

In Defense of the Development of Augustine's

Doctrine of Grace

by

Laban Omondi Agisa

Submitted to the faculty of the

School of Theology of the University of the South

in Partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Sacred Theology

January 2020

Sewanee, Tennessee

Approved

Adviser

Date

Second Adviser

Date

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work and has not been presented in any other institution for consideration of any certification. This work has been complemented by sources duly acknowledged and cited using Chicago Manual Style.

Signature

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My study of theology was initiated in 2009 by the then Provost of St. Stephens Cathedral, Nairobi, the late Ven. Canon John Ndung'u who was a great encouragement to me. This was further made possible through my bishop the Rt. Rev. Joel Waweru and the Rev. Geoffrey Okapisi who were sources of inspiration. My studies at Carlile College (Church Army Africa) and St. Paul's University laid a strong theological foundation and I appreciate among others the influence of the Rev. Dr. John Kiboi who introduced me to Philosophy, Systematic Theology, Ethics, and African Christian Theology that eventually became the foundation for my studies at the University of the South. I also appreciate the encouragement of my lecturers Mrs. Tabitha Waweru and Dr. Scholarstica Githinji during my Study of Education at Kenya Technical Trainers College and at Daystar University respectively. My interest in this topic came as a result of many sittings with two professors at the University of the South, Dr. Cynthia Crysdale and the Rt. Rev. James Tengtenga. I also appreciate my research professor, Dr. Romulus Stefanut, together with my ESL professor Helen Stapleton. I wish to express my indebtedness to my systematic theology professor who is also my thesis supervisor, the Rev. Dr. Robert MacSwain, and my academic advisor, who is also my second reader, the Rev. Dr. Benjamin King for the great contribution and sacrifice they made during my writing. I also acknowledge the Dean of the School of Theology at Sewanee, the Rt. Rev. Neil Alexander for his support. I am very grateful to the Heritage Fellowship for their much support during my studies. Finally, I thank my wife Veronica and my children Jamaine, Regina, and Jayden who allowed me to be absent from them during my studies and despite the distance they gave me complete support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	1
Declaration	2
Acknowledgement	3
Table of Contents	4
Abstract	6
 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	 8
1.1 Rationale	9
1.2 Methodology	10
1.3 Structure of the Project	11
 CHAPTER 2: AUGUSTINE BEFORE PELAGIUS	 13
2.1 Augustine’s conversion and his writings	17
2.2 The need for salvation	22
2.3 The assertion of human autonomy	24
2.4 The limitation of freedom	26
2.5 The necessity of divine grace	28
2.6 The nature of grace	32
2.7 The means of grace	36
2.8 The Augustinian Solution	46
 CHAPTER 3: PELAGIUS	 48
3.1 The Pelagian teachings	50
3.2 Arguments for Freedom, Sin, and Grace	59

3.3 Agreement with Pelagian Teachings	61
CHAPTER 4: AUGUSTINE AFTER PELAGIUS	68
4.1 Augustine’s Response to Pelagian Teachings	71
4.2 Faith as a Gift	72
4.3 Freedom of the will	76
4.4 Divine grace	79
4.5 Perseverance as a gift	81
4.6 The necessity of grace after Pelagius	86
4.7 Doctrine of Grace	90
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	91
5.1 Future Research	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY	99
Primary Sources	99
Secondary Sources	100
Websites	104
Appendix	105

Abstract**“IN DEFENSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUGUSTINE’S
DOCTRINE OF GRACE”****LABAN OMONDI AGISA**Thesis under the direction of Rev. Dr. Robert MacSwain

Augustine contributed to Christian thought with some pivotal works that have developed Christian doctrine. His works continue to be relevant today in theology and Christian practice. He responded to some of the main controversies the Catholic Church faced in the fourth and fifth centuries on the doctrine of Trinity, Christology, and Grace. He believed that only the grace of God can bridge the chasm that sin creates between the Creator and creatures. Only grace can usher believers into God’s salvation. He also claimed that those to whom God chooses to give grace, God does so despite their power to resist. Pelagius and his followers, on the other hand, arguably misinterpreted Augustine’s doctrine of grace especially on the aspect of original sin; so Pelagius therefore denied the efficacy of baptism. He also claimed that Augustine denied the existence of free will in humans and that he held that free will was destroyed by sin, and thus free will was incompatible with Augustine’s doctrine of grace. He also accused Augustine of being a Manichean because of his doctrine of concupiscence. On the contrary to Pelagius, Augustine advanced the view that humans lost their free will only when Adam sinned. He, therefore, emphasized the believer’s restoration in Christ and the need for the grace of Christ. Therefore, the point of this project is to examine Augustine’s doctrine of grace including its development and key tenets. The analysis includes Pelagius’ criticism and its effect on the development of

Augustine's arguments on free will and efficacy of grace. Before its conclusion, Augustine's response to Pelagius and his proponents becomes key in the project.

Approved

Adviser

Date

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“One of the functions of the incarnate and resurrected Christ is to lead our intelligence beyond an obsession with the material to imagine the immaterial reality of the divine as the source of our material world.”¹

This study is devoted to examining Augustine’s doctrine of grace and how it developed. Aurelius Augustinus (354-430), better known as Augustine, is one of the most influential theologians in the history of the post-apostolic church, especially in the West. Augustine expounded upon the relationship between grace and human free will and the role that it played in human salvation. Augustine was one of the first theologians to develop the doctrine of grace, taken not in the sense of a divine attribute, but in the sense of the benefits which God, through Christ, grants to the church. Augustine’s doctrine of grace was the result of his own experience and his study of St. Paul’s Epistles.

For Augustine, grace is efficacious and God does whatsoever God wills. God sovereignly decrees to reprobate some people and choose others. Augustine taught that election and reprobation were not granted on the basis of God’s foresight into an individual’s faith or unbelief. The elect receive grace while the reprobate do not. Augustine says that no other reason can be sought than “the inscrutable will of God.”² The central thought was the absolute dependence of humanity on the grace of God. It made everything that concerned salvation to be of God, the source of all good.

¹ Lewis Ayes, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 51.

² Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Volume 5 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 16, (VIII.), 506.

Pelagius would later lead Augustine into the controversy that was to secure him a truly international reputation.³ Pelagius had come to Italy almost the same period as Augustine. While Augustine returned to his native land after 4 years, Pelagius remained in Rome for 30 years.⁴ As a bishop, Augustine settled into a life dedicated to local pastoral problems and intellectual activities. On the other hand, Pelagius lived in a town frequented by monks troubled with theological issues. Pelagius had joined in the discussions of St. Paul which formed the basis of his exposition of the letters of St. Paul.⁵ He wrote formal letters of exhortation. Even Augustine admired his letters – well written and straight to the point for their ‘*facundia*’ and their ‘*acrimonia*’. *Le style, c’est l’homme*.⁶

1.1 Rationale of the Project

The ultimate focus of this project will be to ascertain Augustine’s view on grace and how the doctrine developed. I suggest that Augustine’s doctrine of grace has been neglected by recent scholars and even though there are materials on the subject, they are not sufficient in highlighting the distinct perspective of Augustine. This project is, therefore, an attempt, just as the Reformers resuscitated Augustine’s work on grace (especially Calvin), to re-visit this important doctrine. Needless to say, Augustine is the forerunner for Christian theologians who explore the ecclesiological implications of grace.

³ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, Part IV, Chapter 29 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 341.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Another reason why this study is timely is that despite “grace” having been accepted as part of the church tradition, it never found its way into the creeds, nor has it been part of the popular doctrines in the church.⁷ Oscar Hardman argues that ignoring “grace” may mean restricting our understanding of the creeds and he quotes Augustine saying, “Grace serves to illuminate many of the doctrines.”⁸ While this project focuses on Augustine’s doctrine of grace, it also examines the disagreement between Augustine and Pelagius on original sin and how this doctrine impacts our understanding of free will and the efficacy of grace.

1.2 Methodology:

The advancement of this project depends on the writings of Augustine on the doctrine of grace, combined with his biblical interpretation and exegesis. Augustinian writings that have been treated are *On Free Will*, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and on Infant Baptism*, *On Nature and Grace*, *On the Proceedings Concerning Pelagius*, *On Grace and Free Choice*, *On Admonition and Grace* and *On the Predestination of the Saints*, among others. These treatises are useful in understanding the Augustinian view of God’s grace and the way it relates to free will and the attainment of eternal life. Apart from writing against the Donatists and the Manicheans, the later works are a response to Pelagius.⁹ Pauline writings, especially the letters to Romans and Corinthians, are also useful as they form the New Testament foundation for understanding sin, salvation, and

⁷ Oscar Hardman, *The Christian Doctrine of Grace*, Chapter I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹ Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 349.

ultimately grace as presented by Augustine. The writings therefore provide insight into the Augustinian view of God's grace, free will, and the attainment of free will. The development considers the Pelagian reaction to Augustine's writings and emerging doctrine and the way Augustine responds to the criticism. The analysis incorporates various theological interpretations of the Augustinian work and it focuses on the primary sources and the underlying argument regarding the relationship between grace, human free will, and human salvation.

1.3 Structure of the Project

Following this Introduction, the Chapters are as follows:

2. Augustine before Pelagius: This chapter provides a background on scriptural references and the early development of Augustine's doctrine of grace.
3. Pelagius: This chapter outlines Pelagius' reaction to Augustine's early doctrine of grace. Pelagius insisted on people being responsible for their own sins. For Pelagius, the dignity of humans resides in their freedom.
4. Augustine after Pelagius: This chapter assesses Augustine's response to Pelagius and his followers as concerns the doctrine of grace.
5. Conclusions: Scott Hoezee quotes Augustine saying, "To desire the help of grace is the beginning of grace."¹⁰ Therefore, this chapter provides a conclusion of the whole project

¹⁰ Scott Hoezee, *The Riddle of Grace: Applying Grace to the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 29.

cementing the need for grace in the life of a Christian according to Augustine. Appended are the major works of Augustine that are relevant to this project.

CHAPTER 2: AUGUSTINE BEFORE PELAGIUS

Augustine's works show that his doctrine of grace developed in stages. The anti-Manichean treatises (388-404) have at their heart a sense that sinful humanity, hamstrung by selfishness from the earliest moments of infancy, is the prisoner of habits.¹¹ Augustine says that only grace can restore authentic freedom.¹² He did not deny good works; as Roger Haight puts it, "one truly merits salvation through good works in grace."¹³ In *Confessions*, dating from 396, he said, "when God rewards our merits, he crowns his own gifts."¹⁴ This formula Augustine often repeated and it was much later borrowed by the council of Trent in 1547.¹⁵ The Council called it the doctrine of infused righteousness.¹⁶ Augustine recognized mortality as the consequence of Adam's sin and discovered within each of Adam's offspring that same tendency to pride which manifests in the first sin.

Patout Burns analyzes this early doctrine of grace, in which according to Augustine God neither responds to nor requires prior human achievement and merit. His sovereign will is both effective and unconstrained.¹⁷ According to Augustine's initial opinion, God

¹¹ Manicheism is a strong fatalist position associated with the Manichees, to which Augustine attached himself as a young man.

¹² Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 11.

¹³ Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 114.

¹⁴ *Confessions* 9.34, quoted in Chadwick, *Augustine*, 107. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 107.

¹⁵ Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 114.

¹⁶ Arthur Headlam, "The Doctrine of Grace: A Statement of the Problems," in *The Doctrine of Grace*, ed. W. T. Whitley (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1932), 380.

¹⁷ Patout Burns, *The Development of St. Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980), 7.

moves an individual to faith by providing motives which appeal to prior dispositions and unfulfilled desires for good. Augustine developed a theory of conversion which was a reversal of evil tendencies by an interior grace. Later, he said that God maintains the elect in good to the end of their lives by a combination of environmental and interior graces. He insists on God's foreknowledge as far as election is concerned.¹⁸ To Augustine, there is a direct influence on the will itself through the interior grace.

As Pereira alludes, Augustine's development of the doctrine of salvation is a rigorous process involving writings and revisions, which speak not of a fundamental change in mind or recantation but reconsiderations and adjustments.¹⁹ Augustine goes through years of theological reflections leading to his *Confessions*, in which he outlines the journey which humans are called through grace to God. In his *Confessions*, Augustine blamed himself, rather than the seductive temptations of the Devil, for his plight.²⁰ "The purpose of the *Confessions* was to document how he came to accept the truth of the human condition. It was not intended to illustrate the author's growing piety or the evil of sexual desire, but to highlight the insurmountable depravity that must be accepted before grace, the unearned gift of God's forgiveness, could be received... [T]he desire to sin could not be banished by human effort."²¹ Significant in the writings of Augustine is that he uses his life as a point of departure to indeed show the application of grace, and to discount good

¹⁸ Thomas Oden, *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 128.

¹⁹ Jairzinho Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther On Original Sin and Justification of the Sinner* (Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 81.

²⁰ James Boyce, *Born Bad: Original Sin and the Making of the Western World* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), 7.

²¹ *Ibid*, 10.

works as the beginning of grace. To understand this development, it is important to consider the life of Augustine and how it influences the development of the concept of grace.

Augustine acknowledges that he had two known sinful lusts: curiosity and worldly ambitions.²² In his *Confessions*, he revisited “What I once was,” the sins and errors of his early years. He told of his thefts as a boy, his remarkable mother, his concubine, his membership with an outlawed religious group, his love of sex, his worldly aspirations. He then undertook to set out “what I (now) am.”²³ He kept presenting matters as though debating with himself, what Robin Fox calls Augustine with Augustine. For example, “At this time I lived with a girl not bound to me in lawful wedlock but sought out by the roving eye of reckless desire; all the same she was the only girl I had and I was faithful to her.”²⁴

In the words of Henry Chadwick, “After Augustine had become a bishop, the issue of man’s absolute need for grace rose to a crescendo.”²⁵ As he changes from presbyter to bishop so does his doctrine of grace grow. More so, he left behind a life of decadence and pride and that journey also shaped his understanding of grace. The same experiences laid a foundation on his response to Pelagius, as will be outlined later. An exploration of his understanding of grace and how this develops prior to the Pelagian criticism is also necessary.

²² Robin Lane Fox, *Augustine: Conversion to Confessions*, (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 409.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴ *Confessions* 4.2.2. In Maria Boulding, Translator, John Rotelle, editor, *The Confessions*. The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1997), 93.

²⁵ Henry Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 115.

To respond to the Donatists, his doctrine of grace begins with the interpretation of the text *Ad Simplicianum* written in AD 396 immediately after his consecration as Bishop of Hippo.²⁶ The meaning of this text can be determined properly by placing it in the context of Augustine's thoughts at the time, rather than transposing it into the Pelagian controversy which came much later. In this early text his idea of grace was almost "Pelagian" which later landed him into problems during the debates with Pelagius. Augustine says that the will is free, not merely to choose between motives, but free to do right. Of that will he had earlier (388-395) said says:

- 1) no one wills anything against his will;
- 2) we have will-power over our wills;
- 3) there is nothing so completely in our power as the will itself.²⁷

He champions for full freedom and voluntariness. He says God never commands what is impossible. Mary Clark quotes Augustine saying, "What is impossible to free will alone become possible to the will informed by charity and moved by grace."²⁸

These statements were later used by Pelagius and his followers to argue that Augustine held their opinion. Augustine would later explain that the will itself cannot be "an upright and virtuous source of life for mortal men unless it is freed by God's grace from the slavery whereby it has become a slave of sin." He says that "not only the major

²⁶ Augustine, *The Anti-Donatist Writings*, Translated by J. R. King in *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 4 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), II, 372.

²⁷ Mary Clark, *Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom* (New York: Desclee Company, 1958), 71, quoting Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio*, II, 14, 37.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

but even the minor cannot exist unless they come from him whom all good things come—that is, God.”²⁹ This was easier when his target was the Donatists but later became complex when he changed his target to Pelagius and his followers.³⁰ In the initial stages as he developed the doctrine of grace, some of the issues that he addressed are included below.

2.1 Augustine’s conversion and his writings

St. Augustine was born on November 13, 354 in Thagaste, Carthage, in the Roman province of Numidia (now Souk Ahras, Algeria) in North Africa, to a Christian mother and non-Christian father.³¹ Initially, Augustine believed the Manichaeism system, which was a dualistic religious movement, which taught that salvation was through special knowledge of spiritual truth.³² He acknowledged his association with Manicheans, “who did not accept the holy scriptures of the Old Testament, in which there is an account of original sin. And whatever one may read in the apostolic writings (i.e. the New Testament), they insist was inserted by corrupters of scripture, as though it had not been said by the apostles.”³³

Augustine was a “hearer” among the Manicheans and his disillusionment began as soon as he came into contact with the ‘fundamentalist groups.’³⁴ This is further seen in

²⁹ *Revisions* 9(8).4. In Boniface Ramsey, translator, Ronald Teske, editor, *Revisions* (New York: New City Press, 2010), Part 1, Volume 2, 48.

³⁰ Philip Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Tradition of Plato and Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 85.

³¹ Gareth Sears, “Augustine in Roman North Africa (Thagaste, Carthage),” in *Augustine in Context*, ed. Tarmo Toom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 37.

