

THE DOCTRINES OF SALVATION (SIN AND GRACE)
Part II: The Theologians (Augustine)

Summary:

- I. INTRODUCTION.**
- II. THE CLASH BETWEEN PELAGIUS AND AUGUSTINE.**
 - A. The Major Figures.
 - B. The Historical Controversy.
- III. THE THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF PELAGIUS.**
- IV. THE THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF AUGUSTINE.**
- V. CONCLUSION.**

I. INTRODUCTION.

It was in the Age of the Theologians (A.D. 300–600), most particularly in the life and writings of Augustine, that the doctrines of “Sin and Grace” received their most intense study and delineation. Augustine’s views were developed by A.D. 387, years before Pelagius reacted against them as he taught in Rome after 407. Pelagius took offense at Augustine’s famous dictum, “Lord command what thy willest and will what they commandest,” and taught his equally famous dictum, “If I ought I can.”

The purpose of this lesson shall be to understand the views of Pelagius and Augustine in their doctrines of “sin and grace,” as well as to conceive the history of the controversy that the differing views occasioned.

II. THE CLASH BETWEEN PELAGIUS AND AUGUSTINE.

A. The Major Figures.

1. Pelagius (ca. 354–ca. 424)

a) His Early Years (ca. 354–380)

Of the early life of Pelagius, little is known of certainty. His birth date is uncertain and most agree that he was of British origins (Pelagius Brito). His character, in contrast to Augustine’s, shows no signs of having passed through any serious moral crises in its development, rather “he led a silent life in the midst of studies and

monastic asceticism” (Neander, *History*. 2, 633). Apparently, he was a man of clear intellect, mild disposition, learned culture, and high moral integrity.

In stature, Pelagius is reported to have been an imposing figure. Wiggers said (*Augustinianism and Pelagianism*, 44), “He bore himself erect, and did not neglect his dress.” Jerome said that he “has the build and the strength of a wrestler and he is nicely stout” (quoted in Evans, *Inquiries*, 35).

Pelagius was a monk (not a monastic or hermit) with enormous learning (Antiochene). He was fluent in both Latin and Greek and linguistically superior to Augustine, his most formidable opponent.

- b) His Life in Rome (*ca.* 380–409). The New Catholic Encyclopedia states (9, 58): “He became a highly regarded spiritual director for both clergy and laity. His followers were few but influential, and this rigorous asceticism was a reproach to the spiritual sloth of many of their fellow Catholics.” Between 385–398, it is likely that he traveled in the East. He did befriend Rufinius (Antiochian), Paulinus of Nola, Sulpicus Severus, and Coelestius (a lawyer).
 - c) His Life in Africa (*ca.* 409–12). Pelagius attempted to meet with Augustine.
 - d) His Life in Palestine (*ca.* 412–18). Pelagius befriended John of Jerusalem, but was condemned by Pope Innocent I in 417. Emperor Honorius upheld Innocent’s condemnation and ordered him banished from the empire.
 - e) His Life Upon Leaving Palestine (*ca.* 418–24). Little is known of Pelagius after 418, except a notice in 424 by Augustine.
2. **Augustine of Hippo (354–430).** Aurelius Augustine was born in Tagaste, North Africa, on 13 November 354 of the now-famous St. Monica. After a lustful pursuit of peace, he turned to religion (Manicheanism in 373, Neoplatinism in 382), but found frustration. Due to illness, the rhetoric teacher went to Rome, then to Milan where he met Ambrose. After rejecting the gospel initially and struggling with a continued illness, he came to Christ in 387. In 391, he became a priest and, in 395, the Bishop of Hippo. He remained in his office, writing voluminously, until 430 as the Vandals stood at the gates of his city. Most of his writings were after 400, thus after the period of his eschatological shift from premillennialism to amillennialism.

During Augustine's ministry he dealt with three major doctrinal controversies: the Manichaean Controversy, the Donatist Controversy and the Pelagian Controversy. The Donatist Controversy focused on doctrines of ecclesiology but also impacted Augustine's views on eschatology. This shift in his eschatology in turn impacted his soteriology and must therefore be briefly surveyed to understand the context of his soteriology.

- a. **The Manichean Debate:** Augustine was born to a pagan father and Christian mother, Monica. Loosely raised a Christian, he rejected Christianity in adolescence and by 18 he became a devotee of Manichaeism for the next decade. Following this he was enamored with neo-Platonism.

After his conversion to Christianity, during his early years as a priest he wrote several tracts against the Manicheans including the anti-Manichaean *Confessions*. However, Manichaeism and neo-Platonism still influenced his theology.

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* notes:

Augustine nevertheless remained influenced by Mani's contention that unregenerate humanity lacks free will to perform any good action, and the proposition that sexuality exercises a downward pull on the soul (common to Mani and the Platonists) was important to Augustine both in his ascetic ideals and in his articulation of the doctrine of 'original sin'.

