

Saint Augustine's Doctrine on Grace (3)*

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Justification

It is the central theme of the history of salvation, for justification implies the gift of salvation grace.

With Pelagius, Augustine admitted that men imitate Adam by sinning, and just men imitate Christ by leading a good life, but this is not all. At the beginning of his treatise on the remission of sins Augustine writes that all those who through disobedience break the commandments of God imitate Adam, but we must distinguish between a bad example which influences the will of a sinner, and the state in which those born in sin find themselves. Holy men imitate Christ by acting justly, but besides imitating Christ these holy people have the grace of God working in their souls illuminating and justifying them. This grace is also given to baptised infants, who quite evidently cannot imitate anyone. Therefore as Christ, in whom we all live, besides giving grace and justification to all those who imitate Him, also gives to the faithful the mysterious grace of his Holy Spirit, a grace which he infuses mysteriously also in infants, so also Adam, in whom we all die, besides giving a bad example to all those who imitate him by willingly breaking God's commandments, also left the stain of carnal concupiscence in all who are his descendant.⁸⁹ One should notice how much Augustine insists on the word *also*: not just imitation, but *also* something which penetrates deeply in man and precedes the action of free will. Justification therefore

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89. Imitantur quidem Adam, quotquot per inobedientiam transgrediuntur mandatum Dei; sed aliud est quod exemplum est voluntate peccantibus, aliud quod origo est cum peccato nascentibus. Nam et Christus imitantur sancti eius ad sequendam iustitiam ... sed praeter hanc imitationem gratia eius illuminationem iustificationemque nostram etiam intrinsecus operatur... Haec enim gratia baptizatos quoque parvulos suo inserit corpori, qui certe imitari aliquem nondum valent. Sicut ergo ille in quo omnes vivificantur, praeter quod se ad iustitiam exemplum imitantibus praebuit, dat etiam sui spiritus occultissima fidelibus gratiam, quam latentur infudit et parvulis, sic et ille in quo omnes moriuntur praeter quod eis qui praeceptum Domini voluntate transgrediuntur imitationis exemplum est, occulta etiam tabe carnalis concupiscentiae suae labificavit in se omnes de sua stirpe venturos (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 1,8,10).

is not just imitation of Christ, but implies also the infusion of grace in man's souls. Augustine considers justification under its two aspects, the negative aspect (remission of sins), and the positive aspect (creation of the new man, restoration of God's image in man). We have already made references to remission of sins, and so we have now to speak about the positive aspect of justification, which is one of the most sublime themes in Augustinian anthropology.

Through sin the image of the Trinity in man was defaced, deformed, obscured, and through justification – the work of the Holy Spirit – the image of the Trinity from being a defaced image was changed into a beautiful one.⁹⁰ Some scholars have failed to notice this aspect of Augustine's doctrine, and have seen in Augustine's writings only references to external justification, perhaps misunderstanding Augustine's definition of original sin as concupiscence accompanied with guilt (*concupiscentia cum reatu*). The guilt (*reatus*) is removed by Baptism, while concupiscence remains. Augustine explains this idea of his with a reference to personal sins: personal sins, he says, once committed no longer remain actual (*ut actus*), but the guilt (*reatus*) remains until it is removed by contrition and confession; original sin, once remitted by Baptism, is no longer a guilt (*reatus*) but remains actual (*ut actus*). This explanation induced some scholars to conclude that remission is only external, a juridical act: sin remains but is no longer imputable. But this is not Augustine's opinion: the guilt (*reatus*) according to Augustine is completely taken away, abolished, cancelled, and this means that innocence has been restored: guilt is in opposition to innocence... God can give innocence back to man, by taking away his guilt.⁹¹ For Augustine to be without sin (*non habere peccatum*) means to be free from guilt (*reum non esse peccati*); before God there cannot be any sin if there is no guilt; one should never think that sin has not been abolished, but only hidden, and therefore still present and alive.⁹³

Probably Augustine has been misunderstood, because his distinction between concupiscence – sin and concupiscence – evil has been ignored. In the just, concupiscence is not a sin but an evil, and if Augustine sometimes calls it a sin, it is because he is using Biblical language, he is using metaphorical speech, as we have already remarked.

90. a deformi forma formosam transfertur in formam (*De Trinitate* 15,8,14).

91. reatus magnus malum innocentiae contrarium ... Deus autem potest hominem, reatu ablato, ad innocentiam revocare (*Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum* 8,19).

92. *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 1,26,29.

93. Nec sic intellegatis ... peccata cooperta sunt, quasi ibi sint et vivant (*Enarratio in Ps.* 31,2,9).

Although Augustine, because of his controversy with the Pelagians, insisted more on the negative aspect of justification, he did not ignore its positive aspect, which for him was much more important. In fact, when not writing controversial works, he speaks highly of the positive aspects of justification i.e. man's deification and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in man. Some might think that these themes are proper to the Greek Fathers, who insisted on man's deification and Christ's divinity (God became man so that men might become gods) against the Arians, and insisted on the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in man against the Macedonians who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Commenting on Psalm 82, Augustine says: "It is quite evident that God has called men gods, deified through his grace, not born of his substance... He who justifies is just in himself, not through others. He who justifies also deifies, for through justification we become God's children: 'He gave power to become children of God' (Jn 1,12). If we have become sons of God, we are also gods, but this through the grace of him who adopted us as his sons." Man's deification will attain its full perfection in the *eskaton* (*Sermo* 166,4).

Deification comes through participation in divine life and through love.

i. *Participation in divine life*: "as the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul,"⁹⁴ Augustine tells us. When the soul is justified, it participates in a life which is not its own, "which is not what she is."⁹⁵ Augustine clearly distinguishes divine life in itself from divine life in man: "Men are not gods through their existence, but become gods by participating in the life of Him who is the only one true God."⁹⁶

ii. *Love of God*, in Augustine, is at the centre of man's life, of man's history and of the history of salvation: "Adhering to the eternal Creator, we must of necessity be influenced by eternity."⁹⁷ This same idea is expressed elsewhere by Augustine in a popular way when he writes: "Everyone is similar to the love he has", then concludes: "Are you in love with the world? Then you are of the world. Are you in

94. Sicut vita corporis anima, sic vita animae Deus (*Enarratio in Ps.* 70,2,3).

95. Quod non est quod ipsa (*In Ioannis Evangelium tractatus* 9,11).

96. Homines non existendo sunt dii, sed fiunt participando illius qui verus est Deus (*Enarratio in Ps.* 118,16,1).

97. Aeterno enim Creatori adhaerentes et nos aeternitate afficiamur necesse est (*De vera religione* 10,19).

love with God, what should I say? would you be God? I dare not say it, but the Scriptures say it 'You are gods, sons of the Most High' (Ps 82,6).⁹⁸

For Augustine, man's deification is the effect of the Incarnation and he often repeats a saying so dear to the Greek Fathers: "He who was God and became man, will make gods those who were men."⁹⁹

Briefly, justification does not simply imply a remission of sins, but also something deeper: a spiritual renewal on the ontological and moral level which brings about man's deification.

