARY. (vi. de Trin. circa fin.) If any mere confession whatsoever of Christ were the perfection of faith, it would have been said, Dost thou believe in Christ? But inasmuch as all heretics would have had this name in their mouths, confessing Christ, and yet denying the Son, that which is true of Christ alone, is required of our faith, viz. that we should believe in the Son of God. But what availeth it to believe on the Son of God as being a creature, when we are required to have faith in Christ, not as a creature of God, but as the Son of God.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lix. 1) But the blind man did not yet know Christ, for before he went to Christ he was blind, and after his cure, he was taken hold of by the Jews: He answered and said, Who is He, Lord,

that I might believe on Him? The speech this of a longing and enquiring mind. He knows not who He is for whom he had contended so much; a proof to thee of his love of truth. The Lord however says not to him, I am He who healed thee; but uses a middle way of speaking, Thou hast both seen Him.

THEOPHYLACT. This He says to remind him of his cure, which had given him the power to see. And observe, He that speaks is born of Mary, and the Son is the Son of God, not two different Persons, according to the error of Nestorius: And it is He that talketh with thee.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 15) First, He washes the face of his heart. Then, his heart's face being washed, and his conscience cleansed, he acknowledges Him as not only the Son of man, which he believed before, but as the Son of God, Who had taken flesh upon Him: And he said, Lord, I believe. I believe, is a small thing. Wouldest thou see what he believes of Him? And falling down, he worshipped Him. (Vulgate)

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lix. 1) He adds the deed to the word, as a clear acknowledgment of His divine power. The Lord replies in a way to confirm His faith, and at the same time stirs up the minds of His followers: And Jesus said, For judgment have I come into this world.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xlv. 16, 17) The day then was divided between light and darkness. So it is rightly added, that they which see not, may see; for He relieved men from darkness. But what is that which follows: And that they which see might he made blind. Hear what comes next. Some of the Pharisees were moved by these words: And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? What had moved them were the words, And that they which see might be made blind. It follows; Jesus saith unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; i. e. If ye called yourselves blind, and ran to the physician. But now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth: for in that saying, We see, ye seek not a physician, ye shall remain in your blindness. This then which He has just before said, I came, that they that see not might see; i. e. they who confess they cannot see, and seek a physician, in order that they may see: and that they which see not may be made blind; i. e. they which think they can see, and seek not a physician, may remain in their blindness. This act of division He calls judgment, saying, For judgment have I come into this world: not that judgment by which He will judge quick and dead at the end of the world.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lix. 1) Or, for judgment, He saith; i. e. for greater punishment, shewing that they who condemned Him, were the very ones who were condemned. Respecting what He says, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind; it is the same which St. Paul says, The Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the

righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. (Rom. 9:30, 31)

THEOPHYLACT. As if to say, Lo, he that saw not from his birth, now sees both in body and soul; whereas they who seem to see, have had their understanding darkened.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lix. 1) For there is a twofold vision, and a twofold blindness; viz. that of sense, and that of the understanding. But they were intent only on sensible things, and were ashamed only of sensible blindness: wherefore He shews them that it would be better for them to be blind, than seeing so: If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; your punishment would be easier; But now ye say, We see.

THEOPHYLACT. Overlooking the miracle wrought on the blind man, ye deserve no pardon; since even visible miracles make no impression on you.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lix. 1, 2) What then they thought their great praise, He shews would turn to their punishment; and at the same time consoles him who had been afflicted with bodily blindness from his birth. For it is not without reason that the Evangelist says, And some of the Pharisees which were with him, heard these words; but that he may remind us that those were the very persons who had first withstood Christ, and then wished to stone Him. For there were some who only followed in appearance, and were easily changed to the contrary side.

THEOPHYLACT. Or, if ye were blind, i. e. ignorant of the Scriptures, your offence would be by no means so heavy a one, as erring out of ignorance: but now, seeing ye call yourselves wise and understanding in the law, your own selves condemn you.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

9:1 A Man Blind from Birth

The Significance of Blindness from Birth.

Ambrose: You have heard that story in the Gospel where we are told that the Lord Jesus, as he was passing by, caught sight of a man who had been blind from birth. Since the Lord did not overlook him, neither

ought we to overlook this story of a man whom the Lord considered worthy of his attention. In particular we should notice the fact that he had been blind from birth. This is an important point.

There is, indeed, a kind of blindness, usually brought on by serious illness, which obscures one's vision but that can be cured, given time; and there is another sort of blindness, caused by cataract, that can be remedied by a surgeon: he can remove the cause, and so the blindness is dispelled. Draw your own conclusion: this man, who was actually born blind, was not cured by surgical skill but by the power of God. Letter 67.1–2.