Regarding this influence the *Dictionary of Historical Theology* (p. 44) makes this helpful assessment:

Against the Manichean teaching that sin is involuntary and due to human embodiment, Augustine's earliest writings defend the traditional Christian teaching on the freedom of the human will (*On Free Will*, books 1 and 2). From 396 on, however, his understanding of human freedom, of God's salvific will, and of God's dealing with humankind changed. (The occasion for the change may have been a challenge from the Manicheans to explain why God had chosen Jacob, but not Esau.) Beginning with the second part of his reply *To Simplicianum*, Augustine taught that, while God gives grace to all, the human will is so vitiated by Adam's sin that humankind is incapable, without divine compulsion, of accepting that grace and turning to God. It is only those God wishes to save who are given that compelling or irresistible grace, *gratia congruens*. Those

not predestined to be saved will inevitably refuse the less forceful grace given them. Augustine's conviction that the human will is totally vitiated was based on his belief that humankind inherits not only the results of Adam's sin (as traditionally taught) but Adam's guilt as well. The exegetical basis of this conviction was a misreading of the *eph hō pantes hēmarton* of Romans 5:12 as 'in whom all sinned' rather than 'in that all sinned' (RSV). It is probable that other factors as well contributed to his increasingly pessimistic outlook. Even western churches which have not accepted Augustine's teaching of double predestination (it was rejected as early as 529 at the Second Council of Orange) have not totally escaped his bleak understanding of Christian anthropology.

When in Rome I 387-388 Augustine began a treatise *De libero arbitrio voluntatis* (*On the Freedom of the Will*) which he did not complete until ca. 395. In this work he refutes the external determinism of Manichaeism. His argument is summarized well by Peter Brown (148).

For, previously, he had taken up his stand on the freedom of the will; his criticism of Manichaeism had been a typical philosopher's criticism of determinism generally. It was a matter of common sense that men were responsible for their actions; they could not be held responsible if their wills were not free; therefore, their wills could not be thought of as being determined by some external forces, in this case, by the Manichaean 'Power of Darkness.' ... [This] committed Augustine, in theory at least, to the absolute self-determination of the will; it implied an 'ease of action', a *facilitas*, that would hardly convince such somber observers of the human condition as the Manichees. At this time, indeed, Augustine was, on paper, more Pelagian than Pelagius: Pelagius will even quote from Augustine's book '*On Free Will*' in support of his own views.

b. The Donatist Controversy

1. Augustine and Chiliasm

The Donatists were a group who claimed superiority to the Catholic church because they refused to accept the validity of church sacraments or ministry from those who had once recanted their faith under persecution. Thus they claimed the moral and spiritual high ground and refused to recognize the salvation or

legitimacy of those who had succumbed under threat of persecution to burn their Bibles. The Donatists honored their martyred dead with drunken feasts.

The Donatist were also premillennial, a position also held by Augustine. However, their concept of a materialistic millennial complete with revelries and parties led him, out of his neo-platonic asceticism, to reject millennialism altogether.

In conjunction with this, Augustine was influenced by the hyper typology of Tyconius which bordered on the allegorical method of Origen, to reinterpret the imagery and numbers in Revelation.

According to Paula Fredriksen,

. . . it is Tyconius who stands at the source of a radical transformation of African—and thus, ultimately, of Latin—theology, and whose reinterpretation of his culture’s separatist and millenarian traditions provided the point of departure for what is most brilliant and idiosyncratic in Augustine’s own theology. And it is Tyconius, most precisely, whose own reading of John’s Apocalypse determined the Western church’s exegesis for the next eight hundred years. (Paula Fredriksen, “Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 157)

2. Impact on Augustine’s Soteriology

Having rejected chiliasm, Augustine was logically consistent in his reinterpretation of the Olivet discourse. In his Soteriology he showed the influence of the fatalism of the Manicheans.

a. Augustine had a poor grasp of Greek and translated *dikaioo* as to make righteous rather than to declare righteous. Thus, for Augustine and his followers in the Roman Catholic Church a person gradually become righteous and could be both righteous and a sinner at the same time. This doctrine was not recovered until the Reformation.

b. In his early years Augustine, consistent with his premillennialism, understood “saved” in Matt. 24:13 to be saved from physical destruction, the context for him was the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” . . . If, saith He, the war of the Romans against the city had prevailed further, all the Jews had perished (for by “no flesh” here, He meaneth no Jewish flesh), . . . But whom doth He here mean by the elect? The believers that were shut up in the midst of them. For that Jews may not say that because of the gospel, and the worship of Christ, these ills took place, He showeth, that so far from the believers being the cause, if it had not been for them, all had perished utterly. For if God had permitted the war to be protracted, not so much as a remnant of the Jews had remained, but lest those of them who had become believers should perish together with the unbelieving Jews, He quickly put down the fighting, and gave an end to the war. Therefore He saith, “But for the elect’s sake they shall be shortened.” (*Homily, 14*)

- c. Following his shift to amillennialism, Augustine consistently interprets “saved” in Matt 24:13 to be salvation to eternal life. Regarding the centrality of Augustine’s misinterpretation Anderson notes.

For Augustine Matt 24:13 becomes the sine qua non of eternal salvation. One can genuinely believe, but not be elect: “It is, indeed, to be wondered at, and greatly to be wondered at, that to some of His own children—whom He has regenerated in Christ—to whom He has given faith, hope, and love, God does not give perseverance also . . .” One can be regenerated, but not be elect: “Some are regenerated, but not elect, since they do not persevere; . . .” The only way to validate one’s election was to persevere until the end of his physical life on earth. This was the ultimate sign of the elect: (David Anderson, “The Soteriological Impact of Augustine’s Change From Premillennialism to Amillennialism: Part One” *JOTGES*, 15:1; 31).

- d. This resulted in Augustine’s belief that no one could be assured of being elect in this life. This doctrine later influences the Reformers and their view of perseverance.

