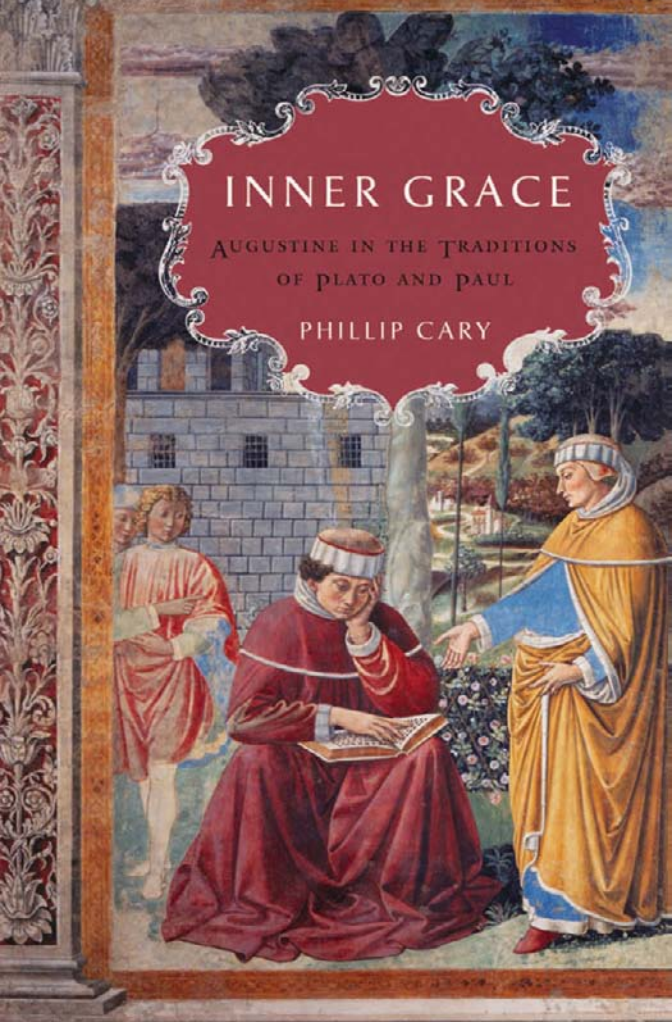
INNER GRACE
AUGUSTINE IN THE TRADITIONS OF PLATO AND PAUL
PHILLIP CARY

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Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul

PHILLIP CARY

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My thanks to Jack Doody
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Preface

This book is the second in a series of three, all of which concern the inner and the outer in Augustine. The first, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist,* investigates the origins of inwardness or interiority (and by the way, I make no distinction between "inner," "inward," "internal," and "interior") and particularly of the new and distinctively Augustinian concept of a private inner space of the self, an inner world into which we may enter to look for what is higher and more divine than ourselves. In addition to its interest for the history of psychology, the Augustinian concept of inner self is of great importance in theology because it allows us to conceive of the divine Other as present within the self—acting, helping, speaking, and teaching inside us. This sets the stage for Augustine's resolutely inward conception of divine grace, which is the topic of the present book.

The inwardness of grace in turn brings into focus what is at issue in the concept of sacraments as *external* means of grace, which is a key topic of investigation in the third book of the series, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Theology*. That book will follow closely on the heels of this one, which is why so many detailed references to it are found in the footnotes here. It argues that for Augustine neither words nor sacraments can convey to us a divine gift or grace, precisely because they are external. Augustine has much to say about how external things may serve as signs of what is inward or divine, but in contrast to later medieval theologians he does

not think such signs can be an efficacious means of conferring what they signify. The reason why parallels Augustine's explanation of why words can signify and express what lies within the soul but cannot convey or show it to other persons. For in fact (as Augustine argues, startlingly and explicitly, in his treatise *On the Teacher*) we do not learn anything from words. Thus both words and sacraments are powerless to convey what they signify. This powerlessness is built into Augustine's theory of signs, or semiotics, because it is a necessary consequence of the way he conceives the relation between inner and outer. Understanding this allows us to put disagreements between Catholics and Protestants about word and sacrament into proper perspective. This has been the goal of my writing on Augustine from the beginning, which is why the last volume contains the materials that I worked on first—almost fifteen years ago now.

The concern of the present book is with the concept of grace itself, and what difference it makes that for Augustine grace is essentially inward. Whereas concepts of grace are an inevitable part of Christianity, the notion that grace is inner, a kind of divine help bestowed inwardly on the soul, is not. I argue here that the inwardness of Augustine's concept of grace, like Augustinian inwardness in general, has to be understood against the background of his Platonism. This has a wider significance beyond the ongoing scholarly investigation of the nature of Augustine's debts to Platonism, because Augustine's Platonist inwardness is closely related to what is both lovely and problematic about his concept of grace.

To understand this concept, I tell a story. As in my previous book, it is a story about the way Augustine's thought develops through the course of his inquiries over many years, about how his concepts took shape as they helped him solve philosophical and theological problems but also inevitably led to new problems, which further shaped the concepts he was using. (Since the story is complex, involving many twists and turns and changes of mind, I have, as before, included a summary at the beginning of each chapter, and I have also included in the appendix a "Basic Narrative" of the development of Augustine's thought on the psychology of grace in the anti-Pelagian writings.) To bring out the point of the story, it might help if I say something about what I myself find both lovely and problematic in Augustine's doctrine of grace. Different readers have different problems with Augustine as well as different enthusiasms, and my problems and enthusiasms may not be the same as yours. So letting you know where I stand on a few theological issues up front ought to make the rest of the book a bit more accessible.

First of all, I follow Augustine in the belief that grace never undermines free will. What undermines free will is not grace but sin, and by combating sin

grace is the ally of every form of human freedom worth the name. This is one of the many lovely things about the Augustinian doctrine of grace: we can pray for God to change our will, strengthening it in all goodness—and when we get what we pray for, that enhances our freedom rather than undermines it. It seems to me this is just how Christian prayer, in one of its many forms, works. Christians are constantly asking God to change our hearts, to turn our will in new directions, to give us new delight and cause us to love as we ought. Praying this way and getting what we pray for is what I call, in chapter 4, the experiential matrix of Augustine's doctrine of grace. People who pray like this will normally experience grace and free will as compatible with each other, as friends and collaborators rather than enemies or competitors.

But the compatibility of grace and free will goes yet deeper. For even Augustine's doctrine of prevenient grace—the grace that comes before our prayers and makes them possible—relies on a kind of compatibilism about the relation of grace and free will, which in turn is founded on a fundamental conviction about the compatibility of divine and human action that is rather unfamiliar to modern thought. To use the terms that Thomas Aquinas made standard in the tradition (terms used also by Protestants in documents like the Westminster Confession) God's activity as first cause does not undermine secondary causes such as our free will, but rather creates and establishes them. So if the Creator of our free will chooses that we shall freely choose X rather than Y, then that is what we do indeed freely choose. God's sovereignty over our free wills does not undermine our free wills.

Many people find this idea profoundly objectionable, but I do not. That is something to reckon with as you read these pages. The notion that God can choose how we shall *freely* choose seems to me a necessary constituent in any sound Christian doctrine of divine power, and is accordingly shared by theologians as diverse as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. The objections commonly raised against it today seem to me to rest on a characteristically modern failure to understand the distinctiveness of divine causality, thinking of God's power as if it were somehow in competition with ours—so that the unlimited exercise of divine power would undermine the exercise of creaturely power. I think this is fundamentally impossible: the activity of the Creator inherently gives being and power to his creatures, as a novelist inherently gives being and power to her characters—the difference being, of course, that when God creates characters they are real. What never has to happen is for God to limit his power in order to make room for his creatures to exert real power. This is not a zero-sum game. The exercise of divine power creates and sustains all human powers, and the only way God could have limited the exercise of his power with regard to us would have been by choosing not to give us existence.

This does not mean I find nothing to object to in Augustine's doctrine of grace. But my objections are not about divine power or even predestination (if God can choose how we freely choose, then it does not make any difference if he does so from all eternity) but about the justice of the choices that, according to Augustine, God actually makes. In Augustine's treatment of divine choice (his doctrine of *election*, as the tradition has come to call it, using the Latin word for "choice") two lovely ideas combine and turn ugly: the biblical teaching that God has a chosen people and the concept of grace as a gift that causes us to delight in the good. Conceived within the experiential matrix of an individual person's faith, grace as an inner gift of delight is lovely; the problem comes when you look outside your individual experience and consider other people. Then you have to ask: why do some people receive grace rather than others? What makes the difference? Since no one can deserve the gift of grace, as is especially clear in the case of prevenient grace, you cannot explain the difference by pointing out any difference in what various human beings deserve, nor indeed by pointing out any difference among human beings at all. The only possible cause of the difference—which amounts to the ultimate difference between human beings, the difference between salvation and damnation—is the inscrutable choice of God, divine election in the distinctively Augustinian sense inherited by Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. God has good reasons for choosing to give grace to some people rather than others, Augustine insists—for God always chooses wisely, not arbitrarily—but we cannot possibly know what these reasons are. Thus the divine choice is inscrutable, which means it is also terrifying—because it concerns which of us are to be damned forever. Perhaps worse, it concerns which of the people we love and pray for are to be damned forever.

And here is where the issue of justice comes in. Augustine argues that in granting grace to some undeserving sinners rather than others, God treats them unequally but not unjustly: the damned get no worse than they deserve, while the saved get undeserved mercy—so neither are treated unjustly. I am among the many theologians who do not buy this argument. Unequal treatment is a thing to rejoice in if it means some are treated more graciously than others (for why should we who receive grace be envious if others are treated even more graciously, as Jesus asks us in the wonderful parable in Matt. 20:1–16) but not if the difference is between grace and no grace, salvation and damnation.

At first I thought the root of this problem must be a kind of mismatch between Augustine's Platonist inwardness and the biblical notion of divine choice. When he first worked out his concept of grace, Augustine was thinking about the inward relation of the soul and God, not the question of why one soul

receives grace rather than another. The idea that God is the inner source of grace for the soul is lovely; the idea that God is the source of the difference between the saved and the damned is terrifying. What Augustine's Platonism had not prepared him for is a God who makes irreducible choices, not simply applying the same standard of judgment equally to all but differentiating some people from others on the basis of nothing but his gracious love. In Platonism God is like a sun shining inwardly upon all souls alike, so that only our own different degrees of inner darkness, opacity, and aversion to the light make a moral difference between one person and the next. But in the Bible, God chooses one person rather than another out of sheer unmerited love, like a father who has a favorite son. It is not obvious how these two conceptions of grace can be reconciled, and certainly a pagan Platonist like Plotinus would never accept the notion of the First Principle of the universe making *choices*. Choices are about particulars, and to choose to love one particular person rather than another—especially when there is no difference of merit between them—is to be a person in a far too anthropomorphic sense for Plotinus to accept.

What I came to see later is that there is also a problem with the earlier Christian tradition's understanding of God's choice, which Augustine inherits. Augustine assumes that God chooses one person rather than another for salvation, but the biblical doctrine of election always has God choosing one person for the blessing of others. The God of Israel does indeed have a favorite son, but as Karl Barth reminded us he is Jesus Christ, chosen for the salvation of the whole world. So the conceptual structure of the biblical doctrine of election is not simply that one is chosen *instead of* others, but that one is chosen *for the sake of* others.

I do not suppose Christian theologians will be in a good position to understand this until it is unmistakably clear to us that the same structure governs the biblical view of the relation of Jew and Gentile. Rather than regarding themselves as chosen in place of Israel, Gentile Christians should rejoice and thank God that the Jews are and remain, through God's faithfulness, the chosen people, the elect of God for the blessing of all nations. Once the doctrine of election is seen through the lens of this biblical rejoicing and thanksgiving, we will no longer find it terrifying that God chooses some rather than others for his own inscrutable reasons—for when we see that our salvation comes to us only through God's chosen ones, we will no longer be frightened or offended at being other than the elect. The inscrutability of divine election is not the inscrutable horror of a predestined damnation, but the inscrutable glory of God's choosing that the Gospel will be the particular story that it is, with Israel and Christ as its central characters and the rest of us reaping the benefits.

I still think there is a kind of mismatch between Platonist inwardness and biblical election, but it is different from what I thought at first—more deeply related, it turns out, to the theme of external means of grace, which is the subject of my next book. We find the grace and blessing of God only outside ourselves, in other creatures who are different from us and not found within our souls: Gentiles will only find it in a Jew, Jesus Christ in the flesh, and (according to Paul in Romans 11) the Jews will only find it together with the Gentiles. Hence whether Jew or Gentile, the election of God requires us to find grace by looking outside ourselves, in a kind of outward turn.

There is hardly a blessing worth having that does not come to us from outside, through others. The benefits of scholarship are no exception. It was a great blessing to me when I found myself for the first time in a self-consciously Augustinian community of scholars at Villanova University in the Core Humanities Program assembled by Jack Doody. I cannot say how much I owe to these colleagues, all starting out together and teaching one another what it meant to be teachers and scholars. But I will always be grateful for Margaret Connolly, Abigail Firey, Deborah Romanick-Baldwin, Felix Asiedu, Kevin Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth. Not all of them are Augustine scholars, but I could hardly have learned to think well about Augustine without them.

A Note on Quotations and Citations

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from primary texts are my own, as are all translations from secondary literature unless an English language edition is given in the bibliography. Italics in quotations are mine, introduced not for the sake of emphasis but simply to highlight the part of the quotation that is most important in my exegesis. Citations from ancient texts usually omit the chapter number where redundant: for example, *Confessions*, book 7, chapter 10, paragraph number 16 is cited "*Conf.* 7:16," not "*Conf.* 7:10.16." However, I have included the chapter number in citations of texts where the standard English translation has only chapter rather than paragraph numbers, as, for example, in Augustine's treatise *On the Grace of the New Testament* (= Ep. 140).

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Inner Grace

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Introduction

Although the concept of grace is essential to Christianity, it will not do to treat it as uniquely or distinctively Christian, as if it were something no other religion or philosophy would think of, like Christology. Every religion expects its deities to be gracious, and the same is true of the deeply religious philosophy known as Platonism, which calls its most high God by the name of the Good. For Plotinus, the greatest of the Platonists Augustine studied, the Good is the inner source of all good and being, inspiring the soul's ecstatic love and longing for an ultimate happiness and wholeness. Augustine does not disagree: he conceives grace as the fundamental form of our inner participation in the Good. His most striking divergence from Plotinus on the issue of grace concerns how God chooses that some souls shall receive this gift of participation rather than others—a kind of selectivity that is quite foreign to Plotinus's conception of the Good.

Of course Augustine's doctrine of grace has roots outside of Platonism as well. The aim of this book is to show how it was formed from an epochal synthesis of Platonism and Paul, not as a departure from Augustine's Christian Platonism but as one of its most important and lasting accomplishments. The first three chapters in the book focus on Augustine's relations to Platonism, Paul, and Pelagius, respectively, following the chronological order in which Augustine had his decisive encounter with each. Pelagius comes last, because the fundamental convictions and conceptual structure of

Augustine's theology were established well before the beginning of the Pelagian controversy—though the arguments Augustine made in the course of the controversy gave his doctrine of grace its distinctive emphases and made it the very particular legacy that it is. Paul is at the heart of the exposition, because it was while wrestling with Paul that Augustine developed his distinctive convictions about grace. But Platonism comes first, because Augustine's Platonist ontological and epistemological commitments (on such matters as the immutability of God, the sensible/intelligible distinction, and the priority of inner to outer) were already in place by the time of his first sustained encounters with Paul, so that his Pauline convictions about grace and human nature were made to fit into an overarching Platonist framework. When the fit turned out to be imperfect, the result was a set of pastoral problems that are an integral part of Augustine's enduring legacy to the West and are examined in the final chapter.

Since readers who would like an overview of the story this book has to tell can read the summaries preceding each chapter, the most useful thing left for this introduction to do is to say a little more about the general issue of Augustine's Platonism, which is a perennially controversial topic. It will be helpful for readers to know that I am among those scholars who think Augustine is very deeply Platonist indeed. As a result, I avoid several strategies of interpretation that serve mainly to minimize the appearance of Augustine's Platonism, which are so common in modern writing on Augustine that some readers may be slightly confused by not finding them in this book. So let me mention these strategies, the absence of which contributes so much to the shape of what is to come. Oftentimes they are combined with an account of the development of Augustine's thought that portrays him as starting out too Platonist for our comfort but becoming more Christian as he goes—another story that is quite different from the story I am telling here.

One strategy is to portray Augustine discovering the necessity of faith as a deeper and more inward relation to God than intellectual understanding. This is exactly the opposite of what Augustine actually thinks. *Intellectus* in Augustine is the deepest understanding, the kind of insight that makes you shout, "Aha! Now I see it!" when you perceive something eternally true and understand it for the first time. Augustine thinks this is what our souls were made for, and eternal happiness is what happens when this kind of insight embraces the whole of eternal Truth and the "aha!" moment expands to become our whole mode of being forever. Faith, by contrast, means trusting in the word of an external authority, which is the best we can do when we do not yet see and experience the truth for ourselves. The fact that faith is less than, lower than,

and preliminary to understanding is essential to Augustine's view of the meaning of life.