Jesus Sees the Blind Man.

Chrysostom: It is clear that, on going out of the temple, he proceeded intentionally to do the work [of the miracle] from the fact that it was he who saw the blind man, not the blind man who came to him. And so intently did Jesus look at him that even his disciples perceived it. Homilies on the Gospel of John 56.1.

9:2 Who Sinned?

Why the Disciples Ask.

Chrysostom: They were led to ask this question because our Lord had said above, when he healed the paralytic, "See, you are well! Sin no more." Thinking from this that the man had been paralyzed because of his sins, they say, "That other person was paralyzed because of his sins, but what would you say about this man? Had he sinned? How can you say that, since he was blind from birth? Have his parents sinned? Neither can one say this because the child does not suffer punishment because of his parents." The same way we ask how it can be when we see a child suffering, this is how the disciples spoke here, not so much asking for information as being perplexed. Homilies on the Gospel of John 56.1.

9:3 Neither This Man Nor His Parents Sinned

He Never Sinned?

Augustine: Was he then born without original sin, or had he committed no sin in the course of his lifetime?... Both this man and his parents had sinned ... but that sin itself was not the reason why he was born blind.... Our Lord gives the reason why ... "That the works of God should be made known in him." Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.3.

Does He Suffer for the Glory of God?

Chrysostom: Here again is another difficulty if [it is true that] it was not possible that the glory of God should be shown without this man's punishment. Certainly it was not impossible, for it was possible. But it happened so "that [God's glory] might be made evident even in this man." One might ask, however, Did he suffer wrong for the glory of God? Tell me what he did wrong. For what if God had never willed to make him at all? But I assert that he even received benefit from his blindness. Because he recovered the sight of the eyes within. What were the Jews profited by their eyes? They incurred the heavier punishment, being blinded even while they saw. And what injury did this man have because of his blindness? For through his blindness he recovered his sight. As, then, the evils of the present life are not evils, so neither are the good things good. Sin alone is an evil, but blindness is not an evil. And he who had brought this man from not being into being also had power to leave him as he was. Homilies on the Gospel of John 56.1.

What Is the Cause of Suffering?

Cyril of Alexandria: We do not believe that the soul previously existed; nor indeed can we think that it sinned before the body, for how can someone sin who has not yet been born? But if there has been no sin or fault preceding the suffering, what then shall we allege as the cause of the suffering? Truly, by our minds we cannot comprehend those things that are far above us. And, I should advise the prudent and myself above all to abstain from wishing to thoroughly scrutinize them. For we should recall to mind what we have been commanded and not curiously examine things that are too deep, or pry into those that are too hard or rashly attempt to discover those things that are hidden in the divine and ineffable counsel alone. Rather, concerning such matters we should piously acknowledge that there are certain wondrous things that God alone understands. At the same time we should maintain and believe that since God is the fountain of all righteousness, God will neither do nor determine anything whatsoever in human affairs or in those of the rest of creation that is unbecoming to God or differs at all from the true righteousness of justice. Since therefore it is fitting for us to be affected in this way, I say, that the Lord does not speak dogmatically when he says "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Rather, he says it to redirect the questioner in another direction and to lead us from things too deep for us to more suitable ones. Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.1.

9:4 Working the Works of Him Who Sent Me

Christ and the Father's Work Is the Same.

Chrysostom: He says here, "I must reveal myself and do those things that may show that I do the same things with the Father"—not things "similar" but "the same." This is an expression that marks greater invariability and that is used of those who do not differ even a little. Who then, after this, will face him when he sees that he had the same power with the Father? For not only did he form or open eyes; he also gave the gift of sight. This is proof that he also breathed in the soul. If that [soul] did not work, the eye, though perfected, could never see anything. He gave both the energy, which is from the soul, and gave the member also, possessing all things, both arteries and nerves and veins, and all things of which our body is composed. Homilies on the Gospel of John 56.2.

Beyond Life Is Neither Faith, Labor Nor Repentance.

Chrysostom: "While it is day" means I must work while people can still believe on me as long as this life lasts. "The night comes," that is, the future, "when no one can work." He did not say, "when I cannot work" but "when no one can work," that is, when there is no longer faith, labors or repentance. For to show that he called faith a "work," ... he replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent." Why then can no one do this kind of work in the future world? Because there is no faith there, but all, whether willingly or unwillingly, will simply submit. Homilies on the Gospel of John 56.2.

God Prefers Holy Action over Idle Speculation.

