BY G.WRIGHT DOYLE

AUGUSTINE

THEOLOGIAN FOR OUR TIME

Table of Contents

Other works by Wright Doyle

Books in print

Reaching Chinese Worldwide

China: Ancient Culture, Modern Society (with Peter Xiaoming Yu)

Christ the King: Meditations on Matthew's Gospel

The Lord's Healing Words

Worship and Wisdom

Christianity in America: Triumph and Tragedy

Jesus: The Complete Man

Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons

Editor: *Builders of the Chinese Church: Pioneer Missionaries and Chinese Christians*

Editor and translator: *Wise Man from the East: Lit-sen Chang (Zhang Lisheng)*

The China Inland Mission: A Brief Biographical History (forthcoming 2023)

Online books: Available at
www.reachingchineseworldwide.org/books

Truth and Life: Doctrinal and Ethical Notes on the Bible

Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons

Zhang Lisheng: Evangelist, Apologist, Theologian, Prophet

The Missionary Movement in China: An Introduction to the Literature

Chinese Christianity: An Introduction to the Literature

Introduction

"Augustine (354–430 AD) was one of the great thinkers of all time."[1] By common consent, he is also one of the most influential theologians in the history of Western Christianity. A theological, philosophical, rhetorical, literary, and psychological genius, Augustine has made a major contribution to Western civilization and, in recent centuries, to the entire world. To put it another way, as the cover illustration indicates, Augustine is a major pillar of Christian theology and of Western Civilization.

The following chapters constitute what might be called a selective introduction to his life, thought, and ongoing influence. Selective, because they do not discuss several of his major works, including *The City of God*, *On the Trinity*, and *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, as well as many others.

An introduction, because this volume does present the outlines of Augustine's life, major teachings, and analyses of a few of his important writings: *The Confessions*, Handbook of Christian Doctrine (*The Enchiridion*), and parts of *On Christian Teaching* (*de Doctrina Christiana*).

Work on this present volume began almost fifty years ago when, in 1974, I started on my doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Professor George Kennedy of the University of North Carolina. The last chapter,

---

[1] Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, Volume I, 93.

“Augustine’s Sermonic Method,” introduced my study of his *Tractates on the Gospel of John*.

The first chapter, “Augustine: A Man for Our Times,” was delivered as a lecture in a series of great thinkers sponsored by *The United Daily News*, a leading newspaper in Taiwan, in 1981. Two chapters were presented as lectures at Shanghai University in 2014–2015. “Augustine’s Doctrines of Grace” was composed in 2021 and posted on academia.edu.

If God wills, I hope to contribute more studies to this collection, on *The City of God* and on Augustine’s sermons on John’s Gospel.

So, this is a work in progress. I am issuing it now in order to make available to the reading public the results of my study of this seminal theologian so far.

My prayer is that God will use these pages to lead you into the enjoyment of the life and learning of a truly great soul.

My heartfelt thanks go to Casey Houseworth, who has kindly proofread, edited, and formatted this manuscript from a variety of documents. She also chose the cover.

Augustine: A Man for Our Times

St. Augustine has been called one of the makers of the modern world by many. In fact, one historian wrote that he was "the first modern man."[2] Why is such importance given to a man who lived more than fifteen hundred years ago? What can this man say to us today?

Augustine was born in 354 AD in what is now Algeria, North Africa. His parents were not rich, but they had a passion for their intelligent son to get a good education, so they sent him to the best schools they could.

After years of study, he became the head of a school of rhetoric, which in ancient times was the equivalent of our modern university. Nevertheless, his success did not satisfy him; for many years, he searched for truth and happiness in various philosophies and religious systems. Finally, he became a zealous disciple of Jesus Christ.

Soon after his conversion, he was made bishop, where he served for forty-four years, until his death in 430 AD. As a church leader, he travelled often to church councils, where his words usually carried the day and settled the issue. In addition, he preached several times a week and wrote more books than most people have time to read.

He was very influential in his own day, not only because of his teaching and writing, but because he lived a life of outstanding virtue. He thus conformed to the Confucian and to the Christian ideal of the true teacher. Shortly after

2. Warfield, 316.

his death, his best friend wrote a biography of him, which concludes with this touching sentence: “Pray for me, that I may . . . become the . . . imitator of this man with whom for almost forty years . . . I lived in intimacy and happiness, without any unpleasant disagreement.”

Part of the relevance of St. Augustine for our day lies in the fact that his times were quite similar to our own age. The ancient Roman Empire was breaking up under the combined blows of attacking barbarians and a decaying society. The government, more powerful than ever, was also less efficient. Heavy taxation made inflation even harder to endure. Old values were losing their hold upon people. An international elite of educated people communicated freely, but there was less and less certainty as to the best way to build a society and to bring happiness to the individual.

As in our own time, the communications media dominated society. In addition, most people spent much time at the theater and watching the games. There was an intense search for personal peace and pleasure, without much success. Many types of religions and philosophies competed for the attention of the earnest seeker for truth and happiness. In such a time, Augustine lived, taught, and composed books whose relevance has increased with every succeeding century.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of St. Augustine. Listen to what a few scholars have said about him:

> “Augustine . . . is a philosophical and theological genius of the first order, towering like a pyramid

> above his age, and looking down commandingly upon succeeding centuries."[3]
>
> "Augustine was the great poet of the ancient church, though just as little as Plato did he write in verse. These two get together as the great poet-philosophers of all time."[4]
>
> "In every department of philosophical inquiry he became normative for later centuries."[5]
>
> Leibnitz called him "A truly great man of stupendous genius."[6]

Let us look more closely at this influence. First, Augustine is credited with molding the character of the Middle Ages. "The suggestions for the right relationship between Christianity and classical culture set down by Augustine had a tremendous influence in the early Middle Ages," after the breakdown of the Roman Empire.[7] His thoughts on education became the basis for the Medieval educational curriculum and later for the university.

In philosophical circles, "Augustinism was always one of the dominant streams of Medieval thought."[8] This was true not only of the strong mystical tradition in the Middle Ages, but of Scholasticism, which sought to understand

---

3. Schaff, 7.
4. Norden, in Warfield, 315, note.
5. Warfield, 316.
6. Schaff, 7.
7. Cantor, 75.
8. Leff, 16.

reality through reasoning. In particular, his theory of knowledge, which insisted upon the role of faith, became the focus for much reflection.

In the Renaissance, Europe "rediscovered" its non-Christian philosophical heritage. But the emphasis upon the potential of each individual person, which marks Renaissance art and literature, comes largely from Augustine himself. We shall speak shortly of his impact upon the Protestant Reformation, but let it be said for now that Augustine was the chief theologian to which Luther and Calvin appealed, with immense consequences for the history of the West and thus for the entire world.

When we turn to thinkers of the modern period, we find that Pascal was an Augustinian thinker. Descartes, with his dictum, "I think, therefore I am," was following up on a thought long ago expressed by Augustine. We have already seen that Leibnitz held Augustine in highest regard.

In fact, Augustine's ideas have so entered into the bloodstream of Western thought that it is impossible to identify precisely where he has become the teacher for any one philosopher, for even those who do not quote him directly employ ideas first introduced by him.

If there is one area of thought in which Augustine is the acknowledged forerunner of our age, it is human psychology. He says that he aspired to know nothing but God and the soul.[9] As one man has written, "His

9. Warfield, 317.

characteristic mark as a thinker was the inward gaze."[10] This was new to ancient Roman thought and significant for the history of Western philosophy. When he put "the immediate certainty of inner experience into the controlling central position of philosophic thought, he transcended his times and became one of the founders of modern thought."[11]

Even those who disagree with Augustine have not escaped the power of his literary works, which so profoundly analyze the human heart. For example, when Rousseau set out to write a book about himself, he entitled it his "Confessions," after Augustine's great work. Likewise, some believe that Goethe's *Truth and Fiction* show the mark of Augustine's autobiography.[12] In our own time, who can read James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* without thinking of Augustine's *Confessions*? Kierkegaard, T.S. Eliot, and C.S. Lewis all show the influence of Augustine's main ideas.

Augustine's brilliant understanding of the human personality pervades all his writings and makes the *Confessions* a unique book. That is why, in fact, this autobiography speaks to modern man so powerfully. For we, too, are preoccupied with ourselves. The modern novel and the study of psychology cannot be understood apart from the pioneer work of St. Augustine. At the same time, we should say that the preoccupation with oneself and with personal happiness which marks our time has come as a

10. Warfield, 317.
11. Warfield, citing Windelbound.
12. Schaff, 12.

perversion of Augustine's thought; we need the correction he can bring.

Before turning to a closer examination of the *Confessions*, we should briefly glance at Augustine's influence upon Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In the first place, "Augustine contributed much to the development of the doctrinal basis which Catholicism and Protestantism hold in common."[13] In his apologetical works, such as the *City of God*, he demonstrated the superiority of the religion of Christ to the available alternatives. Since those rivals to biblical doctrine very much resemble non-Christian worldviews today, his work is permanently valuable. He defined the nature of the Christian God as an eternal Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, in a way which has become standard since his time. He also explained the relationship between God and man in terms that remain normative for most schools of Christianity.

Secondly, Augustine is the "principal theological creator of the Latin-Catholic system, as distinct from Greek Catholicism and from evangelical Protestantism."[14] One scholar has boldly affirmed: "He ruled the entire theology of the middle age . . ." As a great historian has said, "Augustine sought to apprehend the divine with the united power of mind and heart, of bold thought and humble faith," and thus he is the spiritual brother of Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventura.[15] In particular, his doctrine of the church, with its emphasis upon the organizational unity and

13. Schaff, 19.
14. Schaff, 19.
15. Schaff, 20.

authority, remains "the orthodox teaching of the Roman Catholic church even today."[16]

Finally, Augustine, as we have already said, is the real father of the Protestant Reformation. Speaking now as an evangelical Protestant, I must say that this is the aspect of Augustine that most interests me. When Martin Luther and John Calvin quoted Augustine, they referred to his autobiography and to his later works, in which there is a strong emphasis upon the realization that we are not strong enough to measure up to God's pure standards: we need to be saved from ourselves, by God's mercy. This doctrine, of course, was taught by Roman Catholics, including St. Thomas Aquinas. But in the Reformation, as in Augustine's later works, we find a new appreciation of the words of St. Paul, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus . . . through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:23–25).

One of the great questions of ancient Western history is, "Why did the Greeks and the Romans, with all their subtle philosophy and noble ethics, turn to Christianity?" Another way of putting the same question would be, "What made a brilliant Roman intellectual like Augustine bow before the Galilean carpenter, Jesus of Nazareth?"

This question possesses more than historical interest. If we understand the answer to it, perhaps we may gain insight into the dramatic change which took place in T.S. Eliot and in C.S. Lewis earlier in this century. We shall also, perhaps,

16. Cantor, 80.

understand more why Jesus Christ has had such an influence in the lives of great modern Chinese such as Sun Yat-sen, Lin Yu-tang, and the late President Chiang Kai-shek.

For the answer to this question, we naturally turn to Augustine's own account of his "journey into light," the book he called his *Confessions*.

If we see this book as a love story, we shall not be mistaken, for the key to Augustine's life is love. At first, it is a selfish love: for pleasure, fame, and truth. We shall see how this became transformed into a love for God and for his neighbor.

Augustine's Spiritual Pilgrimage: The *Confessions*

Not until the twentieth century, and perhaps not even up to the present, do we find a book like the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. In this remarkable work, his thoughts, feelings, and actions receive a kind of minute examination that burst suddenly upon his first readers. Although others had written of their lives and even had explored the wanderings of the soul as it seeks after the truth, no one had laid bare his entire being as does the author of this work in thirteen chapters, or "books." Published in 397 AD, soon after he became a bishop in the North African town of Hippo, this work has become a classic of Western literature.

Why a classic of literature? Because with a new subject – a heart's search for rest in God – there must be a new style. This style is at once personal and philosophical, poetic and logical, concrete and abstract. No one could call the

Confessions an easy book to read; but then few great works of literature are. What cost St. Augustine years of sorrowful searching cannot be described in a shallow fashion. And yet, such was his need for being understood by his friends, he felt he *must* attempt to trace the wandering steps of his journey into light.

Because the style of this intimate autobiography cannot really be separated from its content, I have decided to introduce the *Confessions* using many quotations of the author himself.

Beginning with his infancy, Augustine traces for us his progress toward the knowledge of God. His fascinating discussion of how infants learn to speak must be passed over, but we should note right away his view of human sinfulness.

By observing other babies, Augustine draws conclusions about himself. And one thing that he sees is that even a little child is capable of sin. When a baby does not get its way, even parents become the objects of his infantile rage. Augustine concludes that "it is clear, indeed, that infants are harmless because of physical weakness, not because of any innocence of mind." He goes on to observe, for example, "I have seen and known a baby who was envious; it could not yet speak, but it turned pale and looked bitterly at another baby sharing its milk."[17]

17. *Confessions*, I.7. (All further footnotes in this article with volume numbers are from *Confessions*.)

Augustine's boredom with schoolwork and his fear of being beaten for poor performance strike a responsive note in any average schoolboy.

As a Greek teacher, I cringe when I read of his distaste for elementary Greek grammar, yet I readily agree that literature is far more interesting. Looking back, however, Augustine decides that grammar outweighs fiction in importance. First, because we can't enjoy great books unless we can read. Second, because much of what is called literature merely purveys stories of lust and violence which men ought to ignore. As a young student, then, Augustine was "more frightened of committing a grammatical barbarism than" of envying those whose grammar was flawless. In addition, he confesses that when, in some game, he was caught cheating, he flew into a rage rather than admit his fault. He remarks, "Is this what is called 'the innocence of boyhood'? Not so, Lord, not so." These same sins, as the years pass by, appear as serious crimes and bring harsh punishments under the law. But what was his real sin? "I looked for pleasures, honor, truths not in God himself but in his creatures (myself and the rest), and so I fell straight into sorrows, confusions, and mistakes."[18]

As adolescence approached, Augustine, with his passionate temperament, fell at once into sexual sins. "What was it that delighted me? Only this – to love and be loved."[19] This was not a love of another for the sake of moral excellence, but a sinking into physical lust and passion.

18. I.20.
19. II.2.

The other overmastering drive in his life was the love of fame. For this, his parents spent a small fortune, that he might become "cultured." It is this passion for success and a good name that seems to Augustine just as bad as sexual immorality, although few people recognize this fact. By supposing that true happiness can be found outside of knowing and serving God, we plunge into a life lived for self, however subtly we may conceal those motives from ourselves or others. He believed that the utter perversity of human sinfulness is found in the wanton turning away from the only source of true delight, God. He says, "So the soul commits fornication when she turns away from you and tries to find outside you things which, unless she returns to you, cannot be found in their true and pure state."[20]

To further his studies, Augustine went to the capital of the province, Carthage, which was the second greatest city in the West. There he found not only bad examples featured in plays on the stage, but an atmosphere "sizzling and frying" with unholy loves.[21] At the age of nineteen, however, he read a book by the famous Roman, Cicero, which contained an exhortation to philosophy. Although Cicero was not at all a Christian, his book set before Augustine the ideal of searching only for "the immortality of wisdom" – all other ambitions seemed worthless.

Why did he not at this time turn to the Christian faith of his mother? Because, when he turned to the Scriptures, he says "they seemed to me unworthy of comparison with the grand style of Cicero. For my pride shrank from their

20. II.6.
21. III.1.

modesty, and my sharp eye was not penetrating enough to see into their depths."[22] As a Latin rhetorician, he was unused to the style of the Hebrew prophets and Christian apostles, and so he failed to see the truth contained in their writings.

He goes on, "And so I fell in with a sort of people who were arrogant in their madness . . ." These were the Manichees, whose writings have been found as far east as Fukien province in China. The Manichees were the materialistic rationalists of the day. Using reason alone, they claimed to understand all of reality, including human personality. Their theories resembled modern Freudianism. They believed that all that is, is material. Thus, even evil itself is a substance. It took years to Augustine to shake off their misconceptions about the Bible and about God that entrapped him in a purely materialistic way of seeing things.

All this time, however, God was watching him and watching out for him. God used his mother's fervent, tearful prayers to keep Augustine from being utterly lost to truth. Throughout the *Confessions*, Augustine pays tribute, not only to God's mercy in not letting him go entirely, but also to his mother, whom God used to pray for Augustine and to remind her son of the dangers of turning from God. In fact, we may say that if the "hero" of this book is God, the "heroine" is Augustine's mother. Although her many entreaties failed in turning Augustine away from error, they did keep the claims of God before his mind.

---

22. III.5.

If the Manichees were the rationalists and materialists of their day, proclaiming in the name of science what could not really be proved, the astrologers were just the same then as they are now. Augustine was attracted to them for a while. Although a prominent member of the government showed him that astrology is a false science, Augustine remained interested in the speculations of those who claim that they can predict the future by the movements of the stars. To anticipate our story, we can say now that he was dissuaded from this error years later by another intelligent man. This gentleman pointed out that twins, born under the same constellation, should have the same destiny and career, according to astrology. But in fact, they often do not. But that came later.

In addition to the Manichees, whose speculations did not convince Augustine, he read in the books of the philosophers, who included what we would call natural scientists. He found their explanations of natural phenomena far more credible. Then, as now, the findings of science impressed people. And yet, they do not by science come to a knowledge of God. Listen to Augustine's more mature critique of them:

> The proud cannot find you, God, however deep and curious their knowledge, not even if they could count the stars and the grains of the sand. . . . They have discovered much . . . their calculations have proved correct; they put into writing the rules which they have discovered. . . . And men who are ignorant of the subject are full of astonishment and admiration, while those who know will boast of their knowledge and will be praised for it, thus

> turning away from you in their pride and losing the light that comes to them from you. . . . They do not know the way, which is your Word, and (that) by your word you have made the things which they measure and themselves who do the measuring. . . . Much that they say about what is created is true; but they do not seek religiously for the truth which is the maker of creation, and therefore they do not find him, or if they do find him and know him to be God, they do not honor him as God and give him thanks.[23]

Later, like most ambitious men of that age, he moved to Rome. There, he began to wonder whether the skeptics were right after all. They maintained that there is no way to discover the truth. (In fact, they proclaimed dogmatically that there is no truth). What they did not see was that this theory of theirs was considered by them to be absolutely true! As Augustine reflected on this, he realized that there is at least one thing of which a doubting man may be absolutely certain: namely, that he doubts. Therefore, we cannot say that absolute certainty is impossible. In fact, from the certainty of our own existence, we may go on to infer the existence of others and even of God.

When he discovered that students in Rome had the annoying habit of leaving a teacher just before time came to pay school fees, he applied for a job as official spokesman of the Emperor in the capital of Milan. He gained this prestigious job and went to Milan, where he met the man who was to change his opinion of Christianity. Bishop

---

23. V.3.

Ambrose, as Augustine writes, was a man "with a worldwide reputation" as a preacher and intellectual. He writes:

> Though I did not realize it, I was led to him by you so that, with full realization, I might be led to you by him. That man of God welcomed me as a father . . . I began to love him at first not as a teacher of the truth, but simply as a man who was kind and generous to me. I used to listen eagerly when he preached to the people, but my intention was not what it should have been; I was, as it were, putting his eloquence on trial to see whether it came up to his reputation. . . . So I hung intently on his words, but I was not interested in what he was really saying. Nevertheless, together with the language, which I admired, the subject matter also, to which I was indifferent, began to enter into my head.[24]

As he learned from Ambrose how to interpret Scripture more accurately, he lost his previous contempt for its plainness of speech and lack of Classical eloquence. Now, he writes, "the authority of Scripture seemed to me the more venerable and the more worthy of religious faith because . . . it offers itself to all in plain words and a very simple style of speech, yet serious thinkers have to give it their closest attention."[25]

At this point, Augustine was prepared for the final step in his intellectual journey. He became friends with a learned

---

24. V.13, 14.
25. VI.5.

man who introduced him to some books written by Platonic philosophers. These books, although not Christian, demonstrated to him once and for all that God is spiritual, not material or physical. Likewise, he saw that evil is not, as he had supposed, a substance which affects us, but the deprivation of good. In itself, evil is nothing. But we do evil deeds by the exercise of our will, and gradually become enslaved to evil habits. He realized that God "made all things good."[26] At that point, as he says, "I was swept away to you by your own beauty."[27]

He did not yet understand that Christ was both man and God, but at least he was willing to learn more from the Bible, now that he realized that God is not composed of matter. So he "most greedily seized upon the venerable writings of your spirit and in particular the works of the Apostle Paul." Here he found all that he had found true in the books of the Platonists, but with this difference: "it was expressed to the glory of your grace."

The Platonists had been too proud to speak of the need a man has for forgiveness of sins and power to live a new life, but he became convinced that he was indeed enslaved to sin, and could not break free by his own willpower. Finally, in great agony of soul, he went with his friend Alypius into a garden, where he wept bitterly. Leaving the presence of Alypius, he was by himself when he heard what seemed to be a child's voice saying, "Take up and read. Take up and read."

---

26. VII.12.
27. VI.17.

This he did and, opening his Bible at random, he saw the passage of Paul in Romans, "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:13–14).

At that point, he had no wish to read further; there was no need to. "For immediately I had reached the end of this sentence it was as though my heart was filled with a light of confidence and all the shadows of my doubt were swept away."[28]

We have raced quickly through to this point, giving in brief outline the story of Augustine's journey into light. To be accurate, however, we should note that the *Confessions* do not end with the conversion of St. Augustine to Christ. That event comes at the end of Book Eight. After that, five more books tell of his life immediately after his life-changing experience and then give a sampling of his meditations upon the God who had brought him from slavery into freedom. These pages are very rich and deserve to be read. The later, famous, bishop and theological writer is understood only in their light.

Two things must be said: First, that Augustine did not become a morally flawless man the moment he was born again. True, he no longer had to fight the old flames of lust. But other sins continued to annoy him, as they do all followers of God. Book Ten analyzes in detail the subtlety of sin in a Christian's heart and expresses the hope that someday we shall completely be free: that is the day when

28. VIII.12.

we meet Jesus Christ in our new, resurrected bodies at the close of the age.

Finally, although Augustine remained conscious of his many weaknesses and failings, he daily grew in an awareness of the love, power, and beauty of the God who had forgiven him through the death of Jesus Christ. He became, in fact, a man with a life-transforming love for God and for Jesus Christ, the divine son of God.

We have looked briefly at Augustine's past influence and at his movement from unbelief into a firm faith in God. Now we need to close with a few words about the insights which he can give thinking people today. For this, we need only to review some of his principal ideas.

What are some of his leading convictions? We can only touch on a few of them briefly here, but this quick introduction will serve to show both the present relevance of Augustine and the reason for his influence upon past ages.

In our own day, some people believe in the power of man's scientific research to uncover all necessary truth. They are often opposed by those who emphasize, not reason, but personal experience. Augustine, however, did not put faith and reason in opposing positions. Rather, he saw that personal belief and involvement are necessary for any true understanding of reality, and that careful thinking and observation must follow such faith to result in solid knowledge. In this, as one writer has said, "Augustine lays

new ground in philosophy."[29] Another scholar has described his approach with these words, "He always asserted the primacy of faith, but to him faith itself was an acting of reason, and from faith to knowledge, therefore, was a necessary transition."[30] In other words, Augustine knew nothing of what is now called, "blind faith." He always had reasons for his beliefs.

On the one hand, Augustine believed that "God is intelligible. God is the truth, and some degree of understanding of God can be ours." On the other hand, he says, "He whom you comprehend is not God," for he knows that mortal man can never fully understand his creator.[31] That means that for him, "the infinite God is a continual source of freedom for new reflection."[32] If that is the case, then education should be not only a process by which the student is given information to master, but one in which he is taught how to reflect. Augustine would agree with many that "the memorization of unrelated bits of information" is not what students most need. Rather, the editorial was expressing ideas like those of St. Augustine when it called for an educational system that "stimulates learning instead of stifling it," one that produces "the cultivation of wisdom and understanding."[33]

Philosophers have debated for many years the question of man's freedom in its relationship to God and to the world around us. For many people, the concept of Fate

29. Leff, 38.
30. Schaff, 7.
31. cf. Battenhouse, 7.
32. cf. Battenhouse, 7.
33. *China Post*, March 15, 1981.

overwhelms the idea of human ability to make real choices. They see that we are limited by our ignorance, our weakness, our selfishness, and by the many forces working in the world. Augustine addressed this question directly, since in his own day there were many who either overemphasized man's autonomy or saw only man's helplessness in a world of relentless Fate. His answer lay in the power, love, and justice of God, and in the nature of man. To state the matter very briefly, Augustine believed that man has great potential as a creature of God, but that he is crippled by his innate tendency to live for himself. His only deliverance comes from God, who sets him free to live a life of love.

It is this focus on God that helps Augustine address the problem of evil in a fresh way. He saw that evil is not a material substance, but a deprivation of good, and that evil is in choices which we make, not in any external force acting upon us. Augustine's great work on the meaning of history (which has been translated into Chinese), *The City of God*, traces the history of the world in terms of two groups of people – those who choose to serve God and those who do not. This work, with its comprehensive view of human events, has captured the attention of political scientists for many years. He shows that it is a common love which binds together a community, and that each nation or group of people is defined by what type of love is keeping them together.[34]

As we look at the world around us, the tensions and warfare may be seen as evidence of his profound analysis of human

34. cf. Battenhouse, 10.

nature. The love of glory and of physical security drives men to struggle with each other and even to kill. On the other hand, the love of God will give us the peace of mind and satisfaction of heart that makes endurance of trouble in this life possible.

We have seen that Augustine believed that we are unable to discover God only by our reason, or to please him only by our own behavior. God's free mercy and power stand at the front of all of Augustine's thoughts and make his religious contribution permanently valuable.

Finally, let us close with the sentence with which he begins his autobiography: it is his most well-known statement, and perhaps gives us the essence of his contribution to men of today: "You move us to delight in praising you, for you have formed us for yourself; and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you."[35]

35. I.1.

Augustine: A Builder of Western Civilization

Introduction

Augustine of Hippo, who lived most of his life in Northern Africa, continues to exercise a major influence on Western civilization. His works continue to be published and widely read. University courses on history, politics, and religion require students to study what he wrote on a variety of topics. He influenced Christianity just as the Roman Empire was crumbling, and his thought reigned supreme in the Christian church until Thomas Aquinas' new system arose as a rival.

Still, Augustine remained the most influential thinker. Protestant Reformers and their Roman Catholic opponents both appealed to his ideas. Much of Christian theology today starts with Augustine. For example, Carl Henry, the leading twentieth-century American theologian, was clear about his debt to Augustine. Scholars continue to write about the relevance of Augustine's thoughts about public life, and philosophers still grapple with his ideas on knowledge, good and evil, free will, time, and ethics.

Augustine's Early Life

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aurelius Augustinus was born in AD 354 in what is now Algeria, North Africa. His father was a pagan Roman, his mother a devout Christian. They saw his unusual intelligence early and gave him the best possible education. In the process, Augustine turned away from Christianity and pursued a life of pleasure, including sex. He took a mistress at age 17 and

lived with her for fourteen years. He studied rhetoric and became famous as a speaker and teacher. Neither pleasure nor success satisfied him, however, so he began a search for wisdom.

At first, he was attracted to the Manichees, mentioned previously as materialists. Later, he came under the influence of Platonism, which showed that materialism cannot explain the existence of invisible realities like the soul and moral judgments. Around the same time, he realized that the skeptics of his time, called the Academics, could not prove that there was no absolute truth. Even the claim that there is no absolute truth is an absolute claim. Absolute doubt cannot exist, for we cannot doubt our own existence.

Finally, after he had reached the pinnacle of success as the public rhetorician in the capital city of Milan, his sense of his own sin led him toward Christianity. He was impressed by the powerful preaching and intellect of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and by the conversion of a former Platonist, Victorinus. He could not overcome his addiction to sexual passion, however. Meanwhile, he had been reading the Scriptures, especially the letters of Paul. After his incredible conversion experience, light seemed to flood his mind and his heart, and he gave himself completely to Christ.

Years after that conversion, he wrote this beautiful passage in his *Confessions*

> Late have I loved you, beauty so ancient, so new, late have I loved you. And see; You were within, inside me, and I was outside; and out there I sought

> you, and I – misshapen – chased after the beautiful shapes You had made. You were with me, but I was not with You. Beautiful things kept me far off from You – things which, if not in You, would not be, not be at all. You called and shouted out and shattered my deafness. You flashed, You blazed, and my blindness fled. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and panted for You. I tasted You, and hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for Your peace.[36]

Career as a Church Leader

Though he wanted to lead a quiet life in a monastery with a few friends, he was quickly noticed by church leaders and ordinary Christians, who essentially forced him to be ordained as a priest in the church. Not long afterwards, he was consecrated as bishop of Hippo Regius, where he lived and worked the rest of his life. His duties included frequent preaching, training men for the ministry, pastoral care of believers, and even participation in the courts of the city.

As his fame grew, he became involved in various controversies. The most difficult of these involved the Donatists, who rejected the authority of the Catholic Church and set up their own church. They even used violence to attack Augustine's clergy and destroy Catholic church buildings. Finally, Augustine sought the help of the Roman government to suppress what he considered to be terrorist activities committed by the Donatists.

---

36. Augustine, *Confessions*, X.27.

Theologian and Writer

Augustine's primary influence derived from his extensive writings. These included countless letters, sermons, short tracts on various topics, commentaries on the Bible, and major treatises such as *Confessions*, *The City of God*, *On Christian Teaching* (*De Doctrina Christiana*), and *On the Trinity*.

One editor has said, "*Confessions* is one of the uncontested classics of world literature. Even if Augustine had written no other work, this alone would have insured his lasting fame."[37] Writing after several church councils had established the basic outlines of orthodox Christian belief, he wrote to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, including the full deity of Jesus Christ. *On The Trinity* quickly became the standard treatment on the Christian doctrine of God in the West. *The City of God*, Augustine's third masterpiece, is a massive work of history, philosophy, political thought, biblical study, and apologetics, which both answered pagan critics of Christianity and set forth a Christian view of the world. He refuted the arguments of pagan philosophers and believers in pagan religion and answered the charge that Rome had been sacked by the barbarians because it had forsaken its traditional religion to follow Christianity.