³² David Vincent Meconi, “Saint Augustine,” in *Christian Theologies of Salvation*, ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 59.

³³ *Revisions* 9(8).6. (translated Boniface Ramsey, edited Roland J. Teske) Part 1, Volume 2, 51.

³⁴ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 55.

his reply to Festus the Manichaeon: “You warn against semi-Christians, which you say we are; but we warn against pseudo-Christians, which we have shown you to be. Semi-Christians may be imperfect without being false. It was to the imperfect Christians that the Apostle wrote, in Colossians 2:5.”³⁵

The moment that Augustine turned to Christianity, his world was transformed. The patron of his turn to Christianity was bishop Ambrose of Milan. His sermons demolished intellectual barriers Augustine had not been able to surmount for himself and [his] hands administered the baptism that made him a member of Christ’s church...He had sought Faustus’s advice as a guru, but found only some oratorical skill, and Faustus wound up studying classical literature under Augustine. He went to hear Ambrose, to observe his oratorical style, was inspired to seek him out as a guru, but was rebuffed by various difficulties. The Christian religion, we are meant to infer, is not transmitted as secret doctrine gurus, but proclaimed publicly from the pulpit for all. Augustine could never reach Ambrose the guru, but Ambrose the bishop reached him with his words and baptized him with his hands.³⁶

The words of Ambrose finally undermined Augustine’s Manicheism. Augustine must have heard him preach on the Six Days of Creation (Hexaemeron) in the first chapter of Genesis: On the sixth day God said, “Let us make man in our own image.” Ambrose challenged the literal Manichaeon interpretation. Augustine then decided that he could no

³⁵ Augustine, Reply to Festus *the Manichaeon*, Translated by Richard Stothert and Albert Newman in *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 4, I. 3; 156.

³⁶ James O’Donnell, *Augustine*, edited by Philip Levine (Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 95.

longer be a member of the sect as their arguments against Christianity looked unconvincing.³⁷ Augustine says to God, “you inspired in me the idea that I ought to go to Simplicianus ... your good servant from whom grace radiated.” To Simplicianus, he says, “I described the winding paths of my wayward life... Simplicianus told me how fortunate I was not to have stumbled on the works of other philosophers, works full of fallacies and dishonesty,” but only “those Platonist writings” conveying “albeit indirectly, the truth of God and his Word.”³⁸

From his conversion, he first began a monastic experiment in AD 388 of communal Christian living, accepted priesthood in AD 391, and then became a bishop in AD 395 in Hippo.³⁹ The journey from Manichaeism to Christianity and ordination informs his letters, sermons, and writings, from this time. The range and scope of his writings provide the church with an extraordinary source of understanding Christian doctrines and identifying the fundamental changes that had taken place in the early centuries, and that continues to affect it in the contemporary world.

The writings of Augustine lead to the fullness of human salvation through Christ. In Augustine’s understanding, salvation is the very essence of God. Love, then, will see to it that we are conformed to God and, having been conformed and configured by him and cut off from this world, we will not be confused with the things that ought to be subject to us.⁴⁰ In this case, conformity to Christ means loving as Christ loves. Christ is that power

³⁷ Gillian Clark, *Augustine: The Confessions*, part 1 (Streatham, Devon: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2005), 21.

³⁸ *Confessions*, Book 8.1.1, 8.2.3 (translated Maria Boulding), Volume 1, part 1, 184, 186.

³⁹ Meconi, “*Saint Augustine*,” 60.

⁴⁰ J. Norregaard, “Grace in St. Augustine,” in *The Doctrine of Grace*, ed. W. T. Whitley, 119.

that transforms. This aspect of the transformation becomes clear by highlighting Augustine's conceptualization of sin, and the need for salvation.

The development of the doctrine of salvation aligns with the Augustinian understanding of sin, in which he argues that sinners also have a place within the church. Augustine bases his arguments on the Old Testament teachings, especially Genesis. He uses the images of wheat and chaff and the sheep and goats to show the mixed nature of the church, and argues that all represent the spiritual and carnal people.⁴¹ He argues that having wicked people in the church does not necessarily corrupt the good because the good will resist their sin. Rather than avoiding sinners, Augustine encourages the church to embrace them and love them, as people, just as Christ did. He says those that separate themselves cannot truly enjoy their faith because they miss out on the unity of the church and thus live in division and factions. He therefore strongly advocates for accepting of all in the church.

Separating the sinners from the church emerges as sin itself. Augustine thus encourages the church to bear the sins of one another as found in Galatians 6:2, and continues to show that the whole person is affected by sin. God liberates us and forgives sin, and the Lord is patient with the sinful.⁴² Augustine believes that, based on Genesis 3, all humans are broken, and he presents three basic questions to support this: "Have I ever known what was right, but not chosen to do it? Have I ever loved the wrong thing? Have I

⁴¹ Antony Dupont, *Preacher of Grace: A Critical reappraisal of Augustine's Doctrine of Grace in his Sermones ad Populum on Liturgical Feasts and during the Donatist Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 64.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 66.

ever known what was good and wanted to do it, but still found myself doing something else?”⁴³ All humans, therefore, are broken, guilty, and have need for grace through Christ.

Genesis 1-2 presents humanity as created good, then Genesis 3 reveals the perversion of humanity, which in turn perverts goodness. Augustine follows the teachings of Paul on the sinful nature of man, that “through one man, sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and in that way, it was passed on to all human beings”.⁴⁴ The fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, thus meant the fall of humanity and the need for salvation, otherwise all are condemned to suffer as sin indwells in them. For that reason, he believes “the only way to account for infant suffering is to suppose those bad choices are punished communally”. Therefore, original sin he says “posits communal guilt.”⁴⁵ Augustine says, “Now, inasmuch as infants are not held bound by any sins of their own actual life, it is the guilt of original sin which is healed in them by the grace of him who saves them by the laver of regeneration.”⁴⁶ The Lord said, “Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) This, Augustine says includes infants. Because the human race has sinned, the human race is guilty and individual identities are therefore irrelevant.

⁴³ Thomas Humphries Jr., *Who is Chosen?: Four Theories about Christian Salvation* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 20.

⁴⁴ Romans 5:12 as Translated in Augustine, *Gift of Perseverance* 12. 30, Trans. Teske in WSA 1.26.210 quoted by Thomas Humphries Jr., *Who is Chosen?: Four Theories about Christian Salvation*, 21.

⁴⁵ Sharon Kaye and Paul Thomson, “Original Sin” in *On Augustine* (Belmont: Thomas Learning Center Inc., 2001), 23.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and On Baptism of Infants*. Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest, in *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 5, I. 24, (XIX); 25.

The necessity of salvation thus becomes the way to receive healing from the human nature, and the penalty of the guilt of sin. Thomas Humphries explains how later Augustine became more radical and confirms that heaven is not attainable without grace, because it is beyond our abilities, and we thus cannot attain it by our human powers. Because of our own damages to self, we do not have the ability to get to heaven, and we also do not deserve God's help to get there, as all have sinned, thus all need God's grace in order to achieve heaven.⁴⁷ We attain grace through Jesus Christ, and the grace of Christ is necessary for salvation. Augustine says that even the human accepting of the grace of God is based on the grace of God. Therefore, the whole concept of salvation is effected by the grace of God.⁴⁸ He believes that no one on their own can do good without being aided by the grace of God. In *Confessions*, Augustine sets out an example of the depraved nature of humanity. He explained his struggles with debauchery, but within his bodily struggles, he found the evidence of the enduring love of God. He understood his desire to sin, which was in contradiction to the spirit that sought to do good. Looking back on his own life, he was "amazed at the evidences of growth and change."⁴⁹

2.2 The Need for Salvation

From the onset, Augustine had been troubled by the basic question of where evil comes from. "If God created all things, does this not mean that He created evil itself?"⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Humphries Jr., *Who is Chosen?*, 21.

⁴⁸ J. Norregaard, "Grace in Augustine", 121

⁴⁹ O'Donnell, *Augustine*, ed. Philip Levine, 92.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 97.

He argues that the desire cannot come from Satan, considering he also is the creation of a good creator.⁵¹ He said, “When we were still living at Rome, we wanted to discuss and examine where evil comes from ... After a careful and reasonable discussion, we agreed that evil arises from nothing but the free choice of the will.” He added, “In the same way, in keeping with the error of their impiousness (for they are Manicheans), they want to introduce a kind of immutable nature of evil that is coeternal with God.”⁵² Eventually Augustine resolves that evil is attributed to the creatures and not to God.

According to him, conversion is necessary and it is total surrender of heart and will. While Augustine does not fully comprehend nor explain the transmission of sin from Adam to the rest of humans, a challenge found in the use of the Vulgate, he nonetheless lays the foundation for sin, guilt, judgement, and free will as aspects fundamental to human nature, and uses this to present the need for Christ’s grace and ultimately salvation. Augustine with his limited Greek adopted the mistranslation of Paul used in the Vulgate that indicated all human had sinned in Adam, and then he drew from custom, theology, and tradition to augment his case on sin.⁵³ He came to accept the limitation of the Biblical explanations provided on original sin, but emerged with the argument that humans were incapable of reforming themselves, and thus were wholly dependent on the mercy of God.⁵⁴

The concept of sin was important at this period as the church was facing concerns on the inclusion of sinners within the community as we have seen as well the role of

⁵¹Boyce, *Born Bad*, 7.

⁵² *Revisions*, 9(8). 1-2 (translated Boniface Ramsey, edited Ronald Teske) Part 1, Volume 2, 44.

⁵³ Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, 395.

⁵⁴ Boyce, *Born Bad*, 10.

baptism. The Donatist movement was at the center of this controversy as they believed in the purity of the Christian community and the uncompromising nature of living a holy life. They represented the historic character of North African Christianity, a community with clear marked boundaries and a strong sense of its own communal righteousness, guaranteed by its fidelity to scripture, to the theology of Cyprian of Carthage (248-254), and to the memory of the numerous martyrs North Africa had produced.

There was an eventual split which can be traced to the time of persecutions of the emperors Decius and Valerian in the mid-third century, and from there to the persecution of Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth Century. Numerous Christians in Carthage including clergy, apostatized during this time.⁵⁵ Later, many sought reconciliations for betraying the church. The penance at times were long and arduous. This sacrifice in order to be re-incorporated was one of the issues that led to the split which became evident during Constantine as both groups wanted recognition.

2.3 The assertion of human autonomy

This theme concentrates on Augustine's earlier writings while in Italy before going back to Africa. His insight into the distinction between spiritual and corporeal reality liberated him from the world of Manichean materialism and opened the way to a neo-Platonic form of Christianity.⁵⁶ He says corporeal things are subject to mortality and that is the undoing of the Manicheans. He defines a human as a rational soul having a mortal

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ J. Norregaard, "*Grace in Augustine*," 126.

body. Within the soul, he focused on the mind or spirit, which raises the human person above animals. To attain the spiritual realm in which its perfection lies, the mind must turn away from the senses and attend to the interior light, which God bestows on it. So, he calls the mind to free itself from all earthly concerns and desires.⁵⁷ He says that the object of beatitude is that which cannot be lost through misfortune or against one's will. He assumed that the human spirit could transcend the flaws that cause instability and hence participate in the fixity of the divine.

For Augustine, beatitude is characterized as a state of mind in which "one desires only those things which can be possessed simply by willing them and which cannot be lost unwillingly."⁵⁸ He says unhappiness is experienced in unfulfilled desire or in fear of losing a loved possession. Therefore, independence from all agents and circumstances which are not within one's control is the central element in the understanding of beatitude. Augustine shows that the means of attaining beatitude are within each person's power. He demonstrates that, "although a person cannot be happy simply by willing it, his willing can make him good and thereby happy."⁵⁹ His definition of beatitude through spiritual autonomy rests on two suppositions.

1. He believed that the spirit can free itself from bodily concerns and operate independently of sensation. To him, the mind's orientation to the darkness

⁵⁷ Rev. Chester Hartranft, Introductory Essay on Augustine's Writings in connection with Donatist Controversy, Translated by J. R. King in *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 4, (II); 373.

⁵⁸ Burns, *The Development of St Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, quoting *De lib. Arb.* 3, 5, 14; 19.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, quoting *De lib. Arb.* 1, 12, 25; 19

of sensual opinion arises from habitual negligence rather than from a natural dependence on the body. Because it belongs to a lower grade, the body cannot force the spirit to act in a particular way.⁶⁰

2. He believed that the divine truth is available to all who seek it. He concludes that the soul's participation in carnal cupidity is initiated and sustained by its own free choice.⁶¹

However, he says that the enlightenment of the spirit liberates it from the concerns of the flesh. Augustine brushed aside Alypius' objection that people do not always act as they see they should.⁶² For Augustine, it starts with awareness of spiritual goods, which leads to valuing them and purifying the soul to attain them. He says God is the author of good choice because he is the source of understanding. Augustine describes God's help as provoking and directing human efforts to attain a spiritual beatitude. "The divine illumines each person internally and is the source of all understanding."⁶³ He therefore acknowledges that there is a real difficulty of attaining spiritual autonomy.

2.4 The limitation of freedom

In his writing before and after ordination, Augustine contrasted the spiritual, eternal, and unchanging to the corporeal, temporal, and changing. He refuted Manichean doctrine. His prior assertion of human autonomy was muted. He was then interested in the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Norregaard, "*Grace in Augustine*," 118.

⁶³ Burns, *The Development of St. Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, quoting *Solil.*, 1, 8, 15; 21.

examination of the limitation of human freedom and the origin of sin. Augustine asserts that all evil is either sin or the punishment of sin. To him, the consequences are mortality, ignorance, and weakness of will. He believed that, “humanity was initially endowed with wisdom ... then Adam and Eve sinned by pride and curiosity and that changed the equation. Their love shifted from the divine truth to their own goodness and then turned to seek truth in the external, corporeal world.”⁶⁴ Their spirits were immediately darkened by sensory illusion; their souls turned from the spirits to the flesh; their bodies became mortal and fragile.

According to Augustine, the sin of Adam affects his offspring through the mortality which is communicated by carnal generation. However, he says the human spirit is still capable of withdrawing its attention from sensible things and returning to divine illumination, which continues to provide access to the truth but only when aided by God.⁶⁵ The conversion from sensible to intelligible is also hampered by the pleasure of sensual life. When the spirit withdraws its attention from the body and seeks divine truth, a state of equilibrium of the body is attained. Mortality makes the good spiritual tendencies difficult to generate and the evil carnal ones easy to nourish. The force within the soul becomes difficult to resist so that the spirit can reclaim its original liberty and convert to spiritual goods only by great and persevering labor. Augustine asserts that few can attain this by reason but the mediation of Christ is necessary.⁶⁶ He recognized the spiritual

⁶⁴ Ibid., quoting *De vera relig.*, 37, 68; 23.

⁶⁵ Augustine, *The Free Choice of the Will*, 436.

⁶⁶ Burns, *The Development of St. Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, quoting *De util. cred.*, 7, 16; 29.

limitations of a majority of Christians. It is only through God that such limitations are therefore overcome.

2.5 The necessity of divine grace

Augustine referred to Paul's assertions of divine sovereignty. He said, "humble faith in Christ reverses the pride which caused the fall of Adam and vitiates even the lawful works of those who rely on their own strength."⁶⁷ One turns to Christ in order to receive forgiveness of sins and the strength of will to perform the good works commanded by the law. He insists that it is only possible to the elect as it is made possible by God.

Augustine follows the Pauline divisions of the history of humanity as: before the law (sin was not recognized), under the law (which brought recognition of sin and threat of punishment for transgressions but did not give motivation and strength to live by it), under grace (God offers the forgiveness of sins and the assistance necessary to perform the good works of the law), in peace (those who have lived in good works attain eternal life).⁶⁸ By this, he explains the process of salvation.

Augustine says God uses the law to prepare people to receive the gospel of deliverance by moving them away from both the sins of the flesh and reliance on their own strength. In Christ God offers both the forgiveness of sins and motivation to strengthen the good will. The graced then have the power to resist and overcome the opposition of carnal

⁶⁷ Ibid., quoting *De diu. Quaest.*, 66, 5; 31.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 20.

delight and thus choose the will of God and perform the command.⁶⁹ He says the role of the Holy Spirit is to strengthen the will in its prior decision to do good. He acknowledges therefore that human spirit is weak and so coerced by either the desires of the flesh or the grace of the Holy Spirit. However, he says grace is given only to those who not only desire good but who choose to strengthen that desire and seek divine assistance to make it effective. The gift of the Holy Spirit adds power to the choice of the good, but the person must choose to retain and exercise that strength.

Augustine believed that God was the vital and immanent Spirit in whom all things live, move, and have their being. The Lord himself not only shows us the evil we are to avoid and the good we are to do (which is all that the letter of the law can do) but also helps us to avoid evil and do good things that are impossible without the spirit of grace. Augustine quoting second Corinthians said, “‘The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ must be understood in the sense ... that the letter of the law, which teaches us not to commit sin, kills, if the life-giving spirit be absent, for as much as it causes sin to be known rather than avoided, and therefore to be increased rather than diminished, because to an evil concupiscence there is now added the transgression of the law.”⁷⁰ It must be noted that we have a will free to do both evil and good; but in doing evil, one is free of justice and is a slave of sin. On the other hand, in the matter of good, no one is free unless they are freed by him who said: “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36)

⁶⁹ Ibid., Introduction, 11.

