

© 2016

Arif Gören

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

SAINT AUGUSTINE: A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE GRACE OF GOD AND
THE HUMAN BEING'S FREE CHOICE OF THE WILL

By

ARİF GÖREN

A thesis submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Department of Religion

Written under the direction of

Tia M. Kolbaba

And Approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

May 2016

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

SAINT AUGUSTINE: A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE HUMAN BEING'S FREE CHOICE OF THE WILL

by ARİF GÖREN

Thesis Director:

Tia M. Kolbaba

Saint Augustine's understanding of the grace of God and human beings' free choice of the will underwent significant changes. On the one hand, Augustine never ceased to defend the existence of free choice of the will for the sake of goodness, omnipotence, and justice of God. On the other hand, as soon as he converted to Christianity he accentuated the role of God's grace over human beings' good actions. His growing concern for divine omnipotence forced him to accentuate the role of God's grace while lessening the role of human beings' free choice of the will in their good works. Augustine's final views on the grace of God and human beings' free choice of the will are in serious tension. His concern with the omnipotence of God caused him to give no role to human beings. Human beings after the fall cannot freely will or do anything unless God bestows His grace to them. Yet, to hold human beings responsible for the existence of sin, free will must exist. Therefore, Augustine argued that the disobedience of Adam and Eve removed the capability of doing good for all humanity. With the fall, human beings produced their personal sin and became totally incapable of willing and doing good. The Grace of God,

therefore, is only hope for salvation. Augustine's final views on the grace of God and human beings' free choice of the will put him in a position where he contradicts with God's justice. Augustine argued that God has predestined all human beings either to salvation or to damnation. Hence, human beings are not capable of acting contrary to what God determined for them. Yet, Augustine strongly advocated that human beings are responsible for their actions. In other words, God holds a person responsible for things beyond his control.

Acknowledgements

First, and most of all, I would like to express the deepest appreciation to Professor Tia M. Kolbaba, for her assistance, guidance, and patience throughout the process of writing this thesis. Without her guidance and persistent help this thesis would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my committee members Professor James Turner Johnson and Professor Emma J. Wasserman for their time and willingness to be part of this study.

I am also grateful to all the lecturers in Department of Religion. I also would like to thank my friend Ümit Atlamaz who proofread this thesis.

Also importantly, I would like to thank the Turkish Government for its financial support. Without the financial support of the Turkish Government Ministry of National Education, which offered me a scholarship for graduate studies, this work would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unceasing encouragement and support.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
GOD'S GRACE	8
2. FROM CONVERSION TO THE ELEVATION TO BISHOP (386- 396)	9
2.1. <i>Under Manichean Influence (386-391)</i>	9
2.2. <i>After Ordination (391-396)</i>	12
3. AFTER ELEVATION TO BISHOP TO THE BEGINNING OF THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY. (396-412)	16
4. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY TO AUGUSTINE'S DEATH (412- 430)	24
4.1. <i>The Beginning of Faith</i>	27
4.2. <i>Assisting Grace</i>	29
4.3. THE GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE: ULTIMATE BENEFIT	31
5. PROBLEMS	33
6. CONCLUSION	36
FREE CHOICE OF THE WILL	37
2. DEFENDING FREE WILL TO PROTECT GOD'S ABSOLUTE POWER AND GOODNESS	39
2.1 <i>From the Manichean Doctrine of Two Powers</i>	39
2.2. <i>From the Claim that God is the Source of Evil</i>	40
2.3. <i>From the Claim that God is Unjust</i>	43
3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT	44
3.1. 386 – 396.....	44
3.2 396-412: <i>From Elevation to Bishop to the Beginning of the Pelagian Controversy</i>	54
3.3. 412 – 430: <i>From Beginning of the Pelagian Controversy to Augustine's Death</i>	61
4. A LINGERING QUESTION — THE VITIATION OF GOD'S JUSTICE	68
CONCLUSION.....	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	79

1

Introduction

The amount of Augustine's works is enormous. From his conversion to his death, Augustine developed some of his ideas harmoniously while he changed some others radically. In his own words, he was the sort of man who writes because he has made progress, and who makes progress by writing.¹ Therefore, it is easy to come across contradictory opinions in Augustine's work. A large body of work has been dedicated to the investigation and clarification of conflicting ideas from Augustine's different periods of life. This thesis investigates the contradictions stemming from Augustine's views on God's grace and free choice of the will. The first goal of this thesis is to analyze the changes in Augustine's views on God's grace and free choice of the will with the period starting with his conversion to Christianity to his death. The second goal of the thesis is to show that Augustine's concern with God's omnipotence forced him to interpret God's grace as the sole element for salvation. Yet, Augustine also believed in the existence of

¹ Peter Brown. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000). p.35

free choice of the will. His attempts to reconcile God's grace with human free choice of the will led to serious contradictions with God's justice.

In order to attain the two main goals, this thesis investigates Augustine's different views on God's grace and free choice of the will in three different periods. It also attempts to take a snapshot of Augustine's understanding of evil, original sin, and predestination.

The thesis has been divided into two main chapters. Chapter 1 investigates Augustine's views on God's grace, while Chapter 2 focuses on his understanding of human free choice of the will. To show how Augustine's views evolved throughout his life, each chapter is organized primarily in chronological order and divided into three periods : 1) from his conversion to elevation as Bishop (386 – 396), 2) from elevation as Bishop to the beginning of the Pelagian Controversy (396 – 412), and 3) from the beginning of the Pelagian controversy to his death (412 – 430).

As soon as Augustine converted to Christianity, he began to defend the goodness and omnipotence of God against the Manichean discourse of the power of darkness. Augustine argued that God is wholly good and He has absolute sovereignty over every single creature. Therefore, he rejected the Manichean view that human beings sin because of the Dark, an independent power. As a result of his fear of blaming God for evil, Augustine argued that human beings are responsible for evil, and explained that when human beings misuse free will it causes a moral failure, which is the source of evil. Yet, since moral culpability is possible only when a person is responsible for his actions, being responsible for an action requires having the ability to choose to do evil, or refrain from doing good. Although Augustine later rejected this view, in the first period, he

accepted that human beings have the fullest form of freedom to choose whatever they desire.

In the meantime, by the late fourth century a “catholic” Christian had to believe in the existence of God’s grace. Yet Augustine’s concern for the existence of evil forced him to limit the role of grace over human actions. He argued that God unconditionally bestowed his grace upon every human being in creation. This grace is the ability to think, reason, and make their choices by themselves. Later, Augustine gradually came to believe that grace is an additional power given by God to empower human beings to perform when they will to do good. Unlike unconditionally given grace, this sort of grace is given in response to explicit prayer. Even though Augustine began to lessen his emphasis on the power of human beings, God’s grace does not necessarily remove the responsibility. Every human being receives what he deserves as a result of his actions. God assists those who believe in Him and ask His assistance. The grace of God does not orient the hearts of human beings to do good or refrain from doing evil. The choice to do or refrain from any action is under human control.

Augustine’s thought continued to develop when he became the Bishop of Hippo. Over the years, the omnipotence of God came to dominate his mind such that he argued that God’s grace is absolutely necessary to will and perform good. In this period, he thought that human beings are incapable of initiating and completing a good action. Augustine argued that Adam and Eve’s disobedience had weakened the power of human beings such that a person can only will evil. Even though one becomes capable to will good, one eventually will perform evil. The only hope for willing and performing good is contingent on God’s grace. According to Augustine, because human beings are fallen, it

is impossible for all human beings to attain good in this life. Direct divine assistance is the only hope for attaining the highest good. Augustine even began to claim that the existence of the Laws makes human beings more prone to sin. Although the law informs human beings about the existence of evil, it does not provide any assistance to overcome their evil desires. On the contrary, it causes an increase in self-confidence because human beings assume that they can attain virtues by themselves, which causes human beings to fail to realize their inability to will and perform any good.

It is normal to expect that Augustine became more interested in studying Scriptures after he became a priest. Yet it is hard to determine whether Augustine changed his views on free will and grace with the influence of Scriptures, or he employed some of the verses to reinforce ideas he already had. Augustine referred to Paul and his writings in many places in his treatises. In order to prove that God's grace is His free gift toward human beings, Augustine employed Paul's conversion and some verses from his writings. For instance, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?"²

Augustine had already begun to downplay the role of human beings over their good actions. However, with the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine completely ignored human free will. Theoretically, he never ceased to defend the existence of free will, yet even before the beginning of the Pelagian controversy he argued that human beings, practically, have no opportunity to realize, to will, or to do good. Instead of people being able to perform good works with their free will, it is now the mercy of God that empowers human beings to do good. At the last period of his life, Augustine came to believe that free will is not neutral between the possibilities of

² 1 Corinthians 4:7

performing good and evil. God created human beings with a balanced ability to choose between good or evil, but the disobedience of Adam and Eve caused human beings to be inclined to choose evil instead of good. When Adam and Eve sinned, human beings began to seek pleasure in material changeable goods. These material goods attracted human beings such that they became unable to differentiate good from evil. Eventually, human beings built habits that make them more inclined to sin and refrain from doing good works. Human beings cannot overcome these habits and the inclination to do evil by free will. Therefore, all human beings deserve to be punished.

Even though all human beings deserve to be punished, God shows His mercy for some of them and people who receive God's mercy are predestined to salvation. Augustine literally never claimed that God predestines people to damnation, but his emphasis on human beings' inability of willing and doing good and absolute necessity of God's grace logically assumes that people who cannot will and do any good by themselves are predestined to be damned because of the absence of God's grace. God does not give His grace (mercy) to those who deserve it because of their own merits; but, those who receive God's grace become believers and perform good things. Therefore, I propose that even though Augustine cannot be called as double predestinarian, from his understanding of free will and absolute necessity of grace it could be deduced that God predestine some people to salvation by giving His grace and predestines others to damnation by not giving His grace. To defend God's grace against the Pelagian emphasis on human freedom, Augustine argued that grace is not given in response to any prior merits. God also does not give His mercy and make a person believer because He foreknows that a person will be a believer. As a result of his conviction of the

omnipotence of God, Augustine argued that God decided to bring some people to salvation even before the foundation of the universe, and He left the rest to damnation. Therefore, God destines human beings either to salvation or to damnation by giving or not giving His grace. Since God is omnipotent, the irresistible divine purpose cannot be corrupted by human beings' choices and decisions. God orients the heart of human beings through different kinds of internal and external influences. After God orients human beings' hearts to changeable or unchangeable goods, human beings are free to do what God determined for them.

Augustine strongly advocated that human beings are powerless to will and perform any good unless God assists them by bestowing His grace. If God decides to not give His grace, a person will inevitably sin. However, Augustine still advocated that human beings are responsible for their evil actions, and they will be rewarded or punished in accordance with their works even they will not be able to perform any good without God's grace. The absolute necessity of God's grace for willing and performing good, and the incapability of human beings necessarily removes the reward and punishment. On the one hand, since God is wholly just, He punishes the ones who deserve it. On the other hand, even though human beings desire to perform good, if God did not predestine them to salvation, they would fail. Therefore, when God punishes those who failed, He will punish not those who did not choose to do good, but those who were not created powerful enough to perform good. God punishes His absence of grace while he rewards His grace.

In sum, on the one hand, Augustine's concern with the power of God caused him to accentuate the role of God's grace over human actions. On the other hand, his concern

for God's goodness forced him to accept the existence of free choice of the will. Augustine redefined freedom and free will in an attempt to reconcile them. However, he failed. This is clearly seen from his following words: "I, indeed, labored in defense of the free choice of the human will; but the grace of the God conquered..." Augustine's conviction of God's grace annulled free choice of the will and moral responsibility. However, he insisted that human beings are responsible because of what they have done even though they were already predestinated before the foundation of the universe. As a result, Augustine's effort to reconcile God's grace and free choice of the will, and his insistence on the existence of the responsibility and the existence of reward and punishment vitiates God's justice.

2

God's Grace

Augustine's understanding of grace, which is central to his teaching, underwent significant changes from his conversion to his death. These changes can be roughly divided into three periods: A) From Augustine's conversion to his elevation as Bishop (386 – 396). In this period, Augustine's understanding of grace was closely related to his emphasis on God's love and justice, and this can be shown from his early writings. B) From his elevation to Bishop to the beginning of Pelagian controversy (386 – 412). In this period Augustine began to lessen his emphasis on human beings' ability while he accentuated the role of God in human beings' actions. This period was a transition period for Augustine's idea of grace. By the end of this period, for him grace had become an undeserved, unearned gift of God. C) From the beginning of the Pelagian controversy to the end of his life (412 – 430). In this final period of life, Augustine became very concern about God's power. The power of human beings was totally taken away. God, as all – powerful, became predestinator of human beings. Augustine's idea of divine election illustrates how Augustine becomes very concern with God's power.

2. From Conversion to the Elevation to Bishop (386- 396)

2.1. Under Manichean Influence (386-391)

Augustine's involvement with the Manichees shaped his understanding of the grace of God in his earlier writings. To demonstrate this Manichean influence, it is necessary to note the history of the Manichees and the specifics that attracted Augustine's interest. Peter Brown states, the Manichees "... were a small sect with a sinister reputation. They were illegal; later, they would be savagely persecuted. They had the aura of a secret society: in foreign cities, Manichees would lodge only with members of their own sect."¹ Miles Hollingworth explains the characteristics of Manichaeism in the period when Augustine was involved in the following way: "The Manichaeism that Augustine came to know was syncretic, mixing various elements of Gnosticism, mysticism, and asceticism with the language and broad message of Christianity. It also contained core elements from the ancient Babylonian, or Persian, religion."² Therefore, Manichaeism was a mixture of various ideas of different religions at the time when Augustine joined them.

Augustine became involved with this group for two major reasons; first, they accepted reason as the source of knowledge, and used Aristotelian logic. Therefore, their way of using reason in their thinking attracted Augustine's attention: "It was this 'knowledge of the reason of things' which the Manichees made plain to Augustine."³ Second, although Manichaeism contained some aspects of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity, it was well-known for its views on evil. Manichaeans believed that the

¹ Peter, Brown. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000). p.35.

² Miles, Hollingworth. *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An intellectual Biography*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). p.128.

³ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p.35.

existence of an independent evil entity is the source of evil in this world.⁴ Therefore, they had an answer to the question, ‘from what cause do we do evil,’ that Augustine found satisfying – at least for nine years. Augustine states this in his *Confessions*: “... and through my own sharpness that I let myself be taken in by fools, who deceived me with such questions as: Whence comes evil? And is God bounded by a bodily shape and has he hair and nails?”⁵ Manicheans answered this question by using both reason and their discourse of *dualism*. According to this discourse of *dualism*, there is a Kingdom of Light and a Kingdom of Darkness, and evil comes “... from an invasion of the good –the ‘Kingdom of Light’ – by a hostile force of evil, equal in power, eternal, totally separate – the ‘Kingdom of Darkness’.”⁶ Influenced by the Manichean teaching, Augustine argued that it is absurd for a rational thinker to believe that the absolutely good and totally innocent God is the source of evil.⁷

By offering an explanation for the origin of evil, the Manicheans impressed and persuaded Augustine. As a result of Manichean influence, Augustine believed that human reason is powerful enough to lead people to the true path. As a result of His love, God desired all human beings to be saved. Hence, He gave reason to every one so that they might follow the true path. Augustine defined reason as the grace of God to all human beings. Yet, since having reason was necessary to be a human being, he did not consider it as a special sort of grace, such as assisting or persevering grace. Thus, for Augustine, God bestowed reason upon all human beings so that they might think rationally and act morally.