B. The Historical Controversy.

It would be advantageous, before we compare their theological views, to grasp the ongoing theological clash between these two men.

1. **The Setting for the Clash.** While teaching in Rome Pelagius penned an Exposition of Paul's Epistles (405 A.D.), the basic explanation of his views. He left Rome for Africa via Sicily in 409 as Alaric, king of the Goths, was about to pillage the city. The basic cause for this was a reading in Augustine's *Confessions*, that "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." Pelagius believed this destroyed human volition and blurred the majesty of God. He penned a counter, *On Nature*.
2. **The Initial Confrontation with Augustine.** Pelagius arrived in Africa to meet Augustine with Coelestius at Hippo, but Augustine was at Carthage disputing with the Donatists. Pelagius' letter to Augustine received a courteous reply expressing his regrets at not meeting. Unfortunately, they never met. Augustine saw to Pelagius' condemnation at provincial synod, in Carthage twice (416, 418).
3. **The Actual Theological Clash**

- a) In 415 Augustine penned a work against Pelagius entitled "*On Nature and Grace*."
- b) Also, in 415 Augustine sent Orosius, a young Spanish presbyter, to Palestine to subvert Pelagius' influence. Orosius got John of Jerusalem to call a synod but Pelagius was acquitted largely due to the unfamiliarity of the East with the issues or Augustine's writings.

In December, 415, a second synod was held at Diospolis (Lydda) in which Pelagius was again acquitted due to the failure of accusers to present the charges because of illness, linguistic inability of those presiding, Pelagius' ability, and his disavowal of Coelestius' views. Augustine commented that he was acquitted either by a "lying condemnation or a tricky interpretation."

- c) In 416 Augustine, upon hearing of Pelagius' acquittal, wrote *On the Freedom of the Will* and had Pelagius and Coelestius condemned at two local synods (Carthage, Mileve). North African bishops wrote to Innocent I, bishop of Rome, to mediate and resolve the dividing East-West issue.

- d) In 417 Innocent condemned Pelagius and Coelestius, but the bishop's untimely death brought Zosimus to Rome. Zosimus, after Coelestius appeared in Rome, to plead his case, reversed the decision reproving the North African bishops.
- e) In 418 the African bishops appealed to Emperor Honorius who supported them banishing Pelagius and Coelestius. In the same year (March) Zosimus capitulated to the imperial decree and issued his famous "Epistola Tractoria" which reversed his decision based upon "mature consideration." As a result, all bishops were required to subscribe to the doctrine of the African bishops as set forth by a Synod of Carthage on 1 May 418.
- f) In 431 at the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus, Pelagius' views were universally condemned by the church. Bishop Celestine of Rome supported the condemnation of Nestorius (the East plagued with Christological problems) in turn for bishop Cyril of Alexandria's support in the condemnation of Pelagius (West labored in anthropological-soteriological problems). The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* stated (1783–84): "While the Eastern Church engaged all her energies in the elaboration of the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation, and the demonstration of the supernatural character of the Christianity as a fact in the objective world, it fell to the lot of the Western Church to take up the doctrines of sin and grace, and demonstrate the supernatural character of Christianity as an agency in the subjective world. Not that those ideas were altogether wanting in the Eastern Church, but they were only partially developed. The problem was then and there to burst the bounds of Pagan naturalism, and rise to the higher level of spiritual morality. Both in the contest between the Greek philosophy and the old mythological spirit, and in the contest between Christianity and Gnosticism, the issue at stake was to make a definite distinction between nature and morality, to disentangle man from all his improper complications with nature, to make him feel himself an independent moral centre, to place him as a free, responsible personality in his relation to God. Hence the constant and strong emphasis which all the Greek Fathers, from Origen to Chrysostom, lay on human freedom".

Warfield (Reformed theologian) adds (4): "All the elements of the composite doctrine of man were everywhere confessed. But they were variously emphasized, according to the temper of the writers of the controversial demands of the times. Such a state of affairs, however, was an invitation to heresy, and a prophecy of controversy; just as the simultaneous confession of the Unity of

God and the Deity of Christ, or of the Deity and the Humanity of Christ, inevitably carried in its train a series of heresies and controversies, until the definitions of the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ were complete. In like manner, it was inevitable that sooner or later some one should arise who would throw so one-sided a stress upon one element or the other of the Church's teaching as to salvation . . . the emphasis that he laid on free will than in the fact that, in order to emphasize free will, he denied the ruin of the race and the necessity of grace. This was not only new in Christianity; it was even anti-Christian The struggle with Pelagianism was thus in reality a struggle for the very foundations of Christianity”.

III. THE THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF PELAGIUS.

The sum of Pelagius' teaching is not the freedom of the will, indeed this is actually a byproduct of his foundational assumptions concerning the sin nature and the sinfulness of man. Thus, the central and formative principle of Pelagianism said Warfield, (6) [is]: “in the assumption of the plenary ability of man; his ability to do all that righteousness can demand—to work out not only his own salvation, but also his own perfection. This is the core of the whole theory; and all the other postulates not only depend upon it, but arise out of it. Both chronologically and logically this is the root of the system.”