This spiritual renewal implies also the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in man. In *Epist.* 187 (a treatise rather than a letter, on account of its great length) Augustine develops his ideas distinguishing the presence of God in creatures from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and giving reasons for this indwelling. Augustine's ideas are briefly the following:

- i. God is everywhere: *in seipso ubique totus*, as Creator of all things;
- ii. although everywhere as Creator, he is not everywhere through the grace of indwelling;
- iii. He is present through the grace of indwelling only in those he made his holy temple, freeing them from the powers of darkness and transferring them to the kingdom of his beloved Son, a kingdom which had its beginning in rebirth.¹⁰⁰

This presence is not the same in all the just, but depends on their disponibility (*pro suae capacitatis diversitate*).

v. God also dwells in baptised infants, secretly working in them so that they may become his temple, a temple which he perfects in those who persevere.

vi. God indwells in each just person in as many temples and indwells in all together (in the Church) as if in his temple, which in the present time is continually harassed by the tempests of the world, but will obtain stability in eternal life, in the *eskaton*. Augustine's anthropological vision of justification is always within his ecclesiological vision. Augustine always sees man's justification within his vision of the Church.

98. *In epistulam Ioannis tractatus* 2,14.

99. *Deus facturus qui homines erant, homo factus est qui Deus erat.*

100. *Epistula* 187,12,35.

Man's justification has three moments: (i) a total remission of sins in Baptism, followed by the conferment of the precious gifts of the Holy Spirit; (ii) a continuous renewal of the inner life, lasting through one's whole lifetime; (iii) perfect justice and immortality at the final resurrection.

Through Baptism, the remission of sins is complete and immediate, but no internal renewal, for concupiscence (the *infirmitas*) remains and this, so that we might fight the good fight and conquer our pride; concupiscence will remain for us to struggle against it (*ad agonem interea remanet*).

To the Pelagian objection that God could have also cured man from this *infirmitas*, from concupiscence, Augustine answered: "God acts on his own judgement and does not receive orders from those who labour under an infirmity."¹⁰¹ Augustine confirmed this answer by a reference to Saint Paul: Christ wanted him to be strong but, nevertheless he told him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12,9).

Because even the just are subject to concupiscence (the *infirmitas*), no man can be without sin (*impeccantia*) in this world. Augustine defends his thesis, starting from the Scriptures, from those texts which Coelestius had quoted in his *Definitiones*. He had drawn three long lists, one list containing those texts which speak about the universal vocation to perfection, a second list with texts showing how easy it is for man to observe the commandments, and a third list which insists on man's imperfections, and therefore texts which seem to contradict the two other lists. Coelestius never tried to find an explanation for the texts contradicting *impeccantia*, and so it was not a difficult matter for Augustine to refute Coelestius, telling him that, instead of solving the problem, he was aggravating it because he was making his hearers think that the Scriptures contradict themselves. There is no contradiction in the Scriptures, says Augustine, because one should distinguish between the Church of the future, the Church without blemish or wrinkle, as St Paul says (Eph 5, 27), and the Church now in this world: here on earth the Church is full of imperfections, only at the *eskaton* will she appear in all her brightness and perfection.

Another distinction to be made is between crimes worthy of condemnation (*crimina damnabilia*) and venial sins (*peccata venialia*). The just should be exempt from the *crimina damnabilia*, but while on earth they will never be free from the

101. Hoc utique agit ut sanet omnia, sed agit iudicio suo, nec ordinem sanandi ab aegroto.

smallest *peccata venialia*, the slightest imperfections. The just man on earth is both a just man and a sinner (*iustus et peccator*): There are just men on earth ... but they are not without sin ... all are great, all are just, all really worthy of praise, but none are without some sin ... they were just but they were not without sin.¹⁰² For without faults it is impossible to live on earth, one cannot live without sin in this world; only the Virgin was exempt from sin because of the Lord (*propter honorem Domini*).

The just man knows that he is not perfect and that he must continually strive for perfection in a perfect manner (*perfecte*), trying to avoid daily imperfections, which Augustine calls the *peccata quotidiana*. “This we should realise, that however much far have we gone forward on the road of perfection, we are not yet perfect.”¹⁰³ We go forward along the road of perfection (*perfecte currimus*) if we pray, fast and give alms; no other means are available in this world and because of the struggle between flesh and spirit in us on this earth we will never succeed in loving God with all our being, for, although we can control our disorderly passions, we can never be without them in this world. Briefly Augustine distinguishes between initial justification and complete justification: “Has not Baptism given us rebirth, adoption, redemption? and yet we still need rebirth, adoption, redemption, which will only be ours at the end of time, while NOW we have to wait patiently so that THEN, when the time comes, we will not be in any way children of the world. Those therefore who deprive Baptism of what it now gives us, are corrupting the faith, while those who attribute to Baptism now what we will only receive through Baptism then, are destroying all hope.”¹⁰⁴

The distinction helps Augustine in answering another Pelagian objection: If death is the consequence of sin, why does death remain once sins have been remitted? Augustine answered: “God could have exempted believers from death, so that their bodies would not be subjected to death, but if He did this, a kind of pleasure would have been given to the flesh, but the strength of faith would have been lessened. Men fear death so much that Christians would be considered blessed only because they could not die. But God has given a greater grace, for He gave something better to those who believe in Him. What greatness those who believed they would not

102. Sunt ergo in terra iusti sed ... non sunt sine peccato ... omnes sancti, omnes iusti, omnes veraciter laudabiles sunt, sed sine peccato aliquo non sunt ... et iusti fuerunt et sine peccato non fuerunt.