⁴ Andrew, Michael, Flescher. *Moral Evil*. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013). p.28.

⁵ Augustine. *The Confessions*.3.7, trans. F.J.Sheed, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961). p.49.

⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p.36.

⁷ *Ibid*, 36.

God implanted reason in the creation; hence, He created all human beings in perfect condition. Augustine stated that "... the soul itself is perfect and whatever is perfect is not in want of anything."⁸ Accordingly, Augustine claimed that by bestowing reason, God has provided everything that human beings need in order to live righteously. Before and shortly after his conversion, Augustine argued that by using reason and thinking rationally, human beings can direct themselves to the true path and deserve the eternal reward. As he stated, "indeed it is not by faith alone, but by trustworthy reason, that the soul leads itself little by little to most virtuous habits and the perfect life."⁹ Since human beings received the gift of reason, the only thing that human beings need to do is trust in their reason. When they trust in reason, it will show them the truth. Then, they should follow the true path, which is gained by reason before they lose it.¹⁰

Augustine asserted that by reason human beings could distinguish good from evil and thus could lead themselves to the true path. He considered human beings powerful enough both to will what is good and to perform what is good. As a result, human beings are powerful enough to receive the eternal reward. Augustine's earlier trust in human beings' ability was the consequence of the Father's love. As a result of His love for all human beings, claimed Augustine, "...God [is] supremely good, so good that he is not jealous of any nature's being able to derive its goodness from him and has given them all the ability to abide in good, some as much as they wish, others as much as they can."¹¹

These earliest sayings of Augustine clearly demonstrate that Augustine appreciated

⁸ Augustine. *The Happy Life*. 25, trans. Ludwig Schopp, The Fathers of the Church: Writings of Saint Augustine. Vol.21, p.55, (New York: Cima Publishing, 1948).

⁹ Augustine. *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*. II. 19:50, trans. Robert P. Russell, The Fathers of the Church. Vol.1. p. 327, ed. Ludwig Schopp, et al. (New York: Cima Publishing, 1948).

¹⁰ Augustine. *True Religion*. 42:79, trans. Edmund Hill, The Works of Saint Augustine: A translation for the 21st Century: On Christian Belief. Vol. 8. P. 83-84, ed. Boniface Ramsey, et al. (New York: New City Press, 2005).

¹¹ Ibid, 55:113. p.104.

human free choice of the will for the sake of God's love toward human beings. Since He loves all human beings, He grudges nothing to any, and He gave His gift to all human beings.

2.2. After Ordination (391-396)

Right before Augustine's ordination as a priest, his understanding of the grace of God began to change. Unlike his earlier assertions about human reason and free will, Augustine now argued that God assists human beings by His grace in order to empower them to perform good deeds. The grace of God is, in this argument, given in response to explicit prayer, rather than being a free gift of God that is given to all human beings in creation. As he stated, "once and for all I believe that He never ceases to help up those who are thus disposed toward Him...."¹² Augustine claimed that as a result of His justice and love, God gives His grace to those who ask for it in their prayer. Augustine's belief that God never ceases to help is the result of his reliance on God's love towards human beings. Yet, since He is fully just, He helps not all humanity but only those who deserve it by trusting in Him.

Augustine's view that grace is given in response to prayer converted the nature of grace from a free gift of God to the reward for faith because praying requires having faith. And according to Augustine, having faith also requires receiving reward. It is necessary for the sake of God's justice: "for it would be unjust if they should incur the punishment for impiety but not receive the reward for faith."¹³ Therefore, Augustine claimed that when human beings realize their inadequacy for rising up by themselves,

¹² Augustine. *Soliloquies*. I.26, trans. Thomas F. Gillian, *The Fathers of Christian Church: A New Translation*, Vol. 1. p.376, ed. Ludwig Schopp, et al. (New York: Cima Publishing, 1948).

¹³ Augustine. *Propositions From the Epistles to the Romans*. 3.5, trans. Paula Fredriksen Landes, *Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translation*. Vol. 23. p.3, ed. Robert L. Wilken and William R. Schoedel. (California: Scholar Press, 1982).

they implore God's aid, and then the grace of God comes.¹⁴ By changing the nature of grace, Augustine changed his view on how grace is received. Moreover, with the change in nature of grace, Augustine began to lessen his emphasis on human beings' ability of performing good works.

Augustine's ordination as priest caused him to broaden and accentuate the role of grace on human beings' actions, specifically in good actions. It is normal to expect that Augustine became more interested in studying the Scriptures after he became a priest. Yet it is hard to determine whether Augustine accentuated the role of grace as a result of his deepened study of the Scriptures, or he selected some verses which are in harmony with his views to reinforce his ideas. For Denis R. Cresswell, these changes are the effect of his studying of scriptures. As he states, "His writings of the period immediately following his ordination as a priest...reflect the effect of his study of scripture.... One becomes aware of a growing emphasis upon grace and love, and a lessening emphasis on the abilities of humans to do what is necessary for eternal life."¹⁵ On the other hand, even though Pelagians and many other people read the same verses, their assertions on grace and free will were different from Augustine's. Therefore, trying to explain the changes in Augustine's views only with the influence of the scripture would be unreasonable. There is no doubt that the Apostle Paul had great influence on Augustine. He relied on the Apostle Paul for some crucial points, but it seems more logical to assume that he expanded his own analysis far beyond Apostle Paul's texts.¹⁶ In the light of these changes, Augustine considered this new type of grace as additional power that is given by

¹⁴ Augustine, *Propositions to the Romans*, 13-18: 7. p.7.

¹⁵ Cresswell Denis R., *St. Augustine's Dilemma: Grace and Eternal Law In the Major Works of Augustine of Hippo*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997). p. 27.

¹⁶ Stark C. J. "The Pauline Influence on Augustine's Notion of the Will." *Vigiliae Christianae*. 43.4. (1989): 345 – 360. p.345.

God to enable human beings to overcome sin and desires of the flesh. Yet, at this point, Augustine did not argue that human beings are totally unable to will or to perform good. They have power to will to do good and even initiate the good works, but they are not powerful enough to complete what is willed or initiated. To achieve what is willed, human beings need the assistance of God.

Augustine's understanding of the necessity of grace for human salvation could be clearly seen in his understanding of the functions of the Law. According to Augustine, the law of the Old Testament had two main functions; first, it helps human beings to realize the existence of sin. Augustine argued that human beings need to receive some teaching and guidance about what is good and what is evil in order to be able to do good, avoid evil, and show their obedience to God. And God made it possible by commanding the laws. Augustine, therefore, concluded that the law was necessary. As he stated, "I did not know sin except through the Law, for I would not have been aware of evil desire if the Law had not said: 'Shun evil desire!'"¹⁷ Hence, the law mainly is the knowledge of sin. Yet, although the law informs human beings that sin exists, it does not make them free from sin. "The Law points out the sin from which the soul in its subservience must turn itself to the grace of the Deliverer so that might be set free from sin."¹⁸

Second, the Law demonstrates the importance of humility by showing human beings their own transgression. "The law was ordained, therefore, for a proud people so that they might be humbled by their transgression...(since they could not receive the grace

¹⁷ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*. 66.5, trans. David L. Mosher, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. Vol. 70. p. 143, ed. Hermigild Dressler, et al. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977).

¹⁸ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Questions*. 66.1. p.139.

of love unless they were humbled...)"¹⁹ By realizing both the existence of sin, and their transgression, human beings will also realize that even though they have power to will and initiate the good works, they are not able to achieve it with their own power only. Augustine claimed that this realization of inadequacy would lead believers to ask for God's help to fulfill what the laws commanded. He stated: ".... When he realizes that he cannot rise by himself, implore the aid of the Liberator. For then comes grace, which pardons earlier sins and aids the struggling one."²⁰

Augustine divided "the Laws" into two main sections: sacramental and moral. In *the Commentary on Galatians*, Augustine claimed that believers no longer needed to obey the sacramental laws, such as circumcision of the flesh, observance of Sabbath, and sacrifices. On the other hand, one still needed to obey the moral laws, such as "you shall not kill," "you shall not commit adultery," and "you shall not bear false witness in order to receive eternal reward."²¹ Yet, human beings are not capable of fulfilling even the precepts of the moral laws by themselves: "A person fulfills the works of the law when his weakness is aided not by his own merits but by the grace of God... [G]entiles could fulfill spiritual works of the law through the grace of faith."²² Grace became a necessary element in order to fulfill the commands of the law.²³ Therefore, human beings should seek grace, and they should not assume that they could be saved by their own merits.²⁴ By claiming that grace is necessary for the fulfillment of what the law commands, Augustine illustrated his lessened reliance on human beings' abilities.

¹⁹ Augustine, *Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians*, 24:14, trans. Eric Plumer, Augustine's Commentary on Galatians. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). p.167.

²⁰ Augustine, *Propositions to the Romans*, 13-18: 7. p.7.

²¹ Augustine, *Galatians*, 19: 1-7. p.153.

²² Augustine, *Galatians*, 15:15. p.147.

²³ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Questions*. 66.1. p.139- 140.

²⁴ Augustine, *Galatians*, 24:14. p.167.

At the end of this period, Augustine defined the grace of God as added power to human beings' power to enable them to perform good works and fulfill what the Laws commanded. Although Augustine's emphasis on human beings' ability to perform good works was lessened, he did not refute the necessity of human choice and the ability of human beings for salvation. Since grace is obtained both by asking for it in prayer and by desiring good with free choice of human beings, the position of human beings' ability in the way of salvation was guaranteed.²⁵ Therefore, salvation neither could be achieved by the grace of God only, nor it could be achieved by human effort alone. Only the collective works of the human ability and the grace of God could achieve salvation. As Augustine stated, "...in case anyone was saying that while he does not attribute a person's entire justification to works of the law alone, neither does he attribute it to the grace of faith alone, but rather claims that salvation is accomplished by both."²⁶

3. After Elevation to Bishop to the Beginning of the Pelagian Controversy. (396-412)

Augustine's understanding of grace altered radically from his elevation to Bishop of Hippo in 396²⁷ to the beginning of the Pelagian controversy around 412²⁸. At the beginning of this period, Augustine defined grace as God's assistance given in response to human beings' good will and enabling them to fulfill the commandments of the law, specifically, the moral law. This grace was the God's answer to the prayer of believer; those who received grace were given the reward for their faith.²⁹ God's justice and

²⁵ Augustine, *Galatians*, 46: 1. p.209.

²⁶ Augustine, *Galatians*, 19:1. p.153.

²⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p.66.

²⁸ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p.280, 340-1.

²⁹ Augustine, *Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician*. I.1.11, trans. Boniface Ramsey, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*. Vol. 12. p.193 – 194, ed. Raymond Canning, et al. (New York: New City Press, 2008).

righteousness required Him to give this reward.³⁰ In contrast, at the end of this period, Augustine identified grace as the unearned, undeserved gift of God that comes not in accordance with any prayer or faith but by God's will alone bestowed to whom God wishes to give it.³¹ From the beginning to the end of this period, Augustine's emphasis on divine sovereignty in human actions grew while his emphasis on human ability lessened. As a result of his lower estimation of human ability, Augustine asserted that human beings are incapable of doing and willing any good. God gives His grace to whomever He desires, and he who receives grace becomes capable of doing and willing good. Augustine was still concerned with the justice of God, and he tried to reconcile this sovereign idea of grace with God's justice. To legitimize this reconciliation, he claimed that there are some reasons why God choose some people over others, but these reasons are unknowable to human beings.

The changes in Augustine's views of grace were highly related to the changes in his understanding of the role of the law. At the beginning of this period, for Augustine, the main purpose of the law was informing human beings about the existence of sin and reminding them their inability of overcoming sin by their power alone.³² Although the law did not provide any power to human beings to overcome sins, its role was positively informing and warning people about the existence of sins. In this period, Augustine came to believe that if human beings were not given grace, when the law informs human beings about the existence of sin, they would become more vulnerable against the sin. Because, human beings are not powerful enough to achieve what is commanded unless God assists them. Therefore, for Augustine, when a person hears the commandments, he/she should

³⁰ Augustine, *Propositions to the Romans*, 3:5. p.3.

³¹ Augustine, *Response to Simplician*, I.2.10. p.193.

³² Augustine, *Galatians*, 15:15. p.147. Augustine, *Eighty-Three Questions*. 66.1. p.139- 140.

remember his/her own weaknesses and ask for God's help. If they trust their power, the laws will cause an increase in their self-confidence, thereby increasing pride, which makes human beings more prone to sin.³³ As he stated, "when the law entered, sin might abound, but the addition of the holy, just, and good commandment also made guilty of transgression those proud people who attributed too much to themselves."³⁴ In brief, if people trust their power, they may assume that they could achieve what the laws commands. Then, the laws will become nothing but the source of the sin. Only people who received the grace of God could be directed to the true path by the laws. Therefore, when people study the laws, they should remember their weaknesses so that they might seek the grace of God.³⁵

The changes in Augustine's understanding of the roles of the laws clearly demonstrated his growing emphasis on the necessity of divine assistance for salvation. At the beginning of this period, Augustine maintained that even though human beings are not capable of doing good works, they still could will to do good without the grace of God.³⁶ However, at the end of this period, with the influence of increased interest in the omnipotence of God, Augustine not only claimed that human beings are not powerful enough to fulfill the commandments of the laws, but also argued that human beings are totally incapable of willing and doing what is good. He clearly indicated his attitude in *On the Spirit and the Letter*, by stating "...but then you ought to reflect that, although this great work, no doubt, belongs to human agency to accomplish, yet it is also a divine gift,

³³ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 7:11, 19:33, 21:36, trans. Peter Holmes, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. 5. p.87, 97, 98, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

³⁴ Augustine, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*. XIX: 7, trans. Roland Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Answer to Faustus A Manichean. Vol. 20. p. 241, ed. Boniface Ramsey, et al. (New York: New City Press, 2007).

³⁵ Augustine, *Answer to Faustus*, XVI: 19. p.212 – 213.

³⁶ Augustine, *Response to Simplician*, I.2.3. p.186 – 188.

and therefore, not doubt that it is a divine work.”³⁷ He also employed a verse from *Philippians* to reinforce his idea; “for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”³⁸ Therefore, according to Augustine’s concept of grace, God’s grace not only empowers human beings who want to do good, but actually causes the desire itself.

By asserting that human beings also need the grace of God in order to will good, Augustine strengthened the role of God in human beings’ actions. Augustine claimed that although human beings have free will, it is too weak to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, in order to will what is good, the infirmity of human beings had to be healed, and this healing is possible only by the grace of God.³⁹ Moreover, as Augustine lost his faith in human ability and increasingly emphasized the power of God, he began to decrease the role of human beings in receiving the grace of God, accordingly, by their own actions and wills. Augustine said; “...even a good will itself comes about in us through God’s working.”⁴⁰ The grace of God not only strengthens human beings’ desire for good, or assists them to fulfill the commandments of the law, but it now also orients human beings’ will to good so that they might love righteousness.⁴¹

This insistence that God’s grace comes even before the will to do good raises another issue. Who receives the grace to want to do good? Does God choose to give this grace to some people and not to others? Since God, by giving His grace, not only assists human beings to perform good things, but also gives the tendency to will to do good, the grace of God becomes the main element in having faith. Augustine’s earlier concept of

³⁷ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*, 2:2. p.84.

³⁸ *Philippians*, 2:13.

