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Blessed Augustine “of the Graces”

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Abstract

The fundamental problem of understanding Augustine’s dogma of grace is that of the relationship between grace and predestination. Predestination is the direct consequence of grace sovereignty. In Blessed Augustine’s thinking, there is a privileged - we may say fundamental - relationship between free will and grace, and this relationship is based on the work of prayer. Therefore, when Blessed Augustine speaks or writes about grace, he understands (almost always) the prayer that called it and invoked grace, which means that in his doctrine, grace is not even completely free. Free will is called to work with grace through prayer. Affirming the primacy / pre-eminence / sovereignty of grace, Augustine insists on the importance of prayer that grace comes through and is maintained! The consciousness of its own fragility (including the will with its free will), prayer and hope exalted to God represents the right spiritual attitude proclaimed by Blessed Augustine.

Keywords:

grace, predestination, works, merits, faith, life, love, salvation

I. Relationship between grace and predestination

Augustine’s texts are not suitable for the interpretation that postulates the existence of two types of grace: the “efficient” grace - the particular grace that produces the will of good - and the “sufficient” grace - which inclines

(predisposes), urges and demands. This disjunction of graces does not belong to him, but it is a late modern Augustinian exegesis, as Jean Chéné argues, who is one of Augustine's authoritative translators¹.

The fundamental problem of understanding Augustine's dogma of grace is that of the relationship between grace and predestination. Predestination is the direct consequence of grace sovereignty. Augustine embodies his doctrine of predestination in consonance with the doctrine of grace by making the exegesis of St. Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans².

"In the first of these texts he discovered that, according to the Apostle, there are two kinds of called [men], those who are simply called, and those called *secundum propositum*. The latter are the chosen, and the predestined, whom God has known beforehand, that is, He has *distinguished* them by looking at them with predilection. And by an infallible divine plan these predestined are called to receive faith, correction and glorification *as free as the null received the being*"³.

The predestination to salvation is as free as the predestination of our creation from non-existence - this Augustinian thesis is found in the apologetic books against Julian⁴. This conviction was formed along a long-lasting correspondence in which Augustine and his companions found that the world around them was so fallen that it seemed a miracle to see someone starting on the path of salvation. Thus, before Augustine, Evodius, one of his ante-speakers, says that owing to the original sin, the free will was so wounded or vitiated that it only leads to perdition, unable to do good deeds:

"The free will has had the perfect effect on the first man, I want to say on Adam; but the world abusing the divine gift, this free

¹ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, Troisième série: La grâce, Aux moines d'Adrumète et de Provence, *De gratia et libero arbitrio & De correptione et gratia & De predestinatione sanctorum & de dono perseverantiae*, Texte de l'édition bénédictine, introduction, traduction et notes par Jean CHÉNÉ, PSS, et Jacques PINTARD, Desclée, De Brouwer, 1962, p. 11.

² Mostly Chapter VIII, 28-30 and Chapter IX, 9-21.

³ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, Troisième série, p. 19.

⁴ *PL* 44, 792, *Contra Iulianum*, lib. V, cap. IV, n. 14.

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will was wounded: there is now a free will in man, but it is wounded. (...) ... since it was vitiated, the free will only goes to perdition..."⁵.

II. The relationship between free will and grace is based on the work of prayer

Augustine could not have been unaffected by this since this was the trend of his times. It would seem there is a proto-Protestantism, an incipient Protestant attitude, but we see things from the past in this way because we lack prayer - the most important work of man. Or, in Augustine's writings, there is a privileged relationship, I say fundamental, between free will and grace, and this relationship is based on the work of prayer. Therefore, when Blessed Augustine speaks or writes about grace, he understands (almost always) the prayer that called it and invoked grace, which means that in his doctrine grace is not completely free! Here we have a synergistic relationship between prayer (will / freedom) and grace.

"Remember these so majestic words of the Great Apostle (II Peter 3, 14-16); and when you have the feeling that you do not understand, by expecting please believe in God's Scriptures that teach us at once the reality of human free will and the reality of divine grace: grace without which the free will cannot return to God nor progress in God. But pray at the same time to move from simple religious belief to understanding and wisdom"⁶.

⁵ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24... Lettre d'Evodius, évêque, à Valentin, abbé d'Adrumète: "Liberi arbitrii plenissimum effectum habuit homo primo creatus, Adam dico; sed ubi male usus est mundus divinum, sauciatum est ipsum liberum arbitrium. Est ergo in homine nunc liberum arbitrium, sed sauciatum. (...) Ex quo enim vitiatum est ipsud liberum arbitrium, ad pereundum sibi tantummodo sufficit..."