An introductory summary of Pelagius-Coelestius' views are given by Augustine as he commented on the Synod of Palestine held by John of Jerusalem in 415 (*On Original Sin*, 12): “The synod said: Now, forasmuch as Pelagius has pronounced his anathema on this uncertain utterance of folly, rightly replying that a man by God's help and grace is able to live *anamartetos*, that is to say, without sin, let him give us his answer on other articles also. Another particular in the teaching of Coelestius, disciple of Pelagius, selected from the heads which were mentioned and heard at Carthage before the holy Aurelius bishop of Carthage, and other bishops, was to this effect: ‘That Adam was made mortal, and that he would have died, whether he sinned or did not sin; that Adam's sin injured himself alone, and not the human race; that the law no less than the gospel leads us to the kingdom; that before the coming of Christ there were persons without sin; that new-born infants are in the same condition that Adam was before the transgression; that, on the one hand, the entire human race does not die on account of Adam's death and transgression, nor, on the other hand, does the whole human race rise again through the resurrection of Christ; that the holy bishop Augustine wrote a book in answer to his followers in Sicily, on articles which were subjoined, and in this book, which was addressed to Hilary, are contained the following statements: That a man is able to be without sin if he wishes; that infants, even if they are unbaptized, have eternal life; that rich men, even if they are baptized, unless they renounce and give up all, have, whatever good they may seem to have done, nothing of it reckoned unto them, neither can they possess the kingdom of heaven.’ Pelagius then said: As regards man's ability to be without sin, my opinion has

been already spoken. With respect, however, to the allegation that there were even before the Lord's coming persons who lived without sin, we also on our part say, that before the coming of Christ there certainly were persons who passed their lives in holiness and righteousness, according to the accounts which have been handed down to us in the Holy Scriptures. As for the other points, indeed, even on their own showing, they are not of a character which obliges me to be answerable for them; but yet, for the satisfaction of the sacred Synod, I anathematize those who either now hold or have ever held these opinions".

The three principle corollaries of Pelagius' system are its denial of an Adamic fall, original sin, and unmerited, unassisted grace. These heretical views, along with Pelagius rejection of a substitutionary atonement for sin is admitted by both sides of the Calvinists-Arminian debate.

A. Pelagius on Original Sin

N.B. The description of Pelagius' opinions will be largely taken from G. F. Wiggers' *Augustinism and Pelagianism* (66-316).

1. Summary. "According to the Pelagian doctrine, there is absolutely no original sin, i.e., no sin which passes, by generation, from the first man to his posterity, and of which they have to bear the punishment. Hence man is born in the same state, in respect to his moral nature, in which Adam was created by God".
2. Propositions
 - a) "A propagation of sin by generation, is by no means to be admitted. This physical propagation of sin, can be admitted only when we grant the propagation of the soul by generation. But this is a heretical error. Consequently there is no original sin; and nothing in the moral nature of man has been corrupted by Adam's sin".
 - b) "Adam's transgression was imputed to himself, but not to his posterity. A reckoning of Adam's sin as that of his posterity, would conflict with the divine rectitude. Hence bodily death is no punishment of Adam's imputed sin, but a necessity of nature".
 - c) "As sin itself has no more passed over to Adam's posterity than has the punishment of sin, so every man, in respect to his moral nature, is born in just the same state in which Adam was first created".
3. Scriptural Support

- a) “Romans 5:12. In this verse, Pelagius took ‘death’ not with Augustine for bodily death, but for spiritual, or the moral ruin which came into the world by the example and imitation of Adam’s sin. Sin, and moral death with sin, came into the world by Adam, for Adam gave the first example or form of sin, which did not there exist before him. So moral corruption came upon all, with the exception of a few righteous, because all sinned after the example of Adam. The phrase, ‘in whom all have sinned,’ he explained thus, ‘In as much as all have sinned, they sin by Adam’s example.’ The sense of the whole passage (Romans 5:12ff), therefore, according to Pelagius, was that by one man sin has come into the world, and moral ruin with sin, so moral corruption has come to all, because all have sinned after Adam’s example. Pelagius’ interpretation of Romans 5:12 means that men are justified by their own voluntary action just as they come under condemnation by their own voluntary sin”.
- b) “1 Corinthians 15:21. Pelagius explained this verse by saying that as death came into the world by Adam because he died first, so the resurrection by Christ, because he has risen first. As the former is the pattern of those that die, so is the latter of the resurrection”.
- c) “Ephesians 2:3. On this verse Pelagius refers the phrase ‘we were by nature children of wrath,’ to ‘the custom of paternal tradition,’ so that all appeared to be born to condemnation. POINT. In this manner, Pelagius knew how, by this exegesis, to dispose of the sin propagated from Adam by generation, and to argue against it and Augustine’s interpretation of the same passages”.

B. Pelagius on Free Will

“With the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine of man’s freewill stands in the closest connection. As the Pelagians admitted no original sin, but maintained that every man, as to his moral condition, is born in just the same state in which Adam was created, they had also to admit, that man, in his present state, has the power to do good. And this they actually taught”.

1. Pelagius

- a) “All men are governed by their own will, and each one is left to his own inclination.”
- b) “We are born capable of good and of evil; and as we are created without virtue, so are we without vice” (cf. Augustine, “On Original Sin”).

- c) “God has imparted to us the capacity of doing evil, merely that we may perform his will by our own will. The very ability to do evil, is therefore a good”.
2. Coelestius. “Apparently Coelestius did not show himself so fully on man’s freewill, as Pelagius. But, that he also received the doctrine, may be presumed, partly because he denied original sin, and partly because he declared in his confession of faith (cf. Augustine’s “On Original Sin”), that sin is not a trespass of nature, but of will; and it was also adduced at the Synod of Diospolis, as a proposition of Coelestius, that it depends on the free will of every one, whether to do or not to do a thing”.