In particular, Augustine is known for his defense of God's sovereign grace against the ideas of Pelagius, who taught that men have free will to do good and to have faith in God. Augustine taught that our salvation comes entirely from

37. Harmless, *Augustine*, 1.

God's initiative, not ours, and is therefore secure, because it rests on God's decision, not ours.

Augustine's Significance for Western Civilization

Writing at the end of the classical age and the opening of the early Middle Ages, Augustine is a pivotal figure in Western history. In many ways, he laid the foundation for much of later Western civilization. I shall refer only briefly to a few of his achievements.

First, he cleared the ground for the erection of a society based upon the Bible. He refuted pagan philosophy in several ways. He showed that skepticism is not a viable intellectual position, as I have stated already. Though he appreciated the contributions of Neo-Platonism, he replaced their speculation with a system based upon the Scriptures, which he considered to be more trustworthy than unaided human reason. Instead of an impersonal One, he explained that God is the personal origin, source, and ground of all life and being, and that he can be known as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In Augustine's time, pagan religion still exerted wide and deep influence throughout Roman and Greek society. Like others before him, but with greater learning and knowledge of non-Christian beliefs, he exposed the folly of polytheism and the belief in an impersonal Fate. Tracing Roman history, he proved that worship of the ancient gods had never really benefitted the Romans or protected them.

As we have seen, he refuted semi-Christian views like Manichaeism, which taught that the God of the Old Testament was different from the God of the New

Testament. In doing so, he showed how the Bible is unified in its theology. He also paved the way for a Christian civilization by dealing the death blow to Christian errors such as Arianism, which taught that Jesus was fundamentally inferior to God the Father; Donatism, which insisted that the church must consist only of sinless people; and Pelagianism, which emphasized man's free will and basically ignored our bondage to selfishness, pride, and ignorance of God.

In addition to clearing the ground, Augustine set the stage for a new civilization. He replaced the old pagan ideas with new Christian ones, which possessed greater coherence and explanatory power. Stoic ethics, which centered on mastery of self and denial of feeling, was replaced by Christian ethics, which is based on receiving, responding to, and reflecting God's love in the world, following the example of Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Classical rhetoric gave way to Christian preaching, which should consist in a careful explanation of the Bible, which has its own persuasive energy.

Instead of the worship of Rome and its great empire, he wrote of two cities, the city of man and the city of God. One of them is motivated by selfish desire; the other finds its goal and energy in the love of God. He turned attention from human empire to the kingdom of God. A linear view of history, which culminates in the return of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, replaced the cyclical view of history held by Romans and Greeks.

Though he was a master of classical literature, and especially the great Latin works of poetry and prose, Augustine's own literary genius helped to create a new,

Christian literature. Stories and poems founded on truth supplanted myths and legends. Of course, others were involved in this project, such as Jerome, Prudentius, and Lactantius, but Augustine's works were both numerous and written in a style so elegant and eloquent that it has seldom, if ever, been matched. He is known for several statements, including this line from the opening of his biography, *Confessions*: "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless 'til they rest in You."[38]

The speculations of classical philosophy were displaced by Christian theology, founded upon a more reliable epistemology, featuring a more satisfying ontology, and enriched with more comprehensive and realistic ethics. In epistemology, faith in God's word governed reason, tradition, and observation. Ontology changed from naturalism to theism. Ethics ceased to be a search for happiness in this life based on self-effort, and became a quest to find satisfaction in God, accompanied by new motivation in his love for us. Men were turned from love-of-self *Eros* (cupiditas) to love-of-God *Agape* (caritas). One of his great contributions was his recognition that human action is driven by desire. God created us with desires, but in our current state our desires – our loves – are disordered. Salvation involves having our desires – our loves – re-ordered to focus on God.

Along the way, Augustine planted seeds for something new in his theory of language, his in-depth study of human psychology in the *Confessions*, and his meditations upon time and eternity.

---

38. Augustine, *Confessions*, I.1.

An Outline of His Theology

Now let us turn to a brief outline of Augustine's theology, as he himself summarized it in the *Enchiridion,* or *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love*. This little book became one of the most significant and widely read works in Western history.

Introduction: Chapters 1–8

Augustine's friend, Laurentius, had asked him for a handbook summarizing the basic tenets of the Christian faith. Augustine commends him for his desire for wisdom and opens by asserting the fundamental truth that "wisdom comes from the Lord." Furthermore, true wisdom begins with the fear of God. By "fear," the Bible essentially means reverent worship. How are we to worship God? Through faith, hope, and love. So, Augustine will explain what we are to believe, what we ought to hope for, and what we ought to love. We must begin by faith, because our observation, experience, intuition, and reason cannot tell us for sure about things yet unseen. We start by believing that God has revealed himself in the Scriptures; we then use our reason to understand these writings, which then make sense of our intuition and our experience. Along the way, God begins to purify our hearts from bad motives, and we comprehend more of the truth. Eventually, when Christ returns, he grants us to see himself in all his glory.

That is why Christianity is founded on Christ, for he is the locus and focus of God's self-revelation.

For a brief summary of Christian doctrine, Augustine looks to the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer; in these,

faith, hope, and love are exercised. “Faith believes; hope and love pray.” But faith must come before hope and love. “There is no love without hope, no hope without love, and neither love nor hope without faith.” Faith, hope, and love are directed to God, for the goal of life is to see God’s beauty and love him supremely for his supreme excellence.

Faith: The Creed, Chapters 9-113

Turning now to what we believe, Augustine quotes the first sentence of the Apostles’ Creed: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.” God is the good Creator of all things; thus, all things created are also good. This God is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all equally divine, but comprising only one God.

Hear how Augustine describes this God in the Confessions: “You are most high, most excellent, most potent, most omnipotent; you are most merciful and most just, most hidden and most near, most beautiful and most strong; stable yet uncontainable, unchangeable yet changing all things; you are never new and never old; you make all things new, yet you bring old age upon the proud and they know it not; always working, yet ever at rest; gathering, yet needing nothing; sustaining, pervading and protecting; creating, nourishing and developing; seeking, and yet possessing all things. You love, and burn not; are jealous, yet free from care; . . . are angry, yet serene; . . . But my God, my life, my holy joy, for all these words, what have I

said? What does any man say when he speaks of you? Yet woe to them that keep silence."[39]

If God is the cause of all things good, what is evil and where does it come from? Augustine teaches that evil has no independent existence but is the absence of good. It is a corruption of something originally good. All things were created good but were liable to corruption. Since the sin of Adam and Eve, we live in a fallen and corrupted world. As to the cause of evil, neither Augustine nor anyone else can give an answer. It is something that we simply do not know.

We do need to know the secondary causes of good and evil among human beings, however. We can know truth by faith. These secondary causes of evil are ignorance of our duty and lust for what is hurtful to ourselves and others. These lead to error and to suffering and are the cause of fear. Even when we attain the things for which we long, we are either deeply disappointed or foolishly joyful in them, for they are temporary. The punishment for these faults is the death of the body.

In a way that we can't fully explain, in Adam's sin of disobedience, he both represented us and also passed on to us the disease which we call original sin. The resulting misery involves God's condemnation, which includes separation from him now and also final punishment in hell. But God's mercy brings good out of evil. The image of God has been defaced, but remnants of it remain. That is

---

39. Augustine, *Confessions*, I.4. Quoted in *St. Augustine's Bishop of Hippo, Confessions*. Based on a translation by J.G. Pilkington (London, The Folio Society, 2006), 15.

why we are still able to do good deeds. Though many will suffer eternal punishment, a great number of people will be saved. That is, they are reconciled to God and thus delivered from condemnation.

How can we be saved from God's wrath? Only by God's free gift of grace and mercy, received by faith. We are not able to reform ourselves, because our wills are no longer fully free. "When man [Adam] by his own free will sinned, then sin being victorious over him, the freedom of his will was lost."[40] Only Christ can set us free to do good. Faith is a gift of God, and produces good works, because God gives a new freedom to the will of believers.

Now Augustine turns to the second statement of the Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord." We need a Mediator because of our sins, both our original sin and our actual offenses against God's holy law. In his mercy, God sent his Son to die in our place, so that we might be reconciled to him. Jesus is the eternal Word of God, the divine Son of God. He became a Man, through the Virgin Mary, so he now is both God and man. He had no human father but was born by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Let us hear how Augustine describes this unique person:

> Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is both God and man; God before all worlds; man in our world: God, because the Word of God; and man, because in His one person the Word was joined with a body and a rational soul. Wherefore, so far as He is God, he and the Father are one; so far as He is man, the

40. *Enchiridion*, 30.

> Father is greater than He. . . . He Himself unites both natures [i.e., human and divine] in His own identity, and both natures constitute one Christ; because, "being in the form of God he thought it not robbery to be" what He was by nature, "equal with God." But He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, not losing the form of God . . . As Word, He is equal with the Father; as man, less than the Father. One Son of God, and at the same time Son of man . . . beginning, man with a beginning, our Lord Jesus Christ.[41]

This Christ, who was without sin, was made sin for us. That is, he died in our place as a sacrifice for sin, to satisfy God's just penalty against sin. United with him by faith, we died with him. Our baptism symbolizes death and then resurrection with Christ to new life in this world and the promise of eternal life in the world to come. To enter into this new life, we must be born again through faith in Christ. We receive forgiveness of sins because of his sacrifice for us in our place. Through faith, we are counted as righteous in God's eyes, so we can have fellowship with him now. Meanwhile, our lives should reflect his self-denial and death, as well as his resurrection and victory over sin.

The great hope of the Christian is that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Those who have received God's mercy and grace through faith will live forever with Christ in a new heaven and a new earth.

---

41. *Enchiridion,* 35, 37–40.

Now Augustine directs our attention to the third section of the Creed, which talks about the Holy Spirit and the church. The church is the complete body of all those who believe in Christ and are born again by the Spirit. These people are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is God, equal with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is God, fully equal with the Father and the Son, though he is sent by the Father through the Son to all who truly believe in Christ. God pours out his love into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, who then dwells in them. Thus, the church is the temple of God; it consists of people who have been redeemed by the shed blood of Jesus, by whom they are reconciled to God, and therefore have peace with him by faith.

The Creed next speaks of the forgiveness of sins, which extends throughout the lives of believers. Christians need this constant forgiveness since, though they are led by the Spirit to do good works, they also frequently wander from God and disobey his will. Still, Augustine says that "the mercy of God is never to be despaired of by men who truly repent."[42] That does not mean that believers can just sit back and rest on God's mercy, however, for "faith without works is dead, and cannot save us." Those who claim to be Christian, yet live constantly in sin without repentance, are not truly believers at all. The most important good work, says Augustine, is to forgive our enemies, just as we have been forgiven. Indeed, Augustine, quoting Jesus, says, "And the man who does not from his heart forgive him who repents of his sin, and asks forgiveness, need not suppose that his own sins are forgiven by God."[43]

---

42. *Enchiridion*, 56.
43. *Enchiridion*, 74.

In a rather subtle discussion of sin, Augustine says that there are two great causes of sin: ignorance and weakness. Either "we do not know our duty, or we do not perform the duty we know."[44] We shall be beaten in our struggle with sin, "unless we are helped by God, not only to see our duty but also, when we clearly see it, to make the love of righteousness stronger in us than the love of earthly things, the eager longing after which, or the fear of losing which, leads us with our eyes open into known sin."[45] Likewise, God's mercy is necessary to lead us to true repentance.

"The resurrection of the body" is the next statement of the Creed to occupy Augustine's attention. Again, he engages in a very detailed and subtle analysis of the many problems connected with this belief, but emphasizes what the Bible teaches, namely, that the resurrected body is a spiritual body. It shares continuity with our current physical body, but like the body of the resurrected Christ, possesses qualities that transcend the limits of space and time. Those who have died without repenting of their sins and trusting in Christ will also be raised, but they will then die a second death that will endure forever. Those who are saved will live eternally with God and will then know what we can't know now.

For example, they will understand that all that God does is good and just. Although we see much that is evil and perplexes us, we know from the Bible that, as Augustine puts it, "Nothing . . . happens but by the will of the Omnipotent" – that is, God – "He either permitting it to be

44. *Enchiridion*, 81.
45. *Enchiridion*, 81.

done, or Himself doing it."[46] Yet he is not the cause of sin or of evil.

Some Christians have quoted the verse that says God "wills that all men should be saved," but Augustine points out that the original context shows that the true meaning is that God intends to save some people of every sort, not all people of every sort. In other words, he does not will that all men be saved. He has chosen some people to be saved through faith. They are predestined from before all time. Otherwise, they would never have been saved at all. He explains: "It is grace that separates the redeemed from the lost," since "all . . . [have] been involved in one common[47] perdition through their common origin" as descendants of Adam. Those whom God has chosen will ultimately be saved, since his will is never defeated. He can even use evil men to accomplish his good will.

Even before creation, God foresaw the sin of Adam and planned accordingly. He determined to save those whose will was bound by selfishness, setting them free to believe and follow Christ, who, as God–Man, is our only Redeemer. After death and resurrection there will be two eternal kingdoms for the saved and the lost.

Hope and Love: The Lord's Prayer, Chapters 114-116

After this long treatment of faith, Augustine concludes the *Enchiridion* with a very brief discussion of hope and love, using the Lord's Prayer as his outline. Hope and love flow from faith, for they are based upon the truths in the Bible.

---

46. *Enchiridion*, 95.
47. *Enchiridion*, 99.

Augustine points out that the Lord's Prayer begins with three requests that are spiritual in nature: "May your name be hallowed; may your kingdom come; may your will be done." It also ends with a spiritual request, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Only in the middle do we have the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." We learn, therefore, that though we may certainly ask God for our physical needs, we should really hope for, and thus love, his glory, his will, and his kingdom to come in and through us.

Love is greater than faith and hope, for it endures for all eternity. We cannot hope without love, for we love that for which we long and pray in faith. Also, "the greater measure in which [love] dwells in a man, the better is the man in whom it dwells."[48] How do we receive love? "Faith obtains through prayer that which the law commands. For without the gift of God, that is, without the Holy Spirit, through whom love is shed abroad in our hearts, the law can command, but it cannot assist." [49] Furthermore, fleshly lust "reigns where there is not the love of God."[50]

At this point Augustine describes the four stages of the person who has been chosen for salvation. First, he is sunk in ignorance and sin. Then, he hears the commands of God, realizes that he is on the wrong path, and strives to follow God's will, but he is thwarted by his own sinful nature, to which he is enslaved. "But if God has regard to him, and inspires him with faith in God's help, and the Spirit of God begins to work in him, then the mightier power of love

48. *Enchiridion,* 117.
49. *Enchiridion,* 117.
50. *Enchiridion,* 117.

strives against the power of the flesh; and although there is still in the man's own nature a power that fights against him (for his disease is not completely cured), yet he lives the life of the just by faith, and lives in righteousness so far as he does not yield to evil lust, but conquers it by the love of holiness. . . . He who by steadfast piety advances in this course, shall attain at last to peace," when his body is raised from the dead to live forever with God.[51] That is, those who are truly born again by the Spirit will eventually be fully saved from sin.

Love is the goal of all commands, for God is love. "Lust diminishes as love grows, till the latter grows to such a height that it can grow no higher here. . . . Who then can tell how great love shall be in the future world, when there shall be no lust for it to restrain and conquer? For that will be the perfection of health when there shall be no struggle with death."[52]

On that happy note the *Enchiridion* comes to a close.

Evaluation

How shall we evaluate Augustine and his significance in history?

First, we should note that Augustine is an authority for Roman Catholics and Protestants. They share common points with him and other orthodox theologians, including belief in the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed, acceptance

51. *Enchiridion,* 118.
52. *Enchiridion,* 121.

of the authority of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity, and salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

On the other hand, they draw some of their differences from Augustine's writings. For example, Roman Catholics, like Augustine, believe that Mary remained a virgin after Jesus was born. They believe that infants are born again when they are baptized. And they have more sacraments, including penance, which Augustine recognized. Like him, they tend to think of sex as inherently tainted with evil, and as only for the purpose of having children. They follow Augustine's teaching on the existence of a state of refining by fire after death, called Purgatory; and they stress the authority of the organized church. Throughout most of their history, they have also followed his lead in asserting the power of the church to compel belief, and even the use of the government to enforce this authority. Augustine's own monastic life, which he considered to be a better way to follow Christ, strengthened the dichotomy of sacred and secular against which Martin Luther later objected so strongly, and which remains, though to a lesser degree, a hallmark of Roman Catholicism.

Protestants have largely emphasized Augustine's teaching on God's sovereign grace in our salvation, his insistence that faith precedes knowledge, and his reliance on the Bible for all of his theology. They have developed his insistence upon the necessity of faith in the word of God when partaking of the Lord's Supper, as distinct from the ritualistic *ex opera operato* doctrine of Roman sacramentalism.

Most interpreters of Augustine see some weaknesses in his thinking, including his use of the allegorical method of

interpreting the Bible, which he learned from Ambrose. Christians generally do not now approve of state intervention to compel “orthodox” Christianity. Protestants also rejected his negative assessment of the study of the natural sciences.

In the end, however, Augustine is still held in very high esteem for his incomparable literary style, his brilliant exposition of Scripture, his breadth of knowledge, and his focus on love. As a man, he was known by those closest to him as an example of great humility. Though they considered him to be very holy, he was still confessing his sins on his deathbed. In my mind, that is his greatest legacy to us.

Augustine of Hippo: A Biography
by Peter Brown
A Review

I first read Peter Brown's magnificent *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* in 1974, while preparing to write my dissertation on Augustine's sermons on John's Gospel. Like everyone else, I was struck, even stunned, by the sheer brilliance of this detailed "life and times" of Augustine. Leaving virtually no stone unturned, Brown presented to us a truly great man whose life was bound up with the tumultuous events of the late Roman Empire, and whose career – especially his writings – both transformed that world and laid the foundation for Western civilization.

Peter Brown painted a rich, even lush, portrait of Augustine's times; showed him striving to refute the errors of the Manichees, Donatists, Pelagians, and pagans; followed him through his daily routine of preaching, counseling, teaching, and mediating innumerable lawsuits. He integrated Augustine's writings and sermons with his own role as a bishop, the conflicts of the period, and the inner life of his soul. All in all, it was – and remains – a justly-famous work of biography, written with exquisite beauty and elegance.

Alas, Augustine's terrible mistakes were presented alongside his powerful achievements; above all was his growing willingness to use force against the Donatists. Admirers of Augustine must face the enormity of his error in turning to the government to crush theological opponents, even if his reasons, which we must take at face value as sincere, were theological.

Aside from teaching a course on Augustine's thought in 1976 and giving a public lecture in Taiwan on the *Confessions* in 1981, I largely put aside Augustine for about twenty years. In the early 1990s, I decided to try to finish the *City of God* – except for the long refutation of paganism as represented by Varro. A marvelous compendium of his writings on grace (*The Triumph of Grace: Augustine's writings on Salvation*, edited by N.R. Needham) convinced me again that Augustine's doctrine of predestination was not, as Brown had argued, "the departure of a tired old man from the views of an earlier, 'better' self."[53]

Then came a re-reading of the *Confessions*, surely one of the most exalted literary achievements of human history. *On Christian Doctrine*, the lens through which I had studied Augustine's sermons, followed, then the *Enchiridion*. Now I am working slowly through *On the Trinity*, which challenges the reader to wrestle with the theological profundities of the relationships among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the one Godhead. On every page, you are confronted with a towering genius whose mind must find solutions to virtually insoluble conundrums.

In that context, I obtained and read the second edition, with an epilogue, of Brown's now-classic work. All the delight and awe of my first encounter with the book returned; I could hardly put it down, eager to see what the Epilogue would bring.

---

53. Brown, 466.

The first time I read his biography, I was bothered by Brown's psychological reading of Augustine, which seemed to me to ignore the biblical fountain from which his theology flowed. I wondered, too, whether Platonism – or, rather, Neo-Platonism – had really continued to permeate Augustine's thought. Most importantly, I could not agree with his assessment of Augustine's views on sin and grace, including his teaching on predestination.

Imagine my delight when, in the second and last part of the Epilogue, "New Directions," Brown himself admits how his earlier reading had been the product of the psychology-obsessed climate of the Sixties, when the book was first penned. He now believes that the core of Augustine's theological structure remained pretty solid throughout his career as a bishop (following the earliest period after his conversion), and Brown sees that the doctrines of grace were meant to convince ordinary believers that they, too, could be "elect," like the heroic martyrs whose feasts they celebrated. God's mercy was available to all, freely, and would carry common Christians through their lives and into eternity.

Brown's earlier understanding of the role of Neo-Platonism in Augustine's thought has now been replaced by his belief that this pagan philosophy had been dramatically altered by Augustine, who replaced wonder at the universe with adoration for the Maker of this glorious world. Even Augustine's lamentably negative attitude towards sex within marriage as for procreation only is shown by Brown to have been relatively *liberal* in his time!

Much more could be said in praise of this new edition. Indeed, I wish I could include long quotes from the Epilogue; Brown's prose has lost none of its power and elegance. He has spotted and corrected some of the major weaknesses in the earlier work and has given us an example of a truly humble scholar, a worthy biographer of one of history's most influential figures.

Roger Olson on Augustine: A Critique

Robert Olson's history of Christian theology in *The Story of Christian Theology* has much to offer. Well-written, clear, and mostly accurate, it surveys the development of Christian theology from the early church to the twentieth century.

In this chapter, I want to point out and briefly discuss what, for me, is the main problem with this otherwise helpful volume. This fault is so serious that it vitiates a great deal of Olson's project.

Specifically, his treatment of Augustine suffers from the same bias that blemishes his engagement with other theologians whose doctrines of God, providence, salvation, and the Christian life might be called "Augustinian," or, in more recent terminology, "Reformed." Whenever he turns his attention to these thinkers, he loses much of his usual balance, objectivity, and fairness.

Augustine

Olson's exposition of Augustine's major theological works is clear and reasonably fair – until he begins to evaluate Augustine's doctrine of salvation (soteriology). At this point, as elsewhere in this volume and in his writings, Olson's commitment to Arminian theology seems to override his considerable learning and gift for succinct and balanced exposition of different theological positions.

Rhetorical devices and false claims

Instead, he cannot resist the temptation to engage in cheap rhetorical devices, like only quoting critics, not supporters,

of Augustine's views and suggesting that Augustine's idea of God's sovereignty derives from Roman imperial totalitarianism.[54]

He describes Augustine's "monergistic ideas of providence and salvation in which God is the sole active agent and energy and humans . . . are tools and instruments of God's grace or wrath," in ways that those who agree with Augustine would not.[55] He makes the broad and questionable claim that "Neo-Platonism . . . shaped his own subsequent thinking about God and God's relationship with the world," as if the Bible did not play the dominant role in Augustine's thoughts about God.[56]

In treating the outlines of Augustine's response to Pelagius, Olson trots out three old canards concerning Augustine's use of Romans to expound his doctrines of grace: 1. Augustine "did not read Greek," (2) he "used a very poor Latin translation of Romans," namely, the *Itala*; (3) this version "mistranslated [Romans 5:12] to read *in quo omnes peccaverunt*, or "in whom [that is Adam] all sinned," rather than "in that" all sinned.[57]

In response, let me say that
(1) We cannot be sure that Augustine did not read Greek. We know from the *Confessions* that he did not enjoy the study of Greek as a boy, but that does not mean that he did not learn anything from his early schooling or that he did not build on this knowledge in later years. On the other

54. Olson, 256.
55. Olson, 256.
56. Olson, 261.
57. Olson, 272.

hand, in *On Christian Doctrine* he states categorically that Christian preachers ought to learn both Hebrew and Greek, so that they can compare various Latin translations against the original languages, and his entire discussion of how such use of the original languages assumes that he had at least some knowledge of Greek.[58] In the *City of God*, Augustine demonstrates at least some knowledge of both Greek and Hebrew several times.[59] Augustine was one of the most learned men in the western Roman Empire. Further, we know that he regularly consulted the Septuagint "in order to correct or to evaluate its Latin versions."[60] We simply cannot dismiss his biblical exegesis on the problematic supposition that he "did not read Greek."

(2) Yes, as he explains in the section of *On Christian Doctrine* to which I referred above, Augustine preferred the *Itala*, because it tried to translate word-for-word, but he later made use of Jerome's *Vulgate*. Furthermore, Olson's reference to this inferior translation is vitiated by the fact that Jerome's very learned translation also reads, "*in quo*" in Romans 5:12, and no one can accuse Jerome of not knowing his Greek. Perhaps it is Olson who does not know enough to spot a false charge against someone whose theology he does not like.

---

58. St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book Two, 19-22. Translated by D.W. Robertson, Jr. The Library of Christian Arts, 46-50. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill: 1958.
59. See for example, xx., 23, and xx.30. St. Augustine, *City of God*. Translated by Marcus Dods, D.D, 748, 760. New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1950.
60. C. Kannengiesser, "Augustine of Hippo." In *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, edited by Donald K. McKim, 138. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007.

(3) Yes, the Greek of Romans 5:12 might better be translated, "in that," or "because," but (a) this point can be argued; and (b) much more importantly, and as even Olson casually points out and then simply disregards, "Augustine would argue that the entirety of Romans 5 and of the epistle to the Romans and the very gospel itself teach that we humans are all born of Adam's race and therefore inherits his guilt and corruption."[61] I shall return to this crucial point later.

So, the bit about an incorrect translation in an inferior Latin version of the Bible was irrelevant for Olson's argument, though it fits his pattern of employing rhetoric to hide a weak argument.

Is *Concerning the Nature of Good* Augustine's main book against the Manichaeans? Or was it *Answer to Faustus, A Manichean*? Perhaps that is a subjective judgment, but Olson's choice allows him to emphasize Augustine's use of Neo-Platonic philosophy to address the problem of evil, rather than acknowledging the powerful case for a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, which the Manichaeans rejected as depicting an evil demigod.[62]

Olson rightly says that "Augustine was reluctant to attribute sin and evil to God, but the inner logic of his overall theology moves in that direction."[63] Speaking of Augustine's teaching on "double predestination," Olson

---

61. Olson, 272.
62. For a very helpful discussion of this work, see Michael Levering, *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works*, 47. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
63. Olson, 274.

correctly says, “Why does God not save all? Augustine said that ‘the reason why one person is assisted by grace and another is not helped, must be referred to the secret judgments of God.’”[64] Later, Olson complains, “Augustine came right up against the ultimate questions raised by his monergism and flew into mystery.”[65]

Now, Olson had noted the same refuge in “mystery” with regard to the problem of evil, without comment.[66] Likewise, he noted that, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, “Like the Cappadocian fathers, he [Augustine] acknowledged mystery.”[67] In both these cases, “mystery” seems to be acceptable to Olson. But not with the question of why God saves some and not others. This, he claims, “raises the question of God’s goodness to an intense pitch.”[68]

He terms Augustine’s doctrine of free will, “determinism,” something with which no “Augustinian” theologian would ever agree. Olson’s defines freedom of the will as “the ability to do otherwise,” sometimes called, “the freedom of contrary choice.” He remarks, “Apparently he could not conceive of a self-limitation of God’s power such that God could allow free creatures to do what is against his own perfect will.”[69]

---

64. Olson, 274.
65. Olson, 276.
66. Olson, 263.
67. Olson, 261. He had earlier also defended the fourth-century fathers for trying to protect the mystery of the gospel and the God of the gospel from false rationalization” (174).
68. Olson, 275.
69. Olson, 276.

Olson agrees with T. Kermit Scott, who believes that "the key to understanding Augustine is his obsession with the absolute and unconditional power of God," and that "'the omnipotence doctrine is the heart of Augustine's imperial myth.'"[70]

Note the recourse to rhetoric here. It is one of Olson's favorite devices when dealing with theologians whom he doesn't like. Words like "determinism," "obsession," and "imperial myth" carry negative connotations that seem, at least to Olson, to suffice in degrading the stature of theological adversaries.

My criticism of Olson's discussion of Augustine's teachings on grace stem not only from the pervasive use of cheap rhetorical tricks, including false statements, however.

Questionable arguments

The second major problem I have with Olson's chapter on Augustine is that he employs questionable arguments. Although he deserves credit for providing a reasonably fair description of Augustine's views – as, for example, when he says that Augustine "was a pessimist about humanity, including his own, and an optimist about grace" – he employs problematic arguments in attacking the African theologian's "monergism."

Supposed reliance on Neo-Platonist philosophy

The problem of evil: First, in discussing Augustine's treatment of the problem of evil, he correctly states that reading books by Neo-Platonists freed him from the notion

70. Olson, 275.

that evil is a substance. Olson also observes that the Cappadocian father Gregory of Nyssa had also "discovered and taught that "evil is not a substance but the absence of the good." Then Olson states that "Neo-Platonism – a pagan philosophy – gave him one of the most important keys to unlock the door that opened onto his mother's religious faith."[71]

By emphasizing that Neo-Platonism was a pagan philosophy, Olson implicitly argues that Augustine's treatment of the problem of evil, and thus of God's sovereignty over all things, including salvation for humans, rested upon pagan philosophical arguments, not the Bible.

Aside from that rhetorical ploy, three things stand out here: First, Olson does not criticize Gregory of Nyssa for holding views similar to those of the Neo-Platonists, but he does fault Augustine for agreeing with their view of evil. That is unfair. He states that Gregory of Nyssa had read both Scripture and "the writings of the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, those mystical pagan philosophers whose beliefs seemed so compatible with Christianity to many fourth- and fifth-century church fathers. Gregory soaked in their message about the absolute unity, spirituality and transcendence of God and sought to combine the best of it with his Christian reflections on the Trinity and attributes of God."[72] In fact, his "theological writings make greater and more profound use of Greek philosophy than do those

71. Olson, 257.
72. Olson, 179.

of the other two Cappadocian fathers."[73] In short, what Olson approves of in Gregory of Nyssa he criticizes (unfairly, as we shall see) in Augustine.[74]

Second, he fails to note that it is one thing to use one non-biblical philosophical system to refute another; that is, to see the flaws of Manicheism through the analysis of Neo-Platonism. It is quite another to build one's theology of God and salvation on a pagan philosophy.