⁶ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 59-61, Première lettre à Valentin: „Cavete ergo quod tantus apostolus tam terribiliter dicit; et ubi sentitis non vos intellegere, interim credite divinis eloquiis, quia et liberum hominis est arbitrium et gratia Dei, sine cuius adiutorio liberum arbitrium nec converti potest ad Deum, nec proficere in Deum; et quod pie creditis, ut etiamsapienter intellegatis, orate. Et ad hoc ipsum enim, id est ut sapienter intellegaus, est utique liberum arbitrium”.

The grace of understanding the Scriptures and the grace of wisdom come through prayer: this is *Augustine's existential attitude*, which means we must always see in him the *grace directly linked to the work of prayer* (unlike innate gifts or gift).

The reproach of the Saviour at the Judgment would not be justified if we were not to claim the work of the call of light: "What does that mean then «I do not know you»? Something other than: «I did not create you as you are now!»"⁷. Man must continually demand the grace that helps the free will and thank when conveyed and is triumphant through it: "Thus, the victory by which we triumph over sin is nothing more than a gift from God who helps the free will in this confrontation"⁸.

The deeds of the body must be killed through the spirit, says Augustine, but man must never lose sight of the fact that the spirit of man is strong only within the Holy Spirit:

"But yet you must not therefore glory in man,—that is to say, in your own selves,—and not in the Lord, when you live not after the flesh, but through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh. For in order that they to whom the apostle addressed this language might not exalt themselves, thinking that they were themselves able of their own spirit to do such good works as these, and not by the Spirit of God, after saying to them, «If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live», he at once added, «For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God» (Rom 8, 14)"⁹.

Free will means here to let you be moved or led by the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is how the free will is called to work with grace and man to entrust his will to God.

Blessed Augustine condemns Pelagians they mixed nature with grace and claimed that our intelligence can be exalted by itself, by its innate powers:

⁷ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 69, Seconde lettre à Valentin: „Sed quid est: „Non vos novi”, nisi „tales vos ego non feci”?”

⁸ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 111, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, IV, 8: „Ergo et victoria qua peccatum vincitur, nihil aliud est quam donum Dei, in isto certamine adjuvantis liberum arbitrium”.

⁹ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 143, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, XI, 23.

“For this, too, the Pelagians have been bold enough to aver that grace is the nature in which we were created, so as to possess a rational mind, by which we are enabled to understand,—formed as we are in the image of God, so as to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth”¹⁰.

Free will is called to work with grace through prayer. By affirming the primacy / pre-eminence / sovereignty of grace, Augustine insists on the importance of prayer through which grace comes and is maintained! Thinking that they had all the innate gifts, the Pelagians no longer considered it necessary to pray, but only to “train”, to cultivate the gifts they already had “by the creative act”. This treaty on the collaboration of grace and free will makes the “Doctor of Grace” a Doctor of Prayer. If we keep this in mind when studying all his treaties and letters we might become more indulgent with his apologetic excesses and we will see differently the way his dogmatic conception was configured.

For Blessed Augustine the grace of God does not annihilate our freedom, but helps it:

“Wherefore the free choice of the human will we by no means destroy, when the Grace of God, by which the free choice itself is helped, we deny not with ungrateful pride, but rather set forth with grateful piety. For it is ours to will: but the will itself is both admonished that it may arise, and healed, that it may have power; and enlarged, that it may receive; and filled, that it may have. For were not we to will, certainly neither should we receive the things that are given, nor should we have. For who would have continence, (among the rest of the gifts of God to speak of this rather, of which I am speaking to you,) who, I say, would have continence, unless willing? Forasmuch as also no one would

¹⁰ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 147, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, XIII, 25: „Nam et hoc Pelagiani ausi sunt dicere, gratiam esse naturam, in qua sic creati sumus, ut habeamus mentem rationalem, qua intelligere valeamus, facti ad imaginem Dei, ut dominemur piscibus maris, et volucris coeli, et omnibus pecoribus quae repunt super terram”.

receive unless willing. But if you ask, Whose gift it is, that it can be by our will received and had? Listen to Scripture; yea, rather, because you know, recollect what you have read, Whereas I knew, says he, that no one can be continent, unless God give it, and this itself was of wisdom, to know whose gift it was (Eccl 8, 21)”¹¹.