C. Pelagius on Grace

1. “Freewill is a gracious gift of God, by which man is in a condition to do good from his own power, without special divine aid. This, according to a later technical expression, may be called ‘creating grace.’ Grace in the wider sense”.
2. “This gracious gift, all men possess, Christians, Jews, and heathen. But that man may the more easily perform good, He gave him the law, by which knowledge is more easily gained, and the reasons why he should do thus and not otherwise, become the more manifest to him. For this purpose, He gave him the instructions and example of Jesus, and for this He aids Christians further by supernatural influence. This is ‘illuminating grace;’ and in reference merely to supernatural influence, ‘co-operating grace;’ grace in the more restricted and the most restricted sense”.
3. “He, to whom this grace is imparted, can do more than they who do not receive it. By it, he more easily reaches a higher step than he would have reached by his own power”.
4. “The supernatural influence of gracious operations, however, is imparted only to him who merits it by the faithful application of his own power”.
5. “The supernatural operations of grace, do not relate immediately to the will of man, but to his understanding. This becomes enlightened by those operations; and thus also the will is indirectly inclined to do what the understanding has perceived as good”.
6. “These gracious operations do not put forth their influence in an irresistible manner, (this would be determinism); but the man can resist them. There is therefore no ‘irresistible grace.’”

7. “It is also grace, that God remits to the sinner the punishment of his past transgressions. And so is baptism to be called grace, by which Christians become partakers of the benefits of Christianity and a higher salvation.”

D. Pelagius on Predestination

Pelagius bases the decree of election and reprobation upon prescience (foresight). Those of whom God foresaw that they would keep his commandments, he predestinated to salvation; all others to damnation. Pelagius bases the decree of election and reprobation upon prescience (foresight). Those of whom God foresaw that they would keep his commandments, he predestinated to salvation; all others to damnation. But for him, this is a foresight of meritorious action, foresight of doing “good.” Augustine argued for Pelagius (*Predestination of the Saints*. 18): Do you not see that my desire was, without any prejudgment of the hidden counsel of God, and of other reasons, to say what might seem sufficient about Christ’s foreknowledge, to convince the unbelief of the pagans who had brought forward this question? For what is more true than that Christ foreknew who should believe on Him, and at what times and places they should believe? But whether by the preaching of Christ to themselves by themselves they were to have faith, or whether they would receive it by God’s gift,—that is, whether God only foreknew them, or also predestinated them, I did not at that time think it necessary, to inquire or to discuss. Therefore what I said, ‘that Christ willed to appear to men at that time, and that His doctrine should be preached among them when he knew, and where He knew, that there were those who would believe on Him,’ may also thus be said, ‘That Christ willed to appear to men at that time, and that His gospel should be preached among those, whom He knew, and where He knew, that there were those who had been elected in Himself before the foundation of the world.’ But since, if it were so said, it would make the reader desirous of asking about those things which now by the warning of Pelagian errors must of necessity be discussed with greater copiousness and care, it seemed to me that what at that time was sufficient should be briefly said, leaving to one side, as I said, the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God, and without prejudging other reasons, concerning which I thought that we might more fittingly argue, not then, but at some other time”.

Schaff’s (who is Calvinistic) summary is perhaps valuable (*History*. 3, 78): “The Pelagian controversy turns upon the mighty antithesis of sin and grace. It embraces the whole cycle of doctrine respecting the ethical and religious relation of man to God, and includes, therefore, the doctrines of human freedom, of the primitive state, of the fall, of regeneration and conversion, of the eternal purpose of redemption, and of the nature and operation of the grace of God. It comes at last to the question, whether redemption is chiefly a work of God or of man; whether redemption man needs to be born anew, or merely improved”.

IV. THE THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF AUGUSTINE.

As has been demonstrated, Augustine reacted negatively to Pelagius' views and with enormous literary zeal and skill sought to refute them. We turn now to Augustine's opinions on "Sin and Grace."

A. Augustine on Original Sin

In summary, Augustine maintains that by Adam's first sin, in whom all men jointly sinned together, sin and the other positive punishments (guilt), came into the world. By it, human nature has been both physically and morally corrupted. Every man brings into the world with him a nature already so corrupt that it can do nothing but sin. After the fall, Adam was still free, but he lost the gift of grace which enabled him not to sin and was free only to sin. Augustine wrote (*Enchiridon*, 26-27):

"Thence, after his sin, he was driven into exile, and by his sin the whole race of which he was the root was corrupted in him, and thereby subjected to the penalty of death. And so it happens that all descended from him, and from the woman who had led him into sin, and was condemned at the same time with him,—being the offspring of carnal lust on which the same punishment of disobedience was visited,—were tainted with the original sin, and were by it drawn through divers errors and sufferings into that last and endless punishment which they suffer in common with the fallen angels, their corrupters and masters, and the partakers of their doom. And thus 'by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' By 'the world' the apostle, of course, means in this place the whole human race".