103. Quotquot perfecte currimus, hoc sapiamus quod nondum perfecti sumus (*De perfectione iustitiae hominis* 8,10).

104. *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* 3,3,5.

die would be theirs by believing this during their lifetime? How much greater, how much stronger, how much more worthy of praise would they be in believing that by dying they would obtain victory over death for all eternity."¹⁰⁵ Faith without hope is no faith at all: "faith is possible only when what is hoped for is not yet realised."¹⁰⁶

For Augustine man's progress towards complete justification is a progress towards freedom, which is attained through the impossibility of dying (*non posse mori*), through the impossibility of sinning (*non posse peccare*), which is the greater freedom (*libertas maior*), in contrast to the minor freedom (*libertas minor*) which our first parents enjoyed namely the possibility of not dying (*posse non mori*) and the possibility of not sinning (*posse non peccare*).

Justification is a gratuitous gift of God

Justification is not something we merit through our good deeds: grace is given to us not because of our good deeds, but is given to us so that we can perform good deeds.¹⁰⁷ Justification is through faith and therefore we have no reason to pride ourselves of our good deeds. To prove this Augustine makes use of Pauline texts: "What becomes of your boasting? It is excluded" (Rom 3,27) and "Let him he who boasts, boast of the Lord" (1 Cor 1,31): no one can boast of his merits before God, for he has none, or better still, the merits one has are evil and Augustine makes reference to Saint Paul saying that before his conversion his merits were many but were all evil.¹⁰⁸ Because we have been justified by the Blood of Christ, "if we boast, let us boast of the Lord" for then nothing is more sure, more certain.¹⁰⁹ "God's justice is ours because it is given to us, and it is called God's justice so that we might not think that we have justice through our own efforts. God's justice is grace given to us, and is called grace because it is gratuitous, and it is gratuitous because it has preceded our merits, God's gifts have preceded us."¹¹⁰

105. Poterat (Deus) ... hoc (exemptio a morte) donare credentibus, ut nec istius experirentur corporis mortem, sed si hoc fecisset, carni quaedam felicitas adderetur, minueretur autem fidei fortitudo. Sic enim homines mortem istam timent ut non ob aliud felices dicerent esse christianos, nisi quod mori omnino non possent. Sed Deus plus gratiae praestitit, plus fidelibus suis sine dubitatione donavit. Quid enim magnum erat vivendo non mori eos qui crederent credere se non moriturum? Quanto est maius, quanto fortius, quanto laudabilius ita credere ut se speret moriturus sine fine victurum (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 2,31,50).

106. Tunc est fides quando expectatur in spe, quam in re nondum videtur (*De Civitate Dei* 13,4).

107. *De Spiritu et littera* 10, 16.

108. Merita eius erant magna, sed mala (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 5,12).

109. Sigloriemur in Domino gloriemur (quia) nihil tutius, nihil securius (*Sermo* 160, 3).

110. *Erratio in Ps.* 30,3.

The gratuitousness of justification does not exclude merit. No merits are acquired before the gift of faith, before justification, but the just are not without merits. The just have become just gratuitously, because they have been justified, gratuitously through God's grace (Rom 3,24). Merit is so intimately connected with grace, that Augustine feels that he must insist that man's merits are gratuitous gifts, and therefore he concludes that God does not crown your merits as if they were yours, but because they are his¹¹¹ and so he invites his hearers to recognise these merits as God's gifts.¹¹²

Augustine also teaches that our hope for eternal reward is strengthened by this teaching: God who gave his gifts gratuitously, will not deny his promises¹¹³; for this reason the just man will speak to God in this manner: "Give us what you promised, for we have done what you have commanded, and you yourself have done this, for you help us in doing it."¹¹⁴

Gratia adiuvans

We need God's help to obtain justification and persevere in it. What is the nature of this help? Is this help necessary? Is it efficacious? Is it gratuitous? Augustine's answers to these questions were in contrast with the position taken by the Pelagians.

According to Augustine, Pelagius identified grace with free will, with God's law including the Gospels, with the remission of sins, and with Christ's good example.

i. Pelagius considered human nature created and adorned with free will as a grace of God. Augustine replied that this was true in a certain manner (*quadam non improbanda ratione*) for we can call grace what has been given to us at creation so that we might be human beings, but the grace we are speaking about is altogether different, something vastly superior. Deriding the Pelagians for admitting the grace of creation (*illam generalem gratiam qua creatus est homo*) and denying the grace by means of which we are Christians (*illam gratiam qua Christiani sumus*), he

111. Deus non coronat merita tua tamquam tua, sed tamquam dona sua (*Epistula* 194, 5,19).

112. Discute bene merita tua et videbis quia dona sunt mea (*Sermo* 131).

113. Non negabit debitum qui donavit indebitum (*Sermo* 297,5).

114. Redde quod promisisti, quia fecimus quod iussisti, et hoc tu fecisti quia laborantes iuvisti (*Enarratio in Ps.* 138,2).

calls their intelligence a brittle intelligence (*vitreum acumen*). The Pelagians, concludes Augustine, should also admit the grace by means of which we are Christians, and the reason for this is the fact that our nature, because of Adam's sin, needed a doctor: it asks for a doctor (*medicum imploret*). May the Pelagians seek this medicine (*gratia medicinalis quaeratur*) so that all controversies might come to an end (*controversia finiatur*).¹¹⁵

ii. The Pelagians considered God's law grace for it teaches us how to lead a good life; Augustine agreed for God's law is good, holy and useful, prohibits what is prohibited (*vetat quae vetanda sunt*) and commands what must be commanded (*iubet quae iubenda sunt*); but Augustine adds that to observe God's law, the love which the Holy Spirit diffuses in our hearts is necessary.

iii. Augustine agreed with the Pelagians that Christ's good example could be considered as a gift given to us by Christ himself; for Augustine the imitation of Christ (*imitatio Christi*) was the summit of all religion (*religionis summa*); but the *imitatio Christi* is not Christian grace; Christian grace is the *caritas* we need to imitate Christ, to observe God's law, to obtain remission of our sins. What is, according to Augustine, the nature of this grace, the nature of the *gratia adiuvans*?

From the Scriptures Augustine develops three themes:

i. "Help us to do what your order, and order what you will". This is a prayer coming out of the depths of Augustine's heart which finds its echo in several texts from *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* and from *De spiritu et littera*; as an example we can mention this text: "God himself helps our conversion: when he orders us: 'Turn unto me and I will turn unto you;' we say to him: 'Turn unto us, God of our salvation' and 'Restore us, o Lord', what else are we saying except 'Help us to do what you order?' And when he orders us saying 'Do not follow your evil desires' and we answer 'We know that no one can be continent without God's help' what else are we saying but: 'Order what you will'?"¹¹⁷

115. *De natura et gratia* 54,63.