³⁹ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*. 9:15. p.88- 89.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Response to Simplician*. I.2.12. p.194.

⁴¹ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*. 30:52. p.106.

grace was non-elective; it was given to all human beings in creation. Later, it became the assistance of God that is given as a response to prayer; yet it was still non-elective, given to all who ask for His help. In this late period, the grace of God became an elective and initiative gift of God. Unlike the earlier views, God now works in the heart of individuals by renewing free will with His grace, and orienting their hearts to love righteousness.⁴²

Since God orients and gives the tendency of willing what is good, accordingly, human beings could not believe unless God gave the tendency of believing by calling them. Therefore, Augustine claimed that having faith is also the grace of God. Augustine defended this view with two arguments. First, human beings have no power that they did not receive from God. Augustine supported this claim with a verse from *1 Corinthians*, “What do you have you did not receive.”⁴³ Then, he claimed, “In creation God gives each person the power of free choice which can be turned to fidelity or infidelity. Then in grace God calls the person to faith.”⁴⁴ Therefore, it is God who gave human beings the power of believing.⁴⁵ Second, Augustine maintained that God works in the heart of individuals, and assists them to believe:

...the very will by which we believe is reckoned as a gift of God, because it arises out of the free will which we received at the our creation. Let the objector, however, attentively observe that this will is to be ascribed to the divine gift, not merely because it arises from our free will, which was created naturally with us; but also because God acts upon us by the incentives of our perceptions, to will and to believe, either externally by evangelical exhortations, where even the commands of the law also do something, if they so far admonish a man of his infirmity that he betakes himself to the grace that justifies by believing; or internally, where no man has in his own control what shall enter into his thoughts, although it appertains to his own will to consent or to dissent.⁴⁶

At this point, however much Augustine claims to believe that God gives each person free will in creation, he still maintains that only God's power can turn a human being towards

⁴² Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*. 30:52. p.106.

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 4:7.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*, 33:58. p.109.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*, 31:54. p.107.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*, 34:60. p.110

faith. His claim that God works in the heart of a human being in ways beyond that person's control shows his lessening belief in human power and his increasing insistence on God's power. The grace of God becomes the reflection of God's power, since God is all-powerful, He could elect whomever He desires, and He could turn the heart of whomever He chose to be saved.

Augustine tried to explain this divine election with God's mercy, and his discourse of mercy further increases his emphasis on divine sovereignty. Augustine claimed that God has mercy on whom He wills, and does not have mercy on whom He does not will.⁴⁷ It was not the result of His foreknowledge, but the result of His power.⁴⁸ Therefore, the salvation of human beings depends on the mercy of God. God gives His mercy to whomever He wants, and only he who receives mercy can achieve salvation. Human beings' will, effort, or habits cannot impede the mercy of God, because God calls in such a way that people may follow His call.⁴⁹ If God does not give His mercy, human beings can neither will good nor do good. Therefore, according to Augustine, the only hope for human beings was the great mercy of God.⁵⁰ This divine distribution of mercy decides who will be saved. Any ability to will or do good works is taken away, and everything becomes the business of God.

Augustine's interpretation of the verse: "I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau."⁵¹ clearly demonstrates that Augustine began to consider the grace of God as a reflection of God's power. Since God's mercy and grace are not given in response to any prior merits, God did not choose Jacob because of the merits he had done. God also did

⁴⁷ Romans, 9:18

⁴⁸ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*. 33:58. p.109.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Response to Simplician*. I.2.12-15. p.194-197.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*. 10:29. p.237.

⁵¹ Romans 9:13.

not choose Jacob because He foreknew that Jacob would do good works. If God had chosen Jacob because of his merits, the grace of God would become the reward of merits. As Augustine stated “If, then, Jacob believed because he willed to, God did not bestow faith on him, but he conferred it upon himself by an act of will, and he had something that he did not receive.”⁵² Yet, for Augustine, a person has nothing he has not received.⁵³ The only way of receiving salvation is receiving the call from God. There is no chance to have faith for one who was not called, and since God is omnipotent, there is no way that the ones who were called could reject the call of God. God calls those people whom He mercies, and such people cannot reject the call, as “He knows [mercy] is appropriate for him.”⁵⁴ Therefore, while God predestines some people to salvation by bestowing His grace, He left the rest to the damnation by not giving His grace. Augustine said, “.... God most justly renders His judgment to blind the minds of some and to enlighten the minds of other.”⁵⁵ Briefly, a person cannot believe unless he/she wills to believe, and he/she cannot will to believe unless God calls him/her. And God calls whomever He desires to call.

Augustine claimed that it is true that God gives His grace to whomever He wants, and He hardens the heart of those He wants. “But how God distributes His judgment and His mercy, why one person receives this grace and another that, is done for hidden but just reasons.”⁵⁶ For Augustine, all people deserved to be damned as a result of their inherited and personal sins. Yet, God gives His mercy to some people and they are saved. There are some reasons why God gives his mercy to some while He leaves the others to

⁵² Augustine, *Response to Simplician*, I.2.10. p.193.

⁵³ Augustine, *On Spirit and the Letter*, 33:58. p.109.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Response to Simplician*, I.2.13. p.194-195.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Answer to Faustus*, 21: 2. p.284 – 286.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Answer to Faustus*, 22: 78. p.354 – 356.

damnation, but they are beyond human comprehension. As Creswell stated: “[Augustine argued that] only God has the knowledge of who is saved, and why. Human cannot themselves clearly, not to mention others, so how can they know why they are chosen in God’s mercy to be saved, and why others are not chosen.”⁵⁷ Augustine demonstrated how his emphasis on human power and the power of reason decreased, and divine works and the divine will became unintelligible to human beings. This grace of God is unknowable to human beings because it is not given in any way that human beings could comprehend. God gives His grace to whomever He wants. When God gives His grace to only some people, He does not become unjust. Since He is omnipotent, He has the power to do whatever He desires, and, “who indeed are human beings to talk back God.”⁵⁸

From Augustine’s elevation to Bishop of Hippo to the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine’s concept of grace radically altered. Grace became a necessary element for salvation as soon as Augustine became a priest. Grace was given to human beings as an additional tool to empower them only when they wanted to overcome their evil desires, though. The power of willing good, and even initiating good action were in the hands of people. Humans were still the main authors of their good action even though they needed the grace of God as an additional power. Later in this period, Augustine came to believe that the grace of God is the main author of every good action. The grace of God is not assisting human beings to achieve what they desire, but it initiates and causes the desire itself. God now chooses some people to be saved not because of their own merits, but because of His mercy on them. God works in the hearts of human beings, and He can turn an evil person’s heart to the righteousness even though he did not desire

⁵⁷ Creswell, *Augustine’s Dilemma*, p.76.

⁵⁸ Romans 9:20

or deserve it. And by hardening the hearts of the rest, He turns their hearts to the wickedness. Therefore, grace is neither given in reward of works, nor faith, but it is given in accordance with God's own will. And human beings are totally unable to will or do any good.

4. From the Beginning of the Pelagian Controversy to Augustine's Death (412- 430)

Pelagianism and Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings are very crucial documents to illustrate Augustine's final thoughts about human free will and the grace of God. Beginning with the definition of grace according to the Pelagians will help us illustrate how Augustine's concept of grace became the reflection of God's absolute authority on human beings' actions. Based on Augustine's writings against the Pelagians, it could be claimed that the Pelagians defined grace as forgiveness of sin, guidance, and motivation for those who have prepared themselves for it.⁵⁹ Hence, the Pelagians did not consider the grace of God as an absolute necessity for salvation. To the Pelagians, the grace of God is merely an assisting element to strengthen human beings' ability to choose the good. As Bourke states: "Pelagius did not deny that God may help man through grace – but he claimed that such gratuitous help is not really necessary, that grace is more like an ornament than a necessity in the spiritual life."⁶⁰ Therefore, the Pelagian understanding of God's grace differs from Augustine's concept of grace both in terms of how it is given and its functions.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Augustine, *On Grace and Free will*. 6.15, trans. Peter Holmes. , A Select Library of the Nicene and Post – Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. p.450, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

⁶⁰ Vernon J. Bourke. *The Essential Augustine*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1974). p. 175

⁶¹ John Ferguson. *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*. (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons LTD., 1956). p.172.

Contrary to Augustine, the Pelagians lessened the importance of grace by limiting its functions as forgiving the sins and encouraging human beings to do good works. The positive aspects of their definition of grace did not necessarily contradict with Augustine's understanding of grace. Augustine agreed that grace assists human beings to be saved. He also agreed that by bestowing His grace, God forgives past sins of a person. On the other hand, the Pelagians did not consider the grace of God as an absolute necessity in human beings' lives and actions. They claimed that God bestows His grace upon those who prepared themselves for it. For Augustine, the degree of necessity for grace was much more than what Pelagians thought. He believed that the grace of God is totally independent from human beings' good willing and good working. Therefore, he strongly protested the Pelagian understanding of grace. He argued that the Pelagians vitiated the absolute power of God by lessening the necessity of grace.

The Pelagians trusted the power of human being's ability for a great deal. Hence, they rejected the idea that human beings absolutely needed the grace of God for salvation. They emphasized that God created human beings with the ability of choosing good over evil. To prove their ideas, the Pelagians used the justice and omniscience of God as evidences. For the Pelagians, since God is omniscient, He foreknows everything before it happens. And since He is just, He does not command what is too much for human beings. As a result, if human beings were unable to keep the commandments and do good works, God would know it, and He would not command human beings to keep the commandments or to do good works. Otherwise, God would be unjust. Yet, since God is just, humans could attain virtue and good life as long as they act in accordance with the way in which God ordered them to act. As King stated, "[Pelagius] thought that

human could attain virtue and the good life by their own efforts, making moral progress towards their goal, “perfecting” themselves.”⁶² To Pelagius, God bestowed the ability of achieving perfection upon human beings in creation.⁶³ Hence, the grace of God is not an absolute necessity, but it is just an assisting element for salvation. As a result of these sayings, King called Pelagius a moral perfectionist.⁶⁴

The Pelagians relied on the power of human beings; hence they claimed people are powerful enough to will and initiate good and thereby deserve the eternal reward by their power alone.⁶⁵ Unlike Augustine, to the Pelagians, everything from conversion to the deserving of heaven is under the control of human beings. The Pelagians’ reliance on the power of human beings’ ability conflicted with Augustine’s idea of the absolute necessity of grace. Therefore, in dealing with the Pelagians, Augustine began to accentuate his discourses on the weakness of human beings. Creswell explained the influence of Pelagians on Augustine’s understanding of grace by stating “the Pelagian controversy convinced him that the power of original sin is so great that only God’s gracious gift of a will capable of willing the good is able to overcome the bondage into which humans had been placed by original sin.”⁶⁶ Hence, for Augustine, human beings need grace as an effective divine assistance from the beginning to the end of their lives.

In this final stage of Augustine’s life, with the effect of Pelagian teachings and Augustine’ idea of original sin, Augustine identified grace in three fundamental forms. First, it is the beginning of the faith. Second, it is God’s assistance towards human

⁶² Peter King. Introduction to *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*. Augustine. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p.XV.

⁶³ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p.342.

⁶⁴ King, *Augustine: On the Free Choice*. XV.

⁶⁵ Bourke, *The Essential Augustine*. p.175.

⁶⁶ Creswell, *Augustine’s Dilemma*. p.5.

beings. Finally, it is God's free gift of perseverance, which confers salvation to human beings.

4.1. The Beginning of Faith

In the first period, Augustine claimed that having faith depends on human beings' desires and works. Yet, right after his elevation to Bishop, he began to lessen human beings' role in the process of having faith. With the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, he came to believe that human beings do not have the ability of having faith by themselves, but they have the capacity of having faith. He said, "Accordingly, the capacity to have faith, as the capacity to have love, belongs to men's nature; but to have faith, even as to have love, belongs to the grace of believers."⁶⁷ Therefore, although human beings have the capacity to believe, it is the grace of God that makes one a believer or unbeliever.

The conversion of Paul was one of the most important arguments that Augustine employed as evidence to reinforce his idea that faith is not dependent on human beings' wills or actions, but it is totally a free gift of God. Augustine asserted that Paul played no role on his conversion, yet since God desired to make him a believer, Paul became a believer.⁶⁸ Paul, as a human being, had the capacity of having faith, yet he did not possess the faith until God bestowed it upon him. When God turned Paul's heart to righteousness, Paul had many evil desires. Yet, since God desired Paul to have faith, He removed Paul's perverse and blameworthy thoughts about Christ and made him a

⁶⁷ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*. 5:10, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. p.503, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

⁶⁸ Augustine. *On Grace and Free Choice*. 6.14, trans. Peter King, Augustine On the Free Choice the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p.153.

believer.⁶⁹ As a result, to Augustine, God gave His grace to Paul so that he may become a believer.

Augustine employed another verse from Pauline writings to reinforce his idea that faith is the free gift of God. He interpreted a verse from *I Corinthians*, and claimed that if Paul had said that he obtained mercy because he had been faithful, it would mean that Paul was saved through his own works. Yet Paul said, “I have obtained mercy that I might be faithful,”⁷⁰ and this clearly illustrates that faith itself could be obtained only through the grace of God.⁷¹ Therefore, human beings are unable to have faith without the free gift of omnipotent God. Augustine argued that human beings’ weaknesses impede their ability to have faith by their power alone. Even their good works do not assist them to have faith. Only the will and the help of omnipotent God can make a human being powerful enough to desire and deserve to have faith. And God gives this power to whomever He desires. Augustine’s understanding of the nature of faith clearly illustrates that, to Augustine, the possibility of willing and doing any good is in the power of God. This claim takes away the necessity of the desire to pursue good and moral actions. Since human beings have no power to do good and God will only give His grace to whomever He wishes, then there is no need to desire the good. When God gives His grace, no matter what human beings do, they will be saved.

According to Augustine, God allowed Paul no such liberty to accept or reject His call because God calls people for whom mercy is appropriate and does so in a way that they cannot reject the call. Therefore, for the sake of God’s omnipotence, when human beings are called, they must follow the call. Since God is omnipotent, there is no way that

⁶⁹ Augustine, *On grace and Free Choice*. 6.14 – 7.16. p.153- 155.

⁷⁰ Augustine, *On grace and Free Choice*. 7.17. p.155.

⁷¹ Ibid. p.155

they can reject the call. At this point, Augustine accentuated his discourse of the elective nature of grace. He wrote, “Faith, then as well in its beginning as in its completion, is God’s gift; and let no one have any doubt whatever, unless he desires to resist the plainest sacred writings, that this gift is given to some, while to some it is not given.”⁷² Augustine claimed that there are some hidden reasons why this gift is given to some people while it is not given to the others. Since the judgment of God is unsearchable, and God does not will anything unrighteous, God’s election of some people over others should not disturb human beings.⁷³ Therefore, conversion of human beings and their possessing faith is the business of God, and because humans are weak, it is entirely out of their control.

4.2. Assisting Grace

In this period of time, Augustine continued to claim that God assists human beings on their good works as well as their good wills. Augustine stressed the difference between having the capacity and having the ability to prove his idea that human beings are unable to initiate any good works. For Augustine, human beings have the capacity of willing good, and the capacity of avoiding sin. Yet, having the capacity does not guarantee that one is able to do good works. In addition to the capacity, one also needs the instruments that give someone the ability of achieving what is desired. Augustine said a bird is able to fly and a hare is able to run, but they need their instruments to be able to achieve their works.⁷⁴ Just as a bird needs wings and a hare needs legs, human beings need the grace of God in order to achieve their works. Augustine tried to prove his claim with the following words:

⁷² Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 8:16. p.506.