Cyril of Alexandria: Here Jesus is saying, "Why do you ask questions that are better left unsaid? Or why, leaving what suits the time, do you hurry to learn things beyond the capacity of people? It is not a time for such curiosity," he says, "but for intense work. I think it is more appropriate to pass by such questions and instead zealously execute God's commands." Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.1.

After the Resurrection Comes the Night for Unbelievers.

Augustine: After the resurrection of the living and the dead, when he will say to those placed at his right hand, "Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom," and to those at his left, "Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," then shall be the night when no one can work but

only get back what he has previously done. There is a time for working, another for receiving; for the Lord shall render to every one according to his works. While you live, do something if you are to be doing anything at all. For then that appalling night shall come to envelop the wicked in its folds. But even now every unbeliever, when he dies, is received within that night: there is no work to be done there. In that night was the rich man burning and asking a drop of water from the beggar's finger. ... Unhappy man! When you were living, that was the time for working. Now you are already in the night in which no one can work. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.6.

9:5 The Light of the World

The Light of Souls and of the Blind.

Theodore of Heraclea: He calls himself light both because he enlightens the souls of those who believe and because he was about to open the eyes of the one who was blind from birth. Fragments on John 71.

The Light Shines in the Darkness of Dust.

Ephrem the Syrian: And he brought forth the light from the dust, just as he had done in the beginning, when there was a shadow of the heavens. "Darkness was spread out over everything." He gave a command to the light, and it was born from the darkness. Thus also here, he formed clay from his saliva, and he supplied what lacking in creation, which was from the beginning, to show that what was lacking in nature was being supplied by his hand. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 16.28.

The Light Lasts until the End of the World.

Augustine: What is that night in which, when it comes, no one shall be able to work? Hear what the day is, and then you will understand what the night is. But how shall we hear what the day is? Let he himself tell us: "As long as I am in this world, I am the light of the world." See, he himself is the day.... The natural day is completed by the circuit of the sun and contains only a few hours. The day of Christ's presence will last to the end of the world, for he himself has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.5–6.

The Blinding Brightness of the Lord.

Chrysostom: “Believe while the light is with you,” he said to others. Why then did Paul call this life “night” and that other “day”? He was not opposing Christ but saying the same thing, even if not in those exact words—although the sense is the same. For he also says, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” He calls the present time “night,” because of those who sit in darkness or because he compares it with that day that is to come. Christ calls the future “night” because sin has no power to work there, but Paul calls the present life “night” because those who continue in wickedness and unbelief are in darkness. Addressing himself then to the faithful, he said, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand,” since they should enjoy that light. And he calls the old life night. “Let us put away,” he says, “the works of darkness.” Do you see that he tells them that it is “night”? Therefore he says, “Let us walk honestly as in the day,” that we may enjoy that light. For if this light is so good, consider what that light will be. As much as the sunlight is brighter than the flame of a candle, so much and far more is that light better than this. And signifying this, Christ says that “the sun shall be darkened.” Because of the excess of that brightness, not even the sun shall be seen. Homilies on the Gospel of John 56.3.

9:6 He Made Mud and Spread It on the Man’s Eyes

Jesus Completes His Work as Creator.

Irenaeus: He healed others by a word.... But the Lord bestowed sight on the one who was blind from birth—not by a word, but by an outward action. He did this neither casually nor simply because this was how it happened. He did it this way in order to show it was the same hand of God here that had also formed man at the beginning. And therefore when his disciples asked him why he had been born blind, whether by his own fault or his parents’, Jesus said, “Neither this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him.” The work of God is, after all, the forming of man. He did this by an outward action, as Scripture says, “And the Lord took clay from earth, and formed man.” Notice here too how the Lord spit on the earth, and made clay and smeared it on his eyes, showing how the ancient creation was made. He was making clear to those who can understand, that this was the [same] hand of God through which man was formed from clay. For what the creating Word had neglected to form in the womb, this he supplied openly. He did this so that the works of God might be evident in him, and so that we would now seek for no other hand than that through which humanity was formed. Nor should we seek another Father, knowing that the hand of God which formed us in the beginning, and forms in

the womb, has in the last times sought us lost ones out. He is gaining his own lost sheep and putting it on his shoulders and joyfully restoring it to the fold of life. Against Heresies 5.15.2.

Anointing of the Eyes with Clay.