116. Da quod iubes, et iube quod vis (*Confessiones* 10,29,400).

117. Uf convertamus, ipse (Deus) adiuvat... Cum ergo nobis iubet: Convertimi ad me et ego convertar ad vos, nosque illi dicimus: Convertite nos Deus sanitarum nostrarum, et: Deus virtutum convertite nos, quid aliud dicimus quam: Da quod iubes?... Cum iubet dicendo: Post concupiscentias tuas non eas, nosque dicimus: Scimus nemo esse potest continens nisi Deus dat, quid aliud dicimus: Da quod iubes? (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 2,5,5).

ii. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (Jn 6,44). Quoting these words of St. John, together with the words John wrote further on in the same chapter: “No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father” (Jn 6,65), Augustine says: “This is the grace which Pelagius ought to admit if he really wants to be a Christian and not a Christian in name only.”¹¹⁸

Augustine quotes other Scripture texts; worthy of note is this quotation: “Pride has so closed the ears of their heart that they are unable to hear: ‘What have you that you did not receive?’ (1 Cor 4,7); they do not hear: ‘Love is of God’ (1 Jn 4,7); they do not hear: ‘Each according to the measure of faith that God assigned to him’ (Rom 12,3); they do not hear: ‘No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father’ (Jn 6,65); they do not hear ... what the Spirit says through Jeremiah: ‘I will put the fear of me in their hearts that they may not turn from me’ Jer 32,40) ... and especially what has been said through Ezechiel”. Here Augustine gives a long quotation from the prophet foretelling the work of the Spirit (Ez 30, 22-37) “...a new heart I will give you and a new spirit ... I will put within you ... and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances...”¹¹⁹

iii. “God’s love has been poured into our hearts” (Rom 5,5). Augustine summarises his ideas in these words of St. Paul (Augustine usually did this in many of his controversies, choosing a Scriptural text which summarised the various Biblical texts he quoted in support of his thesis). Augustine used this text numberless times during the Pelagian controversy from its beginning: as an example we can mention what he says in *De Spiritu et littera*: after explaining the terms of the problem, he says:

“From what I will prove it would certainly appear more evident that to lead a good life is a gift of God not only because God gave man freedom of will, without which one can neither lead a good or a bad life, not only because God gave man a commandment telling him how he ought to live, but because God’s love has been poured through the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those whom he foreknew to predestinate them, in those whom he predestinated to call them, in those whom he

118. Hanc debet Pelagius gratiam confiteri, si vult non solum vocari, verum etiam esse Christianum (*De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* 1,10,110).

119. *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* 14,6,14.

called to justify them, in those whom he justified to glorify them."¹²⁰

Augustine also draws an argument against the Pelagians from Liturgy; with regard to original sin his argument from Liturgy was the Baptism of infants; his argument now is from prayer, for prayer is a clear proof of the necessity of God's grace to help us (*gratia adiuvans*): if we do not need such a grace why pray for it? "Is there anything more foolish than praying for something which is in your power?"¹²¹ When one says: "Lead us not into temptation" one does not pray to be a man for he is so by nature; nor does one pray for free will for he has received it when his nature was created; nor does he ask for the remission of sins as this has been asked for in the preceding petition: "Forgive us our trespasses"; nor does he pray for knowledge of the commandments, but to be able to obey them... Who prays thus, prays not to sin." Augustine then concludes; "Prayer itself is the clearest witness of the necessity of grace."¹²²

Augustine also quotes the Fathers, especially Saint Ambrose who for Pelagius was among the Latin writers, a flower of great beauty, whose faith, whose interpretation of the Scriptures no one dared doubting, not even an enemy¹²³; because of this regard Pelagius had for Ambrose, Augustine quotes a number of texts against Pelagius five of which from Ambrose's commentary on Luke with reference to grace, and one from the commentary on Isaiah with reference to the *impeccantia*. Augustine also quotes Cyprian's treatise on the Lord's prayer because Cyprian explains the various petitions of the *Pater noster* by insisting on the necessity of prayer.

Finally Augustine concludes his argument saying (i) that we must admit "a help to do good added to our nature and to the instruction in doctrine we have received"¹²⁴; (ii) this help is something marvellous and ineffable: "In this we see difference

120. Quod cum ostendero, profecto manifestius apparebit bene vivere donum esse divinum non tantum quia homini Deus dedit liberum arbitrium, sine quo nec male nec bene vivitur, non tantum quia praeceptum dedit, quod doceat quemadmodum sit vivendum, sed quia per Spiritum sanctum diffundit caritatem in cordibus eorum quos praescivit ut praedestinaret, praedestinavit ut vocaret, vocavit ut iustificaret, iustificavit ut glorificaret (*De spiritu et littera*).

121. Quid stultius quam orare ut facias quod in potestate habes (*De natura et gratia* 18,20).

122. *Epistula* 177,4.

123. *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* 1,42,47.

124. Adiutorium bene agendi adiunctum naturae atque doctrinae (*De gratia Christi et peccato originali* 1,36,38).

between the Old and New Testaments; the law was written on tables, now it is written in our hearts so that what filled us externally with fear now pleases us internally; then one became a prevaricator because of a law which killed, now one becomes a lover because of a spirit which gives life"¹²⁵; (iii) that this help (*adiutorium*) is essentially "the inspiration of a beautiful and bright love."¹²⁶

Augustine then asks what might be an obstacle to human actions, and answers that ignorance (*ignorantia*) and infirmity (*infirmitas*) are to blame: "Men refuse to do what is just either because what is just is hidden to them or because it does not please them. The more ardently we wish for something the more certain we are of its goodness and the more ardently will it please us. Ignorance and infirmity are therefore those vices which prevent the will from doing what is good or avoiding evil. God's grace is necessary to help man's will so that we might become aware of what is hidden to us and how sweet is what was not attracting us."¹²⁷ In other words *ignorantia* is the lack of knowledge of the goodness or the evilness of something, while the *infirmitas* makes what is good and just unpleasant to our nature. These obstacles are removed by certain knowledge (*certam scientiam*) and victorious pleasure (*victricem delectationem*) which the good God gives us. The *scientia certa* is not external knowledge, namely the knowledge of Christian doctrine, but it is above all the pleasure which God grants to the soul in the knowledge of the truth of faith. The *victrix delectatio* so badly misunderstood by the Jansenists, is the pleasure of love (*delectatio dilectioque*) of the supreme God, the pleasure in doing for the love of God what seems unpleasant to our nature.