⁷⁰ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*. Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest, in *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 5, 8. (V); 86.

Therefore, Augustine asserts that our confidence in freedom must originate from the grace of God.

Augustine notes that Adam used his freedom for sinning and involved his whole race in his fall whose consequence he calls “double death” (dying both physically and spiritually) which is passed over from Adam to us and so no one generated from Adam is free and can only be freed through regeneration in Christ. Augustine acknowledges that the whole race was in one man (Adam) that sinned. He introduces two possibilities in which this transmission of sin could have taken place: heredity or concupiscence.⁷¹ “They imitate Adam who by disobedience transgress the commandment of God; but he is one thing as an example to those who sin because they choose; and another thing as the progenitor of all who are born with sin.”⁷² The same happens in regard to imitating Christ.

Augustine said, “for by this grace, He engrafts into his body even baptized infants, who certainly have not yet become able to imitate anyone.”⁷³ He, in whom all are made alive, besides offering himself as an example of righteousness to those who imitate him, gives also to those who believe in him the hidden grace of his spirit, which He secretly infuses even into infants; so likewise he, in whom all die, besides being an example to those who willfully transgress the commandment of the Lord, depraved also in own person all who come of his stock by the hidden corruption of his own concupiscence.⁷⁴ It is by this

⁷¹ Augustine, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and On Baptism of Infants*. Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest, in *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 5, I. (VIII), 10; 18.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

that the Apostle says, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so passed upon all men; in which all have sinned.” (Rom 5:12) Augustine says that this indicates propagation not imitation, so he says it is passed upon all men. (Concupiscence is that element of lust which is inseparable from fallen sexuality, even in Christian marriage).⁷⁵ To him, sin was propagated, and we all became sinners through Adam thereby we lost the image of God. He asserts that the sinning soul makes the flesh corruptible, our whole nature is thus corrupted and are unable to do anything of ourselves truly good which he says causes an injury to the will.⁷⁶

By the fall humans suffered change, became corrupt and under the power of Satan; their will was now injured, wounded, diseased, and enslaved. As a result, Augustine believes humanity often cannot choose anything but evil.⁷⁷ Augustine said, “It is true, man has retained the freedom to choose—but only in the domain of evil, not with regard to good. All men strive after blessedness but they seek in the wrong places.”⁷⁸ They are therefore slaves of sin, which they obey; and while their free will avails for sinning, it does not avail for doing any good unless they are first freed by the grace of God which Augustine defines as the divine assistance from God. Augustine says “A man’s free-will, indeed, avails for nothing except to sin, if he knows not the way of truth; and even after his duty and his proper aim shall begin to become known to him, unless he also takes delight in and

⁷⁵ Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 375.

⁷⁶ Gerald Bonner, “Augustine’s Theology of Freedom” in *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine’s Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 88.

⁷⁷ Norregaard, “*Grace in Augustine*,” 118.

⁷⁸ *Confessions*, IV, XII (18) quoted by Norregard’s “*Grace in Augustine*”, 119.

feel a love for it, he neither does his duty, nor sets about it, nor lives rightly.”⁷⁹ Grace allows us to freely choose with the help of God. In that case, human beings then desire and use their free will for good.

Because humans are not good and do not have it in their power to be good, whether by reason of not seeing what they ought to be; or seeing, and yet not having the strength to be what they see that they ought to be; who doubts that their actual condition is a penalty? To Augustine this penalty is just and is a penalty of some sin given that such humans are convicted of wrongdoing.⁸⁰ Augustine says the free choice can be used badly yet it is a necessity for living right. He acknowledges that the right use of free choice is from God.⁸¹ Even with the wrong choice, humans can still be raised through the grace of God.

2.6 The nature of grace

Augustine defines grace as “unconstrained and undeserved divine favor.”⁸² Again in his argument of grace, Augustine first shows how God in his goodness has given humans free choice of the will, and then moves on to show how grace helps humans not to give in to their willful nature. Augustine states that God has revealed through the scriptures that human beings have a free choice of the will using divine eloquence. He qualifies this argument through a scriptural reference. For instance, Romans 1:18-20 and also John

⁷⁹ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*. Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest, in *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 5, 6. (IV); 85.

⁸⁰ Augustine, *The Free Choice of the Will*, 435.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 436.

⁸² Sharon Kaye and Paul Thomson, “Grace” in *On Augustine*, 19.

15:22, which indicates that had the Lord not come and spoken to humanity, then they would have no sin and thus not have an excuse for their sin.

Augustine further understands that sometimes people use God as the excuse for their sin, as noted in James 1:13-15, which says that when one faces temptation, they should not argue that they have been tempted by God, for God is not tempted by evil. The Old Testament states similarly in Proverbs 19:3 that “One’s own folly leads to ruin, yet the heart rages against the Lord.” Therefore, Augustine says human beings shall not claim that their sin is through the Lord, because God does no evil, instead, the Lord hates all evil, and those who fear God, should also hate evil.

The Lord has given humans commandments to which God expects the human to fulfill and observe. Having a free choice of will thus means that humans retain the choice of whether to abide by the commandments of God. For instance, Matthew indicates that one should not fear those that kill the body (Matthew 10:28), but if they are willing to follow the Lord, deny themselves. Apostle Paul repeats the issue of the will in 1 Corinthians 15:34 indicating that one should be sober and unwilling to sin, and in 2 Corinthians 8:11 the apostle indicates that there was a readiness to will and he urges the Church in Corinth that “so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means.” Augustine provides both Old and New Testament evidence on the aspect of human beings having free will but shows that this does not give them the mandate to sin.

In the case where one does evil, Augustine said “crimes are punished by God’s justice for they would not be justly punished unless they were committed by the will.”⁸³

⁸³ *Revisions* 9(8).3 (Boniface Ramsey, Translator, Ronald Teske, editor), Part 1, Volume 2, 45.

For him, freedom excluded coercion into a particular way of acting but did not require alternatives to every particular way. He says, in beatitude, one will have the voluntary necessity of not sinning, and in his vitiated nature the child of Adam is in voluntary servitude to sin.⁸⁴ He also speaks of evil in two ways: first, when we say that “someone has done evil; second, when someone has suffered something evil.”⁸⁵ According to him, free choice of the will presents thus as a condition that allows humans to choose the path they want to take with that path wholly being blamed on them and not any other party.

Despite the choice to be unwilling to do evil, Augustine contends that this can only be enabled by the Lord, who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). The implication is that the ability to overcome sin comes from the Lord, who gives the gift to help our free choice in the struggle for good versus evil. Matthew 26:41 qualifies this notion, “Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; ...” When one prays, the Lord then grants the victory to overcome. This gift introduces to us the evidence of God’s grace. Augustine asserts that “because by his own choosing man fell, he cannot so by his own choice unaided rise.”⁸⁶

God’s grace becomes the element that the Lord provides to help humans not fall into temptation. Augustine argues that human beings are therefore assisted by grace. As shown in Proverbs 3:11, Zechariah 1:3, and Luke 22:32, we see the action of turning to the

⁸⁴ Burns, *The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace*, quoting *De Nat. et Grat.* 49, 57.

⁸⁵ Augustine: *On Free Choice of the Will* in *The Fathers of the Church*, Translated by Robert Russell, Book I (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 1; 72.

⁸⁶ Augustine, *The Free Choice of the Will*, 433.

Lord is a human action that pertains to our will to seek Him, while Him turning to us shows His grace. He says this grace not only assists us but heals us as well.⁸⁷

Grace refers to God's self-giving to humanity, in which God gives and presents Godself in a new and personal way, which is available for all due to God's universal salvation.⁸⁸ Acceptance of grace means acceptance of grace as a guarantee of human's autonomy. When humans accept the grace of God then it opens a way to begin allowing the dependence on God and his absoluteness.

Augustine established the belief that God grants humans grace as a way to help humankind overcome their sinful nature. The emerging premise is that grace is a gift. He argues that "mankind is thus an agglomeration of condemned creatures which cannot acquire any merit before God, and whose hopes for forgiveness and atonement are only in the benevolent grace of the Father and the infallible decree of his predestination".⁸⁹

For Augustine, human beings are not neutral persons that cannot decide between good and evil. They are beings with free choice of will that allows them to pick, and as they pick sin, they become guilty and polluted, an element he clearly shows in the *Confessions* and whose punishment is death. Augustine said "...when lust overpowers the mind and drags it about, impoverished and stripped of the riches of virtue." The mind takes

⁸⁷ Cary, *Inner Grace*, 82.

⁸⁸ Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 41.

⁸⁹ Ernesto Bonaiuti and Giorgio La Piana, "The Genesis of St. Augustine's Idea of Original Sin," *Harvard Theological Review* 10.2 (1917): 163.

false things for true.⁹⁰ God, however, offers humanity a way out in his sovereignty: the gift of grace. Augustine compares grace and free will to Paul's comparison of faith and the Law. He says that "grace does not negate free will but it establishes it."⁹¹

2.7 Means of grace

Baptism as a means of grace is absolutely necessary for salvation according to Augustine. He asserts that while there are many baptized who will not be saved, there are none saved who have not been baptized, a position which I disagree in part. While I agree that baptism is a necessity, there are isolated cases of those who will be saved without baptism. For example, one of the thieves crucified with Jesus. Jesus promised to be with him in Paradise that very day yet he did not have time to be baptized. (Luke 23: 43) Augustine insists that it is the grace of God that saves, but baptism is a channel of grace without which none receive it. To him, those who died unbaptized, including infants are lost and departed into eternal punishment. Such infant damnation and the fact that only a few of the human race will be saved became his main teachings that he had to defend in the midst of opposition even from within the church.

To him, the universality of personal sin justified the damnation of the non-elect whose vocation was not designed by God to produce their conversion.⁹² According to Felix the Manichee, "the Manichean God is no more cruel than Christ who will condemn some

⁹⁰ James O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2005), 43, quoting Augustine's *Free Choice of the Will*, 3.18.52.

⁹¹ *De Sp. Et Litt.* 52, alluding to Rom 3:31, "So are we destroying the law by faith? Far be it! Rather, we are establishing the law." Quoted in Cary, *Inner Grace*, 82.

⁹² Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 50.

souls to eternal fire.” But Augustine explains that God will punish sinners who do not repent.⁹³ Felix asks to what nature Christ came in order to set us free. “If Christ came to set us free from captivity, who held us captive? If we were in the power of God we did not need to be set free.”⁹⁴ Augustine explains that Christ redeems from the devil those whom the devil held captive because they sinned through their free will.

Augustine’s early understanding of the interaction of grace and freedom was a blend of Platonism and Paul. “From the one he accepted the connaturality of the human spirit to its creator which grounds the inextinguishable desire for God. By the other, he recognized the perversity and bondage of the human spirit and the divine sovereignty which liberates through Christ and the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁵ Humans, therefore, are in dire need of God’s grace as advanced by Augustine.

The center of the Augustinian theology of grace is that sin has pulled humankind so low that no right to divine favor remains. The favor that comes is free and unearned, a gift from God. Humans were created to give God praise and honor of their own free will with undarkened intelligence, but they rebelled. Humans turned away willfully from God, but here is the good news: He works salvation in this mass of perdition which would otherwise absolutely perish because it has turned willfully away from God.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Gerald Bonner et al. Translators, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century—The Manichaean Debate* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2006), 276.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Burns, *The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 51.

⁹⁶ Norregaard, “*Grace in Augustine*,” 119.

Augustine saw in the fall of Adam an essential mystery: evil enters the world, it persists, but it consists of nothing more than the perversity of dependent creatures, fleetingly anonymous in their rebellion. Through sin, death and all misery entered the world. Augustine asserts that the wounds of life are all self-inflicted.⁹⁷ He calls it the swollenness of pride which he says, “I was groping and wandering and separated from you. But your healing hand applied to my eyes a stinging ointment that caused my pride and self-sufficiency to subside.”⁹⁸ He says self-sufficiency is the source of evil in him. “And so, it is in coming to God daily – weak, hungry, and in need of ‘Your life flowing through me’ – which my troubled and darkened soul gains in strength”.⁹⁹

In summary, he concludes that original sin is natural within humans, even though the responsibility for that sin lies in each individual.¹⁰⁰ It is clear that original sin comes from Adam but is the responsibility of each individual. People are responsible for their own sin because they sin freely and are not willing to avoid sin. To those who would debate the fairness of this system of transmission, Augustine would simply point out that every individual, from the earliest age, is a sinner. From even before the access of knowledge and reason (the conditions we are accustomed to associating with moral responsibility) there is evidence of selfishness and willed disobedience.¹⁰¹ Original sin brings with it all

⁹⁷ Hazard, *Early Will I Seek You: A 40-Day Journey in the Company of Augustine* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1991), 36.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 182.

¹⁰⁰ Boyce, *Born Bad*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Benedict Groeschel, “Augustine the Historian –The City of God” in *Augustine’s Major Writings* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), 131.

the consequences discussed in *The City of God*, and even when the responsibility for original sin is taken away, the damage (that is, the harm done to the species in the material world) remains.¹⁰² Actual sin, on the other hand, does much less harm by its secondary, ill effects (sometimes none at all in the human arena), while carrying with it a higher degree of responsibility and potentially eternal damage for the soul of the sinner.¹⁰³ Augustine acknowledges that sin did not come from God be it original sin or otherwise.¹⁰⁴

Sin is not then a matter of just chance or choice but both. It is Augustine's assertion that original sin is present in all from the outset and is the reason for the continued propensity to sin that afflicts humanity.¹⁰⁵ Humans do not begin as a *tabula rasa*, blissful in ignorance and poised in sublime neutrality somewhere between good and evil, able to earn praise for doing good and blame for doing evil. Instead, all men and women start with a handicap.¹⁰⁶ Even when the eternal consequences of original sin are removed by baptism, it still affects the soul so that every human being eventually succumbs to sin. Augustine affirms that it is only by grace that we are saved as did St. Paul.¹⁰⁷ He therefore insists salvation is a gift of God.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² "Augustine: Christ and the Soul," online version by James O'Donnell (Retrieved from <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/twayne/aug4.html>)

¹⁰³ Mathew Levering, "City of God Books 15-18" in *The Theology of Augustine: An Introduction to His Most Important Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 131.

¹⁰⁴ "Augustine: Christ and the Soul," online version by James O'Donnell.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ D. L. Moody, *Sovereign Grace: Its Source, Its Nature, and Its Effect* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1967), 17.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, 6.

In Augustine's own time penance was public; private confession is a medieval innovation. The cumbersome and frightening penitential discipline (whose validity was periodically challenged by such as the Novatians and Donatists) had conspired to encourage many, like the emperor Constantine, to postpone baptism—the one sovereign remedy for sin—until the deathbed. Pastorally, this solution was unacceptable, since it seemed to provide *carte blanche* for sin through the whole of life, so long as sacramental grace was accessible at the very end.¹⁰⁹ By Augustine's day, timely baptism was becoming more popular. But one may ask when the need for baptism emerged. Whether it was only a remedy for the sin of the conscious, reasoning individual or it did speak to the underlying sinfulness innate in humans were very pertinent questions at that time. Given the views Augustine cherished, it is not surprising that he saw the urgency in baptism including that of infants. This was in tandem with most Christian authorities in his day. His reasoning is that if we are sinners from the womb, then from the womb we need redemption. Cary's analysis of Augustine concludes "In a world where the infant's grasp on life was tenuous, the urgency was strongly felt. Thus, baptism offered immediate forgiveness of original sin and hence the removal of all the eternal penalties for that ancient fault; in addition, the sacrament washed the soul clean of the whole burden of actual sin that might have accumulated, however slight."¹¹⁰

Outwardly, the sacrament of baptism marked a person's entry into full membership in the church. Thus, from Augustine's formulation, the child entered the church by an

¹⁰⁹ That accessibility had a disturbing correlation to the wealth and social position of the sinner; pagan criticism of Christianity made much of this aspect of church practice.

¹¹⁰ Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Tradition of Plato and Paul*, 71.

unearned favor, by which the eternal penalties of original sin were removed.¹¹¹ Only the actual sins of the individual after baptism could do harm now. According to Augustine, baptism was the sacrament that formed the church itself. “Catechumens, outsiders contemplating entrance, continued to be only fringe members of the community;” it was still the custom to exclude them from the communion service of the liturgy.¹¹² Therefore, only baptism rendered the individual eligibility for full sacramental participation in the Eucharist which also became a prerequisite for any ecclesiastical office.