Origen: I think this has been said to establish that Christ's saliva had a quality of healing power. Even though the blind man did not himself ask to receive his sight, yet he will be found praiseworthy in delivering himself to Jesus anointing his eyes with clay and in doing without hesitation what had been enjoined him, without Jesus having even said that he would receive sight.... Let us therefore wash off the clay smeared in our eyes in the water of the pool of him [i.e., Jesus] who has been sent so that after this we may be able to see again. But you will understand by the clay the beginning of the rudiments of the oracles of God, according to which we as babies are fed with milk. But when the childish things are done away with and we eat solid food, we wipe away the clay so that we may return to Jesus as one who sees. Fragment 63 on the Gospel of John.

Proving Jesus Is Creator.

Ammonius: He spat on the ground and made mud out of the saliva and he daubed the mud onto the eyes of the blind man. He wanted to show with the mud that he himself is the one who made Adam from the earth. His statement that "I am the one doing this" seemed to make his hearer hostile to him. But have shown himself to be the one through this work that he did—this, finally, did not give offense. Therefore, he fashioned eyes in that way rather than simply healing them. And he did not only make the eyes or open them but also graced them with the ability to see. This is positive proof that he had also breathed a soul into Adam. For he would never have seen, even if the eye had been completed, unless that life-giving spirit that breathed into Adam was at work. Fragments on John 317.

Why Not Water Instead of Saliva?

Chrysostom: And why didn't he use water instead of saliva for the clay? He was about to send the man to Siloam. In order, therefore, that nothing might be ascribed to the fountain but that you might learn that the power proceeds from his mouth—the same, both formed and opened the man's eyes—he "spat on the ground." ... And then, so that you might not think that it was the earth that healed him, he commanded him to wash. Homilies on the Gospel of John 57.1.

9:7 Go, Wash in the Pool of Siloam

Healing Does Not Occur in Jesus' Presence.

Origen: But to heal in his absence, to tell him to go away and wash and to provide the healing only once he has washed—this was the work of someone who wanted to be sure that no one would be ignorant of the miracle that had taken place. For as he commanded the paralytic to take up his bed on the day when it was not lawful to do this—so that each man charging him with the transgression might learn the greatness of the miracle—in the same way he commanded this man who was at a distance from the pool to go there and wash. Fragment 63 on the Gospel of John.

The Washing of Regeneration.

Irenaeus: As, therefore, we are formed in the womb by the Word, this very same Word also formed sight in the one who had been blind from his birth. In this way, he openly showed who it is who forms us in secret, since now the Word himself had been revealed to the world. It also made known the ancient formation of Adam and how he was made, and through what hand he was formed—indicating the whole [of Adam's creation] by showing us a part [of it]. For the Lord who formed sight is he who has formed the entire person, and in doing so, carried out the will of the Father. But in respect to that formation in men and women that took place after Adam—when humanity fell into sin—there was a need for the washing of regeneration. This is why the Lord said to the man to whom he had given sight, "Go to Siloam and wash." In this way, he provided both his physical reformation and his regeneration which comes through washing. And this is why, when he washed, he came back seeing. He would come to know his creator and humanity would come to know him who has given us life. Against Heresies 5.15.3.

You Too Come to Siloam.

Ambrose: Again, I ask you: What is he trying to convey to us by spitting on the ground, mixing his saliva with clay and putting it on the eyes of a blind man, saying, "Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam (a name that means 'sent')"? What is the meaning of the Lord's action in this? Surely one of great significance, since the person whom Jesus touches receives more than just his sight.

In one instant we see both the power of his divinity and the strength of his holiness. As the divine light, he touched this man and enlightened him. As priest, by an action symbolizing baptism he wrought in him

his work of redemption. The only reason for his mixing clay with the saliva and smearing it on the eyes of the blind man was to remind you that he who restored the man to health by anointing his eyes with clay is the very one who fashioned the first man out of clay, and that this clay that is our flesh can receive the light of eternal life through the sacrament of baptism.

You, too, should come to Siloam, that is, to him who was sent by the Father, as he says in the Gospel: "My teaching is not my own; it comes from him who sent me." Let Christ wash you, and you will then see. Come and be baptized, it is time; come quickly, and you too will be able to say, "I went and washed"; you will be able to say, "I was blind, and now I can see." And, as the blind man said when his eyes began to receive the light, you too can say, "The night is almost over and the day is at hand." Letter 67.4–6.

The Power of the Lord's Word.

Ephrem the Syrian: For Siloam did not open [the eyes of] the blind man, just as the waters of the Jordan did not purify Naaman, but rather it was the command [by our Lord] that brought the healing. Also, it is not the waters of our atonement that bring purification; rather, it is the names invoked over it that produce atonement for us. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 16.29.

9:8 The Former Beggar?

Jesus Even Heals Beggars.

