

Augustine: Sin and Salvation



ISSUES IN ANCIENT CHURCH THINKING



AUGUSTINE ON SIN

- ▶ What is sin? (reading from Paul)
- ▶ Paul: Sin is a State of Being, not just errors or a series of wrongful acts.
- ▶ Sin is also a power which inflicts evil on God's creation.
- ▶ Sin began with early humanity (or the first human being):
- ▶ Leaves Augustine with some questions:
- ▶ How are the effects of Adam's sin passed on to present day humanity?
- ▶ What are the true extent of these effects?
- ▶ What is the role of the Church in dealing with the effects of sin?



The Battle Which Defined Augustine's Views On Sin

- ▶ Pelagius (360 – 418)
- ▶ Probably a Britain ascetic.
- ▶ Travelled to Rome- shocked by moral laxity among Christians.
- ▶ Worried that Augustine's view of sin (the, we can't help it model found in Paul is theologically troubling.
- ▶ Key themes in Pelagius
- ▶ Free Will (God does not give us anything we can't manage).
- ▶ Augustine's worries about His position: understates Paul's position on sin.
- ▶ If we are free to choose good over sin, then what exactly is Jesus saving us from?
- ▶ **There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias...His ...Elizabeth. & And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1.)**
- ▶ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (Romans 7:15)

The Result: Doctrine of Original Sin



- ▶ Original sin is derived from Adam's fall and creates human concupiscence; the tendency toward evil.
- ▶ Develops the notion of sin passed to each other via procreation.
- ▶ Personal sin takes two forms: mortal sin, which destroys grace in a person's soul and venial sin which weakens a person and increases temptation.
- ▶ **Grace:** Sanctifying grace is brought through baptism, which purifies a person's soul, forgives all sin and makes a person a child of God.
- ▶ Baptism is necessary to purge original sin. (preserves the attitude of supernatural healing in Christianity).

Some Consequences of the Doctrine

- ▶ **Attitudes to Sexuality:** It is claimed that Augustine renders sex a vehicle of evil and an obstacle to salvation.
- ▶ **Election:** Since there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation, God chooses who will be saved from eternity.
- ▶ **Unbaptised Infants:** Pelagius believes that unbaptised infants can be saved (this is in accord with his optimistic view of human nature).
- ▶ **Augustine:** infants who die without baptism are consigned to hell.
- ▶ "Why did Christ die for them if they are not guilty?"



AUGUSTINE AND SIN



Augustine (13 November 354 – 28 August 430)

African Bishop, Church Father

Begins with Paul

Sin as State of Being

- ▶ **Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. (1 Corinthians 15:22).**
- ▶ **One product of sin is death: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23).**

But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. (Romans 7:23).

Raises questions- how is Adam's sin linked with us?



Pelagius/Augustine

Pelagius: (circa 360 – 418)

- ▶ Some Interesting Texts:
- ▶ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1.)

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (Romans 7:15)

“Da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo (Give me chastity and continence, but not just yet)!”

— Augustine of Hippo, Confessions

It is not what you believe that matters; it is how you respond with your heart and your actions. It is not believing in Christ that matters; it is becoming like him (Pelagius)