The main obstacle is the *infirmitas*, which can only be overcome by a great love which does not depend on our free will, but is infused in us by the Holy Spirit.

125. Cum haec apparet distantia Veteris et Novi Testamenti, quod lex ibi in tabulis, hic in cordibus scribitur, ut quod ibi forinsecus terret, hic delectat intrinsecus, ibique fiet praevaricator per occidentem litteram, hic dilector per vivificantem spiritus (*De spiritu et littera* 35,42).
126. Inspiratio flagrantissimae et luminosissimae caritatis (*De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* 1,35,38).
127. Nolunt homines facere quod iustum est sive quia latet an latum sit sive quia non delectat. Tanto enim quidque vehementius volumus, quanto certius quam bonum sit novimus eoque delectamur ardentius. Ignorantia igitur et infirmitas vitia sunt quae impediunt voluntatem ne moveatur ad faciendum opus bonum vel ab opere malo abstrahendum. Ut autem innotescat quod latebat et suave fiet quod non delectabat gratiae Dei est, qua hominum adiuvat voluntates (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 2,17,26).

Necessity of the gratia adiuvens

Grace is absolutely necessary. Augustine distinguishes two types of help (*auxilia*); certain *auxilia* are such that without them we cannot obtain what they help us to obtain, while other *auxilia* help us to obtain what we can obtain even without them. Grace belongs to the first type of *auxilia* and to show that no one can live justly without the help of God's grace (*nemo sine Dei gratia recte vivit*), Augustine gives several examples v.g. you cannot sail without a boat, you cannot speak without a voice, you cannot walk without feet, etc.

Pelagius held that with the help of grace man can more easily (*facilius*) do what their free will commands them to do. Refuting Pelagius' treatise on free will (*De libero arbitrio*), Augustine tells him to remove the word *facilius* and he would be in perfect agreement with him: "We can never do anything, great or small, without God's help for without his help we can do nothing."¹²⁸

What can man do without the *auxilium gratiae*; without the help of God's grace? The Pelagian answer was too optimistic (we can do anything, grace is necessary only to make things easier for us); the Jansenist and Lutheran answer was too pessimistic (we can do nothing).

Stated in the form given above, the problem is more philosophical than theological, but Augustine preferred discussing the problem expressed in a more theological form: What cannot we do without the *auxilium gratiae*? Misunderstanding Augustine, the Jansenists took a too pessimistic view of the problem.

Augustine's answer to the question can be briefly given in the following three points:

i. *Without grace man cannot avoid sin.* "Through grace," says Augustine," we not only obtain remission of our sins, but also help not to commit sins."¹²⁹ As usual Augustine sees the problem in relation to salvation history and, as we have already seen, he sees three moments in this history; between its beginning, between the possibility of not sinning (*posse non peccare*) which is a minor freedom (*libertas minor*), and its end, the impossibility of sinning (*non posse peccare*) which is the

128. Sive parum, sive multum, sine illo fieri non potest, sine quo nihil fieri potest.

129. Sanat ergo Deus non solum ut deleat quod peccavimus, sed ut praestet etiam ne peccemus (*De natura et gratia* 26,29).

greater freedom (*maior libertas*), there is a long period during which man is not free from sin (the *necessitas peccandi*), punishment for the abuse made with the *libertas minor*. The *necessitas peccandi* does not mean that all man's actions are sinful, that man sins with every action he does, but means that man is in a state of sin and so unable to avoid sin with his sole efforts.

ii. *Without grace man cannot lead a pious life, namely he cannot do good (non posse recte agere)*. Grace is necessary for each single act (*ad singulos actus*) man does, and is especially necessary for the first act of faith (*initium fidei*) and final perseverance (*perseverantia finalis*).

iii. *Without grace we cannot do any "truly" virtuous acts*. Augustine held, against Pelagius, that pagan virtues are not true virtues, and based this harsh opinion on two biblical texts: "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb 11,2); and "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom 14,23). An act is good not because its object is good but because of its end: "You should therefore realise that virtues are distinguished from vices not from one's actions but from the end for which an action is done."¹³⁰ An act is not truly virtuous unless it is referred to God; even if its aim is good, it cannot be really virtuous, for if an action is not for God (*ad Deum*) it must be for its own self (*ad se ipsas*) and so it would be an act of pride (*inflatae et superbae sunt*).

But what can human nature do without the help of grace, without the *auxilium gratiae*? To have a balanced view of Augustine's doctrine on the necessity of grace, we must also say that Augustine always held that the image of God impressed in man's soul could not be destroyed by sin: it was only darkened. To prove this Augustine quotes Rom 2,14: "Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires" because "what has been impressed by God's image at creation was not totally destroyed; what make man's soul rational certainly remained together with the natural faculty which makes a rational animal (man) feel and do."¹³¹

Even the most evil of men, continues Augustine, cannot live his whole life without doing some good deed, for in all men there is a natural goodness (*quandam*

130. Noveris itaque non officiis, sed finibus a vitiis discernendas esse virtutes (*Contra Iulianum* 4,3,21).

131. Gentes quae legem non habent naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt (Rom 2,14). (Quia) non omnimodo deletum est quod ibi per imaginem Dei cum crearentur impressum est... remanserat utique id quod anima hominis nisi rationalis esse non potest: (in omnibus) illa naturae qua legitimum aliquid animal rationale et sentit et facit, (remansit) (*De spiritu et littera* 28,48).

sui generis probitatem), which is enough for the foundation and the progress of the city of the world: "We read and hear and know certain facts about such people", says Augustine, "facts which are according to justice and which we cannot blame, but we should justly and really praise: and yet if we were to examine these actions with reference to their end, we will notice that they are hardly worthy of praise and defence for their goodness."¹³² The reason for this is the fact that these people do not direct their actions to God (*ad Deum*): there is no true justification (*iustitia*) where there is no worship of the one true God.