What was left pending by baptism was concupiscence, the inclination toward sin that original sin had introduced.¹¹³ The sacrament cleared the slate for the past and offered support for the future, but it was not the end. Sin remained a present possibility for the Christian, and ultimate success was uncertain. Human life in the church was full of hope, but still devoid of assurance. Only later in Augustine’s life would the precise theological definition of this dilemma (centered on the doctrine of perseverance) come out.¹¹⁴ Augustine would ask, “Is there now or has there ever been a human being born alive who was completely without sin, original or actual?” The only exception was Christ.¹¹⁵ The rest of humanity falls outside the bracket and so needs redemption.

¹¹¹ Joseph Sittler, *Essays on Nature and Grace* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 18.

¹¹² “Augustine: Christ and the Soul,” online version by James O’Donnell.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Tradition of Plato and Paul*, 73.

For humans, sinlessness is both possible and impossible according to Augustine. It is possible, through the grace of God and human's own free will, not doubting that the free will itself is ascribable to God's grace; but impossible, in the sense that it does not ever occur. Augustine acknowledges that there are on earth righteous people, brave, prudent, chaste, patient, pious, merciful, who endure all kinds of temporal evil with an even mind for righteousness' sake. However, there is truth in these words, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8). Moody puts it that "if you come to God as a prince, you go away as a beggar: if you come as a beggar, you go away like a prince."¹¹⁶ This, Moody says, is Augustinian.

Augustine affirms that Baptism releases the individual from the worst of chains into the life of grace. He continues to explain the efficacy of baptism, that it is Christ, not the minister, who gives grace and justifies the sinner. He says if it depended on the minister, then not only would salvation be uncertain, but there would be none at all.¹¹⁷

After Augustine had written *The Guilt and Remission of Sin* in 411, the further questions of his friend, Marcellinus, led him to expatiate further on grace itself. He did it on *The Spirit and the Letter*. Augustine begins by reviewing his explanation that "sin is virtually inevitable, but inevitable as a result of earlier sinfulness rather than as a result of an exterior constraint on human actions."¹¹⁸ This all leads to considering the mechanism

¹¹⁶ Moody, *Sovereign Grace: Its Source, Its Nature, and Its Effects*, 17.

¹¹⁷ Lenka Karfikova, "Anti-Donatist Works" in *Grace and the Will according to Augustine*, Translated by Marketa Janebova (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 137.

¹¹⁸ "Augustine: Christ and the Soul," online Version by James O'Donnell.

by which God deals with humanity in the Christian dispensation: hence the relevance of *The Spirit and the Letter*.

Augustine says the law was to reveal to humankind its iniquities—nothing more: “Through the Law came an awareness of sin.” (Rom. 3.20) He adds that “the law does but to enable the commandments to be fulfilled.”¹¹⁹ The proper response to the law is remorse and repentance and longing for divine assistance.¹²⁰ To take the law as a complete and exclusive set of commandments leading to perfection is sin in Augustine’s assessment. But Augustine, expounding Paul, said: “The apostle wanted to commend the grace that has come to all nations through Jesus Christ, lest the Jews should boast of themselves at the expense of other peoples on account of their having the Law.” First, he says that “sin and death came on the human race through one man (Adam), and that righteousness and eternal life came also through one (Christ).”¹²¹ He adds that “the law entered, that sin might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, so that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so, might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 5.20-21).

For there was a need to prove to the humans how corruptly weak they are. Thus, convicted and confounded, the humans might see that they needed not only a physician, but even God as their helper to direct their steps so sin would not rule over them, and so they might be healed by fleeing to the aid of divine mercy. In this way, “where sin

¹¹⁹ Lenka Karfikova, “Other Works From the Beginning to the Episcopate,” in *Grace and the Will according to Augustine*, 108.

¹²⁰ “Augustine: Christ and the Soul,” online version by James O’Donnell.

¹²¹ Norregaard, “Grace in Augustine,” 118.

abounded grace might much more abound, not through the merit of the sinner, but by the intervention of God.”¹²² Grace is not a gift present to all in the same way, which some choose to accept and some reject. If this were the case, the gift would lose its power, and salvation would be distributed in accordance with the merit of having accepted the gift.¹²³ Where grace prevails, it does so regardless of the choice of the individual subjected to it. Augustine alludes that grace is always strangeness, a gift, a surprise.¹²⁴ The paradox is that moral responsibility for rejecting God remains, while the moral merit for accepting God is abolished by grace. This creates a two-fold system of judgment in appearance, whereby it is just for God to punish the damned and merciful for God to reward the blessed, and not at all inconsistent to treat the two groups differently.

Opponents of Augustine observed that a thoroughgoing system of divine grace leads to difficulties.¹²⁵ They ask, “if grace is absolutely sovereign and human merit entirely nonexistent, does not freedom of the will disappear? Worse, does it not mean that it is God who chooses, not only who will go to heaven, but also who will go to hell?”¹²⁶ Cannot those who go to hell rightly blame the negligence and cruelty of a God who denied them the free gift given to others just as undeserving? “Can God be just if such whimsy reigns? Is God really merciful?”¹²⁷ But Augustine insists that some creatures are better than others.

¹²² Lenka Karfikova, “Other Works From the Beginning to the Episcopate,” in *Grace and the Will according to Augustine*, 112.

¹²³ Norregaard, “Grace in Augustine,” 118.

¹²⁴ Sittler, *Essays on Nature and Grace*, 9.

¹²⁵ “Augustine: Christ and the Soul,” online version by James O’Donnell

¹²⁶ Norregaard, “Grace in Augustine,” 125.

¹²⁷ “Augustine: Christ and the Soul,” online version by James O’Donnell

He continues to say that some things even when corrupted are still better than other things that remain uncorrupted. For example, corrupted gold is better than uncorrupted silver.¹²⁸

This from a human perspective looks unfair.

According to James O'Donnell:

A related question attacks the problem neatly: Is grace resistible? This would seem to suggest an attractive escape route, for if grace is resistible, then those who are damned are responsible for their own damnation. But if the answer to this question is affirmative, we must ask if that may mean that grace is also acceptable, that is, if it is in the power of human beings to reject it, is it not also in their power to accept it? And has not merit returned to the system? If it is not in our power to accept grace, but only to reject it, the justice and mercy of God remain in question, for God must foreordain which people will be allowed to resist and which will be compelled to accept—and divine whimsy, a terrifying notion, reenters. Augustine does not have a simple, comprehensive solution acceptable to all for these dilemmas. His principle, as in the question of original sin, is to cling to what he knows for certain, to attempt to provide explanations for difficulties, as well as to stand with what he knows by faith even when logical difficulties remain.¹²⁹

We therefore embark on what theologians call Augustinian solution in an attempt to settle the dilemmas.

¹²⁸ William Mann, "Augustine on Evil and Original Sin" in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 44.

¹²⁹ "Augustine: Christ and the Soul," online version by James O'Donnell

2.8 The Augustinian Solution

Augustine believed in predestination. “God actively chooses certain individuals to be the recipients of his grace, confers it on them in a way that altogether overpowers their own will to sin, and leaves them utterly transformed, to live a life of blessedness.”¹³⁰ But God does not choose beforehand to send others to hell. God wills that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), even as God takes actions that save only certain individuals. Those who are damned are damned by their own actions. Augustine’s opponents through the centuries claimed that this view is pessimistic and proclaims a tyrannical and arbitrary God. Even Augustine acknowledges that to understand the condition of the evil creatures who will not win eternal blessedness is painfully difficult.

Again he says that all choices are choices of will, and all acts are acts of appetite, hence acts of love, either the divinely inspired love Augustine calls *caritas*, or the sinful selfish love he calls *cupiditas*.¹³¹ He says, “if there is no will there is no sin” and adds that “either the will in itself is the first cause of sin or there is no cause of sin.”¹³² When divine grace intervenes, it liberates the individual from the bondage of wrong past choices. Precisely how this happens is unclear to Augustine, but it is certain that God, without ever tampering with the interior working of the will itself, can still direct its choices by altering, in perfect omniscience, the circumstances that affect the will. Augustine says that unless it is freed from the servitude by which it has been made the servant of sin—freed by the grace

¹³⁰ James Wetzel, “Predestination,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 49.

¹³¹ “Augustine: Christ and the Soul,” online version by James O’Donnell.

¹³² Augustine, *The Free Choice of the Will*, 430.

of God and aided to rise above sinfulness—the will itself is beyond the power of mortal humans to live rightly and piously. And if this divine benefit, by which the will is freed were not antecedent to the act of the will, it would be given to merit, and would not be grace, which surely is freely given.¹³³ From a human point of view, the divine grace that effects salvation is best described as Initial Grace plus the Grace of Perseverance. From the divine point of view, we can say that unless the Grace of Perseverance is present, the Initial Grace is not finally graced at all but only some lesser gift.¹³⁴

For Augustine, therefore, the life of the Christian is lived on the horns of a dilemma.¹³⁵ Grace must be firmly believed to be omnipotent; without grace, nothing good can be done. All that is good in the soul must come from God, while all that is bad is of one's own doing is Augustine's premise. And yet all "this appears to the individual as a matter of individual choices of that frustratingly free will."¹³⁶ The faithful Christian, therefore, is one who believes utterly in God but who responds to the exigencies of daily life by living as though everything, salvation included, depends on his own actions. Augustine was consistent in maintaining this difficult position. He kept quoting Paul on the unsearchable judgments of God. He never let it escape his attention that when the choice must be made between human reason and divine goodness, the latter suffice.

¹³³ Ibid., 431.

¹³⁴ "Augustine: Christ and the Soul," online version by James O'Donnell.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Groeschel, "*Augustine the Historian –The City of God*," 138.

CHAPTER 3: PELAGIUS

Pelagius arises as a voice contrary to the teachings of Augustine, disqualifying his doctrine of Grace, and the arguments proposed concerning the relationship between free choice of will and the nature of grace. The basic argument propagated by Pelagius is that people are responsible for their own sins, and thus their dignity resides in their freedom. This section explores the arguments of Pelagius laying the foundation for a complete Augustinian view of grace which is seen as an adjusted position from the earlier Augustine.

Pelagius, a Briton, comes to Rome around the same time as Augustine. While Augustine focused on the aspect of free choice of the will, sin, and grace, Pelagius focused on legalism. Pelagius arose as a reformer teaching the aristocratic class against the pagan morality that had infiltrated the church, arguing that people were converting for convenience. Being an advocate of radical conversion, he could not condone that. Roger Haight explains that “Pelagius was in the capital, in the thick of degenerating Church life, immersed in pastoral activities and spiritual exhortation.”¹³⁷ Within this setting, Pelagius was preaching a conversion that would stand out against the corruption of Rome, speaking of Christianity as a new life.¹³⁸ This packaging of Christianity outside the pagan background would form a basis of acceptance of Pelagius’ teachings by the bishops of Southern Italy, who needed a way to make the gospel acceptable.

¹³⁷ Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 29.

¹³⁸ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, Translated by John Burnaby in *Augustine: Later Works* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1991), 182.

Pelagius', reacting to Augustine's doctrine of grace, insisted on people being responsible for their own sins. For Pelagius, the dignity of humans resides in their freedom: "in our freedom, we retain the power to choose to obey God's law or disobey it. The unique status affords us the possibility of not sinning. It is not our own doing but implanted in our nature by God, and as such it is 'grace.'"¹³⁹ Pelagius opposes the idea of original sin but rather says our own sin is what damages this nature. For Pelagius, the damage done by Adam's sin is that it established a model for human disobedience to God so that subsequent sin is in imitation of Adam. This imitation compounded over time builds up a nearly inescapable "habit" or custom of sinning. Pelagius' disciples would lament; "If it was Adam and Eve who sinned, what did we poor wretches do? How do we deserve to be born in the blindness and ignorance and the torture of difficulty?"¹⁴⁰

Pelagius's letter to Demetrias (413) on the occasion of her decision to become a nun was a calculated and widely-publicized declaration of his message. Writing on free choice, Pelagius declares: "Since perfection is possible for man, it is obligatory."¹⁴¹ Pelagius was annoyed by the way in which Augustine's *Confessions* seemed merely to popularize the tendency toward languid piety. On the other hand, Pelagius's book *On Nature* did not please Augustine. The issue of infant baptism, as advocated by Pelagius made the bishops furious as well. For baptism, Pelagius insists on the consent of the believer's will which in turn eliminates the possibility of infants being baptized. He says

¹³⁹ William Collinge, Introduction in *The Fathers of the Church: Saint Augustine's Four Anti-Pelagian Writings* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 6.

¹⁴⁰ Kaye and Thomson, *On Augustine*, 24.

¹⁴¹ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 343.

for grace to impose itself without that consent would violate the nature of the will. However, Augustine urges them to be silent and not to murmur about God.

3.1 The Pelagian teachings

The teachings of the Pelagian movement come from the 4th and 5th Century theologian Pelagius (354-430) from the Roman province of Britain (although St. Jerome identified Pelagius as an Irishman), along with Celestius and Julian of Eclanum.¹⁴² Pelagius and Celestius were monks while Julian was a Bishop in Italy. Pelagius as a person believed in moral perfection, made possible by following the laws of God completely. He pursued the argument that God would not give commandments if God did not expect humankind to obey them fully. He taught that human beings possessed the capacity of freedom by virtue of their God-created nature, and he continued to state that they did not inherit sin from Adam as argued by Augustine, a position that formed the opposition that would arise against Pelagius' teachings.¹⁴³ The first aspect addressed in Pelagius teachings was that Adam's sin was directly related to Adam alone and not all humankind.¹⁴⁴ He taught that Adam was a bad example, but his sin is not transferable to all, instead people are born in a state of innocence. Pelagius further did not see death as a punishment of sin, as Adam would have still died of old age even if he did not sin. Thus, he denied death as an expression of penalty for sin.

¹⁴² William H. Brackney, *Historical Dictionary of Radical Christianity* (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 238.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁴⁴ Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 392.

The second teaching under Pelagianism regards the will. He taught of a radical will, in which sin comes from human choice. This implies that human beings are not sinful by nature but sin is a consequence of individual choices.¹⁴⁵ He argues that human beings have the capacity to obey all God's laws, apart from the grace and power of God. Using 1 John 5:3, Pelagius thought humanity was able to attain perfection through personal will and determination, and thus did not have an excuse for their sins or for the evil around them.¹⁴⁶

The third teaching of Pelagius regards the concept of humanity being morally perfect before and apart from Christ, thus grace was an external encouragement for them to obey God's perfect will rather than an internal work of the Spirit on the heart and volition or helping the regeneration of the human spirit.¹⁴⁷ Embedded in this argument is that humanity was not dead in sin but suffered the consequences of emulating Adam. Pelagius thus saw grace as a way of assisting humanity to follow God although not as an essential part. Humans had the liberty to follow the commands by grace or the law, which also could be a sufficient guide to enable them to follow the moral purposes as established by God.

The fourth aspect of the Pelagian teaching regards the atonement of Christ, in which he taught that Christ was simply a good example of humankind. Such an argument was a drastic modification to the more common understanding of the reason for Christ dying. Pelagius argued that Christ did not die for the sins of Adam or those of the world, and that

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ 1 John 5:3 says "For the Love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

¹⁴⁷ Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 392.

Christ's righteousness does not attribute the same to humanity. For him, Christ's death did not bring redemption since human beings did not need redemption.

Pelagius was calling into question the morality of the church by rejecting the doctrine of the original sin and calling into question the atonement of Christ. He was raising the question of how the Catholic Church can expect its followers to live righteous and holy lives if they could only be saved by grace alone. The emphasis on grace for Pelagius was the root cause of the moral laxity and indifference found in the church. The argument was that if humanity was wholly dependent on the grace of God, then they had no moral obligation and can even blame their sinfulness to God's unwillingness to grant grace. As Haight explains, the Pelagian movement saw the grace of God within the law, and as part of the Christian dispensation, with Christ as an example.¹⁴⁸ Humanity could, therefore, choose to follow this example, which would, in turn, break the bonds of sin.

Against the plea that it is impossible not to sin, Pelagius believed that humans are given a false sense of security in sinning. Those who have heard that it is not possible for them to be without sin will not even try to be what they judge to be impossible. His argument is that such people enjoy the false security of believing that it is impossible for them not to sin. Pelagius thus implies that if these people were to hear that they are able not to sin, then they would have made efforts to fulfill what they now know to be possible and that way they would achieve even if not entirely.

According to Pelagius, Augustine takes grace to be absolute. What human beings do that is wrong, they do themselves; what they do that is right, God does in them. This

¹⁴⁸ Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 29.

Augustinian position would seem for Pelagius as leaving little room for free will and he sees this position as putting human beings as either sinners or puppets.

Augustine had to say the following at the onset, in *On the Spirit and the Letter*:

Do we then by grace make void free will? God forbid! No! Rather we establish free will. For even as the law by faith, so free will by grace is not made void but strengthened. The law is fulfilled only by free will, but from the law comes knowledge of sin, from faith the acquisition of grace against sin, from grace the healing of the soul from the disease of sin, from the health of the soul freedom of will, from free will the love of righteousness, from love of righteousness the accomplishment of the law.¹⁴⁹

Augustine's position is that true freedom of the will is the highest and noblest of human faculties, but it can be seriously damaged and even destroyed by its own self-inflicted wounds. He believed that when Adam and Eve encountered the divine command about the tree in the garden, then and only then was the freedom of choice absolute, a position that Pelagius disputed.