III. “Our merits” must be attributed to grace

In his confrontation with Pelagius, Augustine quotes Prophet Jeremiah who had fought in his day with people having the same attitude of reckless confidence in themselves, and who had threatened them:

“«Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord» (Jeremiah 17, 5). Understand, my brethren, I pray you, this passage of the prophet. Because the prophet did not say, «Cursed is the man who has hope in his own self», it might seem to some that the passage «Cursed is the man who has hope in man» was spoken to prevent man having hope in any other man but himself. In order, therefore, to show that his admonition to man was not to have hope in himself, after saying «Cursed is the man who has hope in man», he immediately added «And maketh strong the flesh of his arm». He used the word «arm» to designate power in operation. By the term «flesh», however, must be understood human frailty”¹².

Augustine shows that, just as the prophet had condemned the people of his time in the name of God, the Pelagian heretics would be anathematized by the ecclesiastical synods of his time. To keep away from this terrible pride, Augustine says that people must have the Psalmist attitude: “Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!” (Ps.

¹¹ *De bono viduitatis*, Contra inimicos gratiae Christi propugnatio: XVII. 21, p. 280.

¹² *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 105-107, De gratia et libero arbitrio, IV, 6.

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26, 9). The consciousness of its own fragility (including the will with its free will), prayer and hope exalted to God represents the right spiritual attitude proclaimed by Blessed Augustine. Further, he says that our merits / deeds must be attributed to grace!

“But it is plain that when it has been given, also our good merits begin to be,—yet only by means of it; for, were that only to withdraw itself, man falls, not raised up, but precipitated by free will. Wherefore no man ought, even when he begins to possess good merits, to attribute them to himself, but to God, who is thus addressed by the Psalmist: «Be Thou my helper, forsake me not». By saying «Forsake me not» he shows that if he were to be forsaken, he is unable of himself to do any good thing”¹³.

Merits must be fully attributed to grace *for keeping humility!* – “lest any man should boast” (Eph 2, 9), quoting St. Ap. Paul. Keeping the consciousness of his own fragility, keeping humility, praying, fleeing from vain glory, putting hope only in God - all these virtues make up the saving ascetic and spiritual attitude and the intimate conviction of Blessed Augustine.

a. Faith comes through grace

There comes the question: how was the role of grace exaggerated and the predestination exacerbated; by what excess, by what dogmatic abuse the authentic sense of these virtues was lost? Because from the texts of Blessed Augustine we can come to the conclusion that faith also comes through grace, for free, and whoever receives the faith is an elected, and whoever does not receive it is lost:

“His last clause runs thus: «I have kept the faith». But he who says this is the same who declares in another passage, «I have obtained mercy that I might be faithful». He does not say «I obtained mercy because I was faithful» but «*in order that I might be faithful*» thus showing that even faith itself cannot be had without God’s mercy, and that it is the gift of God”¹⁴.

¹³ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 121, De gratia et libero arbitrio, VI, 13.

¹⁴ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 129, De gratia et libero arbitrio, VII, 17.

Augustine attempts here *to universalize the incomparable mystery of Paul's conversion!*

In the writings of the Doctor of Grace there are texts that condemn the Protestant concepts before they appeared: in the exegesis of St James Epistle, Augustine says that not every faith is worthless, because “the devils also believe, and tremble” (2, 19), “but faith which works by love” (Gal 5, 6). When quoting St Apostle Paul - the “Doctor of nations” (Doctor Gentium) - Augustine remarks that for him eternal life is itself a grace¹⁵.

b. Life is grace

Being asked, “How can we be worthy of Heaven if this is a gift?” Or “How do we deserve Heaven if this is the grace of God?” Augustine responds that even our merits or worthiness are gifts from God, because He said: “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15, 5). He also says that eternal life is “grace for grace”, or rather the ultimate divine gift as a reward for the work of the original gifts:

“It follows, then, dearly beloved, beyond all doubt, that as your good life is nothing else than God's grace, so also the eternal life which is the recompense of a good life is the grace of God; moreover it is given gratuitously, even as that is given gratuitously to which it is given. But that to which it is given is solely and simply grace; this therefore is also that which is given to it, because it is its reward;—grace is for grace, as if remuneration for righteousness; in order that it may be true, because it is true, that God “shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt 26, 27; Rom 2, 6)”¹⁶.

¹⁵ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 131, De gratia et libero arbitrio, VII, 18: „Sed quia et ipsa bona opera nobis ex Deo sunt, a quo nobis et fides est et dilectio, propterea idem ipse Doctor Gentium etiam ipsam vitam aeternam gratiam nuncupavit”.