---

73. Olson, 179. We should note that the precise influence of Neo-Platonism upon even Gregory has been questioned in an article that also warns us against a facile use of the title "Neo-Platonism" to describe the views of any of the fourth-century fathers. See Rist, John. "On the Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa." *Hermathena*, no. 169 (2000): 129–151. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23041325. Accessed 26 May 2020. But that is not the question here. What matters is that Olson likes Gregory of Nyssa and not Augustine of Hippo, and applies different standards when evaluating their thought.

74. Following Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great held that God is "completely incomprehensible and ineffable in essence – beyond all human knowing except in mystical experience" (180). This idea became a staple in Christian theology, even to the present. Carl F. H. Henry, in *God, Revelation and Authority* demonstrated the self-contradictory and unbiblical nature of this belief. First: If God is completely incomprehensible, how can we know this? By definition, we cannot know anything about God's essence, even that he is (as alleged) incomprehensible. Second, the Bible is filled with statements about God's inner nature, his being, like "God is love," and "God is light." Henry shows that God's attributes are inseparable from his essence, and that claiming that God's essence is unknowable both denies Scripture and separates his being from his attributes in a way that is unbiblical. None of this seems to occur to Olson. Further, though all Christian theologians assert that God, being infinite, is in some ways incomprehensible to humans, we must distinguish between incomprehensibility and ineffability, which the theologians whom Olson admires do not. The common saying is that though we cannot know God fully, we can know him truly, and we can speak truly about what he has revealed of himself.

Although Olson is formally correct to note the role of the Neo-Platonic critique of the substance theory of evil in Augustine's abandonment of Manicheism, he is implying too much about the rest of Augustine's theology here. Neo-Platonism's spiritual view of good and evil removed an obstacle to Augustine's conversion to his mother's faith; that is true. It played a "negative" or preparatory role in his spiritual journey. That is all we should infer from Augustine's use of a "pagan philosophy," however.

Finally, Olson fully approves of "the extrabiblical and somewhat philosophical language such as *homoousios"* in formulating the doctrine of the Trinity.[75] His criticism of Augustine for seeing that the Neo-Platonists were right about the non-material nature of evil is thus inconsistent with his earlier acceptance of some use of non-biblical and "philosophical" terms for theological construction, which is more than Augustine did with his doctrines of grace.[76] In other words, his argument against the de-constructive role of Neo-Platonism in freeing Augustine from Manicheism is self-contradictory.

Other doctrines: Olson asserts that Augustine not only used Neo-Platonic ideas as "an ally and a weapon" against the Manichean view of evil but that "Neo-Platonism in turn shaped his own subsequent thinking about God and God's relationship with the world."[77] He does not develop that argument in his extended discussion of Augustine's teaching on grace and free will, but this introductory

75. Olson, 174.
76. He also accepts the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* as valid tools for defining the nature of the Trinity (175, 179-80).
77. Olson, 261.

statement leads us to read all that he later says about Augustine's theology of salvation as if it were built upon Neo-Platonic concepts.

The influence of Neo-Platonism upon Augustine is a complicated and controversial subject.[78] For one thing, Augustine's theology developed over time, as Olson admits. Against the Manicheans, he affirmed the reality of free will; against the Pelagians, he denied that humans have the freedom to choose God and do what is good.

Furthermore, we must ask what "Neo-Platonism" might mean for any given passage in Augustine's theological corpus. There were varieties of Neo-Platonic thought, as expressed in the writings of its greatest exponents, Porphyry and Plotinus.

So, when Olson claims that Augustine's doctrine of God and his relationship with the world was shaped by Neo-Platonism, he not only fails to explain that charge but also fails to distinguish among the different stages of Augustine's theological development, and among the various strands of Neo-Platonism.

His fundamental claim, therefore, that Augustine's doctrine of God and his relations to humans depended on Neo-Platonism is invalid, because it is unclear and unproven.

Omission of Scripture: Obviously, in telling the story of Christian theology Olson had to make countless choices.

---

78. For a useful summary, see Mark J. Edwards, "Neoplatonism." In *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 588-591. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

He could not say everything about every theologian. One major choice was to omit the appeals to Scripture employed by theologians to support their teachings. We can understand that, to some degree, but Olson's overall treatment of Augustine's doctrines of God and of salvation suffers from two major flaws.

First, as we have noted, he criticizes Augustine's interpretation of Romans 5:12 as based on an inferior Latin translation. Though, as we saw, Olson admits that Augustine insisted that the entire flow of Romans 5 rests upon Adam as, in some sense, the federal head of the human race, he virtually ignores this essential biblical grounding for Augustine's doctrines of original sin and of salvation by God's grace in Christ.

Thus, the only biblical passage deployed by Augustine that Olson chooses to discuss is treated in such a way as to make Augustine seem like an incompetent interpreter of Scripture. Augustine was guilty of allegorical interpretation, to be sure, but when he was seeking to expound the literal meaning of the Bible, he was superbly thorough and penetrating.

Second, in framing the debate about free will largely in terms of whether freedom is defined as the ability to do what we want, as Augustine believed, or the freedom to do otherwise, as supporters of Pelagius and later the Arminians (including Olson) insisted. That is partly true, of course, but it makes the controversy primarily a philosophical one. Posed that way, the verdict must be – as Olson implies – that Augustine's philosophy determined his theology. And, as we have seen, he has affirmed that

Augustine's philosophy came from a pagan system, Neo-Platonism.

Even a casual reading of Augustine's later works composed during the Pelagian controversy will reveal that Augustine based his theology of salvation by God's sovereign grace squarely upon the Scriptures. He quotes or exegetes a variety of biblical passages that shaped his conclusions. Notably – and this is crucial for our evaluation of Olson – Augustine does not construct his doctrine of grace on the foundation of philosophy.[79]

Conclusion

Though Olson does give a reasonably accurate of Augustine's theology, by cheap rhetorical devices and invalid arguments, he prejudices the reader against Augustine's doctrines of grace.

We see this approach later in his discussions of other "Augustinian" theologians, including Zwingli, Luther, Calvin, and Carl Henry. In every case, Olson deploys clever rhetoric, incomplete exposition, and invalid reasoning to negate "Augustinian" doctrines of God and of salvation. In other words, his otherwise outstanding ability to tell the story of theology with clarity and winsomeness falls victim to his deeply held Arminianism.

---

79. For definitive and overwhelming proof of this assertion, see N.R. Needham, *The Triumph of Grace: Augustine's Writings on Salvation*. London: Grace Publications Trust, 2000.

Augustine On the Education of a Preacher

(First published in the *Evangelical Review of Theology*. Volume 5. Number 2. October 1981. Pages 298-293)

Printed with permission

St. Augustine's sermons taken down in shorthand and later published influenced the preaching and theological education in the Church for 1000 years. His reflections on how to study the Bible still have a message for today. This article is the second part of a paper on Augustine's view of theological education. (Editor)

Among the most hotly-debated topics concerning theological education today, the content of the curriculum stands high. With more and more courses being compressed into the brief span of three years, we would do well once again to reconsider the question, "What exactly does the modern preacher need to know in order to expound the Scriptures?"

Augustine not only presided over what may be called the first real theological college, but he taught so well that the leadership of the North African church was almost monopolized by his students in later years. What does he have to tell us about the curriculum of such a school?

On Understanding the Bible

First of all, of course, comes knowledge of Bible content: "The first rule . . . is to know these books even if they are not understood, at least to read them or to memorize them,

or to make them not altogether unfamiliar to us." Presumably, this kind of approach lies behind the practice of many schools of requiring a rapid reading of the whole Bible at the beginning of theological training, followed immediately by general Bible survey and introduction courses.

Then follows a step which is likewise imitated today: "Then those things which are put openly in them either as precepts for living or as rules for believing are to be studied more diligently and more intelligently, for the more one learns about these things, the more capable of understanding he becomes." Could this be where our beginning Systematic Theology and Ethics courses originated? At least, the principle is the same.

Now comes the main theme of Book Two of *On Christian Doctrine* – which, we recall, may also be translated as "On Christian Education" or "On Theological Education." "Having become familiar with the language of the Divine Scriptures, we should turn to those obscure things which must be opened up and explained, so that we may take examples from those things that are manifest to illuminate those things which are obscure, bringing principles which are certain to bear on our doubts concerning those things which are not certain."

"There are two reasons why things written are not understood: they are obscured either by unknown or by ambiguous signs." Now Augustine has returned to his sign-terminology to furnish the outline for the next two books. He further divides signs into two classes: literal or figurative, and discusses how to understand "unknown

literal signs" first: "For (these) the sovereign remedy is a knowledge of languages." He goes on to say that for Latin-speaking (we would add English- or Chinese- or Japanese-, etc.) men, there is a need for a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, in order to refer to these originals whenever the translations of the Bible in the vernacular prove ambiguous.

Before turning to the Hebrew and Greek texts, Augustine recommends that we first compare the various translations available to us. As in his day the Latin translations were numerous, so in ours those in English abound. Other languages have many fewer renderings, but even Chinese offers a half-dozen translations of the New Testament, and only a few less for the Old.

While a multiplicity of translations causes some to despair, as Augustine says, "This situation would rather help than impede understanding if readers would only avoid negligence. For an inspection of various translations frequently makes obscure passages clear."

Naturally, some of these editions render the original more faithfully than others. When we have doubts about a certain translation, "we must either seek a knowledge of those languages from which Scripture is translated (into the vernacular) or we must consult the translations of those who translate word for word." These word-for-word translations are, of course, deficient in one important respect: they do not translate idioms from one tongue to another. (Augustine's discussion of the values of what we would call a "dynamic equivalence" translation merits attention even today.) Nevertheless, they are to be preferred "because by means of them we may test the truth or falsity

of those who have sought to translate meanings as well as words."

If an unknown word or expression meets us while we read the Bible, it is either in our own language or in the original Greek or Hebrew. If the latter, then "we must consult one who speaks those languages (this was written in a day when Jews and Greeks still spoke more or less biblical Hebrew and Greek), or learn them ourselves if we have leisure, or make a comparison of various translations." The phrase, "if we have leisure" expresses succinctly one of the chief arguments in favor of residential theological education: in no other way can one find the time to master these difficult languages (so the argument goes).

What if the unknown expression or word is one in our own language? The remedy is to "become familiar with them by reading and hearing them." Augustine suggests that we store up such unfamiliar items in our memory so that we can ask people more learned than ourselves to explain them. Another solution is to let the context illuminate such passages. Here, one might add, lies the justification for a careful knowledge of the Bible in our own tongue and an adequate understanding of that tongue! Thus, mastery of one's own language is as essential to understanding the Bible as is mastery of Hebrew or Greek – perhaps more so!

As an important aside, although we cannot agree with Augustine's naïve credence towards the story about the origin of the Septuagint, nevertheless his high estimation of the value of that primitive translation of the Old Testament finds an echo in the preface of most Greek New Testament lexicons and word-books: one can hardly understand why

the Greek Old Testament, so widely used in the Early Church, should be read so rarely today. Perhaps our theological curriculum should include courses not only in the Greek New Testament, but in the Septuagint as well.

Augustine has been talking about how to unravel the mysteries of unknown literal signs – words we don't recognize. Now he turns to unfamiliar figurative signs. These we should study "partly with reference to a knowledge of languages and partly with reference to a knowledge of things." For example, unless the Evangelist had told us that "Siloam" means "sent," we would not appreciate the significance of Jesus' telling the blind man to go wash in that particular pool. Likewise, a knowledge of the Hebrew language – or at least the ability to consult a lexicon – will let us in on the meaning of many Hebrew names. Augustine cites, for example, Adam, Eve, Abraham, Moses, Jerusalem, Sinai and others.

On the Use of the Allegorical Method

What does he mean when he advocates "a knowledge of things?" At this point the advocates of a grammatical-historical, literal exegesis will become a bit uncomfortable with our venerable author, for he demonstrates his love of what is now called the allegorical method. Before we dismiss him, however, let us at least hear him out.

Let us take just two examples, both based on habits of certain snakes. An ignorance of things makes figurative expressions obscure when we are ignorant of the natures of animals, or stones, or plants, or other things which are often used in the Scriptures for purposes of constructing

similitudes. Thus, the well-known fact that a serpent exposes its whole body in order to protect its head from those attacking it illustrates the sense of the Lord's admonition that we be wise like serpents. That is, for the sake of our head, which is Christ, we should offer our bodies to persecutors lest the Christian faith be in a manner killed in us, and in an effort to save our bodies we deny God. It is also said that the serpent, having forced its way through narrow openings, sheds its skin and renews its vigor. How well this conforms to our imitation of the wisdom of the serpent when we shed the "old man" as the Apostle says, and put on the "new"; and we shed it in narrow places, for the Lord directs us, "Enter ye in at the narrow gate."

We would, perhaps, question the suitability of using this particular saying for the purposes Augustine wishes (here the matter of context as a determining factor in interpretation enters the picture), but the fertile field of illustrations drawn from nature has been reaped by such diverse Bible teachers as Charles Spurgeon and Bill Gothard, and not without effect. Certainly, in any literary work, the impact of a simile will depend upon the reader's familiarity with the thing being held up for comparison.

Next, Augustine turns to an even more disputed department of exegesis: the meaning of numbers. At the very least, we must agree when he begins, "Certainly, a gifted and frank person cannot avoid wondering about the significance of the fact that Moses, Elias (Elijah), and the Lord Himself all fasted for forty days." Even when we doubt the certitude with which this and other numerical matters are solved for us (in this case, forty is said to teach that we are to live

chastely and continently in this temporal existence), we must heed his advice to investigate more carefully the significance of the numbers found in the Bible, especially since letters were used also as numbers.

For an understanding of the Psalms, Augustine suggests that we become acquainted with some things concerning music. For instance, the difference between the psaltery and the harp has been held to be significant by some writers. We might expand on this theme a bit by noting that in modern times the interpretation of Hebrew poetry has been enhanced by a fresh appreciation of the role of rhythm and parallelism in ancient Hebrew music.

On Truth in Nature and in Pagan Philosophy

At this point, Augustine introduces the vital question: Should a Christian learn from non-Christians? If so, what things are legitimate and useful for the Christian, especially the Christian exegete, to study? His treatment has relevance for the current debate of the ways in which the Christian message is to be "contextualized" in various cultural settings. Space permits only a brief review now, but the entire passage deserves careful study.

At the start, he enunciates the famous principle: "Every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's."

To further divide the kinds of things found among pagan teachings and customs, he observes that there are "things which men have themselves instituted," and "things which

they have seen to be firmly established or divinely ordained."

Of the things instituted by men, some are superstitious and are thus to be avoided. These include all types of idol-manufacture and worship as well as any king of prognostication, through magic or astrology. The current popularity of astrology in the West makes Augustine's devastating critique of that pseudo-science most useful.

Other than superstitious practices, human institutions include some extravagant and useless things such as the signs which actors use to express themselves, as well as much art and all literary fiction. The useful and necessary institutions are represented by dress distinctions, weights and measures, coinage and the like. "All this part of human institutions helpful to the necessary conduct of life is not to be shunned by the Christian; rather, as such institutions are needed, they are to be given sufficient notice and remembered."

Moving on to other useful branches of knowledge, a quick approbation of shorthand (widely used in taking down his sermons for later publication) precedes his strong commendation of the study of history, which "helps us a great deal in the understanding of the sacred books, even if we learn it outside of the Church as a part of our childhood education." By such a study, the idea that Jesus learned his doctrines from the Platonists becomes hard to believe, for example (although Augustine's belief that the Greeks learned the truth from Jews in Egypt is not now given credence by most scholars, it should not be laughed out of court; after all, Moses had been dead many hundreds of

years, and the Jews dispersed around the Mediterranean basin, long before Plato put pen to papyrus).

Editors of Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias will be happy to learn that Augustine, as mentioned before, placed a high priority upon knowing about such things as the locations of places, the nature of animals, trees, plants, stones and other objects. Naturally, the more we know about the world and human activities, the more complete will our understanding of the biblical writings be. Nevertheless, although the stars have fascinated mankind for millenia, they appear rarely in the Bible, and the exegete need know only a little about them. As for an understanding of such arts as carpentry, medicine, agriculture, navigation, dancing, wrestling and similar everyday phenomena, Augustine believed that we could pick up such knowledge along the way, so to speak, rather than making a special study of it. The scientific, industrial, and technological advances of recent years, along with urbanization, make this assumption less true than in his day.

Book Two concludes with mention of the three most highly valued fields of learning in Augustine's day: logic – what he calls "the science of disputation" – rhetoric, and philosophy. For our purposes, only a cursory glance at his evaluation of these will be needed, but – once again – the reader would do well to examine these pages himself, since Augustine's conclusions have profoundly affected subsequent Christian education and attitudes.

What is the value of logic? As a science, it was not invented, but "discovered in the nature of things." Wicked

men may make improper use of it, but defenders of God's truth can use this weapon to uncover fallacies in their opponents' reasoning. Some qualifications are in order however: "A knowledge of inference, definition, and division (the three branches of logic at that time) aids the understanding a great deal, provided that men do not make the mistake of thinking that they have learned the truth of the blessed life when they have learned them." Likewise, a knowledge of this science may breed an unwarranted pride in petty men, who are more delighted by these rules than by the truth itself.

As for rhetoric, he will treat this fully in Book Four. For the present, he simply affirms that "certain precepts for a more copious discourse, which make up what are called the rules of eloquence . . . are very true, even though they may be used to make falsehoods persuasive." As such, being inherent in nature rather than invented by men, they deserve our study.

Finally, the question of philosophy comes up. This topic had engaged the minds of Christian thinkers ever since Paul spoke at Athens and wrote to the Corinthian Christians. Augustine's momentous judgment can here be only summarized.

First of all, we should not fear the philosophers, but, like the children of Israel when leaving Egypt, we should take whatever of value is found among the pagans and convert it to our own use. This so-called "spoiling of the Egyptians" approach to philosophy has dominated much of Christianity's attitude to non-Christian thought since Augustine's time, with a few (significant) exceptions.

Moses' education "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" becomes the type for all future Christian intellectuals.

In closing, Augustine makes two comments which ought to be etched in bronze over every seminary entrance: First, he reminds us of the apostolic saying, "Knowledge puffs up; but charity builds up." Thus, no one can be saved apart from faith in Christ, no matter how learned that person may be.

Second, "the knowledge collected from the books of the pagans, although some of it is useful, is . . . little as compared with that derived from the Holy Scriptures. For whatever a man has learned elsewhere is censured there if it is harmful; if it is useful, it is found there . . . And . . . he will also find very abundantly things which are found nowhere else at all except as they are taught with the wonderful nobility and remarkable humility of the Holy Scriptures."
Amen.

Dr. "John Peace" teaches at an evangelical seminary in Taiwan.

Augustine's Doctrines of Grace: Are They Biblical? With an Appendix on the Ongoing Influence of Augustine's Soteriology

Introduction

Augustine of Hippo was "probably the greatest and most influential mind of the Christian church throughout its long history."[80] Augustine's vast corpus of writings discussed, in greater or lesser detail, an enormous range of ideas, including psychology, aesthetics, language, rhetoric,[81] education, history, philosophy, much of the Bible, and, of course, theology. In most of these fields, he set the parameters for the intellectual development of the West.[82] In Augustine, "we encounter what is probably the greatest and most influential mind of the Christian church throughout its long history."[83]

Although he was not the only early Christian theologian to write on God's grace in the salvation of mankind, he was by far the most influential, at least in the Western church. For fifteen hundred years, his distinctive teachings on different aspects of this crucial subject have formed and shaped Western theology. Indeed, Augustine has been called "the Doctor [Teacher] of Grace," because, first, his views on these topics have made such a profound and widespread impact on other theologians, and, second, Augustine's understanding of God's free grace in saving

---

80. McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 27.
81. On Augustine's rhetorical theory, see G. Wright Doyle, "Augustine's Sermonic Method."
82. For a sampling of the disciplines impacted by his thought, see Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, 1.95-98.
83. McGrath, 27.

people from sin lies at the core of his understanding of God and of the Scriptures.

"In Augustine of Hippo Western Christianity found its most influential spokesman, and the doctrine of grace its most articulate interpreter."[84] "The Latin Church was correct when it designated him not only a 'doctor of the church,' but specifically the 'doctor of grace.' For if there was a doctrinal accent that bound together most of what he said and wrote, it was divine grace."[85]

A word about the title and structure of this article

Because Augustine's teaching on salvation deals with several different topics, I speak of his "doctrines" of grace. The article will discuss these in the usual order. To many readers, "doctrines of grace" will evoke the traditional Reformed understanding of the sovereignty of God in our salvation, often summed up by the acronym "TULIP," which stands for Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and the Perseverance of the Saints. This article will deal with these as well as other crucial concepts, such as original sin and freedom of the will.

The subtitle: "Are they biblical?" reflects the ongoing criticisms of Augustine's soteriology in his time and down to the present. While some object to Augustine's views on philosophical grounds, others maintain that he errs in his exegesis of Scripture.

---

84. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 292.
85. Pelikan, 294.

Both parts of this criticism are inaccurate.[86]

I hope to show, first, that Augustine derived his soteriology from Scripture and, second, that his doctrines reflect exegesis that is both careful and sound.

In the process, I also hope to offer evidence that Augustine's doctrines of grace do not come from philosophical commitments, especially Neo-Platonism, as some have claimed, including Alexander Chow[87] and Roger E. Olson.[88] Augustine's relationship to Neo-Platonism was complicated, but this article will show that his doctrine of salvation derived from his understanding of the Bible.[89]

The result is a very long article, for which I beg your indulgence.

The paper consists almost entirely of quotations from Augustine, along with comments by a few scholars of Augustine. The scholarship on this topic is vast, but because of the COVID19 pandemic, I was not able to

---

86. See, for example, Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 272; Alexander Chow, *Theosis*, 133. For critiques of Olson and Chow, see the references in notes 8 and 9, below.
87. See Alexander Chow, *Theosis*, 61, 170. For a detailed critique of Chow's book, see https://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/2015/04/28/theosis-sino-christian-theology-and-the-second-chinese-enlightenment-part-ii.
88. Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 257, 261–62. For a refutation of Olson's charges, see https://www.academia.edu/43206691/Roger_Olson_on_Augustine_A_Critique.
89. On Augustine and Neo-Platonism, see Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, 94–98.

access other materials in nearby libraries. I believe, nevertheless, that these selections are representative both of Augustine's thought and of the findings of leading scholars. Thus, this article is more of a study than an essay. I am trying to let Augustine and a few of his interpreters speak for themselves and to provide students of Augustine with a useful resource.

Citations of Augustine's writings in the notes will follow the format used in the different books that I consulted; I have not tried to impose uniformity. For the sake of simplicity, after the first reference, I will generally give only the author's last name; full publication information will be found in the bibliography at the end of the article. Where no author is named, the quotation comes from Augustine's works.

I am ashamed to say that a few quotations lack proper citation. Author or work is sometimes not given, having been somehow lost in the transfer of my notes to this draft. If you can supply this information, I'll be very grateful!

Order of presentation

After discussions of the sources for Augustine's soteriology and of the Pelagian controversy, quotations from Augustine will follow this order: Original Sin; Free Will; Grace; Election; Predestination; The Atonement; New Life in Christ; Perseverance; Reprobation; Answers to Common Questions and Objections; Conclusion. A brief appendix on the continuing influence of Augustine's doctrines of grace precedes the bibliography.

Since, in Augustine's mind, these topics were all inter-related, you will find some overlap and mixing of categories. The general meaning should be clear, however.

Sources of Augustine's Soteriology

Neoplatonism?

In addition to Olson and Chow, a number of notable scholars have averred that that Augustine's doctrines of grace flowed from pagan philosophical sources.

J. P. Burns says that his view of grace derived from Neo-Platonic views of a created order in which "being, power, and even operation are continuously communicated from the highest to the lower levels of a hierarchically ordered universe."[90] Peter Brown alleges that Augustine's view of God "still remained the ineffable God of the New-Platonic mystic."[91] Brown also says that Augustine agreed with the Manichees in some respect in seeing God as Savior.[92] Jonathan Hill claims that his views came from (1) Platonism, and (2) Ancient theories of genetics.[93] And also from his Manichean background: "His strong, even cruel doctrine of original sin and universal guilt and the inescapable power of the sinful impulse is highly reminiscent of the Manichean belief in the substantial power of evil."[94]

Others have disagreed with this position.

---

90. Burns, "Grace," 391.
91. Peter Brown, *Augustine,* 396.
92. Peter Brown, 387.
93. Hill, 89–90.
94. Hill, 90.

Colin Brown, for example, says that though Augustine was "deeply influenced by Platonism and Neoplatonism, . . . [he] was never simply a Platonist. Centuries later, Thomas Aquinas observed that 'Augustine, who was steeped in the doctrines of the Platonists, whenever he found anything in their statements consistent with the Faith he accepted it, but amended what he found hostile.' . . . Augustine's approach was not an attempt to build an edifice of Christian theology on either Platonic or Neoplatonic foundations."[95]

Plotinus may have "exercised a significant influence on the conversion and thought of Augustine."[96] But Augustine distinguished between what in Plotinus was in accordance with the Scriptures and what was not.[97]

In several of his works, Augustine explicitly criticizes the teachings of the Platonists.[98]

His own experience

In refuting the Pelagian heresy, Augustine wrote out of the depths of his heart: "First and foremost, because no subject gives me greater pleasure. For what ought to be more attractive to us sick men, than grace, grace by which we are healed; for us lazy men, than grace, grace by which we are

95. Colin Brown, 98. The quotation from Aquinas comes from *Summa Theologiae* I.Q. 4 art. 5 (Blackfriars Edition 12:31).
96. Cooper, *Augustine*, 16.
97. Cooper, 124–130.
98. Cavadini, "God's Eternal Knowledge According to Augustine," 38–59.

stirred up; for us men longing to act, than grace, by which we are helped?"[99]

Before that, in 396, meditating on 1 Corinthians 4:7, he had come to believe in the "utter dependence of the human will upon grace."[100] This underlies his personal narrative in the *Confessions*. Augustine's doctrine of human nature sprang "like his *Confessions*, from a profound sense of his own guilt."[101]

Paul and the Rest of Scripture

Some scholars charge that Augustine misunderstood, or at least misinterpreted, Romans 5:12-21. Jonathan Hill, for example, asserts that the "notion that all of Adam's descendants actually share his guilt for that first sin was new. It is not to be found in Romans 5, the source passage for the doctrine."[102]

Elsewhere, however, Hill admits that "Augustine draws his theology of salvation from Romans 6, where Paul speaks of dying with Christ and being raised with him" if we trust in him.[103]

Jaroslav Pelikan writes: "The ancestry of Augustine's doctrine on the sovereignty of the God of grace cannot be ascribed to Plotinus or Porphyry without taking into

99. *Ep*. 186, XI, 39. Quoted in Peter Brown, 356.
100. Bonner, "Anti-Pelagian Works," 41.
101. Hill, *History of Christian Thought*, 88. See also Paula Fredriksen, "Paul."
102. Hill, 89.
103. Hill, 91.

account the biblical view of God as Creator, which formed a major preoccupation of his thought."[104]

Augustine believed that the priority of grace is taught throughout the Bible. For example, Jeremiah 17:5 says, "Cursed is the man who trusts in himself." Augustine believes that "those who are mature in Christ . . . will recognize the truth of this statement."[105]

Christian tradition

In his authoritative biography of Augustine, Peter Brown asserts: "Previously, as in *On the Trinity*, Augustine could speculate on deep matters. Now, with the challenge of Pelagianism, this speculation suddenly comes to a halt."[106] Instead, he returned to what he thought was the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church.

Augustine saw his teaching as in keeping with church tradition, "validated for him personally by an illumination experienced at the beginning of his episcopate when writing to Simplicianus of Milan, which had extinguished all previous doubts and concessions, leaving him unalterably convinced of God's omnipotence and the utter incapacity of human nature, even in paradise before the fall, to do anything good without the enabling assistance of grace."[107]

---

104. Pelikan, 296.
105. Levering, *Theology of Augustine*, 72.
106. Peter Brown, 355.
107. Bonner, 41.

"The Pelagian controversy was much more than Augustine's personal battle with Pelagius. Augustine saw himself and was the spokesman for North African theology."[108] He also believed that he was reflecting the teachings of earlier theologians, including those who wrote in Greek. In his long and heated correspondence with Julian of Eclanum, Augustine "argued that he was defending the apostolic tradition and quoted long passages from venerable predecessors and contemporaries, such as Cyprian, Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom."[109]

This faith was expressed by African bishops in Carthage in 411 and later at a Pan-African synod of Carthage in 418. They affirmed that Adam's sin affected all who followed him. In his controversy with the Pelagians, Augustine does "amass citations from Cyprian and Ambrose in the first place, and then from a plethora of Latin and Greek Fathers . . . Augustine's concern is to show his critics that he was not being innovative and that he shares the same understanding of the Scriptures as those he cites."[110]

Augustine was a very creative theologian, of course, and he did not hesitate to draw out "new" implications of orthodox doctrines. "What was distinctive about his version of the creed was his awareness of the sovereignty of divine power and divine grace . . ."[111]

---

108. Harmless, *Augustine in His Own Words*, 411.
109. Harmless, 408.
110. Madec, "Christian Influences," in *Augustine Through the Ages,* 155.
111. Pelikan, 297.

Augustine's ideas resonated with pious Christians, but "The Pelagian movement . . . rested firmly on a bed rock of the old ethical ideals of paganism, especially on Stoicism."[112]

The Scriptures

Previously, most Christian theologians had "adopted Greek ideas of divine justice for explaining God's action in Christ," teaching that "God punishes and withholds necessary or effective assistance according to the sinful intentions and actions of individual creatures."[113] Augustine, however, supported his doctrines of grace by appealing to Scripture, not human logic.