"Thus, then, matters stood. The whole mass of the human race was under condemnation, was lying steeped and wallowing in misery, and was being tossed from one form of evil to another, and, having joined the faction of the fallen angels, was paying the well-merited penalty of that impious rebellion. For whatever the wicked freely do through blind and unbridled lust, and whatever they suffer against their will in the way of open punishment, this all evidently pertains to the just wrath of God. But the goodness of the Creator never fails either to supply life and vital power to the wicked angels (without which their existence would soon come to an end); or, in the case of mankind, who spring from a condemned and corrupt stock, to impart form and life to their seed, to fashion their members, and through the various seasons of their life, and in the different parts of the earth, to quicken their senses, and bestow upon them the nourishment they need. For He judged it better to bring good out of evil, than not to permit any evil to exist. And if He had determined that in the case of men, as in the case of the fallen angels, there should be no

restoration to happiness, would it not have been quite just, that the being who rebelled against God, who is the abuse of his freedom spurned and transgressed the command of his Creator when he could so easily have kept it, who defaced in himself the image of his Creator by stubbornly turning away from His light, who by an evil use of his free-will broke away from his wholesome bondage to the Creator's laws,—would it not have been just that such a being should have been wholly and to all eternity deserted by God, and left to suffer the everlasting punishment he had so richly earned? Certainly so God would have done, had He been only just and not also merciful, and had He not designed that His unmerited mercy should shine forth the more brightly in contrast with the unworthiness of its objects”.

Gonzalez has a helpful passage (*History*. 2, 44): “In summary, natural man is free only inasmuch as he is free to sin. ‘Thus, we always enjoy a free will; but this will is not always good.’ This does not mean that freedom has lost its meaning in fallen man, who is only able to choose a particular sinful alternative. On the contrary, natural man has true freedom to choose between several alternatives, although, given his condition as a sinner subject to concupiscence, and as a member of this ‘mass of damnation,’ all the alternatives that are really open to him are sin. The option not to sin does not exist. This is what is meant by saying that he has freedom to sin (*posse peccare*) but does not have freedom not to sin (*posse non peccare*).”

B. Augustine on Free Will

Augustine's work *On Free Will* written early in his ministry and during the early Manichaean Controversy showed a belief in free will differing from that which followed. In his developments during the debate with the Manichaeans he shifted more to a view similar to that which he had later held. The influence of this is seen in the writings against Pelagius.

As stated above, Augustine maintains that by virtue of Adam's initial transgression that freedom to chose the good, not freedom itself, has been lost entirely. In this present state of corruption, man cannot will out of a pure motive (selflessness) hence all his thoughts in God's sight are evil. God judges motive of action, not simply action. No natural man wills the glory of God, hence all he does is sinful in God's reckoning. At the moment of salvation, God provides grace that restores man's will to chose the good, that is Christ. He wrote (*On Grace and Free Will*. 10): “When God said ‘Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you,’ one of these clauses—that which invites our return to God—evidently belongs to our will; while the other, which promises His return to us, belongs to His grace. Here, possibly, the Pelagians think they have a justification for their opinion which they so prominently advance, that God's grace is given according to our merits. In the East, indeed, that is to say, in the province of Palestine, in

which is the city of Jerusalem, Pelagius, when examined in person by the bishop, did not venture to affirm this. For it happened that among the objections which were brought up against him, this in particular was objected, that he maintained that the grace of God was given according to our merits,—an opinion which was so diverse from catholic doctrine, and so hostile to the grace of Christ, that unless he had anathematized it, as laid to his charge, he himself must have been anathematized on its account. He pronounced, indeed, the required anathema upon the dogma, but how insincerely his later books plainly show; for in them he maintains absolutely no other opinion than that the grace of God is given according to our merits. Such passages do they collect out of the Scriptures—like the one which I just now quoted, ‘Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you,’—as if it were owing to the merit of our turning to God that His grace were given us, wherein He Himself even turns unto us. Now the persons who hold this opinion fail to observe that, unless our turning to God were itself God’s gift, it would not be said to Him in prayer, ‘Turn us again, O God of hosts;’ and, ‘Thou, O God, wilt turn and quicken us;’ and again, ‘Turn us, O God of our salvation,’—with other passages of similar import, too numerous to mention here. For, with respect to our coming unto Christ, what else does it mean than our being turned to Him by believing? And yet he said: ‘No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father’”.

Again (29): “Now if faith is simply of free will, and is not given by God, why do we pray for those who will not believe, that they may believe? This it would be absolutely useless to do, unless we believe, with perfect propriety, that Almighty God is able to turn to belief wills that are perverse and opposed to faith. Man’s free will is addressed when it is said, ‘To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.’ But if God were not able to remove from the human heart even its obstinacy and hardness, He would not say, through the prophet, ‘I will take from them their heart of stone, and will give them a heart of flesh.’ That all this was foretold in reference to the New Testament is shown clearly enough by the apostle when he says, ‘Ye are our epistle, . . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.’ We must not, of course, suppose that such a phrase as this is used as if those might live in a fleshly way who ought to live spiritually; but inasmuch as a stone has no feeling, with which man’s hard heart is compared, what was there left Him to compare man’s intelligent heart with but the flesh, which possesses feeling? For this is what is said by the prophet Ezekiel: ‘I will give them another heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, saith the Lord.’ Now can we possibly, without extreme absurdity, maintain that there previously existed in any man the good merit of a good will, to entitle him to the removal of his stony heart, when all the while this very heart of stone signifies nothing else than a will of the hardest kind and such as is

absolutely inflexible against God? For where a good will precedes, there is, of course, no longer a heart of stone”.

N.B. Logically, not chronologically since conversion is instantaneous, regeneration precedes faith (the exercise of the free will). Free will and God’s grace are simultaneously commended.