Chrysostom: The strangeness of the miracle made people incredulous. The neighbors and those who had seen that he was blind said, "Is this now the man who used to sit and beg?" What wonderful clemency and condescension of God! With such great kindness he even heals the beggars. In this way he shuts up the mouths of the Jews, because he made, not the great, illustrious and noble, but the poorest and meanest, the objects of his providence. Indeed, he had come for the salvation of all. Homilies on the Gospel of John 57.1.

9:9 I Am the Man

The Long Walk to the Pool Enables Recognition.

Chrysostom: Why didn't he have him wash immediately instead of sending him to Siloam?... For one thing, everyone would probably see him as he was leaving, having the clay spread upon his eyes. The strangeness

of this spectacle would most likely focus the attention of everyone on him—both those who knew him and those who did not—everyone would be watching him closely. And, because it is not easy to recognize a blind man who has recovered his sight, Jesus first of all sends him this long distance so that he can be seen by many witnesses. This bizarre spectacle of a man walking with mud on his eyes would make these witnesses even more attentive so that no one could any longer say, “This is not he.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 57.1.

9:10 How Were Your Eyes Opened?

The Blind Leading the Blind to See.

Ephrem the Syrian: Those who could see were clearly being drawn to the blind man, who saw inwardly. The blind man was being drawn secretly to those who could see but who were blind inwardly. He [the blind man] washed away the clay from his eyes and appeared to himself. They washed the blindness from their hearts and gained approval for themselves. When our Lord opened up the eyes of one blind man clearly in that moment, he opened up [the eyes of] many blind people secretly. For that blind man was [surely] blind. He was like a source of profit for our Lord, for by him our Lord acquired many blind people [by healing them] from the blindness of their heart. Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron 16.30.

9:11 The Man Called Jesus Made Clay and Anointed My Eyes

Still Ignorant of Who Jesus Is.

Cyril of Alexandria: He appears still to be ignorant that the Savior is by nature God, for otherwise he would not have spoken of him in such an unworthy way. He probably thought of him as a holy man, forming this opinion from the rumors that were circulating around Jerusalem. Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.1.

The Miracle Described from the Blind Man’s Perspective.

Chrysostom: Notice how precise he is. He does not say how the clay was made since he could not see that our Lord spat on the ground. He does not say what he does not know. He did not see Jesus spit on the ground, but he could feel it when he spread the mud on his eyes. “And he said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash.’” This too he could mention because he heard it. For he had heard our Lord in conversation with his disciples and so he knew his voice. Even after all this, however, he cannot tell how

he was cured. Now if faith is needed in matters that are felt and handled by the senses, how much more in the case of what is invisible? Homilies on the Gospel of John 57.2.

The Blind Evangelist.

Augustine: See how he became a herald of grace. See how he preaches the gospel. See how, once he is endowed with sight, he becomes a witness. That blind man testified, and the ungodly were troubled in their hearts because they did not have in their own hearts what they saw in him. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.8.

9:12 Where Is He?

Opened Eyes Later Testify.

Ephrem the Syrian: His saliva was thus the key for closed eyes, for with water he healed the eye. From the water [he formed] clay and brought to wholeness what had been lost. When [later] they were spitting at his face, the blind eyes that had been opened by his saliva would accuse them. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 16.32.

9:13–14 A Sabbath Day

Jesus' Departure from the Law.

Chrysostom: The Evangelist remarks that it was "the sabbath" in order to expose their real design ... which was to accuse him of a departure from the law and thus detract from the miracle. Homilies on the Gospel of John 57.2.

9:15 Clay, Washing, Sight

The Gift of Sight and the Gift of Faith.

Cyril of Alexandria: Here, it is as though the man is saying: I will prove to you that the power of the Healer was not exerted in vain. I will not deny the favor I received, for I now possess what I formerly longed for. I who was blind from birth and afflicted from the womb, having been anointed with clay, am healed, and I see. That is, I do not merely show you my eye opened, concealing the darkness in its depth, but I really

see. From now on I am able to look at things that formerly I could only hear about. Look! The bright light of the sun is shining around me. Look! The beauty of strange sights surrounds my eye. A short time ago I scarcely knew what Jerusalem was like. Now I see the temple of God glittering within it, and I behold in its midst the truly venerable altar. And if I stood outside the gate, I could look around on the country of Judea and recognize one thing as a hill and another as a tree. And when the time changes to evening, my eye will no longer fail to notice the beauty of the nighttime sky, the brilliant company of the stars and the golden light of the moon. When I do, I shall be amazed at the skill of him who made them “from the greatness and beauty of created things.” I as well as others shall acknowledge the great Creator. Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.1.

