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# SIN & ITS EFFECTS: AUGUSTINE

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## Augustine (354-430)

### Works on Grace

388-395	De libero arbitrio
412	De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum
412	De spiritu et littera
412	De gratia Novi Testamenti (Ep 140, ad Honoratum)
414-415	De natura et gratia
415	De perfectione justitiæ
417	De gestis Pelagii
418	De gratia Christi et de peccato originali
419-420	De nuptiis et concupiscentia
420	Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum
421	Contra Iulianum
426-427	De gratia et libero arbitrio
426-427	De correptione et gratia
428-429	De prædestinatione sanctorum
428-429	De dono perseverantiæ
429-430	Contra secundam Iuliani: Responsonem opus imperfectum

## Pelagianism

### History

- First stage
  - An Irish monk named Pelagius lived in Rome under Pope Innocent I (401-417)
  - After the fall of Rome to Alaric (410), Pelagius and his friend Celestius move to Africa; Celestius then settles in Carthage while Pelagius moves to Jerusalem
  - Celestius is condemned by a council at Carthage in 411
  - Councils at Jerusalem, Diospolis, then at Carthage condemn Pelagius with letters to Innocent
  - Innocent condemns Pelagius
- Second stage
  - Pelagius defends himself against Innocent, who dies and is replaced by Zosimus. Pelagius writes *De libero arbitrio*; Celestius writes *Libellus fidei*
  - Council of Carthage condemns Pelagius and the acts are approved by Zosimus
- Third stage
  - Pelagius dies around 422; Celestius is welcomed by Nestorius who defends him at the council of Ephesus
  - Julian of Eclanum becomes the prominent spokesperson for Pelagianism; he is excommunicated and takes refuge with Theodore of Mopsuestia

### Doctrine

- Humans can follow the commandments of God by their own efforts, without divine aid
- The power to do good comes from God; the doing of the good comes from us
- Nothing can erase the fundamental free will given by the creator
- Human merit derives from the will and good works

## Augustine's Teaching

### The consequences of Adam's sin

- Fallen humans are enslaved to sin, manifested in concupiscentia, the tendency toward evil/excessive acts & desires
- Fallen humans have no freedom to do good; all acts are sinful
- The grace of Christ, justifying the person and freeing them from sin, gives freedom
- Original sin is a desire for evil and through it one is guilty in the eyes of God (*massa damnata*)
- Sin is transmitted in every act of copulation because it is always an act of concupiscentia

### **Justifying grace is a free gift of God**

- Grace restores the capacity for desiring, knowing, and doing the good
- The faith which saves is in itself a gift of God
- Through the grace of baptism one becomes incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church, to become a son of God by adoption and a temple of the Holy Spirit
- Justification is brought about through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which produces in the person the created gift of love/charity

### **Grace, uncreated and created, gives the possibility of right action**

- Every good act performed by the justified is performed by virtue of the Spirit dwelling within; there is no good act outside of grace
- The desire for good is only possible in the Spirit

### **Perseverance**

- Achieved by the cooperation of the person with God's grace, thus allowing the person to merit everlasting life; this perseverance in itself is a gift of grace, received through prayer
- The final gift of perseverance in faith, being a free gift of God, is also something that God chooses/elects/predestines

### **Predestination**

- *De correptione et gratia; De praedestinatione sanctorum; De dono perseverantiae*
- The gift of grace is the result of God's free choice/election, as all are worthy only of damnation
  - Those who are saved were predestined by God to receive the gift of grace
- God only saves a small portion of humanity
- There is no predestination to sin; sin is a result of human choice

### **Council of Carthage (418)**

- Justifying grace does not only consist in the remission of sins already committed but is a help that we no longer sin
- The grace of Christ that helps us to not sin does not only give us the knowledge of good to be done and evil to be avoided but gives us the love of the good and the power to do it
- Justifying grace does not only give the capacity but the power to accomplish the divine commandments
- Even the saints are powerless to avoid sin

### **Semi-pelagianism**

#### **Teachings**

- A reaction against strict Augustinianism
- It admits the necessity of grace for saving acts and the existence of original sin
- It also emphasizes the universal salvific will of God
- It argues against Augustine, seeing in his teaching the removal of any reason for human action
- It asserts an independence of human action in regard to grace in order to explain how some merit salvation and some do not
- In creation, God gives to everyone the natural grace sufficient for the *initium fidei*; if humans accept this, then they receive saving grace
- Perseverance in faith is an act of the person, not a special gift of God

### **Council of Orange (529)**

- The saving initiative comes from God; no saving action is accomplished without grace
- The causes of the necessity of grace are: original sin, the weakening of the will by original sin, the condition of the creature
- Grace precedes all effort on the part of humans: prayer, good will, desire for good, *initium salutis*, all effort towards faith, all saving actions, all preparation, all merit
- In justification, grace repairs, liberates, transforms, and gives the justice of Christ
- After justification, grace is necessary to act for God, to persevere, to follow a vocation, to achieve virtue, for the life of Christ in us, for the love of God
- Grace is universal and necessary for every good act
- Predestination is formally condemned; there is no predestination to evil
- All the baptized have the ability to be saved, if they wish