Following Ambrosiaster's commentary on Romans 5:12, Augustine "insisted that 'all men are understood to have sinned in that first man because all men were in him when he sinned.'"[114]

Augustine derives his teaching on grace "even more from his sustained reflection on the Scriptures – especially but not exclusively the Pauline letters – and on the practices of the Christian church in North Africa. In the Bible Augustine discovered not only a history of divine operation . . . but the gratuity and efficacy of that grace."[115]

Paula Fredriksen, though critical of Augustine, does recognize that Augustine drew his doctrines of grace from

---

112. Peter Brown, 369.
113. Burns, 394.
114. Pelikan, 299; see also William Mann, "Augustine on evil and original sin," 98–107.
115. Burns, 392.

the Scriptures: "Paul was a lifelong source of theological inspiration for Augustine . . . Much of Western Christian thought can be seen as one long response to Augustine's Paul."[116]

"In his Romans commentary of 394/395 . . . Augustine presented the four stages of humans: *ante legem*, *sub lege*, *sub gratis*, and *in pace*."[117] The idea and wording, *massa peccati*, comes from Romans 9:21. Paula Fredriksen says that Augustine based his mature understanding of conversion as an act of God in us on the biography of Paul in Acts.

Did Augustine know Greek?

Modern critics of Augustine's exegesis, especially his use of Romans 5:12, often charge that he based his entire theology on an inaccurate Latin translation of the Greek, and that, furthermore, he knew so little Greek that he could understand neither the New Testament nor the Greek fathers.[118]

Jonathan Hill, for example, charges Augustine with misrepresenting the Trinitarian views of the Eastern theologians because "[h]is Greek was too bad for him to realize that although hints of the doctrine could be found in some Greek writers, it was not really there."[119]

---

116. Fredriksen, "Paul," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, 621.
117. Fredriksen, 622.
118. See, for example, Fredriksen, 624; Roger Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 272.
119. Hill, 88.

On the other hand, Goulven Madec asserts, "One may think that Augustine, in spite of his distaste for Greek, was a good enough student to have known that language as well as a smart student in classics today would know Latin."[120] After all, "Ambrose had convinced him of the overwhelming richness of the Septuagint."[121]

On John 1:16, "And of His fullness we have all received," Augustine first quotes his Latin version, then corrects it to include the word, "and": "*and* grace for grace." He does so, "by a comparison of the Greek copies."[122]

"Although he had learned enough [Greek] to compare the authoritative Greek of the Bible with the Latin translation then in use, he hadn't the ability to read important philosophical or theological works in Greek. Later, however, the press of theological controversy forced him to bone up on his Greek to consult a medical treatise on some technical matters of biology relating to the transmission of original sin."[123] When a deacon asked him to produce a selection of quotations about various heresies, Augustine learned enough Greek to translate a short Greek text.[124]

The Pelagian Controversy

Augustine developed his understanding of God's grace in our salvation from his own experience, as recorded and

120. Madec, 152, quoting A. Solgnac, "Introduction" and "Notes complementaires," Bibliothèque Augustinienne, Oeuvres de Saint Augustine. Paris: Desclee, De Brower, 1949, 13:662.
121. Kannengiesser, "Augustine of Hippo," 380.
122. *Tractates on John*, 3, 8.
123. Cooper, 35.
124. Peter Brown, 415.

interpreted in the *Confessions*, and through his participation in the controversy over the doctrines of Pelagius and his followers, which roiled the church for several decades.[125] The Pelagian controversy was long and complicated.[126] In the course of it, Augustine wrote to and against Celestius, Pelagius, and Julian of Eclanum, and tried to respond to questions from some monks in Spain and North Africa.[127]

In this chapter, I will not rehearse the sequence of events or repeat the charges and questions of those who questioned Augustine's interpretation of the Scriptures. His distinctly anti-Pelagian works include *De peccatorum meritis*; *De perfectionae justitiae hominis*; *De spiritu et littera*, (412). *De natura et gratis*, (415); *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*; in the *Enchiridion*, the whole of Augustine's anti-Pelagian theology found expression in a general exposition of Christian doctrine."[128] Also *Letters* 190; 194; 166; *Against Julian*; Contra Julian opus imperfection (428–30). In *de anima et eius origine*, he said that, even if we can't figure out how the soul originated, Paul's statements in

---

125. By far the best biography is by Peter Brown. For some reflections on the revised edition of this magisterial work, see https://wrightdoyle.ghost.io/ghost/#/editor/post/5a8457781943130018 2b11e1.

126. For excellent summaries of this complex controversy, see Brown, *Augustine*, 340–410; Harmless, *Augustine in his Own Words*, 373, 446; Needham, *The Triumph of Grace*, 15–24; Eugene TeSelle, "Pelagius, Pelagianism," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 633–640.

127. In addition to his earlier work *Ad Simplicianum* (396–97), his anti-Pelagian works were: "Letter 194 to Sixtus (418), *De gratia et libero arbitrio* (426), *De correptione et gratia* (426), Letter 217 to Vitalis of Carthage (427), *De praedestinatione sanctorum* (429), *De dono perseverantiae* (429), and . . . *contra Julianum opus imperfectum* (428–30)." Mathijs Lamberigts, "Predestination," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 678.

128. Bonner, 45.

Romans 5:18 "[p]ersuaded him of the divine decrees and the damnation of unbaptized infants."[129]

"His opponents advocated a view that Augustine himself had once held – namely, that predestination depended on God's foreknowledge of the person's free act of faith. In *On the Predestination of the Saints*, however, Augustine argues that God's grace causes the free charitable actions by which we attain to eternal life," including faith.[130]

"The order of salvation depends upon God's decision from eternity whether to give grace to particular persons. By emphasizing the radical priority of the grace of the Holy Spirit, Augustine focuses the debate away from the difficulties caused by the fact that God does not predestine all persons – although Augustine readily acknowledges these difficulties – and toward the praise of God for curing our pride by his gift of love and thereby enabling our intimate participation in the trinitarian life."[131]

"At stake is whether we wish to stand before God as pagans or as followers of Jesus Christ. Given the finitude of the pagans' 'gods' and the pride of the philosophers, pagans can be said to adhere to Virgil's phrase, 'Each man has hope in himself.' By contrast, Christians recognize themselves as dependent entirely on God for existence and salvation."[132]

Original sin

---

129. Bonner, 46.
130. Levering, 71.
131. Levering, 71.
132. Levering, 72.

"In the first man . . . there existed the whole human nature, which was to be transmitted by the woman to posterity . . . and what man was made, not when created, but when he sinned and was punished, this he propagated, so far as the origin of sin and death are concerned."[133]

"For we were all in that one man, since we all were that one man who fell into sin . . . For . . . already the seminal nature was there from which we were to be propagated; and this being vitiated by sin, and bound by the chain of death, and justly condemned, man could not be born of man in any other state."[134]

"'We were all in Adam, and when he perished, we all perished' (Romans 5:12). But you say that no one should have perished because of someone else's sin. It is true that Adam's sin was the sin of another person, but he is our ancestor, and for this reason his sins are ours, by the law of insemination and reproduction."[135]

As I noted earlier, many scholars have criticized Augustine for this interpretation of Romans 5:12. If we look at the passage as a whole, however, we see that (1) Paul contrasts mankind according to their being "in" Adam or "in" Christ, and (2) Both Adam and Paul represent those who are "in" them, with the result that the condemnation and consequent death of Adam implicates all of mankind, and the obedience and righteousness of Christ, leading to grace and

133. *City of God,* 13.4, 414.
134. *City of God,* 13.15, 422–23.
135. *Against Julian,* 1.48. Quoted in Gerald Bray, *We Believe in One God,* 108.

life, comes to all who are "in" him, that is, to all who are "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1).

In other words, our incorporation into Adam resulted not only in sharing the penalty of death with him, as Orthodox theologians teach, but also in our being considered, reckoned, and even, somehow, constituted, sinners (5:12, 18, 19). Otherwise, how could otherwise "sinless" people be condemned to death, which is the penalty for sin (5:12, 14-15, 17, 21). Even Roger Olson admits that "Augustine would argue that the entirety of Romans 5 and of the epistle to the Romans and the very gospel itself teach that we humans are all born of Adam's race and therefore inherit his guilt and corruption."[136]

As a result of the Fall, "the fault through which it was committed has not yet been completely healed . . . Because of this injury, people are now increasingly in a bad condition and, through weakness or blindness, commit more sins."[137]

Everyone is born spiritually blind. "For this blindness fell upon the first man through sin, and he is the origin from which we all spring, not only in respect to death, but also of unrighteousness. For unbelief is blindness and faith is enlightenment; whom did Christ find a believer when he came?"[138]

"We also were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). "If we were 'children of wrath,' then we were children

136. Olson, 272.
137. *On Nature and Grace*, 30.34. Quoted in Harmless, 405.
138. *Sermons on John*, 44:1. Quoted in Needham, 60.

of vengeance, children of punishment, children of hell. And how is this 'by nature,' except that through the first man's sin, moral evil took root in our human nature itself?"[139]

"And so the human race was lying under a just condemnation, and all men were the children of wrath." Here Augustine quotes Job 14:1, John 3:36, and Ephesians 2:3: "We were by nature the children of wrath, even as the others."[140]

Augustine also cites 1 Corinthians 15:22, "Just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" to demonstrate that all of humanity "died" when Adam sinned.[141]

"For people are not without sin, whether the sin they contracted originally or sins they added through their own misconduct. 'For all have sinned,' either in Adam or in themselves, 'and are deprived of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23)."[142]

In the *Enchiridion,* 49–51, Augustine writes of how people are condemned in Adam, justified in Christ. He quotes Romans 5:16. On Adam's sin: "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification." Augustine writes: "For it is evident that the

---

139. *Sermons on John,* 44:1. Quoted in Needham, 60. See also *On Nature and Grace,* 3.3.
140. *Enchiridion,* 33.
141. *Letter,* 176. Cited in Harmless, 411.
142. *On Nature and Grace,* 4.4. Quoted in Harmless, 403.

one sin which we bring with us by nature would, even if it stood alone, bring us under condemnation; but the free gift justifies man from many offenses; for each man, in addition to the one sin which, in common with all his kind, he brings with him by nature, has committed many sins that are strictly his own."[143]

"But what he says a little after, 'Therefore, as by the offense of one [man] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [man, that is, Christ], the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life,' shows clearly enough that there is no one born of Adam but is subject to condemnation, and that no one, unless he be new born [that is, born again] in Christ, is freed from condemnation."[144]

Pelagians claimed that we are only condemned for our own sins, not those of Adam, and that, in theory at least, one could become just by his own nature and free will. Augustine replies, "If they say he could have, then see what amounts to rendering the cross of Christ void (1 Cor. 1:17): to contend that without the cross anyone can be justified by the law of nature and choice of his will. And so we would be able to say, 'Then Christ died in vain' (Gal. 2:21), for this [salvation by one's nature and free will] would be something that everyone could do, even if Christ had not died."[145]

Sin

---

143. *Enchiridion,* 49.
144. *Enchiridion,* 51.
145. *On Nature and Grace,* 9:10. Quoted in Harmless, 404–405.

"Eternal punishment seems hard and unjust to human perceptions, because in the weakness of our mortal condition there is lacking that highest and purest wisdom by which it can be perceived how great a wickedness was committed in that first transgression. The more enjoyment humanity found in God, the greater was its wickedness in abandoning Him . . . Hence the whole mass of the human race is condemned; for he who at first gave entrance to sin has been punished with all his offspring who were in him as in a root."[146]

"Even in people whose natural birth is followed by exuberant grace, there still exists this fleshly lust that wages war against the law of the mind (Romans 7:23) . . . So children derive guilt from their natural birth, and cannot be liberated from the sickness unless they are born again."[147]

Original sin "has been proclaimed throughout the whole Church and believed from ancient times as the truth Catholic faith. The church would not exorcise nor exsufflate [breathe or hiss upon in order to exorcise demonic influences] the infants of the faithful if she were not rescuing them from the power of darkness and from the prince of death."[148]

Augustine regularly deployed the imagery of soul-sickness to describe our fallen condition. Our human nature, including the will, is sick and needs the Great Physician's healing grace, both to bring us to himself and to enable us

146. *City of God,* 21:12. Quoted in Needham, 238.
147. *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin,* 2:45, 58. Quoted by Needham, 59.
148. *Against Julian,* 1.4.14. Quoted in Harmless, 419.

to follow his commands after our regeneration. Thus: "We are concerned with human beings, [like the man in Jesus' parable] the thieves left half-dead on the road, who, being injured and pierced with serious wounds, cannot ascend to the heights of justice as they were once . . . even though they are now undergoing treatment in the inn [of the Church]" (Luke 10:33-35).[149]

Pelagius and Augustine held radically different views of human nature. "For Pelagius, men had simply decided to imitate Adam, the first sinner; for Augustine, they received their basic weakness in the most intimate and irreversible manner possible; they were born into it by the mere fact of physical descent from this, the common father of the human race."[150]

For Augustine, Pelagius's views reflected an "optimism about human nature [that was] based upon a transparently inadequate view of the complexity of human motivation." In sum, for Augustine, "men choose because they love; but . . . they could not, of themselves, choose to love."[151]

Likewise, in monasteries around the Mediterranean world, the monks had remained under "their optimistic traditions of Origen."[152] They were most interested in making progress toward spiritual "goals," and wrote to Augustine for advice. His replies must have come to them rather like a bucket of cold water on an unsuspecting head.

---

149. *On Nature and Grace*, 4.50. Quoted in Harmless, 406.
150. Peter Brown, 367–368.
151. Peter Brown, 375.
152. Peter Brown, 401.

In contrast to Origen and much of the Greek tradition, for Augustine, sin "is something that contaminates our lives from birth, and dominates our lives thereafter." We have no decisive control over it.[153] We have "an inherent bias towards acts of sins" because of the sinful disposition with which we are born.[154]

"Sin is a state of being, or rather . . . sin is a kind of existence in which we seek to find ourselves apart from God."[155]

"Underlying this theory of predestination and this definition of grace was not only a doctrine of God as the omnipotent and sovereign Creator whose will was always accomplished, but also a doctrine of man as the fallen and sinful creature whose will had been turned against God."[156] He explained how we were all in Adam when he sinned by "referring to the 'carnal begetting' by which their lives began."[157]

As a result, human nature is "wounded, hurt, damaged, destroyed."[158]

In his *Sermons on John* 14:29–30, Augustine says, "For all have been under the rulers of this darkness, that is [under the rulers] of wicked men, or darkness, as it were, in subjection to darkness; but 'thanks be to God, who has

153. Reference needed, 81.
154. Reference needed, 82.
155. Cooper, 37.
156. Pelikan, 298.
157. Pelikan, 300.
158. *On Nature and Grace,* 53.62. Quoted in Pelikan, 300.

delivered us,' says the same apostle, 'from the power of darkness, and translated [transferred] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love' (Colossians 1:13)."[159]

Against the Manichees, Augustine asserted that "the nature of man as a creature of God remained even after the fall into sin, which, as a turning away from God to evil, did not mean the creation of another and evil nature but the corruption of that nature which had already been created good."[160]

Greatly wounded and in need of grace, "human nature needed to be healed by God's grace. Grace was more than nature, more than free will, more even than the forgiveness of sins and the gift of God's commandments; it was the divinely given power to avoid and conquer sin."[161] Pride is turning away from God to the self and the created world. This results in "a darkening of the mind and a scattering of desire by which the sinner loses the capacity to know and love the highest good."[162]

Our fall with Adam: "In that original sin all humanity fell corporately; every individual is born carrying the guilt and the consequences of the sin committed when all were one in Adam."[163]

To show that all are guilty, Augustine offered a new interpretation of Romans 5:12. We inherit Adam's sin, so

159. *Tractates on John,* 79. Quoted in Seraphim, 287.
160. Pelikan, 301.
161. Pelikan, 301.
162. Burns, 393.
163. Burns, 396.

we can't do real good works out of true love for God. To prove this, Augustine relied heavily on Romans 5:5. We need a love for and a delight in love, and this comes only from God's love being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The Penalty for Sin

"How can the Pelagians say it was only death that passed upon us by means of Adam? For a few die because Adam *died*, but Adam died because he sinned, they are saying that the punishment is passed on without the guilt!"[164]

Freedom of The Will

Though he denounced the idea that human beings now have the freedom to do good, including to believe in Christ, Augustine never denied the importance of the will, or that Adam and Eve had been created with the freedom not to sin. In his earlier critiques of Manichaeism, Augustine had treated evil as a metaphysical category, seeing it as the privation of good. Later, he described evil as a moral, not a metaphysical category, and this underlay his discussion of free will, since he saw that freedom was a matter of moral choice, not "freedom" in general.

Augustine famously "provided a biblical history of moral freedom, in four states: (1) As originally created, Adam had the freedom to sin or not to sin (*posse peccare et posse non peccare)*. (2) After the fall, Adam and his descendants

164. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 4:6. Quoted in Needham, 147. See the discussion of the exegesis of Romans 5:12 above.

became spiritually dead and therefore lost the freedom not to sin. They could not stop sinning (*non posse non peccare*). (3) Those who are in Christ regain the freedom to do what is right (*posse non peccare*), though they still commit sin. (4) In heaven, believers are confirmed in righteousness, free to do good without ever again committing sin (*non posse peccare*)."[165]

Romans 8:13 tells us that we should mortify the evil deeds of the flesh and then we will live. The Pelagians say that because this is required of us, it is something that we can do in our own power. Augustine responds with the next verse in Romans: "'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God' (Romans 8:14) so that we might not believe that we mortify the deeds of the flesh by our own spirit rather than by God's Spirit."

Therefore, just because something is required doesn't mean that we can do it by our own power. When we hear a command from God, we ask him to work in us that which he commands.

Even faith is a gift of God, for Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:11, "'but one and the same Spirit works all these gifts distributing to everyone what is his own, as he wills.' Among all these gifts, as you know, he also named faith. Therefore, although it is the gift of God to mortify the deeds of the flesh yet mortification is still required of us and life is set before us as a reward. So likewise faith is the gift of God; yet faith is still required of us, when it is said,

165. Frame, 115.

‘if you believe you shall be saved,’ and salvation proposed to us as a reward.”[166]

No One is Forced to Sin

“We do not teach that ‘everyone is forced to sin,’ as if they were unwilling, ‘by the necessity of the flesh.’ If someone is mature enough to exercise the choice of his own mind, he is *held captive in sin by his own will*. By his own will he is rushed along from one sin to another . . . So the human will is free – to do evil, because it takes pleasure in evil. But it is not free to do good, because it has not been set free. No one wills anything good unless he is helped by him who cannot will anything evil – that is by the grace of God through Christ our Lord. For ‘whatever is not from faith is sin’ (Romans 14:23). And so the good will which withdraws itself from sin is the believing will: for, ‘The just shall live by faith’ (Romans 1:17). And the function of faith is to believe in Christ. And no one can believe in Christ – that is, come to him – unless this is given to him (John 6:6). No one therefore can have a righteous will, unless he has received the true gratuitous grace from above, without any virtue of his own going beforehand.”[167]

Augustine quotes the statement of Jesus in John 8:36, ‘“If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed,’ to mean, ‘That is, free to live a good and righteous life.’”[168]

---

166. *On the Predestination of the* Saints, 22. Quoted by Needham, 79.
167. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 1:17. Quoted in Needham, 80.
168. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 1:5. Quoted in Needham, 80.

Augustine adduces Romans 6:20, "when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness," to say that "sinners cannot be slaves to sin, except by another kind of freedom. They are free from righteousness by the choice of their wills; but they do not become free from sin except by the grace of the Savior."[169]

Augustine quotes Romans 6:22-23 to show that before regeneration sinners are not free from sin because Paul says "now, having been set free from sin and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit and holiness, in the end, everlasting life." Augustine goes on: "If he had merely said 'free,' they might have attributed this to themselves; so he quite deliberately says 'set free,' referring their freedom to what the Lord said: 'If the son sets you free you shall be free indeed' (John 8:36). The children of men do not live good lives unless they are made into the children of God. . . . as the gospel says, 'As many as received him, to them he gave the power to become children of God' (John 1:12)."[170]

Free Will

"I am, moreover, fully persuaded that the soul has fallen into sin, not through the fault of God, nor through any necessity either in the divine nature or in its own, but by its own free will; and that it can be delivered from the body of this death neither by the strength of its own will, as if that were in it self-sufficient to achieve this, nor by the death of the body itself, but only by the grace of God through our

169. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 1:5–6. Quoted in Needham, 80.
170. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 1:5–6. Quoted in Needham, 81.

Lord Jesus Christ, and that there is not one soul in the human family to whose salvation the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, is not absolutely necessary."[171]

The early church fathers, refuting the pagan belief in astrology and determinism, and also fighting against Gnostics and especially the Manichees, who taught that we sin because of our fleshly, bodily natures, against our rational wills, emphasized that we are responsible for our own sin and our own conduct.

Pelagius taught that "the freedom of the will meant that our wills are, so to speak, hanging in the air, suspended between good and evil, and capable of choosing between them by the will's own in built power." In other words, Pelagius interpreted freedom to mean that the human will was always the final cause of all its own choices and actions.[172]

Augustine spoke of the freedom of the will, but he "held that the essence of the will's freedom in the unredeemed center lay in its 'freedom from outward compulsion or coercion.'"[173]

"Augustine insisted that in the very midst of this freedom of the will from compulsion, our wills exist in a state of deep bondage; when we sin, we sin willingly . . . But the problem is that the unredeemed sinner never does anything else . . . he keeps on sinning willingly . . . further, his sin is

171. Letter 166:5. Quoted in Needham, 62.
172. Needham, 64.
173. Needham, 64.

as inward as his will. It is not so much bad deeds, but the false love that lies behind them. The unredeemed sinner will still love created things rather than the creator. And this false love is a permanent condition . . . All the time in the depths of his will, the sinner is loving the creature, not the ever-Blessed creator. The will, for Augustine, meant this fundamental inclination of the heart, this deep inward preference or 'penchant' of the self, either for God or for created things, which lies behind and ultimately determines our conscious choices."[174]

On John 15:5, "Without Me you can do nothing," Augustine says, "His . . . words are not, 'Without Me you can do but little,' but 'Without Me you can do nothing.' Whether then it be little or much, without Him it is impracticable; for without Him nothing can be done."[175]

The will "will be free to the extent that it is healthy, and healthy to the extent that it is submissive to divine mercy and grace. Therefore, it prays with faith and says, 'direct my journeying according to your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me' (Psalm 118:133 Vulgate and LXX) . . . It prays, it does not promise; it confesses, it does not make claims for itself; it begs for fullest freedom, it does not boast of its own power . . . The one who says to God, 'Be my helper' (Psalm 26:9), confesses that he wishes to carry out what is commanded but asks help of the One who gave the command so that he may be able to do it."[176]

---

174. Needham, 65.
175. *Tractates on John,* 81.3. Quoted in Seraphim, 289.
176. Letter 157 to Hilary of Syracuse, 8, 10. Quoted in Harmless, 409.

As John Piper explains, the main problem with Pelagius' view of sin was that he did not understand the human heart. From his experience and from Scripture, Augustine knew that everyone seeks to be happy. That is why Scripture often speaks of the "blessedness" of those who know and love him. But we all seek to be happy in things other than God. We are blind to the supreme happiness that is found in God alone. The will is not neutral, with freedom to choose between good and evil. Rather, it is bound up in the pursuit of lesser joys. Only our Creator can give us a passionate desire to long for him above all else, to seek nothing apart from him, to delight in him alone, for his own sake.[177]

Augustine puts it this way in the *Confessions*, "How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose! . . . You drove them from me, you are the true, the sovereign joy. You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure."[178]

Similarly, while Pelagius insisted that Christians can of their own free will refrain from sin and do what is right, Augustine counters that they deny the force of the words in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13), as well as Romans 9:16, "It depends not upon the one willing or the one running, but upon God who shows mercy."[179] First Corinthians 10:13, similarly, credits God with giving a way to escape temptation.

---

177. John Piper, *Sovereign Joy*, 55–63.
178. *Confessions*, IX, 1. Quoted in Piper, 57.
179. Letter 176:2-4. Cited in Harmless, 411.

"Pelagius and his circle defined free will in a conventional way: the ability to choose good or evil. This implies that sinning is a sign of our freedom. Augustine disagreed. If defined that way, then God would not be free since God cannot sin."[180]

Answering Cicero, who, like other pagans, believed in fate, Augustine affirmed the reality of man's freedom to make choices: "Now, against the sacrilegious and impious darings of reason, we assert both that God knows all things before they come to pass, and that we do by our free will whatsoever we know and feel to be done by us only because we will it . . . [There is a certain ordering of events in the world, but this is not to be called fate, for] it does not follow that, though there is for God a certain order of all causes, there must therefore be nothing depending on the free exercise of our own wills, for our wills themselves are included in that order of causes which is certain to God, and is embraced by His foreknowledge, for human wills are also causes of human actions; and He who foreknew all the causes of things, would certainly among those causes not have been ignorant of our wills."[181]

On free will: "We embrace both free will and God's foreknowledge."[182]

Answering Celestius's postulation that sin can be avoided by our free will, apart from God's grace, he explains: "Sin *can* be avoided if our corrupted nature is healed by God's grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. For to the degree that

180. Harmless, 408.
181. *City of God* 5:9, Quoted in Needham, 154.
182. *City of God,* 5:10. Quoted in Needham, 69.

our nature is not sound, to that degree it fails to see on account of blindness, or fails to accomplish on account of weakness, what it did not will to do. 'For the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh,' so that a person does not do the things he wishes" (Galatians 5:17).[183]

Responding to the claim of Pelagius that we turn our hearts to God and do good works and therefore secure God's grace, Augustine now says, "Well now, how can this be called Grace if it is not given freely? How can it be 'Grace' if it is given in payment of a debt? How does this fit in with Paul's teaching 'It is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works in case anyone should boast' (Ephesians 2:8-9). Again, 'If it is by grace then it is no longer by works, otherwise Grace is no longer Grace' (Romans 11:6). How can this be true, if we do such good work before we receive grace, and those works secure grace for us? Under these circumstances there is no free gift from God, only the pain of a well-deserved reward!"[184]

On Adam in paradise: Adam was given the grace, that is, the possibility that he would never be evil, but he was not given the grace to prevent him from sinning. "Free will is sufficient for evil but it is too little for good, unless it is aided by Almighty goodness."[185] The second Grace in the second Adam "can do more than this, since by this Grace it is even accomplished that a person actually wills, and wills so much, and lives with such order, that by the will of the

183. *On Human Perfection,* 2. Quoted in Needham, 70.
184. *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* 1:24. Quoted in Needham, 72.
185. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 31. Quoted in Needham, 72.

spirit he overcomes the world, and the flesh it lusts in opposition to it."[186]

"Since God foresaw that Adam would make a bad use of his free will, that is, would sin, God arranged his own designs with a view to do good to man even in his sinfulness. Thus the good will of the Almighty would not be canceled out by the evil will of man, but be fulfilled in spite of it."[187]

"In the future life, it will not be in our power to will evil; and yet this will constitute no restriction on the freedom of our will. On the contrary the human will shall be much more free when it is completely impossible for it to be the slave of sin!"[188]

"Our will, through which we accept all the other gifts of God that lead us onto his eternal gift, is itself prepared by the Lord, as the Scripture says (Proverbs 8:35, Septuagint)."[189]

"Can [sinners] do anything good by the free determination of their own will? God forbid . . . For it was by the evil use of his free will that man destroyed both it and himself. For, as a man who kills himself must, of course, be alive when he kills himself, but after he has killed himself ceases to live, and cannot restore himself to life, so, when man by his own free will sinned, then sin being victorious over him, the freedom of his will was lost. 'For by whom a man is

186. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 31. Quoted in Needham, 72.
187. *Enchiridion,* 104–106. Quoted in Needham, 73.
188. *Enchiridion,* 104–106. Quoted in Needham, 74.
189. *Enchiridion,* 106. Quoted in Needham, 75.

overcome, by the same he is brought into bondage.' (2 Peter 2:19)."[190]

Before we are set free by Christ, we are slaves to sin. Augustine quotes John 8:36, "if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed." He goes on: "Before this redemption is wrought in a man, when he is not yet free to do what is right, how can he talk of the freedom of his will and his good works?" [191]

"The Apostle offered a clear statement in commendation of grace when he said, 'It is not of the one who wills or of the one who runs, but of the merciful God.' (Romans 9:16) . . . For God does not have mercy on someone because that person has willed and run, but he willed and ran because God has had mercy on him. For the human 'will is prepared by God' (Proverbs 8:35, LXX), and 'the steps of man are directed by the Lord' (Psalm 36:23), and so fittingly does he say: 'It is not of the one who wills, or of the one who runs, but of the merciful God.'" [192]

"It is not the free who need a deliverer, but only the enslaved. That is why believers cry with joy to him over their deliverance: 'You have saved my soul from the straits of necessity!' (Psalm 31:17)."[193]

"If Adam is called the author of all sins that followed his own, because he was the first center of the human race, (as

190. *Enchiridion,* 30. Quoted in Needham, 75–76.
191. *Enchiridion,* 30. Quoted in Needham, 76.
192. *Contra Julianum opus imperfectum*, bk. 1 c. 141. In Lombard, *Sentences*, Book 2, Distinction xxvi, 3, p. 123–24.
193. *On Human Perfection,* 9. Quoted in Needham, 77.

the Pelagians claim) then why isn't Abel rather than Christ placed at the head of all the righteous, since he was the first righteous man?" [194]

"If, as the Pelagians claim, someone could become righteous by his own free will, then that is to 'make the cross of Christ of no effect' (1 Cor. 1:17). That is what we do, if we argue that apart from the cross, anyone can be justified by the law of nature and the power of his own will. We must also say then that 'Christ died in vain' (Gal. 2:21), since everyone might have achieved righteousness even if Christ had never died!"[195]

"But as He foresaw that man would make a bad use of his free-will, that is, would sin, God arranged His own design with a view to do good to man even in his sinfulness, that thus the good will of the Omnipotent might not be made void by the evil will of man, but might be fulfilled in spirt of it."[196] Behind this stance of Augustine lies Psalm 115:3: "He has done all that He pleased in heaven and on earth."