¹⁶ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 135, De gratia et libero arbitrio VIII, 20: „Itaque, charissimi, si vita bona nostra nihil aliud est quam Dei gratia, sine dubio et vita aeterna, quae bonae vitae redditur, Dei gratia est: et ipsa enim gratis datur, quia gratis data est illa cui datur. Sed illa cui datur, tantummodo gratia est; haec autem quae illi datur quoniam praemium eius est, gratia est pro gratia, tanquam merces pro iustitia; ut verum sit, quoniam verum est, quia *reddet unicuique Deus secundum opera eius*”.

Blessed Augustine does not invent the term "grace for grace": he is very careful to be faithful to the biblical text: "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1, 16). His theological attitude is that of the deepest humility: mystical life is grace over the grace of the spiritual effort of asceticism.

Everything man does well must be ascribed to God. Whatever happens well, we must say that this is the grace of God. Here Blessed Augustine is in agreement with the Holy Fathers. Eternal life is the reward of good deeds – that only men of grace are capable of:

"Accordingly, even the life eternal, which is surely the wages of good works, is called a *gift* of God by the apostle. «For the wages of sin, he says, is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord» (Rom 6, 23). Now, wages for military service are paid as a just debit, not as a gift. Hence, he said «the wages of sin is death» to show that death was not an unmerited punishment for sin but a just debit. But a gift, unless it be gratuitous, is not grace. We are, therefore, to understand that even man's merited goods are gifts from God, and when life eternal is given through them, what else do we have but «grace upon grace returned»? Man was, therefore, made upright, and in such a fashion that he could either continue in that uprightness - though not without divine aid - or become perverted by his own choice. Whichever of these two man had chosen, God's will would be done, either by man or at least *concerning* him. Wherefore, since man chose to do his own will instead of God's, God's will *concerning* him was done; for, from the same mass of perdition *massa damnata* that flowed out of that common source, God maketh «one vessel for honorable, another for ignoble use»; the ones for honorable use through his mercy, the ones for ignoble use through his judgment; lest anyone glory in man, or-what is the same thing- in himself"¹⁷.

¹⁷ SAINT AUGUSTINE, *The Augustine Catechism, The Enchiridion on Faith Hope and Charity* (The Augustine Series), Paperback – September 1, 2008, p. 122.

c. Love is grace

For Blessed Augustine the divine grace gives love of the evangelical law:

“Wherefore, then, is it said, «Let us love one another, for love is of God» (I John 4, 7) unless it be as a precept to our free will, admonishing it to seek the gift of God? Now, this would be indeed a thoroughly fruitless admonition if the will did not previously receive some donation of love, which might seek to be enlarged so as to fulfil whatever command was laid upon it. When it is said, «Let us love one another» it is law; when it is said, «For love is of God» it is grace (...) Let no one, then, deceive you, my brethren, for we should not love God unless He first loved us. John again gives us the plainest proof of this when he says, «We love Him because He first loved us» (I John 4, 19). Grace makes us lovers of the law; but the law itself, without grace, makes us nothing but breakers of the law (*praevaricatores – bribed*)”¹⁸.

The love of what the divine commandment prescribes - given to us by divine grace - can master our freedom:

“Wherefore let not lust usurp our members, but let Continence claim them for herself; that they be weapons of righteousness unto God, that they be not weapons of unrighteousness unto sin; for thus sin shall not rule over us. For we are not under the Law, which indeed commands what is good yet gives it not: but we are under Grace, which, making us to love that which the Law commands, is able to rule over the free”¹⁹.

Only grace that makes us love the Law and its imperatives can reign over our freedom, says Augustine. So those who do not have the grace are somehow exempt from obedience, as well as from the responsibility of obedience to the Law.

Grace makes love possible, which makes chastity (or virginity) possible, the consciousness of the grace presence being a state of humility.

¹⁸ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 177, De gratia et libero arbitrio, XVIII, 37-38.

¹⁹ *De continentia, Apostolica tuba milites accendit in praelium*: III. 8, p. 38.

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Even though Augustine does not pronounce the word grace here, it means its presence within human virtues: “The guardian of virginity is therefore charity: but the guardian of this guardian is humility”²⁰.

d. Grace renews the will

For Blessed Augustine “grace does not suppress the human will, but it changes it from evil to good”²¹. These are the “regenerated” wills in God, or “reborn” for eternal life.