⁷³ Ibid. p.506.

⁷⁴ Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*. 11:12, trans. Peter Holmes, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. p.125, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

Whether we will or not, we have the capacity of not sinning, - a capacity which he declares to be inherent in our nature. Of a man, indeed, who has his legs strong and sound, it may be said admissibly enough, "whether he will or not he has the capacity of walking;" but if his legs be broken, however much he may wish, he has not the capacity. The nature of which our author speaks is corrupted. "Why is dust and ashes proud?" It is corrupted. It implores the physician's help.⁷⁵

Hence, human beings need their instruments to achieve their goal, the grace of God. This instrument is not the capacity that is received in creation because it was already lost. First, with the sin of Adam and Eve, then, by following their evil desires and producing habit, human beings became totally incapable of willing or doing any good works. Yet, when the grace of God is received, human beings possess the necessary instrument.

Augustine argued that God assists human beings in their good works, yet the nature of this assistance was far from what he asserted in his earlier periods. As a result of his concern with God's omnipotence, Augustine asserted that the grace of God is the absolute authority on human beings' every action. Therefore, the grace of God is not only necessary to achieve what is ordered or to direct human beings' wills to righteousness, but it is also necessary for every moment and for every action. As Augustine wrote, "[human beings are saved] by His assistance without whom we can do nothing, we cannot open our mouth, yet we open it by His aid and by our agency, while the lord fills it without our agency."⁷⁶ Therefore, Augustine argued that without the help of God, human beings are not only powerless to desire and accomplish good, but they are also powerless to do their daily works. So, human beings should not even hope to live rightly

⁷⁵ Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*. 49:57. p.141.

⁷⁶ Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*. 9:19-20, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. P. 400, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

by themselves. If human beings trust their abilities and think that they could perform good works by their power alone, this trust will bring a curse to them.⁷⁷

4.3. The gift of perseverance: ultimate benefit

After his elevation to Bishop, Augustine began to assert that God gives His mercy to whomever he desires. Human beings' willing of good and their prior merits cannot play any role in receiving grace or its nature. God can work in the heart of any person without looking at their good or evil works. Yet, the Pelagian controversy led Augustine to put forth a new type of grace, namely perseverance. For Augustine, this new type of grace was also a free gift of God to human beings. By bestowing this kind of grace, God empowers the one whom He desires to save, and thereby rewards him with salvation. For Augustine, the life of Apostle Paul was the best evidence to verify the necessity and efficacy of this new sort of grace. Paul had many evil desires, and yet he gained the gift of God. With this gift God first bestowed upon him conversion. Second, He assisted him to do good works. Finally, He bestowed upon him the gift of perseverance, by which he became powerful enough to keep performing good works and preserve his faith until the end of his life.⁷⁸ By granting this gift, God preserves the person from falling down because of evil desires. He bestows the power so that people could will and perform good until the end of their lives. Therefore, Augustine claimed that perseverance in holiness is a gift of God, and this gift preserves the believer to the end, as it saved Paul.

Augustine's understanding of the gift of perseverance was strongly related to his views on predestination. He relied on the idea of predestination to refute the Pelagian

⁷⁷ Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*. 4:4, 6: 6-7:7. p.122-123.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance*. 2:4, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. p.527, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

claim that human beings earn their rewards, or they deserve to be punished in accordance with their evil deeds. In the Pelagian view, “God foreknew who would be holy and immaculate by the choice of free will, and on that account elected them before the foundation of the world in that same foreknowledge of His in which He foreknew that they would be such. Therefore, he elected them.”⁷⁹ According to Augustine, this assertion contradicts the omnipotence and omniscience of God. He refuted the idea with the following words:

If this were said because God foreknew that they would believe, not because He Himself would make them believers, the Son is speaking against such a foreknowledge as that when He says “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;” when God should rather have foreknown this very thing, that they themselves would have chosen Him, so that they might deserve to be chosen by Him. Therefore, they were elected before the foundation of the world with that predestination in which God foreknew what he himself would do; but they were elected out of the world with that calling whereby God fulfilled that which he predestinated.⁸⁰

To sum up Augustine’s views, there are two major reasons why the Pelagians’ assertion cannot be accepted. First, human beings are not powerful enough to do good works without the grace of God. Hence, people cannot receive the grace of perseverance that is necessary for salvation. Second, the Pelagian assertion conflicts the nature of grace. Augustine claimed that the grace of perseverance is given regardless of prior merits of good will or good deeds. Therefore, to support his views on God’s grace, Augustine claimed that God predestined the people who will be righteous before he created the world.

Augustine had already begun to defend the elective nature of God’s grace by the time he encountered the Pelagian controversy. Yet, the Pelagian controversy caused Augustine to accentuate his claim, and consider God as omnipotent. He did not reject that faith is necessary in order to receive the eternal reward; he claimed that faith is required,

⁷⁹ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 18:36. p.515-516.

⁸⁰ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 17: 34. p.515.

and the reward of eternal life is promised to faith. Yet, since faith is the gift of God, and human beings do not have the power to will or do good unless it is given by the grace of God, human beings' good works are also produced by the grace of God. To Augustine, the eternal reward is the grace of God for those who are saved. Since people who are saved are saved by the grace of God, the eternal reward or salvation is 'grace for grace.' To Augustine, God is the only One Who has the power to do or to make someone do good things. Hence, if eternal life were given in accordance with the works of people, then it would mean that God is forced to do what he does. Even though God would do what He has promised, it would vitiate the absolute power of God. As a result, to Augustine, when God promised eternal life to human beings who do good works, "He promised what He Himself would do, not men would do. Because, although men do those good things which pertain to God's worship, He Himself makes to do what He has commanded; it is not they that cause Him to do what He has promised."⁸¹

5. Problems

After his elevation to Bishop, Augustine transformed his earlier philosophical optimistic trust in human beings' ability of performing good works to the pessimistic view that human beings are completely dependent on the grace of God. Right after his conversion, Augustine defined grace as God's free gift to all human beings. Then he came to believe that grace is an additional power given by God in response to prayers. Yet, starting towards the end of the second period till his death, Augustine defined the grace in the following way:

By which alone men are freed from evil and without which they do absolutely no good thing, whether in thought, or will and affection, or in action; not only in order that they may know, by

⁸¹ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 10:19. p.508.

the manifestation of that grace, what should be done, but moreover, in order that, by its enabling, they may do with love what they know.⁸²

Augustine argued that God works within the hearts of human beings to make them will what is good. It is God who determines who will be given the eternal reward not human beings' actions.⁸³ Unlike his earlier work, in the writings of this period, Augustine expanded the significance of grace. His emphasis on the necessity of God's grace as an additional power was transformed to absolute authority of God on human beings' will and actions.

As a result of Augustine's concern with God's power, He claimed that salvation is not the reward of any merits of human beings, but it is the free gift of God. In order to avoid giving any role to human beings in salvation, Augustine even argued that God does not save human beings based on His foreknowledge. To exalt God's omnipotence, Augustine resorted to the belief that God saves whomever He desires to save. Since He is powerful, He can do whatever He desires. As a result, He predestinated some people to salvation while He predestinated the others to damnation. This idea of divine election clearly illustrates that God does not judge and repay according to someone's good or evil deeds. Therefore, God rewards the good actions which He Himself forces human beings to do, and He punishes the evil actions that the person has done himself.

Augustine claimed that performing good works are the fruit of having faith. Since human beings are not powerful enough to will good or to perform good, a person's prayer and performance of good works are also part of a divine operation. If so, then human beings should not be kept responsible for failure. Burns said:

⁸² Augustine, *Admonition and Grace*. 2:3, trans. John Courtney Murray, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. Vol. 4. p.427, ed. Ludwig Schopp, et al. (New York: Cima Publishing, 1947).

⁸³ Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and On Original Sin*. I.10:11, trans. Peter Holmes, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings*. Vol. 5. p.221 – 222, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

If continued performance of good works is a gift of God, then failure would be consequence of his withholding the necessary grace, and the human person should not be held responsible for sin. In particular, since Adam did not remain in the good state in which he was created, he must not have received this grace of performance.⁸⁴

Augustine, however, accredited God for human achievements and held Adam with the rest of human beings responsible for failure. Hence, it can be stated that according to Augustine, there is an asymmetry in human activities; evil actions are products of human beings whereas good actions are free gifts from God.

Although Augustine assigned the responsibility of evil to human beings, from his sayings, it can be deduced that it is the absence of God's grace that causes human beings to fail to reach the true path. In his words, "if God had willed to teach even those to whom the word of the cross is foolishness to come to Christ, beyond all doubt these also would have come."⁸⁵ In the light of this argument, people who do not believe are unbelievers because God did not teach or did not call them. Augustine argued that one cannot even think of the possibility of not following Christ once receiving the call.⁸⁶ Augustine argued that "Whomsoever God deigns He calls, and Whom He wills He makes religious."⁸⁷ Therefore, one is not punished because of his evil works, but because he did not hear the call. If God had called him, he would be faithful, yet, since God did not call him, he became sinful. Then, the reason of being sinful is not in one's own control, but in the hands of God. As a result, doing evil works is not the result of one's sinful nature, but it is the result of not being called by God.

⁸⁴ Patout J. Burns. *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*. (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980). p.160.

⁸⁵ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*. 8:14. p.505.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p.505.

⁸⁷ Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ*. I.46:51. p.234.

6. Conclusion

Augustine's views on grace underwent radical changes rather than following a gradual path. Right after his conversion, Augustine evaluated the grace of God as free gift of God that is given to all human beings. With the help of this gift, Augustine claimed that human beings were able to follow the true path in order to receive salvation. Later, Augustine's concern of God's absolute authority and His power gradually began to vitiate human ability of doing good works. As soon as Augustine elevated to Bishop, he transformed his universal discourse of grace to individually given gift of God. By giving this individual gift, God works in the heart of human beings to make them believers. As a result, Augustine developed an elective nature of God's grace, and he asserted that God predestinated all human beings before the foundation of the universe.

At the last period of his lifetime, Augustine endorsed the view that human beings are completely incapable of willing or performing any good works unless God desires them to perform. Thus, salvation of human beings became His choice. When one receives the grace of God, he is saved. Augustine could not deny that human beings have free choice of the will because it was stated in many places in Scriptures. Yet, as a result of his concern with God's absolute power, he could not give up the idea that the grace of God is the main author of the good actions. Therefore, he tried to reconcile the grace of God and human free will. Yet, he also confessed that he appreciated the grace of God more than human free choice of the will. Although he claimed that human beings are able to choose what is right when God allowed and assisted them, he vitiated human beings' responsibility, thereby, God's justice.

3

Free Choice of the Will

Augustine's emphasis on free choice of the will changed over time. Yet he never ceased to argue for the existence of free choice of the will for two reasons. First, he was concerned with defending the goodness of God against the claim that God is the source of evil. The question of 'how it is that we do evil' troubled Augustine so much that it caused his downfall and landed him in the company of heretics.¹ If Augustine denied the existence of free will, then he would need to accept that God is the source of evil actions. Since God is wholly good,² this could not be accepted. If God is not the source of evil and He is wholly good, then one solution to the question of evil is that there is an opposed powerful source of evil against God's will. This idea had been defended for years by Manicheans, and it appealed to young Augustine. Yet, eventually Augustine became convinced of God's omnipotence and thus found the existence of an opposed

¹ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, I.2:4, trans. Dom Mark Pontifex, *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*. Vol. 22. P. 37, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe. (Maryland: The Newman Press, 1955).

² Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, I.2.5. p.38.

source of power impossible. God created everything out of nothing,³ and nothing can happen contrary to the will of God. In other words, nothing can exist without the permission of God. In sum, for Augustine, God is not the source of evil, and the existence of another eternal power beyond the power of omnipotent God is impossible. To defend these ideas, Augustine had to answer the following questions: If God is totally good, and not the source of evil, then what is the source of evil? Moreover, how can omnipotent God permit evil things to happen? Augustine found the answer in free choice of the will.

The second reason for Augustine's defense of free will was his belief in God's justice. Augustine argued that since God is wholly just, He does not punish those who do not deserve it. And to deserve something one needs to be responsible. Hence, Augustine claimed that every human being is responsible for what they have done and will be rewarded or punished in accordance with their actions. Yet, to be held responsible for an action, one needs to have authority over his actions. The absence of authority over an action voids responsibility. If a person had no free will, then according to what criterion could a person be punished or rewarded? Therefore, refuting the existence of free will would make God unjust. In brief, the problem of the source of evil threatened God's goodness, omnipotence, and justice. By defending the existence of free choice of the will, Augustine held human beings responsible for evil, and tried to protect God's goodness, omnipotence, and justice.

Augustine's thoughts developed over the years. This is clearly seen in Augustine's following words: "I am the sort of man who writes because he has made

³ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, I.2.5. p.38.

progress, and who makes progress by writing.”⁴ Yet, his idea of free will altered radically rather than developing harmoniously. Although he never ceased to argue that human beings have free choice of the will, even when he confessed that his idea of God’s grace dominated his thoughts, he limited the power of will such that it only leads human beings to evil. While Augustine became more concerned with God’s power and accentuated the role of grace in human beings’ actions, he became less concerned with God’s justice and lessened his emphasis on the power of free choice of the will. In the last years of his life, his emphasis on human beings’ ability left its place to the idea that God alone governs human beings’ whole lives and destinies.

2. Defending Free Will to Protect God’s Absolute Power and Goodness

2.1 From the Manichean Doctrine of Two Powers

The Manicheans attempted to solve the problem of evil by their discourse of dualism. Briefly, the Manicheans claimed that there are two Principles, the Light, and the Dark. Since, the Light, and the Dark are two opposed eternal sources of power, Manicheans taught cosmic conflict between the sources of good and evil. In the beginning, the Light and the Dark were separate, then, the Dark attacked the Light. Patout Burns explains this invasion with the following words:

The turbulent Darkness attacked the peaceful realm of Light, captured a portion of it and mixed with it to form the world of living bodies. The continuing struggle between these two sources is evident in the human person: Light seeks purification and deliverance; Darkness strives to hold it fast through fleshly desires.⁵

In the light of this definition, to Manichean understanding, the Dark power, as an independent eternal source of power, produces the evil. This Manichean dualistic

⁴ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000). p.35.

⁵ Patout J. Burns. “Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil.” *The Journal of Religious Ethics*. 16.1. (1988): 9-27. p.10.

discourse and their belief that the Dark was an independent eternal source of evil appealed to Augustine so much that he spent nine years of his life as a Manichee. As soon as Augustine left Manichaeism, he realized that the Manichean definition of the source of evil was different from the mainstream Christian understanding. Hence, he had to rethink the source of evil.

Once he came to believe that God is all-powerful and exercises governance over the world, Augustine could not accept the Manichean interpretation of the source of evil for two main reasons. First, it vitiated God's absolute power. Second, it exempted human beings from the moral agency of sin. As William S. Babcock states, "[to Manicheans] we sin not because we ourselves, exercising control, determine which action of those open to us will be realized. Rather we sin because we are compelled by the dark power of evil operating upon us from within."⁶ To refute the Manichean dualism, Augustine had to prove that the source of evil could be explained without assuming the existence of the Dark power.⁷ Therefore, Augustine asserted that evil people are the authors of their evil doing.⁸ God, as an only eternal power, bestowed free will upon all human beings. People do evil things not because they were compelled by the dark power, but because of their misuse of what God bestowed upon them.