9:16 Not Keeping the Sabbath

Carnal and Spiritual Keeping of Sabbath.

Augustine: Those [Pharisees] who neither saw nor had yet been anointed said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath.” On the contrary, he kept it because he was without sin; to observe the sabbath spiritually is to have no sin. And this is what God admonishes us when he commends the sabbath, saying, “You shall do no servile work.” ... Our Lord tells us above what servile work is: “Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.” But these men, who neither could see nor were anointed, observed the sabbath carnally but profaned it spiritually. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.9.

Joshua Did Not Keep the Sabbath at Jericho.

Cyril of Alexandria: The Jews admire the ancient hero Joshua who captured Jericho on the sabbath and commanded their forefathers to do such things as are customary for conquerors—and Joshua himself by no means observed the proper sabbath rest. Yet, those who admire Joshua persistently attack Christ. Their personal ill will toward Christ prompted them not only to try and take away from him the glory due to God but also to rob him of the honor due to holy people. And speaking inconsiderately through their malice, they pour forth a charge of impiety against him who came to us from the Father and who justifies the world. Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.1.

What about the Miracle Itself?

Chrysostom: Passing over the miracle in silence, they give all the prominence they can to the supposed transgression. They do not charge him with “healing on the sabbath day” but with not “keeping the sabbath.” “Others replied rather weakly, ‘How can a man who is a sinner do such miracles?’ ” They were impressed by his miracles, but only in a weak and unsettled way. For whereas the fact of whether the sabbath was broken or not might have divided them, they still had no idea yet that he was God. They did not know that it was the Lord of the sabbath who had worked the miracle. Nor did any of them dare to say openly what his sentiments were, but they spoke ambiguously—one, because he thought the fact itself improbable, another, from his love of status. It follows, “And there was a division among them.” That is, the people were divided first, and then the rulers. Homilies on the Gospel of John 57.2.

9:17 What Do You Say About Him?

His Confession True, Though Incomplete.

Augustine: There was a division among them as the day divided between the light and the darkness... They were looking for a way to denigrate the man and cast him out of their synagogue (although he would be found by Christ). However, he declares openly what he thinks. For he said, “He is a prophet.” Not yet anointed in heart, he could not confess the Son of God. Nevertheless, he is not wrong in what he says either, for our Lord even says of himself, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country.” Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.9.

9:18 They Called the Parents

A Failed Attempt to Nullify the Miracle.

Chrysostom: It is the nature of truth to be strengthened by the very snares that are laid against it by people.... Lies defeat themselves by the very means they use against the truth, making it appear even brighter, as is the case now. For the argument that might otherwise have been urged—that is, that the neighbors knew nothing for certain but were guessing on the basis that this man looked like the one who was healed—that whole argument is cut off by the introduction of the parents who could, of course, testify to their own son. The Pharisees, being unable by intimidation to deter the blind man from publicly

proclaiming his benefactor, try to nullify the miracle through the parents. Homilies on the Gospel of John 58.1.

9:19 Is This Your Son?

Two Questions to Bring About Denial.

Chrysostom: Having brought the parents into the middle of the assembly in order to intimidate them, they angrily begin a fierce interrogation: “Is this your son?” Notice, they do not say, “who was born blind” but “who you say was born blind.” ... What kind of a father would say such things about his son if they were not true? Why not say at once, “Whom you made blind”?... They try two ways of making them deny the miracle by saying, “who you say was born blind” and then by adding, “How then does he now see?” Homilies on the Gospel of John 58.1–2.

9:21 He Is of Age

The Parents Expose Their Son to Possible Harm.

Origen: Besides having spoken falsely, they committed another sin by exposing their son to obvious harm. But I think this also has a reason. When the Savior opened the eyes of the blind man, he did not open those of a child but of one full grown so that he might see as a full-grown man. But such was also the case with other blind men who received sight. However, it is true that he being of full age can speak for himself, and especially so when Jesus makes him receive his sight. For he needs no one else to negotiate for him. Fragment 67 on the Gospel of John.

No Need to Speak for a Grown Man.

Augustine: The parents reply, We might justly be compelled to speak for him as an infant when he could not speak for himself ...; but even though we know he has been blind from birth, we also know that he has been able to speak for some time now. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.10.

9:22–23 His Parents Feared Being Put Out of the Synagogue

The Rulers' Unbelief.

Theodore of Heraclea: Thus evil mastered the rulers who not only disabled themselves through unbelief but also through their threatening shut the way of salvation for the rest. Fragment on John 82.

You Cast Out, Christ Takes In.