“And if this divine record be looked into carefully, it shows us that not only men’s good wills, which God Himself converts from bad ones, and, when converted by Him, directs to good actions and to eternal life, but also those which follow the world are so entirely at the disposal of God, that He turns them whithersoever He wills, and whensoever He wills,—to bestow kindness on some, and to heap punishment on others, as He Himself judges right by a counsel most secret to Himself, indeed, but beyond all doubt most righteous”²².

Outside the “regenerated” wills *in novam creaturam* there are “the vessels of God’s wrath” – which St. Apostle Paul spoke of (Rom 9, 22) – “fitted to destruction”. Maybe it was more accurate to write that God lets to tilt *saeculi creaturam* to perdition, and not that “He makes [Himself] them to incline”, as one might understand. The phrase should have been understood in the sense of the Scripture, which says that God has hardened the heart of Pharaoh, when it is obviously understood that God let it harden or allowed hardness, turning the Pharaoh’s evil insight into a chance for Israel to be opened a road without return.

²⁰ *De sancta virginitate*, LI 52, p. 216.

²¹ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 185, XX, 41.

²² *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 185 : „Quae Scriptura divina si diligenter inspiciatur, ostendit non solum bonas hominum voluntates quas ipse facit ex malis, et a se factas bonas in actus bonos et in aeternam dirigit vitam, verum etiam illas quae conservant saeculi creaturam, ita esse in Dei potestate, ut eas quo voluerit, quando voluerit, faciat inclinari, vel ad beneficia quibusdam praestanda, vel ad poenas quibusdam ingerendas, sicut ipse iudicat, occultissimo quidem iudicio, sed sine nulla dubitatione iustissimo.”

IV. “The dogma of sovereign grace”

But Augustine asserts that God is working inside the hearts of the people to move their will!

“God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills whithersoever He wills, whether to good deeds according to His mercy, or to evil after their own deserts; His own judgment being sometimes manifest, sometimes secret, but always righteous”²³.

Augustine quotes Apostle Paul (Rom 9, 33) when he speaks of the “secret providence of God,” whose judgments and paths are unfathomable, noting also the “overabundance of grace” where sin has multiplied (Rom 5, 20), and insisting on the “mysterious” character of divine judgment. He has only two certainties: the existence of God’s Justice and Mercy. The final conclusion of the treaty is that each of us must pray to understand the message of the book, each of us must ask God for wisdom: “Re-read this book with insistence, and if you understand thank God; when you do not understand, pray for understanding, for God will give you understanding”²⁴.

The book “De correptione et gratia”, which constitutes Augustine’s second response to the monks of Adrumet after “De gratia et libero arbitrio”, starts from the fundamental objection of a monk: “If God is the One who gives us the desire to do good, then we must not oppress someone for not obeying the commandments of God: it is enough to pray for him so that he will fulfil them”²⁵. The question of Augustine and of the monks to whom he first answered is if one can be reproached the fact that he does not obey God’s commandments: whether God would be “guilty” of not planting in him the power to will and to accomplish good.

“Everything in us is a gift from God, Augustine said, and this means also the final perseverance”²⁶.

²³ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 197, De gratia et libero arbitrio, XXI, 43.

²⁴ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 205, De gratia et libero arbitrio, XXIV, 46.

²⁵ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 12, XII., Les révisions, Desclée, De Brouwer et Cie, Paris 1950, p. 559, Retractationum Liber II, cap LXVII (XCIV): „Rursus ad eosdem scripsi alterum librum, quem De correptione et gratia prae-notavi, cum mihi nuntiatum esset dixisse ibi quemdam, neminem corripiendum si Dei praecepta non facit, sed pro illo ut faciat tantummodo orandum”.

²⁶ PL 45, 1027, *De dono perseverantiae*, cap. XXI, n. 57.

The infallible sovereignty of divine action over human will had been described in such strong terms that Augustine was basically "summoned" to give a second treaty: "On reproach and grace". The central theme of the treaty "De correptione et gratia" consists in demonstrating that despite the "dogma of sovereign grace"²⁷ we can and we are even forced not only to prescribe well and to exert its practice, but also to admonish and correct those who do not fulfil it. The omnipotence of grace does not exclude reproof - Augustine tells us - which means that the previous dogmatic error, according to which God would work in the hearts of the people the movement of their will, some being destined to salvation and others to condemnation, is corrected in the ascetic-monastic experience. Augustine is aware that his earlier writings had scandalized some monks who could not reasonably understand the discretionary attitude God was seen. All good is to be given to God, but how do we leave to Him the hardening of our hearts?