Another strategy is to contrast intellect and love, arguing that Augustine ends up emphasizing the latter. This strategy is particularly attractive in modernity, which has largely jettisoned the Platonist notion of *intellectus* (as for instance when Kant insists that human beings have no faculty of intellectual intuition). The activity of the intellect is thereby often reduced to ratiocination, a discursive reason without vision or experience or intuition, cold and calculating, all head and no heart. But this split between intellect and love is entirely foreign to Augustine, for whom intellect is fundamentally intuitive (from Latin *intuitus,* a seeing or beholding), the deepest experience we can possibly have, and the substance of the happiness everyone loves and longs for. Our intellect takes joy in seeing the Truth, and this is the deepest love of our hearts. To separate love from intellect, heart from head, is a mistake we should guard against, but it is our kind of mistake, not Augustine's.

Finally, Augustine's doctrine of grace is often said to replace his Platonist conviction that happiness can be achieved by our own unaided efforts. But no Platonist ever held such a conviction. Divine grace is built into the very structure of Platonism, in which all good is a participation in a higher Good, as Augustine himself shows us.[1] Hence for a Platonist, there is no such thing as the mind's unaided efforts or the autonomy of free will. That would make no more sense than the eye's autonomy from the light or its unaided efforts to see in the dark. What happens in the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace, rather, is that the inner help needed by our intellect to understand turns out (as Augustine investigates the matter) to be needed also by our will to love what we do not yet understand and even (eventually) to have faith in it. Our need for grace turns out to be more extensive than he realized at first. But this does not make for any fundamental reorientation in Augustine's theology. The most important shift in his thought has to do not with our need for inner grace but our humiliating need for external authority.[2]

Since I am not a Platonist myself, I have my concerns about Augustine's Platonism. Yet the aim of this book is not to prove Augustine is a Platonist, as if that were some sort of crime. Rather, I want to get clear on the extent of Augustine's Platonism precisely so we all can be judicious in assessing his use of it, which includes joining with him in learning from Plato and the Platonists on the many occasions when they get things right. What will make this book seem harsh to some admirers of Augustine is that I never try to make Augustine look more Christian by making him look less Platonist. I keep highlighting

Augustine's Platonism because I don't believe we will understand what is lovely and powerful about Augustine's Christianity until we see quite clearly the extent of his Platonism, appreciating when the one assists the other as well as when the two do not make a good fit. Precisely such appreciation will free us to form our own judgments about when to make his thinking our own and when to seek instruction elsewhere.

I

Platonist Grace

Inner Help to Love

Augustine's doctrine of grace is not a turn away from his Platonism. It is situated within a set of Platonist convictions that can be traced from the beginning of his career: about happiness as the goal of human life, wisdom (i.e., intellectual vision of the Truth) as the essence of happiness, and virtue as the path to wisdom. For a Platonist, ethical virtue involves purification from attachment to lower (external, sensible, temporal) things and a conversion to higher (inner, intelligible, eternal) things. This means that the path to true happiness is rightly-directed love, delighting above all in the Beauty of the divine. Hence true freedom of will consists not in autonomy from God but in rational participation in divine Law. Grace assists us on the road of moral progress by helping the will make the crucial transition from a slavish obedience out of fear to an inner delight in God that is much like falling in love. (We should resist Augustine's very influential tendency to associate slavish fear with the Jews and love with something more spiritual and Platonistic.) Augustine presents Christian faith as something very much like "Platonism for the masses." The development of his doctrine of grace means that our dependence on an inward divine help, which any Platonist regards as necessary for the achievement of ultimate intellectual vision, gradually expands "outward" to the achievement of ethical love and even Christian faith. The core meaning of grace for Augustine is determined not by its negative function of offering an alternative to merit but by its positive role of helping the human will, conceived in Platonist terms as finding its fulfillment in love of eternal Truth.

The development of Augustine's doctrine of grace does not take a trajectory from Augustine's early Platonism to something more Christian but belongs within the ongoing development of his Christian Platonism. Indeed the phrase "Augustine's early Platonism" is a misleading characterization of his starting point, for his earliest extant writings, the philosophical dialogues composed at Cassiciacum beginning late in 386, move on a conceptual landscape defined not by Platonism but by the Hellenistic schools, especially the Stoics and the Academics, whose teachings were conveyed to him mainly by Cicero.[1] In these works he is not yet thinking quite like a Platonist, but rather like a Ciceronian who is eagerly learning Platonism. For the Neoplatonist philosophy he has recently encountered promises a clearer view of the divine Wisdom that Cicero first taught him to love[2]—a Wisdom that turns out to be none other than Christ, in whose name Augustine is preparing to be baptized the next Easter. So Platonism as true philosophy is none other than the love of true Wisdom,[3] which (unbeknownst to the pagan Platonists) is the divine person of Christ. From this starting point, both Augustine's Platonism and his Christianity grow in sophistication and depth, mutually interacting—his Platonism always submitting to the authority of Christian teaching, but his interpretation of Christian teaching always informed by his Platonism.

Wisdom and Virtue

Grace and wisdom are closely related topics in Augustine, as are ethics and epistemology, because happiness is a matter of the intellect.[4] The connection is a bit of a shock to modern sensibilities, but Augustine cannot be understood without it. For an ancient Platonist intellect is not all about logic, proof, and calculation but is aimed at the soul's highest joy and ultimate vision, which medieval theologians conceived as supernatural and modern writers typically describe as mystical. Intellectual understanding is our natural connection with the divine—our innate ability to see the eternal Truth, which is what we most deeply long for—and therefore intellect is the locus of our true happiness. Ethics, and therefore grace, are about how we arrive at this ultimate good of the intellect.

This conviction gives Platonism its particular place on the map of ancient ethical thought, which is all about happiness, understood as the intrinsic and necessary goal (*telos*) of human life. The great philosophical debate was about what happiness really is.[5] The term itself (*eudaimonia* in Greek, but *beata vita*—literally "happy life"—in Cicero and Augustine's Latin) has a much less determinate meaning than our word "happiness," which is why it could mutate

in medieval usage into "blessedness" or "bliss" (*beatitudo*). It meant something like ultimate human fulfillment, the deepest and most genuine human flourishing—whatever that might be. We all want to flourish; the disagreement is about what real flourishing consists in. So the ancient ethical question about the nature of happiness was more like asking, "what is true success in life?" than like asking, "how does it feel to be happy?" Indeed "happiness," in the context of ancient philosophy, did not have to be a feeling at all. Hence contrary to the implications of the modern English word, it was not a foregone conclusion among the ancients that happiness meant feeling good. Some philosophers did indeed draw that conclusion, but they faced intense criticism from those who believed there had to be more to human fulfillment than how we feel. The position that happiness is essentially a good feeling has been given the technical name "hedonism," not because the philosophers who espoused it lived lives of wild dissipation (the most important hedonists, the Epicureans, did not) but because the Greek term *hedonē*, usually translated "pleasure," is broad enough to cover any good feeling.

Hedonist ethics had absolutely no attraction for Augustine.[6] He always belonged to a philosophical tradition described by Cicero as the common teaching of Academics, Peripatetics, and Stoics, which identified happiness not with a feeling but with wisdom. There were disagreements between these schools, but all of them inevitably saw a connection between ethics and epistemology, because ancient ethics aimed at happiness and ancient epistemology aimed at wisdom, and for these three schools the happy life *was* the life of wisdom.[7] Within this common philosophical tradition (as Cicero and Augustine understood it), the question about the relation between ethics and epistemology could be framed as a question about the relation between virtue and wisdom. The Stoic position, with which Cicero and Augustine both disagree, is that the two are coextensive: not only are all wise people necessarily virtuous, but all virtuous people are necessarily wise. This was a radical position, for while all parties to the debate agreed that wicked people cannot be truly wise (clever, yes, but not wise), the Stoics added the converse proposition, that people who have not attained true wisdom cannot be virtuous. Like other radical Stoic positions, this had counterintuitive implications. Since for the Stoics, the wise man is a paragon of human perfection and faultless in his conduct of life, the implications are that only moral perfection is real virtue, that the ethical life is not a matter of degree, and that there is no such thing as growth in virtue.[8] Everyone who falls short of complete wisdom is a vicious fool. Thus the Stoics could not say it is virtuous to seek wisdom, because true virtue (like true happiness) belongs only to those who have already attained wisdom.[9]

Platonism offered, by contrast, a path of moral progress or growth in virtue leading to the wisdom of intellectual vision, which affords us ultimate beatitude.[10] Speaking in a Socratic mode, like the Hellenistic Academics, one might call this path by the name of inquiry (*skepsis*). Or speaking in the "Platonist" mode of Plato's middle dialogues, such as *Phaedrus* and *Symposium,* one might call it love (*erōs*). Or speaking in a Christian Platonist mode, one might call it by the name of Christ, alluding to the first passage of Paul to play an important role in Augustine's thought, where Christ is identified as both the Virtue and the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).[11] Interpreted in Platonist terms this means that Christ is, in his divine nature, the eternal Form or essence of both Virtue and Wisdom, which makes possible all virtue and wisdom in us. Quite apart from the Incarnation, he is both the deep inner destination of human life (the happiness of wisdom) and the inward power or virtue that moves us along in our journey.

Conversion and Purification

Augustine's doctrine of grace develops within the framework of an increasingly complex articulation of the nature of this journey and the road it follows. To see what resources the Platonist tradition offers him for this purpose, consider Plato's Allegory of the Cave, where ethics is implicit in epistemology. The epistemic journey is up out of the darkness of sensible things into the light of intelligibility, and the ethical goal, which is to say ultimate human happiness, is to enjoy what we see instead of being blinded by it. But that means the epistemological journey is also an ethical one, a journey in which the mind must be purified in order to see God, as the pagan Platonist Fonteius of Carthage put it.[12] The journey begins with liberation and conversion, as souls are first *freed* from the bonds that attached them to the shadowy world of sensible things in the cave and then *turned* toward the intelligible light above.[13] This turning of the soul is conversion, as the words for turning in Greek get translated into Latin by the noun *conversio* and the verb *convertere*. It is first and foremost a turning of attention, a focusing of the mind on something new.[14] This sort of turning is a particularly important concept for Augustine, as it suggests movement in a realm of being quite different from the spatial dimensions in which bodies move.[15] The soul's movement is a change of will or love, which is not a movement from place to place.[16] Therefore the journey to God, as Plotinus taught him, is not a journey for feet or chariots or ships but for the will.[17] We are moved toward God not by traveling any distance in space but by the weight of our love.[18] So the first step in the journey is to turn the soul in

the right direction, away from bodily things and toward the light of the soul's eternal Good.

The possibility of such a journey also provides a Platonist alternative to Manichaean fatalism, with its notion that there is an evil kind of soul or an evil part of the self that is irredeemable.[19] The Platonist conception of moral progress, on the contrary, affirmed that all souls are of the same nature, containing the same capacity for goodness. No soul is irredeemably evil, but all are capable of being converted to the good, turned away from a love of earthly things that dragged it downward and to a love of higher things that lifted it upward toward God. In this fundamental Augustinian metaphor, the two dimensions of turning, upward and downward, are not defined literally in terms of the spatial locations of earth and sky but in terms of the three-tiered Platonist hierarchy of being, which locates bodies below the soul and God above it (and affirms contrary to the Manichaeans that even bodies are good, though not the proper objects of the soul's highest love). Thus Platonist conversion implies a Platonist liberation that Manichaeans could not conceive of: not freedom from embodiment itself, which is what the redemption of good souls amounted to in Manichaeanism, but liberation from too-deep involvement in bodily things, so that the soul may govern and care for the body without being wholly absorbed in its needs and desires.[20]

The Platonist imagery of liberation, conversion, and vision obviously has great religious power, so we must remind ourselves that the Allegory of the Cave is not about religious or mystical experience but education, as Plato tells us at the beginning.[21] Along with his doctrine of recollection, the Allegory of the Cave aims to show what is wrong with the Sophists' claim to sell knowledge like a commodity. The point of the story is that no teacher can give a student knowledge, because that is something already present in every soul.[22] Education therefore does not mean transferring knowledge from one soul to another but leading students to where they can see for themselves; it does not give sight to blind eyes but rather is the art of getting people to turn around and look away from the darkness to the light.[23] But this internalization of the source of knowledge does not make learning easy: on the contrary, the turning is a difficult ethical transformation. People need to be dragged up out of the cave despite their own resistance, while their eyes painfully adjust to the brightness of the world above.[24] Evidently this is Plato's explanation of why education is hard work, even though the mind has as natural an affinity for knowledge as the eye for light.

No doubt the ascent is much like being pressed with an intense and bewildering series of questions by a teacher like Socrates, who cannot show you what you want to see but is very good at helping you recognize that you haven't

really seen it. Acknowledging that you have just refuted yourself in the process of answering a series of Socratic questions, as well as confessing that you are not as wise as you thought, is the original form of ethical progress in Platonism.[25] Sometimes this ethical discipline of dialectic is so painful that the dwellers in the cave prefer to kill the teacher.[26] After all, half-blind souls like it better in the dark, where they can discern among the shadows (e.g., making judgments of political expediency) with more expertise than a philosopher who comes stumbling and blinking back down into the cave after gazing at the sun.[27] For those at home below, turning around to look at the light of the supreme Good only hurts the eyes.

Elsewhere Plato presents another metaphor for the negative side of this educational process: purification, cleansing, or purgation.[28] The soul accustomed to the darkness prefers to look with the eyes of the body rather than the eye of the mind: that is the sense in which it is impure, tainted by its association with the body, with bodily modes of perception, needs, and desires. Progress in virtue is therefore a process of purification, separating soul from body as much as possible so that the eye of the mind may see eternal and intelligible things without interference or distraction. This is why Plotinus calls the virtues "purifications"[29] and says purification is essential for the ascent to vision.[30] Augustine deploys the metaphor of purification systematically in his earliest exposition of the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and combines it with imagery of healing as well as imagery from the Allegory of the Cave, so as to explain the importance of faith: "Healthy eyes are a mind pure of all bodily stain, that is, purged and removed from all desires for mortal things, which nothing can accomplish for it but faith at first."[31] Here at the beginning of his career, Augustine defines faith not as belief in Christ but as belief in the mind's need for purification and healing in order to see God—a belief that makes it willing, as Augustine puts it, to "follow the doctor's orders,"[32] that is, to obey the divine commands that make for virtuous living. Faith thus stands at the beginning of a temporal road of virtue and purification that ends with the vision of eternal things. As Plato puts it, in a passage Augustine quotes with approval in his treatise *On the Trinity*, "Truth is related to faith as eternity is to things that have a beginning."[33]

Of course in the works of his maturity, Augustine does explicitly and persistently define faith as belief in Christ, as well as in all the temporal things narrated in Scripture. Thus whereas the intellect encounters Christ as the inner teacher, the eternal Truth, Wisdom, and Virtue of God, faith is concerned with the temporal life of Christ as a mortal man, including his death and resurrection.[34] But in making this connection between faith and Christ, Augustine retains the basic Platonist structure: we must believe in the "history and pro-

phecy of the temporal dispensation" of Christ's incarnation, after which "a way of life in accordance with the divine commandments" (equivalent to following "doctor's orders" above) "will purify the mind and make it able to perceive spiritual things," which are not temporal but eternal.[35] In this way a specifically Christian faith becomes necessary, in Augustine's view, for the happiness that is the object of so much debate among the philosophers. For "every human being wills to be happy, but not everyone has the faith by which the heart, being purified, arrives at happiness."[36] Similarly, when the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith enters Augustine's theology, it enriches rather than supplants this conception of purification by faith; both purification and justification are terms used to explain how we get from our beginning in faith to our end in beatific understanding.[37]

Talk of purification by faith is as biblical as talk of justification by faith, but Augustine fills it in with specifically Platonist conceptual content. In its original biblical context, the phrase "purifying their hearts by faith" refers specifically to the Gentiles, who were to be made clean by faith in Christ rather than by fulfilling the Law of Moses.[38] Likewise the Epistle to the Hebrews, that most Platonist-sounding of all the books of the New Testament, speaks of drawing near to God in faith, "having hearts sprinkled clean" by the blood of Christ,[39] which alone can purify the conscience of deadly sins, in contrast to the sacrifices and ordinances of the Law, which cleanse only the flesh.[40] But when Augustine speaks of purification by faith, he has in mind something more specifically Platonist: a turning away from bodily desires as well as a withdrawing from habits of sensible imagination.[41] The pure "mind's eye," for Augustine, is intellect, not imagination. For there is a great difference between merely imagining a geometrical figure (as for instance one might picture to oneself a triangle drawn on a chalkboard, an ephemeral sensible thing) and seeing it solely with the mind's eye, tainted by no admixture of sensory images—an act of pure intellect perceiving a truth such as the Pythagorean theorem. In one of his early works Augustine dwells on this difference in order to make clear the kind of purity required by the mind's eye.[42] This epistemological distinction has deep religious import for Augustine the Platonist, because understanding the unchangeable figures of geometry, like seeing any intelligible truth, is of a piece with the vision of God.[43] For God is "the unchangeable Truth containing everything that is unchangeably true."[44] That is why Augustine early on makes a point of identifying the Platonist sensible/intelligible distinction with the Christian carnal/spiritual distinction:[45] for Augustine spirituality originally means intelligibility, the unchangeable eternal being of things in God's own essence, which can only be seen by the pure intellect apart from the eye of the flesh.