Pelagius' accusations by the Synod of Diospolis in 415 can, therefore, be summed up as follows:

1. He was accused of saying that no human can be without sin unless they have acquired the knowledge of the law. However, Pelagius said that he

¹⁴⁹ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, Trans. Burnaby, 182.

meant, “A human is by the knowledge of the law assisted towards not sinning.”¹⁵⁰

2. He was accused of saying that “all humans are ruled by their own will.”¹⁵¹ He responded by saying that when a man sins, he is himself to blame as of free will.¹⁵²

3. He was accused of saying that “on the Day of Judgment, no forbearance will be shown to the ungodly and sinners, but they will be consumed in eternal fires.”¹⁵³ He responded that he had made his assertion with respect to the gospel: “These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46).

4. He was accused of having said that humans are able if they like, to be without sin.¹⁵⁴ Writing to a certain widow, Pelagius said; “O how happy and blessed art thou, when that righteousness which we must believe to flourish only in heaven has found a shelter on earth only in thy heart!”¹⁵⁵ Again he writes to her of the manner in which saints ought to pray: “He worthily raises his hands to God, and with a good conscience does he pour out his

¹⁵⁰ Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 5, 3.(I), 184.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.(III), 185.

¹⁵² Rees, *Pelagius*, 135.

¹⁵³ Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 5, 9(III), 186.

¹⁵⁴ Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, 338.

¹⁵⁵ Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, 188.

prayer, who is able to say, ‘Thou O Lord, knowest how holy, and harmless, and pure from all injury and inequity and violence, are the hands which I stretch out to Thee, how righteous and pure are the lips with which I offer to Thee, my supplication that Thou wouldst have mercy upon me’.”¹⁵⁶ To the bishops, it looked like a declaration of self-righteousness.

5. He was accused as having said that God gives grace to the person who has proved themselves worthy to receive them. “God will distribute his rewards and his punishment strictly according to merit, and merit is what each human earns by what he does.”¹⁵⁷ In other words, one should merit God’s grace which is opposite to Augustine’s teaching of grace and all other teachings that were in the public domain as concerns grace.

As much as there were disagreements, the bishops saw in general that most of what Pelagius said was not inconsistent with the teaching of the Church.¹⁵⁸ Hence they did not judge him harshly.

Pelagius’s meaning of “grace” can as well be summarized as follows:

1. The original endowment with rational will by which humans have the capacity to be without sin.
2. The Law of Moses.
3. The forgiveness of sins in virtue of redemptive death of Christ.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 189.

¹⁵⁷ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 183.

¹⁵⁸ Rees, *Pelagius*, 135.

4. The example of Christ.
5. The teaching of Christ conceived both as to law and more generally as teaching concerning the things proper to human's nature and salvation.¹⁵⁹

Pelagius spoke of grace in terms of enlightenment. According to him, the law provides that enlightenment.¹⁶⁰ He said: "man lived in Paradise as desired, whilst he only desired what God commanded. He enjoyed God, from whence was his good. He lived without need and had life eternal in his power. He had meat for hunger, drink for thirst, the tree of life to keep off age."¹⁶¹

It can, therefore, be concluded that the Pelagian controversy had its origin in two doctrinal questions:

1. Concerning the effects of the sin of Adam and Eve upon their descendants. Did it cause moral weakness, mortality, or perhaps even guilt? Or whether they were created in the same condition as later humanity, i.e. as sinful.
2. The ability of sinners to return to God. Was this within the power of their free will? Or were they able to do it only with divine assistance, and perhaps even because the process was initiated by divine grace?¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Collinge, Introduction in *Saint Augustine's Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, 9.

¹⁶⁰ Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, 363.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 367.

¹⁶² Rees, *Pelagius*, 140.

One of Pelagius' disciples, Caelestius, when seeking ordination was refused and accused of teaching six propositions which were seen as Pelagius'.¹⁶³ These views were also supported by Rufinus the Syrian who had come to Africa as a refugee in 410 just like Pelagius.¹⁶⁴ The propositions are:

1. That Adam was created mortal and whether he had sinned or not, he was still going to die.
2. That the sin of Adam injured only himself and not the human race.
3. That infants are in the same condition in which Adam was before his transgression.
4. That the human race as a whole does not die through the transgression and death of Adam, nor does the whole human race rise again through the resurrection of Christ.
5. That the Law of Moses leads people to the kingdom of heaven in the same way as does the gospel.
6. That even before the coming of Christ, there were human beings without sin.

Caelestius did not recant these propositions, but rather, citing Rufinus, held that these were permissible theological opinions.¹⁶⁵ The Synod saw that these propositions sounded like

¹⁶³ Collinge, Introduction in *Saint Augustine's Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, 11.

¹⁶⁴ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 185.

¹⁶⁵ Collinge, Introduction in *Saint Augustine's Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, 13.

Pelagius. It is important to note that Augustine was not present at that time. However, he was not satisfied with the outcome of the synod and later insisted that as much as Pelagius was acquitted, his writings were not acquitted, therefore his heresy stands condemned.¹⁶⁶

Two main reasons for Pelagius' vindication by the bishops was as follows:

1. The East was strong on the doctrine of the freedom of the will. Pelagius said this is what he was interested in.
2. He was not forthright in his explanation. Instead, he used ambiguous terminologies and tried to agree with the doctrines of the church and never forthrightly stated his position.

Pelagius was summoned by other councils, some of which condemned him while others acquitted him. Just like the Synod of Diospolis, the Synod of Jerusalem rejected charges against him brought by Jerome as not proven.¹⁶⁷

Celestius later moved to Asia Minor where he was ordained priest at Ephesus but Augustine renewed his attack with his *On the Perfection of Man's Righteousness*.¹⁶⁸ The bishops finally excommunicated Celestius.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Rees, *Pelagius*, 139.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Collinge, Introduction in *Saint Augustine's Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, 13.

3.2 Arguments for Freedom, Sin, and Grace

The basis of the Pelagian controversy is the question of whether redemption and salvation are the work of God or humanity, and whether humanity comes with sin or becomes corrupt as they grow. The question arises from the claims of human freedom and its superiority over divine grace. As shown previously, Pelagius sees Adam as an individual and thus objects to the idea of the original sin and its hereditary nature, which creates a paradox based on its conflict with the teachings of others in the church as well as the standard interpretation of the Pauline view. For instance, Apostle Paul shows Christ as the second Adam who comes to reconcile fallen humanity to God. Adam and Christ are thus representatives of humanity rather than examples as Pelagius alleges. He thus puts it that their respective influence on humanity is based on what people choose. It is therefore pertinent to then answer the question of how the Fall of Adam affects us in aspects of freedom, will, and grace, and the role that Christ plays in this understanding as explored by the Pelagian thought.

The Pelagian movement taught that the moral fiber of humanity did not receive any corruption from the Fall and thus humans continued to have as much ability to do the will of God and discharge the obligations therein as Adam.¹⁷⁰ The proponents argued that similar to the requirement that Adam fulfill the laws as set by God, modern-day Christians had the same obligation. Humans could thus not allege that their moral decay is a consequence of Adam's sin. The proponents continued to argue that the role of grace was as an enabler rather than necessity. Pelagius denied special divine agency and its influence

¹⁷⁰ William Cunningham, *The Pelagian Controversy* (West Linn: Monergism Books, 2018), 11.

on humans, indicating that unless its purpose was for enabling them to more easily adhere to the expectations of God, yet even without grace humans had the capability to do so, although less easily.¹⁷¹ An excerpt from Brinley Rees explains the Pelagian argument:

It was because God wished to bestow on the rational creature the gift of doing good of his own free will and the capacity to exercise free choice, by implanting in man the possibility of choosing either alternative, that he made it his peculiar right to be what he wanted to be, so that with his capacity for good and evil he could do either quite naturally and then bend his will in other direction too. He could not claim to possess the good of his own volition unless he was the kind of creature that could do also have possessed evil. Our most excellent creator wished us to be able to do either but actually to do only one, that is, good, which he also commanded, giving us the capacity to do evil only so that we might do his will by exercising our own. That being so, this very capacity to do evil is also good – good, I say because it makes the good part better by making it voluntary and independent, not bound by necessity but free to decide for itself.¹⁷²

The Pelagian understanding is that humanity has the freedom for good and bad, and their capability to do evil, remains good, because that makes their capability for good even better, because when they do good, then it is voluntary rather than an aspect of necessity. This argument consequently disqualifies the contention of the original sin born of Adam. Rather than humanity acting in disobedience because of the roots of Adam, they choose to

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Augustine, “To Demetrias,” in *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers*, Brinley Roderick Rees, editor (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991), 38.

do evil. In short, Pelagius argued that humans have a similar moral fabric to that of Adam before the fall, and thus remained subject to the same conditions, powers, and capabilities. The Pelagian teachings as a result dismiss the possibility of redemption, atonement, and regeneration, which are typical Pauline beliefs and by extension Augustinian. Instead, they argue for own moral effort, perfected by what human beings are capable of doing with the aid of God's grace.

This argument creates a challenge for those subscribing to the Pelagian way of thinking, which is explaining the consistency of the things that are distinctive about Christianity such as the role of Christ. While the Pelagian thinkers do not deny the doctrine of the Trinity, they call into question the meaning of a savior, atonement, and even the Holy Spirit. The argument arises from the consideration that since humanity did not fall with Adam, it is only sensible that nothing should call for a remedy such as the atonement of Christ. Those of the contrary opinion take it to be an overestimation of the nature of human beings and their own moral powers or capacities and to think lightly of the necessity for divine grace.¹⁷³

3.3 Agreement with Pelagian Teachings

While the Pelagian argument seemed contrary to the basics of traditional Christian teaching especially regarding atonement and the role of Christ, his arguments according to a section of the bishops raised some doctrinal issues that make the teachings sound when viewed from a non-Augustine perspective. For instance, Pelagius sought to show that sin

¹⁷³ Rees, Introduction in *The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers*, 15.

was not a trait one could inherit because it was not a substance. This formed the basis for the argument that the sin of Adam was injurious because humans chose to imitate their ancestors rather than because it was an inheritance. Pelagius wrote that “there are enough things for which we are morally accountable without blaming us for the things for which we are not. We, therefore, do not necessarily share in the blame of Adam, but we share in the blame of choosing to do sin.”¹⁷⁴

The aspect of free will in the teachings of Pelagius was an element of choice. God commanded humans to be holy, and thus they must do so or otherwise face judgement. Any Christians subscribing to a libertarian understanding of free will would accept this argument. Pelagius argued that as the free will was free, then it ensued one would make spontaneous choices, independent of any predispositions of good or evil. The choice to obey God’s command made a person righteous, and this led to one being a Christian. One was able to achieve perfect morality without the need for additional grace, by choosing to be good. However, Pelagius did not deny that grace would facilitate the urge of doing good.

Pelagius saw the ability to live without sin as a divine standard God established. His command for humanity to be holy was the foundation for this standard. Thus, imbuing humanity with free will set the pre-requisite condition for its fulfillment. It is therefore logical that choosing good would ensure righteousness and would make one blameless

¹⁷⁴ John Ferguson, “The Issues of Pelagianism,” in *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (New York: AMS Press, 1956), 160.

before God. Ultimately, Pelagius brings about salvation by merit rather than by grace which is seen as anti-Augustinian and therefore anti-Pauline.

When the church considered the Pelagian teachings heretical, he was able to defend his position in Jerusalem and Diospolis where he was acquitted, but at the Council of Carthage in AD 418, the Augustinian view defeated his position.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, the Council of Orange in AD 529 declared his position heretical. The canons in the council therefore reflected Augustine's teachings including the aspect of the original sin and predestination. The acceptance or refusal of the Pelagian teachings is thus vis-à-vis that of Augustine.

Some Christians nonetheless accepted the teachings of Pelagius, especially in how his teachings aligned to their daily lives. For instance, the communities within the Egyptian desert practiced rigorous self-denial, fasting, and self-renunciation, which was part of the teachings and practices of Pelagius, because Pelagianism made sense for the common people. Such people continually worked to gain acceptance by God. Much later, the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century led by Martin Luther can be seen as a continuation of the debate between Pelagius and Augustine and their conflict between works and justification by faith.

When studying grace and free will, one can appreciate the concerns raised by Pelagius even without agreeing with his arguments. For instance, Pelagius sought to see a turnaround in the church from the moral decay and the pretensions witnessed among the

¹⁷⁵ Rees, *Pelagius*, 140.

early Christians. As a monk known for his piety, his arguments flowed from that which he thought was important for the church to thrive. This led to a premise that humans did not necessarily need God's grace as they could promote their righteousness through goodness.¹⁷⁶ On the contrary, Augustine arose as a vocal respondent to these arguments, seeking to show the nature and character of Christ as will be seen in the next section.

Pelagius held, apparently, that grace as spoken of in scripture consisted of the good nature given to all (which even sin only taints but does not destroy) and of revelation given through Christ.¹⁷⁷ Humans are given basic goodness and the knowledge to employ that goodness. Their reaction then is their own free and responsible choice, by which they earn or fail to earn eternal salvation. But for Augustine, nature and grace are always two different things. Pelagius held the theological position that original sin did not taint human nature and so human will is still capable of choosing good or evil without special divine aid or assistance. According to him, human will, as created with its abilities by God, was sufficient to live a sinless life as much as God's grace assist every good work. This Pelagian doctrine of sinlessness Augustine denies by admitting the possibility of it but again says no one has reached that level.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Pelagianism has come to be identified with the view (whether taught by Pelagius or his followers) that human beings can earn salvation by their own efforts.

¹⁷⁶ Cary, "Anti-Pelagian Grace," in *Inner Grace*, 71.

¹⁷⁷ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 188.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

According to Augustinian theologians, Pelagius rejected the Biblical concept of grace. They see Pelagius as having taught that moral perfection was attainable in this life without the assistance of divine grace, only through human free will. Augustine contradicted this by saying perfection was impossible without grace because we are born sinners with a sinful heart and will. He dismisses the Pelagian position by calling it deadly perfectionism.¹⁷⁹ By contrast, the Pelagians charged Augustine with departing from the accepted teaching (John 8:11) of the Apostles and the Bible, arguing that his doctrine of original sin amounted to Manichaeism, which taught that the flesh was in itself sinful (and thus denied that Jesus came in the flesh).¹⁸⁰ This charge would have carried added weight since contemporaries knew Augustine had himself been a Manichaean layman before converting to Christianity. Augustine thus taught that a person's salvation comes solely through a free gift, the efficacious grace of God, but this was a gift one had no free choice to accept or refuse, a position that was not acceptable to Pelagius and his followers.

The teachings of Pelagius can therefore be said to be generally associated with the rejection of both original sin and infant baptism. Although most of the writings of Pelagius are no longer extant, the eight canons of the Council of Carthage (418) provided corrections to the perceived errors of the early Pelagians. The basic question under debate was the respective roles of God and humanity in salvation. Does God have the upper hand? Or do we? Is salvation something which is given to us by God or is it something which we earn or merit by our good works? The corrections included:

¹⁷⁹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 325.

¹⁸⁰ John 8:11 says "...Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

1. Death did not come to Adam from a physical necessity, but through sin.
2. New-born children must be baptized on account of original sin. Augustine said that children should be permitted to be baptized and that way they would be coming to Christ for salvation.¹⁸¹
3. Justifying grace not only avails for the forgiveness of past sins but also gives assistance for the avoidance of future sins.
4. The grace of Christ not only discloses the knowledge of God's commandments but also imparts strength to will and execute them.
5. Without God's grace, it is not merely more difficult, but absolutely impossible to perform good works.
6. Not out of humility, but in truth must we confess ourselves to be sinners.
7. The saints refer to the petition of the Our Father, "Forgive us our trespasses," not only to others but also to themselves.
8. The saints pronounce the same supplication not from mere humility, but from truthfulness.

Against Pelagius, Augustine holds that divine grace works both absolutely and by degrees. Faith and baptism mark the first stage on a long road. With divine assistance, that

¹⁸¹ Karfikova, *Grace and the Will according to Augustine*, 306.

road will be followed to its end, but if the assistance fails, failure remains possible. We now turn to Augustine's later arguments in response to Pelagian theology.

CHAPTER 4: AUGUSTINE AFTER PELAGIUS

Augustine and Pelagius were contemporaries sharing a period of immense change in the history of the Christian movement. They emerged as religious leaders within a period in which Christianity itself was emerging from persecuted minority into a state-accepted religion. For Augustine, at the heart of the shift is that he came to accept the role of grace as taught by Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 4:7, that what one has received can only be taken as a gift.¹⁸² To understand the controversies arising in the teachings of Pelagius and Augustine's response to them, it is useful to analyze the values underlying each perspective as they inform the underlying premises as well as the acceptance versus rejection of each view.