N.N.B.B. The freedom to choose the good out of a proper motive, which was lost in the first Adam, is renewed by means of grace. The believer by grace now has freedom of choice (good-evil). Augustine calls the freedom a gift (*Enchiridion*, 32): “And further, should any one be inclined to boast, not indeed of his works, but of the freedom of his will, as if the first merit belonged to him, this very liberty of action being given to him as a reward he had earned, let him listen to this same preacher of grace, when he says: ‘For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure;’ and in another place: ‘So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.’ Now as, undoubtedly, if a man is of the age to use his reason, he cannot believe, hope, love, unless he will to do so, nor obtain the prize of the high calling of God unless he voluntarily run for it; in what sense it is ‘not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,’ except that, as it is written, ‘the preparation of the heart is from the Lord?’ Otherwise, if it is said, ‘It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,’ because it is of both, that is, both of the will of man and of the mercy of God, so that we are to understand the saying, ‘It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,’ as is it meant the will of man alone is not sufficient, if the mercy of God do not with it,—then it will follow that the mercy of God alone is not sufficient, if the will of man go not with it; and therefore, if we may rightly say, ‘it is not of man that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy’”.

C. Augustine on Grace

“If, nevertheless, man, in his present state, wills and does good, it is merely the work of grace. It is an inward, secret, and wonderful operation of God upon man. It is a preceding as well as an accompanying work. By preceding grace, man attains faith, by which he comes to an insight of good, and by which power is given him to will the good. He needs cooperating grace for the performance of every individual good act. As man can do nothing without grace, so he can do nothing against it. It is irresistible. And as man by nature has no merit at all, no respect at all can be had to man’s moral disposition, in imparting grace, but God acts according to his own freewill”.

Augustine simply stated that grace is free, unmerited (*On Nature and Grace*, 4): “This grace, however, of Christ, without which neither infants nor adults can be

saved, is not rendered for any merits, but is given gratis, on account of which it is also called grace. 'Being justified,' says the apostle, 'freely through His blood.' Whence they, who are not liberated through grace, either because they are not yet able to hear, or because they are unwilling to obey; or again because they did not receive, at the time when they were unable on account of youth to hear, that bath of regeneration, which they might have received and through which they might have been saved, are indeed justly condemned; because they are not without sin, either that which they have derived from their birth, so that which they have added from their own misconduct. 'For all have sinned'—whether in Adam or in themselves—'and come short of the glory of God.'"

Again (*On Grace and Free Will*, 33, 458): "He, therefore, who wishes to do God's commandment, but is unable, already possesses a good will, but as yet a small and weak one; he will, however, become able when he shall have acquired a great and robust will. When the martyrs did the great commandments which they obeyed, they acted by a great will,—that is, with great love. Of this love the Lord Himself thus speaks: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' In accordance with this, the apostle also says, 'He that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law. For this: Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' This love the Apostle Peter did not yet possess, when he for fear thrice denied the Lord. 'There is no fear in love,' says the Evangelist John in his first Epistle, 'but perfect love casteth out fear.' But yet, however small and imperfect his love was, it was not wholly wanting when he said to the Lord, 'I will lay down my life for Thy sake;' for he supposed himself able to effect what he felt himself willing to do. And who was it that had begun to give him his love, however small, but His co-operation which He initiates by His operation? Forasmuch as in beginning He works in us that we may have the will, and in perfecting works with us when we have the will. On which account the apostle says, 'I am confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' He operates, therefore, without us, in order that we may will; but when we will, and so will that we may act, He co-operates with us. We can, however, ourselves do nothing to effect good works of piety without Him either working that we may will, or co-working when we will. Now, concerning His working that we may will, it is said: 'It is God which worketh in you, even to will.' While of His co-working with us, when we will and act by willing, the apostle says, 'We know that in all things there is co-working for good to them that love God.' What does this phrase, 'all things,' mean, but the terrible and cruel sufferings which affect our condition? That burden, indeed of Christ, which is heavy for our infirmity, becomes light to love. For to such did the Lord say that His burden was light, as Peter was when he suffered for Christ, not as he was when he denied Him".

This grace to Augustine is irresistible. God, through His grace, boasts the will, strengthens and stimulates it, so that the will itself, without any coercion, will desire the good. Man does not save himself, nor is he saved against his will. Augustine said (*On Nature and Free Will*, 10), “Neither the grace of God alone, nor he alone, but the grace of God with him.”

D. Augustine on Predestination

“From eternity, God made a free and unconditional decree to save a few from the mass that was corrupted and subjected to damnation. To those whom he predestinated to this salvation, he gives the requisite means for the purpose. But on the rest, who do not belong to this small number of the elect, the merited ruin falls.” Augustine wrote (*Predestination of the Saints*, 19): “Moreover, that which I said, ‘That the salvation of this religion has never been lacking to him who was worthy of it, and that he to whom it was lacking was not worthy,’—if it be discussed and it be asked whence any man can be worthy, there are not wanting those who say—by human will. But we say, by divine grace or predestination. Further, between grace and predestination there is only this difference, that predestination is the preparation for grace, while grace is the donation itself. When, therefore, the apostle says, ‘Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works,’ it is grace; but what follows—‘which God hath prepared that we should walk in them’—is predestination, which cannot exist without foreknowledge, although foreknowledge may exist without predestination because God foreknew by predestination those things which He was about to do. whence it was said, ‘He made those things that shall be.’ Moreover, He is able to foreknow even those things which He does not Himself do,—as all sins whatever.