The problem of the sinful soul is that it is scarcely aware of any such distinction, because it literally cannot imagine the kind of vision by which the intellect sees eternal and spiritual things. Thus sinners "are ignorant of what is to be seen by right living."[46] This is why, he explains in one of his early expositions of Paul on faith, "sinners are commanded to believe, so that by believing they may be purified of sins."[47] As before, faith in what we cannot yet see leads us to obey the doctor's orders, as it were, so that our minds may be purified for vision of God. This is the only way the souls of sinners can be healed for a vision they do not yet know:

> Since they cannot see without living rightly, nor are they able to live rightly without believing, clearly the beginning must lie in faith, so that the commandments by which believers are turned away from this world may make *a pure heart, where God can be seen*. For "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."[48]

The peculiar phrase about the pure heart being *where* God can be seen (*ubi Deus videri possit*) probably reflects Ambrose's saying, "God is not seen in a place but by the pure heart."[49] But it is Augustine who turns the pure heart into a place of its own, an alternative dimension of the inner self that one can enter, turning away from external things to see God shining like the Platonic sun above.[50] Augustine thus ties the biblical notion of purification by faith to the biblical teaching that the pure of heart are blessed because they see God, via a specifically Platonist conception of the purification of the mind's inner eye.

Beauty and Love

All these conceptual resources—notions of ascent, vision, liberation, conversion, and purification—were gathered up and developed by the Platonist tradition, and in particular by Plotinus, in ways that made them accessible to the Christian tradition. But the conceptual glue that holds them all together still needs to be mentioned. It has to do with our inner motivation to proceed along the road of virtue leading to vision. According to these Platonist metaphors, the soul often has to be dragged up into the light, painfully shedding the filth of bodily attachments, following divine commands that, like doctor's orders, heal us by prescribing medicine that may have a very bitter taste. But none of this explains why the journey is worthwhile in the first place. Why, from the soul's own perspective, is this difficult climb worth the trouble?

The answer is that the soul loves beauty,[51] and there is nothing more beautiful than what it sees when it is pure. This love of beauty is literally erotic,

for the sight of beauty is the goal toward which *erōs* drives us.[52] We fall in love because the sight of something beautiful in this world reminds us of what is most lovely of all, the eternal Beauty from which all mortal loveliness comes. We ascend to the vision of eternal things willingly, longingly, because the reflection of such Beauty in the transient beauties of the earth leads us upward.[53] Plato is thus the first and greatest philosopher of falling in love; he is the one to tell us that this wondrous phenomenon has the deep meaning we have always suspected. He teaches us that we yearn for the ultimate Good and Beauty as lovers sigh for their beloved. Or rather the reverse: the wild abandon with which human beings fall in love with one another is a mere shadow of the erotic mania with which the soul longs to embrace eternal Beauty. The experience of falling in love is a divine madness touched off by a particular human body or soul that reminds us of eternal things our soul once saw but has forgotten, and it inflames us with a desire to see again.[54] It overtakes us even contrary to our baser instincts, as Alcibiades, that black sheep of Athens, finds himself falling in love with Socrates, whose only attractiveness consists in his ability to seduce young men into the love of wisdom.[55]

Augustine did not know firsthand Plato's great treatments of love, but he did know Plotinus's. The latter's treatise "On Beauty" (*Ennead* 1:6) is his favorite piece of philosophical writing, judging by how often he quotes and alludes to it throughout his career.[56] Together with other Plotinian writings such as the treatise "On Intellectual Beauty" (*Ennead* 5:8),[57] it provided him with a powerful alternative to the rationalistic account of human motivation he had inherited from the Stoics. Whereas for the Stoics all human motivation stems from the mind's assent,[58] for Augustine it is all the outcome of a faculty of will whose every act is to love. And Platonist love, while deeply allied to reason, does not work like rational assent or judgment. We do not fall in love by judging it would be best, as if that were a decision within our power to make. Yet once we are in love, we freely assent to what love desires, because our loving has become the center of our will. Falling in love determines rather than is determined by our free choice, and every happy lover welcomes this and finds it to be an enhancement rather than an impairment of human freedom.[59] Thus Augustine's Platonist eroticism allows him to interpret Paul's doctrine of grace in ways that have often been thought to threaten free will, but that Augustine thinks reinforces what free will is for: "The choice of the will is not taken away by being helped," as he puts it.[60] Or as he also says, echoing Paul, "Do we by grace make free will void? Not at all! Rather, by grace we establish free will."[61]

The experience of grace for Augustine is very much like falling in love. It means being overtaken by a kind of delight that is not in our power to choose but that, once it overtakes us, causes us to choose its object gladly and

wholeheartedly.[62] It is a choice we never regret, because unlike earthly loves it leads to a happiness we can never lose. The delight in Truth given by the inward teaching of grace leads us to enjoyment of what every soul necessarily seeks: for the one thing that is necessary about free will is that it is a will for happiness,[63] and the only thing that can make us truly happy is that which makes us eternally happy (so that a truly happy life is necessarily, as the Bible puts it, an eternal life).[64] So the inward teaching that gives us enjoyment of eternal truth fulfills our deepest desire, leading our restless heart to the only thing that will give it eternal rest.[65] When delight in God overcomes us, we have found our one true love. That is why we always welcome the love for God when it is "poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit," a key formulation of the effect of grace that Augustine develops from a startling phrase in Paul.[66] We cannot regret what makes us eternally happy, and we cannot ultimately resist it. This does not mean grace compels us to do anything against our will, but rather that it changes our will, making us willing where before we were unwilling[67]—so that we find it delightful to do what before was burdensome. God makes this inward change in us not by the external force of coercion, but by the inner power of his own beauty. If even earthly beauty sometimes overwhelms us with delight, how can we resist the divine Beauty that is the very substance of unending Happiness?[68] So the gift of grace, poured out deep within our hearts by the Spirit of God himself, does precisely what coercion cannot: it moves the will rather than the body. For free will is indeed freedom from coercion but not freedom from true Beauty. The latter would make no more sense to a Platonist than an eye being free from the light.

Free Will against Autonomy

Of course in one sense it is possible to be free from the light of the Good. As an unhealthy eye can prefer darkness to light, so a perverse will can love what is ugly or cling to what makes it miserable. Outside the Platonist tradition one can even call this "freedom of the will" and insist on defending it, as if anything that interfered with it would undermine human dignity and autonomy.[69] But the proper Platonist vocabulary for such a possibility is not freedom but weakness, defect, and instability; this is not the soul's autonomy but its vulnerability to privation, loss, and misery. We are free to sin in the same sense that we are free to be unhappy, blind, or stupid: these are all real possibilities for corruptible creatures. But why would one want to defend such possibilities from interference, as if they were a valuable freedom that God's grace threatened to take away from us? As the proper freedom of the eye is the power to see,

not the possibility of going blind, so the proper freedom of the will is the ability to enjoy what is good and beautiful, not the possibility of lust and foolishness that make us wretched. That is why for Augustine grace, no matter how drastically it changes us, cannot ever undermine the real freedom of the will but only help and strengthen it.[70] Grace is never incompatible with human freedom but only with human sin and bondage. This is the heart of Augustine's synthesis of the traditions of Plato and Paul. The idea that the autonomy of human free will needs to be protected from grace ultimately makes no sense to him, just as the idea of freedom from righteousness makes no sense for Paul, except as another way of talking about slavery to sin.[71] For both Paul and Platonism, true freedom is freedom from evil for the sake of what is good, not an autonomy that is indifferent to the contrast between good and evil.

Indeed we can put the conceptual point more strongly yet. Autonomy, if it means freedom from the goodness of God, is for Augustine incompatible with free will. Our freedom of choice, for Augustine as for every ancient philosopher, is inseparable from the power of reason, which human beings have and other animals lack. And reason, for Augustine as for every Platonist, means a participation or sharing in the eternal Good or Reason or Law, which is divine. To be a law unto oneself (as implied by the term *auto-nomy*, literally "self-law") thus can only mean to be in bondage to one's lower self, like irrational beasts. Since the higher and rational part of the soul functions properly only in the light of the divine Law above it, to be free from that light is for our rational capacities to be in darkness and our carnal desires to be in control. Hence if the soul is not ruled by the truth of eternal Law above it, it will be captive to the sensual demands of the body below it.[72] The effort to be autonomous therefore always fails. It fails precisely because autonomy from God is incompatible with both reason and free will, which are good things that are ineradicably present in us. Though our free will can (through its own fault) be brought into captivity to carnal desires, it cannot simply be eliminated. We are always free enough to turn back to the Light with God's help.[73] Our freedom therefore means precisely our inevitable lack of autonomy—or more positively put, the ineradicable possibility of participating in eternal Law, which is God.

God's grace is the help he gives us to actualize this possibility of freedom. We need his help for various reasons. Most fundamentally, our mind's vision is weak, clouded, and diseased by its own bad habits—like an eye partially blinded by the habit of looking around for things in the dark. But our will too is diseased, turned in the wrong direction, attached to earthly things by its fleshly habits or by inborn covetousness (*concupiscentia*), and therefore finds it too difficult to turn itself back in love toward God. Grace, in Augustine's later formulations, acts inwardly to move or turn the will back in the right direction.

The Platonist notion of the soul's turning, with its suggestion of an alternative dimension of being (psychological rather than spatial) provides a site for this inward action of God's grace on the soul.

Thus Augustine is eager to defend human free will against the dualistic fatalism of the Manichaeans, but not against the monistic account of God as the sole source of all good and being in Platonism. Very early on in his career, in the first book of his treatise *On Free Choice,* he establishes the fundamental point that human freedom is dependent on the goodness of the eternal Law, from which follows the inconceivability of human autonomy or freedom *from* the divine.[74] The analysis grows more complicated, but its fundamental premises do not change, when a little later he introduces the concept of pride. Pride is an attempt to find one's good in oneself. It seeks but does not find autonomy, for (in a recurrent Augustinian image) it is like a kind of tumor: it is an inward sickness that swells outward, searching for external things it may dominate, yet in that very search becoming dependent on what is outside it, which is lesser and lower than itself.[75] The penalty for pride, like the penalty for lust and covetousness, is bondage to lower things.

From Fear to Love

Such is the only power external things have over the soul: the strength of the soul's own sinful attachments. Our epistemological failure to rise above sensible images in the mind stems from our ethical weakness, our proclivity to love sensible things more than intelligible things, which is the source of our attachment to them and therefore of our impurity. The impure mind "cannot separate from itself the images of sensible things . . . for in an astounding way they are stuck to it by the glue of love; and in this consists its impurity."[76] Love is a unitive power like a glue attaching us to what we love.[77] Since the deepest love desires the ultimate enjoyment, seeking beatitude in union with its beloved, the love of anything on earth is inevitably beset by grief.[78] Trying to find happiness among temporal things means being attached to what must inevitably perish. Friendship in particular, the highest of all earthly loves, makes two souls one, so that the death of a friend feels like having one's soul ripped in half—such is Augustine's description of the torture of losing his best friend in youth.[79] In the course of one of the most powerful descriptions of grief in Western literature, Augustine laments that "I had poured out my soul on the sand, loving one who would die as if he were not mortal."[80] The jarring lesson is that we should not love so. Not that something is wrong with loving our friends, but that we must not cling to them as if they could make us happy. It is

one of the fundamental lessons of the *Confessions:* to seek true happiness anywhere but in God is to find only misery.

When not actively tormented by loss, the impure soul inevitably fears it. Like all our emotions fear is the outgrowth of love, for "the only cause of fear is that we might lose what we love or desire."[81] By the same token, grace, which frees us to love eternal things rather than temporal things, effects a transition from the anguished vicissitudes of earthly fear to the tranquility of lasting delight. This transition from fear to love is at the heart of Augustine's early interpretations of the writings of Paul, leading up to the epochal treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter,* which established the psychology of grace that would become fundamental for medieval and Reformation theology. That treatise aims to show that we cannot do without divine help if we are to progress in justice or righteousness toward "participation in the true light."[82] It is not enough that we have free will and the external commandments of the Law teaching us how to live. We cannot live as we ought until we can delight in justice and in the supreme Good that is God.[83] Otherwise we obey the Law only externally, going through the motions of doing the right thing motivated by fear rather than love, seeking simply to avoid punishment rather than delight in the Good.[84] The help we need therefore cannot come from the external teaching of the Law (the letter that kills) but only from the inward grace of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit that gives life).[85] This Platonist psychology with its focus on loving what cannot change, die, or be lost is one of the foundations for the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace. The divine inner help we need is to give our wills the ability to delight in eternal things, which is true freedom as well as the inner strength making it possible to obey God's commands out of love, not fear.[86] When the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts such delight and love for the highest and unchangeable Good,[87] then the hard work of right living really becomes possible because, as Augustine elsewhere puts it, "all things are easy for love."[88] The experience of grace is like that of a lover who will gladly go through any number of trials and tribulations for the sake of her beloved, her one true delight.

Augustine's insight about delight (so deeply rooted in our will, yet so much out of the will's control) is indispensable to his reading of Paul on grace. But it belongs to a larger Platonist concern about the transition from fear to love, which is central to his moral psychology from the beginning of his career. In his first completed treatise, *On the Happy Life,* he moves from Stoicism to Platonism by analyzing the Stoic claim that the happiness of the wise person is unshakeable, free from all fear of loss. How can this be, Augustine argues, unless what a wise person possesses is unchangeable?[89] Hence there is no true wisdom except by possessing immutable Platonic forms. In order to be free

from the fear of loss one needs nothing less than eternal Wisdom, which is the Son of God.[90] Henceforth no philosophy or religion that fails to raise our love from temporal to eternal goods will meet with Augustine's approval, for it subjects the soul to the misery of fear—the fear of being tortured by the loss of temporal goods one loves.[91] He will defend the religion of the Old Testament, with its promises of earthly reward, only insofar as it signifies and prefigures the religion of the New Testament, where souls are freed from carnal desire so as to love eternal things.

In what is perhaps his earliest interpretation of the cross of Christ, Augustine's Christology turns on this point about freedom from fear. Why did the eternal Wisdom of God become human (or, in Augustine's favored terminology, "assume a man")? He explains:

> The Wisdom of God assumed a man as an example of how to live rightly. Now it pertains to right living, not to fear what is not to be feared. But death is not to be feared. Therefore this needed to be shown by the death of the man whom the Wisdom of God assumed.[92]

Augustine proceeds to argue that the crucifixion of the man Wisdom assumed shows that not only death in general, but even the most awful and accursed death, is not to be feared. Behind this lesson about fear is a lesson about love, the importance of loving spiritual and eternal goods that cannot be lost rather than temporal and perishable goods, a lesson that as we shall see remains not only central to Augustine's ethics but an enduring element of his understanding of the meaning of the cross of Christ.

The example of Christ's fearlessness is what Augustine identifies as the "grace of the liberator" in his first sustained treatment of Paul's doctrine of grace. This is how he reads the culmination of Paul's argument in Romans 7:24–25: "what shall *liberate* me from the body of this death? The *grace* of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."[93] This grace, Augustine argues, liberates us from the fear that characterizes life under the Law, which promises only temporal rewards for right living.[94] For in Augustine's early exegeses of Paul, grace means that Christians love eternal things, while Law means that Jews are motivated by love of temporal things and thus subject to fear of loss.[95] Nonetheless, at this earliest stage in his reading of Paul, the term "grace" refers only to Christ's external example, not to the inner divine help that bestows on us a gift of love and delight. This is precisely what we should expect if there is something fundamentally new about Augustine's concept of inner grace: it is not a concept he has at the beginning of his career but something he must develop as he goes. The concept of grace as inner help cannot be read straight

out of Paul, as if it were there in the scriptural text waiting to be found, but must be arrived at by a synthesis in which Augustine interprets the Pauline term "grace" in light of a Christian Platonist inwardness, where the inner self becomes the special site of divine action.

Against Augustine on the Jews

At this point it is necessary to say something about a theme that will be with us from here on: Augustine's words against the Jews. These have had immense influence on the West's reading of Paul—so much so that Paul is often read (bizarrely) as anti-Jewish. Recent scholarship, on the contrary, has emphasized again and again that Paul is a Jew for whom the operative contrast is not between Christians and Jews but between Jews and Gentiles.[96] His question is not why Christianity is superior to Judaism but how Gentiles might be "brought in" to share in God's blessing to Israel, without having to cease being Gentiles and convert to observant Judaism. This happens, Paul argues, through faith alone, that is, when the Gentiles believe in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, without doing the works of the Mosaic Law. Paul's Law/grace distinction functions in the context of this argument, not as part of a contrast between two religions, Judaism and Christianity, nor as a general psychological truth about the difference between living under a legalistic morality and enjoying a grace-filled religion.

But for Augustine the psychological contrast between living under Law and living under grace is central and serves to show the inferiority of Judaism to Christianity as a religion. Hence no one can discuss Augustine's doctrine of grace without dealing with his attitude toward the Jews. This is an area where moral clarity is demanded of all Christians, not least in our time. In my judgment, Christian writers have a particular obligation to speak unsparingly of the anti-Jewish strand in the Christian tradition—not to sit in judgment on our predecessors (we are in no position to know if we would have done any better) but to be unambiguous in rejecting falsehoods that have done great harm. Therefore it is important to register my view that most of what Augustine has to say against the Jews is false, and that where it is true I tend to think good Christians should side with the Jews. His most important criticisms can be summed up in three points: for Augustine, the Jews are carnal, literalistic, and legalistic.