Grace is given only to those who cooperate with it. "God, who is our helper," says Augustine, "cannot help us unless we willingly try to do something, for God works in us our salvation not as if we were insensible beings like stones or rocks, which he created without will or reason."¹³³ Elsewhere Augustine expressed the same idea with these words: "He is not one who helps us if we do nothing; he does not cooperate if we do not strive.... Be led, but you must run."¹³⁴ Again, in one of his letters he writes: "Free will is not taken away when help is given to us, but help is given to us because our free will is not taken away"¹³⁵ for free will has not been destroyed by Adam's sin. "The freedom which has been lost," says Augustine, "is the freedom from death and sin"; man has lost his *libertas minor*, 'minor freedom', the *posse non peccare* (the possibility of not sinning) after Adam's sin, it is impossible for man not to sin (*non posse non peccare*) as we have already explained, therefore no one is free to do good without God's help, for our captive free will is only capable of sinning.¹³⁶ We have already said in what way these statements should be understood: Augustine never meant that free will had been destroyed by sin, but that free will cannot help us to lead a virtuous life, if man's will is still enslaved by sin, and has not been liberated by God's grace.

132. Quaedam facta vel legimus vel novimus vel audivimus quae secundum iustitiae regulam non solum vituperare non possumus, verum etiam merito recteque laudamus, quamquam si discutiantur, quo fine fiant, vix inveniuntur quae iustitiae debitam laudem defensionemque mereantur.

133. Adiutor enim noster Deus, nec adiuvari potest nisi qui aliquid etiam sponte conatur, quia non sicut in lapidibus insensatis aut sicut in eis, in quorum natura rationem voluntatemque non condidit, salutem nostram Deus operatur in nobis (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 2,5,60).

134. Non enim adiutor est ille, si nihil agatis; non enim cooperatur est ille,...si nihil operamini. ... Ducimini, sed currite et vos (*Sermo* 196, 13).

135. Neque enim voluntatis arbitrium ideo tollitur quia iuvatur sed ideo iuvatur quia non tollitur (*Epistula* 157,2,100).

136. Non est liber ad agendum bonum sine adiutorio Dei (nam) liberum arbitrium captivatum non nisi ad peccandum valet.

All this shows the need of prayer

A clear proof of the need of prayer is the fact that the Church prays for God's help, and this fact helped Augustine to answer the objections of the Pelagians who continually insisted that God does not command the impossible and so they wrongly concluded that prayers of intercession are not necessary. The Church prays, for prayer is the general law of Christian life.

To the Pelagian objection, Augustine replied admitting the truth that God does not command the impossible: "God does not command the impossible, but when he commands us to do something he also tells us to do what we are able to do and ask for help when we are unable to do something with our efforts alone."¹³⁷ Augustine also adds: "Once we strongly believe that the good and just God does not command the impossible, we are told what to do when something easy is asked from us, and what to ask for, if something difficult is requested from us. Everything becomes easier through love, through which Christ's burden becomes light. ... This is why it has been said that his commandments are not difficult; but if to someone they might appear difficult let him consider the fact that God would not have said they were not difficult unless there was a loving heart for whom they would not be difficult and would ask for what he lacked, to do what was requested of him."¹³⁸ Then Augustine concludes: "Law has been given that grace might be sought, and grace has been given that law might be obeyed."¹³⁹

Grace is given us through prayer. God, writes Augustine,¹⁴⁰ wants us to fight the good fight with our prayers rather than with our own efforts, for the efforts we need in this world are given us by him to whom we pray. Fight against the world with

137. Non igitur Deus impossibilia iubet sed iubendo admonet et facere quod possis et petere quod non possis (*De natura et gratia* 43,50).

138. Eo ipso quo firmissime creditur Deum iustum et bonum impossibilia non potuisse praecipere hinc admonemur et in facilibus quid agamus et in difficilibus quid petamus. Omnia quippe fiunt facilia caritati, cui uni Christi sarcina levis est. Secundum hoc dictum est: praecepta eius graviora non sunt, ut cui graviora sunt, consideret non potuisse divinitus dici: Graviora non sunt, nisi qui potest esse cordis affectus cui graviora non sunt, et petat quo destituitur, ut impleat quod iubetur (*De natura et gratia* 69.8.30)

139. Lex ergo data est ut gratia quereretur, gratia data est ut lex impleteretur (*De spiritu et littera* 19,34)

140. *Opus imperfectum* 6,15.

141. *Epistula* 130,16,29.

your prayers, Augustine wrote to Proba,¹⁴¹ pray with hope, pray with faith and with love, pray with perseverance and patience for whatever God's law commands is accomplished only if He who commands helps, inspires and give.¹⁴² Prayer is necessary for us as much as the grace we obtain through prayer; without prayer there is no salvation, as there is no salvation without grace. Prayer is especially necessary for final perseverance which we can never merit, but can always achieve through prayer.¹⁴³

Prayer is necessary for us to obtain grace, and grace is necessary for us to be able to pray. We know, says Augustine,¹⁴⁴ that God has some gifts which he gives even to those who do not pray, e.g. the *initium fidei*, and some gifts which he only gives to those who pray v.g. final perseverance. Besides the gift of the *initium fidei*, to those who do not pray, God also gives the grace of prayer.

Nature and Grace

We have already mentioned the Pelagian argument to prove that sin has not weakened human nature, that human nature was not changed by Adam's sin. Pelagius argued that sin is not a substance but an action: how could it therefore change and weaken human nature? We also mentioned that Augustine did not deny that sin was not a substance, but added that sin was an action which estranged us from God, and, depriving us of God has been our death:

"If you prefer a discussion there is no objection and it would also be worth while if a very strong faith precedes our discussion, that faith which make us not think that human nature cannot be vitiated by sin, that faith based on the authority of the Scriptures, which will help us to find out how it could have been possible for our nature to be vitiated by sin. We have learned that sin is not a substance, must we not also admit that eating is not a substance? But there is some connection ... for food is a substance; to abstain from food is not a substance but if one abstains totally from food, the substance-body languishes, loses its strength, and if it continues

142. Quidquid lex Dei iubet, nonnisi eo qui iubet adiuvante, inspirante, donante, completur (*Opus imperfectum* 6,30).

143. Suppliciter mereri potest (*De dono perseverantiae* 5,19).

144. *De dono perseverantiae* 16,30.

to live in some way, it can hardly be asked to take that food, by abstaining from which, it has been weakened.”¹⁴⁵

Our nature is a fallen nature through a very serious act of pride; the seriousness of Adam’s sin is due to the fact that Adam enjoyed complete freedom and could therefore easily obey God’s commands; he disobeyed God through pride, and man’s disobedience to God brought disobedience within himself, for his passions rebelled against the dictates of reason as we have said before: man was punished for his disobedience to God, by disobedience within his own nature.