Because, although there are some which are in such wise sins as that they are also the penalties of sins, whence it is said, ‘God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient,’ it is not in such a case the sin that is God’s, but the judgment. Therefore God’s predestination of good is, as I have said, the preparation of grace; which grace is the effect of that predestination. Therefore when God promised to Abraham in his seed the faith of the nations, saying, ‘I have established thee a father of many nations,’ whence the apostle says, ‘Therefore it is of faith, that the promise, according to grace, might be established to all the seed,’ He promised not from the power of our will, but from His own predestination. For He promised what He Himself would do, not what men would do. Because, although men do those good things which pertain to God’s worship, He Himself makes them to do what He has commanded; it is not they that cause Him to do what He has promised. Otherwise the fulfillment of God’s promise would not be in the power of God, but in that of men; and thus what was promised by God to Abraham would be given to Abraham by men themselves. Abraham, however, did not believe thus, but ‘he believed, giving glory to God, that what He promised He is able also to do.’ He does not say, ‘to

foretell’—he does not say, ‘to foreknow;’ for He can foretell and foreknow the doings of strangers also; but he says, ‘He is able also to do;’ and thus he is speaking not of the doings of others, but of His own”.

E. Summary of Augustine’s Theology.

Despite Augustine’s valid attempt to preserve the depravity of man and the imputation of Adam’s original sin and guilt to all mankind, he overstates his case and also has an equally heretical soteriology as Pelagius.

1. He believed in the inspiration and canonicity of the apocrypha, and the inspiration of the Septuagint. He quoted from Baruch, Bel and the Dragon, Susana, and the Song of the Three Children as authoritative. He had no knowledge of Hebrew and little of biblical Greek.
2. Augustine held to an allegorical interpretation of the Scripture.
3. Augustine rejected his early Chiliasm in favor of a sort of amillennial and postmillennial synthesis. He rejected a literal thousand year reign of Christ and believed that in the present conflict between the City of God and the City of Man, the City of God would be victorious before Christ returned.
4. He believed the devil is currently bound.
5. He equated the Church with the kingdom.
6. He interpreted the Bible within his neo-platonic grid.
7. He believed a person could be regenerated but not elect .
8. He believed that a person was regenerated through water baptism.
9. He believed that salvation was kept through perseverance. He wrote in *On Rebuke and Grace*:

We, then, call men elected, and Christ’s disciples, and God’s children, because they are to be so called whom, being regenerated, we see to live piously; but they are then truly what they are called if they shall abide in that on account of which they are so called. (22)

It is, indeed, to be wondered at, and greatly to be wondered at, that to some of His own children—whom He has regenerated in Christ—to whom He has given faith, hope, and love, God does not give perseverance also. (18).

But they who fall and perish have never been in the number of the predestined. (36)

10. He believed in limbo for those who died in infancy and finalized the form of purgatory.

J. A. Neander (1789-1850) concluded that Augustines theology”contains the germ of the whole system of spiritual despotism, intolerance, and persecution, even to the court of the Inquisition.”

V. CONCLUSION.

I shall conclude with Schaff’s remarkable summary (*History*. 3, 787-89): “The soul of the Pelagian system is human freedom; the soul of the Augustinian is divine grace. Pelagius starts from the natural man, and works up, by his own exertions, to righteousness and holiness. Augustine despairs of the moral sufficiency of man, and derives the new life and all power for good from the creative grace of God. The one system proceeds from the liberty of choice to legalistic piety; the other from the bondage of sin to the evangelical liberty of the children of God. To the former Christ is merely a teacher and example, and grace an external auxiliary to the development of the native powers of man; to the latter he is also Priest and King, and grace a creative principle, which begets, nourishes, and consummates a new life. The former makes regeneration and conversion a gradual process of the strengthening and perfecting of human virtue; the latter makes it a complete transformation, in which the old disappears and all becomes new. The one loves to admire the dignity and strength of man; the other loses itself in adoration of the glory and omnipotence of God. The one flatters natural pride, the other is a gospel for penitent publicans and sinners. Pelagianism begins with self-exaltation and ends with the sense of self-deception and impotency. Augustinianism casts man first into the dust of humiliation and despair, in order to lift him on the wings of grace to supernatural strength, and leads him through the hell of self-knowledge up to the heaven of the knowledge of God. The Pelagian system is clear, sober, and intelligible, but superficial; the Augustinian sounds the depths of knowledge and experience, and renders reverential homage to mystery. The former is grounded upon the philosophy of common sense, which is indispensable for ordinary life, but has no perception of divine things; the latter is grounded upon the philosophy of the regenerate reason, which breaks through the limits of nature, and penetrates the depths of divine revelation. The former starts with the proposition: *Intellectus procedit fidem*; the latter with the opposite maxim: *Fides procedit intellectum*. Both make use of the Scriptures; the one, however, conforming them to reason, the other subjecting reason to them. Pelagianism has an unmistakable affinity with rationalism, and supplies its practical side. The natural will of the former system corresponds with natural reason of the latter; and as the natural will, according to Pelagianism, is competent to good, so is the natural reason, according to rationalism, competent to the knowledge of the truth. All rationalists are Pelagian in their anthropology; but Pelagius and Coelestius were not consistent, and declared their agreement with the traditional orthodoxy in all other doctrines, though without entering into their deeper meaning and connection. Even divine mysteries may be believed in a purely external, mechanical way, by inheritance from the past, as the history of theology, especially in the East, abundantly proves”.