They are carnal, he thinks, because they hope for temporal, earthly rewards.[97] This criticism misses the point that the reward Judaism hopes for is the presence of God with his people, for which Christians also hope.[98] For Jews this presence was found on earth at one time in the Temple, now in the study

of Torah.[99] For Christians, it is found above all in the flesh of Jesus Christ. This is a kind of carnality that Christians need more of, but Western Christians have less of it than they should due to Augustine's inward turn, which makes it difficult to see what salvific power could lie in temporal, external things such as Christ's flesh.[100] The inwardness of Augustine's doctrine of grace, therefore, is of a piece with his Platonist criticism of the Jews, which makes it difficult for him to make sense of key biblical themes such as the presence of God working powerfully through particular bodily things such as Temple and Torah, word and sacrament, and the flesh of Christ.

Augustine's recurrent charge that Jews are literalistic in their interpretation of Scripture[101] is, on the face of it, bizarre. He must have known next to nothing about the actual practice of rabbinic interpretation or midrash, which could not by any stretch of the imagination be called literalistic. Indeed it seems his actual acquaintance with living, contemporary Jews was "extremely superficial."[102] In his writings "the Jews" designate primarily a hermeneutical position, which Christian reading of Scripture must overcome: Jews resist the interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel as pointing to the new, more otherworldly dispensation established by Jesus Christ, which aims at eternal rather than temporal goods. His charge that this rejection of Christian hermeneutics stemmed from literalism was an ignorant slander.

On the other hand, this was the worst Augustine had to say against contemporary Jews as enemies of Christianity: they were hermeneutical opponents contending for a non-Christian reading of Scripture. It would have been wonderful if this accusation of literalism were the most serious slander against the Jews any Christian theologian ever made, for in that case Christian sins against the Jews would surely be fewer and far less bloody. Augustine was consistently opposed to violence against the Jews and indeed one of the keynotes of his thinking about the Jewish people is summed up in the biblical passage "Slay them not . . . but scatter them" (Psalm 59:11), which he read as divine protection of the Jewish people, so that in their diaspora throughout the world they might bear witness to the antiquity of the Scriptures on which the Christian faith was based—a witness all the more convincing because they were enemies of the Christian interpretation of the Scriptures.[103] Thus Augustine found precisely in the Jews' deepest enmity to Christianity a reason to protect them from violence. This is one respect, surely, in which one could wish that Augustine's massive influence on Western Christianity were more pervasive than it actually was.[104]

Finally, the charge that Jews are legalistic is a falsehood that has distorted Christian perceptions of both the Scriptures of Israel and the New Testament ever since Augustine, but that makes no sense in the context of Judaism itself.

Indeed it is hard to picture any religion conceiving of God or gods who always lay down the law and never show grace, mercy, or favor. Evidently, no one before Augustine ever quite conceived of the possibility of religious legalism, a religion of divine law without grace. Such religion is hard to imagine unless you are working within the context of an Augustinian theology, where grace is conceived not simply as divine mercy and favor (a concept every religion has, if it worships any gods at all—for what god *cannot* show mercy or favor?) but as a divine assistance that can inwardly move our wills in the right direction when we can't. Even Pelagius did not think of himself as a legalist, but had to be told that he was one in light of what he lacked: an Augustinian conception of grace as inner help. In fact, it turns out, as we shall see in chapter 3, that Augustine's initial description of the Pelagian heresy was in terms of charges he had leveled earlier against the Jews.[105]

Dialogue with Plato

For Augustine the Jews, like many of his Christian opponents, represent a view of biblical religion that is external, literal, and focused on temporal things. The proper reading of Scripture is more Platonist, seeking what is inward, spiritual, and eternal. In short, Judaism is related to Platonism as external to inward, letter to spirit, Law to grace. In this context the Incarnation on the face of it looks disturbingly Jewish: eternal Wisdom becomes quite literally carnal and external, indeed a Jew. Augustine's initial impulse, in fact, is to say that this astounding anomaly is needed precisely because most people are so unspiritual. What Plato and his pagan followers lacked, Augustine argues, is not superior insight into spiritual and eternal things but the authority to instill belief in more than the elite few.

Augustine explains this in a dialogue he imagines having with Plato. Supposing he could talk to the great philosopher—or rather imagining a student talking with him back when he was alive—Augustine tells us what he finds persuasive in Platonism:[106]

> that it is not by the eyes of the body but by the pure mind that Truth is seen; that any soul clinging to it is made happy and perfect . . .

This connection between Truth and happiness means that Platonist epistemology implies an ethics:

> that nothing hinders us from grasping it [i.e., Truth] more than a life given to lusts [*libidinibus*] and the false images of sensible things,

> which being impressed on us from this sensible world by the body generate all sorts of opinions and errors; which is why the mind must be healed to see the unchangeable Form of things, the Beauty that always possesses itself in the same way, in all respects like unto itself, not stretched out in space nor varying in time, but remaining one and the same throughout . . .

The problem is that most people don't believe this kind of Truth:

> human beings do not believe it exists, though it exists supremely and truly, while all other things are born and die, flow and totter, though insofar as they do have existence they hold together because they are fashioned by that eternal God through his Truth . . .

The rational soul finds true happiness only in the eternal enjoyment of this God, this Truth and Beauty and Form, but it does not believe this because it is led astray by its own wayward loves:

> so long as it is wounded by love or sorrow for things that are born and pass away and, given to habits of this life and the senses of the body, fades away among the emptiness of images, it laughs at those who say there is something that is not seen by these eyes nor thought by means of phantasms but can be discerned by the mind alone and its understanding . . .

This problem of unbelief is one that pagan Platonism cannot solve, because the teaching of pagan philosophers is persuasive only to the few, not the many, and moreover these philosophers have degraded themselves by taking part in public worship of gods they privately disbelieve.[107] What is needed is a way of salvation that is available to all, not just to the learned. This is where Christianity comes in, as the student indicates by the question he proceeds to ask Plato:

> if some great and divine man existed, who could persuade people at least to believe in such things, if they weren't capable of grasping them—or if they could grasp them, not to be implicated in the depraved opinions of the multitude and overwhelmed by vulgar errors [e.g., of pagan worship]—would you not judge him worthy of divine honors?

A Platonic Christ would teach the multitude to believe and love a God of Platonic Ideas, which Plato never succeeded in teaching to the polytheists around him. Plato, Augustine imagines, immediately gets the point, and therefore affirms such a Christology. So Augustine's Plato answers:

> this is not humanly possible, unless the very *Virtue and Wisdom of God* [1 Cor. 1:24], removed from nature itself and enlightened from the cradle by inward illumination rather than human teaching, was dignified by such grace, confirmed by such steadfastness, and finally elevated by such majesty that he could convert the human race to this wholesome faith by the highest love and authority, despising everything depraved humanity desires, enduring everything it fears, doing everything it marvels at . . .

Augustinian Christianity does indeed look very much like "Platonism for the masses," as one of its greatest critics has claimed—the only Western thinker bold enough to be an adversary of both Socrates and Christ.[108] In Augustine's view Plato was right about what we want to see and how we must love if we are to see it, and he could well have grasped the need for faith. All he lacked was the opportunity to recognize the particular faith humanity needs, which did not come into the world until long after his death, with the advent of Christ who alone has the authority to persuade even the uneducated multitude to believe in a Truth that had hitherto been glimpsed only by the philosophical few.[109]

The Widening Scope of Inner Help

Augustine's imaginary dialogue with Plato comes from a relatively early text, written some four years after his baptism, but what Augustine claims to have learned from Plato here are convictions that do not change over the course of his career.[110] Always, for Augustine, the point of Christian faith is to pass from faith to vision: to reach an intellectual understanding and enjoyment of the unchangeable Truth, Good, and Beauty, in which consists the eternal life of happiness. Always, we move toward this happiness by loving eternal things like Truth and turning away from absorption in lower, changing things, which are external and earthly. Consequently the soul's journey to God is structured in a psychological sequence that we could call, borrowing from Protestant theology, a process or order of salvation (*ordo salutis*): the soul begins in faith, proceeds in love, and arrives in the end at understanding, which is the intellectual vision of God that makes it eternally happy or blessed. This sequence is the most useful backdrop against which to see the developments in Augustine's doctrine of grace. The fundamental development takes place in two stages: the inner divine help that was always necessary for the understanding of God expands so as to be necessary also for love, and then eventually for faith

as well. Thus over the course of Augustine's career, divine help becomes more and more prevenient (in the technical sense of "coming before" [*praevenire*] more and more of the efforts of the soul) until the whole process of coming to beatitude is preceded, helped, and empowered throughout by the inward gift of grace.

The first point to notice about this development is that Augustine is never without a doctrine of grace. There is no stage in his career as a Christian writer at which he thinks the soul can reach its ultimate goal, the wisdom and happiness of knowing God, by its own unaided efforts. From his earliest writings he has an acute sense of the difficulty of the soul's quest for happiness because of its fall and alienation from God, its eye darkened by love of temporal things.[111] Nor is the concept of divine help for the soul ever absent from his writings. There is no point in his career at which he "discovers" the necessity of grace. It has always been there, especially in his prayers. In one of the works written before his baptism, for example, Reason itself commands Augustine to pray for divine help in his inquiries[112] and warns him, "Do not will to be, as it were, your own and in your own power."[113] Likewise, Augustine begins his early philosophical dialogue about the freedom of the will with prayer, asking "that God be present and make us understand what we believe."[114] For he is convinced that "unless the love of finding truth had obtained divine help for me," he would never have emerged from the stifling darkness of heresy to "breathe in that same first liberty of inquiry," which the Manichaeans had falsely promised him.[115]

But notice that in this last passage, what he must pray for is not help to believe or to love, but to inquire and understand. The assumption is that by loving rightly one obtains divine help, not the other way around: one does not need divine help to love rightly. At this very early stage in Augustine's career, love and faith are not fruits of grace but means by which we obtain the grace our minds need in order to reach an understanding of God. Augustine's encounter with Paul will change this, as we shall see next chapter, but it is not Paul who gives him the notion of divine help in the first place. That is a notion that is always a part of his Christian Platonism, for divine help is something every religious person prays for, and Platonists have been praying for it ever since Plato.[116] Indeed, the practice of praying for help *in the conduct of philosophical inquiry,* which is so prominent in Augustine's early works,[117] is a kind of piety native to the Platonist rather than the biblical tradition. Later Augustine explicitly locates a concept of grace in the Platonist tradition at precisely this point: grace is the divine gift that enables imperfect minds to reach a full intellectual grasp of God. In an imaginary address to the pagan Neoplatonist Porphyry in the *City of God,* Augustine points out that "you confess grace

inasmuch as you say it is granted to few to arrive at God through the power [*virtutem*] of intelligence."[118] Indeed, he notes that the pagan actually uses the word "grace" in much the same way he does: "You even use the word explicitly when, following Plato's view, you do not doubt that there is no way for a man to arrive in this life at the perfection of wisdom, but that anything missing in one who lives according to the intellect will be made up for by the providence and grace of God."[119]

So grace is not a uniquely Christian concept that comes in to disrupt Augustine's Platonism. This does not mean there is no development in Augustine's doctrine of grace, just that it is a development *within* his Christian Platonism. What is underdeveloped about his initial view of grace is that he does not fully recognize the need for divine help in the moral life. In effect, he knows that our intellect needs grace but he is not quite so clear about our will. Sometimes in his earliest writings, it seems as if the effort to love the God whom the intellect seeks to see precedes the gift of grace and obtains it, as for instance when he says that God always "lifts up those who set their affections on him,"[120] and that "the utmost effort must be given to living the best moral life, for otherwise our God cannot hear us."[121] The latter sentiment is a mistake he peremptorily corrects in the *Retractations,* because it implies that "God would not hear sinners."[122] But in a way it is already corrected by what immediately follows, where Augustine urges us to pray "for the coming of what will make us good as well as happy."[123] It is clear that Augustine's impulse is already to pray for help not only to reach the ultimate end of happiness but also to attain the necessary means, which is moral goodness. Yet in this case the result is incoherent: we are to pray for what we need to become good, even though God cannot hear the prayers of those who are not already doing good! Something must give: either such prayers are useless or God can hear us even when we have no goodness—not even our best efforts—to offer him. It is clear where the future of Augustine's doctrine of grace lies: any good thing we can pray for is something God can give, even our own goodness, virtue, and love. So it does not take long for Augustine to come to the conclusion that our love and all its works are outgrowths of divine grace.

What takes longer is the conclusion that we cannot even *pray* for divine help unless grace comes first: for faith itself, by which we pray for the gifts of love and its works, is a gift of God. As we shall see in the next chapter, Augustine spends a good deal of effort in his early exegeses of Paul avoiding that conclusion, until he comes to the epochal turning point of the treatise *To Simplicianus,* where for the first time he treats grace as fully prevenient, coming before every worthy effort of ours, including our decision to believe. Thus over the course of his career the prevenience of grace gradually expands backward:

at first grace must come before the understanding of God that makes us ultimately happy, then before the love of God that seeks this understanding, and finally even before the faith that gets us started on the path of love.

This expansion of prevenience widens the scope of grace. As the need for inner help moves further back in the process of salvation, it expands to take in more functions of the soul. Grace affects more and more of the self, not just its inmost understanding of eternal Truth but even its relations to external things: without grace we will not make the right use of temporal things (which is the work of love) nor even assent to the external teaching of Christian doctrine (which is the work of faith). Consequently, developments in Augustine's doctrine of grace are matched by developments in his psychology. Complementary to the widening scope of God's grace, the soul's love and faith, which Augustine had earlier conceived as concerned with external and temporal things, are as it were moved inward—defined more and more in terms of their relation to inner and divine things.

The potential for this movement inward is already present at the beginning of Augustine's career. For instance, charity is conceived from the first as a desire that abides forever, since even after the vision of God is attained love for God must remain to keep the gaze of the mind focused, as it were, on what it sees.[124] Augustine thus takes the rather un-Platonic position that love is not only a desire for what we lack but also an enjoyment of what we have. Whereas Plato argues that we cannot really love something we already have,[125] Augustine argues that we cannot truly have something we do not love.[126] Love not only motivates the seeking but remains to enjoy the finding—and when what is found is eternal, love abides forever. For while the temporal things we strive for often disappoint us when we get them, it is impossible to overestimate the value of eternal things—impossible to expect more of them than they can give us—with the result that "the eternal is more ardently loved when it is gotten than when it is desired."[127] This revision of Platonist *erōs* means that Augustine's psychology cannot continue to subordinate love to understanding as if the former were only about the temporal road, not also the eternal goal. Eventually the will that loves is "promoted," we could say, to a level equal to the intelligence that understands, as both are integrated into the coequal triad of memory, intelligence, and will that resembles the three coequal persons of the holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[128]

Love "promoted" in this way is love moved inward, conceived as closer to the inner core of the self because it is more directly involved in the soul's relation to God, who is both within the soul and above it. Thus as a result of developments in Augustine's doctrine of grace, the will's love becomes as inward as the intellect's vision. For it is precisely the higher and more inward

functions of the self that stand in need of grace. The eye of the body needs no special grace to see external things like colors and shapes, but the eye of the mind needs inner help from above if it is to gaze upon nothing less than God. So also, it turns out, though we do not need an inner gift of grace to love food that is healthy for us or friends in whom we delight, we do need grace if we are to love what will make us eternally happy. And eventually, it turns out that we even need grace to believe what we are told about the road to eternal happiness.

These developments in Augustine's psychology set the stage for rather ironic reversals later in the Augustinian tradition, where love is often conceived as a more inward function of the soul than intellect or, to use a later and un-Augustinian dichotomy, the heart is taken to be more central to the personality than the head. (Since this contrast is so popular and so misleading, it is worth noting that it is as unbiblical as it is un-Augustinian: Scripture never locates human understanding and thought in the head but places them in the heart, the same location as love and feelings.[129] In this regard Augustine's usage is more scriptural than almost any modern writer's.) Similarly, after Augustine conceives of faith too as requiring grace, the stage is set for ironic new developments, as for instance when faith is later regarded as more inward than reason, more deeply rooted in the heart or more capable of experiencing God—all convictions quite foreign to Augustine's thinking. Yet Augustine sets the stage for both these reversals by insisting that love and faith too need grace, thus treating them in the end as more inward functions of the soul than they were at the beginning of his career. By moving faith and love inward Augustine makes room for a richer psychology, a denser, weightier, and more intricate account of the motives behind them. Love especially comes to have its own relation with the divine, hence its own complexities, perversities, and pathologies needing the inner healing of grace.

An equally dense account of the concept of faith must wait until Augustine's successors in the Middle Ages and especially the Reformation, when the thought that our proper relation to God is founded on faith alone requires a richer and more intricate psychology of faith. Putting so much weight on faith inevitably evokes deeper anxiety about the problems and perversities of human believing, such as the possibility that some people are mistaken when they think they are truly believers.[130] One can conceive of a faith so deeply hypocritical that it even deceives the believer himself—and then be plagued by the anxiety that one is precisely such a believer, who culpably fools himself into believing he has true faith. This is a psychological possibility Augustine never conceived of but which one could hardly have a reason to conceive of apart from the Augustinian tradition. Such an anxiety is part of the pastoral legacy of Augustine's theology that Augustine himself did not anticipate (for all his

psychological acuity) because it could only arise after the establishment of a religious culture shaped from the ground up by Augustinian thinking—and Augustineof course does not come from such a culture. Agonizing about whether one truly believes makes no sense unless one has *grown up* taking something like Augustine's psychology of grace for granted.