2.2. From the Claim that God is the Source of Evil

Another reason why Augustine defended the existence of free will was his concern for answering the question of 'How can all-omnipotent God permit evil things to happen?' Augustine said, "God is the creator of all things that are good, and He Himself more

⁶ William S. Babcock. "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16.1. (1988): 28-55. p.30.

⁷ Don M. Pontifex. Introduction to *The Problem of Free Choice*, Augustine, p.4. (Maryland: The Newman Press, 1955).

⁸ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*. I.1:1. p.35-36.

excellent than they.”⁹ It is expected that someone all-good will eliminate any evil that can be eliminated. And since God is the only eternal source of power and He is omnipotent, then there is no evil that cannot be eliminated by God. Therefore, to protect God’s absolute power, Augustine had to accept that God allows human beings to do evil by their own free choice. Otherwise, he had to accept that either God is the source of evil, or He is too weak to prevent evil things from happening. Yet, Augustine consistently claimed that God is the source of everything, yet not of our evil doings. As he stated, “If you know or believe God is good – and it would be wrong to think otherwise – He does not do evil.”¹⁰ And being unable to prevent something from happening is not compatible with the omnipotence of God. Therefore, as T.D.J. Chappel put it, “For it was Augustine’s efforts to solve this problem, the problem of evil, that induced him to develop his ‘free will defense’, his version of the biblical argument... that evil results from the exercise of creatures’ God – given autonomy, not from God’s own action....”¹¹

Although Augustine argued that human beings do evil by their own free choices, he still had to answer the question of ‘God knows everything before they happen. Then, why did God give the free choice of the will, even though He knew that human beings would sin by using it?’ Specifically, Augustine’s historical friend Evodius’ question was important. The question which was asked in *On the Free Choice of the Will*, is as follows: “Now explain to me, if you can, why God has given man free choice of the will. For if a man had not received this gift, he would not be capable of sin.”¹² Even though the question does not directly claim that God is the secondary agent, if not the main source,

⁹ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*. I.2:5. p.38.

¹⁰ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*. I.1:1. p.35.

¹¹ Chappel T. D. J. *Aristotle and Augustine on Freedom: Two Theories of Freedom, Voluntary Action and Akrasia*. (New York: St. Martin Press, 1995). p.122-123.

¹² Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*. 2.1:1. p.74.

of the evil doings of people, it implies that by giving the free choice of the will, God caused human beings to do evil. Hence, the free will must not be given. To explain the reason why God gave free will, Augustine argued that free will is originally good, and it had to be bestowed upon human beings so that they may be able to do good things. Augustine explained, “If a person is something good and could act rightly only because he willed to, then he ought to have free will, without which he could not act rightly.... The fact that a person cannot live rightly without it is therefore a sufficient reason why it should have been given to him.”¹³ Therefore, Augustine claimed that if human beings did not possess free choice of the will, there would be no good. Hence, God ought to have given free will to human beings.¹⁴

Moreover, it is not the free will, but the abuse of free choice of the will that should be condemned. Human beings do not condemn one’s bodily organs when one uses them in an evil action, but they condemn the one who used them wrongly. The bodily organs are originally good, but the way of using them could be good or evil. “So too free will, without which no one can live rightly, must be a God – given good, and you must admit rather that those who use this good wrongly are to be condemned than that He who gave it ought not to have given it.”¹⁵ Augustine argued that God bestowed free will upon human beings to do good things. Since God gave this free will unconditionally, human beings are free to choose between good and evil. Augustine explained, “The will, then, if it clings to the unchangeable good [God] which is common to all, obtains the principal and important human goods, though the will itself is a middle good. But the will sins, if it

¹³ Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*. 2.1.3.6, trans. Peter King, Augustine On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p.31.

¹⁴ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*, 2.1.3.6-7. p. 31-32.

¹⁵ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*. 2.18:48. p.131.

turns away from the unchangeable good...”¹⁶ Therefore, to protect the absolute power of God, Augustine argued that the reason why God permits evil is not because God is too weak to prevent evil things to happen, but because, “God bestowed free choice of the will on human beings unconditionally, He ought not, and hence He does not, interfere with its exercise.”¹⁷ By bestowing free choice of the will, God bounded himself not to intervene in the actions of human beings. Hence, the omnipotent and all-good God allows human beings to do evil even He does not desire these things to happen. As a result, for Augustine, it was crucial to defend the existence of free will to protect both the omnipotence and the goodness of God.

2.3. From the Claim that God is Unjust.

The final reason that challenged Augustine to defend the existence of free will was his concern for the justice of God. God’s nature of being just requires Him to punish those who sin, and reward those who do good deeds. Therefore, Augustine stated,

God is by far incomparably better and more just than any man, no matter how good and just. And the just ruler and governor of all things allows no punishment to be inflicted undeservedly on anyone, nor any reward to be given undeservedly to anyone. That which merits punishment is sin, and that which merits reward is right conduct can be justly charged to anyone who has done nothing of his own will.¹⁸

Since God is absolutely just, doers of good and evil will be rewarded or punished in accordance with their actions. Therefore, human beings should have authority over their actions.

¹⁶ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*. 2.19:53. p.135.

¹⁷ Peter King. Introduction to *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*. Augustine. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p. XX.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*. 66.5, trans. David L. Mosher, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. Vol. 70. p.51, ed. Hermigild Dressler, et al. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977).

Although Augustine changed his discourse as the omnipotence of God dominated his ideas, in the first period of his Christian years, Augustine argued that good or evil deeds must involve a free exercise of will. Otherwise, the agent cannot be responsible for the action.¹⁹ Moreover, Augustine argued that to be held responsible for an action, a person should be free from any compulsion and he should act voluntarily. As he stated, “[there] would not be a sin or a good deed, unless it was done willfully.”²⁰ In sum, Augustine argued that rewarding or punishing a person for an action which he is not responsible for is unjust. To be rewarded or punished one eventually must possess free choice of the will. God who is more just than any man therefore does not punish anyone unless he has free choice of the will.

3. The Development of Augustine's Thought

3.1. 386 – 396

3.1.1. Definition of free will

Between the years of his conversion to his elevation to Bishop, Augustine could be called a libertarian. During the first years of his conversion, Augustine trusted in free will so much that he argued that free will is the best thing that human beings could obtain in their lives. As he stated, “For what is so much in the power of the will as the will itself? When anyone has a good will, he surely has something to be put far ahead of all earthly kingdoms and all bodily pleasures.”²¹ Augustine argued that free will was the natural ability of human beings that was given in creation so that they may turn their love toward unchangeable good or to changeable material good. At the beginning, Adam and Eve misused their God given autonomy and fell away from Him. As he stated, “The rational

¹⁹ Babcock, *Sin and Moral Agency*, p.28.

²⁰ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*. 2. 1:3. p.76.

²¹ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*, 1.12.26.86. p.21.

souls that fall away from Him, although they possess that immense power of free choice, are placed in the lower ranks of creatures ... since they are ranked according to merits”²²

Although human beings fell away from God by misusing free will, one still can return to God by his efforts. As he stated “He, after all, does not yet have the mental acumen suited to contemplating eternal realities... but he is capable of having it [when he praises to God]...All that being so, I urge you, my dearest friends and neighbors, and along with you I urge myself, to run with all the speed we can manage towards the goal to which God is urging us on through his wisdom.”²³

In this period of time, Augustine argued that free choice of the will was given to every person. Although Augustine later came to reject this view, he argued that human beings have enough power to will what is good with God—given autonomy and reason. As Burns states,

in *de Vera Religione* and *de Utilitate Credenda*, faith indicates the belief that God makes true religion available to humans and the acceptance of the teaching and example of Christ as the authoritative guide provided by God. By living according to Christ, a person cleanses his soul and becomes fit to understand divine truth.²⁴

Since, in creation, God provided reason to all human beings, when they desire and choose to live according to the teachings of Christ, they will immediately possess the necessary power to turn their loves towards unchangeable good. Since human beings have sinned, they were placed among the lower ranks of creatures. Yet, they should beg God, and they should seek and strive, because God is ready to give to those who beg, to show light to

²² Augustine, *The Way of Life the Manicheans*, II. 7.9, trans. Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher, *The Fathers of Church: A New Translation: Saint Augustine: The Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life*. Vol. 56. p.71, ed. Roy Joseph DeFerrari, et al. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966).

²³ Augustine, *True Religion*. 54:106-55:107, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: On Christian Belief*. Vol. 8. p.100, ed. Boniface Ramsey, et al. (New York: New City Press, 2005).

²⁴ Patout J. Burns. *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*. (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980). p.28.

those who seek, and to open to those who knock.²⁵ Therefore, Augustine assumed that with the immense power of free will, human beings are capable of returning to the unchangeable good which is God.²⁶

On the other hand, by bestowing free will, God not only made human beings powerful enough to do good, He also gave power to human beings so that they do evil with it. When human beings choose to turn away from unchangeable and common good to something lower, they sin by their own will.²⁷ A man, therefore, does good deeds when he wills to do the good, and he sins when he wills to do evil. Augustine stated, “When God made man, although he made him very good, nevertheless he did not make him what he himself is. But that man is better who is good freely and willingly than the man who is good by necessity. Accordingly free will was a fitting and appropriate gift for man.”²⁸ Therefore, according to Augustine, God created human beings in a way they could make their choices. Human beings can direct themselves to good or to evil by choosing it freely. He argued that when human beings choose to turn to unchangeable good by their free will, it is more praiseworthy than if they were turned by necessity. If God desired to turn the hearts of all humanity to Him, He could have done it. Yet, He willed human beings to do it themselves. Therefore, He bestowed the free choice of the will to human beings so that they may choose righteousness by themselves.

Augustine’s definition of free will and its relations with the ability to perform good or evil were explicitly concerned with the nature of responsibility. Augustine

²⁵ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 3.20.58. p.199- 200.

²⁶ Augustine. *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*. II. 19:51, trans. Robert P. Russell, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Vol.1. p.328, ed. Ludwig Schopp, et al. (New York: Cima Publishing, 1948).

²⁷ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*, 2.19.53.199. p.70.

²⁸ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Questions*. 2. p.37.

strongly advocated that human beings should have free will in order to be held responsible for their acts. God bestowed free will, the ability of reasoning, and the power of performing what is willed upon human beings in creation. Hence, all human beings are obligated to make moral choices correctly.²⁹ As he stated, “Finally, if we only do evil involuntarily, there is no place either for reprimanding people or for giving them fair warning. Eliminate these, and you have to eliminate Christian law and the discipline of every religion.”³⁰ Therefore, for Augustine, human beings are responsible only for their voluntarily done actions. Yet, Augustine argued that there should exist some criteria to hold a person responsible for his actions.

The first criterion of responsibility is voluntariness. A person is responsible only for his voluntary actions. If a person acts toward something either to gain or to not lose it without any compulsion, he acts voluntarily. As Augustine stated, “For every one who does a thing unwillingly is compelled: and everyone who is compelled, if he does a thing, does it unwillingly. It follows that he that is willing is free from compulsion, even if anyone thinks him compelled.”³¹ Therefore, for Augustine, voluntary action is absolutely free from any kind of compulsion. If a man does a good thing, he deserves praise. And if he does evil, he deserves blame. Yet, if there is any external force that compels human beings to act in a certain way, then there is nothing to be praised or blamed. To claim the existence of sin, it should be the case that “Nothing either higher or lower or equal forces us, it is we ourselves who sin through the will.”³² Hence, Augustine claimed that human

²⁹ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 3.24:72. p.214.

³⁰ Augustine, *True Religion*. 14:27. p.46.

³¹ Augustine, *On Two Souls, Against the Manicheans*. 10:14, trans. Albert H. Newman, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manicheans and Against Donatist. Vol. 4. p.103, ed. Philip Schaff. (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983).

³² Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 3.4.9.36. p.80.

beings should have a radical freedom over their actions. When they sin, they sin by their own choices, not by any external forces. If will is not controlled voluntarily, then there should be no blame for those who choose to love lower things or any praise for those who choose to love God.³³ Augustine explained this with an example in his treatise of *on Two Souls*; he claimed that writing a disgraceful thing is a sin. Yet, if the hand of a man was used to write something ungraceful while he was sleeping, or a stronger man bound him, then there is no blame for the one whose hand was used. Even though the writing is the product of his hand, he did not will to write.³⁴ Therefore, for Augustine, the existence of any external compulsion removes the responsibility of a person, thereby, the necessity of reward and punishment.

The second criterion is resistibility against sin. Augustine argued that man should possess enough power to refrain from doing evil that he does not will to do. In the third book of *On the Free Choice of the will*, the conversation between Augustine and Evodius illustrates Augustine's position that there is no sin for actions that a person cannot resist by free will:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Augustine: | ... whatever the cause of the will is, if it cannot be resisted there is no sin in yielding to it; but if it can be resisted, let someone not yield to it, and there will be no sin. |
| Evodius: | what if it tricks him, catching him off his guard? |
| Augustine: | Then let him guard against being tricked. |
| Evodius: | What if the trickery is so great that he could not guard against it any way? |
| Augustine: | if so, there are no sins, for who sins in the case of what one cannot guard against in any way? But there is sin. Hence one can guard against it. ³⁵ |

³³ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 3.1.3.13. p.75.

³⁴ Augustine, *On Two Souls*, 10.12. p.102.

³⁵ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 3.18.50.171. p.107.

In this period of time, Augustine argued that free choice of the will is a radical freedom; hence, he claimed that human beings are autonomous beings who could make their own choices without any external forces. As Peter King put Augustine's earlier thought, "...the will is completely self-determining. On pain of infinite regress, there cannot be any prior cause or ground that determines the will in its free choices. The freedom involved in free choice must, therefore, be a radical freedom."³⁶ Yet, if there is any cause that cannot be resisted by will, there is no sin for the one who was compelled to act in a way that he was not willing to act.

According to Augustine, an action can be praiseworthy or blameworthy only when the action contains free choice of will. When there is no chance to avoid sin, then there is no blame and punishment for the action. If a man performs good deeds not because he freely desires to, but because he is forced to, then there is no praise or reward for the action. Augustine explained how compulsion and necessity removes the responsibility with an example and he differentiated voluntary action from necessary action with the following words:

... a stone is borne downwards, in that just as the movement of the stone is its own, so too the movement of the mind is its own. But it is dissimilar in that the stone does not have it in its power to check the movement by which it is borne in its descent, whereas when the mind does not will, it is not moved to take delight in lower thing, leaving higher things behind. Hence the movement of the stone is natural, but the movement of the mind is voluntary. Thus if anyone were to say that the stone "sins" because it tends earthward by its weight, I will not say he is more stupid than the stone, but rather that he is certainly thought to be a madman.³⁷

For Augustine, good and evil lie in the intention of the will when the act is done. It is not the action but the purpose of the one while one was doing evil or good that needs to be blamed or praised. Therefore, he argued that, if a man does not have the opportunity to do

³⁶ King, *Augustine*, p.XIX.