Augustine: But it was no disadvantage to be put out of the synagogue since the one they cast out, Christ received. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.10.

9:24 Give God the Praise

Under the Guise of Religion.

Chrysostom: The parents referred the Pharisees to the healed man himself, and so they summon him a second time. They do not openly say now, "Deny that Christ has healed you." Instead they conceal their objective under the pretense of religion.... They say, "Give God the glory," that is, confess that this man Jesus has had nothing to do with the work. Homilies on the Gospel of John 58.2.

Blaspheme God.

Augustine: They tell him to deny what he has received. This is not to give God the glory but rather to blaspheme him. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.11.

9:25 Though I Was Blind, Now I See

9:27 Do You Too Want to Become His Disciples?

The Boldness of Faith.

Chrysostom: Do you see how boldly the beggar speaks with the scribes and Pharisees? It shows how strong truth is and how weak falsehood is. Truth, though it grasps only ordinary people, makes them to appear glorious; falsehood, even when it is among the strong, shows them to be weak. What he says is like this: you do not pay attention to my words; therefore, I will no longer speak or answer you when you question

me continually to no purpose. You do not want to hear in order to learn but so that you can lay insults over my words. Homilies on the Gospel of John 58.2.

No Longer Tolerating Blindness.

Augustine: He was indignant now at the obstinacy of the Jews. Now that he is no longer blind himself, he can no longer tolerate their blindness either. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.11.

Already a Disciple.

Cyril of Alexandria: He reveals his own state of mind that he was not only willing to become, but actually had already become, a disciple. Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.1.

9:28–29 Disciples of Moses

A Compliment, but Not Intentional.

Augustine: May such an “evil thing” be said of us and on our children! In other words, it was an evil thing [to say he was a disciple] from their point of view, but not if you think about the words themselves. They say, “But we are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses. But we have no idea where this person comes from.” But if you [Pharisees] knew that God spoke to Moses, then you should have also known that God preached about our Lord through Moses after hearing what he said, “If you had believed Moses, you would have believed me, for he wrote of me.” Do you then follow a servant and turn your back on the Lord? But you do not even follow the servant, for he would guide you to the Lord. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.12.

9:30 He Opened My Eyes

The Miracle Is Incontrovertible Evidence.

Chrysostom: He brings in the miracle everywhere as evidence because they could not invalidate it. And he draws his own inferences from it too. First, he says, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know.” He has no doubt that Jesus was not a sinner. And so, when he has an opportunity, he turns their own words against them and defends Jesus: “Now we know that God does not listen to sinners.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 58.3.

9:31 God Does Not Listen to Sinners

Is It True That God Does Not Listen to Sinners?

Origen: But if so important a doctrine were true, that is, that the sinner is not heard by God, it would not have been passed over in silence but would have been spoken by someone deserving to be believed, for example, by the servant [Moses] or one of the prophets. But how, if God did not hear a sinner, were the sinners taught to say, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive our transgressors”? Whom then does God hear? He hears those who turn to him in repentance, even if they have not yet ceased from being sinners. If God did not hear sinners, our Savior would not have been eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. But if those needing physicians because they were sick were not being heard, he would not have healed them. Therefore, as if the prayer of those who have sinned but no longer altogether disbelieve attained its object, it is said, “If you mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” But perhaps the blind man is speaking not about any ordinary thing in the prayer of the sinner but of the kind of great works that Jesus was doing. For when God is petitioned concerning those kinds of works by sinners, he does not hear them. Fragment 70 on the Gospel of John.

9:33–34 If This Man Were Not from God, He Could Do Nothing

The Insight of Faith.

Cyril of Alexandria: He who had just received sight and had been miraculously freed from his old blindness was quicker to perceive truth than those who had been instructed by the law. See how through numerous and wise arguments he demonstrates the utter inferiority of the Pharisees’ opinion. Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.1.

9:35 Do You Believe in the Son of Man?

Christ Elicits a Confession of Faith.

Hilary of Poitiers: When the man was already healed and had suffered ejection from the synagogue, the Lord put to him the question, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” This was to save him from the thought that he had lost everything by being excluded from the synagogue. It gave him the certainty that confession of the true faith had restored him to immortality. When the man, his soul still unenlightened,

answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?" the Lord's reply was, "You have both seen him, and it is he that speaks with you." For his goal was to remove the ignorance of the man whose sight he had restored and whom he was now enriching with the knowledge of so glorious a faith. Does the Lord demand from this man, as from others who entreated him to heal them, a confession of faith as the price of their recovery? Emphatically not! For the blind man could already see when he was thus addressed. The Lord asked the question in order to receive the answer, "Lord, I believe." The faith that spoke in that answer was to receive not sight but life. On the Trinity 6.48.