Connections of Love

Since love is the central concept that must be enriched and elaborated as Augustine develops his doctrine of grace, it is useful in conclusion to note explicitly its connection with other concepts that will be important in coming chapters. For Augustine love is always an act of the *will,*[131] as understanding is always an act of the intellect. (In the technical parlance of later medieval philosophy, will is the faculty of love, as intellect is the faculty of understanding: the one is related to the other as power is to act, as for instance the power of vision in the eyes is related to the act of seeing something in particular.) Because of this close connection between love and will, any Augustinian analysis of free will is always implicitly an analysis of human love, and vice versa. A Platonist transformation of the notion of free will in the direction of a doctrine of grace therefore occurs as Augustine increasingly comes to identify delight as the phenomenological core of love, the very feel of what loving is like. For a will that cannot love without delight is more dependent on sources of motivation beyond itself than a will that needs merely to choose in order to act.

Love originates in the will but results in both passions and actions. All passions or *emotions* (which are for Augustine literally motions of the soul, *motus animi*) are acts of will,[132] and thus forms of love. Likewise all our outward actions or *works* are motivated by love of one kind or another. This means that good works (that key term in Paul's writings) can come only from charity, the love for God and neighbor. Good works in turn, Augustine will say, *merit* or deserve the promised reward of eternal life. Thus in Augustine's mature theology of grace, the process of salvation or *ordo salutis* is filled out with a sequence from love to good works (which are always works of love) and thence to merit and finally to eternal life. Unlike his Protestant successors, Augustine does not hesitate to attribute merit to our good works, so long as it is clear that all good works result from the grace that God bestows on our will, without which charity and its works are impossible. This means that there are no merits prior to the gift of grace: in the later technical terminology, the order of salvation includes prevenient grace but not antecedent merit. When God rewards

our merits, this is ultimately a matter of "grace for grace" (John 1:16), which Augustine takes to mean: a gracious reward for meritorious works, which are themselves the result of grace.[133] Yet this doubling of grace also shows why Augustine thinks faith alone is not sufficient without works: the first grace is given *so that* the second grace may reward the merit of the ensuing good works.[134] Thus Augustine takes up a position as unacceptable to Luther and Calvin as to Pelagius, which remains the teaching of Roman Catholicism to this day. (That is to say: Roman Catholic theology is simply correct when it insists that in rejecting Protestantism, it does not necessarily fall into Pelagianism.)

It is worth emphasizing that the issue of merit does not occupy much of Augustine's attention until he begins wrestling with Paul. Merit is not a natural focus for a Platonist conception of love. We do not fall in love in order to earn a reward but because we long to be united with our Beloved. As Augustine repeatedly emphasizes in his sermons, the only reward for loving God is to get what we love.[135] Merit comes into consideration only as a subordinate concern: we want to get what we love worthily, like a spotless bride rather than a filthy thief. So Augustine will indeed speak of merit in his early works prior to his exegeses of Paul, but it is not a prominent feature of his conception of the process of salvation.[136] Love is not a way to earn something (what kind of lover thinks like that?) but a force of attraction moving us in the direction of what we love. In a famous metaphor, Augustine makes love into a weight that can carry us not only downward but upward[137]—as in ancient physics the weight of fire bears it upward to its heavenly home among the burning stars. So our carnal loves are muddy, like the heavier elements of earth and water weighing us down, while charity is always ardent, clear, and bright like a flame rising to its celestial source. (Thus in Augustine's writings fire is nearly always a heavenly, not hellish, metaphor—a connection maintained by Dante, for whom the depths of hell are frozen in ice, lacking all fire and warmth of love.)[138] Augustine will thus speak of the fruits of love, its virtues and good works, as meriting eternal life, but he will never make merit part of the motivation for love itself. Charity seeks not merit but God; it burns in longing for Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Eternity, Justice, and the like, and its only reward is to arrive where it longs to be. Merit is simply a way of saying that when the weight of charity does ultimately bring us home, we will be where we rightly belong.

Finally, we should note the key conceptual connection love had for Augustine before his extensive exegetical encounters with Paul: a Platonist connection with the classical concept of *virtue*. Three times in his early works Augustine gives an exposition of the four classical virtues of temperance, courage, justice, and prudence, each time presenting them all as outgrowths of

a single fundamental desire for eternal rather than temporal things. In the earliest of these expositions, that desire is called Good Will.[139] In another exposition, it is the conversion of love, turning our delight away from inferior beauties to God.[140] And in the exposition that most resembles the writings of Augustine's maturity, the four classical virtues are described as fulfillments of the commandment to love God with one's whole heart and soul and mind.[141] Such love is described both as "virtue [that] leads us to the happy life"[142] and as "love of wisdom and diligence in seeking."[143]

Given the tight connection in Augustine between love, will, and conversion, I take these three expositions to be saying roughly the same thing. What is of prime interest is how they all differ from the medieval view, which classifies love for God as one of three "theological" virtues (faith, hope, and charity) requiring the gift of grace and places the four classical or "cardinal" virtues on a lower level, capable of existing in us without grace but not capable of meriting eternal life. For Augustine, on the contrary, the latter virtues are all forms of love for God, so that "virtue" is really just another name for charity. This coheres not with the later medieval view but with the Platonist view of virtue as the road to wisdom,[144] motivated by love. In fact the identification of the four virtues with one fundamental motivation is a familiar kind of Platonist tour-de-force. Plotinus, for instance, identifies the four virtues with purification from desire for earthly things.[145] He in turn refers to the passage where Plato explains how all four virtues grow out of philosophy, the love of wisdom that trains us to die to this world.[146] This ancient version of virtue theory can serve as a useful marker of the starting point or *terminus a quo* of Augustine's thinking about the soul's journey to God, which by the close of his career ends up looking much more medieval than ancient. Thus in the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace we are tracing the transition from ancient philosophy to medieval theology, and putting ourselves in a better position to discern how much of the former remains a living presence in the latter.

2

Pauline Grace

Human Will and Divine Choice

Augustine's distinctive approach to grace and free will emerges from his readings of the apostle Paul in the 390s. Before then, "good will" for Augustine had first meant something divine in the soul, then an inward love by which we choose to enjoy only what is divine. But it turns out we cannot simply choose to choose the divine: because of our carnal habits we find it hard to will what we will to will. According to the four-stage schema Augustine develops to interpret Paul, there is a crucial transition from life under Law to life under grace, before which we have a good will that does not succeed in wholeheartedly willing the good. Many of the characteristic problems in Augustine's doctrine of grace arise when he tries to place faith and merit in relation to this schema, producing an "order of salvation" that proceeds from faith to love to intellectual vision. At first he entertains the notion that God's grace is merited by faith, not by works. Preserving a place for merit in this way allows him to say that the ultimate source of the differentiation between good and evil souls lies in their wills. However, in the last of his early Pauline exegeses, the treatise To Simplicianus, *Augustine gives a new answer to this question of differentiation in order to secure a place for the Pauline and Biblical concept of the election of grace, which is God's choice to bestow grace freely, without consideration of merit, upon some undeserving sinners rather than others. The human choice to have faith is real enough, but it stems from the divine choice to give the gift of faith to some souls rather than others, with the result that it is God who ultimately makes the difference between the saved and the damned. To explain how the choice to believe can be caused by*

God's grace, Augustine locates the deepest root of faith not in the act of assent (as in the Stoic theory of free choice) but in inward delight (as in the Platonist theory of love). In this early version of Augustine's doctrine of grace, the gift of delight is occasioned by a "suitable call," an external word or admonition that God knows will evoke the delight and (consequently) the free assent of the will. This conceptual reconciliation of grace and free will is illustrated in Augustine's own conversion narrative. But unresolved tensions about inward power and outward persuasion remain in Augustine's thinking on grace, to be exposed over the course of the Pelagian controversy.

Discussions of Augustine's doctrine of grace must put the concept of will front and center. Of course will can never be disconnected from intellect in Augustine's thought, because understanding the Truth is the deepest desire of our hearts.[1] But as the scope of grace widens over the course of Augustine's career to include not only intellect but also love and faith,[2] he gives more and more attention to these latter acts of the soul, which stem specifically from will rather than intellect. Also, since grace itself is not a principle or Form but an act of unmerited mercy, it inevitably brings into the foreground the notion of the will of God in a way that the Platonist concept of God as Truth does not. In contrast to a merited reward, which can be determined as a matter of principle, unmerited mercy can only result from a free choice. Consequently, Augustine's theology of grace inevitably ends up relating human will to divine will, and in particular the free choices of human beings about their own good to God's free choice about who will receive the gift of grace.

Augustine never abandons the concept of human free will, but he does over the course of his career assign it less and less control over the ultimate good of human beings. What drives this development, I shall argue, is Augustine's need to reckon with the distinctively biblical conception that God really does make choices and that his choices make the ultimate difference in the human race (what Augustinian theologians came to call "the doctrine of election"). Augustine ultimately does incorporate the concept of divine choice or election deeply into his thinking, but only at the price of straining and even cracking—yet never simply abandoning—his Platonist framework, and thus leaving a legacy of distinctively Augustinian pastoral problems.

The crucial developments take place years before Augustine puts his conception of grace to work in the Pelagian controversy. As has been widely recognized, they are catalyzed by his first serious readings of the apostle Paul.[3] Most important are a series of exegeses of Paul's letter to the Romans written in the mid-390s. Two of them have a great deal in common and were probably

written at about the same time: questions 66 through 68 of the treatise *On Eighty-Three Different Questions*[4] and the *Exposition of Some Propositions from the Letter to the Romans* (*Propositions from Romans* for short). A couple years later came the treatise *To Simplicianus on Various Questions* (*To Simplicianus* for short), which settled the crucial problem left unresolved by the two earlier exegeses. Before examining these works, however, we should get some familiarity with the shape of Augustine's thinking in the most important ethical writing of his early period, the treatise *On Free Choice* (the title is sometimes translated *On Free Will*). This will give us a vantage point from which to see how his encounter with Paul changed his earlier thinking about the will.

Divine Good Will

The first great change in the development of Augustine's psychology is that he must give up the notion that there is a divine element inherent in the soul. The movement of psychological functions inward that we shall trace in this chapter begins when the highest part of the soul is drastically "promoted," lifted altogether above the soul and identified strictly with God. In his earliest extant works, Augustine had treated Reason (the equivalent of Greek *Logos*) as a divine and immutable power inseparably present in the soul and unfailingly joined to Truth.[5] He could not maintain this view once he understood Catholic teaching on the ontological distinction between Creator and creature. In his mature view, unchangeable Reason or *Logos* (i.e., the second person of the Trinity) remains divine and interior to the soul, but not inseparable from it. For the soul can be turned outward, becoming ignorant of itself and what is inmost in it. This revision of Augustine's psychology results in the three-tiered hierarchy of being that forms the ontological framework of his theology for the rest of his life. From this point on, he always thinks of the unchangeable God as ontologically superior to the changeable soul, which is in turn ontologically superior to bodies.[6] This hierarchy is arranged not only in terms of higher and lower but also in terms of inner and outer. God as Truth is more inward than our inmost selves,[7] while the soul is a private inner world quite different in its mode of being from the external world of bodies extended in space.[8]

The separation between soul and Truth is not a separation in space.[9] It is the same separation that Scripture calls sin. It is characteristic of Augustine, as of Platonism generally, that separation between the soul and unchanging Forms such as Truth is from the beginning a moral problem, not just a matter of ignorance and error but of perversity and wrong turns of the soul,[10] which must be overcome not only by learning but by conversion of the will and

purification of the heart. Thus as Augustine acquires a deeper understanding of the Platonist heritage, problems of love and will become increasingly central to his thought. When Truth can no longer be regarded as inseparable from the soul, the longing to see it becomes central to our being. Temporal and human functions such as seeking and learning, which had originally been assigned to the lower part of the soul (cast in the role of "Augustine," playing opposite to "Reason" in the inner drama of *Soliloquies*) now become the most inward functions of the soul.[11] This initiates a series of developments leading to Augustine's Pauline argument that charity, the soul's proper love for God, is impossible for us without the help of grace.

The nature of these developments can best be seen by contrast with the peculiar theory of will developed in the first book of *On Free Choice,* where Augustine is still exploring the possibility that there is something inherently divine in the soul. This book is best studied separately from the rest of the treatise, for it was completed several years before books 2 and 3, on literally and figuratively a different continent. It was written in Italy a year or so after Augustine was baptized, whereas the later books were composed in fits and starts in Africa and not finished until after he became presbyter in the church at Hippo.[12] Book 1 is based on profoundly different suppositions about the relation of God and the soul, which he soon must abandon. Yet it also presents the first elaboration of themes that will be the basis of Augustine's ethical thinking for the rest of his life, including the fundamental contrast between love of eternal goods and love of temporal goods. Rightly-ordered love, which in Pauline context will be called charity, is in this text called good will. It is defined as "a will by which we desire to live rightly and excellently and arrive at the highest Wisdom."[13] The term "good will" (*bona voluntas*) has both classical and biblical resonances. On the one hand Seneca, the Roman Stoic, links good will closely with virtue,[14] and on other hand the Gospel angels sing of peace on earth to human beings of good will.[15] Peace, like rest, is one of Augustine's terms for the happy life.[16] Hence the basic connection to be made is: virtuous life, which consists in good will, leads to happiness. Or, in a related formulation, living a good life (*bene vivere*) leads to living a happy life (*beata vivere*).[17]

There is more than one problem with this earliest version of Augustinian ethics. To begin with, the conception of moral evil in this treatise relies on an overly simple dualism, the contrast between turning in love to temporal things and turning in love to eternal things.[18] Given Augustine's ontology, his notion that we must love only eternal things means that "only God is to be loved," as he explicitly puts it in another treatise written at about the same time.[19] A Christian theologian who says things like this needs to add some explanation of why Christ was not teaching us to sin when he commanded us to love our neighbor

(unless of course our neighbor is not fundamentally a temporal being, as is implied by Augustine's early view that there is a divine and immutable element in the soul). Augustine in fact proceeds to argue later in the same treatise that love of God is inseparable from love of self and of neighbor, because if we know how to love ourselves we will love and seek God as our true and highest Good, and in loving our neighbors we treat them as ourselves, helping them seek to enjoy the same Good.[20] This inseparable intertwining of love for God, self, and neighbor is ever afterward fundamental to Augustine's interpretation of Christ's command to love both God and neighbor, but here it flatly contradicts what he said earlier: it cannot be true that we should love self and neighbor if God alone is to be loved. The source of the contradiction is Augustine's conviction, spelled out at great length in the first book of *On Free Choice,* that there is something wrong with loving temporal things. It takes years for him to adjust this conviction to accommodate coherently the love of neighbor.

A decade later Augustine offers his most notorious attempt to solve the problem of how we may legitimately love our neighbors by suggesting that we should use people rather than enjoy them.[21] For using things, oddly, counts as a form of love, though not the same kind of love as enjoyment, in which one "clings with love to a thing for its own sake."[22] It is legitimate to use one's neighbors because use is a transitory kind of love: it means using one thing to get another, as for instance when we use temporal things in order to arrive at enjoyment of eternal things. But the suggestion that loving our neighbors really ought to mean using them turns out to be, as Oliver O'Donovan convincingly shows, "quite simply a mistake, with which Augustine cannot live."[23] In fact within the same book Augustine modifies his position so that Christian charity is aimed ultimately at enjoying not only God but other human beings in God, and this becomes his standard view in later works.[24] In the end we really must be permitted to do what Christ commands and love our neighbors—permanently and wholeheartedly, even though they are not eternal.

But there is a yet deeper problem with Augustine's earliest ethics. In the first book of *On Free Choice* Augustine makes good will turn in on itself, so that what the good will loves is the good will. He asks his dialogue partner, "To love one's good will and esteem it as greatly as has just been said—isn't this also good will itself?"[25] What has just been said is that all four classical virtues (prudence, courage, temperance, and justice) are ways of embracing, enjoying, and delighting in one's own good will.[26] Since in this text proper love is of eternal rather than temporal things, and since all eternal (unchanging) things are divine, this must mean our good will, which we are to love, is divine. I have suggested in my previous book that this divine Good Will within us is another name for Christ as the Virtue of God, just as the inner teacher named Reason

in the *Soliloquies* is another name for Christ as the Wisdom of God.[27] In Augustine's earliest writings Christ is the divine part of the soul, inseparably present within us as the Wisdom we need to remember (according to the Platonist doctrine of recollection) and the Virtue we should love (according to Augustine's ethics). In both cases, the goal of happiness consists in a reunification of the self, as the lower, temporal self comes to know and will the same things as the higher, unchanging part of the self ("Augustine" knowing the same things as "Reason" in the *Soliloquies,* the human will embracing its own Good Will in *On Free Choice,* book 1). Divine help here works on the Plotinian model of the higher and divine part of the soul calling the lower part of the soul back to their common center.[28]

Of course Augustine must soon abandon this Plotinian conception of the inherent divinity of the inner self. By the time he writes *On the Teacher,* Christ (or divine Wisdom and Virtue, Reason and Good Will) is no longer an inseparable part of the soul, but he is still found within, as an inner not external teacher. This remains a crucial and distinctive feature of Augustine's thinking about grace from this time forward: grace means help from an Other who is nonetheless not found outside the self. Grace is both within the self and other than the self. That accounts for a great many of the distinctive conceptual features of Augustine's doctrine of grace, such as his conviction that grace may be irresistible but never coercive. It may overcome our resistance, but not the way an outside force does—for it comes to us from deep within.[29]

The Inward-Turning Will

Once Augustine abandons the thought that the soul is divine, our good will (by which we use temporal things well so as to arrive at enjoyment of eternal things) is our own. God is more inward than our inmost self, but our inmost self is now merely ourselves. By the time Augustine gets to book 2 of *On Free Choice,* what we are to embrace, enjoy, and delight in is not our own good will but a Wisdom and Truth that is clearly above us, as the immutable is above the mutable.[30] So now our minds are changeable things at the center of our own being, needing help from above: an inner light that shines like the sun above us, a divine Wisdom and Virtue that is not ourselves.[31] Our job is to turn within and look for this Wisdom, which is the same as Truth, which is the same as God, who is our highest Good.[32] Otherwise it is as if we are turning our back on the light within, captivated by external beauties while ignoring the loveliness of the inner Wisdom that created them.[33] Augustine's theology of grace in this next phase of his career does not center on the Pauline term "grace" but on the

motive forces that bring about this inward turn, this seeking of delight and happiness within.