This verse is foundational for Augustine, and leads to his fundamental assertion:

"Nothing, therefore, happens but by the will of the Omnipotent, He either permitting it to be done, or Himself doing it."[197] He goes on, "And if we do not believe this, the very first sentence of our Creed is endangered, wherein we profess to believe in God the Father Almighty. For He is

194. *On Nature and Grace,* 10. Quoted in Needham, 83.
195. *On Nature and Grace,* 10. Quoted in Needham, 83.
196. *Enchiridion,* 104. Quoted in Needham, 73.
197. *Enchiridion,* 95.

not truly called Almighty if He cannot do whatever He pleases, or if the power of His almighty will is hindered by the will of any creature whatsoever."[198]

"For Augustine, the total sovereignty of God and genuine human responsibility and freedom must be upheld at one and the same time."[199] He used the phrase freedom of the will, but tried "to restore a more 'Pauline" meaning to it by emphasizing the limitations placed upon the human free will by sin . . . Natural human freedom is affirmed: we do not do things out of any necessity, but as a matter of freedom. Second, Augustine argues that human free will has been weakened and incapacitated – but not eliminated or destroyed – through sin. In order for that free will to be restored and healed, it requires the operation of divine grace."[200]

For Augustine "freedom can only be the culmination of a process of healing." For he spoke of the "freed" will, not free will.[201]

We are inherently slaves of sin: "For 'by whatever a person is overcome, to that he is delivered as a slave' (2 Peter 2:19)."[202]

Grace: The Basis of Salvation

"One of Augustine's favorite biblical texts is John 15:5, 'apart from me you can do nothing.' For Augustine, we are

198. *Enchiridion*, 96.
199. Reference needed, 79.
200. Reference needed, 80.
201. Peter Brown, 376.
202. *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 52. Quoted in Needham, 191.

totally dependent on God for our salvation, from the beginning to the end of our lives."[203]

"For Augustine, humanity is justified as an act of grace: even human good works are the result of God working within fallen human nature. Everything leading up to salvation is the free and unmerited gift of God, given out of his love for sinners. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is enabled to deal with fallen humanity in this remarkable and generous manner, giving us that which we do not deserve (salvation) and withholding from us that which we do deserve (condemnation). Augustine's exposition of the Parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–10) is of considerable importance in this respect."[204]

This parable emphasizes the owner's fulfillment of his promise to pay a day's wages, regardless of how long each person worked. Those who started work later did not receive what they "deserved" but much more.

"This grace, which perfects strength in weakness, brings everyone who is predestined and called by God to supreme perfection and glory. This grace not only shows us what we ought to do, it makes us do it. It not only makes us believe what we ought to love, it makes us love it."[205]

"The grace of Christ . . . is not bestowed on account of any virtues, but is given gratuitously, which is why it is called

---

203. Levering, 83.
204. Reference needed.
205. *On the Grace of Christ,* 13. Quoted in Hill, 90.

‘grace.’ As Paul says, ‘being justified freely through His blood’ (Romans 3:24).”[206]

“Consequently, those who are delivered from punishment by grace are called, not vessels of their own virtues, but vessels of mercy (Romans 9:23).”[207]

We not saved because of some goodness in us before our conversion. Augustine quotes Titus 3:5, “Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” and John 6:65, “’No one can come to Me’ – that is, ‘believe in Me’ – ‘unless it has been granted to him by My Father.’” He also quotes John 6:44, “No one can come to Me, unless the Father Who sent me draws him,” and adds, “Therefore in wondrous ways a person is drawn into a state of willingness, by Him who knows how to work within the very hearts of human beings. Not that unwilling people are made to believe . . . Rather, unwilling people are made willing.”[208]

This is a doctrine of internal grace rather than external, as in Pelagius.[209]

“For Pelagius, grace was something external and passive, something outside us. Augustine understood grace as the real and redeeming presence of God in Christ within us, transforming us; something that was internal and active.”[210]

---

206. *On Nature and Grace,* 4. Quoted in Needham, 177; see also *On Nature and Grace,* 4:4.
207. *On Nature and Grace,* 5. Quoted in Needham, 178.
208. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 1:37. Quoted in Needham, 179.
209. Jonathan Hill, 90.
210. Reference needed, 83.

"It will thus be clear that Pelagianism and Augustinianism represent two radically different outlooks, one with divergent understandings of the manner in which God and humanity relate to one another."[211]

"The central theme in all Augustine's writings is the sovereign God of grace and the sovereign grace of God. Grace, for Augustine, is God's freedom to act without any external necessity whatsoever – to act in love beyond human understanding or control; to act in creation, judgment, and redemption; to give his Son freely as Mediator and Redeemer; to indue the Church with indwelling power and guidance of the Holy Spirit; to shape the destinies of all creation and the ends of two human societies . . . Grace is God's unmerited love and favor, prevenient and occurrent. It touches man's inmost heart and will. It guides and impels the pilgrimage of those called to be faithful. It draws and raises the soul to repentance, faith, and praise. It transforms the human will so that it is capable of doing good."[212]

"As a result [of Adam's transgression], the whole human mass ought to be punished, and if the punishment of damnation were rendered to all, beyond all doubt it would be justly rendered. This is why those who are liberated from it by grace are not called vessels of their own merits, but 'vessels of mercy' (Romans 9:23). But whose mercy was it but the One who sent Jesus Christ into this world to

211. Reference needed, 84.
212. Outler, 14–15.

save sinners, whom he foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified?"[213]

"The grace of Christ, then, . . . is given gratuitously and not for our merits, and for this reason is called 'grace.' '[They are] justified,' says the Apostle, 'freely by His blood' (Romans 3:14)."[214]

For that reason, "there is no other name under heaven in which we can be saved (Acts 4:12)."[215]

"The grace of God was sovereign because God was sovereign. His creatures might accept his will or defy it, but that did not threaten his sovereignty; for 'however strong the wills either of angels of men, whether good or evil, whether they will what God wills or will something, the will of the Omnipotent is always undefeated.'"[216] "The wisdom and power of God were such that even the evil deeds of evil men in defiance of his will eventually contributed to the achievement of his good and just purposes." [217]

"This grace was not based upon any preceding merit or works of man; for man could not love God unless God first loved him . . . Grace, then, preceded and followed man's life of love; preceded it in order that we might be healed,

213. *On Nature and Grace,* 5:5. Quoted in Harmless, 404–404.
214. *On Nature and Grace,* 4:4. Quoted in Harmless, 403.
215. *On Nature and Grace,* 34:39. Quoted in Harmless, 406.
216. *Enchiridion,* 26.102.
217. Pelikan, 294.

followed it that we might become healthy and strong." This is seen in the baptism of infants.[218]

All is of grace: "But what do you have that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it? (1 Cor 4:7)."[219]

To demonstrate that faith itself comes from God, Augustine quotes Philippians 1:28–29: "For to you it has been granted on Christ's behalf, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake." He goes on, "Clearly, Paul says that both things were 'granted.' Let them read what Paul also said: 'Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (Ephesians 6:23). Let them also read what the Lord himself said: 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him' (John 6:44)."[220]

To show that our hearing with faith and coming to Christ are from God, he quotes Jesus' words in John 6:45, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

Similarly, Jesus says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:29), showing that our faith is a work that God effects in us. A little later, he says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me"

---

218. Pelikan, 302.
219. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 4.8. Quoted in Harmless, 436.
220. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 1:5-6. Quoted in Needham, 81.

(John 6:37) and "No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44).[221]

Note: The Greek word for "draw" is used elsewhere in John to describe an action by an agent upon a passive object, such as Peter's drawing his sword or dragging a net full of fish onto the shore (John 18:10; 21:6). This word shows that God's grace upon sinners is irresistible and that people do not come to Christ of their own free will.

Since the Greek and Latin words for "draw" mean "to haul" or "to drag along," Augustine, commenting on John 6:44, addresses the question of whether people are drawn, that is, believe in Christ, unwillingly: "Do not imagine that you are being drawn against your will; the soul is drawn by love . . . Fear not their saying to us, 'How can I believe by choice if I am being drawn?' I in turn say, 'Your will is less important than you think;' you are drawn by pleasure . . . What does it mean to be drawn by pleasure? 'Delight in the Lord, and he will give you the appeals of your heart' (Psalm 37:4). There is a pleasure of the heart for the one for whom that heavenly bread is sweet . . . [T]hose whose delight is in the truth, whose delight is in happiness, whose delight is in justice, whose delight is in eternal life, are drawn to Christ, because each of those is Christ . . . Give me a lover, and he will know by experience what I am saying here. Give me a man of desires, give me someone who is hungry, give me someone traveling through this

221. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 13. Quoted in Needham, 186–87.

thirsty wilderness, and panting for the fountain of eternal life, and he will know what I am saying."[222]

"The true interpretation of the saying, 'It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God' (Romans 9:16), is that the entire work [of salvation] belongs to God. We read in Holy Scriptures, both that God's mercy 'shall meet me' (Psalm 59:10) and that His mercy 'shall follow me' (Psalm 23:6). Mercy goes before the unwilling person to make him willing; it follows the willing person to make his will effective."[223]

Christians are "created by God for good works," as David had written, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10), thus showing that our new nature is a new creation from God, not the result of our works or merit.

Again, showing that faith itself is a gift from God, Augustine quotes Philippians 1:29: "To you it is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."[224]

"Why do we not instead listen to the words of Paul, 'Who has first given to Him and may be repaid in turn? For from Him and through Him and in Him are all things' (Romans 11:35–36). And therefore, that very beginning of our faith: From whom does it come if not from Him? For it is not the

---

222. *Homilies on John*. Homily 26.4. Quoted in Edmund Hill, 452–53.
223. *Enchiridion,* 32. Quoted in Needham, 190.
224. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 2.4. Quoted in Harmless, 429.

case that all *other* things are from Him, and this is the sole exception."[225]

To believe is "to think with assent," and Paul says, "We are 'not sufficient to think anything as from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God' (2 Cor. 3:5)."[226]

Augustine quotes Ephesians 1:13-16 and 1 Thessalonians 2:13, in which Paul gives thanks to God for the conversion of Christians in those cities. "Why would he thank God for their faith in Christ, if it were something that had come from themselves rather than as a gift from God?"[227]

The example of Lydia proves the same point, for Luke writes, "The Lord opened her heart, and she gave heed to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14).[228]

If faith, and therefore salvation, is not a gift from God, why does Paul write, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them [the Jews] is for their salvation (Romans 10:1)?"[229]

Likewise, God's words through Ezekiel 11:19–20, "I will give them another heart, and I will put a new spirit within

---

225. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 2.4. Quoted in Harmless, 429.
226. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 2.5. Cited in Harmless, 430.
227. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 39. Quoted in Needham, 200.
228. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 41. Quoted in Needham, 201.
229. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 15. Quoted in Needham 201.

you," show that the willingness to believe in and obey God comes not from us, but from him.[230]

Even repentance flows from God and not ourselves; otherwise, why would Paul write of certain people, "if perhaps God may give them repentance" (2 Tim. 2:25)?[231] Also, "You will turn to us and bring us to life" (Psalm 87:4 LXX and Vulgate).[232]

God's Work and Our Work:

"When, therefore, He commands us in the words, 'Turn to Me, and I will turn to you' (Zech. 1:3), and we say to Him, 'Turn us, O God of our salvation' (Ps. 85:4) . . . what else do we say but, 'Give what You command'?"[233]

Faith is a Gift from God:

"If we say that faith is not the gift of God, we must then fear that we have discovered the answer to the apostle's reproachful appeal, 'What do you have that you did not receive? No, if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?' (1 Cor. 4:7)."[234] Matthew Levering points out that Augustine carefully considered the context of this quotation, showing that the verse cited forms the

230. *On Grace and Free Will,* 29. Quoted in Needham, 202.
231. *Enchiridion,* 82. Quoted in Needham, 203.
232. Cited in *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 2.4. Quoted in Harmless, 430.
233. *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins,* 2:5. Quoted in Needham, 197.
234. *On the Spirit and the Letter,* 57. Quoted in Needham, 197.

fundamental core of all that Paul wants to say to the Corinthians.[235]

Paul says, "'I have obtained mercy that I might be faithful' (1 Cor. 7:25). He does not say, 'I obtained mercy because I was faithful,' but 'in order that I might be faithful.' This shows that even faith itself cannot be had without God's mercy. Paul very expressly teaches us this when he says, 'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:10) . . . And again, in case they say they deserved so great a gift by their works, he immediately added, 'Not of works, in case anyone should boast.'" Paul does not deny the value of works, but "works proceed from faith, not faith from works. Therefore it is from God that we have works of righteousness, as it is from Him that we have faith, concerning whom it is written, 'The just shall live by faith' (Romans 1:17)."[236]

Grace and the Moral Law

"By the law is the knowledge of sin, by faith the acquisition of grace against sin, by grace the healing of the soul from the fault of sin, by the health of the soul the freedom of the will, by free will the love of righteousness, by love of righteousness the accomplishment of the law."[237]

"Those being led to salvation are brought through the law to recognize their helplessness and the certainty of condemnation. Thus they abandon pride, accept humility,

---

235. Levering, 75.
236. *On Grace and Free Will,* 17. Quoted in Needham, 198.
237. *On the Spirit and the Letter,* 30:52. Quoted in Pelikan, 306.

and are prepared to revive the following grace of the gospel."[238] For the basis of this thought, see Romans 3:20; 7:7.

The true Christian is the believer who "in all his sins accuses himself, in all his good works praises God, counts himself a disgrace and gives to God the glory, and receives from God both the forgiveness of sins and a love of doing what is right."[239]

The law is still good. In fact, "Grace makes us lovers of the law."[240]

The law is necessary for believers today "for the right ordering of our life."[241]

The Pelagians say that the law *is* grace, but "[t]he true meaning of grace, however, is the love that God breathes into us, which enables us with a holy delight to carry out the duty that we know. For without love, the knowledge of the law does not build us up – it puffs up." Here Augustine quotes 2 Corinthians 3:6 and also Romans 5:8.[242]

"The knowledge of the law, unless it is accompanied by the assistance of grace, merely serves to provoke transgressions of God's commands. (Romans 4:15; 7:7) . . . The law

---

238. Burns, 397.
239. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 3:14. Quoted in Needham, 87.
240. *On Grace and Free Will,* 38. Quoted in Needham, 88.
241. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 3:10. Quoted in Needham, 88.
242. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 4:11. Quoted in Needham, 90.

commands rather than assists; it reveals the disease, but does not heal it. (2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:21) . . . Therefore, says the apostle, 'the law was our schoolmaster to Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:24)."[243]

The law tells me that I must love, but it does not give me the power to love. That only comes by the Holy Spirit, by whom the love of God is poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5).

By showing us our sin, "the law leads us to faith; faith obtains the Spirit in fuller measure; the Spirit sheds love abroad within us; and love fulfills the law." [244] Augustine concludes: "Therefore to those who believe and call on the Lord, the life-giving Spirit is given," and we are empowered to love.[245]

After quoting Romans 2:13, "Not the hearers of the law are justified before God, but the doers of the law will be justified," Augustine says, "Therefore the law makes hearers of righteousness, but grace makes doers." He then quotes Romans 8:3-4 to show that only those who walk according to the Holy Spirit can begin to fulfill the moral law of God: "For it is impossible that the law should be fulfilled by the flesh, that is, by sinful presumption. . . . Therefore their righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk, not according to the flesh – that is, according to human wisdom, ignorant of the righteousness of God [that comes by faith] and desiring to establish their own – but in

---

243. *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin,* 1:9. Quoted in Needham, 94.
244. Romans 10:13-14.
245. Letter 145:3. Quoted in Needham, 98.

those who walk according to the Spirit. But who walks according to the Spirit, except whoever is led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14)?[246]

Despite its weakness, the Mosaic moral law, especially as summarized in the Ten Commandments, has relevance for Christians today, for it teaches us how we should live, as we rely on the power of the Spirit to produce a new righteousness in us.[247] Thus, "the righteousness of the [Mosaic] law is fulfilled by the grace of the Spirit in those who learn from Christ to be meek and lowly in heart."[248]

Grace and "Free Will"

"So saving grace, converting grace, in Augustine's view, is God's *giving us a sovereign joy in God* that triumphs over all other joys and therefore sways the will. The will is free to move toward whatever it delights in most fully, but it is not within the power of our will to determine what that *sovereign joy* will be."[249]

Grace is "that divine operation in angels and humans through which they are moved to know and love God."[250]

Grace, he said, was the operation of divine love. Only God can cause us to love him and his will. Other Scriptures that Augustine references are 1 Corinthians 4:7 and John 15:5.

---

246. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 3:2. Quoted in Needham, 99.
247. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 3:10.
248. *Reply to Faustus the Manichee,* 19:7. Quoted in Needham, 108; see also *On the Spirit and the Letter,* 23.
249. Piper, 59.
250. Burns, 391.

The grace of which Augustine speaks is "what Paul refers to when he says, 'the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us' (Romans 5:5). Pelagius does not confess grace in this way."[251]

The quotation from Romans 5 above indicates that our capacity to love, that is, to do good, comes from God who has poured out his own love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. To live rightly is to love God as the highest good, and others for his sake, and only the Holy Spirit can give us this kind of love.

Prevenient Grace

"Now God's people rely on him to enable them to do good works, as the Psalmist wrote, 'Reveal your way to the Lord, and hope in Him, and He will do it' (Psalm 36:5 LXX and Vulgate) . . . For when the Psalmist said that, he meant that 'We do, in fact work, but when we work, we cooperate with God who works, for his mercy comes before us. It comes before us, however, that we may be healed, as it will also follow us so that being healed we may gain strength to continue in doing good. . . . It comes before us so that we may lead pious lives, it will follow us so that we may always live with Him, for without him we can do nothing' (John 15:5). For Scripture says both, 'He is my God, His mercy shall come before me' (Psalm 58:11), and, 'Your mercy will follow me all the days of my life' (Psalm 22:6 Vulgate and LXX)."[252]

---

251. *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin,* 1:27–29. Quoted in Needham, 77.
252. *On Nature and Grace,* 31.35. Quoted in Harmless, 408.

"Grace is fundamentally the illumination of the mind by divine Truth, the Word of God, and the movement of the will by divine Love, the Holy Spirit. This divine operation takes many forms."[253] In other words, God uses various means to bring us to true repentance and faith. As stated previously, Augustine stressed the fact that the Holy Spirit is the gift of Love (based on Romans 5:5 and 1 John 4:7-17). We need a love for and a delight in love, and this comes only from God's love being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

"'Grace' must be conceptualized not as a created disposition or accident but rather as the operation and dwelling of the divine being within the created spirit."[254] To this end, Augustine often cited Romans 5:5, as we have seen.

J. P. Burns has an excellent discussion of "the history of grace," in which he lists "five identifying components, distinct but connected to each other: grace's 'identity, necessity, gratuity, efficacy, and social role.'"[255]

Election

"People are 'elected not because they have believed, but elected in order that they may believe.' For the Lord Himself also sufficiently explains this calling when He says, 'You did not choose Me, but I chose you' (John 15:16) . . . He chose them in order that they might then

253. Burns, 398.
254. Burns, 392.
255. Burns, 392.

choose Him. . . . . This is the changeless truth concerning predestination and grace. For what is it that the apostle says, 'As He has chosen us in Himself before the foundation of the world' (Eph. 1:4)? . . . For whom He predestined, them He also called, with that calling which is according to purpose. Not others, therefore, but those whom He predestined, He also called; not others, but those whom He called, them He also justified; not others, but those whom He predestined, called, and justified, them He also glorified, assuredly to that end which has no end' (Romans 8:30)."[256]

"When Jesus says, 'I have chosen you out of the world' (John 15:19), he means that they 'were chosen, through no merit of their own, for no good works of theirs had gone before . . . No, they were chosen gratuitously, that is, by actual grace . . . For 'there is a remnant saved according to the election of grace. And if by grace . . . then is it no more by works; otherwise grace is no longer grace' (Romans 11:5–6)."[257]

On John 15:16: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit," Augustine says, "They were not chosen because of their goodness, inasmuch as they could not be good without being chosen. Otherwise grace is no more grace, if we maintain the priority of merit. Such, certainly, is the election of grace" referred to in Romans 11:6. "Listen, you ungrateful one, listen, 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' Not that you may say, 'I am chosen because I

256. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 30. Quoted in Needham, 215.
257. *Sermons on John,* 87:3. Quoted in Needham, 168.

already believed.' For if you were believing in Him, then you would already have chosen Him. But listen: 'You have not chosen me.' Not that you may say, 'Before I believed I was already doing good works, and therefore was I chosen.' For what good work can be prior to faith, when the apostle says, 'Whatever is not of faith is sin' (Romans 14:23). What, then, are we to say on hearing such words, 'You have not chosen me,' but that we were evil, and were chosen in order that we might be good through the grace of Him who chose us? . . . See, then, beloved, it is that He chooses not the good, but makes those whom He has chosen good."[258]

"The Lord says, 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you' (John 15:16).' If they had been chosen because they already believed, then they would have chosen him first by believing in him, in order to deserve their election. But by saying this, Jesus takes this supposition away. At the same time it is clear that in fact they did choose him when they believed, but this was because he had first chosen them for belief."[259]

God chose those whom he wanted to make righteous: "'He has chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and unblemished' (Ephesians 1:4). It was not because we were going to be holy, but so that we might become holy . . . that he predestined us by his grace."[260]

"Without reference to their prior, contemporary, or subsequent merits, God separates those who become the

---

258. *Tractates on John,* 86.2. Quoted in Seraphim, 295.
259. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 17.34. Quoted in Bray, 105.
260. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 18.36. Quoted in Bray, 105

Christian faithful from others who will die in their sins (Romans 9:16 and Proverbs 8:35 LXX)."[261]

The Difference between Predestination and Grace

"The only way anyone can merit salvation is by God's grace and predestination. The difference between these two things is that predestination is the preparation for grace, whereas grace is the gift itself. When the apostle Paul says, 'Not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works' (Ephesians 2:9–10), it is grace."[262]

On God's "Free Will"

"God accomplishes some of His purposes, which of course are all good, through the evil desires of wicked men; for example, it was through the wicked designs of the Jews, working out the good purpose of the Father, that Christ was slain. And this event was so truly good that when the apostle Peter expressed his unwillingness that it should take place, he was designated Satan by Him who had come to be slain (Matthew 16:21–23)."[263]

On God's sovereignty and human evil, see the *Enchiridion,* 100–102.

"The omnipotent God, then, whether in mercy He pities whom He will, or in judgment hardens whom He will, is never unjust in what He does (Romans 9:14–24), never

261. Burns, 397.
262. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 10.19. Quoted in Bray, 104.
263. *Enchiridion,* 101.

does anything except of His own free-will, and never wills anything that He does not perform."[264]

Election is an Unsearchable Mystery

"Why does God make some people into his sheep and not others, since there is no favouritism with Him? This is the very question the blessed apostle Paul answers . . . 'Indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to Him Who formed it, "Why have You made me like this?"' (Romans 9:20). This is the very question belonging to that 'depth' which, in a sense terrified the same apostle when he desired to look into it, causing him to exclaim, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? . . . For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to Whom be glory forever' (Romans 11:33–36). Let the Pelagians not dare to pry into that unsearchable question . . . Let it be enough to know that there is no unrighteousness with God . . . For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' . . . Therefore let us be thankful for his free compassion, even though we find no answer to this profound question."[265]

He also quotes Ephesians 1:4: "As He has chosen us in Christ before the creation of the world":

---

264. *Enchiridion,* 102.
265. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 4:15–16. Quoted in Needham, 214.

> Therefore God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world, and predestined us to be adopted as His children. He did this, not because we were going to be holy and blameless by our own will, but rather He chose and predestined us that we *might* become holy and blameless. Moreover, He did this according to the good pleasure of *His* will, so that nobody might glory in his own will, but in God's will towards Himself. He also did this according to the riches of His grace, according to His good will, which He purposed in His beloved Son. In Him we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose (His, not ours) of the One Who works all things to such an extent that He works even in our wills. Moreover, He works according to the counsel of His will, so that we may be for the praise of His glory.[266]

On John 15:19: "But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you," he writes, "It follows that once they *were* of the world: for in order that they may *not* be of the world, they were chosen *out* of the world."[267]

"Now this election the apostle demonstrates to be, not from good qualities going before in good works, but an election by grace, saying thus: 'And at this time a remnant is saved by the election of grace. But if it is by grace, then it is no longer by works, otherwise, grace is not grace' (Romans

266. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 37. Quoted in Needham, 216.
267. *On Patience,* 16. Quoted in Needham, 216.

11:5–6). This is election by grace; that is, election in which, through the grace of God, people are elected."[268]

"We would not love God unless he first loved us. John gives us the plainest proof of this when he says, 'We love because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19). Grace makes us lovers of the law, but law without grace makes us into nothing but law-breakers."[269]

"Jesus does not choose good people, but chooses people in order to make them good. 'I chose you,' He says, 'and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain' (John 15:16). Our fruit is what He has already spoken about when He said, 'Without Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5). So He has chosen us and appointed us to go and bear fruit. It follows that we had no fruit which could have made Him choose us."[270]

The Lord Knows Who the Elect Are

"I say then, 'The Lord knows those who are His' (2 Tim. 2:19). He knows those who were foreknown. He knows those who were predestined; because it is said of Him, 'For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son . . . ' (Romans 8:29)."[271]

God's Mercy and Judgment are Displayed in People's Different Responses to the Gospel

---

268. *On Patience,* 16. Quoted in Needham, 217.
269. *On Grace and Free Will,* 38. Quoted in Needham, 218.
270. *Sermons on John,* 86:2-3. Quoted in Needham, 219.
271. *Sermons on John,* 45:12. Quoted in Needham, 220.

"Many hear the word of truth; but some believe, while others contradict. Therefore the former will to believe and the latter do not will. Who does not know this? Who can deny this? But since in some the will is prepared by the Lord, while in others it is not prepared, we must certainly be able to distinguish what comes from God's mercy, and what come from His judgment. 'What Israel sought for,' says the apostle, 'it has not obtained, but the elect have obtained it; and the rest were blinded, as it is written, "God gave to them the spirit of stupor – eyes that should not see, and ears that they should not hear"' (Romans 11:7–8) . . . Here is mercy and judgment – mercy towards the elect, who have obtained the righteousness of God, but judgment to the rest who have been blinded. . . . Yet His ways are unsearchable. Therefore the mercy by which He freely saves, and the truth by which He righteously judges are equally unsearchable."[272]

Election is Not Unfair, Since No Matter of Justice is Involved

Quoting the parable of the equal pay given to workers in the vineyard, regardless of how long they worked (Matt. 20:13-15), Augustine says that if the owner was generous to some, he did so without defrauding the others. We all deserve eternal punishment "since all are guilty from the fact that sin entered into the world through one man." Justice requires that we all be punished, but God extends mercy to some while he carries out a just sentence on the

272. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 11. Quoted in Needham, 221.

others. “But where it is said, ‘Therefore, He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens’ (Romans 9:18), and Who ‘makes one vessel for honor and another for dishonor’ (Romans 9:20); grace is given freely to the undeserving, who belong to the same mass [of condemned humanity] as those to whom it is not given. But evil is deservedly repaid as a matter of debt, since evil is justly repaid to the evil in the condemned mass.”[273]

Predestination

We Can Be Saved Only if God Wants Us to Be

“‘No one can come to me unless it is given to him by my Father’ (John 6:65). Therefore all those who are saved and come to a knowledge of the truth are saved because God wills it. . . . They are those who, like small children, are born again by the will of their Creator, even before they come to the age of discretion. By contrast, those who have reached the age of discretion cannot will their own salvation unless God wills it and comes to help them achieve it by preparing their will for it.”[274]

Most important is the “connection between predestination and grace; the only difference between them was that predestination was the preparation for grace, while grace was the bestowal of the gift. Since grace was sovereign, those whom God predestined would be saved.”[275]

---

273. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 2:13. Quoted in Needham, 222–23.
274. *Against Julian,* 4.8.44. Quoted in Bray, 101.
275. Pelikan, 297.

Predestination Unto Salvation

All who are predestined will be saved. Augustine quotes Romans 8:28-30 to show that all whom God chose will be saved. "They are elect because they were called according to God's purpose, of which Paul says, 'That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him who calls' (Romans 9:11–12)."[276]

Called According to His Purpose

We are not savingly called by God because he sees that we are ready for his calling, but, Augustine quotes Romans 8:29, "Who are called according to his [God's] purpose." And, "The purpose of God might stand according to election, not by works" (Romans 9:11). "Those who are called according to purpose are the persons who were elected before the creation of the world. Of this purpose of God, it was also said (as I have already mentioned concerning the twins Esau and Jacob), 'that the purpose of God might stand according to election, not by works, but by Him Who calls, it was said, that the elder shall serve the younger' (Romans 9:11–12). . . . God's calling of his people 'is not according to our works, but according to His purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before eternal ages, but is now made manifest by the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Tim. 1:8–10)."[277]

---

276. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 7(14). Quoted in Bray, 102.
277. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 2:22. Quoted in Needham, 195.

Many are called in a general sense, but not all are chosen to salvation. Augustine says that the elect are "called according to his purpose."[278]

Even the evil deeds of evil men served God's good purposes. "Why did God create those whose fall he foreknew? To manifest his wrath and to demonstrate his power." [279] Pelikan here alludes to, though he does not cite, Romans 9:22. It is essential that we see this connection between Scripture and Augustine's teaching.

"The same mystery that precluded empirical judgments about who was or who was not predestined also obliged the believer to wait upon the ordinances [that is, sacraments] of the church."[280]

Many who seemed to be on the inside of the church might, in fact, be on the outside. "The true church consisted of 'the fixed number of the saints predestined before the foundation of the world, even though some might now be wallowing in heresy or vice.'"[281]

"Repeated consideration of Paul's reflection of God's preference of Jacob over Esau in Romans 9 finally moved Augustine to the further realization that the merits of human willing and working – prior, contemporary, or subsequent – are irrelevant to the granting of divine assistance. . . . [H]e accepted the Pauline teaching that the initial movements toward salvation are utterly gratuitous

278. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 16.32. Quoted in Bray, 105.
279. Pelikan, 297.
280. Pelikan, 302.
281. Pelikan, 303.

because they actually produce human cooperation."[282] And, later, he was brought to the realization that God would continue to bestow grace enabling the elect to persevere and attain to eternal life.