³⁷ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 3.1.2.10. p.74.

any evil act, but indeed he wants to do so, and he is going to do so when the opportunity arises, he is no less guilty than if he were caught in the act.³⁸

3.1.2. The problem of necessity

Augustine's concern for God's absolute power, and his emphasis on human free choice of the will forced him to deal with the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and human free choice of the will. As stated in previous pages, Augustine was a libertarian in early years of his career. Hence, he claimed that the will is totally free to act in whatever way it desires. On the other hand, he believed that God's omnipotence requires Him to foreknow all things before they happen. These two ideas raised another question that Augustine had to answer. When God foreknows something will happen in a certain way, there is no other way in which that thing can happen. Hence, if God foreknows something, then it will happen necessarily. And since God foreknows every human being's actions, then how do human beings act freely, but not necessarily? Evodius asked this question in the third book of *On the Free Choice of the Will*:

...It perplexes me beyond words how it could happen that [1] God has foreknowledge of everything that will happen, and yet [2] we do not sin by any necessity. Anyone who said that something can turn out otherwise that God previously foreknew would be trying to destroy God's foreknowledge with his senseless irreligiousness. ... Since God had foreknown that he was going to sin, it was necessary that what He foreknew would be the case would happen. So how is the will free where such unavoidable necessity is apparent.³⁹

Augustine paraphrased Evodius' argument and claimed that Evodius was concerned with the inconsistency of God's foreknowledge and free choice of the will. Augustine claimed that Evodius' argument implies that a person either should deny the omnipotence of God or the existence of free choice of the will. William L. Rowe reconstructs Evodius' argument and Augustine's paraphrasing as follows:

³⁸ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 1.3.8.20. p.20.

³⁹ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 3.2.4.14. p.75.

- 1) God has foreknowledge of all future events.
- 2) Hence, if a man is going to sin, God foreknows that he will sin.
- 3) Whatever God foreknows must necessarily happen.
- 4) Hence, if God foreknows that a man will sin, he must necessarily sin.
- 5) But if such a man must necessarily sin, there is no voluntary choice in his sinning.
- 6) Therefore, such a man does not have free will.⁴⁰

Augustine answered this question by giving three pieces of evidence. First, although what God foreknows must happen, it does not mean God's foreknowledge removes the free choice of the will. God foreknows everything a person will do; yet the person does these things freely, but not necessarily. Even though man necessarily does what God foreknows, he freely does these things. Augustine claimed that there is no doubt that God foreknows not only our actions, but He also foreknows His own actions and foresees what He will do in the future. Therefore, if one claims that what God foreknows will happen necessarily, and since God also foreknows His own actions, then it would mean God also will act not freely but necessarily.⁴¹ Since God is free to do whatever He desires, and also foreknows what he will do, then, God's foreknowledge is compatible with the free choice of the will. And one does not have to deny that God has foreknowledge of all future events or the existence of free will.⁴²

Second, Augustine argued that God's foreknowledge does not necessitate Him to intervene in an action. Augustine differentiated between the omniscience and the omnipotence of God. Although God foresees what every human being will do by his own will, He does not force anyone to act in a certain way.⁴³ God perfectly foreknows what human beings will do, but it is not because God forces them to act in the way in which He foreknows. Yet, because human beings will act in a certain way by choosing this way

⁴⁰ William L. Rowe. "Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will." *The Review of Metaphysics*. 18.2. (1964): 356- 363. p.356-357.

⁴¹ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 3.3.6. p.145 – 146.

⁴² Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 3.3.8. p.149.

⁴³ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 3.4.10.39. p.80.

freely, God foreknows it. Augustine's explanation of this is as follows, "you would not necessarily compel a man to sin by foreknowing his sin. Your foreknowledge would not be the cause of his sin, though undoubtedly he would sin; otherwise you would not foreknow that this would happen. Therefore these two are not contradictory, your foreknowledge and someone else's free act."⁴⁴ As a result, for Augustine, God's foreknowledge of what human beings will do in future does not imply that people are unable to act according to their own choices.

Augustine's final argument was the timelessness of God. It is commonly accepted that God dwells in a different dimension, more precisely, beyond the perception of our physical world. And Augustine believed, "Everything past no longer exists, everything future does not yet exist, therefore nothing past and nothing future exists. But in God's sight there is nothing which does not exist. Therefore, in God's sight, [nothing exists] as past or future, but everything is now."⁴⁵ Hence, for Augustine, as human beings do not force past things to have happened by remembering them, so too God does not force future things to happen by His foreknowledge.⁴⁶ Because there is no difference between past and future for God, everything happens in the present for Him. Therefore, there is no need to assume that human beings have to follow the path that God determined for them. God does not determine any path to any people; He simply knows what human beings are doing right now. Although Augustine rejects these ideas later, Augustine accounts for the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and human beings' free choice of the will by separating the omnipotence and omniscience of God.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 3.4.10. p.150.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Questions*. 17. p.45.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *On the Free Choice*. 3.4.11.40. p.81.

3.1.3. Fallen – Unfallen Human Beings and Free Will

Augustine's emphasis on the ability of free will lessened from the beginning of this period to the end. During the last years of this period, Augustine began to claim that fallen humanity does not enjoy the same freedom that Adam enjoyed. Unlike his descendants, Adam had the full capacity of willing without any hindrance. Adam received both the knowledge of truth and of evil, and he could have chosen God's precept instead of the serpent's suggestion. He was free to choose either God or the lesser good; yet he chose the lesser good instead of the unchangeable truth. He not only had the fullest form of freedom, but also had the full capacity to translate his will into action. Burns clarifies Augustine's teachings on Adam's freedom by stating, "Adam and Eve sinned by pride and curiosity. Their love shifted from the divine Truth to their own goodness and then turned to seek truth in the external, corporeal world."⁴⁷

As a result of this shift, God punished not only Adam and Eve, but also all humanity, and these punishments are death, ignorance, and moral difficulty. Augustine argued that God punished all humanity because the children of Adam and Eve could not be better than Adam and Eve. Otherwise, it would be inequitable. Yet, although fallen humanity received mortality, ignorance, and moral difficulty, when they turn to God, there is not any hindrance for following the path that leads them to God. On the other hand, since they were wounded, they need God's assistance, and as soon as they convert their love towards God, they will receive God's assistance to overcome the moral difficulty that they originally possessed.⁴⁸ All in all, even though Augustine began to lessen his emphasis on human beings' free choice of the will, specifically, on the ability

⁴⁷ Burns, *Operative Grace*, p.23.

⁴⁸ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 3.20.55. p.196.

to perform what is willed, he still argued that human beings have the necessary power to return to God by reordering their love from material goods toward God.

3.2 396-412: From Elevation to Bishop to the Beginning of the Pelagian Controversy

3.2.1 Beginning to Question the Value of Free Will

Augustine never abandoned the defense of the existence of free will. It was crucial to defend the existence of free will to protect goodness and justice of God against the problem of evil. Yet, Augustine began to question the value of free will. Augustine continued to assert that human beings should have free will so that some can show their obedience while the others disobey what is commanded by their own choices. Since God is just, while those who obey the commandments will be rewarded, those who disobey the commandments will be punished.⁴⁹ As the time went on, however, he never rejected the existence of free will; he lessened his emphasis on the ability to perform what is willed. Augustine believed that God originally bestowed wisdom to human beings. Yet, the sin of Adam and Eve wounded the soul of all humanity, thereby the ability of using wisdom. As a result of Adam and Eve's sin, all human beings inherited mortality, ignorance, and weakness, which hinder human beings from translating their good wills into action. In sum, this period was a transition period for Augustine. He transformed his reliance on the ability to perform what is willed to the inability of willing the good. At the end of this period, free will not only needs the assistance of God to be empowered to follow the true path, but it also needs to be directly oriented to the true path.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*. 22:78, trans. Richard Stothert, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manicheans and Against Donatist. Vol. 4. P.303, ed. Philip Schaff. (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983).

3.2.2 Fallen- Unfallen human beings

Augustine did not change his discourse about the power and situation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve enjoyed the true and fullest form of freedom before the fall. They were free to choose either unchangeable good that is God, or changeable goods that are external material things. When they chose the lesser goods by their own choices, the capability of free will lessened. Therefore, the loss of the power of the will began with the Adam and Eve's choice which also caused them to fall from the Garden of Eden. In the light of these thoughts, unlike his earlier reliance on the power of free will, Augustine began to lessen his emphasis on the power of free choice of the will. Although human beings have the fullest freedom to pursue their evil desires and commit evil, they need direct divine assistance to find and pursue the true path which leads them to the love of God. As he stated in *On the Spirit and the Letter*,

... [We affirm that] human will is so divinely aided in the pursuit of righteousness, that (in addition to man's being created with a free will, and in addition to the teaching by which he is instructed how he ought to live) he receives the Holy Ghost, by whom there is formed in his mind a delight in, and a love of, that supreme and unchangeable good, which is God...⁵⁰

One of Augustine's most significant explanations for the inability of realizing, choosing, and performing the good with free choice of the will came through his understanding of desire and delight. Augustine believed that a person could not will something unless an object is presented to the attention of the soul.⁵¹ In this period of his life, the desire for an object played a much more crucial role than the earlier period. Augustine came to believe that a person is driven by his desires. Moreover, it is not human beings' mind, but their delights that motivate their choices. Katherine A. Rogers

⁵⁰ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 3:5, trans. Peter Holmes, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post – Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. 5. p.84, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

⁵¹ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 3. 25:75. p.218.

explains Augustine's idea on desire and delight by stating, "Choice is caused by desire. The rational agent deliberates between options and comes to a conclusion about what it most desires and inevitably chooses that."⁵² Therefore, in order to will the good, a good object must attract human beings' attention. Yet, once Adam and Eve sinned, the love of humanity turned to seek the pleasure in the external world rather than the unchangeable good. Since then, human beings are drawn by their evil desires because external material things became more attractive for people. Therefore, for human beings, it is getting harder to be attracted by the Divine Truth.

There is no doubt that human beings make their choices under certain kinds of motivations. Yet, Augustine came to believe that once human beings obeyed their desire and allowed the sin to be performed, it became pervasive. Moreover, the sin became irresistible by human strength alone. As Augustine explained, "For, lust is the product of perverse will, and when one obeys lust habit is produced, and when one offers no resistance to habit, necessity is produced."⁵³ For Augustine, the character of a person is the reflection of the choices that he had made during his or her life. And since Adam and Eve sinned, all human beings are inclined to sin rather than performing the good actions. Hence, human beings, at least the heirs of Adam and Eve, were not created in a neutral form which can choose either good or evil. To eliminate this assumption, Augustine argued that the fall from the Garden of Eden is not the only reason for the erosion of the power of the will. Although the sin of Adam and Eve caused human beings' will to be

⁵² Katherine A. Rogers. "Augustine's Compatibilism." *Religious Studies*, 40.4. (2004): 415 – 435. p.417.

⁵³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.5:10, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. Vol. 21. p.206, ed. Ray Joseph DeFerri (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966).

weakened, each person added their own sins to this inherited condition by following their evil desires.⁵⁴

According to Augustine, repetition of sinning produces a habit, and when the habit is produced, it does not allow human beings to free themselves from the bondage of sin. With the formation of the habit, the power of free will becomes less capable of performing good. Although human beings do not have enough power to free themselves from the chains of the habit, since they still have free will, they should will to resist to the habit even though, practically, they will not be able to resist to it. Otherwise, the growth of habits would produce a necessity to commit sin.⁵⁵ As a result of inherited and personal sins, human beings do not need any assistance to commit sin. Yet, they need the assistance of God to be freed from the chains of the habit to perform any good action. Augustine explained the necessity of God's help for performing any good action by stating, "They, however, must be resisted with the utmost ardor and vigor who suppose that without God's help, the mere power of the human will in itself, can either perfect righteousness, or advance steadily towards it."⁵⁶

3.2.3. Willing versus Performing

Even though Augustine continued to claim that free will is an important element for salvation, he increased the limitations that he placed on the power of human free will. To Augustine, free choice of the will, as a power of the mind, always exists within human beings. Yet, due to the influence of the delight and the habit, human beings are not

⁵⁴ Burns, *Operative Grace*, p.71.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. 5. 10. p. 206.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Spirit and the letter*. 2: 4. p.84.

always powerful enough to perform good.⁵⁷ Therefore, there is a crucial distinction between willing and performing what is willed. Augustine explained this distinction by stating, “Since, then, there are two things, - will and ability; it follows that not every one that has the will has therefore the ability also, nor has every one that possesses the ability the will also...”⁵⁸ The ability of willing is present in the nature of the will, but it does not necessarily mean that when one wills to do something, one also will have the ability to achieve what one wills.

Ann A. Pang states that the power to achieve what is willed requires three elements: the object, the act of willing, and the power of achieving the object to which the act of willing is directed. For Augustine, the object and the act of willing are present in human beings. Yet, when a person wills to do good, the power to achieve it is absent unless God helps. Without God’s assistance, a man’s free will achieves nothing except for sin. As he stated in *Confessions*, “so was I sure that it was better to give myself over to Thy charity, rather than to give in to my own cupidity. But, while charity was attractive and was about to win its victory, cupidity was also alluring and held me in its fetters.”⁵⁹ Therefore, for Augustine, even though a person wills to do good, desire, delight, and habit hinder him from doing so, and he does the wrong things that he does not will to do.

How does it happen that even though a person wills to do the good, he does the wrong that he does not will to do? How can a person be held responsible because of his lack of ability? Augustine argued that the main reason of willing good but being unable

⁵⁷ Judith C. Stark. “The Pauline Influence on Augustine’s Notion of the Will.” *Vigiliae Christianae*. 43.4. (1989): 345 – 360. p.350.

⁵⁸ Augustine, *Spirit and the letter*. 31:53. p.106.

⁵⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.5:12. p.208.

to do is due to the impairment of the will. As a result of the fall from the Garden of Eden, the will is divided against itself, and thus, it is unable to will righteousness completely.

Augustine explains this impairment of the will in the *Confessions*:

The mind commands the body and is immediately obeyed; the mind commands itself and is resisted. The mind commands the hand to be moved and its readiness is so great that command can hardly be distinguished from enslavement. Yet the mind is the mind, while the hand is the body. The mind commands the mind to will; it is not something else, yet it does not do it. What is the source of this monstrosity? What purpose does it serve? But, it does not will it completely, and so it does not command it completely. For, it commands to the extent that it wills; and what it commands it not done, to the extent that it does not will it, since the will command that there be a will, not another will, but its very self. So, it does not command with its whole being; therefore, its command is not fulfilled....⁶⁰

The passage from the *Confessions* means that human beings are restrained by an internal struggle, which is the impairment of the will. It is the same soul that wishes good or evil. While it is unable to perform good, it has the absolute power to do evil.

Augustine tried to prove that human beings are culpable due to the lack of ability. The logic of the distinction between ability and will seems to work against Augustine's conclusion, though.⁶¹ For Augustine, it was crucial to defend the existence of free will for his understanding of the problem of evil. Augustine argued that since human beings lost the power of performing good by sinning repeatedly, human beings are culpable because of what they have or have not done. Therefore, human beings possess freedom to will; yet they do not possess the freedom to act the way they desire. Yet, from the passage, it is clearly seen that what is really lacking is the will, not the ability. If the will could desire to do something wholeheartedly, the mind would obey the desire of the will. Therefore, the reason for inability is the lack of wholeness of the will, thereby, an internal struggle. And this struggle cannot be overcome by human power alone. To Augustine, when a person is restrained by an external force, he does not deserve the punishment because of

⁶⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. 9.21. p. 217.

⁶¹ Fred Berthold Jr. "Free Will and Theodicy in Augustine: An Exposition and Critique." *Religious Studies*. 17. 4. (1981): 525 – 535. p.530.

what he did or did not. There is no sin for a person whose hand was used to write disgraceful things. Similarly, blaming a person since he could not fly without necessary equipment would be groundless. Yet, when a person fails to do what is expected not because of external forces but because of the internal conflict, which is impossible to overcome for Augustine, he is still responsible for the failure.