Man, once fallen, could never redeem himself. Through sin man lost the freedom he enjoyed in the garden of Eden, namely having full justice together with immortality.¹⁴⁶ Once lost, this freedom could not be given back except by the One who could give it.¹⁴⁷ The reason for this statement, says Augustine, is found in the Bible; to the proof from the Bible Augustine adds a metaphysical argument: “We are not helped by God to sin ... but to do good; to obey the commandment of justice in all its implications is not possible for us unless we have God’s help ... just as the eye of our body is not helped by light, if it is closed to this light and runs away from it; but to see the eye needs the help of light and will not see unless helped by light; we can say the same with regard to God who is the light of the soul: he helps the sight of our soul to do something good, which is according to his justice and not according to our nature.”¹⁴⁸ Briefly, (i) Adam through his sin lost his friendship with God, only God could give him back his friendship; (ii) Adam lost

145. Quia disputare vis non obest, immo etiam prodest, si firmissima procedat fides nec existimemus peccato humanam naturam non posse vitari, sed divinis credentes Scripturis peccato eam esse vitiatam quomodo id feri potuerit inquiramus. Quoniam peccatum iam didicimus non esse substantiam, nonne adtenditur... etiam non manducare non esse substantiam? A substantia quippe receditur... quoniam cibus substantia est; sed abstinere a cibo non est substantia, et tamen substantia corporis, si omnino abstinetur a cibo, ita languescit...ita exhauritur viribus... ut si aliquo modo perduret in vita, vix possit ad cum cibum revocari, unde abstinendo vitata est (*De natura et gratia* 20,22) (Cfr. note II).

146. Libertas quae in paradiso fuit, scilicet habendi plenam cum immortalitate iustitiam (*Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* 1,25).

147. Reddi non potest nisi a quo dari potuit (*De Civitate Dei* 14,11,1).

148. Ad peccandum...non adiuvarur a Deo; iuste autem agere vel iustitiae praeceptum omni ex parte implere non possumus, nisi adiuvemur a Deo... Sicut enim corporis oculus non adiuvarur a luce, ut ab eadem luce clausus aversumque discedat, ut autem videat adiuvarur ab eo neque hoc omnino, nisi illa adiuverit, potest, ita Deus cui lux est hominis interioris: adiuvat nostrae mentis obtutum ut non secundum nostram, sed secundum eius iustitiam boni aliquid operemur (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 1,5,5).

his immortality, he became mortal, and therefore through his efforts, he could never conquer death; (iii) Adam became subject to disorders, for his passions were no longer controlled by reason: because of these disorders he could never enjoy interior stability. Adam therefore needed a Mediator to reconcile Him with God and so free him from the situation into which he had fallen through his sin.

Once these points are accepted, we will immediately convince ourselves that the whole problem is not about human nature itself, but about the need of salvation for human nature (*de sanandis, non de instituendis naturis agitur*) This is the thesis which Augustine develops in his *De natura et gratia* in answer to the *De natura* of Pelagius. The first question Augustine asks is: "Is our nature a fallen nature, or not? His answer is quite clear: "It is vitiated and needs a doctor" (*vitiata est, medicum imploret*); to clarify his idea, Augustine makes reference to the parable of the good Samaritan; this led medieval theologians, when discussing original sin, to state that through this sin man has been despoiled and wounded in his nature.¹⁴⁹ Augustine speaks of a *natura vitiata* and asks what *vitium* is. It is not sin or guilt, says Augustine, but an imperfection, a defect, an evil in the sense we say blindness (*caecitas*) is a *vitium oculorum*, a defect in the eyes. Applied to men, for Augustine the *vitium* is a *privatio bonorum*, a lack of something good.¹⁵⁰ For Augustine the *bona naturalia* (natural goods) are not only what belongs to the integrity of human nature but also all that is the object of our deepest desires, and therefore he considered death, disorderly concupiscence and separation from God as the *vitia*, the defects and evils which make human nature a *natura vitiata*.

Having said this, we can easily understand that Augustine's position vis-à-vis Manichaeism and Pelagianism was, what we may call, a middle way, the *veritatis medium*. The Pelagians, as we have seen, held that concupiscence in our present state, *ut nunc est*, is not an evil but a natural good, while the Manichees considered concupiscence and all the material world as something evil. Augustine took the middle way: concupiscence *ut nunc est* is a *vitium naturae*, a defect of fallen nature, and does not come from God but from the world (*non provenit a Patre sed a mundo*). Again the Pelagians held that men could do good through their own free will without God's help, while the Manichees held that our evil actions do not derive from our free will. Augustine replied telling the Manichees that God made man upright (Qoh 7,29) and telling the Pelagians: "If the Son makes you free, you are free indeed (Jn 8,36).

149. Spoliatus gratuitis vulneratus in naturalibus.

150. Vitia naturalium sunt privationes bonorum (*Enchiridion* 3,11).

We can now see the relation there is between nature and grace.

Human nature, says Augustine, is *capax Dei*, capable of having God, for man has been created to God's image and likeness, an image which has not been destroyed by sin but only darkened and defaced. Augustine, during his last years, was continually repeating what he wrote in his *Confessions*: O Lord, you have made us for you, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you,¹⁵¹ and what he wrote in *The City of God* that our soul will not lose its poverty unless it acquires blessedness, for there is nothing to satisfy it unless it is God himself.¹⁵²

We have several times repeated that concupiscence in our present state (*ut nunc est*) is a defect, a *vitium*, but this is not what God wanted human nature to be: immunity from disorderly concupiscence is something worthy of man's dignity, and this is what God had willed. The same thing can be said with regard to death which is of no good for anyone (*nulli boni est*). Fear of death is not an opinion but something natural,¹⁵³ for the human soul which is immortal and which of its nature is the *forma corporis* (the form of the body) postulates the immortality of the body.

These ideas of Augustine made Baius identify nature with grace; but Baius misunderstood Augustine, who clearly distinguished between nature and grace. Augustine wrote that God, in one and the same moment, created human nature and infused his grace in it,¹⁵⁴ and that it is natural for man to have faith as well as love, to have faith and to have love is a grace given to believers ... nature does not distinguish a man from another, but faith distinguishes a man who believes from a man who is an unbeliever.¹⁵⁵

Augustine not only affirms the distinction between nature and grace, but also insists on God's transcendence and on the gifts God gave to man at creation i.e. his friendship, and immunity from death and concupiscence. "God is the Being whom no man or angel can pretend to approach for he is the Subsistent Being.... Before this Being, what is man...? Who can ever hope to approach him? Who can ever

151. Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.

152. Nec expleat indigentiam suam nisi utique beata sit, eique explenda non sufficiat nisi Deus (*De Civitate Dei* 12, 13).