His teaching thus "contradicted the assumptions of Hellenistic philosophy and contemporary Christian theology," though he found evidence of them in the church's practice of infant baptism and in his own experience.[283]

The Mystery of Predestination and Election

When pressed for an answer as to why one person rather than another is "persuaded to yield" to God, Augustine quotes Scripture: "'O the Depths of the riches!' (Romans 11:33) and 'Is there any unrighteousness with God?' (Romans 9:14) . . . There is no unrighteousness with God. . . . And God has mercy on whom he will and that whom he will he hardeneth, that is, he has or has not mercy on whom he will. Let us believe that this belongs to a certain hidden equity that cannot be searched out by any human standard of measurement."[284]

Anders Nygren is quoted to say that "the doctrine of double predestination, to heaven and to hell, has . . . the last word in the theology of Augustine."[285] Pelikan comments: "Even

282. Burns, 394.
283. Burns, 394.
284. To Simplicius, II, 16, as cited in Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context*, 212, as quoted in Piper, 61–62.
285. Pelikan, 266.

in his most explicit statements about double predestination, however, Augustine spoke of that grace as a mystery."[286]

The Atoning Work of Christ

Christ the Mediator takes away God's wrath: "Now, human beings were lying under this wrath [of God] on account of their original sin, and this original sin was the more heavy and deadly in proportion and magnitude of the actual sins that were added to it. This is why there was need for a Mediator, that is, a reconciler, who by the offering of one sacrifice, of which all the sacrifices of the law and the prophets were types, should take away this wrath. Therefore the apostle says: 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life' (Romans 5:10)."[287]

The Extent of the Atonement

The reason that Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "You do not believe, because you are not my sheep" (John 10:26) is that "He saw them predestined to everlasting destruction, not won to eternal life by the price of His own blood."[288]

Many quote John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," and other Scriptures to prove that God intends to save every person born into the world.

---

286. Pelikan, 298.
287. *Enchiridion,* 33. Quoted in Needham, 137.
288. *Sermons on John,* 48:4. Quoted in Needham, 165.

To show that the word "world" can refer to the church, those whom Christ saves by his death, Augustine quotes 2 Corinthians 5:19, John 3:17, and 1 John 2:1–2: "That world which God is in Christ reconciling to Himself, which is saved by Christ, and has all its sins freely pardoned by Christ, has been chosen out of the other world that is hostile, condemned and defiled. For out of the mass, which has all perished in Adam, the vessels of mercy are formed."[289]

"'For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Cor. 15:22). Who belong to Adam? All who were born of Adam. Who belong to Christ? All who were born through Christ."[290]

New Life in Christ

"The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord must be understood as follows: grace is the only thing that delivers human beings from evil; without it, they do absolutely nothing good, whether in thought, or in will and emotion, or in action. Grace not only makes known to people what they ought to do, but also enables them to perform with love the duty that they know."[291]

Augustine demonstrates this from Paul's statement, "We pray to God, that you do not evil, but that you should do what is good" (2 Corinthians 13:7). Prayer is necessary

289. See Romans 9:22–23. Quoted in Needham, 167.
290. *Sermons on John,* 3:12–23. Quoted in Needham, 141.
291. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 3. Quoted in Needham, 176.

because God's grace is necessary for us to do what is good.[292]

"Listen to the apostle Paul when he says, 'Love is the fulfillment of the law' (Romans 13:10). How do we obtain the love? By the grace of God. By the Holy Spirit. For we could not have it from ourselves, as if we created it for ourselves. Love is the gift of God. . . . For the apostle says, 'The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us' (Romans 5:5)."[293]

"For them [the Pelagians], grace means the knowledge with which the Lord God helps us, by which we can *know* what our duty is. The true meaning of grace, however, is the love that God breathes into us, which enables us with a holy delight to *carry out* the duty that we know."[294]

The Christian Life – a Lifelong Struggle with Sin

As a result of further reflection prompted by the Pelagian controversy, Augustine later changed his interpretation of Romans 7:14–25 to apply to the life of the converted Christian. The spiritual struggle comes as the Holy Spirit inspires true believers to delight in God and the good which God commands and to oppose sin.

God allows us to fall into sin to keep us from the greater sin of pride. God uses a variety of means to cause the elect to persevere in love as a general orientation of the heart,

---

292. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 3. Quoted in Needham, 176.
293. *Sermons on John,* 17:6. Quoted in Needham, 177.
294. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 4:11. Quoted in Needham, 177.

despite lapses, until their final glorification. Thus, it is all of grace; we are to take no credit for continuing to turn toward God.

Augustine believed that the practice of prayer is inconsistent with relying on free will. He notes that Jesus said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation" (Matt. 26:24). Augustine also points to the Lord's Prayer, where Jesus teaches us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13), as evidence that we need God's help to keep us from sinning.

By telling us to pray for God's help not to enter into temptation, Jesus says clearly that we need God's help not to succumb to temptation that is too great for us. He did not just say, "Watch, lest you enter in to temptation." Augustine says, "Since he added these words 'and pray,' he shows that God helps us not to enter into temptation. You see then that we are assisted by grace, so that God's commands to our wills may not be useless." [295]

The Pelagians seem not to have read the Scriptures like: "For what do you have that you did not receive" (1 Cor. 4:7). "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). They do not understand that "Love is from God" (1 John 4:7), or "God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). "They do not hear what the Lord says through the prophet Jeremiah, 'And I will put My fear into their heart, so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will visit them to make them good' (Jer. 32:40–41)." Or the words God spoke through Ezekiel, "A new heart also I will give you,

---

295. *On Grace and Free Will,* 9. Quoted in Needham, 82.

and a new spirit I will put within you . . . and cause you to walk in My statutes and you shall keep [observe] My ordinances, and do them" (Ezek. 36:22–27).[296]

Augustine concludes, "We walk, true enough, and we observe, and we do, but it is God Who makes us to walk, to observe, to do. This is the grace of God making us good; this is His mercy going before us."[297]

Likewise, Paul wrote, "Because He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it even to the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6), indicating that God initiates the life of faith and obedience in us, and he brings it to completion.

This is not the same as fate, which is an impersonal force, for God is personal, and acts according to his own will and purpose.

For the one chosen by God, "the human will is so divinely aided in the pursuit of righteousness, that a person receives the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit forms in his mind a delight in, and a love of, that supreme and unchangeable good which is God. . . . Now, in order to win our affections to what is right, God's 'love is shed abroad in our hearts,' not through free-will which arises from ourselves, but 'through the Holy Spirit Who is given to us' (Romans 5:5)."[298]

---

296. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 4:13–14. Quoted in Needham, 180–81.
297. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 4:15. Quoted in Needham, 182.
298. *On the Spirit and the Letter,* 5. Quoted in Needham, 189.

God puts into our hearts the desire to do good. "For what is the desire for good but love? John the apostle speaks of this without any ambiguity, and says, 'Love is from God' (1 John 4:7). Love does not begin from ourselves."[299]

Our love for God comes from God: "So that we might receive the love that enables us to love, God loved us while as yet we had no love ourselves. This the apostle John most expressly declares: 'Not that we loved God,' says he, 'but that He loved us' (1 John 4:10). And again, 'We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19) . . . For we could not have any power to love Him, unless we received it from Him in His first loving us."[300]

"It is certain that we keep the commandments if we will. But because 'the will is prepared by the Lord' (Prov. 8:35, Septuagint), we must ask Him for such a force of will that is sufficient to make us act by willing. Again, it is certain that when we will, we are the ones who do the willing. But it is God Who causes us to will what is good, of whom it is said . . . 'The will is prepared by the Lord.' Of the same Lord it is said, 'The steps of a man are ordered by the Lord, and He wills his way' (Ps. 37:23). Of the same Lord it is also said, 'It is God who works in you, even to will!' (Phil. 2:13)."[301]

Perseverance

---

299. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 2:21. Quoted in Needham, 192
300. *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin,* 1:27. Quoted in Needham, 193.
301. *On Grace and Free Will,* 32. Quoted in Needham, 194.

"Persevering obedience is God's gift, which, by the confession of all Christians, God foreknew that He would give to His people, those who were called by that calling of which it was said, 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance' (Romans 11:29)."[302]

"None of the godly can perish. For we must consider the unchangeable promises of God; and the apostle [Paul] says, 'The Lord knows those who are His' (2 Tim. 2:19); for 'those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son' (Romans 8:29), which means that none of them can perish."[303]

Augustine also quotes John 10:28: "And they shall never perish," and "No one shall pluck them out of My hand." He goes on, "Of those sheep concerning whom the apostle says, 'The Lord knows those who are His' (2 Tim. 2:19), and 'those whom He foreknew . . . He also glorified' (Romans 8:29–30). It is this that He says: 'No one shall pluck them out of My hand.'"[304]

He notes that in Romans 8:28–30 Paul employs the past tense, "as if God had already arranged from eternity that they should come to pass."[305]

Citing Philippians 1:6, "He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ," he concludes,

---

302. *On the Gift of Perseverance,* 36. Quoted in Needham, 233.
303. *City of God,* 18:51. Quoted in Needham, 239.
304. *Sermons on John,* 48:6. Quoted in Needham, 275.
305. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 23. Quoted in Needham, 285.

"What else does he promise to them from God's mercy other than perseverance in good to the end?"[306]

"When [Jude] says, 'Now to Him Who is able to keep you without offence, and to establish you before the presence of His glory, blameless in joy' (Jude 24), does He not most manifestly show that perseverance to the end in goodness is God's gift?"[307]

On Acts 13:48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," he writes, "Who could be ordained to eternal life except by the gift of perseverance?"[308]

He also quotes John 6:39 to show that he will not let any whom he has given to Christ to perish. John 15:16 shows that Christ will see to it that the fruit borne by his disciples will endure.[309]

This doctrine should not lead us into pride, however: Believers should take care "not to be high-minded, but fear (Romans 11:20). For who of the multitude of believers can presume, so long as he is living in this mortal state, that he is in the number of the predestined?"[310]

We must not think that lifelong membership in the church guarantees or indicates being one of the elect or predicts perseverance to the end, for constant and unrepented iniquity indicates that one is among those of whom Paul

306. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 10. Quoted in Needham, 275–276.
307. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 10. Quoted in Needham, 276.
308. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 10. Quoted in Needham, 276.
309. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 34. Quoted in Needham, 281.
310. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 40. Quoted in Needham, 240.

said, “Those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”[311]

Still, however, “You, therefore, ought to hope that the gift of persevering in obedience will be given to you by the Father of Lights, from Whom comes down every excellent gift and every perfect gift (James 1:17); and you ought to ask for this gift in your daily prayers. And in doing this, you ought to trust that you are not aliens from the predestination of His people, because it is God Himself Who bestows even the power of praying for perseverance.”[312]

Election by God is shown by continuing with Christ, as seen in John 8:31: “If you continue in my word, then you are truly My disciples.”[313]

He also cites John 17:15, where Jesus prays to the Father to keep his disciples from evil, or the Evil One.

Quoting John 8:36, “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed,” Augustine concludes, “By that deliverance they have the free will which enables them to serve God. . . . By being set free from sin, that have become servants of righteousness, in which they will stand till the end, by the gift of perseverance given to them by Him who foreknew them, predestined them, called them according to His purpose, justified them, glorified them.”[314]

---

311. *City of God,* 21:25. Cited in Needham, 291.
312. *On the Gift of Perseverance,* 62. Quoted in Needham, 241.
313. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 22.
314. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 35. Quoted in Needham, 288.

The Christian Life

The Christian life depends upon continuous divine operation: "Light in the mind and Love in the will."[315]

Believers are not saved in isolation, but become members of the church of Christ. That is, grace has social effects: Grace produces a community of love, the church. The church is a mixed society. The saints are those in whom God's grace is working to produce love for himself and each other.

Augustine taught that the sacraments were necessary to help Christians in their fight against sin. God uses the sacraments and the prayers of the saints to cause people to grow in their sanctification and convert others.[316]

Sinless Perfection in This Life?

Against the perfectionism of Pelagius, Augustine resolutely resisted the idea that Christians in this life are marked by perfect sinlessness. Quoting such passages as Jeremiah 10:23; Psalms 32:5–6; 143:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15; 1 Timothy 5:20; Matthew 18:35; and 1 John 1:8, he affirmed that the "normal" Christian life is a pilgrimage. "It is thus the citizens of the city of God who are healed while they dwell as pilgrims in this earth, sighing for the peace of their heavenly country," where they will be fully and finally free from sin.

---

315. Burns, 392.
316. Burns, 396.

Meanwhile they trust in God, who "acts inwardly on the mind, distinguishing between the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy, by His own very secret but very just providence. He Himself aids the soul in His own hidden and wonderful ways" until it reaches the heavenly city. "Afterwards, with perfected health and endowed with immortality, it will reign without sin in everlasting peace."[317]

Above all, he frequently appeals to the Lord's Prayer, which teaches us to pray, "forgive us our debts" (Matt. 6:12) as evidence that true Christians continue to sin in this life and need constantly to ask for, and receive forgiveness of God by faith, even as they strive constantly for holiness.[318] As long as we sincerely pray this prayer and ask for perseverance, we may confidently trust that we are among God's elect and will endure to the end.

The Christian Life is One of Constant Struggle

Augustine cites Ambrose as teaching that we must constantly ask God for grace to overcome indwelling sin, citing Romans 7:23 and 7:18. The Christian's struggle against "foolish and harmful desires (1 Tim. 6:9) is "a struggle, a conflict, a battle."[319]

In the elect, the "divine call [through preaching of the gospel] evokes and secures the response of faith, so that the salvific result in response must be attributed to divine

317. *City of God,* 15:6. Quoted in Needham, 249–250.
318. See, among many passages, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* 3:15. Quoted in Needham, 256.
319. *Against Julian,* 2.9.32. Quoted in Harmless, 425.

mercy alone, according to Romans 9:16 and Proverbs 8:35 (LXX)."[320]

Upon these, God bestows the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, "the gift of divine love . . . [that] changes the person's dispositions so that God and the good which God commands are loved for their own sake. . . For the first time, the new person can choose the good and be freed from evil, but this liberation is incomplete. Instead, the Holy Spirit initiates the struggle between desired good and inevitable evil which Paul describes in Romans 7." [321]

Reprobation

The reprobate are justly punished for their sins. "Those who do not belong to the number of the predestined are . . . mostly justly judged according to their deservings. Either they lie under the sins that they have inherited from Adam and die without having had that debt put away by regeneration, or they have added further sins to the original one by their own free will. This is will free but not freed – it is free from righteousness but enslaved to sin."[322]

In this quotation, Augustine is obviously referring to Genesis 3; Titus 3:5; Romans 5:12–19; John 8:34; and Romans 6:16–20.

Answers to Questions and Objections

Why Preach the Gospel if Only Some are Elect?

---

320. Burns, 397.
321. Burns, 397.
322. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 13(42). Quoted in Bray, 103.

We preach to all because we do not know who will be saved: "Because we do not know who belongs to the number of the predestined, we ought to be influenced by the affection of love so as to will all people to be saved. . . . So then, in our ignorance of who will be saved, God commands us to will that all to whom we preach . . . may be saved, and He Himself works this in us by diffusing love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given to us (Romans 5:5)."[323]

On John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him," Augustine says, "What splendid praise of grace! Nobody comes unless drawn. Which one he draws and which one he does not, why he draws this one and does not draw that one, is not for you to judge, if you do not want to err. . . . Are you not yet being drawn? Pray to be drawn."[324]

Why did God not Will to Create Those Who Could not Sin?

"He alone knows. We must not know more than is suitable."[325]

"Why did God create people whom he knew would be condemned to hell and not saved by his grace? The blessed apostle explains this as succinctly and as authoritatively as he can when he says . . . that it would indeed be unjust if

323. *On Rebuke and Grace*, 46–47. Quoted in Needham, 230.
324. *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 26.2. Quoted in Hill, 450.
325. PL 2.xxiii.1, p.105 *De Genesis ad litteram*, 2.11; Quoted in Lombard, *Sentences*.

God had made vessels of wrath for perdition (see Romans 9:20) if they had not belonged to the universal race of the condemned that descends from Adam. What is made a vessel of wrath by birth receives its deserved punishment, but what is made a vessel of mercy by rebirth received undeserved grace."[326]

Does God Want Everyone to be Saved?
In what sense does God want all human beings to be saved?

On 1 Timothy 2:4 and the phrase, "all men," see *Enchiridion,* page 103. Some highlights:

First, this verse means that "no man is saved unless God wills his salvation . . . no man is saved apart from His will."[327]

Secondly, Paul is referring to "the human race in all its variety of rank and circumstance," and "men . . . in all nations . . . every sort of man."[328]

Commenting on 1 Timothy 2:4 and Matthew 23:37, he says, "even though she [that is, Jerusalem] was unwilling, God gathered together as many of her children as He wished. For He does not will some things and do them, and will others and fail to do them; no, 'He has done all that He pleased in heaven and in earth' (Psalm 125:6)."[329]

326. Letter 190.3.9. Quoted in Bray, 101.
327. *Enchiridion,* 103. Quoted in Paolucci, 120.
328. *Enchiridion,* 103. Quoted in Paolucci, 121.
329. *Enchiridion,* 103. Quoted in Paolucci, 121–122.

God can change the human will out of his mercy (see Romans 9:18).

On Romans 9:13: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," he says, God "loved Jacob by His undeserved grace, and hated Esau by His deserved judgment," basing his argument on 9:15–16, where Paul says that God shows mercy on whom he will.[330]

Also: "all men" refers to "all the predestined, because every kind of person is found among them. Just as it was said to the Pharisees, 'You tithe every herb' (Lk. 11:42), where the expression is only to be understood of every herb that they had; for they did not tithe every herb which was found throughout the whole earth."[331]

Note: Augustine is right here. Paul uses "all" or "every" many times in 1 Timothy to refer to "some of a particular kind" rather than "all of any kind." See 2:1: "all men,"; "all who are in authority" 2:2; "everywhere" 2:8; "all submission" 2:11; "all evil" 6:10.

Similarly, "'Even as I also please all men in all things' (1 Cor. 10:33). For did he who said this please the multitude of his persecutors? But he pleased every kind of person that assembled in the Church of Christ."[332]

"Likewise the verse that says 'God wants everyone to be saved' (1 Tim. 2:4) means that although there are a great many people whom he does not want to be saved, those

330. On Romans 9, see *Enchiridion,* 97–99.
331. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 44. Quoted in Needham, 229.
332. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 44. Quoted in Needham, 229.

who are saved are saved only because he wants them to be."[333]

On 1 Timothy 2:4, Augustine refers to Luke 11:42 and 1 Corinthians 10:33 to show that "all" and "every" in the Bible do not always refer to all of any kind, but to some of any kind.[334]

"It is said, 'Who will have all men to be saved,' not that there is no man whose salvation He does not will (for how, then, explain the fact that He was unwilling to work miracles in the presence of some who, He said, would have repented if He had worked them? Matthew 11:20-24), but that we are to understand by 'all men,' the human race in all its varieties of rank and circumstances – kings, subjects, noble, plebeian, high, low, learned and unlearned, the sound in body, the feeble, the clever, the dull, the foolish, the rich, the poor . . . of every tongue, of every fashion, of all arts, of all professions, withal the innumerable differences of will and conscience, and whatever else there is that makes a distinction among men. For which of all these classes is there out of which God does not will that men should be saved in all nations through His only-begotten Son, our Lord, and therefore does save them; for the Omnipotent cannot will in vain, whatsoever He may will."[335]

Our ignorance of who will be saved should lead us to desire the salvation of all whom we meet: "God commands us to

---

333. Letter 217.6.19. Quoted in Bray, 101.
334. See *On Rebuke and Grace*, 14(44), cited in Bray, 104. Many more examples could be cited, even from 1 Timothy.
335. *Enchiridion*, 103.

desire this for everyone to whom we preach the gospel and works this in us by diffusing that love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us" (referring to Romans 5:5).[336]

Why does God not Teach Everyone the Way of Salvation?

"It must surely be because those whom He teaches, He teaches in mercy, whereas those whom He does not teach, He judges. 'He has mercy on those whom He chooses, and He hardens those whom He chooses' (Romans 9:18)."[337]

"'His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways are past finding out; all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth' (Psalm 25:10; Romans 11:33). God's mercy is past finding out. He has mercy on those whom he wants to have mercy, and without any merit of the recipient. Likewise, the truth by which he hardens whom he wills, even when the person concerned may have done meritorious works, is beyond our understanding. . . . There is no unrighteousness with God, but his ways are past finding out. Therefore, let us believe in his mercy in the case of those who are delivered and in his truth in the case of those who are punished, without any hesitation, and let us not try to look into what is inscrutable or to trace what cannot be discovered."[338]

On John 12:37–41, which quotes Isaiah 6 and raises the question of how the Jews could be charged with sin for not believing in Jesus, Augustine writes: "'They could not believe,' because Isaiah the prophet foretold it; and the

336. *On Rebuke and Grace,* 15(47). Quoted in Bray, 104.
337. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 8.14. Quoted in Bray, 104.
338. *On the Gift of Perseverance,* 11.25. Quoted in Bray, 106.

prophet foretold it because God foreknew that such would be the case. But if I am asked why they could not, I reply at once, because they would not; for certainly their depraved will was foreseen by God, and foretold through the prophet by Him from whom nothing that is future can be hid. But the prophet . . . assigns another cause than that of their will . . . [t]hat God has given them . . . eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, and has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart. This also, I reply, their will deserved. For God thus blinds and hardens, simply by letting alone and withdrawing His aid; and God can do this by a judgment that is hidden, although not one that is unrighteous. This is a doctrine which the piety of the God-fearing ought to preserve unshaken and inviolable in all its integrity; even as the apostle, when treating of the same intricate question, says, 'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!' (Romans 9:14). If, then, we must be far from thinking that there is unrighteousness with God, this only can it be, that, when He gives His aid, He acts mercifully; and, when He withholds it, He acts righteously."[339]

"Whilst our Lord Jesus Christ was speaking among the Jews, and giving so many miraculous signs, some believed who were foreordained to eternal life, and whom He also called His sheep; but some did not believe, and could not believe, because that, by the mysterious yet not unrighteous judgment of God, they had been blinded and hardened, forsaken by Him who 'resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble' (James 4:6)."[340]

---

339. *Tractates on John,* 53.6. Quoted in Seraphim, 247.
340. *Tractates on John,* 54.1 Quoted in Seraphim, 249.

"Accordingly, when questions of this sort come before us, why one is dealt with in such a way and another is dealt with in such another way; why this one is blinded by being forsaken of God, and that one is enlightened by the divine aid vouchsafed to him; let us not take upon ourselves to pass judgment on the judgment of so mighty a judge, but tremblingly exclaim with the apostle, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!' (Romans 11:33)" [341]

"The hidden works of God have their secret that I believe by faith."[342]

Why Does One Professing Christian Persevere, and Another Fall Away from the Faith?

"The judgments of God are unsearchable. . . . Yet to believers it ought to be crystal clear that in each case, the former is predestined to eternal life and the latter is not."[343]

Does the Doctrine of Election make Believers Careless and Complacent?

No, because we must remember that "as long as we are here on earth we must take heed lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12) . . . We must learn to 'work out our own salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God who works in us both to will and to do for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:12–13). We therefore

341. *Tractates on John,* 53.6. Quoted in Seraphim, 248.
342. *On the Soul,* 4.11.16. Quoted in Bray, 108.
343. *On the Gift of Perseverance,* 9.21. Quoted in Bray, 106.

will, but God also works in us to will. We work, but God also works in us to work for his good pleasure."[344]

Why Do Some Believe and Others not Believe unto Salvation?

"The Gospel itself explains the reason for this by quoting the prophet Isaiah." Here Augustine refers to John 12:37–38 and quotes Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 to show that "no one comes to Christ unless it is given to him to do so, and it is given to those who have been chosen from before the foundation of the world" (referring to Ephesians 1:4–5). [345]

Should We Stop Preaching if We Believe in Predestination? No!

"Did not [Paul] so often, in faith and truth, both commend predestination, and not cease to preach the word of God? For he who said, 'It is God that works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure' (Phil. 2:13), did he not also exhort that we should both will and do what is pleasing to God? Or because he said, 'He who has begun a good work in you will carry it on even until the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 1:6), did he on that account cease to persuade people to begin and to persevere to the end?"[346]

Why Does God not Save All People?

"The apostle [Paul] explained, as far as he judged that it was to be explained: it was because, 'willing to show His

344. *On the Gift of Perseverance,* 13.33. Quoted in Bray, 106–107.
345. *On the Gift of Perseverance,* 14.35. Quoted in Bray, 107.
346. *On the Gift of Perseverance,* 34. Quoted in Needham, 231.

wrath, and to exhibit His power, He endured with much patience the vessels of wrath that were prepared for destruction, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He has prepared for glory' (Romans 9:22–23)."[347]

Conclusion

From this selection of Augustine's writings on salvation by God's sovereign grace, we can see that (1) "Augustine makes this case on the basis of Scripture," not on philosophy or reason; and (2) "Since God's grace and power to save are at the very heart of the gospel, it would be quite difficult to refute the biblical arguments that Augustine presents."[348]

Appendix: Augustine's Ongoing Influence

Augustine's Doctrines of Grace: Ongoing Influence

Augustine's doctrine of salvation, with some modifications, became the official position of the Western church after Pelagianism was decisively rejected. Throughout the Middle Ages, his exposition of grace became standard, as seen in the writings of the Venerable Bede (672/3–735), who was also later accorded the title of "Doctor of the Church." Bede wrote of "the blessed Augustine, bishop of Hippo and foremost doctor the church."[349] According to

347. *On the Predestination of the Saints,* 14. Quoted in Needham, 246.
348. Levering, 87.
349. Bede, *The Greater Chronicle*, 4403, in McClure and Collins, *Bede*, 325.

him, Pelagius's teaching "was treacherous poison" that denied "our need of heavenly grace." St. Augustine and the rest of the orthodox fathers answered them by quoting many thousands of catholic authorities against them."[350]

Peter Lombard, whose *Sentences* were one of the principal theological textbooks well into the 16th century, quoted Augustine hundreds of times. "Among the Fathers, Augustine . . . is dominant."[351] Indeed, "it can be said with some justification that nine-tenths of the *Sentences* consist of Augustinian texts."[352]

Distinctions XXII – XXX in Book 2 of the *Sentences* contain many of the major arguments for and against Augustine's soteriology, expressed, as almost all of this work, by the quotation of Augustine and his critics.[353]

Among the many Medieval commentators on Lombard's *Sentences* was Thomas Aquinas, whose works gradually supplanted Peter Lombard's, and who was later declared the authoritative theologian for Roman Catholics. It is well known that Aquinas sought to build a synthesis that combined elements from such disparate components as the Scriptures, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Aristotle.[354] Recent scholarship has demonstrated, however, that "Aquinas is 'genuinely reared in Augustine' and remains

---

350. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 1.10, in McClure and Collins, *Bede*, 21.
351. Lombard, *Sentences*, translated by Silano, Book 1, xi.
352. Lombard, Book 1, xxvii.
353. Lombard, Book 2, 97-158.
354. On the opposition of Pseudo-Dionysius's teachings to those of Augustine, see Luibheid, et al., *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 17–18.

Augustine's 'faithful disciple, both in theological doctrine and in the quality of his spirituality.'"[355]

"On the subject of predestination, Aquinas himself was solidly Augustinian."[356]

In particular, "Aquinas's theology of merit and predestination was enriched during the course of his career by reading Augustine's later works on grace."[357] His doctrine on the origin of original sin follows Augustinian lines, while advancing the discussion further, and he "draws out the order of grace in a way that accords with and deepens Augustine's emphasis on grace in his commentary" on John's Gospel.[358]

The Reformers

It is well known that Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk. Though he insisted that theology must come solely from the Scriptures, his doctrines of grace largely reflect Augustine. *The Bondage of the Will* may be regarded as the first, and perhaps most basic, of Protestant re-affirmations and restatements of Augustine's soteriology.

John Calvin differed from Luther in his stronger insistence that the Reformation, far from being a deviation from Christian doctrine, represented a return to the religion of the Fathers, especially Augustine. Though he was not interested in several of Augustine's viewpoints and

355. Dauphinais et al., *Aquinas the Augustinian*, xii.
356. Colin Brown, 160.
357. Dauphinais, xv.
358. Dauphinais, xx-xxi.

disagreed with others (such as the damnation of unbaptized infants and the nature of evil as privation of good), he followed Augustine's lead in his treatment of God's sovereign grace.

He wrote, "Augustine is so completely of our persuasion, that if I should have to make a written profession, it would be quite enough to present a composition made up entirely of excerpts from his writings."[359] That, of course, is what I have attempted in this article. His quotations from, and references to, Augustine's anti-Pelagian works far outnumber those to the writings of others.

Likewise, the English Reformers, following their forerunners Luther and Calvin, relied heavily upon Augustine in their emphasis on God's free grace in our salvation. Like Calvin, they maintained that their revisions of Roman liturgy and the Thirty-Nine Articles reflected the views of the Fathers, preeminently Augustine. *The Book of Common Prayer*, authored mostly by Thomas Cranmer, weaves Augustinian theology into a tapestry of prayer and praise.[360]

The Puritans followed Augustine and Calvin in their understanding of sin and salvation.

Examples are too many to name, but John Owen's *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers* and *The Death of Death in the Death of Jesus Christ* expound and expand on Augustinian themes in even greater detail. In particular, the

---

359. David Marshall, "Calvin," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 116.
360. See, for example, Philip E. Hughes, T*he Theology of the English Reformers*.

latter work by Owen demonstrates that the doctrines of the limited atonement and the perseverance of saints are firmly rooted in Scripture.

On the Continent, Reformed theologians like J. Wollebius, G. Voetius, and F. Turretin responding to Roman Catholics and post-Luther Lutherans, produced detailed expositions of "Augustine" soteriology and other "Calvinist" themes.[361] They were followed in the nineteenth and twentieth century by Herman Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper.

In the twentieth century, Swiss theologian Karl Barth shattered the optimism of liberal theology with his rich and eloquent enunciation of major "Augustinian" themes.[362]

Augustine's thought, especially his soteriology, has profoundly affected major American theologians.