Augustine's emphasis on free choice of the will lessened from the beginning to the end of this period. According to Augustine's words, human beings first lost the power to perform good even though it was willed by free will. In addition to this loss, human beings also became totally unable to realize, choose and will good. Augustine's main arguments were the fall of Adam and Eve, the strength of the desire and the habit, and the lack of wholeness of the will. Yet it is important to note that Augustine's increased interest in Scripture, especially in Pauline writings, and his way of interpretation of Biblical passages, helped Augustine to reinforce his discourse of inability to will good. As Judith C. Stark stated, "Augustine's interpretations of some of Paul's texts have a direct bearing on Augustine's notion of the will. Augustine relied on Paul for some crucial initial insights on the will and then Augustine greatly extended and deepened his own analysis far beyond Paul's texts."⁶² With the influence of the verse of "What do you have that you did not receive,"⁶³ Augustine began to claim that God is the source of every single good thing in the universe. A human being is not powerful enough to will and perform good by himself. Therefore, every single creature needs the direct assistance of the most powerful Being, which is God.

⁶² Stark, Pauline influence on Augustine, p.345.

⁶³ 1 Corinthians, 4:7

God assists human beings in three ways; first, He bestows free will upon human beings. Although Augustine questioned the value of free will and lessened the power of it in this period, he never abandoned the claim that human beings were bestowed free choice of the will in creation.⁶⁴ Second, He gives the commandments to teach how human beings ought to live. Third, He orients human beings' will to love righteousness through the Holy Ghost. Augustine summarized this assistance in his treatise of *On the Spirit and Letter*:

When I shall have proved this, it will more manifestly appear that to lead a holy life is the gift of God,—not only because God has given a free will to man, without which there is no living ill or well; nor only because He has given him a commandment to teach him how he ought to live; but because through the Holy Ghost He sheds love abroad in the hearts of those whom he foreknew, in order to predestinate them... That these assertions are vain will be clear enough, after it has been also plainly shown that even man's righteousness must be attributed to the operation of God...⁶⁵

All in all, Augustine thought that he should minimize the ability of human beings to exalt God's power. It is hard to determine whether Augustine came to believe this with the influence of some Biblical verses, such as “What do you have you did not receive?”⁶⁶ and “Without me you can do nothing,”⁶⁷ or if he selected these verses to reinforce his idea. Yet, he referred to these verses in almost all of his treatises.

3.3. 412 – 430: From Beginning of the Pelagian Controversy to Augustine's Death

3.3.1. The Absolute Authority of an Omnipotent God

This period of Augustine's life was filled with answering the Pelagians' teaching of free choice of the will. The Pelagian position was clearly based on absolute freedom for human beings. They claimed that “[God] has given us a capacity for right or wrong

⁶⁴ Augustine, *Spirit and the letter*. 33:58. p.109.

⁶⁵ Augustine, *Spirit and the letter*. 5:7. p.85. Also, the same meaning can be drawn from on the spirit and the letter, 3:5, 33:58, 34:60.

⁶⁶ Corinthians, 4:7

⁶⁷ John 15:5.

action; He wants us to choose the right, but gives us the possibility of wrong choice in order that our fulfillment of His will may come from our wills, not from His. Thus, there is what we may call a kind of natural holiness in our hearts.”⁶⁸ For the Pelagians, the main evidence of the existence of free will is the belief that God will punish the one who commits sin while He will reward the one who does good. Therefore, human beings are responsible for their actions, and to be held responsible one should be able to choose to do or refrain from doing an action. Therefore, God bestowed free will to human beings in creation, and He commanded human beings that they ought to live virtuously. If human beings were not capable of living virtuously, God would not command human beings to live virtuously. Here, an “ought” implies a “can”. As a result, either human beings have free choice of the will, or God acts unjustly by ordering human beings to live virtuously even though He foreknows that they were not capable of it. As God cannot be unjust, human beings must have free choice of the will.⁶⁹

The Pelagian reasoning that free will has to exist was almost the same as what Augustine had claimed in his earlier career, specifically, in *On the Free Choice of the Will*. In this last period of his life, especially in his treatise *On Grace and Free Will*, Augustine disagreed with most of the points. Augustine said that the reason for writing this treatise was to prove that grace of God is compatible with the free choice of the will. On the one hand, he argued that the existence of God’s grace does not contradict the existence of free will. On the other hand, he strongly advocated that human beings should not trust the power of their free will so much that they claim they do not need the grace of

⁶⁸ John Ferguson. *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*. (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons LTD, 1956). p.60.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 62-64. Based on a document that was sent to Augustine which outlined Pelagian position and attributed to Caelestius.

God for salvation, or for willing and performing any good. Augustine agreed with the Pelagians in that God ordered human beings to obey the commandments. While obedience to them brings a reward, disobedience to them brings punishment. Therefore, there should be a free choice of the will; otherwise, God's precepts would be meaningless.⁷⁰ Since God is wise, he does not order any unreasonable thing. Then, if He orders all His commandments to be kept and fulfilled, there is a free choice of the will. As Augustine states, "Now wherever it is said, "Do not do this," and "Do not do that," and wherever there is any requirement in the divine admonitions for the work of the will to do anything, or to refrain from doing anything, there is at once a sufficient proof of free will."⁷¹

Although Augustine claimed that since God orders human beings to keep the commandments, there is free choice of the will, he insisted that human free choice of the will does not provide any assistance for living a virtuous life to a person. The main reason for this lessened emphasis on the power of human beings is Augustine's growing emphasis on the absolute authority of an omnipotent God. Dennis R. Cresswell explains Augustine's concern of God's power and its influence on Augustine's understanding of free choice with the following words:

[Augustine agrees] with the Pelagians that free choice of the will is necessary to moral activity, that eternal life is the reward of a good life – i.e., a life of virtue, and God is immutably just. But his understanding of Paul's writing, and certain passages of the Gospels [e.g. John 15:5, "Apart from me, you can do nothing."] forces him to say that human beings cannot be just – i.e., live a virtuous life – apart from the working of the God.⁷²

⁷⁰ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, 2:2, trans. Peter Holmes, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. p.444, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

⁷¹ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, 3:4. p.445.

⁷² Cresswell Denis R., *St. Augustine's Dilemma: Grace and Eternal Law In the Major Works of Augustine of Hippo*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997). p.95.

God created the universe from nothing, He has the authority on everything, and He is the source of every good thing. These ideas forced Augustine to increase his emphasis on God's absolute authority. Augustine tried to exalt God's authority on the universe by reducing the power of human free will. As a result, unlike his earlier emphasis on human beings' freedom of choice over their actions, Augustine came to believe that omnipotent God's will alone governs all good activities.

By reducing the power of the free choice of the will, Augustine claimed that human beings couldn't will what is good by their own power. It is a fact that there is always free choice of the will to live and act rightly. Yet, human beings need the cooperation of God to achieve any good. God is the initiator of the good action. Because human beings are sinful, there is no way that people can be the initiators of the good works by their own will and power. God is the one who creates the will to do good, and he is the one who gives power to achieve it. As a result of Adam and Eve's sin and individual sins, human beings lost the capability of performing good. If God does not help, they can do nothing but sin.⁷³ Therefore, contrary to what the Pelagians say, for Augustine, even though God foreknows that human beings will not be able to do what is commanded, He still commands something that is above the power of a person. He argued, "Who can be ignorant of this? But God commands some things which we cannot do, in order that we may know what we ought to ask of Him."⁷⁴ Even though Augustine left human beings powerless to will something good, he still insisted that human beings have free choice of the will. Yet, God prepares the good will within human beings before

⁷³ Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity*. 9.30. trans. Bernard M. Peebles, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. Vol.4. p.395, ed. Ludwig Schopp. (New York: Cima Publishing, 1947).

⁷⁴ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*. 16:32. p.457.

they will the good.⁷⁵ Eventually, a person plays no more role than a puppet in his good works.

3.3.2. The Predestination of the Will

Human beings are unable to will any good unless God prepares the will. And they cannot turn their evil will to righteousness unless God desires it to be turned. God is the initiator of the good action; He elects some people to be saved and therefore turns their hearts to righteousness while He leaves the rest to the damnation as a result of their evil actions. In this period of Augustine's lifetime, his idea of predestination became very dominant over his understanding of free choice of the will. For Augustine, predestination is not only a matter of foreknowing the destiny of human beings. It includes God electing some people to be rewarded while leaving the rest for the damnation. God does not elect human beings because He foreknows who will believe in Him and perform good, but He elects some people so that they may believe, and they may perform the good.⁷⁶ As he states in *on the Predestination of the Saints*, "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinating us to the adoption of children, not because we were going to be of ourselves holy and immaculate, but He chose and predestinated us that we might be so."⁷⁷ By defending predestination, Augustine made salvation totally independent from human beings' will. God saved some people because He willed to save them, and He left the rest to the damnation because He did not will their salvation.

Augustine was aware that his idea of God's election of some people raised a problem about God's justice. If people who are saved are saved by God's will, then it can

⁷⁵ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*. 16.32. p.457.

⁷⁶ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*. 17:34, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. P. 514 - 515, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

⁷⁷ Ibid, 18. 37. p.516.

be assumed that people who are not saved are not saved because of lack of God's will to save them. God foreknows that human beings are not capable of rising up by their own free will. Therefore, by not willing to save them, He indirectly, if not directly, caused them to sin. Augustine tried to solve the conflict by claiming that since Adam and Eve sinned, all humanity deserves to be punished as partakers of the sin. Yet, God showed some of them His mercy and saved them⁷⁸ while He left the rest to the damnation as a result of His nature of being just. Augustine could not directly answer the following question: If God predestinated all human beings in accordance with His own will, then what is the reason for punishment for not being chosen by God? Moreover, how could all-just God punish people because He did not choose them? Augustine shaped his argument again based on the inability of human beings. He claimed that the choice of who are saved and who are not saved is God's judgment. Since human beings are not wise enough, it is impossible to understand the reason of this choice. Yet, since it is God who makes the choice, it is just.⁷⁹ As Rist summarized, "Augustine preferred to place the possibility of salvation entirely under God's control, a control which he believed to be both rational and just."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Augustine, *Grace and Free Will*. 21.43. p.463.

⁷⁹ Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace*. 8:17, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Vol. 5. p. 478, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York: The Christian Literature Library, 1887).

⁸⁰ John M. Rist. "Augustine on Free will and Predestination." *Journal of Theological Studies*. 20.2. (1969): 420- 447. p.424.

3.3.3. *Final thoughts on free will*

The Pelagian controversy, Augustine's growing emphasis on the grace of God, and his notion of predestination forced Augustine to rethink his position and his idea of free choice of the will. On the one hand, since everything is under God's control, salvation of human beings is also under His control. On the other hand, Augustine had to accept that there is free choice of the will as a result of his fear of making God blameworthy for the existence of evil and the necessity of defending the existence of responsibility. As a result, Augustine had to redefine freedom, thereby, free choice of the will. Augustine said,

There is, however, always within us a free will, – but it is not always good; for it is either free from righteousness when it serves sin, – and then it is evil, – or else it is free from sin when it serves righteousness, – and then it is good. But the grace of God is always good; and by it it comes to pass that a man is of a good will, though he was before an evil one. By it also it comes to pass that the very good will, which has now begun to be, is enlarged, and made so great that it is able to fulfill the divine commandments which it shall wish, when it shall once firmly and perfectly wish.... So that the man who wills but is not able knows that he does not yet fully will, and prays that he may have so great a will that it may suffice for keeping the commandments. And thus, indeed, he receives assistance to perform what he is commanded.⁸¹

Hence, in the final period of his lifetime, when Augustine said human beings have free will, it did not mean that human beings were free to choose good or evil. Human beings have free choice of the will only to do evil unless they are helped by God's grace. When the God's help is received, human beings reach the true freedom and become liberated from the web of evil-doing. Human beings are free from virtue, or free from sin. And it is the grace of God that sets sinners free from the chain of evil doing.⁸² All in all, for Augustine, freedom came to mean being liberated from evil desires. And by claiming that human beings have free will, he argued that they are free to sin unless they were

⁸¹ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*. 15:31. p.456-457.

⁸² Augustine, *Reconsideration*, 1.9, trans. Peter King, Augustine On the Free Choice of the Will, On grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p.132, Augustine, *Grace and Free Will*. 14:27. p.455.

liberated. They become free to do good if they are liberated. Yet, even in this case human beings are not free to sin, since God determined them to be saved.

4. A Lingering Question — the Vitiating of God's justice

For Augustine, it was crucial to defend the existence of free will, even in those cases where freedom of action was not possible. The goodness and justice of God led Augustine to advocate the existence of the free choice of the will. He claimed that God is wholly good, and He is the only eternal power. Hence, to explain the source of evil Augustine argued that free will is the source of evil actions. In the first period, in order not to make God directly or indirectly the source of evil, Augustine argued that human beings are the only authors of their action. As a result of their actions, they will be rewarded or punished. Even just rulers do not punish anyone who does not deserve it. Therefore, God who is incomparably more just than any person could not punish or reward anyone who does not deserve it.⁸³ Yet, in the second and third period, although he kept claiming that human beings have free choice of will, and they are responsible for their actions, he argued that people do not have any authority over their actions.

It is commonly accepted that to be punished or rewarded one needs to deserve it. And deserving something requires responsibility. Yet, if a person will be held responsible for an action, at least, three criteria must be met. First, the person should be the absolute author of the action. Second, alternatives must be available. Third, the action must be done without any internal or external forces. In other words, it has to be done voluntarily, or it should be the direct consequence of a voluntary action. Augustine was aware that these criteria must be fulfilled to hold a person responsible for his action. Hence, in his

⁸³ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Questions*. 24. p.51.

treatise of *on the Free Choice of the Will*, he argued that human beings are autonomous in the sense of choosing what they desire without any compulsion. Yet, as time went on, his growing emphasis on the omnipotence of God forced him to lessen the power of free will. Even though he was aware that holding a person responsible would be impossible, he kept stressing the importance of God's grace. Augustine's final thoughts on the free choice of the will prove that in Augustine's thinking none of those three criteria are present in human actions.

From Augustine's final period writings, it could be deduced that a person is the author of neither his evil actions, nor his good actions. On the one hand, Augustine claimed that God created human beings in perfect condition. On the other hand, he asserted that the sin of Adam and Eve caused them to fall into a position in which they cannot rise up by themselves. Therefore, the following question can be raised: If Adam and Eve sinned, what have the rest of human beings done to deserve punishment? No other human being was actively involved in Adam and Eve's sin. Augustine held all humanity responsible for the action that has been done, despite the fact that they did not even exist. For him, Adam and Eve's disobedience caused all human being's love to be turned from unchangeable good to changeable material things. Eventually, all human beings came to desire lesser good instead of returning to God. Their desire for lesser good led them to produce habits that are very hard to alter. Finally, these desires and habits dominated people's will and caused them to sin repeatedly. Therefore, even when they will to do good, they will not be able to perform it, and consequently, they will be drawn to do evil by the strength of their evil desires.⁸⁴ Even though, one accepts Augustine's view that human beings produce habits not by necessity but by free choice of the will, it

⁸⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. 5:12. p. 208.

is still impossible to hold a person responsible for his evil actions. Because a person becomes unable to alter his habits. Hence, he does not do evil because he wants to do so, but because he cannot resist his habit. If he does not have enough power to overcome his evil desires, how can one be the absolute author of his actions? It could be proposed that, for Augustine, habits and desires mean the same thing as what the Dark meant to the Manicheans. While Augustine claimed that habits are the source of evil, the Manicheans claimed that the Dark is the source of evil. In both cases, a person is not the author of his actions.