153. Mortem quippe horret non opinio sed natura (*Sermo* 172,1).

154. Simul in eis condens naturam et largiens gratiam (*Civitate Dei* 12,9,2).

155. Posse habere fidem sicut posse habere caritatem naturae est hominum; habere autem fidem quemadmodum habere caritatem gratiae est fidelium...illa utique natura...non discernit ab homine hominem; ipsa vero fides discernit ab infideli homine (*De praedestinatione sanctorum* 5,10).

presume to be in him?"¹⁵⁶ If God did not come down to man, man could not rise up to God: "I come to you, because you cannot come up to me."¹⁵⁷ Only the grace of divine adoption can bridge the gap between man and his Creator. Augustine continues to insist on this, speaking on God's image in man: because man is created to the image of God, man needs God, for each image tends towards its exemplar, on the other hand man is infinitely unlike God for he is far below, far away from Him, very different from him.¹⁵⁸

Once we admit this, we cannot admit that grace is something which belongs to the integrity of our nature but is something which has been given to us as a gratuitous gift of God, who to his eternal name (*nomen aeternitatis*) has added a merciful name (*nomen misericordiae*) by coming down to our lowliness to lift us up to his greatness. Not only is man's elevation a gift of God, but also immunity from death and concupiscence, is a gift from God. It is through a marvellous grace of God (*mirabili Dei gratia*) that man could not die, for man is mortal because of his animal body (*condicione corporis animalis*), but can be granted immortality as a gift from the Creator (*beneficio Conditoris*). In the garden of Eden man, adorned with grace (*vestitus gratia*) was not ashamed of his nakedness, but deprived of grace (*spoliatus gratia*) he felt ashamed and felt the need of covering his nakedness - God's grace is truly something great.¹⁵⁹

Predestination

Augustine discussed predestination towards the end of his life, and wrote three treatises *De corruptione et gratia*, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* and *De dono perseverantiae*. Augustine did not discuss predestination theoretically, but factually, from a historical point of view, *in concreto*, basing himself on the data of revelation. "God wants all men to be saved", says Augustine, "and acquire the full knowledge of truth, but not in such a way as to destroy their free will, on the good and bad use of which they will be justly judged. Infidels act against God's will when they do not believe the Gospel, but they do not overcome him; on the contrary they defraud themselves of the supreme good and subject themselves to great punishments,

156. *Enarratio in Ps.* 101,2,1.

157. Ego descendo quia tu venire non potes (*Enarratio in Ps.* 121,5).

158. Longe intra, remotissimum, longe dissimillimum (*Sermo* 7,7).

159. Gratia quippe Dei magna erat (*Contra Iulianum* 18,82).

submitting to his power in their torments, having refused the gifts of his mercy.”¹⁶⁰ In the order of intention, that is, considering divine wisdom in itself, God wills the salvation of all men and gives the means of salvation to all, but considering the actual fact – and this is what Augustine does – not all men are saved.

Speaking about predestination, Augustine does not refer simply to God’s foreknowledge but also to his will; nor does he refer to the pure order of intention, independently of the reality that from all eternity there will be the chosen and the damned. Augustine’s chief preoccupation is the gratuity of salvation and of the very merits which lead to it, which are all divine gifts given to whom God wills through his mercy (*per misericordiam*). And so Augustine defines predestination as the foreknowledge and preparation of God’s benefits by means of which all those who are liberated are certainly liberated.¹⁶¹ In Augustine’s definition only those who are certainly liberated (*certissime liberentur*) are mentioned; there is no mention of those who are not saved; with regard to the damned, Augustine says that their judgement is not gratuitously given or given without just cause; they are damned by a judgement (*per iudicium*).

Many of Augustine’s statements on predestination may cause great difficulties for us, if we forget that Augustine is speaking of predestination not theoretically but factually, *in concreto*. Another point we must constantly keep in mind is that Augustine continually insists on the gratuity of all the gifts God vouchsafes to men that they may be saved. All Augustine’s statements are based on these facts: (i) God’s gifts, and above all, final perseverance are gratuitous and are not in any way merited by us; (ii) God wants all men to be saved (*vult omnes homines salvos fieri*), and gives to all men the means for salvation, but in actual fact, not all are saved; (iii) God from all eternity knows who are these saved, and their number. On account of Adam’s sin all are a *massa damnata*, all have been redeemed by Christ, but some refuse salvation and are therefore damned.

160. Deus vult omnes homines salvos fieri et ad agnitionem veritatis venire, non sic tamen ut eis adimat liberum arbitrium quo vel bene vel male utentes iustissime iudicetur. Quod cum fit infideles quidem contra voluntatem Dei faciunt cum eius Evangelium non credunt; nec ideo tamen eum vincunt, verum seipos fraudent magno et summo bono magnisque poenalibus, experturi in supplicii potestatem eius cuius in donis misericordiam contempserunt (*De Spiritu et litera* 32,58).

161. Praescientia et praeparatio beneficiorum Dei quibus certissime liberentur quicumque liberantur (*De dono perseverantiae* 19,35).

It is in the light of the above statements, that we must understand the great many texts in which Augustine speaks of the identical situation of both the damned and the elect before the all-powerfulness of God's will: their cause is the same (*eadem causa, causa communis*), for sin has made all a mass of perdition (*massa perditionis*): even infants. Augustine is so logical in his arguments that he considers unbaptised children as damned, as we have already seen. He even says, with regard to an infant dying before baptism in spite of all the efforts made to have the infant baptised, that the infant died because God did not want Baptism to be given.¹⁶² Augustine's statements here should not be understood as meaning that God does not want some to be saved, as the words just quoted seem to imply. God wants all men to be saved (the antecedent will – *voluntas antecedens* of later theologians), but because of the lack of saving grace, for some (like the infant mentioned) God wills that they will not be saved (the consequent will, the *voluntas consequens* of later theologians). Augustine's statements appear categorical because he does not make this distinction explicitly, although it is found in his writings, which, on predestination, apparently contradict themselves; actually there is no contradiction, for Augustine sometimes speaks of the antecedent will of God who wants all men to be saved, and sometimes of the consequent will of God (the damnation of those who refuse salvation, and refuse it

162. Deo nolente quad detur baptismus (*De dono perseverantiae* 31).

163. Etiamsi nullus liberaretur, nemo potest Dei vituperare iustitiam (*Enchiridion* 99; *De dono perseverantiae* 18).