Jonathan Edwards, "the last of the Puritans," has also been called "the American Augustine," because his theology had "multiple affinities" with that of Augustine.[363] His works on the freedom of the will and original sin parallel Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings. "*Personal Narrative* is something like the *Confessions*. *The History of Redemption* might be compared with *City of God*. Edwards's *Discourse on the Trinity* mirrored Augustine's *On the Trinity* both in theme and argument. Edwards's . . . *Charity and Its Fruits*

361. John W. Beardslee, ed., *Reformed Dogmatics*.
362. Geoffrey Bromiley, *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, 19–20, 23, 27, 79, 81–82, 88, 93, 117–18, 123, 143, 155, 188.
363. McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 696–97; see also Peter R. Doyle, *Jonathan Edwards on the New Birth in the Spirit*, 77–92, 137–42, 159–74.

expounded a major theme of Augustine's writings. Both the content of their theologies and the genre of their works show analogies." In his thoughts on the "analogy of being," he is closer to Augustine than to Calvin.[364]

Benjamin B. Warfield's influential theological writings likewise reflect Augustinian soteriology, while his *Calvin and Augustine* describes the similarities and differences in the theologies of these two thinkers. The same is true of Charles Hodge and his son, Archibald A. Hodge.

Carl F. H. Henry, "the dean of evangelical theologians" in the latter half of the twentieth century, adopted Augustine's approach to epistemology, providence, and soteriology.[365] Popular preacher and writer John Piper calls himself a disciple of Jonathan Edwards and has penned an appreciative theological essay on Augustine.[366] Wayne Grudem's widely-read *Systematic Theology* largely reflects Augustine's doctrines of providence and grace.[367] Even popular singers and song writers, like Shane and Shane, powerfully proclaim Augustinian themes.[368]

This will probably surprise many readers, but Augustine's impact – through theologians who propound his soteriology – is very pronounced among the urban intellectual "house" church leaders of China. There is a general interest in Augustine in the Chinese academy, as invitations to this

364. McClymond and McDermott, 105.
365. See G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons,* 38–50.
366. Piper, 41–74.
367. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 315–54, 669–721, 788–809.
368. See especially their song, *Sovereign Over Us*. Sovereign Over Us - Bing video.

writer to give lectures on his thought indicate. More specifically, however, his soteriology has influenced younger church leaders, through the preaching and teaching of Indonesia theologian Stephen Tong (Tang Chongrong) and Americans like Tim Keller, D.A. Carson, and John Piper.[369]

Clearly, Augustine of Hippo has been the "Doctor of Grace" to millions of Christians for sixteen hundred years. Could it be that this continuing influence derives from the biblical nature of his teaching on salvation?

369. On Tong, see stephen tong - Bing. On the rising influence of Calvinism, see https://www.bing.com/search?q=chinese+house+church+leaders+embrace+calvinism&cvid=c119e855167840fd82a19487558954d8&aqs=edge..69i57.11130j0j1&pglt=931&FORM=ANNTA1&PC=DCTS.

Augustine's Sermonic Method

First published in *The Westminster Theological Journal*.
Volume XXXIX. Spring 1977. Number 2.13-238.

AUGUSTINE'S SERMONIC METHOD

G. WRIGHT DOYLE

I. *Augustine's sermonic corpus*

AUGUSTINE preached different kinds of sermons. The Migne compilation (which often follows the Maurist text) divides the body of sermons into a group of 83 on the Old Testament, 88 on the great feasts of the year, 69 on festivals for the saints, 23 on miscellaneous subjects, and 31 of doubtful authenticity.[1] The homilies on the Psalms,[2] on the Gospel[3] and on the First Epistle of John,[4] plus the large group designated as spurious,[5] complete this collection. Since the Migne collection, over 600 other sermons have been attributed to Augustine with varying degrees of certainty.[6] The spurious sermons "are so numerous because Augustine's fame as a preacher motivated others to copy his style in their own sermons, and because forty years of preaching twice weekly would entail more than 4000 sermons — a huge number to keep track of and analyze with certainty. Possidius (*Aurelii Augustini Vita* 5) writes that Augustine readily preached outside Hippo, especially in Carthage, but often in towns throughout Africa."[7]

Our remarks will concentrate upon selected sermons from the

[1] E. Dekkers, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (Brugges, 1961), no. 284 (Maurist text followed here), 285; G. Bardy, *Saint Augustin, L'Homme et l'oeuvre* (Paris, 1940), p. 210.

[2] Dekkers, no. 283.

[3] *Ibid.*, no. 278.

[4] *Ibid.*, no. 279 (Maurist text).

[5] *Ibid.*, no. 368 (Maurist text).

[6] *Ibid.*, nos. 287, 288, 370.

[7] M. Muldowney (introduction and translation), *Saint Augustine: Sermons on the liturgical seasons* (New York, 1959), pp. ix–xi: Bardy, p. 214; M. Pontet, *L'exégèse de S. Augustin prédicateur* (Marseille, 1944), p. 72.

collection known as *Tractatus in Iohannem* or *In Iohannis Euangelium Tractatus CXXIV*, the title used by Willems in his revision of the Maurist text.[8] As Augustine himself notes in the preface to *Enarratio in Psalmum CXVIII*, *"tractatus"* signifies what the Greek word ὁμίλια does: "sermones . . . qui proferantur in populis, quas Graeci ὁμιλιας uocant . . ."[9]

We may ask, Do *sermo* and *tractatus* mean the same thing? Augustine himself seems to answer this question with various phrases in *De doctrina christiana*: Book Four deals with "tractatio scripturarum"(1). The Christian preacher is a "tractator et doctor diuinarum scripturarum" (6). His speaking differs from conversation (*collocutio*); it is a "sermo in populis," when no questions can be asked from the floor (25). Augustine quotes Paul as he exhorts Timothy to study hard to become "uerbum ueritatis recte tractentem" (2 Tim. 2:15); *De doctrina christiana* 4.33). The young man is urged, "Praedica uerbum . . . argue, obsecra, increpa in owne longanimitate et doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2; *ibid.*). Elsewhere, Paul instructs Titus "ut potens sit in doctrina sana et contradicentes redarguere" (Tit. 2:8; *ibid.*). In another description of the preacher's task, we find the words, "doctor in ecclesia facit inde sermonem . . ." (*inde* here refers to a biblical text; 37). Various categories of Christian teaching are mentioned in section 126: "siue ad populum siue priuatim, siue ad unum siue ad plures . . . siue in tractatibus siue in libris," the important thing for us being that *tractatus* is opposed not to any other oral communication, but to books. The same distinction between speaking for the people and dictating for readers is found at the end of Book Four: "Siue autem apud populum uel apud quoslibet iam-iamque dicturus, siue quod apud populum dicendum uel ab eis qui uoluerint aut potuerint legendum est dictaturus, oret ut Deus congruum sermonem daret in os eius" (63). Here we see the use of *sermo* to cover both preaching before the people and dictation. I conclude that Augustine's terminology is not technical and consistent; that *sermo* and *trac-*

[8] Cf. D. Willems (ed.), *Aurelii Augustini in Iohannis Euangelium tractatus CXXIV* (Turnhout, 1954), p. xii, for other titles which have been given to the series.

[9] *Enarratio in Ps. CXVIII, Prooemium*, lines 23–25.

tatus are often synonomous; and that they can refer to public preaching or to speaking before a very small audience.[10]

Regardless of what we label them, Augustine's sermons take many forms.[11] Those on John belong to the large group known as exegetical. Many were preached for festivals and feast days, including saints' days. Others are topical and deal with one subject without attempting to expound any particular passage of the Bible. Finally, there are the textual sermons, which concentrate upon a verse or short passage of Scripture, but do not form part of an extended exegesis of a longer section of the Bible.

The last seventy homilies on John raise questions about the meaning of the word *tractatus,* however, for several scholars have found evidence of more careful construction in them than in the earlier sermons on John, and less evidence of delivery before a large, mixed congregation.[12] La Bonnardière thinks that the critical remarks on the text, the formulaic conclusions, and an absence of such terms as *carissimi,* indicate presentation before a small audience of educated clergy who would then preach the same sermons to the public.[13] Support for this view is found in a remark in *De trinitate* 15.27.48 to the effect that "in sermone quodam proferendo ad aures populi christiani diximus, dictumque conscripsimus," and that these were spoken "fidelibus, non infidelibus." La Bonnardière concludes that *proferendo* carries its full final and purposive force, and that these sermons were preached for the purpose of being delivered later

[10] Cf. Pontet, pp. 51–52.

[11] Cf. the classification of Y. Brilioth (textual; seasonal, including those for saints' days and those that deal with diverse subjects; exegetical; and "a series of essays which are in reality re-worked addresses"), *A Brief History of Preaching* (Philadelphia, 1965), p. 48. The categories given by J. Finaert, *L'évolution littéraire de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1939), p. 154, are similar.

[12] Pontet, p. 2; A.-M. La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris, 1953), p. 64; D. Wright, "The manuscripts of St. Augustine's *Tractatus in Euangelium Iohannis:* A preliminary survey and checklist," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 8 (1972), 55–143.

[13] La Bonnardière, p. 121.

to the large congregation.[14] Le Landais adduced evidence to the contrary, which we shall have to consider.[15]

M. Le Landais sees no essential difference between *Tractatus* 1–54 and the last 70 in the collection on John. For him, these last homilies were spoken, not dictated. In 112, for example, Augustine makes it clear that he is delivering a *sermo* to people who are standing in order to listen, not sitting to read (112.1.18–20) as they would in the case of "aliis laboriosis litteris."[16] In the same homily, he describes his task as "narrationem . . . tractandam"(1.27). 69.4.3–9 clearly indicates an audience to whom Augustine is speaking directly.[17] Similar evidence is found in 57.6 and 71.1.11 ("pristino sermone iam diximus"), as well as in other passages.

To the argument that Augustine was dictating sermons for memorization by simple priests for later delivery, he opposes the later prominence of the group of priests around Augustine: would these men have needed Augustine's help in composing sermons?[18] (We might also observe that simple priests would not know shorthand; likewise, they would not need to be present if Augustine were merely dictating for their later memorization.)

Le Landais attributes the relative brevity of the later homilies to Augustine's maturity as a preacher and the congregation's weariness with the long exposition of John. By this time, the anti-Donatist conflict was over, and Augustine could forego the over-long sermons of earlier years.[19] He had refined his tech-

[14] *Ibid.;* others before her had concluded that 55–124 were dictated, not preached to a large congregation. Cf. J. Huyben, "De sermonen over het Evangelie van Johannes: Bijdrage tot de chronologie van Augustinus' Werken", *Miscellanea Augustiniana* (1930), 265–267; S. Zarb, "Chronologia Tractatuum in Ev. Primamque Ep. Joannis Apostoli," *Angelicum* 10 (1933), 29–34; Bardy, p. 223.

[15] M. Le Landais, "Des années de prédication de saint Augustin: Introduction à la lecture de l'In Iohannem," *Etudes Augustiniennes* (Paris, 1953), pp. 38–47.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 45; Bardy (p. 214) states that Augustine had his presbyters preach just as he had while still a presbyter; did they compose their own sermons?

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

nique; fewer words prepared more carefully would allow the congregation more time to meditate upon what he had said.

Le Landais' argument has force. He does prove that all 124 *Tractatus* were spoken to some kind of audience, not merely dictated. He does not prove what kind of audience those in the last group were addressed to. Whether these homilies belong to a different *genre* of exegetical sermons Le Landais does not prove, nor does La Bonnardière. Our definition of *tractatus* necessarily arises from the works by that title in the Augustinian corpus, and here the evidence favors the basic homogeneity of the homilies on John, since they are all called *tractatus*.

It may be, however, that the last seventy *Tractatus in Iohannem* were preached to Augustine's clerical friends and not to his large congregation. The *genre* would be the same, with the exigencies of different situations producing slightly different results within the same literary category.[20]

Here La Bonnardière's arguments need weighing. If these homilies were preached in order that simple priests might memorize them and later deliver publicly what Augustine had taught them, ought they not to have been composed by Augustine with a view towards popular presentation? Augustine had allowed such a help for those who could not "think of anything to say" in *De doctrina christiana* 4.62; the beneficiaries of such labor were to memorize these sermons and later preach them *verbatim*. If the differences between popular preaching and *Tractatus* 55–124 are so great, then these homilies would not be suitable for memorization by unimaginative clergy.

On the other hand, La Bonnardière thinks that these homilies were preached not to ignorant but to educated men who would then preach them publicly; in this case, they could embellish the short homilies to make them resemble the earlier homilies on John. This argument makes sense, and provides us with one distinct possibility for the provenance of the later homilies. That would leave us with two kinds of *tractatus,* each an exposition of Scripture conforming to the principles enunciated in *De doctrina christiana*, but one preached to a large, mixed audi-

[20] Bardy (p. 246) writes that Augustine loved to preach to a small group of his friends.

ence, the other to a smaller congregation of relatively well-educated clergy.

Le Landais and Van der Meer[21] present us with another possibility: the later homilies belong to the same *genre* as the earlier ones, but they are more refined, concentrated, and effective. In them, Augustine adhered more faithfully to his own counsel to aim at clarity and biblical content rather than at rhetorical charm. He improved his ability to speak clearly and simply to such a degree that the repetitions and digressions of earlier years were no longer needed.

II. *Preparation and delivery*

In 1922, Roy Deferrari published the results of his research into "Augustine's method of composing and delivering sermons."[22] Later literature has accepted his findings, which overturned earlier opinions. Previously, Augustine was thought to have written out his sermons carefully before delivering them to the people. The last sentence of the *Retractations,* which mentions Augustine's failure to revise his letters and sermons, "alios dictatos, alios a me dictos," seemed to support that position. Deferrari, however, rejected the above reading and replaced it with "alias dictatas, alios a me dictos," which would then mean that the *letters* were dictated, the sermons spoken only (99).

He proceeds to demonstrate that other fourth century preachers spoke mostly *ex tempore,* preparing mentally but not in writing (pp. 104–106). *Notarii* were on hand to take down everything in shorthand, which would then be transcribed into longhand (pp. 107, 109, 119). Augustine himself provides ample proof that he thought in terms of extemporaneous delivery. In *De doctrina christiana,* he warns that concentration upon the rules of rhetoric makes impossible attention to what one is saying at the time (4.6.8). His precepts for attending to the mood of the people while preaching, so that their questions may be cleared up, their opposition met, and their weariness relieved, preclude written preparation for memorized delivery (4.25).

[21] F. Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop* (London, 1962), p. 451: "The older he became, the shorter and more powerful and the better became his sermons."

[22] R. Deferrari, "St. Augustine's method of composing and delivering sermons", *American Journal of Philology* 43 (1922), 97–123, 193–220.

Deferrari gives examples from the sermons of such indications that Augustine is watching his audience carefully. The preacher reviews constantly (p. 195); asks for patience (p. 196); repeatedly attempts to explain some difficulty (p. 197); refers to the expiration of his time allotment and their tiredness (p. 198); begs for silence (p. 199); acknowledges the size or disposition of the group (p. 202); digresses frequently (p. 205); stops sentences to clarify a point (p. 205); begs for attention or notes their expressions of approval or disapproval (p. 207). These occasional remarks, along with irregularities and weak spots, convinced Deferrari that the sermons were, as the *Retractations* admit, unrevised; we have them just as they were transcribed from the shorthand records of the *notarii* (pp. 216f.). It is almost certain that portions of Augustine's discourses are omitted because of the imperfection of the shorthand technique, for the sermons are often shorter than the prescribed *hora* (which would be from 45 minutes to 1 hour, 2 minutes) despite Augustine's reference to the exhaustion of time (p. 212).

Further proof is afforded by Possidius' reference in the *Vita* to "finished books and extemporaneous sermons (*repentinis sermonibus*)" (116). Finally, we have Augustine's statement in *Sermon* 225.5 that he considered beforehand what he would say to the people that day (118). Occasionally, Augustine spoke entirely without preparation, as he admits in his sermon on John 7:2–12 (208), but his usual practice called for study and prayer before delivery (*De doctrina christiana* 4.32).

I have so extensively referred to Deferrari's article because his conclusions have been accepted by the majority of later scholars.[23]

Can we believe that the eloquence found in the *Tractatus in Iohannem* resulted from nothing more than prayer, study, and thought, without the aid of a written manuscript either to memorize or to read? I think so. Baldwin[24] points out that im-

[23] M. Comeau, *La rhétorique de St. Augustin d'après les Tractatus in Johannem* (Paris, 1931), pp. 32–38; J. Finaert, *Saint Augustin rhéteur* (Paris, 1939), p. 17; Bardy, pp. 223–225; Pontet, p. 2; M. Brennan, *A Study in the Clausulae in the Sermons of St. Augustine* (Washington, 1947), pp. 2–6; Van der Meer, p. 414; Muldowney, pp. xiii, xvi–xix; Brilioth, p. 54.

[24] C. Baldwin, *Mediaeval Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York, 1928), pp. 13–16.

provisation as a technique was mastered in the Roman Empire well before Augustine's time, with prodigious feats on record. We shall see that Augustine's composition follows the biblical text he is expounding, thus eliminating the need to memorize a complex outline. If he knew what passage he would be preaching on, days or even weeks beforehand; if he meditated on it constantly during his daily round of activities; if he prayed about it and its application to his congregation; if he thought about parallel biblical texts in advance, then we can believe that his years of rhetorical training, coupled with a consciously simple composition and a striving for clarity, would lead to note-free preaching. In our own day, preaching without notes and without a fully-written manuscript has been vigorously advocated by many teachers of homiletics. Charles W. Koller has devoted an entire book to this method, entitled *Expository Preaching without Notes*.[25]

The sheer power and beauty of Augustine's eloquence cannot be explained by either his training or his careful preparation, however; in him, we are dealing with an outstanding literary and oratorical genius. Lesser men with the same training and method have not been able to match him.

III. *Chronology of "Tractatus in Iohannem"*

The date of Augustine's sermons on John has been intensively studied. Zarb[26] and Le Landais[27] thought that all the sermons were preached after 412. The two most recent investigations, however, by La Bonnardière and Berrouard, both place the first sixteen Tractates in the winter of 406–407. Their complete results will be clear from the following table:

La Bonnardière[28]		Berrouard[29]	
1–16	406–407	1–16	406–407
17–23	after 418	17–19,	
24–54	after 418	23–54	414
55–124	after 422	20–22	418–419
		55–124	422 or later.

[25] C. Koller, *Expository Preaching without Notes* (Grand Rapids, 1962), pp. 35–38.

[26] Zarb, 29–34.

[27] Le Landais, p. 11.

[28] La Bonnardière, pp. 46, 104, 117, 141.

[29] M.-F. Berrouard, "La date des Tractatus I–LIV in Iohannis Euan-

Without presuming to judge between these two proposals, each of which can muster persuasive arguments in its defence, I shall merely accept the division into three major groups of sermons which both of them discern (with the addition of the group 20–22 in Berrouard's scheme). The significance of the dating is twofold: the early sermons, coming before the official defeat of Donatism in 411, are primarily anti-Donatist; the latter ones deal with questions raised by Pelagius, who came to Africa after the fall of Rome in 410.

IV. *Setting of the Sermons*

For a proper understanding of Augustine's preaching, something needs to be said about the setting of the sermons. The congregation at Hippo was a mixed one. Most were illiterate, but some would be highly educated.[30] Some would be rich, but more would suffer from poverty and a tendency to envy the wealthy.[31] Some would know the Bible practically by heart; others would have only the vaguest comprehension of the doctrines of Christianity.[32] The men and women stood on either side; the bishop, clergy, virgins, widows, neophytes, and penitents all occupied different places.[33] On the fringes, especially on feast days, would throng the nominal believers, more interested in the social than the religious aspects of the service; their constant commotion taxed Augustine's weak voice to its limits.[34]

The simple people were highly superstitious, and Augustine had to warn them constantly against the dangers of idolatry.[35] Astrology and wild parties at shrines of the martyrs exercised his eloquence to the full.[36] Judging by the exhortations and warnings in the sermons, the people were given to anger,

gelium de saint Augustin", *Recherches Augustiniennes* 7 (1971), 119, 164, 166.

[30] Pontet, pp. 55–56; Van der Meer, p. 132.

[31] Van der Meer, p. 135.

[32] Pontet, pp. 56, 63; Van der Meer, p. 133.

[33] Pontet, p. 59.

[34] Pontet, p. 61; Bardy, pp. 246, 253; Van der Meer, pp. 169–170.

[35] Pontet, pp. 63–65; Van der Meer, p. 160.

[36] Pontet, pp. 95–96; Van der Meer, p. 487.

coarseness, stealing, swearing, cheating, quarrelling, heavy drinking, and sexual immorality.[37]

They were vocal in responding to their preacher: facial expressions, tears, groans, cheers, beating the breast — all indicated to Augustine what kind of impact his words were making.[38]

Van der Meer gives details about the usual order of service: A typical eucharist began with the reading of the Epistle by an acolyte; the lector would lead the congregation in the antiphonal chanting of a Psalm, and a deacon would read the Gospel portion for the day. The bishop, seated while the crowd stood, spoke for up to an hour before the catechumens were dismissed, the doors were closed, and the eucharist began. Everyone moved to the sanctuary area. There they stood and listened to prayers of thanks, petitions, intercessions, choir singing, the words of consecration and distribution, the benediction following the communion, and the long prayer that followed the partaking of the elements. Beginning early in the morning, a service could last well into the middle of the morning. The bright light of an African midday sun would contrast powerfully with the darkness of the church, windowless and lighted only by candles.[39] A daily eucharist and vespers attracted earnest Christians; ordinarily, except during Easter week, Augustine would preach only on Saturdays and Sundays.[40]

On feast days, the readings from the Bible were established by tradition, but the bishop was free to choose his own readings throughout the year.[41] Scripture lessons, psalms, liturgy — all co-ordinated to impress Christian truth upon the congregation.

Augustine warned that the preacher's life must be as eloquent as his words (*De doctrina christiana* 4.61). His own example set the pace. Poorer than anyone else in his congregation, he sympathized little with the grumblings of the poor against the

[37] Pontet, p. 71; Van der Meer, pp. 130–131.

[38] Pontet, pp. 40–41; Van der Meer, pp. 140–141.

[39] Van der Meer, pp. 397–398.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Van der Meer, p. 344; K. Gamber, *Codices Liturgici Latini Antiquiores* (Freiburg, 1968, 2nd edn.), p. 52; Bardy, pp. 226–227.

rich.[42] Government officials might complain that their occupation allowed neither the time nor the seclusion from temptation that the Christian life demanded, but Augustine proved them wrong by serving as a city judge and working longer hours than they did.[43] He opened his door and his heart to all who needed his company or counsel.[44] Although this constant activity wearied him and interfered with his prayer life, it also afforded him intimate knowledge of his flock, whom he knew by name.[45] Augustine seems to have been weak and in poor health; references abound to his weak voice, which may have been caused by general fatigue.[46] This weakness, however, merely underlined one of his favorite themes: he and his congregation were all weak before Almighty God. Always remaining "a small man before God," Augustine tried to avoid standing out above his people as if he were spiritually superior.[47]

Important for our inquiry into the *provenance* of the later sermons on John is the existence of a small college of priests whom Augustine had chosen and whom he taught.[48] They assisted him in his pastoral duties and constantly supported him as he fought for purity of life and doctrine within the Church. They lived with him near the cathedral and shared in the daily vespers and eucharist.

No discussion of the setting of Augustine's preaching would be adequate without some mention of the heresies he combatted, since they figure largely in the sermons themselves. Arianism[49] was a threat to the doctrine of the Church in Africa because of

[42] Van der Meer, p. 136.
[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 237, 259, 262.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 239, 267.
[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 268, 258.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 236.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 200ff.; Bardy, p. 246.
[49] La Bonnardière, p. 94; see article on Arianism by De Clerq in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia;* also the article in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.* Full histories are in H.M. Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism* (Cambridge, 1882, 2nd edn., 1900); Gwatkin, *The Arian Controversy* (Cambridge, 1889); J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York, 1958). See also the standard histories of Christian doctrine.

Arian soldiers in the army and Arian Vandals attacking the borders. The other two most important opponents were Donatism and Pelagianism. Sabellianism presented a less dangerous threat.

Finally condemned by the Church at the Council of Constantinople in 381 after more than fifty years of controversy, Arianism denied the eternity and full equality of the Son with the Father. Consequently, we see Augustine constantly affirming the full deity and equality of the Son in his sermons on John, convinced that there were Arians in attendance: "Quidem enim fortasse sunt in ista multitudine" (*Tract.* 40.7).

Donatism had vexed the Catholic Church for almost a hundred years when Augustine became Bishop of Hippo.[50] Its history is almost as complex as that of Arianism. Beginning with a protest against those who had handed over sacred books during the Diocletian persecution, it blossomed into a complete church with a requirement that all who had any contact with other Christian bodies or who had failed under persecution must be re-baptized before admittance into communion. Donatists "insisted on the holiness of the minister in the confection of sacramental rites; it gradually became an ethnic and social problem that emphasized the enmity between the native Berber population and the Romans by origin or culture and the hatred of the laboring classes for the landowners."[51] Augustine combatted the separatism of Donatism by insisting that the true Church would always contain both good and evil, wheat and tares.[52] At the Conference at Carthage, Donatists were ordered by an imperial tribune to hand over their buildings to the Catholics and to join Catholic congregations. We shall see Augustine repeatedly defending the unity of the Church in his sermons on John, at least until 411 A.D.

Pelagianism[53] emphasized the moral responsibility of men to such an extent that it seemed to make the grace of God super-

[50] For brief accounts, see articles on Donatism and Augustine in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia.* Complete histories in Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne,* iv (1912) — vi (1922); and W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford, 1952).

[51] "Donatism," D. Faul; *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 4, p. 1001.

[52] *Ibid.,* p. 1002.

[53] See reference works referred to in note 50 for short histories. Full treatment by G. de Plinval, *Pélage* (Lausanne, 1943). See also the standard histories of doctrine.

fluous. Objecting to Augustine's "Da quod iubes et iube quod uis" (*Conf.* 10.40), Pelagius insisted upon the inherent goodness of man from birth and his ability to please God without the need for grace on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ. Augustine opposed this teaching in many polemical works,[54] maintaining that man could come to God only if God should have mercy upon him and draw him to Christ by the Holy Spirit's inner working. Since John contains many sayings to this effect, we find in Augustine's sermons much that seems to attack Pelagianism. After the sack of Rome in 410, Pelagius made his way to Carthage, introducing his teachings into Africa. Although he soon left for Palestine, Augustine vigorously opposed his system.

In *Tractatus* 29.7, Augustine gives us his definition of Sabellianism: "Sabelliani enim dicere ausi sunt ipsum esse Filium qui est et Pater; duo esse nomine, sed unam rem." They are also called Patripassiani, for "dicunt ipsum Patrem passum fuisse" (*Tract.* 36.8). Classified as a form of Monarchianism, Sabellianism had been popular in the early third century; Tertullian and Origen had attacked it, and the Church finally had rejected it.[55]

Since orthodoxy had officially triumphed at successive councils, why did Augustine preach against heretical teachings? He must have thought that his people were in danger of misinterpreting the Bible as heretics had; he warned them against errors in advance, and he dealt with questions currently troubling them. La Bonnardière is right: "If Augustine insists upon the refutation of trinitarian errors, it is because he is not unaware that they had troubled the faithful."[56]

V. *De doctrina christiana*

Augustine composed the Fourth Book of *De doctrina christiana* in 427.[57] The first three books had dealt with exegesis

[54] For example, *De peccatorum meritis, De spiritu et littera* (both 412); *De natura et gratia,* 415.

[55] J. Davies, *The Early Christian Church* (New York, 1965), pp. 138–142.

[56] La Bonnardière, p. 93.

[57] T. Sullivan (introduction, translation and commentary), *Aurelii Augustini, De Doctrina Christiana liber quartus* (Washington, 1930), p. 8; P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London, 1967), p. 264.

(which may be taken to correspond to *inventio*); this last book treats exposition (*elocutio* in the older terminology): "There are two things necessary to the treatment of the Scriptures (*tractatio scripturarum*): a way of discovering (*modus inveniendi*) those things which are to be understood, and a way of teaching (*modus docendi*) what we have learned" (I.1, quoted in IV.1; all other citations are from Book Four only). The Christian orator's task, then, is the treatment of Scripture; specifically, in this book, the exposition of Scripture. Here Augustine immediately limits himself in his rhetorical practice to the teaching of the Bible; he will not be giving directions for the composition of ordinary speeches.

For this task, rules of rhetoric, central to pagan education, are adjudged useful, if learned at an early age, but unnecessary, for "those with acute and eager minds more readily learn eloquence by reading and hearing the eloquent than by following the rules of eloquence. There is no lack of ecclesiastical eloquence . . . which, if read, . . . will imbue (the student) with that eloquence while he is studying. And he will learn eloquence especially if he gains practice by writing, dictating, or speaking what he has learned . . ." (4).[58] Earlier, Augustine had mentioned in passing a few of the rules helpful to the Christian speaker: the exordium should render the audience "benevolent, or attentive, or docile"; he should speak "briefly, clearly, and plausibly"; legitimate argumentation should be employed to defend the truth and refute error; exhortations will seek to "terrify, sadden, and exhilarate" the hearers (3).

Augustine then outlines the tasks facing the Christian orator in order to demonstrate the need for eloquence as each challenge is faced:

> The expositor and the teacher of the Divine Scripture, the defender of right faith and the enemy of error, should both teach the good and extirpate the evil. . . . He should conciliate those who are opposed, arouse those who are remiss,

[58] For the relationship between Augustine's rhetorical theory and Cicero's, see J. B. Eskridge, *The Influence of Cicero upon Augustine in the development of his oratorical theory for the training of the ecclesiastical orator* (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1912); Baldwin, pp. 51–55; Sullivan; Comeau; H. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1938); M. Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron* (Paris, 1958).

> and teach those ignorant. . . . If those who hear are to be taught, exposition must be composed . . . that they may become acquainted with the subject at hand. In order that those things which are doubtful may be made certain, they must be reasoned out with the use of evidence. But if (those who hear) are to be moved rather than taught, so that they may not be sluggish in putting what they know into practice, and so that they may fully accept those things which they acknowledge to be true . . . (there is need for) entreaties and reproofs, exhortations and rebukes . . . (6).[59]

Here Augustine introduces the major element of his preaching theory: the accommodation of different styles to meet different needs in the congregation.

The preacher will rely not on his own words for powerful proof, but upon the words of the Scriptures, "so that what he says in his own words he may support with the words of Scripture. In this way he who is inferior in his own words may grow in a certain sense through the testimony of the great" (8).