Augustine's understanding of predestination is another piece of evidence that can be used to show that, for him, human beings after the Fall do not have free choice of the will. Although Augustine's idea of predestination did not originate with the Pelagian controversy, he accentuated its importance in these years by referring to it in many places on his treatises that he wrote against the Pelagians. For Augustine, every single human being was predestinated either to salvation or to damnation. God saved some people, but not because God foreknows that they will be believers by their free choice of the will. They became believers because God desired to make them believers.⁸⁵ Then, since God predestinated them to be saved, there is no way they would act in a way other than how God desired them to act. If they perform good, it is not because they chose to do so, but it is because God already determined them to act in this way. Even if they desired to sin, God would prevent them from sinning. Hence, if they have no chance to act the way they desired, then they are not the authors of their actions. Predestination controls every action of a human being as a person controls a puppet.

⁸⁵ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 18:37. p.516.

According to Augustine, those who are left in damnation exemplify the justice of God. On the one hand, all human beings deserved to be damned, yet God showed His mercy to some of them and saved them. On the other hand, God chose the people who will be saved even before the foundation of the universe. God determined those who will be damned either by not giving His mercy or by not choosing them. Therefore, since God chose who will be rewarded and who will be punished before the foundation of the world,⁸⁶ people who are predestinated to be punished cannot act against God's will. No matter what people who are left to damnation desire, they will choose to do evil. God predestinated them to be damned, and since God cannot fail in His omniscience and his omnipotence requires that whatever He desires will be fulfilled, they need to do what God determined for them. Therefore, human beings are not the absolute authors of their action, but just the doers of what God determined for them.

The second criterion that must be met is that the alternatives must be available. As Babcock states,

The person must be able to act or refrain from acting, or the person must be able to act in any of two or more different ways. We must, that is, be able to rightly say that the person could have done otherwise. For, if the person could not have done otherwise, the person seems to have exercised no agency at all.⁸⁷

As it is discussed above, For Augustine, the person has no authority in the sense that he can choose to perform good. Therefore, evil is not a choice for a person, but following evil desires is the only possible thing that human beings could achieve because God already determined what each person would do before the foundation of the universe. People who are saved were directed to the right path while people who are not saved were directed to the wrong path. Although the possibility of performing good or bad

⁸⁶ Ibid. p.516.

⁸⁷ Babcock, Sin and Moral Agency, p.28.

exists for each person, they cannot determine their actions. Hence, practically, alternatives do not exist. There are certain ways for certain people. People who are not saved are slaves of evil. Hence, the only alternative left for them is to follow the path determined for them by God. Even though they choose to do good, they will be drawn to the evil by their past choices.⁸⁸ The determination of the action is not contingent on human choice; instead, they are determined by some internal or external factors.

Finally, the action must be done voluntarily, in other words, there should be no internal or external force. Augustine stated, “It would not be a sin or a good deed, unless it was done willfully. Hence punishment and reward would be unjust, if man did not have free will.”⁸⁹ Augustine appreciated the importance of the existence of voluntariness during his entire life. If there is an external force that dominates the action of a person, there is neither praise, nor blame to the one whose actions were dominated. If while one is asleep, another takes one’s hand and uses to write ungraceful things, there is no blame for the one whose hand is used. Similarly, if one’s hand was used to write ungraceful things, while being bound by someone stronger, there is no blame for the one whose hand was used.⁹⁰ The same criterion applies to good actions, too. If a man refrains from sinning, not because he desired to live virtuously, but because he had no opportunity to sin, he is no less guilty than if he was caught in the act.⁹¹ As it is seen in the examples, for Augustine, to be held responsible for any action, the action must be chosen without any external compulsion.

⁸⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. 9. 21. p.217.

⁸⁹ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 2. 1. 3. p.76.

⁹⁰ Augustine, *On Two Souls*, 10:13. p.102.

⁹¹ Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, 1.3.8. p.40-41.

On the other hand, for Augustine, the inability of performing good or choosing evil as a result of an irresistible internal struggle does not remove the responsibility. As Rogers stated, “Augustine offers a list of types of ‘choice’ which are unfree and hence not really voluntary and open to praise or blame....[this] list of unfree ‘choice’ does not include being inevitably drawn to choose the one option you find most desirable.”⁹² Augustine argued that a man has no control over his mind unless God helps him to overcome his internal conflict.⁹³ To Augustine, although human beings’ minds are dominated by evil desires, these desires are really theirs. Since human beings act upon evil desires without any external force, they act voluntarily, and they are responsible.⁹⁴ Even though human beings choose to perform good, the habit will force, and achieve to turn him to evil. In brief, Augustine claims that the strength of the habit prevents human beings from making their choices freely. Therefore, a man is only capable of allowing himself to be drawn to act by the sheer irresistible pleasure of the object of his love.⁹⁵

There is no reason to assume that Augustine was unaware that he was vitiating God’s justice by taking away the power from human beings, and making God as the only authority for salvation. Yet, his concern with the God’s omnipotence led him to downplay God’s justice. Three years before his death, Augustine confessed in *Retractions* the following words:

“I, indeed, labored in defense of the free choice of the human will; but the grace of the God conquered, and finally I was able to understand, with full clarity, the meaning of the Apostle: ‘For who singles thee out? Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if you hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it?’”⁹⁶

⁹² Rogers, Augustine’s Compatibilism. p.423.

⁹³ Augustine, *Spirit and the Letter*, 34:60. p.110.

⁹⁴ Berthold, Free will and Theodicy, p.531.

⁹⁵ Rist, Augustine on Free will and Predestination, p.423.

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Retractions*, 2:27, trans. Mary Inez Bogan, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Vol. 60. p.120, ed. Roy Joseph DeFerrari, et al. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968).

On the one hand, Augustine found it important to attribute free choice of the will to human beings, so that they may justly be condemned for their evil doings. On the other hand, his concern with God's power caused him to take away the power of the free choice of the will to exalt God's absolute power. His views on God's omnipotence became dominant and he decreased his reliance on the intellectual ability of human beings. As a result, instead of attempting to explain God's justice, Augustine argued that human beings are not wise enough to understand it.

4

Conclusion

This thesis analyzes the transformations in Augustine's views on God's grace and free choice of the will. Augustine's views on God's grace and free will underwent dramatic changes as a result of his concern with Divine Omnipotence. Augustine's increased emphasis on God's omnipotence forced him to maximize the role of God's grace for salvation while he downplayed the role of free will. Chapter 1 of this thesis analyzed the changes in Augustine's views on grace while Chapter 2 focused on his ideas about free will.

In his earlier years, Augustine conceived of grace as a free gift of God to all human beings. Grace was treated more or less as the ability of reasoning, which was given to human beings as a gift to find the right path. Towards the end of the first period, which covers the few years before his elevation to bishop, Augustine started to think of grace as a response to explicit prayer. After becoming a bishop, Augustine radically changed his views on how grace is given. As God is omnipotent, human beings cannot even ask for grace or even will it. Therefore, God gives his grace to whomever he wants.

In this period, Augustine considers grace as the initiator of good. Later on, starting with the Pelagian Controversy, Augustine carried the role of Grace to the ultimate level. Grace was now considered to be of three types. The beginning of faith was thanks to God's grace. Yet, this was not considered enough for salvation. In order to do good, one had to get assistance grace; and, to keep on the right track, one had to get perseverance as God's grace. Augustine's concern with God's omnipotence changed his views from human as an active agent bestowed with grace of reasoning to human as a passive object that needs Grace to do any good.

Augustine's views on free choice of the will also underwent radical transformations. First, Augustine believed in the existence of free will no matter how much his ideas changed about it. The interactions of God's omnipotence, goodness, and justice forced Augustine to regard free will as an absolute necessity. First of all, God is omnipotent, which means that everything is the product of his power. This however, raises the problem of sin. Where does sin come from? Apparently, it cannot come from God as he is ultimately good. Therefore, there has to be an agent that produces sin and that is the free choice of the will. Second, free will has to exist because God is just. If free will did not exist, human beings would not be responsible for their actions. Therefore, choosing some people for salvation and leaving the rest for damnation for things beyond their control conflicts with God's justice. Hence, free will has to exist.

Augustine argued for the existence of free will throughout his entire life; yet, he had quite different views about its capabilities. In the early period, Augustine believed that human beings had power to will and do anything thanks to free will. As he became more concerned with God's omnipotence, Augustine started to think that free will is just

about willing but not action. Human beings can will to do good or bad but they have no power to realize their wills unless God assist them. In the last period of his life, Augustine had a completely radical view of free will. Human beings must have free will for the aforementioned reasons; however, they are not able to will or do any good unless God gives them grace.

Augustine's final views on God's grace and free will are both enigmatic and quite contradictory. God is omnipotent; therefore, human beings cannot will or do anything unless God gives them grace. Grace is completely contingent on God's will. No prayer or actions can attract God's grace unless God wants to bestow someone with grace. Nevertheless, free will must exist because God is omnipotent, ultimately good, and just. Because free will exists, human beings are responsible for their sins. As a result of Adam and Eve's sin and the snowballing bad habits developed by human beings over time, free will is too weak to will good. It always wills bad things and sins.

Clearly, Augustine's most recent views on God's grace and free will in the light of God's omnipotence put him in a position where he contradicts with God's justice. Human beings are not capable of even willing good, but they are responsible for their actions. This contradicts God's justice, as it cannot be just to hold someone responsible for things beyond his control. This is actually acknowledged by Augustine himself in his earlier periods of life. Additionally, weakening someone's free will so that they cannot will any good because their ancestors sinned and established bad habits cannot be just either.

To sum up, Augustine's concern with God's omnipotence caused him to magnify the role of God's grace and downplay human free will. This caused a serious conflict about God's justice. Augustine chose God's power over God's justice.

Bibliography

Augustine. *Admonition and Grace*. Translated John Courtney Murray. The Fathers Of the Church: A New Translation. Volume 4. Edited Ludwig Schopp, et al. New York: Cima Publishing, 1947.

_____. *Against Julian*. Translated Matthew A. Schumacher. The Fathers Of the Church: A New Translation. Volume 35. Edited Roy Joseph DeFerrari, et al. New York: Fathers of Church Inc., 1957.

_____. *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*. “Answer to Faustus A Manichean.” Translated Roland Teske, S.J. The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Volume 20. Edited Boniface Ramsey, et al. New York: New City Press, 2007.

_____. *Against Two Letters of Pelagians*. Translated Robert Ernest Wallis. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti – Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887.

_____. *Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians*. Translated Eric Plumer. Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

_____. *Confessions*. Translated F. J. Sheed. Confessions of Saint Augustine. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1943.

_____. *Confessions*. Translated Vernon J. Bourke. The Fathers of Church: A New Translation. Volume 21. Edited Ludwig Schopp, et al. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 1953.

_____. *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*. Translated Robert P. Russell. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Volume 1. Edited Ludwig Schopp, et al. New York: Cima Publishing, 1948.

_____. *Eighty-Three Different Questions*. Translated David L. Mosher. The Fathers of Church: A New Translation. Volume 70. Hermigild Dressler, et al. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977.

_____. *Faith, Hope, and Charity*. Translated Bernard M. Peebles. The Fathers Of the Church: A New Translation. Volume 4. Edited Ludwig Schopp, et al. New York: Cima Publishing, 1947.

_____. *Miscellany of Eighty-Three Questions*. Translated Boniface Ramsey. The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Responses to

Miscellaneous Questions. Volume 12. Edited Raymond Canning, et al. New York: New City Press, 2008.

_____. *Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician*. Translated Boniface Ramsey. The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Responses to Miscellaneous Questions. Volume 12. Edited Raymond Canning, et al. New York: New City Press, 2008.

_____. *On Grace and Free Choice*. Translated Peter King. Augustine: on the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2011.

_____. *On Grace and Free will*. Translated Peter Holmes. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887.

_____. *On the Gift of Perseverance*. Translated Robert Ernest Wallis. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887.

_____. *On the Grace of Christ, and On Original Sin*. Translated Peter Holmes. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887.

_____. *On Nature and Grace*. Translated Peter Holmes. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887.

_____. *On the Predestination of the Saints*. Translated Robert Ernest Wallis, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887..

_____. *On the Spirit and The Letter*. Translated Peter Holmes. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887.

_____. *On Two Souls, Against the Manicheans*. Translated Albert H. Newman. Translated Peter Holmes. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 4. Edited Philip Schaff. Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983.

- _____. *On Rebuke and Grace*. Translated Robert Ernest Wallis. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 5. Edited Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1887.
- _____. *Propositions From the Epistles to the Romans*. Translated Paula Fredriksen Landes. Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translation. Volume 23. Edited Robert L. Wilken and William R. Schoedel. California: Scholar Press, 1982.
- _____. *Reply to Faustus The Manichean*. Translated Rev. Richard Stothert. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings. Volume 4. Edited Philip Schaff. Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983.
- _____. *Soliloquies*. Translated by Thomas F. Gilligan. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Volume 1. Edited Ludwig Schopp, et al. New York: Cima Publishing, 1948.
- _____. *The Happy Life*. Translated Ludwig Schopp. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Volume 1. Edited Ludwig Schopp, et al. New York: Cima Publishing, 1948.
- _____. *The Problem of Free Choice*. Translated Dom Mark Pontifex. Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Volume 22. Edited Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1955.
- _____. *The Retractations*. Translated Mary Inez Bogan. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Volume 60. Edited Roy Joseph DeFerrari, et al. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968.
- _____. *The Way of Life of the Manicheans*. Translated Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation: Saint Augustine The Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life. Volume 56. Edited Roy Joseph DeFerrari, et al. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966.
- _____. *True Religion*. Translated Edmund Hill. The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Volume 8. Edited Boniface Ramsey, et al. New York: New City Press, 2005.

- BABCOCK, W.S. "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16.1. (1988): 28 – 55.
- BERTHOLD, F.JR. "Free will and Theodicy in Augustine: An Exposition and Critique." *Religious Studies* 17.4. (1981): 525 – 535.
- BOURKE, J.V. *The Essential Augustine*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1974.
- BROWN, P. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2000.
- BURNS J.P. *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*. Paris: Etudes Augustiennes. 1980.
- _____. "Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16.1. (1988): 9 – 27.
- CHAPPEL, T.D.J. *Aristotle and Augustine on Freedom: Two Theories of Freedom, Voluntary Action and Akrasia*. New York: St. Martin Press, 1995.
- CRESWELL D.R. *St. Augustine's Dilemma: Grace and Eternal Law in the Major Works of Augustine of Hippo*. New York: Peter Lang, 1997.
- DUPONT, A. *Preacher of Grace: A Critical Reappraisal of Augustine's Doctrine of Grace in his Sermones ad Populum on Liturgical Feasts and During the Donatist Controversy*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014.
- FERGUSON, J. *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study*. Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1956.
- FLESCHER, A.M. *Moral Evil*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013.
- HOLLINGWORTH, M. *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- RIST, J. M. "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination." *Journal of Theological Studies* 20.2. (1969): 420 – 447.
- ROGERS, A.K. "Augustine's Compatibilism." *Religious Studies* 40.4. (2004): 415 – 417.
- ROWE, L. W. "Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will." *The Review of Metaphysics* 18.2. (1964): 356 – 363.
- STARK, C. J. "The Pauline Influence on Augustine's Notion of the Will." *Vigiliae Christianae* 43.4. (1989): 345 – 360.