The simplest statement of Augustine's position at this point of his career would be: each soul gets as much illumination as it is capable of, depending on the goodness of its will. Hence immediately after identifying Christ as the inner teacher, Augustine explains: "Every rational soul indeed consults him, but to each one he unfolds only as much as it is capable of receiving because of its own evil or good will."[34] Every rational soul consults him because "reason judges by the light of Truth,"[35] so that there is no possibility of rational activity at all apart from this divine and inward illumination. But every soul gets a different measure of Truth,[36] depending on how fully it turns toward the light—as Augustine explains at length in the second book of *On Free Choice*. Hence he can say there about the discipline of arithmetic—the unchanging Truth and Reason of numbers (*ratio et veritas numeri*)—the same thing he says in *On the Teacher* about Christ:

> It is present [*praesto*] to all reasoners, so that all who make calculations may try to grasp it by their own reason and intelligence. Some do this easily, some with difficulty, some not at all—while it nonetheless presents itself [*se . . . praebeat*] equally to all who are capable of it.[37]

The difference between one soul and another in the quest for wisdom and happiness thus derives ultimately from a difference in their wills. Some are less capable of the light than others, but that is their own fault. In a metaphor deriving ultimately from Plato's Allegory of the Cave, Augustine depicts them as having weakened their mind's eye by loving to look at shadows.[38] Someone like that, Augustine argues, merits the darkness that is the inevitable consequence of his choices:

> From this he begins to be unable to see what supremely exists, and supposes some evil thing fools him because he's thoughtless, or allures him because he's impoverished, or torments him because he's in captivity—when actually he suffers these things deservedly [*pro merito*] due to his turning away, and this cannot be an evil thing, for it is just.[39]

Evil is not a sort of thing or substance (as the Manichaeans thought) but rather the bad consequences of our willfully defective wills. In this passage Augustine gives us merely a sample from a long list of punishments accruing to souls that fail to cleave to Wisdom, including captivity to the tyranny of lust and the torture of losing what one loves, as well as the more epistemic penalties of

uncertainty and disillusionment, being mistaken and being deceived.[40] The point about all of them is that our willful turning away from the light is both the cause of our dwelling in darkness and the reason we deserve it.

The root of this particular style of moralism is Augustine's conviction that love of temporal things is wrong because it means loving what can be lost.[41] The road to happiness lies within, because it means embracing what we cannot lose against our will. Since no physical space separates the soul from inner Truth and Wisdom, the only possible separation is a perverse will, turned toward outward things.[42] Nothing outside the soul can take these inner and eternal goods away from it, since freedom from external compulsion is at the heart of our inviolable free will.[43] As the earliest strata of Augustine's ethics puts it: "the thing to get is something one can have whenever one wills it [*quod cum vult habet*]."[44] That is why everyone is unhappy who "clings to things that can easily be lost, which he does not have as long as he wills it [*dum vult habet*]."[45] The greatest good is such that "the only work needed to have it is to will it."[46] Like much else in Augustine's earliest writing, this is a version of a Stoic conviction (as Seneca says, "What work must you do to be good? Will it!")[47], which Augustine is reformulating and explaining in Platonist terms. Only if the good we will is eternal can we have what we will just by willing it. For all temporal goods, being perishable, are things we can lose against our will. But eternal goods are imperishable and found within, safe from any external force that would take them away from us.

Willing Becomes Difficult

If the only thing that makes a difference is how we will, then you might think that happiness is ultimately very easy to attain. "For what lies more in our will than will itself?" as Augustine himself asks in book 1 of *On Free Choice*.[48] Even when he no longer regards the good will within us as eternal, he thinks of it as something that can be the permanent possession of the soul, for "there is nothing more in our power than the will itself."[49] This is the kind of claim that a Pelagian could like, and it is not surprising that Pelagius himself found ammunition for his cause in this treatise.[50] Many years later Augustine will have to explain and qualify the claims in this treatise at great length.[51] Yet even before the treatise is completed, he has found that the human will does not have quite so much power as Stoic theories of choice might have led him (and Pelagius) to think. The just punishment of the first sin affects us so that we in fact "do not have the free will to choose the right thing to do," either because we are ignorant of it or because the force of "fleshly habit" resists our good will so

that we "see the right thing to do and will it, but cannot carry it out."[52] There is thus a dual penalty of sin: ignorance and difficulty.

> For this is a very just punishment of sin: that you lose what you didn't will to use well, when you could have (with no difficulty) if you willed. That is why, when you knowingly don't do the right thing, you lose the knowledge of the right thing to do; and when you don't will to do what's right when you are able, you lose the ability to do it when you will.[53]

The twin themes of insuperable ignorance and difficulty (or equivalently, ignorance and weakness) will become a centerpiece of his anti-Pelagian polemics.[54] Difficulty in carrying out one's will is the new theme, either reinforced or (more likely, given how late this theme appears in the composition of the treatise) initially suggested by the gap between willing and doing that opens up in the seventh chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. In any case, the will has now the same kind of problem as the intellect. Just as the mind's eye can get accustomed to operating in the dark so that it must work very hard to learn to see again in the light of Truth, the will can develop fleshly habits that are very hard to break so that it cannot do the right thing even when it wills it. For we have great difficulty detaching our love from temporal goods and turning it to eternal goods.

Eventually—but still well before onset of the Pelagian controversy—Augustine makes it clear that we have difficulty not just in carrying out our good will in action, but even in willing itself. The will, strangely enough, does not have the power to will whatever it wills. Augustine gives a vivid portrait of this "monstrousness" in his account in *Confessions* of the moral crisis leading up to what is traditionally called his conversion:

> The soul commands the body and it is obeyed at once; it commands itself and is resisted. . . . The soul commands the soul to will, it is no other than itself, yet it is not done. Where did this monstrousness come from? Why is it, I ask, that it commands itself to will, and it could not command unless it willed, and yet it is not done?[55]

In a sense, it remains true that we can have what we will simply by willing it. The difficulty is that we cannot will it whenever we will to will it. There are some matters of the soul in which "simply to will is already to do, and yet it is not done."[56] The source of this monstrous paradox is that the will is divided against itself, both willing and unwilling, so that it cannot will wholeheartedly what it wills. The old fleshly will has created a habit that is like a chain binding the new spiritual will, and the two are in conflict with each other, flesh against spirit, old self against new:

> So I was bound, not in someone else's irons, but by my own iron will. . . . From a perverse will came lust [*libido*], and lust being obeyed became habit, and habit not resisted became necessity. By these things, connected to each other like links in a chain, I was held in strict servitude.[57]

Free will remains (as always) free from external compulsion, but inwardly it is chained by its own past willing. Because it once consented too easily and too regularly to what it no longer wills, it is not now free to do what it wills or even to will what it wills.

Something new has happened to the concept of will here. The Latin terms for will (the noun *voluntas* and the verb *velle*) have gained a weight and density they never had in writers like Cicero or Seneca. As Max Pohlenz notes, there is no real equivalent in classical or Hellenistic Greek for the term "will," and Seneca's usage of *velle* and *voluntas* (exemplified above) reflect Greek notions of choice (*prohairesis*) rather than a distinct power of the soul called the will.[58] For the Roman Stoics our choices were a matter of rational judgment, while for Aristotle they resulted from reasoning about our desires (hence for Aristotle choice can be defined as "desiring reason" or "reasoning desire").[59] What Augustine gives us, in contrast, is a power of choosing that is not reducible to the activities of more fundamental faculties such as reason and desire. Indeed it is more than a power of choice. It lies at the root not only of our actions but also of our passions, since Augustine explains emotions as essentially acts of will (*voluntates*).[60] The irreducibility of the power of will along with its centrality to our personality and motivation give it a new density, allowing it possibilities, twists and turns that are all its own. The Augustinian will can be chained or freed, sick or convalescent, weakened or strengthened. It can be infected by pathologies of sin that are not reducible to a matter of ignorance (as in the Stoics) or the unruly desires of the body (as in the Manichaeans). The will has diseases of its own, pathologies of misdirected love that become habit and so produce a unique and hitherto unimagined form of inner bondage. Augustine is talking about something that an Aristotle, a Cicero, or a Seneca never conceived of,[61] and that Pelagius seems never to have understood.

This newly enriched conception of will supports further theological developments. While "fleshly habit" (*carnalis consuetudo*) remains a central term in Augustine's moral psychology up to the time he writes the *Confessions,* he has by then begun thinking about a deeper pathology of the will: the covetousness (*concupiscentia*) that is our common inheritance from the first sin. By the time of the Pelagian controversy, *concupiscentia* has replaced *consuetudo* as the fundamental explanation of our moral weakness and need of grace.[62] The

term enters Augustine's discourse because Paul cites the commandment "Thou shalt not covet" (*non concupisces*) as the prime example of our inability to keep the Law of God even when we inwardly will to do so.[63] This is a crucial new step Augustine takes in the course of his exegesis of Paul: the recognition not only that we have difficulty doing and even willing what is right, but that this difficulty is something we all share, simply because of our descent from the first man. The deep point is that the perversity of our wills, which in Augustine's earliest period had made all the difference between one soul and another,[64] now makes us all one. This is the point that eventually leads to Augustine's mature doctrines of election and predestination.

Four Stages

This newly enriched concept of the will plays a central role in Augustine's early exegeses of Paul. In the course of these exegeses, Augustine works out a schema of four stages in the development of our nature after it sinned, which apply both to the human race and to the individual soul.[65] First, prior to the giving of the Law (*ante legem*) we are unselfconscious sinners, and it does not even occur to us to resist our fleshly covetousness. Second, when we are subject to the Law (*sub lege*) we struggle against our habits of carnal desire but lose. Third, when through faith in Christ we live by grace (*sub gratia*) we struggle against sin and win, no longer consenting to fleshly desires because we now have the virtue of charity, a genuine love of what is right. But fleshly desires remain in us until our bodies are renewed in the resurrection, which is when we reach the fourth stage in which we live forever in peace (*in pace*), freed from all fleshly desires. Thus the four stages of humanity are defined in terms of the soul's struggle against fleshly desires: in the first stage we do not struggle against them, in the second we struggle and lose, in the third we struggle and win, and in the fourth there is no more struggle because they are utterly done away with. The crucial transition in our life on earth is from the second stage to the third, from Law to grace. This is where fear gives way to love, because desire for temporal goods, accompanied by fear for their loss,[66] is replaced by charity, in which the desire for eternal goods makes possible a genuine delight in justice[67]—the central notion of motivation that Augustine will use in his polemics against the Pelagians.

Augustine works out this schema both in the treatise *On Eighty-Three Different Questions* and in *Propositions from Romans*. These two texts share a great many themes and a common vocabulary and were probably written at about the same time. But precisely because of the commonalities we can

discern very precisely the differences, which indicate when new thoughts come into play.[68] The most striking difference was discussed in the previous chapter.[69] It turns out that Augustine's understanding of charity as inward delight, picked up from Romans 7:22 ("I delight in the Law of God according to the inner man")[70] is not at first associated with a notion of inner help. The need to ask for help is briefly mentioned in question 66 of the treatise *On Eighty-Three Different Questions,*[71] but the answer to this prayer (which comes in the same paragraph in which Augustine first mentions the concept of inward delight) is not an inner gift of delight but the outward example of Christ's death on the cross.[72] Thereby Christ "condemns sin in the flesh," that is, teaches us how we should live with an ardent love of eternal things. This example and teaching are what Augustine in this text identifies as "the grace of the liberator." In other words, when Augustine first reads the key Pauline passage, "Who shall *liberate* me from the body of this death? The *grace* of God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24–25), the grace it makes him think of is the example of Christ's suffering on the cross teaching us to delight in eternal rather than temporal goods.[73] This external conception of grace as a moral example to follow is as Pelagian as could be wished for by Pelagius himself, who was perfectly willing to describe the teaching and example of Christ as ways that God helps us.[74]

But then comes the *Propositions from Romans,* the first treatise in which Augustine presents an actual running commentary on the whole letter to the Romans. Here he uses the schema of four stages to sort out Paul's complex argument in Romans 3–8, and when he comes to Romans 5:5 (where "the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us") he interprets this to mean that our love for God is a gift of the Holy Spirit, given by grace.[75] A crucial connection is forged here: God causes our will to be what it is, and this causation works inwardly. By his inner gift we love as we ought. This Pauline passage becomes the basis of later doctrines of infused charity, from the verb "poured in" or "poured out" (*infusa* or *diffusa*). The help we need to close the gap between willing and doing is not simply outward example or external teaching, but grace poured deep into our hearts and changing our wills from the inside out. For "before grace there is not in us a free will so as not to sin, but only so as not to will to sin. It is grace that brings it about that we not only will to do right but are actually able—not by our own strength but by the help of the liberator."[76] The power of grace closes the gap between willing and doing, between wanting to do the right thing and actually being able to do it. This means we are justified by faith, as Augustine promptly adds. For "the things that could not be fulfilled by the Law are fulfilled by faith," so that "one is not justified by one's own merit as though by works, but by the grace of God

through faith."[77] Thus Augustine begins forging the enduring connections between his conception of grace and the Pauline teaching of justification by faith.

The Place of Merit

Precisely how faith is connected to grace and love does not get spelled out, however, until Augustine comes to discuss Romans 9. In fact faith never fits conveniently into the four-stage schema, and many of the problems in Augustine's theology of grace result from this inconvenience. The problem is how to get faith and love to line up in time along with grace. Augustine's assumption is always that faith precedes love, which creates the fundamental anomaly that faith must precede the stage of life under grace (*sub gratia*). Augustine quickly realizes that it will not do to say that faith simply precedes grace. Thus arises the difficult problem of the prevenience of grace, which Augustine will wrestle with for the rest of his career. It presents itself as a problem about the place of merit in the sequence of events by which the soul comes to its ultimate beatitude, that sequence which Protestant theologians later called the *ordo salutis* or order of salvation.

We should note that the very idea of a temporal sequence or order of salvation, especially a psychological order of acts of the soul such as faith and love, is not to be taken for granted. It is in fact a highly questionable product of Augustine's Platonism,[78] applied to the four-stage schema of the journey of the soul that he found so useful in his exegeses of Paul. Without the supposition that there must be some definite psychological order of salvation, the problems about prevenient grace with which Augustine wrestles either would not arise or else would arise in a very different form. So the fact that Augustine consistently does suppose that faith and love must line up in a temporal sequence with the gift of grace is a matter of some importance for the history of Western theology. It is worth bearing in mind, as we proceed to trace Augustine's efforts to wrestle with the consequences of this supposition for the rest of this book, that it has a definite origin at this point in Augustine's thought and that it is not beyond questioning. On the face of it, in fact, it is rather odd to expect Christian faith and love to behave in so orderly a way: as if one could not love and long for God before coming to believe in him, or as if a person's faith had to begin at some one moment in her life—as if faith did not begin many times, both before and after loving God, being something one could both lose and regain more than once (for instance, as Luther suggests, every time a believer sins and repents). All these possibilities are excluded by Augustine's notion that there

must be a definite temporal sequence of faith and love—or if not excluded entirely from view then made to look exceptional or anomalous, as if these possibilities did not actually happen all the time in the most ordinary and run-of-the mill kind of Christian life.