The Scriptures are not only wise, but eloquent (9), as Augustine seeks to prove in the following paragraphs (11–21). He finds many ornaments pleasing to the pagan rhetoricians in selections from Paul and Amos. Among them: "membra et caesa," "gradatio," "circuitus" (11), variety, questions-and-answers, brief narrative (13), reproof, invective, proper names used as ornaments (16). Augustine commends the style of Scripture for imitation, except when the biblical passage is obscure, for the expositor does not have the same authority as the writers of the Bible, and clarity is his first aim (22).

Preachers "in all their utterances . . . should first of all seek to speak so that they may be understood, speaking in so far as they are able with clarity . . ." (22). To that end, the preacher should avoid certain topics in public preaching (23), occasionally sacrifice correctness of speech (24), and continue explaining a difficult matter until the congregation shows by its gestures that the matter is understood, and then "aut sermo finiendus, aut in alia transeundus est" (25). Augustine makes the transition from teaching to the other two functions — pleasing and moving — by noting that teaching is fruitless unless the audience listens willingly (26).

[59] Quotations are from Robertson's translation.

> Therefore a certain eloquent man said, and said truly, that he who is eloquent should speak in such a way that he teaches, delights, and moves. Then he added, 'To teach is a necessity, to please is a sweetness, to persuade is a victory.' Of the three, that which is given first place, that is, the necessity of teaching, resides in the things which we have to say, the other two in the manner in which we say it. . . . If he desires also to delight or to move the person to whom he speaks he will not do it simply by speaking in any way at all. . . . Just as the listener is to be delighted if he is to be retained as a listener, so also he is to be persuaded if he is to be moved to act. And just as he is delighted if you speak sweetly, so is he persuaded if he loves what you promise, fears what you threaten, hates what you condemn, embraces what you commend, sorrows at what you maintain to be sorrowful, rejoices when you announce something delightful, takes pity on those whom you place before him in speaking as being pitiful, flees those whom you . . . warn are to be avoided, and is moved by whatever else may be done through grand eloquence toward moving the minds of listeners, not that they may know what is to be done, but that they may do what they already know should be done (27).

The "eloquent man" is, of course, Cicero, and the words quoted from him are found in *Orator* 21.69.[60]

Prayer alone will aid the preacher in finding out what exactly to say to any congregation, for "who knows better how we should say them or how they should be heard through us at the present time than He who sees 'the hearts of all men'? And who shall bring it about that we say what should be said through us and in the manner in which it should be said except Him, in whose 'hand are both we, and our words'?" (32). Prayer also persuades, since "no one rightly learns those things which pertain to life with God unless he is made by God docile to God" (33).

Augustine had taken the three ends of preaching from Cicero, whom he refuses to name; the three styles of classical eloquence are also brought in from Cicero (*Orator* 29.101) and put to Christian use:

> To these three things — that he should teach, delight, and

[60] Augustine follows Cicero in his idea of the three *officia* arising (1) out of Aristotle's proof from the thing itself and (2) from a. the speaker's character and b. the emotions of the hearers (logos, ethos, pathos); Sullivan, p. 102.

> persuade — the author of Roman eloquence himself seems to have wished to relate three other things when he said, 'he therefore will be eloquent who can speak of small things in a subdued manner, of moderate things in a temperate manner, and of grand things in a grand manner.' It is as though he had added these to the three mentioned previously and said, 'He is therefore eloquent who in order to teach, can speak of small things in a subdued manner, and in order to please, can speak of moderate things in a temperate manner, and in order to persuade, can speak of great things in a grand manner' (34).[61]

It happens that everything the Christian has to say is a great matter (35), but he "should not always speak about them in the grand manner, but in a subdued manner when he teaches something, in a moderate manner when he condemns or praises something; but when something is to be done and he is speaking to those who ought to do it but do not wish to do it, then those great things should be spoken in the grand manner . . ." (38). For example, the mysteries of God would be presented in the subdued style; the praise of God, in the middle style; the worship of God and the overthrow of idols in the grand style.

The teacher will not only "explain those things that are hidden and solve the difficulties of questions, but also, while these things are being done . . . introduce other questions which might by chance occur. . . . But they should be introduced in such a way that they are answered at the same time" (39). The examples of the *dictio submissa* given by Augustine indicate that close reasoning, often with questions and answers, joins informal conversation as the outstanding feature of that style.[62] Words such as *disputatio, disputare, disserere,* show how important dialectical argument (*ratiocinatio*) is in Augustine's teaching style.

The middle style (*dictio temperata*) characterizes Paul's exhortation to the Romans (Rom: 12.1–13:14), whose *circuitus, membra,* and *caesa* delight Augustine (40). Sullivan aptly describes this style: "Parallelism, particularly antithetical, and often emphasized by similar ending in clauses . . . is a most im-

[61] Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1, 2, 1355b) distinguishes three styles and three ends; in joining styles and ends Augustine goes beyond both Aristotle and Cicero; Sullivan, p. 120.

[62] Dialectic, with narrative, allegory, and close reasoning, is a central feature of the plain style (Sullivan, pp. 129–132); Augustine's estimation of the usefulness of the rules of argumentation is found in 2.48–53.

portant feature in the middle style, which differs from the grand style in its use of *figurae verborum* . . . rather than of *figurae sententiarum* . . . and in the importance which it attaches to sound and rhythm rather than to vehemence of feeling and emotion."[63] The middle style will use rhythmical endings (*numerosae clausulae*) moderately.[64]

"The grand style (*dictio grandis*) differs from the moderate style not so much in that it is adorned with verbal ornaments but in that it is forceful with emotions of the spirit. Although it uses almost all of the ornaments, it does not seek them if it does not need them" (42). Examples from Paul follow (2 Cor. 6:2–11, Rom. 8:28–39, Gal. 4:10–20); the first two combine charm and fervor; the last moves by the power of its emotions alone.

To avoid boredom, the styles should be mixed and combined (51). The plain style by itself can be tolerated longer than the other two, but should nevertheless be alternated with them for the sake of pleasing variety. When the grand style is to be used, the discourse should begin with the moderate style. Whenever there is need for careful, intricate reasoning and "acumen," the subdued style is appropriate. Praise and blame call for the middle style (52). The value of the subdued (plain) style lies in its power to gain the sympathy of the audience by stating

[63] Sullivan, p. 136.

[64] Augustine's *clausulae* in the City of God were based upon classical and not fourth-century standards, but show the influence of accent as well as quantity (Sullivan, p. 143; G. Reynolds, *The clausulae in the De Civitate Dei of St. Augustine*, Washington, 1824). Brennan concluded that both accentual and metrical principles determine the use of *clausulae* in Augustine's *Sermones ad populum*, but that "Augustine in his *Sermons* showed a marked fondness for accentual *clausulae*" (p. 119). She found that the most common forms were the double spondee, dichoree, cretic spondee, spondee cretic, double cretic, and trochee cretic (p. 116). Augustine's prose is "not metrical to the same degree as is that of Cicero, Cyprian, Ambrose, or Jerome" (p. 117). Other scholars, such as Comeau (p. 14), do not think that the evidence suffices for a study of Augustine's *clausulae*, since we have unrevised transcripts taken down by *notarii*, who certainly left portions of the sermons unrecorded (cf. also Deferrari, pp. 100, 212). Brennan herself admits that the *notarii* missed many things, but still attempts the analysis (p. 9). That she found Augustine's prose to be metrical to some real degree, without any appreciable change throughout his preaching career (p. 7), lends credence to the method she employed.

truth pleasingly, and thus more persuasively than if no ornaments were used (55). In short, "what . . . is it to speak not only wisely but eloquently except to employ sufficient words in the subdued style, splendid words in the moderate style, and vehement words in the grand style . . . ?" (61).

Lest anyone should rigidly join the three styles to the three ends, Augustine warns that these ends "are not to be taken so that one of the three styles is attributed to each one so that the subdued style pertains to understanding, the moderate style to willingness, and the grand style to obedience; rather, in such a way that the orator always attends to all three and fulfills them all as much as he can, even when he is using a single style" (56). When we label a speech as in the plain style, we mean that that style predominates, not that other styles are not used or that the speech only seeks to teach (51).

As he had earlier stressed the power of the very words of Scripture to lend both charm and proof-power to a sermon, so now Augustine teaches that biblical words also serve to persuade (56). Two other means of persuasion conclude the discourse: The life of the preacher and the God about whom he speaks. "The life of the speaker has greater weight in determining whether he is obediently heard than any grandness of eloquence" (59). "For the profitable result of their speech preachers should give thanks to Him from whom they should not doubt they have received it, so that he who glories may glory in Him in whose 'hand are both we and our words' " (63, citing Wisd. 7:16 and referring to 1 Cor. 1:31).

Are Augustine's categories sufficient for analyzing his sermons? In our opinion, they are, at least in the case of the *Tractatus in Iohannem*. Other types of sermon, such as those for feast days, need study to determine whether Augustine applies his rules to them as he does to these exegetical sermons. He defines the preacher's task as the exposition of the Bible; he names the major obstacles (we may call them "rhetorical challenges") facing the preacher; he stresses the importance of the exordium, of rational proof, pleasant speech, and emotional appeals. He seems to divide proof into argument and evidence, of which the Scriptures provide the most compelling. His three styles are nowhere rigidly defined, probably because they cannot be, although the examples he gives and the running commen-

tary upon them offer us parameters for analysis. Just as the purpose of each style extends beyond any one *officium,* so the boundaries between the styles are flexible; the general outline, however, seems obvious enough. Augustine's genius in rhetorical theory lies precisely in this area: he refused to reduce living speech to a set of tight-knit rules.

Although Augustine does not explicitly mention logos, ethos, and pathos (Aristotle's and Cicero's three means of persuasion), we find the concepts embedded in *De doctrina christiana.* He is speaking of logos — rational persuasion — when he dwells upon teaching with the help of arguments and evidence (the latter mostly from Scripture); of ethos, when he mentions praise and blame as the function of the middle style; of pathos, when he admits the need for emotional appeals when the audience are stubborn. His emphasis upon prayer and the sovereignty of God over every sermon adds new and characteristically Christian dimensions to "pathetic" persuasion. So too, the Bible as the most informative, pleasing, and convincing collection of words available to the preacher replaces, to a degree, the *topoi* and rhetorical devices of classical rhetoric.[65]

VI. *Influences upon Augustine*

Modern scholars have detected a number of influences upon Augustine's rhetorical practice.

First of all, there was the popular African speech of the day. Comeau remarks that the dialogue heard from the stage of Roman comedy resembled the popular public speaking of the day and reflected the speech habits of ordinary Roman people.[66] Christine Mohrmann[67] agreed, confirming an observation made before by Norden,[68] that African speech of the time was characterized by parallelism and rhyme.

[65] Comeau, *op. cit.,* pp. 75–77.

[66] Comeau, pp. 39, 43; Finaert, p. 156; C. Mohrmann, "Saint Augustine and the *eloquentia,*" *Etudes sur le latin des chrétiens,* I (Rome, 1958), p. 368.

[67] Deferrari, p. 194; Mohrmann, *op. cit.,* p. 367; also "Saint Augustin prédicateur", *Etudes sur le latin des chrétiens,* I (Rome, 1958), p. 397.

[68] E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI Jahrhundert vor Christus bis in der Zeit der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1909), p. 626.

Closely akin to popular everyday speech was the popular preaching of Stoic and Cynic philosophers using the so-called "diatribe" style.[69] According to Comeau, the popular preachers aimed to please a restless, turbulent audience with word-plays, informal composition, and dramatic techniques such as the fictitious interlocutor.[70] Such popular speaking requires close attention to the responses of the crowd and adaptation of one's remarks to the hearer's reaction.[71] Marrou thinks that Augustine only used the *topoi* and dialogue style of Stoic and Cynic philosopher-preachers when he left biblical exposition and began to exhort and encourage the people to do what the Bible commands.[72] Augustine had both learned and taught in the pagan rhetorical schools; several scholars attribute his verse-by-verse commenting upon the Bible to the method used by the *grammaticus*.[73] Comeau notes the fundamental difference in aim: the Christian speaker intends to change lives as well as to inform minds;[74] Marrou traces Augustine's love of unravelling *nodi* to the insatiable curiosity of the classical scholastic tradition.[75] All agree that the allegorical method employed by Christians had long been useful to pagan scholars desirous of demythologizing Homer and the other classics.[76]

What influence did the Second Sophistic have upon Augustine's practice? He had denounced those who aimed at charm rather than at truth, and who had made excessive use of Gorgianic devices;[77] did he escape the vice of his time? Barry and Comeau think not.[78] The parallel phrases and clauses and the short sentences (or long sentences composed of parallel phrases

[69] Cf. Kennedy, *ARRW*, 469–470, 573, 586, 590, for the earlier history of the "diatribe style"; also "Diatribe" in the *OCD*, 338; Bardy, p. 235.

[70] Comeau, pp. 25, 29; Mohrmann, "Eloquentia," p. 368; Mohrmann, "Prédicateur," p. 400.

[71] Comeau, p. 33; Bardy, p. 233.

[72] Marrou, p. 529.

[73] Comeau, p. 76; Finaert, p. 92; Marrou, p. 469; Mohrmann, "Prédicateur," p. 400; Van der Meer, pp. 440ff.

[74] Comeau, p. 76.

[75] Marrou, p. 587; cf. also Brown, pp. 259–261.

[76] M. Comeau, Saint Augustin, *Exégète de quatrième évangile* (Paris, 1930), p. 106; Marrou, p. 492; Van der Meer, pp. 442–445.

[77] *De doctrina christiana*, 4.30; Comeau, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[78] Comeau, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 29, 59, 60; Bardy, pp. 255–256.

and clauses succeeding one another as idea is added to idea) savor more of the Second Sophistic than of Cicero. Although parallelism, with its antithesis, homoioteleuton, and isocolon, was an effective teaching device, Augustine's fondness for it comes from his being imbued with the sophistic style of the age. Marrou disagrees, considering Augustine restrained in his use of Gorgianic devices and essentially indebted to the Bible for the parallelism which Comeau considers sophistic.[79] Mohrmann traces the rhyming, parallelistic style to Augustine's concern that his hearers learn and understand what he is teaching them.[80] She, too, considers Augustine primarily an imitator of the Bible stylistically.[81]

We have already referred to the Bible as the source of Augustine's style. Comeau, despite her insistence upon the role of current pagan speech in Augustine's sermons, agrees that his content comes entirely from the Bible.[82] In her discussion of the ecclesiastical tradition, she notes that the Jewish tradition of commenting upon Scripture became the regular Christian practice.[83] The Christian sermon becomes a new *genre,* similar to the lectures of the *grammaticus* but aiming, as we have seen, to convert as well as to cultivate the mind.[84] The Bible supplies a new technical language (diction) for the plain style, new ornaments for the middle style, and a new "pathetic" element (the interior life of the soul faced by promises and threats from God).[85] Van der Meer lists the Bible as one of three major influences upon Augustine's preaching (along with the allegorical method and "the reasoning of Antiquity . . . classical intellectualism").[86]

Augustine read the Bible within the ecclesiastical tradition of which he became a part when he was ordained as a presbyter.

[79] Marrou, p. 470.

[80] Mohrmann, "Eloquentia," p. 367.

[81] Mohrmann, "Prédicateur," p. 397.

[82] Comeau, *op. cit.,* p. 45; Brilioth, p. 55.

[83] Comeau, *op. cit.,* p. 73; J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 269ff., traces the Jewish roots of Christian preaching; cf. also H. Dressler, "Preaching Theory," *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 11 (New York, 1967).

[84] Comeau, *op. cit.,* p. 76.

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] Van der Meer, p. 439.

Space does not allow a discussion of the history of the Christian homily.[87] The Christian preacher followed his Jewish predecessor in expounding the Bible. Indeed, the verse-by-verse exegesis which some consider a legacy of the pagan schools may also have been inherited from the Jewish habit of discussing each portion of the Bible separately in turn. Even the allegorical method had long been favored by Christian preachers eager to remove the stumbling blocks of the Old Testament. Ever since Origen, many preachers had found that they could make a difficult passage meaningful or a distasteful one palatable through the use of allegory. Antithetical parallelism also had already become something of a Christian tradition by Augustine's time, canonized by the practice of both Tertullian and Cyprian.[88] Ambrose was Augustine's greatest model in most areas of preaching, being the first preacher really admired by him.[89]

No speaker can ignore his audience. Augustine, more than most, sought to conform his sermons to the needs and capacities of his hearers. *De doctrina christiana* (4.23–25) makes the audience the determining factor in choice of theme and language, and in the length of the exposition itself, for the preacher must persist until his people show that they have comprehended his teaching. Several modern students consider the audience facing Augustine one of the prime shaping forces of his preaching. The popular style he used in common with pagan "preach-

[87] Cf. the histories by E. Dargan (*A History of Preaching*, 2 Vols., New York, 1905), J. Broadus (*Lectures on the History of Preaching*, New York, 1893), H. Kerr (*Preaching in the Early Church*, New York, 1942), and J. Murphy (*ut supra*); see also Kennedy, *ARRW*, 607–613, and C. Mohrmann, "Problèmes stylistiques dans la littérature latine chrétienne," *Vigiliae Christianae* 9 (1955), 222–246.

[88] Broadus, p. 82; Comeau, *Exégète*, p. 39; Pontet, pp. 210ff.; Van der Meer, pp. 442–445.

[89] Comeau, *Rhétorique*, p. 73; Comeau, *Exégète*, p. 35; Pontet, p. 208, however, sees Augustine turning more often to Jerome than to Ambrose for answers to difficult questions; Ambrose's influence may be summed up this way: he introduced Augustine to the allegorical method; he introduced Augustine to the learning of the Eastern Fathers (Pontet, *loc. cit.*; Teselle, *Augustine the Theologian*, London, 1970, p. 199.; *etc.*); he showed Augustine, by his own example, that the Christian preacher was first and foremost an expositor of the Bible: Augustine was in Milan when Ambrose preached his series on Luke and his (considerably more scriptural) adaptation of Basil's *Hexaemeron*.

ers" was chosen precisely for its suitability to a restless crowd eager to be entertained.[90] Such an audience demanded a style involving their active participation, and would not be held by oratorical set-pieces; used to comedies on the stage, they would expect similar rapid dialogue from the pulpit.[91] The mixed character of the congregation, containing illiterates and scholars, mature saints and curious unbelievers, necessitated the simple, didactic, and repetitious style for which Augustine is famous.[92] Heresies of all kinds, new and old, threatened his people; even the Arian heresy became an issue, as we have seen.[93] Augustine could not help discussing the questions of the day, including the principal objections to the Christian faith.[94] They would, however, be familiar with the Bible from years of hearing it read and sung, and would recognize Augustine's innumerable citations and allusions.[95] Form and content, then, were largely influenced by the audience.

Two other circumstances merit attention: Augustine's weak voice, and his posture. Finaert acutely observes that Augustine had chosen the dialogue form of teaching as an accommodation to his weak vocal apparatus (*Contra Academicos* III.15), and assumes that the pervasive presence of dialogue in the sermons also allowed Augustine to rest his voice between question and answer or statement and rejoinder.[96] Finally, we should mention Pontet's conjecture that Augustine's very posture muted the stronger emotions and matched the plain style of the teacher, for he would preach sitting on his Cathedra in front of a standing congregation.[97]

To sum up, Augustine's preaching theory, contained in *De doctrina christiana,* was influenced by pagan and Christian theory and practice. He disliked the sophistry of those who spoke only to please and not to instruct in the truth, and he com-

[90] Mohrmann, "Prédicateur," p. 399.

[91] Comeau, *op. cit.,* p. 25.

[92] Finaert, *L'évolution,* pp. 156, 166, 167; *Rhéteur,* p. 13; Pontet, p. 91; Bardy, p. 255.

[93] Pontet, p. 81; Van der Meer, pp. 131, 132, 169, 170; Brilioth, p. 26.

[94] Pontet, pp. 99, 556; Bardy, p. 246.

[95] Finaert, *Rhéteur,* p. 10; Van der Meer, p. 436.

[96] Finaert, p. 44.

[97] Van der Meer, p. 436.

mitted himself not only to please, but to teach and to persuade, as Cicero had taught before him; accordingly, he valued Cicero's three styles. Although he respected the usefulness of rules of rhetoric taught in the schools, his loyalty to a new tradition caused him to de-emphasize these rules in his theory. We can see the influence of pagans and Christians also in his practice, according to modern scholars. These factors are numerous and complex; their interrelation is not always clear; a precise evaluation of the relative importance of influences upon Augustine would require an extensive study.

Augustine was a master of pithy phrases.[98] We have already seen that he used constant dialogue, with question-and-answer, much the same as popular pagan preachers and dramatists did. This style involved him in constant contact and interaction with the congregation, even though he himself was the only speaker in the dialogue.[99] His desire to teach even the simple led to repetition and rephrasing until they comprehended his message, and then he would move on.[100] Repetition of thought for clarification often takes the form of antithetical parallelism with consequent rhyming, an outstanding feature of Augustine's charm, especially in the middle style.[101] Some critics fault Augustine for an excessive use of figures of repetition, considering him all too close to the Sophists whom he repudiates;[102] others defend him for his judicious use of ornaments abused by pagans.[103] The most common criticism is that Augustine's composition shows little sign of care; its sloppiness proves that he considered composition and arrangement unimportant and that he delivered his sermons largely *ex tempore*.[104] Van der Meer deserves quotation: "He never gives a comprehensive view over a whole

[98] Pontet, p. 37.

[99] Broadus, p. 83; Van der Meer, p. 412; Mohrmann, "Prédicateur," p. 392.

[100] Broadus, p. 83; Deferrari, "St. Augustine's method," 194; Barry, 255, 256; Comeau, *La rhétorique*, 29, 39; Finaert, *Rhéteur*, 41; Mohrmann, "Prédicateur," 392; *Ibid.*, 396–400; Van der Meer, 432–34.

[101] Broadus, 83; Deferrari, "Method," 205; Finaert, *Rhéteur*, pp. 13–17; Pontet, p. 87.

[102] Barry, pp. 254–56; Comeau, *La rhétorique*, 15, 49; Finaert, *Rhéteur*, 41; Mohrmann, "Prédicateur," 396–400.

[103] Broadus, 81; Barry, 256; Comeau, *La rhétorique*, p. 60.

[104] Finaert, *Rhéteur*, p. 25; Mohrmann, "Eloquentia," pp. 363–364.

book of the Bible, nor does he even treat a single reading as a whole or lay bare its connecting thread. . . . The whole planning of his sermons . . . concerns itself with a single verse and sometimes with a single word. . . . It is only when he encounters some difficulty that he traces the connection between one word, or one verse, and another."[105]

Augustine's choice of words reflects his intention to instruct all classes of hearers: "His Latinity bears the stamp of his time; his diction is choice and noble although often descending to the daily language of the people."[106] The pervasive presence of the Bible — its words and its antithetical parallelism — has already been pointed out.

Augustine has also been faulted for a paucity of illustrations,[107] lengthy etymologies, excessive verbiage, and wild allegories based on neo-pythagorean number theory.[108]

Outstanding features of Augustine's style are thus parallelism and repetition of various types; reasoning and argumentation by question-and-answer, including debate with the imaginary interlocutor; interaction with the audience; clarity and simplicity; biblical language and thought; pithy phrases; wordplays; popular speech when necessary; liveliness; and a freedom in composition unknown to classical rhetoricians. Although I agree that Augustine avoids the tight divisions of a speech insisted upon in the schools, I disagree that his composition is usually careless or sloppy. Analysis indicates the presence of internal coherence and continuity. Observing the outlines and noting the transitions within the sermons reveals that Augustine's composition displays order and effective arrangement.

Taichung,
Taiwan,
Republic of China.

[105] Dargan, p. 104; Deferrari, "Method," pp. 194–205, 212; Baldwin, p. 20; Comeau, *La rhétorique*, p. 107; Van der Meer, p. 419.

[106] Van der Meer, pp. 438–440.

[107] Bardy, p. 258.

[108] Dargan, p. 104.

Bibliography

Augustine's writings

Confessions. Various editions are available.

Saint Augustine. *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40*. Translation and notes by Edmund Hill, O.P. Edited and with an introduction and notes by Alan Fitzgerald, O.S.A. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2009.

St. Augustine on St. John: Commentaries, Homilies and Sermons on St. John's Gospel and First Epistle. Compiled and edited by Fr. Seraphim, 2008. Adapted from the original translation found in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series I, Volume 7. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1886–1890.

The City of God. Translated by Marcus Dods; the Rev. George Wilson; the Rev. J.J. Smith. New York: Random House. The Modern Library, 1950.

The Enchiridion: On Faith, Hope and Love. Translated by J. F. Shaw. Edited and with an Introduction by Henry Paolucci. New York: Henry Regnery, 1961.

Other works

Battenhouse, Roy W. *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Beardslee, John W. III, ed. and trans. *Reformed Dogmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Bonner, Gerald. "Anti-Pelagian Works." In *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia,* edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 41–47. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Bray, Gerald L., ed. *We Believe in One God*. In *Ancient Christian Doctrine: Volume 1*, edited by Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Bromiley, Geoffrey W. *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979.

Brown, Colin. *Christianity & Western Thought: A History of Philosophers, Ideas & Movements*. *Vol. 1: From the Ancient World to the Age of Enlightenment*, 95–99. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969.

Burns, J. Patout. "Grace." In *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia,* edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 391–98. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Cantor, Norman F. *Antiquity: From the Birth of Sumerian Civilization to the Fall of the Roman Empire.* New York: Harper Perennial, 2004.

Cavadini, John C. "God's Eternal Knowledge According to Augustine." In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* edited by David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump, 37–59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Chow, Alexander. *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Cooper, Stephen A. *Augustine for Armchair Theologians*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Dauphinais, Michael, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, eds. *Aquinas the Augustinian.* Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2007.

Doyle, G. Wright. "A Great Book about a Great Man." Review of Peter Brown's biography of Augustine.

https://wrightdoyle.ghost.io/ghost/#/editor/post/5a84577819431300182b11e1.

—. “Augustine: A Builder of Western Civilization.” https://www.academia.edu/36244553/Augustine_A_Builder_of_Western_Civilization

—. “Augustine’s Sermonic Method.” *Westminster Theological Journal* XXXIX, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 213–38.

—. *Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons: An Introduction and Guide to Carl Henry’s God, Revelation, and Authority*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010.

—. “Roger Olson on Augustine: A Critique.” https://www.academia.edu/43206691/Roger_Olson_on_Augustine_A_Critique?email_work_card=title

—. “St. Augustine on the Education of a Preacher.” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 5, no. 2 (October 1981): 287–93. Originally published under the pen name John Peace.

Doyle, Peter Reese. *Jonathan Edwards on the New Birth in the Spirit*. Edited by G. Wright Doyle and Brandon J. Cozart. Durham, NC: Torchflame Books, 2017.

Edwards, Mark J. “Neoplatonism.” In *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 588–91. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Fitzgerald, Allan D., ed. *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Frame, John. *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 108–117, especially 114–15. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015.

Fredriksen, Paula. “Paul.” In *Augustine through the Ages*: *An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 621–25. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

Harmless, William, ed. *Augustine in His Own Words*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2010. Most of the quotations in Harmless are based upon the English translation of Augustine’s works by Mourant and Collinge in the *Fathers of the Church* series.

Hill, Jonathan. *The History of Christian Thought*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Hughes, Phillip E. *Theology of the English Reformers.* 2nd ed. edition. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009.

Kannengiesser, Charles. “Augustine of Hippo.” In *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, edited by Donald K. McKim, 133–140. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007.

Lamberigts, Mathijs. “Predestination.” In *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 677–79. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Leff, Gordon. *Medieval Thought – St. Augustine to Ockham.* London: Penguin Books, 1965.

Lombard, Peter. *The Sentences*. Book 2. Translated by Giulo Silano. Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2008.

Levering, Matthew. *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Madec, Goulven. “Christian Influences.” In *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia,* edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 151–56. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Mann, William E. “Augustine on evil and original sin.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* edited by David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump, 98–107. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Marshall, David. “Calvin.” In *Augustine through the Ages*: *An Encyclopedia,* edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 116–120. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

McClure, Judith, and Roger Collins, eds. *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People; the Greater Chronicle; Bede’s Letter to Egbert*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

McClymond, Michael J., and Gerald R. McDermott. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

McGrath, Alistair E. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.

Meconi, David Vincent, and Eleonore Stump, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Needham, N. R. *The Triumph of Grace: Augustine’s Writings on Salvation.* Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2000.

Olson, Roger. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Outler, Albert C., ed. *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion.* St. Louis, MO: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. 1. The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Piper, John. *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000.

Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Complete Works.* Translation by Colm Luibheid; forward, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1967.

Rist, John. "On the Platonism of Gregory of Nissa." *Hermathena*, no. 69 (2000): 129-151. www.jstor.org/stable/23041325. Accessed 26 May 2020.

Schaff, Philip. *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series 1, Volume IV)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984.

Scott, T. Kermit. *Augustine: His Thought in Context.* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995.

TeSelle, Eugene. "Pelagius, Pelagianism." In *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 633–40. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Warfield, Benjamin Breckenridge. *Calvin and Augustine*. Whitefish, MT: Literary Licensing Book Publishers, 2011.

About the Author

Wright Doyle received the BA with Honors in Latin from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the MDiv With Honors from the Virginia (Episcopal) Theological Seminary; and a PhD in Classics from the University of North Carolina.

He and his wife Dori went to Asia with Overseas Missionary Fellowship in 1975. From 1976 to 1988, they lived in Taiwan, where Wright taught Greek and New Testament at China Evangelical Seminary. From 1989 to 2015, they ministered to Chinese students and scholars at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

During that time, Wright traveled to Taiwan and mainland China more than thirty times to teach and to lecture. He also wrote books and articles. He founded China Institute (reachingChineseworldwide.org) and Global China Center (globalChinacenter.org). He is English editor of the online Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity (bdcconline.net) and co-editor of the book series Studies in Chinese Christianity.

Since 2015, Wright and Dori have lived in Texas near their daughter and grandson. He continues to write and to keep in touch with Chinese friends in Asia and North America.