During the 4th and 5th centuries, the church had assumed the grace of God and the sinful culpability of humanity, but controversies still arose.¹⁸³ From the onset of the canonical texts of the New Testament, the Apostles were responding to controversies such as the issue of faith versus works and their relationship to salvation, the nature of Christ as human or divine, and even the role of the Apostles. The rise of Augustine and Pelagius was within the early church defining itself and establishing a theological construct that would inform the conduct of Christians, especially regarding the doctrine of grace. Pelagius and Augustine each present the holistic response of the Christian faith and the divergence of beliefs that arose as the church was growing. The central value underlying Pelagianism

¹⁸² Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol 5, 28, (XIII.), 455.

¹⁸³ Steve Curtis, "Will and Grace: The Essence of the Pelagian Debate", *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 20, iss. 2 (2016): 56.

was human autonomy, especially in freedom and the power of self-determination. Pelagius felt that a grown Christian had the capacity to become “the son of God” and thus behave as an heir to the kingdom, which would be evident through responsible and moral living.¹⁸⁴ A Christian can do this by making a difference. Pelagius understood the human capability to control, to create, and to define one’s existence. Augustine, in contrast, stood on the absoluteness of God and human dependence on God. He understood the limitations of humans, who lived, tossed about by passion and external circumstances that undermined their ability to stand pure on their own. He sees how like a child that needs its mother, Christians need God’s grace. Augustine’s response to the Pelagian teaching seeks to align the image of Christ to the expectations of Christ even while having free will.

Festus carefully interrogated and appropriated both Augustine and Pelagius in a manner that was consistent with the ecclesiastical canonization of Augustine, the formal condemnation of Pelagius, and in accord with the southern Gallic theological tradition. Festus asserts that one (Augustine) errs because of an overemphasis on grace whereas the other (Pelagius) wanders away by placing too much stress on human agency.¹⁸⁵ He vouches for a middle ground without going the direction of any extremes: divine grace alone or human works alone.

Another central value is the issue of baptism of children, which takes us back to the issue of being born with sin. Pelagius believes that the death referred to in Genesis 2:17b

¹⁸⁴ Professor Benjamin Warfield, *Introductory Essay in Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff, Vol 5, Lxvii.

¹⁸⁵ Saint Augustine, *De Gratia Dei*, Translated by Mathew Pereira in *The Debates after Augustine and Pelagius*, 187.

is spiritual death, rather than of the body as argued by Augustine, who believes it is of the body due to the entrance of sin into the world.¹⁸⁶ The center of this argument is the denial that newborn babies inherit sin and thus need baptism.¹⁸⁷ Agreeing with the Augustinian concept of original sin would invariably justify the need for baptizing children which is contrary to Pelagius' assertions. Augustine illustrates a case of baptism: "two children are born; both pertaining to the mass of sin, brought about by the Fall. One is brought to baptism by its mother; the other is suffocated by its mother in her sleep. The one is potentially saved and the other is condemned."¹⁸⁸ This, Pelagius rejects. The Epistle of 1 John 3:9 tells of those who do not continue to sin, thus creating the question if a human is born sinful, then who is the one with no sin?¹⁸⁹ Augustine argues that there is no sinless person, but those born again by the grace of God who then become those who do not continue in sin, which is possible through divine grace. The sacrament of baptism then provides for the cleansing of the sinful flesh, hence why Augustine argues for its importance. According to him, "grace is not tied to the means in the sense that it is not conferred save in the means; but it is tied to the means in the sense that it is not conferred

¹⁸⁶ Gen 2: 17b says, "...for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die."

¹⁸⁷ Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 31.

¹⁸⁸ Bonner, "Augustine's Theology of Freedom," in *Freedom and Necessity* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 84.

¹⁸⁹ 1 John 3:9: "Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God."

without the means.”¹⁹⁰ Augustine says calling the elect “is not because they have believed but in order that they may believe.”¹⁹¹

Within these two central values we find the basis of the contention between Augustine and Pelagius on whether humans are born with or without sin, does free will ensure a sinless life, and the role Christ and his atonement plays in the moral life of humanity.¹⁹² The Augustinian response will be an orthodox qualification that Christ and grace are instrumental to the life of a Christian, and to understand this, one needs to appreciate the position of the original sin. He also argues that Adam’s sin corrupted nature, and nature now corrupts those to whom it is communicated which is the whole human race.

4.1 Augustine’s response to Pelagius teachings

Augustine responds to Pelagius having recognized that the Synod in Palestine considered him a Catholic, and so he seeks to show that while they acquitted him as a heretic, they did not necessarily approve his opinions. *On the Predestination of the Saints*, *On the Gift of Perseverance* and other later Augustinian writings provide the perspective of how Pelagius remains heretical despite the acquittal and the reasons why Augustine denounces his teachings. In *On Predestination of the saints*, Augustine sets out at least

¹⁹⁰ Philip Schaff, Original editor, *Saint Augustine’s Anti-Pelagian Works*, edition edited by Antony Uyl (Woodstock, Ontario: Devoted Publishing, 2017), 79.

¹⁹¹ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Volume 5, 34 (xvii); 514.

¹⁹² Bonner, “Augustine’s Theology of Freedom,” 87.

three accusations against the Pelagian movement as raised by the Catholic Church which they went ahead to correct:

“[1] the grace of God is given not according to our merits,

[2] no one lives in this corruptible body, however righteous he may be, without sins of some kind,

[3] that human race is born obnoxious of the sin first man, and that none can be delivered from that evil save by the righteousness of the second man.”¹⁹³

The following segment presents specific responses raised by Augustine, and which aspects of Pelagian teachings he focuses on.

4.2 Faith as a Gift

In *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Augustine responds to the argument that humans have the capability to save themselves even by works, and he begins by presenting both Old and New Testament writings that disqualify the piousness of humans as an element of salvation. For instance, Jeremiah 17:5 declares that “cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord,” and Philippians 3:15 allows for the revelation of God.¹⁹⁴ He indicates that those that believe in grace are distinguished from the error of Pelagius, and consider them as having “attained

¹⁹³ Augustine, *On The Predestination of the Saints*, 2 (I); 499.

¹⁹⁴ Philippians 3:15 says, “Let those of us who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.”

to the confession that human will is anticipated by God's grace; and to the agreement that no one can suffice to himself either for beginning or for completing any good work."¹⁹⁵ Using Romans 11:35, Augustine argues that our faith is from God, and one must take care lest she put herself in opposition to God.¹⁹⁶ He added that failing to accept the role of faith, and its importance in Christianity, stands as a way of opposition.

Pelagius, on the other hand, wonders why in the case of two infants both equally bound by original sin, one should be taken and the other left, or two adult sinners, why one should be called and follow, while the other is either not called or not so-called that he will follow.¹⁹⁷ Augustine gives no answer to that except to affirm that the judgments of God are inscrutable. To Augustine, grace is given on the ground of God's infinite mercy and undeserved favor. There is nothing in humanity to merit it.¹⁹⁸ On the issue of why this grace is given to one and not to another he only attributes it to God's will. Pelagius continues to allege that if a human's fate was determined by predestination, what was the use of warning and corrections? If others persevere while others do not, then their treatment is unequal.¹⁹⁹ However Augustine replied in two treatises, *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance*.

¹⁹⁵ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest, Edited by Kevin Knight, Book 1 (Retrieved from www.newadvent.org/fathers/15121.htm).

¹⁹⁶ Romans 11:15 says, "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!"

¹⁹⁷ Gerald Bonner, "The Pelagian Controversy," *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, Third Edition (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1963), 349.

¹⁹⁸ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 11 (vi.); 503.

¹⁹⁹ Bonner, "The Pelagian Controversy," 349.

Augustine sees Pelagian thought as presumptuous, which sets itself in opposition to God, specifically to God's promises given to Abraham and the nations. Belief in those promises are part of faith, and this had to be without the condition of merit. Augustine states that God does work on our faith, acting in a manner that our hearts are able to believe, and we thus have no reason to doubt that God can do that as a whole, without any merit from humanity. It is, therefore, free and unmerited according to Augustine.²⁰⁰ He argues that if a person receives faith based on merit, then it becomes a debt, in which more faith comes from having faith. Thus, the promise of faith would be by wages rather than by grace.

For Augustine, "every single good act requires an initial impulse from God to inspire the human will."²⁰¹ Moreover, a person may not adequately show how he has been able to increase his faith even by order of piety. For Pelagius, the power to do good resembles a bank account provided by God, upon which a person has the freedom to draw when she chooses. However, Augustine quotes Romans 12:3 which states that God has given everyone a measure of faith, while Ephesians 6:23 echoes the same, that peace and love with faith are from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Augustine acknowledges that he himself was in error at some point when he thought faith was not a gift from God, but one in us from ourselves, and through it, we obtain the gifts of God.²⁰² This new belief was born out of 1 Corinthians 4:7 in which the apostle had

²⁰⁰ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 39 (XIX.); 517.

²⁰¹ Bonner, "Augustine's Theology of Freedom," 86.

²⁰² Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, Extract from Augustine's *Retractions* (Book II, Chapter 45), Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest, online edition by Kevin Knight, www.newadvent.org/fathers/1505.htm

said that one must not boast, for anything he has, he has received. Augustine explains that he “did not think that faith was preceded by God’s grace, so that by its means would be given to us what we might profitably ask, except that we could not believe if the proclamation of the truth did not precede; but that we should consent when the gospel was preached to us I thought was our own doing, and came to us from ourselves.”²⁰³ He recognized this as an error in thinking. He, therefore, says faith and belief are thus not a consequence of what we are able to do, but a gift from God, given without precondition to the capability of humanity. He denies God’s grace to be equated to fate.²⁰⁴ In the matter of the preacher and the preachment, he says they are nothing, only God gives the increase. He asserts that it is the sovereignty of grace that places humans in God’s hands and suspends salvation absolutely on God’s unmerited mercy.²⁰⁵ However, he acknowledges the apostle Paul whom he delights in calling “the great preacher of grace.”²⁰⁶

Pelagius had written to contend the issue of faith, by showing that humans were assisted not to sin by their knowledge of the law and not necessarily by grace or faith. The response of Augustine was thus to show that the law in itself was complicated, and may not be fully understood even by the practitioners. If such is the case considering how profound and complicated the law is, then what hope did humankind have of surviving or

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, 449.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Professor Benjamin Warfield, *Introductory Essay in Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff, Vol 5, Lxvi.

attaining salvation through the law? The answer was simply, faith and unfailing hope in God as the only sure solution.

Augustine writes that if one maintains that

“no one is without sin, but the man who has acquired the knowledge of the law,” a knowledge which needs to be conveyed to believers before they attain the actual remission of sins – even in such case there would crowd around him a countless multitude, not indeed of angry disputants, but of crying baptized infants, who would exclaim – not, to be sure, in words, but in the very truthfulness of innocence – “what is it, O what is it that you have written: ‘He only can be without sin who has acquired knowledge of the law.’ See here we are, a large flock of lambs, without sin, and yet we have no knowledge of the law.”²⁰⁷

The arising argument is, therefore, that a person does not have anything within him or even as an understanding of the law that frees him from sin. Otherwise, one may not argue for the innocence of the little children, yet Christ considered them as belonging to the kingdom.

4.3 Freedom of the will

Central to the arguments of Augustine and Pelagius is the aspect of the freedom of the will. Pelagius stated that “we distinguish three things and arrange them in a definite order. We put in the first place ‘*posse*’ (ability); in the second, ‘*velle*’ (volition); and in the

²⁰⁷Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, online edition by Kevin Knight.

third, ‘*esse*’ (existence). The *posse* we assign to nature, the *velle* to will, the *esse* to actual realization. The first of these, *posse*, is properly ascribed to God, who conferred it on his creatures; while the other two, *velle* and *esse*, are to be referred to the human agent since they have their source in his will.”²⁰⁸ The argument of the *velle* and *esse* represent the keys to the Pelagian argument that humanity had unconditional free will, which then enabled them to obey, disobey, become righteous, and thus become Christian.²⁰⁹ To Pelagius, a Christian is one who lives a blameless life both in heart and deed. The argument underlined the understanding that humanity was capable of living blamelessly. Pelagius claimed that all humans were ruled by their own will and he explained that the statement meant that when humans chose to do good, God helped free will, but when they chose to sin, then the humans themselves were at fault as directed by their free will. The Synod did not condemn Pelagius under this thought as they understood it based on his argument.

However, Augustine said that in Paradise Adam stood in full ability: “he had the ‘*posse non peccare*,’ but not yet the ‘*non posse peccare*’; that is, he was endowed with a capacity for either part, and possessed the grace of God by which he was able to stand if he would, but also the power of free will by which he might fall if he would.”²¹⁰ This seemed as though he is of the same thought as Pelagius, which he denied. Instead, he argued that the Church leadership should indeed have been concerned that Pelagius’ statement showed that God did not rule and thus simplified scriptures which considered humans an

²⁰⁸ Curtis, “Will and Grace: The Essence of the Pelagian Debate,” 65.

²⁰⁹ Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Volume 5, 21 (XIX.); 127.

²¹⁰ Augustine, *Against Two Letters of Pelagius*, Translated by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Volume 5, 15 (IX.); 382.

inheritance of the Lord. Based on Romans 8:14, Augustine argued that the best thing for humans is to submit their free will to God because there is nothing better than to be led of the Lord who cannot do anything amiss.²¹¹ Seeking the will of God such as through prayer is an example of how one may turn their will to God as proposed by Augustine.

Augustine argued that humans were not able to do as Pelagius claimed, in which humans could not choose right or wrong based on their fallen nature and bondage to sin.²¹² Humans nonetheless had the option of choosing to place their faith in Christ for salvation. Without the grace of God, humans only pursued self-love, which even when seeming good from others' perspective was "tainted by selfishness and weakness."²¹³ Therefore, Augustine says that even if a human was by their will able to do good, such goodness was evil in the eyes of God, as it was not born of a pure heart.

Augustine agreed that Adam indeed came with a free will prior to the fall which made it possible for him to be free of sin. Unlike Pelagius, he argued that Adam was created immortal, but death came about because of sin; both physical and spiritual death.²¹⁴ Augustine explained this analysis based on Genesis 3:19, when God tells Adam he shall return to dust, from which he was taken, signifying a physical death as well as spiritual. The original sin thus affects Adam and is inherited by all his descendants.²¹⁵ Therefore, in

²¹¹ Romans 8:14 says, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God."

²¹² Curtis, "*Will and Grace: The Essence of the Pelagian Debate*," 65.

²¹³ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, Translated by John Courtney Murray in *the Fathers of the Church*, Vol 2, 12, (38), 292.

²¹⁴ Curtis, "*Will and Grace: The Essence of the Pelagian Debate*," 65.

²¹⁵ Bonner, "Augustine's Theology of Freedom," 88.

the same way that humans are born to die of the body due to sin, they are dead in the spirit. Humans, therefore, cannot help but sin unless the grace of God applies in this life as claimed by Augustine.²¹⁶ He thus asserts that Adam did not originally need the death of Christ: “Adam in the midst of his gifts did not need the death of Christ; but the blood of the Lamb absolves the saints from a guilt which is both hereditary and their own ... Adam had no need of that help for which the saints now beg...”²¹⁷ Grace represents for Augustine the only way out of physical and spiritual death that comes from the original sin and the continued depravity of humans.

4.4 Divine grace

Augustine builds on the case of grace, showing that humans are justified by faith not by works; as Ephesians 2:8 states, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” He responds to Pelagius accusing him of acknowledging grace in a deceptive way. According to Augustine, Pelagius states that,

we have affirmed that a man is able to be without sin, and to keep the commandments of God if he wishes, inasmuch as God has given 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 exertion and God’s grace be without sin; and yet not even thus would he be incapable of change afterwards.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, 11, 29; 280.

²¹⁸ Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, online edition by Kevin Knight.

Augustine disagrees with this statement as he believes Pelagius is misleading the church by mentioning grace but is, in essence, arguing for knowledge of the law, or by human nature, instead of grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. He argues that the bishops mistakenly thought that Pelagius was confessing the grace known to the Catholic church, but in the real sense he was not. Augustine indicated that Pelagius was a heretic and did not believe in grace through which humans became a new creation and were adopted as sons and daughters of God. According to Augustine, grace that transforms can only come from God. For instance, he states that “the grace of God, when bestowed upon a human as a divine gift turns away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh, and Christ makes the receiver a child and a vessel of mercy prepared for glory.”²¹⁹ Augustine states that none should doubt faith as a gift of God unless one wants to resist the sacred writings that show the gift given to some and denied to others, and it is through grace that many are delivered that otherwise would be condemned.²²⁰ He beseeches humans to understand that God remains without fault, God’s ways are unquestionable, and thus grace being given to some, should not be of concern, instead, one need only aspire to believe.

The element of divine grace as explained by Augustine leads us to predestination, as indicated in the case of Genesis when Abraham received the promise of whole nation. Augustine writes that grace and predestination have only the difference that predestination prepares us for grace, while grace is the gift by itself.²²¹ The aspect of predestination

²¹⁹ Augustine *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Book 1, online edition by Kevin Knight.

²²⁰ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, Chapter 12, 34; 286.

