

WHAT ST AUGUSTINE AND A FIFTH CENTURY HERESY TEACH US ABOUT ORIGINAL SIN AND OUR NEED FOR GRACE

Many people today are unaware that their version of “Christianity” is actually just a popularized version of a 5th century heresy called “Pelagianism,” which discounts the reality of original sin, our need for grace, and places too much hope in human effort instead of the redemptive plan of Jesus Christ.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church's teaching on the transmission of original sin was articulated more precisely in the fifth century, especially under the impulse of St. Augustine's reflections against Pelagianism ... Pelagius held that man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God's grace, lead a morally good life; he thus reduced the influence of Adam's fault to bad example. CCC 406

The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil". Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals. CCC 407

As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called "concupiscence"). CCC 418

Original sin entails "captivity under the power of ... the devil".

AUGUSTINE AGAINST THE PELAGIANS

From The Pivotal Players by Bishop Robert Barron

Pelagius proposed an interpretation of Christian life that was, to many of his contemporaries and to many today, extremely attractive. To state it briefly, Pelagius held that moral perfection is something that human beings can achieve through the exercise of the will...

This can-do, optimistic theory ran counter to any idea of an “original sin,” which would render human beings incapable of achieving moral excellence through their own effort. And it proved so appealing that Pelagian “cells” began to appear---first in Rome and then throughout the empire---made up of disciples eager to spread their teacher’s message. It should come as no great surprise that Pelagianism, in an even more radical form, is alive and well today. Not only do we think we are capable of perfecting ourselves; we are convinced we can determine the meaning of our lives.

Augustine sensed in this seemingly attractive proposal... an assault on the very nature of Christianity. For if we are basically upright and just require some moral guidance, then we do not stand in need of a Savior. And in point of fact, on the Pelagian reading, Jesus is not a Savior at all, but rather a sort of ethical teacher, exhorting us to do our best. And if this is the case, then Christianity is a slightly modified version of all of the other programs of self-perfection on offer in the ancient world---and today. In their own ways, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca were urging human beings to realize their full potential through proper instruction and moral effort, just as philosophers, social theorists, psychologists, and self-help experts do in our context today. What Augustine saw with particular clarity is the biblical claim that there is something so fundamentally wrong with us, something so off-kilter and twisted, that we are incapable

Augustine saw with particular clarity the biblical claim that there is something so fundamentally wrong with us, something so off-kilter and twisted, that we are incapable of saving ourselves, of simply righting the ship through heroic effort. And he saw the implication---namely, that we require much more than a teacher or guide; we require a Savior.

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CATECHISM: MORTALLY WOUNDED BY SIN, WE NEED GOD'S GRACE TO GO TO HEAVEN

It is by grace that we are saved and again it is by grace that our works can bear fruit for eternal life. CCC 1697

All who die in God's grace... are indeed assured of their eternal salvation. CCC 1030

By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love. CCC 679

It is by grace that we are saved.

To heal the wounds of sin, man and woman need the help of the grace that God in his infinite mercy never refuses them. Without his help man and woman cannot achieve the union of their lives for which God created them "in the beginning." CCC 1608

The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the sanctifying or deifying grace received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification. CCC 1999

THIS IS WHY WE NEED THE CHURCH AND HER SACRAMENTS

The seven sacraments are the signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the head throughout the Church which is his Body. CCC 774

LIVING IN A STATE OF GRACE = LIFE IN THE SPIRIT = FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD = SALVATION

These are all different phrases that describe the same thing: our loving, life-giving relationship with Jesus. The saving grace that we need to overcome the mortal wound of Original Sin only comes through our relationship with Jesus Christ. This life-giving relationship takes flesh in the sacraments of the Church.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned." John 15: 5-6

Living in a state of grace describes one who is attached to Christ through the sacraments of the Church.

The heresy of Pelagianism tries to find salvation apart from the grace of Christ, the vine (*apart from me you can do nothing*). Living in a state of grace describes one

who is attached to Christ through the sacraments of the Church. But this is not a relationship of slavery, but rather a relationship of love, where we find our true joy in Christ!

LOVE IS LIKE A FORCE OF GRAVITY IN THE SOUL

From: Sober Intoxication of the Spirit, by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa

Love is like a force of gravity in the soul, drawing it toward the object of its desire, where it is sure of finding rest.

In this sense, love is a law, a commandment: It creates in Christians a dynamic that leads us to do all that God wants, spontaneously, without even having to think about it, because, by this time, we have made God's will ours and we love everything that God loves. Love adheres to the will of God in its essence before it is codified into law and written proscriptions. It attains, through the Spirit, the living and holy will of God.

However, it is also the most compelling law there is, because it impels us to do things that are so arduous that no written law could ever succeed in making us do them merely with the threat of punishment:

The lover flies, runs and rejoices; he is free and nothing can restrain him.... Love often knows no measure, but burns beyond measure. Love feels no burden, values no labors, would like to do more than it can do, without pleading impossibility, because it believes that it may and can do all things. In fact, it is ready to do anything, and it performs and effects many things, in which he who does not love faints and succumbs.

This is the way it happens when a young man and a young woman are in love. How much more so, then, if we are in love with God?