In any case, we are in a position to see how Augustine's conception of the order of salvation takes shape as he works out his exegeses of the writings of Paul. The four-stage schema has its home in exegeses of Romans 5–8, whereas the problem of faith and merit comes into view when Augustine must discuss Romans 9. The crux of the discussion is Romans 9:11, where Paul excludes all consideration of merit by referring to God's choice of Jacob over Esau, which was announced when the twins were still in the womb, "not having done anything good or evil, so that God's purpose in choosing might stand not by works but by him who calls."[79] For Augustine this immediately raises the question whether Paul "takes away the free choice of the will, by which we *merit* God through the good of piety [i.e., faith] or offend him by the evil of impiety."[80] This is a serious problem, since a major purpose of Augustine's treatise is to read Paul with sufficient care so that (in contrast to Manichaean readings) "the apostle may not seem to disapprove of the Law or take away human free choice."[81] He proposes therefore a distinction between the merit of works (of which the Jews boast)[82] and the merit of faith or piety (by which Christians live). Charity and the good works that stem from it are gifts of God, Augustine says, drawing on Romans 5:5.[83] But faith is different, for "our believing is our own."[84] Thus charity is a gift of grace, but faith (so it seems) is not. This gives God a basis for choosing among us, without making justification dependent on works:

> Therefore God does not choose those who do good works but rather those who believe, so that he may make them into those who do good works. For it is ours both to believe and to will, but his is to give to them who believe and will the ability to do good works by the Holy Spirit, through which the charity of God is poured out in our hearts.[85]

Grace closes the gap between willing and doing, but it does not give us the willing in the first place. Faith, which is our "will to receive" (*accipiendi voluntas*), is our own.[86]

This argument makes a place for merit, which Augustine insists on when he proceeds to discuss why God hardens Pharaoh's heart, an episode that Paul brings up later in Romans 9. This hardening punished the evil merits of Pharaoh's unbelief, Augustine argues, just as the mercy of God is granted to "the antecedent merit of faith" in the elect.[87]

> For just as in those whom God chooses, it is not works but faith that is the beginning of their meriting that by the gift of God they may do good works, so in those whom he condemns, unbelief and impiety is the beginning of their meriting punishment.[88]

In every case God chooses on the basis of faith, not works. The same rule applies in the case of Jacob and Esau: all that needs to be added here is that God *foresaw* the faith of Jacob and the unbelief of Esau. And since God foresees whom he will choose, this doctrine of divine choice or election leads immediately to a (highly qualified) doctrine of predestination, as Augustine makes clear in his comment on Paul's usage of these two terms: "God did not predestine anyone except those whom he foreknew would believe and follow his call; these are the ones he [Paul] calls 'the chosen [*electos*].' "[89] In this way Augustine invents the maneuver used by future theologians in the Augustinian tradition of the West who want to uphold justification by faith but do not want a doctrine of unconditional election or absolute predestination: there is such a thing as predestination and election (Scripture says so) but God predestines and elects those whom he foresees will have faith.

This maneuver does not convince Augustine for very long. But before we consider why it fails so quickly, let us examine the conceptual pressure pushing him in its direction. Why does Augustine want to make a place for merit at all, in the face of Paul's persistent attacks on justification by works? It is because the notion of merit is inextricably connected with other concepts that Augustine cannot give up, including justice and free will. Merit (which could just as well be translated "desert" or "deserving") has conceptual connections both forward and back, as it were: forward to notions of justice in reward and punishment, and back to the notion of free will. Justice means giving to each his due (a classical definition that Augustine endorses in this text and earlier)[90] and therefore, as Augustine points out very early in his career:

> The just Ruler and Governor of the universe allows no unmerited punishment to be inflicted on anyone, and no unmerited reward to be given. Now, punishment is merited by sin and reward is merited by doing right. And no one justly counts as doing right or sinning, who did not do it by his own will. Therefore both sinning and doing right stem from the free choice of the will.[91]

With these connections in mind, Augustine must worry that doing away with merit would undermine not only the concept of human free will but also the concept of divine justice. Precisely because God's choice is just, Augustine reasons, it must be based on human merit, for there is no other morally

relevant ground of distinction between those who receive good things and those who are punished.[92] Without some moral difference between two human beings, some distinction of merit, there appears to be no basis for God's choice. Thus as he prepares to deal with Romans 9, Augustine puts the conceptual point succinctly and powerfully: "If it is not by any merit, then it is not a choice. For prior to merit everyone is equal, and there can be nothing called choice amongst things that are entirely equal."[93] The question about the justice of God is thus in the last analysis a question about where difference comes from. How is it that Jacob and Esau, twins who started out perfectly equal, end up different? Not by God's choice, Augustine says here. Later he will have to change his mind on this point.

Early Inconsistency

This change of mind comes hard. Not that Augustine ever gives up on free will or the justice of God—that would not be hard but intolerably false. Rather, he ends up defending both human will and divine justice in terms that reckon with the biblical (and let me emphasize, Jewish) conception of a God who chooses—and whose choice makes the ultimate difference between human beings, as it is based not on the distinction between worthiness and unworthiness but on his own gracious love. What is hardest for Augustine is that he must try (and ultimately fail) to square this biblical conception with a Platonist framework that conceives of God as a Good, Truth, and Justice that is the same for all. The fundamental attraction of the notion of merit is that by locating the ultimate source of moral differentiation in human free will rather than in God, it fits a Platonist understanding of the relation of the One to the many: the highest One is the source of only goodness, equal for all, whereas our differing levels of participation in that one Good originate at a lower level, in our ontological inferiority, our susceptibility to change, loss, defect, corruption, and vice. It is our sins, our departures from goodness, that merit differing degrees of punishment or reward and therefore afford us differing moral destinies. What Platonism cannot accommodate is a God whose goodness consists in differentiating between particulars—choosing one person rather than another—for no reason but his own gracious love. That looks like a kind of favoritism, as if God had a firstborn son or a chosen people. It is not only Platonists who find this problematic, of course, but Platonists have particularly powerful and articulate reasons for doing so.

So in his early expositions of Paul, Augustine struggles against the idea that God chooses Jacob over Esau with no antecedent merit on which to base

his choice. In the discussion of Romans 9 in question 68 of the treatise *On Eighty-Three Different Questions,* written about the same time as the *Propositions from Romans,* Augustine struggles not to change his mind about this and succeeds, but only at the cost of logical inconsistency. As always, he wants to take Paul's point that God's grace is not a reward for works. He finds a place for merit *subsequent* to grace, in the love and good works that follow from the gift of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to his Protestant successors, he is always willing to say that eternal life is a reward for our merits, so long as it is clear that our merits result from grace. So merit is all right, as long as it is not antecedent to grace. The tough question is rather: how is it, if there is no antecedent merit, that one particular person gets divine grace but another does not? Call this *the question of differentiation.*

Strikingly, when this question is not in view, Augustine is glad to make faith (not just love) dependent on grace. He does this in the course of using his Platonist conception of purification by faith to interpret the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith.[94] Why does faith come before understanding, after all? Because we must be purified by faith so as to arrive at that purity of heart which sees God. This makes faith the basis of merit: "Knowledge [of God] is the reward rendered to merit, but merit is acquired by believing." The sequence seems to be: faith, merit, understanding. But where exactly does grace belong in this sequence? Surely before merit, as Augustine insists: "But the grace that is given through faith is given to none of our preceding merits." So is grace given in response to faith, as the basis of love, good works, and thence merit? That is what one might expect from the *Propositions from Romans,* but the resulting sequence (*faith, grace,* love, works, merit, understanding) is unstable. We have to ask whether faith itself is meritorious, and where it comes from. Augustine's answer at this point seems clear: since Christ's death is for *sinners* (who merit nothing good), "one is called to faith not by merit but by grace." So evidently the proper sequence is: *grace, faith,* love, works, merit, understanding. This sequence would make grace fully prevenient, coming before all moral effort and choices of ours.

But Augustine has to take it back, at least for a while. For once more he turns to the case of Pharaoh, asking the question of differentiation and seeking an answer in the merit of human choices about whether to believe. Yet in the course of this answer—the last time he will clearly trace the ultimate differentiation of the human race to human rather than divine choice—he also introduces a fateful new concept that will soon underwrite his decisive change of mind. For in this text he speaks of Pharaoh and all humanity as belonging to a "mass of sin." The phrase comes from Paul's metaphor about the potter's freedom to make vessels of honor as well as vessels of dishonor from the same

mass or lump of clay (Romans 9:21). Paul's point is clearly that God has the right to be the ultimate source of differentiation in this regard. It is a point that had not registered with Augustine in *Propositions from Romans,* when he used the metaphor of a mass of earthy clay to accuse those who are too earthy, not spiritual enough to understand this deep problem.[95] In this text too he makes the same accusation,[96] but then he has to start dealing with the real point of Paul's metaphor: it is God who differentiates between one sinner and another, because after our nature sinned in paradise we have all become one mass of clay, which is to say, a single mass of sin.[97] But when Augustine applies this to the story of Pharaoh, he cannot take Paul's point: the vessels of wrath are Pharaoh and his people, the vessels of mercy are the people of Israel being brought out of bondage in Egypt, but it is not God that makes the difference. Rather (as we learned in *Propositions from Romans*) the prayerful appeals of human faith make the decisive difference: "even though both [peoples] were sinners and thereby belonged to the same mass, those who cried out to the one God had to be treated differently."[98] Thus the point of Paul's metaphor must be denied:

> Sinners themselves are made into a single mass because of their common sin, yet it is not that there are no differences between them. Something in sinners precedes, by which they are made worthy [*digni*] of justification, even though they are not yet justified.[99]

In contradiction to Augustine's attempt just in the previous paragraph to put grace before faith, here where the question of differentiation is in view, merit is the deciding factor. Because God's choice is not unjust, Augustine reasons, "it comes from deeply hidden merits."[100] He has managed both to contradict himself and blatantly to miss Paul's point. It is no accident, therefore, that he does not mention Jacob and Esau until the end of the discussion, and then only to quite deliberately avoid discussing the matter.[101]

Jacob and Esau

So one must imagine that it is with some sense of foreboding that Augustine begins his third exposition of Romans 9, in the treatise addressed *To Simplicianus,* by looking squarely at Jacob and Esau and remarking not on the need to uphold free will but on the apostle's animus against merit.[102] Augustine has a long fight ahead of him, and the text he produces as a result is both convoluted[103] and thrilling, as he tries out one stratagem after another for accepting Paul's point about antecedent merit without ending up with the undesirable

(i.e., biblical) answer to the question of differentiation. He starts by registering the key conceptual pressure noted before:

> How is it just, how is it even a choice, when there is no distinction? If Jacob was chosen for no merit (being not yet born and having done nothing) he couldn't be chosen at all, since there was no difference by which to choose.[104]

This is the conviction he fights to keep but finds he must surrender. What dooms it is the realization that the distinction between the (supposedly Jewish) merit of works and the (supposedly Christian) merit of faith won't hold up, especially in light of the issues of foreknowledge and election raised by Romans 9:11. For what did God foresee when he announced his choice of Jacob over Esau before either was born?

> Did he by his foreknowledge see that Jacob would *believe?* By the same foreknowledge God could see the *works* Jacob would do. So just as Jacob can be said to be chosen because of his future faith, which God foreknew, someone else could say Jacob was chosen instead because of his future works, which God foreknew no less.[105]

Hence God's choice is no more based on foreknowledge of faith than on foreknowledge of works. This means in turn that faith is as much the result of grace as are love and its works. "Even faith itself is one of the gifts of grace. . . . So grace is before every merit."[106] The rejection of antecedent merit means that faith too comes under the widening scope of prevenient grace.

But this is not the hard conclusion Augustine has to come to. Indeed, as we have seen, he is ready to come to this conclusion in question 68 of the treatise *On Eighty-Three Different Questions,* until the question of differentiation comes in view and drives him to inconsistency. That question, not the question whether faith is a gift of grace, is what sets in motion the thrilling wrestling match in *To Simplicianus.* It is as if Augustine himself were Jacob, wrestling with God and coming away from that harrowing experience with a blessing but also a wound. Having concluded (as before) that faith is a gift of grace, he now launches into the really agonizing and convoluted inquiry: whence the difference between Jacob and Esau? For if Jacob's salvation is ultimately unmerited, the same must not be said for Esau's damnation. God's hatred of Esau "would be unjust unless merited by Esau's injustice."[107] How then can Esau be rejected while still in the womb, having done nothing good or evil?

It is no accident that the focus of the problem is on the negative—on Esau rather than Jacob. Unmerited grace may be no injustice, but unmerited

punishment is. That is why the negative case that Augustine had preferred to talk about was Pharaoh, who clearly merited his hardening of heart and subsequent punishment. But it does not look like the same can be said about Esau, still in the womb with Jacob, neither of them having done anything good or evil, as Paul insists in Romans 9:11. As Augustine wrestles with this problem, it seems that any solution for Esau removes grace from Jacob, by attributing antecedent merit to Esau and thus to Jacob as well. Did God foresee Esau's evil works? Then why not Jacob's good works? Did God foresee Esau's unbelief? Then why not Jacob's faith? Antecedent evil merit in Esau seems to imply antecedent good merit in Jacob.[108]

The solution only emerges when Augustine reckons with the possibility that Jacob has exactly the same antecedent merit as Esau, and that it is negative. Jacob merits only punishment, just like Esau. Merit therefore is present, but it does not differentiate between the two. Rather, it puts them both in the same undifferentiated mass of sin, from which God freely chooses to make one a vessel of honor and the other a vessel of dishonor. It is God, not human merit or faith, free will or works, that makes the fundamental difference. Augustine can finally take the point of Paul's metaphor of the lump of clay in Romans 9:21. In fact, in this text he elaborates it with a care that indicates, I suggest, that he is getting clear on its implications for the first time. He uses an economic metaphor: there is no injustice in exacting a debt of punishment, but the creditor is also free to forgive the debt, and this too is no injustice. The choice is entirely up to the creditor, and not determined by the nature of the debt.[109] That is why there is no injustice when God treats Jacob differently from Esau. Punishment for Esau is just, because it is merited, while grace for Jacob is unmerited but not unjust, because it is a mercy God is free to bestow upon whichever unworthy sinners he chooses.

From this point on, it is clear that Augustine will have to develop a doctrine of original sin—not just an account of how our nature is corrupted because of our descent from Adam, but an explanation of how even infants in the womb deserve condemnation because of their share in his sin. Original sin means we all have the same antecedent merit as Jacob and Esau, which is to say we are all born damnable, before we have done anything good or evil in our own lives. The whole human race is "one lump with original guilt remaining in all of it."[110] Merit does not ultimately differentiate between us, but rather lumps us all together in the same mass of sin. This profoundly un-Platonist concept of an original unity in evil is the presupposition Augustine needs in order to make sense of the biblical concept of a God whose gracious choice makes the ultimate difference between human beings.[111]

The Call to Faith

The treatise *To Simplicianus* is not the first time Augustine says that grace comes before our faith, but it is the first time he is willing to be consistent about saying this even in the face of the question of differentiation (why Jacob and not Esau? why this person and not that one?). Hence the story of how faith comes within the widening scope of grace is not quite so simple as: it happened in *To Simplicianus,* after Augustine resisted it in his earlier treatises on Paul. This is how the story is usually told, following Augustine's own telling of the story late in his life, which is not always perfectly helpful. In the treatise *On the Predestination of the Saints,* completed about a year before his death, Augustine reviews both *Propositions from Romans* and *To Simplicianus,*[112] saying that before the latter treatise he erred by "thinking the faith by which we believe in God was not God's gift but was in us from ourselves."[113] This is how he puts it initially, but the contrast between what is "God's gift" and what is "from ourselves" is too crude, as is the suggestion that his younger self had thought faith was in us "from ourselves." For in all three early exegeses of Romans 9, he had argued at length that the will to believe cannot come about without God first mercifully calling us to faith.[114] Thus for example in *Propositions from Romans,* right after Augustine explains how faith merits grace, he turns around and recognizes that grace also comes *before* faith, because the call to faith reaches us when we are still undeserving sinners: "it is by grace that the call is extended to sinners, as no merit of theirs precedes it except their worthiness of damnation."[115] He develops this point further in the next paragraph when he comes to Romans 9:15 ("I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy"), commenting that God is merciful to us first of all "because we were sinners when He called us."[116] There is thus already in this early text a strong doctrine of prevenience—of God's unmerited grace coming before our faith in the process of salvation.

Also somewhat misleading is the oft-quoted conclusion to Augustine's retrospective on the importance of *To Simplicianus:* "In the solution of this question the effort was indeed on behalf of the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God won."[117] For Augustine grace always wins, but not by defeating the human will nor by eliminating it from the story of salvation. In the immediately preceding chapter for instance (and this in his treatise on predestination!) Augustine states his mature position that faith and good works "are ours because of the choice of the will" and at the same time "are given by the Spirit of faith and love."[118] A similar both/and is operative in the

early Pauline exegeses, where "it is ours to will and believe"[119] and yet "we cannot will unless we are called."[120]

It is only when we attend to the details of what old Augustine says about the call to faith that we get a reliable guide to the thinking of his younger self. Before *To Simplicianus,* he says, "I did not think faith was preceded [*praeveniri*] by God's grace (so that through faith we may be given what we usefully ask) except because we cannot believe unless the proclamation of truth comes first [*praecederet*]."[121] Of course *To Simplicianus* is no different from the other early Pauline exegeses in making a proclamation or call to believe the truth come first, before faith. But the crucial question that emerges from Augustine's phrasing here is whether the call to faith is not only necessary for our coming to believe but sufficient as well. When God calls us to faith, does he merely make faith possible or does he make sure that we actually do come to faith? The latter is the kind of prevenience that Augustine really has in mind in the late treatises on predestination and that was first developed in the treatise *To Simplicianus*.

Yet it is not an entirely new question in *To Simplicianus*. Already in the treatise *On Eighty-Three Different Questions* (whose inconsistency about the precedence of grace to faith we noticed above) Augustine explores the sense in which our will to believe is caused by God's call:

> Since no one can will unless admonished or called, either inwardly where no human being sees it, or outwardly by the sounds of discourse or some visible sign, it follows that *the will itself is something God works* [operatur] *in us.*[122]

Augustine proceeds to illustrate the point by referring to the Gospel parable about people responding to the call to join in the Lord's banquet: those who came should attribute this to the call, while those who didn't should blame it on their own free will. Our good choices come ultimately from God, our evil choices from ourselves. In the initial stage in the process of salvation, our free will is capable of meriting nothing but evil. So the conclusion is: "the call works [*operatur*] the will prior to merit."[123] Since it is clearly the will to believe that is in view here, Augustine is already saying that the human choice to believe is caused by God's grace. So this is not something he says for the first time in *To Simplicianus*!