Jesus Himself Was Siloam.

Augustine: Of course God listens to sinners. But the man who said that had not yet washed the face of his heart in Siloam. The sacrament had already taken place in his eyes, but the benefit of grace had not yet been achieved in his heart. When did this blind man wash the face of his heart? When, after he had been thrown outside by the Jews, the Lord brought him inside into himself. You see, he found him and said to him, as we heard, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" And he answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?" He could already see him, certainly, with his eyes, but with his heart? Not yet. Wait for it; he will see in a moment. Jesus answered him, "I am, I who am talking to you." Did he hesitate? He washed his face immediately. After all, Siloam was talking to him, "which is translated as 'the One sent.' " Who is the one sent but Christ who frequently asserted, "I do the will of my Father, who sent me"? So he himself was Siloam. The man blind in heart approached, heard, believed, worshiped, washed his face and saw. Sermon 136.2.

9:36 Who Is He?

A Beginner's Confession of Faith.

Origen: Since he could not yet say "I believe" but as in ignorance answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?" he was therefore on the borderline, so to speak, between unbelief and belief. Fragment 71 on the Gospel of John.

9:38 Lord, I Believe

Worship Follows Faith.

Basil the Great: Worship follows faith, and faith is confirmed by power. But if you say that believers also know, they know from what they believe; and vice versa, they believe from what they know. We know God from his power. We, therefore, believe in him who is known, and we worship him who is believed. Letter 234.3.

9:39 Coming into the World for Judgment

Light and Darkness, Seeing and Blind.

Augustine: The day then was divided between light and darkness.... And this is only right since you, O Lord, are the light, you are the day, you deliver us from darkness. Every soul accepts and understands this. But what is this that follows, "And those who see may become blind"? Because you have arrived, shall those who saw now be made blind? Hear what comes next, and maybe you will understand. "Some of the Pharisees" were disturbed by these words "and said to him, 'Are we also blind?' " What had moved them were the words "And those who see may become blind." "Jesus said to them, ... 'If you were blind, you would have no sin,' " that is, if you identified yourselves as blind you would run to the physician.... For I have come to take away sin. But now you say, "We see." Therefore your sin remains. Why? Because when you say that you see, you are not looking for a physician, and that is why you will remain in your blindness. Therefore, what he has just said before about coming for those who do not see so that they may see concerns those who acknowledge that they do not see and seek a physician so that they may receive their sight. "And those who see may become blind" concerns those who think they can see without looking for a physician, and so they remain in their blindness. He calls this act of division "judgment," saying, "For judgment I came into this world." ... He is not referring here to that "judgment" when he will judge the living and the dead at the end of the world. Tractates on the Gospel of John 44.16–17.

9:40–41 Are We Also Blind?

Unconfessed Sin Remains.

Augustine: That is why, when the Pharisees who were listening to what he was saying, themselves said, “We are not blind too, are we?” They were obviously like the one who had gone up to the temple and was telling God, “I thank you, because I am not like other people, unjust, adulterers, rapacious,” as though to say, “I thank you that I am not blind but can see, unlike other people of the same sort as this tax collector.” What did those ones say? “We are not blind too, are we?” And the Lord answered them, “If you were blind, you would not have any sin. Now however, because you say ‘We can see,’ your sins remain.” He did not say “your sin occurs” but remains. You see, it was already there; because when you do not confess it, it is not taken away but “remains.” Sermon 136b.2.

Two Recoveries of Sight, Two Types of Blindness.

Chrysostom: In this passage he speaks of two recoveries of sight and of two types of blindness: one sensory and the other spiritual.... But they were intent only on the sensory things and were ashamed only of sensory blindness. And so, in order to show them that it would be better for them to be blind than seeing as they do, he says, “If you were blind, you would have no sin,” ... your punishment would be more tolerable.... “But now you say ‘We see,’ ” but you do not see at all. He shows that what they considered as so great and praiseworthy actually brought them punishment instead. At the same time, he also consoles him who was blind from his birth concerning his former maimed state. And then he speaks concerning their blindness. For he directs his whole speech toward this purpose, that is, so that they cannot say, “We did not refuse to come to you because of our blindness, but we turn away and avoid you as a deceiver.” And there is also a reason the Evangelist adds, “And some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words.” He wants to remind us that those were the very persons who had first withstood Christ and then wished to stone him. For there were some who only followed in appearance and were easily changed to the contrary opinion. Homilies on the Gospel of John 59.1–2.