²²¹ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Book I, online edition by Kevin Knight, www.newadvent.org/fathers/15122.htm.

explains how the Lord promises from the divine nature and not through our will. The promises are on what God will accomplish not what we can do. Augustine explains that “although men do those good things which pertain to God’s worship, He Himself makes them do what He has commanded; it is not they that cause Him to do what He has promised. Otherwise, the fulfillment of God’s promises would not be in the power of God, but that of men; and thus what was promised by God to Abraham would be given to Abraham by men themselves.”²²² The explanation shows what God does by divine power, and the predestination God foreknows and promises occurs by divine grace not the human will.

When comparing Augustine and Pelagius, the latter redefines grace to mean nothing more than the grace of creating, in which God created humanity with the freedom of will to choose good and not evil, and that freedom remained even after the sin of Adam.²²³ However, for Augustine, grace is the only way to deliver humans from evil, without which they have no hope of doing good, and this grace comes through Jesus Christ. Pelagius seeks to empower people to do that which they have the power to do since creation, while Augustine seeks to show them the gift of grace and the understanding that humans need God’s grace.

4.5 Perseverance as a gift

When responding to Pelagius, Augustine also seeks to understand the aspect of perseverance, which emerges as an element of the will, but this time the will of God rather

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

than the freedom of will as alluded by Pelagius. Augustine says perseverance is a gift given to the predestined.²²⁴ Augustine uses the Lord's Prayer to explore this concept, stating that we are to do the will of God based on the outlined petitions. The Lord's Prayer is a way to ask God for perseverance even as God sanctifies us, for we are asking God to make us holy and chaste, righteous, and pious, which is asking that God may preserve the good in us as we acknowledge it all comes from God.²²⁵ Augustine uses the argument of original sin to show how humanity has consistently strayed from God and to show that unless the Lord wills, then humanity has no hope of getting back to the predestined position or the promise. The role of Christ and the arising of grace provides that hope, which humans continue to have by the power of God, not by any human capabilities.

Augustine argues, "No one can achieve perfection through obedience to the law of God by means of free will alone."²²⁶ He says that "the law kills" by just giving awareness of God's commandments but not the strength to carry them out. On the contrary, "the Spirit gives life" by writing the law in our hearts and lifting up the will to God. Augustine states his theory of grace and human free will: "Salvation is only possible through faith. And this faith is grace, given *gratis*, not in view of past good works or foreseen future ones."²²⁷ Without this grace we lack the strength to do the good that we recognize we ought to do. "Unless the mercy of God in calling precedes, no one can even believe, and so begin to be justified and receive power to do good works. So grace comes before all

²²⁴ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, Chapter 12, 286.

²²⁵ Augustine, *On Predestination of the Saints* Book II, online edition by Kevin Knight.

²²⁶ Collinge, Introduction in *Saint Augustine's Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, 13.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* 11.

merits,” Augustine said.²²⁸ He said all human beings deserve punishment due to the sin of Adam; all are “a mass of sin.” By an act of mercy, God chooses to save some, to make them vessels of honor. Augustine says God calls the one for whom he has mercy in the way he knows will suit them so that they will not refuse the call.

Grace already played an important role in the *Confessions*. Reflecting on his own inability to avoid sin, even after years as a Christian, Augustine commits himself to God’s mercy: *Da quod iubes et iube quod vis*, “Give what you command, and command what you will.”²²⁹ Augustine’s theory can be stated as, “Nature which we inherit from Adam is gravely impaired such that we cannot do good without the grace of God through faith received at baptism.”²³⁰ Explaining the importance of baptism, he said the faith received by Cornelius before his baptism was inadequate to save him. Therefore for him to receive complete faith, he had to go through baptism.²³¹ He says that baptism not only removes original sin but prevent later sins as well.

Augustine points out that if anyone should be justified apart from faith in Christ, then the cross is pointless. However, Pelagius argues that if his opponent contends that a sinless life is possible only through grace, then the central point is conceded: a sinless life is possible. The discussion then moved to scripture as both Augustine and Pelagius used it to defend their positions. One of the issues which dominated the controversy between Pelagius and Augustine prior to the Synods of Carthage and Milevis in 416 was the

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid. 18.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

question of whether anyone could be without sin in the present life. Celestius' proposition that "even before the coming of Christ, there were men without sin" was refuted by Augustine.²³² Augustine affirmed the possibility of being without sin after conversion but said one still depends on God's grace for sustainability. He said that nature can be deprived of the possibility of action and that the power of avoiding sin does not reside in nature but comes from the grace of Christ.

Pelagius and Caelestius insisted that God does not demand the impossible and concluded that humans can easily keep God's command. Augustine, on the other hand, said "the grace by which humans avoid sin is neither human nature, free choice, nor the teaching of the law, but the charity of the Holy Spirit."²³³ He explains in the works written to Marcellinus that without the Holy Spirit's gift, humans do not choose the good for its own sake and do not fulfill the law. God gives delight in the good; but during the present life, God does not give that fullness of charity which overcomes every contrary pleasure or pain.

Augustine met Pelagius' contention that human nature retains the possibility of sinlessness when he said that "If anyone can be without sin by the power of nature alone, then Christ has died in vain."²³⁴ The desire for doing good is a gift of God, however, it does not force a human's own choice but heals his will and establishes his liberty. Grace heals the will so that justice is freely loved and the law fulfilled. Haight says that according to

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Burns, *The Development of St. Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 157.

²³⁴ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, Chapter 12, 34; 286.

Augustine, “grace expands freedom by giving liberty.”²³⁵ For that reason, I agree with Augustine that grace is a necessity for human salvation.

Augustine interpreted Pelagius as implying that for redemption, the human example of Jesus is sufficient and indeed that the sacraments of the church may not really be necessary. To Augustine, grace focuses on the remission of sins pledged and communicated through baptism and in the new life renewed in the Eucharist.²³⁶ When writing *On the Free Choice of the Will* before he became a bishop, Augustine speculated that infants dying unbaptized would go to neither heaven nor hell. Pelagius accused the older Augustine for abandoning this wise suggestion and of believing that a merciful and just God was capable of consigning babies to hell if their parents failed to get them to the baptism font in time. Augustine agreed that such events were painful, but they were neither fate nor chance because, in God’s world, nothing is left to fate or chance.²³⁷ He felt that no one deliberately refusing baptism will get to heaven.

Augustine says that human nature is corrupted by Adam’s Fall, so no one has the ability to obey the law or the gospel as advanced by Pelagius. He therefore, says divine grace is essential if sinners are to be saved and this grace is extended only to the predestined. The act of faith, according to Augustine, will result, not only from sinner’s free will (as Pelagius taught) but from God’s free grace, which is bestowed only on the elect. Augustine says that just “because God is God no one receives grace who has not been

²³⁵ Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 47.

²³⁶ Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*, 119.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

foreknown and afore-selected for the gift and no one who has been foreknown and afore-selected for it fails to receive it.”²³⁸

4.6 The necessity of Grace after Pelagius

Valentine sent two of his monks to Hippo, Felix and Cresconius, so that Augustine may clarify his letter to Sixtus. Augustine in his reply to Valentine said that the Lord not only shows us the evil we are to avoid and the good we are to do (which is all the letter of the law can do) but also helps us to avoid evil and to do good—things that are impossible without grace.²³⁹ If grace is lacking, the law is there simply to make culprits and to slay. Therefore, one is to trust in the Lord’s direction and delight in his ways. He says “even the desire for the help of grace is itself the beginning of grace.”²⁴⁰ He asserts that grace is not a denial of free will. In his writings, he acknowledges free choice in humans. “...He will repay everyone for what has been done.” (Matthew 16:27). But after one is freed from the dominion of sin, they still need the help of the liberator who said, “...apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5) and so one must say, “Be thou my helper, forsake me not.” This kind of faith that Augustine found in brother Florus is what he calls “indubitably the true, prophetic, apostolic, and Catholic faith,” which he thus recommends to Valentine.²⁴¹

The apostle Paul also said, “But we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right,

²³⁸ Augustine, *On The Predestination of the Saints*, 34 (XVII.); 514.

²³⁹ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, Chapter 1, 2; 246.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 1, 2; 247.

though we may seem to have failed.” (2 Corinthians 13:7) Augustine says hearing this, it is only clear that the avoidance of evil and the performance of good are given us by the Lord God. He notices the apostle does not say, “We admonish, we teach, we exhort, we chide,” instead he says “we pray God” yet he used to do all those things listed. To him, the apostle says that “Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the growth” is a grace motif. Augustine says commandments are given so that humans may have no excuse for their sin. He asks, “how can God command that his precepts be kept if there is no free choice?”²⁴² The psalmist says for those who are happy are those “whose delight is in the law of the Lord.” (Psalm 1:2) Many commands Augustine says refer to the will. For example, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21), “...do not reject your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8), are some of the scriptures Augustine uses to demonstrate how free choice is necessary for keeping the commands to show that he is not contradicting Pelagius that free choice is necessary.

Scriptures like Matthew 6:19 (“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal”), 1 Corinthians 15:34 (“Come to a sober and right mind, and sin no more...”), Philemon 14 (“...that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced”), James 4:11 (“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters...”), and 1 John 2: 5 (“But whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection...”) are evidence of free choice of the will. However, Augustine says that when someone imagines he is doing good, he may glory in himself thus incurring the curse of the prophet Jeremiah where he says “cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose

²⁴² Ibid., 5, 8; 252.

hearts turn away from the Lord.” (Jeremiah 17:5) Hence a man makes mere flesh their strength when he judges that a poor weak power, namely, a human power, is sufficient of itself to do good and does not place his hope in help from the Lord. So, the prophet added the words: “whose hearts turn away from the Lord.” Augustine understands that human goodness and agency are insufficient and require divine necessity. A human stands subject to the sin of Adam, and the only way to be set free of this sin is through the righteousness of the second Adam, Christ. In *On the Predestination of the Saints*, he argues that “no one is by himself sufficient for either beginning or carrying out any good work.”²⁴³

Augustine says, “Without grace, we are incapable of doing good.”²⁴⁴ He thus acknowledges that one may be willing to do good but may be overcome by concupiscence. He says that it is grace that helps achieve this, and, unless we are assisted by grace, the law will only be a power of sin. Unless we have the spirit of grace to assist us, concupiscence is increased and strengthened by the law and its prohibitions.²⁴⁵ The apostle says, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” (1 Corinthians 15:56) A man says, “I will to observe the command but I am overcome by the power of my concupiscence.”²⁴⁶ Even when his will is called to play and he is told: “Do not be overcome by evil,” what good is this to him unless the command can be carried out with the help of grace? “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1

²⁴³ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 34 (XVII.); 515.

²⁴⁴ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, 7, 11; 258.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7, 12; 259.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7, 13, 260.

Cor 15:57) Augustine therefore asserts that “God is the absolute good, and all good is either Himself or from Him; and only as God makes us good, are we able to do anything good.”²⁴⁷

Jesus said, “Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial...” (Matthew 26:41) He told Peter, “But I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail...” (Luke 22:32) The man then is aided by grace to do God’s will. When God says “return to me ...and I will return to you” (Zachariah 1:3), one part pertains to self-will and the other part is divine grace. Therefore, according to Augustine, the two must be simultaneously engaged—God and self. Pelagius may have used this passage when he said God’s grace is given according to our merits. But Augustine says this returning of ours to God is in itself also a gift.²⁴⁸ Again he says, “No one can come to me unless drawn by my Father who sent me...” (John 6:44) There he says that God’s grace is not given according to our merits; grace must accompany us.

At the council of Diospolis, Pelagius had formally repudiated the view attributed to his companion, Celestius, that pardon is granted to penitent sinners through their merits rather than by grace and mercy of God.²⁴⁹ However, Apostle Paul says, “For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.” (Romans 3:28) Though Augustine recognizes that good works must accompany faith, he held that “those who dwell on only good works of humans are like one who builds a house on sand which

²⁴⁷ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 29 (XIV.); 512.

²⁴⁸ Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, 7, 13; 261.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, 17; 265.

will quickly be swept away.”²⁵⁰ This thought which Augustine adopts seems to go in the opposite direction to that of Pelagius.

4.7 The Doctrine of Grace

The controversy between Pelagian and Augustinian concepts of grace raged on and continues today, as the church still contends on sin, grace, and free will. While the church was able to remove Pelagianism at Ephesus in 431, and specifically adopt the Augustinian beliefs formally in 529 through the Council of Orange, the church still faces that old question of salvation. As Steve Curtis states, those that profess Christ still often have some underlying form of Pelagianism such as in the belief that God rewards the good person, and thus fail to recognize that eternity comes only through grace as stated in Ephesians 2:8.²⁵¹ The church also continues to face the question of free will, with some seeming to think we possess Pelagian free will, rather than the Augustinian form. I am of the Augustinian school of thought, which asserts that free will of humanity on its own may have shortcomings, but grace ensures that we have hope for both spiritual and physical goodness. Augustine helps us understand that humans continue to live in such shortcoming, believing in their own power, until they acknowledge that grace is a gift from the Lord.

²⁵⁰ Professor Benjamin Warfield, *Introductory Essay in Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff, Vol 5, Lxxi.

²⁵¹ Curtis, “Will and Grace: The Essence of the Pelagian Debate”, 69.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

It is generally believed by theologians, which I disagree to some extent, that Augustine's reaction to the Pelagian teachings was one of the great over-reactions in the history of the Church. Pelagius, unlike Celestius and Rufinus the Syrian, was more concerned with exhorting Christian living than to attempt a reasoned argument for the ability to do so.²⁵² The extremity of Augustine's position was one that many of his contemporaries lamented, and much of what he argued was to be quietly abandoned by the Church until it was taken up later by Martin Luther and John Calvin. Indeed, for many contemporary Christians, Augustine's worth is most clearly seen and viewed as the great forerunner of the Protestant Reformation. In this understanding, Augustine saw the faint glow of justification by faith which burst forth aflame in Martin Luther. It is certainly true that the Reformers resuscitated and emphasized Augustine's doctrine of grace.

As has been established in the previous sections, some of Augustine's key ideas were as follows:

- We all chose sin along with and in Adam's first sin—his sin is our sin, not merely because it is passed on to us, but because we committed it.
- Adam's sin is transmitted through sexual desire (not the sexual act itself, but that pleasure which attaches to it). This original sin by Adam, Augustine says is transmitted to all humans, which Pelagius rejects.²⁵³ This is the reason for the virgin birth, for only in this way could Jesus avoid inheriting Adam's sin.

²⁵² Bonner, "Augustine's Theology of Freedom," 89.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 87

- As a result of this sin, humanity lost the right exercise of the freedom of the will. We still have free will, but now we can only choose to use it for evil unless God's grace intervenes. No worthwhile action can be done by us without grace having first moved us to that action and given us the power to accomplish it.
- Thus, no one lived without sin, except Jesus.
- Unbaptized infants go to Hell with the Devil, though they will not suffer as badly as adults who, in addition to original sin, also have actually committed sins held against them. This view according to my opinion needs to be left for further scrutiny.
- Because the initiative in salvation belongs to grace, the sole deciding factor regarding who is saved is God's decision to give or withhold grace.
- Thus, when Scripture says that God "desires everyone to be to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4), Augustine interpreted this to mean that there will be elect from every people.
- God's choice does not depend on foreknowledge of the good things they will do; rather, whatever good the elect will do is the result of God having freely chosen them.

Augustine's opponents thus ask how God choose some to salvation and others to damnation. But he thinks we should not question God. He also believed that the law in itself is a schoolmaster which restrains and threatens. He read Apostle Paul, "For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed?..." (Romans 10:13-14) This was fundamental to Augustine. The life-giving Spirit is given to those that believe and call upon God; but the love of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us (Romans

5:5), so that the words of the same apostle, "...therefore, Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10) may be realized.

In the process of examining the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace, I have used the Pelagian teachings to understand how Augustine shapes his arguments of grace. The analysis incorporates the arguments of original sin and free will, which remains Augustine's concern when addressing the efficacy of grace both before and after encountering Pelagius. Pelagius and Augustine presented the challenges that faced the early church. They focused on a spectrum that seeks to understand Christ as the deliverer and savior, and the connection with grace. For Augustine, it seems obvious that Christ is the savior, and he has given us the gift of grace. The gift is necessary because of human depravity born of original sin, and the subsequent inability to live a holy life. He believed that while God had given humans free will, this no longer serves as a guarantee of goodness, because even when humans seek to do good, the actions embedded within are those of selfishness. Grace thus becomes the only way for a human to be good, and attain his or her predestined position. Pelagius on the other hand, sees humans as capable beings, who can use their free will to decide to do good, thus dismissing the need for grace, and ultimately the need for an atoning Savior.

The two leaders used their lives as examples of their arguments, thus showing how grace or lack of it can be part of humanity. For Pelagius, he believed in piety and as a monk tried to live a life of self-denial and service to others. He showed how free will can be used to determine one's course of life. Augustine, however, shows how humans can be weak even in their power. He used his life before and after his conversion to showcase his

shortcomings and argue for salvation and grace. Responding to Pelagius, he reinforces his doctrine of grace that shows God as the ultimate, and humans as nothing without God, a work that he started before his encounter with Pelagius and one that would continue to find voice after this encounter.