V. Is grace universally granted or to the predestined?

If those who after being released from sin, re-fall in sins and passions, this means they only received the grace of regeneration and did not receive the grace of perseverance [for good]. For Augustine and his followers the question: why did they only receive the first grace and did not receive the second one? represents a dreadful mystery. But for the epigones, for those with rebellious soul, it represents a permanent occasion of rebellion against such a divine order and, ultimately, against God Himself.

After affirming that "at the beginning of the human race God made man right, because there is no injustice in God", and that "the first degeneration (or depravity) of man by which we do not obey God comes from man", Augustine declares that we must reproach this state of fact even if the "original" sin is called "the sin of another": "Those original sins, indeed, are said to be the sins of others, because individuals derived them from their parents; but they are not unreasonably said to be our own also, because in that one, as the apostle says, all have sinned (Rom. 5: 12)"²⁸. Without

²⁷ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24..., p. 251.

²⁸ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 285, *De correptione et gratia*, VI, 9: „Peccata quidem ista originalia ideo dicuntur aliena, quod ea singuli de parentibus trahunt: sed non sine

clarifying how the unborn could have sinned so as to be reproached, Augustine still shows the practical use of the reproach we all have to do for the sin of another:

“Let, then, the damnable source be rebuked, that from the mortification of rebuke may spring the will of regeneration — if, indeed, he who is rebuked is a child of promise — in order that, by the noise of the rebuke sounding and lashing from without, God may by His hidden inspiration work in him from within to will also”²⁹.

Very important: outward rebuke leads to divine inner inspiration, but only if the rebuke is predestined to salvation, that is, if it is a son of promise! Augustine seems to realize the scandal raised by the dogma of the omnipotence of grace, and the manner he corrects it points out that he wants the monastic ascetic practice to remain the same even after the monks accepted the sovereign grace. He turns things back so that the new “dogma” he is launching leaves the monastic practice absolutely unchanged.

Augustine oscillates between the tendency to consider grace is universally granted or is granted only to the predestined. Augustine’s thinking is not contradictory, but works here in two stages: first he states that grace is given to all who pray. Then he says that those who pray are predestined. If we think that the difference between nature and grace, and between the innate gift and inspiration, is the existence or non-existence of prayer, the nature being initially given under any circumstances, and the grace coming only after prayer, we understand why Blessed Augustine must be given not the title “Doctor of Grace” but “Doctor of Prayer”. That “everyone” to whom the universal grace is granted is restricted to those who practice prayer. And how do we recognize those predestined for salvation? - They are the ones who practice prayer. They are the same “chosen” by grace. Augustine cites from the writings of Saint Cyprian of

causa dicuntur et nostra, quia in illo uno omnes, sicut dicit Apostolus, peccaverunt”.

²⁹ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24, p. 285 : „Corripiatur ergo origo condemnabilis, ut ex dolore correptionis voluntas regenerationis oriatur: si tamen qui corripitur filius est promissionis, ut streptu correctionis forinsecus insonante ac flagellante, Deus in illo intrinsecus occulta inspiratione operetur et velle”.

Carthage on the Prayer of the Lord precisely to directly connect prayer to granting the grace of perseverance:

“After this we say: ‘Hallowed be thy name,’ not because we wish for God that He be hallowed by our prayers, but because we seek from the Lord that His name be hallowed in us. Moreover, by whom is God hallowed who himself hallows? But because He Himself said: ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy,’ (Lev 19, 2), we petition and ask for this, that we who have been sanctified in baptism may persevere in what we have begun”³⁰.

Augustine’s conclusion lies in prolonging Saint Cyprian’s words:

“Behold the most glorious martyr is of this opinion, that what in these words Christ’s faithful people are daily asking is, that they may persevere in that which they have begun to be. And no one need doubt, but that whosoever prays from the Lord that he may persevere in good, confesses thereby that such perseverance is His gift”³¹.

The gift of perseverance is therefore given to the one who prays! There is a prayer in Confessions that states the primacy of prayer on grace: *Domine, da quod jubes et jube quod vis* – “Lord, let me do what You command me, and then command me what You want!” (Chap. I).

³⁰ ST. CYPRIAN, *De Oratione dominica*, XII, PL 4, 526-527.

³¹ *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 24..., p. 293, De correptione et gratia VI, 10.