From Augustine's earlier assertion, he said that, "to desire the help of grace is the beginning of grace."²⁵⁴ He insists that if God did not give us faith, we would never have received grace. According to him, God's grace fills the cosmos but unless we are given faith these grace signals simply bounce off our souls meaninglessly. Augustine believes that it is grace itself that resonates in our souls and whose power then transforms situations that would otherwise be filled with hopelessness, sorrow, and despair. "Singer Judy Collins, whose 1970 rendition of John Newton's hymn 'Amazing Grace' was a top 20 hit, claimed that, for her, grace is a kind of inner experience of another dimension from which she draws solace and peace."²⁵⁵ We can infer that "if grace cannot inform and, what is more, transform the practices of life into something gracious and lovely, then God's grace is not so 'amazing' after all."²⁵⁶ Such is how grace transformed Augustine's life.

Lewis Smedes writes, "The experience of God's grace is like the experience of another world. The first experience of grace could feel as if we have landed in a world where 2+2 might knock at our door and introduce herself as 5, where when a wrench falls out of our hand, it rises to the ceiling."²⁵⁷ This contradicts Galileo Galilee and his theory

²⁵⁴ Hoezee, *The Riddle of Grace*, 29.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵⁷ Lewis Smedes, *Shame and Grace* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1993), 110.

of free fall. Galileo's theory states that due to earth's gravity, objects are attracted towards the center of the earth, hence a wrench falling out of our hands should normally fall to the ground. However, there is weightlessness about God's grace. I agree with Augustine's assertion when he presents grace as "otherworldly" and so living it creates all kinds of complex dilemmas. For we are involved in a kind of "war of worlds" as God's grace seeks to overturn most of this world's ways of reckoning merit, earning goodness, or settling scores.²⁵⁸ Grace may have to swim upstream as it battles this world's currents of legalism, antinomianism, and capitalism, but Scott Hoezee continues to say that "it contains more than sufficient strength to do so."²⁵⁹ This project, therefore, is useful in asserting Augustine's position as far as the need for this kind of grace is concerned.

While he gives a solid foundation for teachings of the church, Augustine contributes to individual Christians by providing practical examples of how grace works. Augustine shows us the corruption of human nature, not by the actions of others, but by his own. He helps us understand how when we are given to selfish desires, they affect our relationship with God. When it comes to depending on God, we can understand it as the only way to obtain salvation and be sanctified, that on our own we are not able to do anything (John 15:5).

As Judy Collins suggests, John Newton's hymn "Amazing Grace" gives a glimpse of how grace works. An element that Augustine and Newton share is the hopelessness and despair that humans face as they encounter the challenges of this world. For Newton, it

²⁵⁸ Hoezee, *The Riddle of Grace*, 161.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

came from the devastation of losing his family, which he could not come to terms with apart from grace, which as he testifies, saved a slave-trading wretch like him. Augustine was also “a wretch” by the time he encounters grace and understands that unless he fully commits to the Lord by divine grace, then he cannot be saved as found in his *Confessions*. Both men signify the essence of actual turning of humans to the Lord and how the Lord then turns to the humans. They live Matthew 6, by knocking and seeking of the Lord, and he turns to them. The whole notion of the doctrine of grace is thus on one hand confronting human limitations and on the other hand surrendering to God.

Understanding the significant role of grace is also instrumental in defining the jurisdiction of every Christian in the transformation of every person’s life. It helps explaining the aftermath of sins and the redemption that follows. Christ is revealed as supreme and the redeemer. He frees us from the chains of sin and gives every individual another dimension of life which is the eternal life. As has been seen, due to the underlying impacts of the doctrine of grace, it highlights the origin of how a human transforms from vile deeds, repents and dons the new garment in the awakening of receiving eternal life. For Augustine, through Jesus’ death, we received God’s grace and became free. However, this grace we must continuously seek for sustenance. The human race, therefore, depends on God’s grace especially when pressed with tough calls and through the grace we receive deliverance, favor, and spiritual nourishment.

Augustine’s intention that his prayers be understood as an admonition to Pelagius to look to God for what he was seeking to work out for himself, is fully illustrated by the closing words of this almost contemporary letter to Anastasius: “Pray, therefore, for us,”

he writes, “that we may be righteous—an attainment wholly beyond a man’s reach, unless he knows righteousness, and be willing to practice it, but one which is immediately realized when he is perfectly willing; but this cannot be in him unless he is healed by the grace of God, and aided to be able.”²⁶⁰

The point had already been made in the controversy, that, by the Pelagian doctrine, so much power was attributed to the human will that no one ought to pray, “Do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13) There lies the ultimate difference between the Pelagian and Augustinian standpoint: Pelagius’ was a theology of deism and his ethics that of naturalism. There was no room in his version of Christianity for “...Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27) nor for the real indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Augustine saw that in such a version, the gospel has disappeared and so he stuck with the apostle Paul which I now adopt as the Augustinian formula that humans are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

5.1 Future Research

The project has been an eye-opener in the aspects of God’s grace, and creating a better understanding of the contentions the Fathers of Faith had to contend with, and even creates a better appreciation of the writings of the Apostles when they are defending the person and divinity of Christ as well as their work. However, among the questions that arose during the project that can form a basis for any future research is the question in

²⁶⁰ Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, online edition by Kevin Knight.

regard to reconciling the baptism of infants with the doctrine of grace – noted in the project are the questions arising from children having understood that they come from a sinful generation but are still without sin. It would be interesting to understand how they partake of grace.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Augustine, "On Forgiveness of Sins, and Baptism." In Philip Schaff (ed), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956).
- Babcock, William, Translator, Boniface Ramsey, editor. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (The City of God 1-10)*. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2012.
- Babcock, William, Translator, Boniface Ramsey, editor. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (The City of God 11-22)*. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2013.
- Bonner, Gerald et al., Translators, Boniface Ramsey, editor. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (The Manichean Debate)*. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2006.
- Boulding, Maria, Translator, John Rotelle, editor. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (The Confessions)*. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1997.
- Burnaby, John, Translator. *Augustine: Later Works*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, MCMLV.
- Chadwick, Henry, Translator. *Saint Augustine: Confessions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Dods, Marcus, Translator. *Augustine: City of God, Volume 2*, ed. Philip Schaff, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- Hazard, David, Arranged. *Early Will I Seek You: A 40-Day Journey in the Company of Augustine*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1991.
- Healer, John, Translator. *The City of God*. London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1931.
- Holmes, Peter and Robert Ernest, Translators. *Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans, and Against the Donatists, Volume 4*. Ed. Philip Schaff. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- Holmes, Peter and Robert Ernest, Translators. *Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Works, Volume 5*. Ed. Philip Schaff. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- Hwang, Alexander and Brian Martz, Editors. *Grace for Grace: The Debates after Augustine and Pelagius*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2014.
- King, Peter, ed. and Translator, *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- Mourant, John and William Collinge, Translators. *The Fathers of the Church: Saint Augustine – Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992.
- Murray John Courtney, Translator. *The Fathers of the Church: Writings of Saint Augustine*, Vol. 2. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1950.
- O'Donnell, James. *Augustine: Confessions Volume I: Introduction and Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Ramsey, Boniface, Translator, Ronald Teske, editor. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (Revisions)*. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2010.
- Rhys, Ernest, Editor. *The City of God (De Civitate Dei) Volume Two: Saint Augustine*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1947.
- Rusell, Robert, Translator. *The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine Vol. 59*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968.
- Stothert, Richar and Albert Newman Translators. *Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and the Donatists*, Vol 4. Reply to Festus the Manichaeon, ed. Philip Schaff. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- Teske, Roland, Translator, John Rotelle, editor. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (Letters 1-99)*. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2001.
- Tilly, Maureen and Boniface Ramsey, Translators, Boniface Ramsey and David Hunter, editors. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation of the 21st Century (The Donatist Controversy I)*. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2019.
- Tourscher, Francis, Translator. *Saint Augustine: Free Choice of the Will*. Philadelphia: The Peter Reilly Company, 1937.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Ayres, Lewis Ayres, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless, London: Routledge, 2000.
- Barker, Joseph. *Grace*. Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945.
- Bonaiuti, Ernesto and Giorgio La Piana, “The Genesis of St. Augustine’s Idea of Original Sin,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 10.2 (1917): 163.
- Bonner, Gerald. *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963.
- Bonner, Gerald. *Freedom and Necessity: St Augustine’s Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007.

- Boyce, James. *Born Bad: Original Sin and the Making of the Western World*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015.
- Brackney, William H. *Historical Dictionary of Radical Christianity*. Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2012.
- Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. New Edition. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000.
- Burns, Patout. *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980.
- Cary, Philip. *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Chadwick, Henry. *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Clark, Mary. *Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom*. Manhattville, New York: Desclee Company, 1958.
- Clark, Gillian. *Augustine: The Confessions*. Streatham, Devon: Bristol Phonix Press, 2005.
- Cunningham, William. *The Pelagian Controversy*. West Linn, Oregon: Monergism Books, 2018.
- Curtis, Steve. "Will and Grace: The Essence of the Pelagian Debate", *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology*, 20.2 (2016): 56-69.
- Daujat, Jean. *The Theology of Grace*. New York, New York: Hawthorn books, Inc., 1959.
- Dewart, Joanne McWilliam. *The Theology of Grace of Theodore of Mopsuestia*. Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1971.
- Dupont, Antony. *Preacher of Grace: A Critical reappraisal of Augustine's Doctrine of Grace in his Sermones ad Populum on Liturgical Feasts and during the Donatist Controversy*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Farley, William. "The Great Pelagian Controversy," *Enrichment Journal*, volume (2007).
- Ferguson, John. *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*. New York, New York: AMS Press, 1956.
- Fox, Robin Lane. *Augustine: Conversions to Confessions*. New York, New York: Basic Books, 2015.
- Grenholm, Cristina. "Grace, Transcendence, and Patience: A Response to Monica Melanchthon", in Neils Henrik Gregersen, Bo Holm, Ted Peters, and Peter Widmann (Eds), *The Gifts of Grace: The Future of Lutheran Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

- Groeschel, Benedict. *Augustine: Major Writings*. New York, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995.
- Groves, Peter. *Grace*. Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012.
- Haight, Roger. *The Experience and Language of Grace*. New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1979.
- Hardman, Oscar. *The Christian Doctrine of Grace*. New York, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.
- Hindson, Ed and Ergun Caner. *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity*. City, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.
- Hoezee, Scott. *The Riddle of Grace: Applying Grace to the Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Humphries, Thomas L. *Who is Chosen?: Four Theories about Christian Salvation*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017.
- Innes, Robert. *Augustine and the Journey to Wholeness*. Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 2004.
- Johnson, Robert, Gregory Jones, and Jonathan Wilson, Eds. *Grace upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Langford*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Johnson, Terry. *When Grace Comes Home*. Rose-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2000.
- Karfikova, Lenka. *Grace and the Will According to Augustine*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012.
- Kaye, Sharon and Paul Thomson. *On Augustine*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomas Learning Center Inc., 2001.
- Langford, Thomas. *Reflections on Grace*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007.
- Levering, Mathew. *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Loneragan, Bernard. *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of Aquinas*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1971.
- Matthews, Gareth. *The Augustinian Tradition*. London: University of California Press, 1999.
- McDermott, Brian. *What are they Saying about the Grace of Christ?* New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1984.
- McGrath, Alister. *An Introduction to Christianity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1997.
- Meconi, David Vincent and Eleonore Stump, Editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

- Mecone, David Vincent. "Saint Augustine," in Justin S. Holcomb, *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2017)
- Moody, D. L. *Sovereign Grace: Its Source, Its Nature and Its Effects*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1967.
- Nieuwenhowe, Rik, *An Introduction to Medieval Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Oden, Thomas. *The Transforming Power of Grace*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- O'Donnell, James. *Augustine*. Editor, Philip Levine. Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1985.
- O'Donnell, James. *Augustine: A New Biography*. New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2005
- Pereira, Jairzinho. *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther on Original Sin and Justification of the Sinner*. Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.
- Rees, Brinley Roderick. *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1988.
- Rees, Brinley Roderick. *The Letters of Pelagius and his followers*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991.
- Philip Schaff, Original editor, *Saint Augustine's Anti-Pelagian Works*, edition edited by Antony Uyl, Woodstock, Ontario: Devoted Publishing, 2017.
- Sittler, Joseph. *Essays on Nature and Grace*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.
- Smedes, Lewis B. *Shame and Grace*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1993.
- Studer Basil. *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?* Translated by Mathew O'Connell. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997.
- Stump, Eleonore and Norman Kretzmann. Editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Toom, Tarmo, Editor. *Augustine in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2017.
- Whitley, W.T., Ed. *The Doctrine of Grace*. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1932.
- Zahl, Paul. *Grace in Practice: A Theology of Everyday Life*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.

Websites

Augustine, On the Gift of Perseverance, Retrieved from <https://www.ewtn.com/library/PATRISTC/PNI5-12.HTM>

Augustine, On the Nature of Perseverance, in Predestination of the Saints Book II (Retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/15122.htm>)

Augustine, On the Predestination of the Saints, Book 1. (Retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/15121.htm>)

Augustine, on the Proceedings of Pelagius, Extract from Augustine's Reactions (Book II, Chapter 45), (AD 417) (Retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1505.htm>)

Augustine: Christ and the Soul by James O Donnell (Retrieved from <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/twayne/aug4.html>)

APPENDIX I: Major Works of Augustine (Treatises and Letters)

Dates	Latin Title	English Title	English Translation
388-395	De libero arbitrio	On Free Will	T. Williams (Hackett, 1993) FC 59
393	De fide et symbol	On Faith and the Creed	R. P. Russell, (1955) FC 27
396	De diuresis quaestionibus ad simplicianum	To Simplicianum, On Different Questions	J. Burleigh LCC 6 (1953 Bk I)
397- 401	Confessiones	Confessions	Henry Chadwick (Oxford 1991)
397 - 398	Contra Faustum Manichaeum	Against Festus the Manichee	NPNF 4
397/398	Contra Felicem Manichaeum	Against Felix the Manichee	
399 – 419	De Trinitate	The Trinity	Roy Deferrari FC 2 (1947)
412	De Peccatorum Meritis et remissione et de baptism parvulorum	On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and On Infant baptism	NPNF 5
412/413	De fide et Operibus	On Faith and Works	Roy Deferrari FC 27 (1955)
412	De Spiritu et littera	On the Spirit and the Letter	John Burnaby, LCC 8 (1955) NPNF 5
413 – 427	De Civitate Dei	The City of God	Henry Bettenson (Penguin, 1972) Walsh, FC 8 (1950 -1954) NPNF 2
414/415	De natura et gratia	On Nature and Grace	John Mourant, FC 86 (1992) NPNF 5
415	Ad Hieronymum Presbyterium (Ep. 166 – 167)	To Jerome (Letters 166 – 167)	W. Parsons, FC 30 (1955)
417	De gestis Pelagii	On the Proceedings concerning Pelagius	John Mourant, FC 86 (1992) NPNF 5
418	De gratia Christi et de Peccato originali	On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin	NPNF 5
419/420	De nuptiis et Concupiscentia	On Marriage and Concupiscence	NPNF 5
420	Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum	Against two Letters of the Pelagians	NPNF 5
426/427	De gratia et Libero arbitrio	On Grace and Free Choice	P. R. Russell, FC 59 (1968) NPNF 5

426/427	De Correptione et gratia	On Admonition and Grace	J. Courtney Murray, FC 2 (1947) NPNF 5
426/427	Retractiones	Retractions	M. I Bogan, FC 60 (1968)
428/429	De Praedestinatione Sanctorum	On the Predestination of the Saints	John Mourant, FC 86 (1992) NPNF 5
428/429	De dono Perseverantiae	On the Gift of Perseverance	John Mourant, FC 86 (1992)

FC = Fathers of the Church (Catholic University of America Press)

LCC = Library of Christian Classics (Westminster/John Knox)

NPNF = Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (1980's; Reprint Eerdmanns)

Appendix II: Major events in Augustine's life other than his writings

354 Augustine born, 13 November in Tagaste (Modern Souk Ahras, Algeria) son of Patricius and Monnica.

361-363 Emperor Julian ("the Apostate") withdraws support for Christianity; Donatism regains primacy in Africa.

371 Goes to study at Carthage.

371/372 Augustine marries (Wife's name not known); son Adeodatus born within a year

372/373 Reads Cicero's Hortensius—turns to philosophical studies

375 Returns to Tagaste to begin teaching.

376 Returns to Carthage.

383 Goes from Carthage to Rome.

384 Takes up professorship in Milan.

386 August; conversion.

387 April; baptism.

388 Death of his mother, Monnica.

389 Returns in Africa to live in retirement.

390 Adeodatus dies

391 Emperor Theodosius bans public practice of traditional religion

391 Ordained priest in Hippo (Modern Annaba, Algeria)

395/396 Becomes bishop of Hippo.

410 Rome “sacked” by “Visigoths” in August 24-26.

411 June; Conference at Carthage with Donatists.

430 August 28; death of Augustine.

431 Hippo captured by Vandals