What is new in *To Simplicianus* is that God's call can cause us to choose faith *without fail*. This new point stems from the fundamental conceptual advance made by the treatise, namely, that it is the first time Augustine gives a clear answer to the question of differentiation. Augustine's retrospective account of his development on this point is accurate when he says that before *To*

Simplicianus, "I had not yet diligently sought, nor had I as yet found, what the election of grace was like, of which the Apostle speaks."[124] Once he is clear on the fact that it is ultimately God who decides (i.e., elects) who will come to faith, Augustine can treat grace as not merely a necessary precondition of faith but a sufficient cause of it, thus beginning a long process of development in his thought that results in a conception of grace that is, as later technical terminology puts it, not only prevenient but efficacious in itself.

The new notion that God's call can cause our choice to believe *without fail* reveals its presence in *To Simplicianus* by confronting Augustine with an interesting new problem. The fact that people are perfectly capable of refusing God's merciful call to faith was not a problem in the earlier treatises, but now requires an explanation. If God chooses to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, how is it that the merciful call is sometimes ineffectual? The Gospel itself offers the needed distinction when Jesus says, "many are called but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). There is evidently a gap between God's calling and his choosing. So Augustine begins with a tentative-sounding suggestion: "Perhaps those who are called in such a way that they don't consent, could have adapted their will to faith if called in a different way."[125] This would mean that those whom God calls but does not choose are called in a way not suited to evoke their belief, whereas "the chosen ones [*electi*] are suitably called [*congruenter vocati*]."[126]

Soon Augustine drops his tentative tone and makes this suggestion the centerpiece of his argument: God chooses to bring about faith in some people rather than others by calling them in a way suited to them. This is a phenomenon of persuasion familiar to any rhetorician, as Augustine observes: "one person is moved to belief in one way, another in another way; and often the same thing is moving when spoken in one way, but not in another; or it moves one person but not another."[127] The difference is that God, unlike mortal rhetoricians, always knows how to speak so as to evoke exactly the response he intends. Thus the reason Esau does not believe is not that God's call fails to achieve God's purpose but that God chooses not to speak to him in a way that would move him to believe. God does not intend that every call of his will actually evoke faith. So those who refuse his call are not frustrating his intention to have mercy on those on whom he actually wills to have mercy: "The outcome of God's mercy lies not within human power, as if he could have mercy in vain; for if he willed to have mercy on these same people, he could call them in a way that is fitting [*aptum*] so that they are moved and understand and follow."[128] Thus it is true both that faith is always an act of human free will and that it is ultimately up to God whether this person or that ends up having faith. In that sense God chooses what our free will shall do, and Augustine can

say flatly, "If God has mercy, then we will."[129] And if he does not, then we do not will, because in that case we are called but not chosen.

The conceptual step forward that Augustine has taken here is subtle but decisive. To illustrate what is at stake, imagine what might happen if I were standing behind you and suddenly called your name. Chances are good that you would turn around—quite willingly. So my call can cause you to turn not only your body but your will. In this sense human beings cause changes in each other's wills all the time without violating anyone's free choice. What none of us human beings can do, however, is *guarantee* how things will come out when we have an effect on each other's wills. I can cause you to will to turn, but I cannot cause you to do so *without fail*. It just might happen, for instance, that when I call you, you don't turn—perhaps because at that moment you are annoyed to hear someone call you and would rather keep on with whatever you're doing. This is not something in my control, and to that extent your will also is clearly not in my control. What Augustine has done in *To Simplicianus*, by contrast, is to insist that God *is* in control of our wills, because God can always choose to call us in such a way that we actually do choose to turn to him in faith. That is more than just saying faith is a gift of God. It means that when God chooses to give this gift to you, he can also make sure that you freely and willingly receive it. This is the sort of calling to which the Calvinist tradition later gives the name, "the effectual call."

However, the doctrine of calling here does involve a stronger doctrine of free will than in Calvinism, which (like Lutheranism) insists that the sinful children of Adam are all quite incapable of choosing to believe without divine grace. So far as the argument in this text goes, Jacob and Esau are both inherently capable of believing, given something suitable to believe, but the one has his capacity to believe triggered by a suitable call while the other does not. Their sinfulness has not corrupted their souls to such an extent that they cannot freely choose to believe, given the opportunity. The Reformers, by contrast, are happy to say that the Holy Spirit directly, inwardly moves the human will to a faith that it would otherwise be incapable of choosing for itself. In this they are heirs of Augustine's own mature psychology of grace, which develops many years later in the course of the Pelagian controversy. In *To Simplicianus* Augustine has not gotten that far yet.

Indeed in many respects the psychology of *To Simplicianus* is unique and unrepeated, as we shall see in detail in the next chapter. Augustine never again conceived the effect of grace on our wills in quite the same way. For ultimately it is inconsistent with his own deepest intuitions about the nature of the soul to suppose that a merely external call causes a change for the good in our wills. Yet in the course of trying to explain how this works in *To Simplicianus*, he does

make a key conceptual move that later becomes central to the more radically inward conception of grace in his anti-Pelagian writings: he makes delight the mainspring of our willing.

Assent or Delight?

What is striking about the call to faith in all the early Romans exegeses is that it makes our will dependent on external things. In one sense, this is no great surprise. Unlike love, which can aim straight at the eternal Good, faith is concerned in the first instance with temporal and external things, such as what we are told by the Gospels about Christ being crucified and raised from the dead. Obviously we can't believe this if we have never heard about it, which is why the apostle says that "faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17). In other words, precisely because the orientation of faith is more external than that of love, it makes sense that faith is more dependent on external things, such as the words of the Gospel. But this dependence makes less sense in *To Simplicianus*, where God is supposed to have unfailing control over our wills. For that would seem to give an external thing power over our souls, a result that Augustine always wants to avoid. So Augustine needs to think carefully about the psychological process that leads from an external call to an internal change of will.

To do this he has recourse to a Stoic defense of free will, which he has used before against Manichaean fatalism. The Stoics had a strong doctrine of providence that amounts to a kind of determinism, yet they also affirmed human free will. (They were, in modern philosophical parlance, "compatibilists" about the relation between free will and determinism—arguing that the two were compatible and could both be true together.) Their argument was that human motivation always begins with a mental appearance (Greek *phantasia*) derived from external things but that it is up to us to give our assent to that appearance. Though it is predictable whether we will actually give our assent or not in any given circumstance (predictable for anyone with enough knowledge of our moral character, interests, desires, and so on—knowledge we can assume God has), nevertheless, nothing outside us determines our assent. Our power of choice is therefore not captive to external things, even though it always needs external data to work with. The Latin term for such data is *visa* (or the singular *visum*), a word for "appearances" or mental impressions that plays a key role in Cicero's epistemological works.[130] The Stoic defense of free will revolves around the two terms, appearances and assent: an appearance is a necessary condition of any human action, the Stoics concede, but the action

occurs only when the appearance is greeted by the soul's assent, and it is the latter that is the primary and sufficient cause of the action.[131]

So it is not so surprising that when Augustine wants to defend free will in a text early in the treatise *On Eighty-Three Different Questions,* he uses the term *visum* to designate the necessary beginning of all human motivation.[132] His target in this argument (as throughout the early Pauline exegeses) is the fatalism of the Manichaeans, who had taught him that there are two different kinds of soul, one naturally good and the other naturally evil. His strategy is to offer an alternative account of the ultimate source of difference between the good will of one soul and the evil will of another. He sketches a causal sequence of motivation that begins with different appearances, from which come different desires (*appetitus*), from which come different approaches to getting what one wants (*adipiscendi successus*), from which come differences in habit (*consuetudo*), from which come differences in will. But he adds that these appearances, the very starting points of our motivation, come our way through the hidden order of divine providence. So the difference between souls results not from their natures but from the divine order of things. Thus the Stoic defense of free will (even without the key term "assent," which is not included in this very brief sketch) is useful in showing that there are alternatives to Manichaean fatalism that nonetheless maintain a strong view of divine providence.

In *To Simplicianus* Augustine evidently thought he could expand this sketch to the same effect, vindicating both free will and God's providential control over the differences between souls. When he first tentatively introduces the notion of a fitting or suitable call into the discussion, he even introduces the Stoic notion of assent, suggesting that God could unfailingly give us the gift of faith because he knows what sort of call each of us would freely consent to.[133] Toward the end of the discussion, Augustine sets this account of motivation in the context of the whole process of salvation, which he traces backward from its goal in eternal beatitude to its beginning in faith, which in turn is preceded by the suitable call, which takes the form of an appearance.

> We are commanded to live rightly, being offered this reward: that we may merit living a happy life for eternity. But who can live rightly and do good works, unless he be justified by faith? We are commanded to have faith, so that having received the gift of the Holy Spirit we may be able to do good works through love. But who can believe without being touched by some calling, some *testimony of things?* Who has it in his power that his mind be reached by an appearance [*viso*] by which his *will is moved to faith*?[134]

Now the concept of assent drops out of the picture once again. Its place will be taken by the concept of delight, which has already played a central role in his portrayal of charity as delight in justice.[135] The new thing about Augustine's psychology of grace at this point is that the concept of delight is used to explain the origin not only of love but of faith. As in his earlier treatments of the grace of charity, the usefulness of the concept of delight here is that, unlike the concept of assent, it puts the spotlight on an aspect of our willing that is not in our own control. So Augustine continues:

> But who can embrace with his soul something that does not delight him? Or who has it in his power that something will come up that *can* delight him, or that it *will* delight him when it comes? Therefore when those things delight us by which we advance toward God, this is inspired and presented [*praebetur*] by the grace of God, not acquired by our inclination and industriousness or the merits of works; for that there is inclination [*nutus*] of the will, that there is industriousness of zeal, that there are works fervent in charity, is something he gives, he bestows.[136]

The claim here is sweeping. Everything in our souls by which we advance toward God—our motivation to believe as well as to love—is dependent on the possibility of delight. The connection between faith and delight should come as a bit of a surprise. After all, one might think the call to faith would convince us to believe something is true rather than give us something to delight in. But evidently the focus is on delight here because the issue is precisely the *will* to faith, and delight is what moves the will. Thus Augustine reverts to a Platonist account of the will rather than the Stoic account of choice signaled by the term *visum*.

What happens at this point in the text illustrates a conceptual dynamic characteristic of the whole Augustinian tradition. As the concept of faith is "moved inward," conceived as a deeper aspect of the self as well as a more central element in the process of salvation, it also becomes more problematic psychologically, taking on some of the same density, complexity, and indeed perversity as that central act of the will that Augustine calls love. (The Protestant doctrine of justification by faith *alone* would be impossible without this increasing psychological density of the concept of faith, which allows it to take over some of the theological functions of charity.)[137] Here for the first time, Augustine assigns to faith the same uncontrollable depth and complexity as love, making it dependent on a deep delight that means our will is both free and not in its own power. For what do we will more freely than that which delights us? Yet the will does not come to delight in anything simply by willing to

do so. This double-sidedness of delight, out of control of the will yet making us willing, plays an increasingly important role in Augustine's doctrine of grace, yet Augustine does not again apply it specifically to the concept of faith until midway through the Pelagian controversy.[138] It seems he was not quite ready for what he got himself into by making faith as dependent as love on the gift of delight.[139]

No External Cause of Grace

What is it that moves us to the delight that causes us to believe? Apparently it can be anything in the world. Augustine refers in the passage we have quoted to a "testimony of things" (*rerum testificatione*), which could include Christian preaching and teaching but which is phrased broadly enough to include the witness borne by all things to their Creator. It is striking that at this crucial juncture delight is evoked by external things, and that this moves our will in the right direction. Has Augustine forgotten his central ethical conviction, that we must not seek our happiness in temporal things? Does he no longer believe in turning inward to see eternal things? I do not think so. Rather, he is groping for an explanation of how God might change our will that does not make the will out to be passive, something that is merely moved by God rather than being the source of its own movement. So he tries to defend free will by insisting on the externality of the divine calling, which leaves our will inwardly untrammeled, free and active in choosing how to move itself, even when divine providence is causing it unfailingly to receive the gift God chooses to give.

As we shall see in the next chapter, this is a version of the psychology of grace that cannot last. I suggest that what has happened here in Augustine's treatment of faith is analogous to what happened in his earliest treatment of charity in the Pauline exegeses, where the "grace of the liberator" that frees us to love eternal rather than temporal goods is entirely external, consisting of the example and teaching of Christ.[140] In both cases, Augustine treats a function of the soul that he has just realized needs divine help as if it could be helped by external means. This is because the function has not yet been (but is about to be) "moved inward," where its difficulties can be treated with a new density and psychological complexity.[141] Hence Augustine's first impulse is to treat it as a function oriented toward the proper use of external things, not needing the interior assistance that is addressed to more inward-looking functions of the soul. So it happens that very early in his career, when the intellect (being what is inmost in us) clearly needs the help of an inner teacher to come to knowl-

edge of the Truth, *love* can be helped to move in the right direction by the grace of Christ's merely external teaching and example.[142] Likewise here in *To Simplicianus,* at a point in Augustine's career when love of God has long been treated as an inner gift of delight, *faith* can be called into being by a mere sensible appearance. In both cases, external means of help give way in the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace to the inward operations of God directly moving our wills from within. The more he thinks about it, the more inward grace becomes.

Even in *To Simplicianus,* however, we should not suppose that a merely external thing can actually be a "cause of grace," as medieval theology would later put it.[143] For Augustine never allows that sensible things have causal power over the soul. On the contrary, even in his theory of sense perception souls are not moved by external things but rather move themselves in response to what they notice happening in their sense organs.[144] Only in this way, I take it, can an appearance (*visum*) be that by which the "will is moved to faith," as our passage from *To Simplicianus* puts it.[145] To be precise, the will *moves itself* to faith when it notices an appearance that it finds delightful in the right way. It is this propensity toward self-movement to which a skilled rhetorician appeals by the attractive use of words that we rather misleadingly call "powerful" or "moving."[146]

What is unusual about this passage from *To Simplicianus,* then, is not that it allows external things causal power over the soul (it doesn't) but that it comes so close to suggesting that a delight in particular external things could lead us closer to God. This runs contrary to Augustine's Platonist moralism, in which his theory of sense perception is inextricably embedded. The reason Augustine wants to show that bodies have no power over souls even in sensation is precisely to reinforce the point that the soul, being better and superior to the body, should take no delight in bodily things.[147] Hence shortly after he presents his theory of sense perception, he admonishes us to "delight only in higher things," because delight is a kind of weight of the soul that can move us either up toward God or down toward earthly things.[148] A little further on, this movement toward God is described as a movement into one's own mind.[149] All this is part of a neo-Pythagorean meditation on rhythm and number in the treatise *On Music,* which is a precursor to the meditation on the beauty of Wisdom and Number that we have already noticed in the second book of *On Free Choice.*[150] Both texts affirm that the beauty of the external world is created by a divine Wisdom and Number, but then call us away from external beauties to seek their Creator in a more interior realm. To delight in outward things is to fall away from God within, as Augustine tells us in a pivotal moment in the *Confessions,* summing up this Platonist moralism:

> Late have I loved You, O Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved You! And behold, You were within, I was outside—and I sought You there, rushing deformed among the beautifully-formed things You have made. You were with me but I was not with You.[151]

Rushing among the beautiful things of the external world means turning one's back on the light of eternal Beauty within. So while it is true that there is a "testimony of things" (as the account of the calling to faith in *To Simplicianus* puts it), this is meant to direct our attention away from external things, as all God's good creatures testify: "It's not me you seek, but him who made me."[152] Delight in external things, even the salutary external things of the faith, should not delay us in our ascent beyond externals to the Beauty and Truth within.[153] So we cannot expect Augustine's doctrine of grace to work like later Catholic and Lutheran sacramental theology, which can go so far as to urge us to cling to external signs with spiritual delight. We may use them, even to that extent love them,[154] but we must not think that they can give us the fruition we long for.

Reading Paul's Admonition

Against the pressure of the inward turn so dear to Augustine's heart, the conception of a suitable external calling has nowhere to go. Only one other important text, written not long after *To Simplicianus,* gives it a decisive role. Strikingly, however, this text is from the treatise that most vividly articulates Augustine's inward turn. In the memorable narrative in the eighth book of the *Confessions,* he weeps in a garden in Milan because of his inability to live a life of sexual continence, then snatches up the writings of Paul and reads, "Not in dissipation and drunkenness, not in sex and shamelessness, not in strife and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its covetousness."[155] After this moment he is no longer torn by two conflicting wills but gains a wholehearted delight in eternal rather than temporal goods, as well as the ability to choose a life that accords with it:

> How sweet it suddenly became for me to do without the sweetness of trivial things! Things I once feared to lose, I was now glad to let go of. I threw them out—You true and highest sweetness!—I threw them out and You came in instead, more pleasing than any pleasure . . .[156]

The story is a perfect illustration of the key transition in the schema of the four stages: from the stage of life under Law (*sub lege*) to the stage of life under grace

(*sub gratia*). The author of the *Confessions* tells this story in a way that makes the point unmistakably clear. Whereas book 8 begins with young Augustine willing the good but unable to do it (because his will is divided and in conflict with itself) it ends with his being freed to live the right life because he can now wholeheartedly will it.

The respect in which this narrative reflects the theology of *To Simplicianus* more than that of any of the other early Pauline exegeses lies in the role played by the suitable external call in God's bringing about an interior change of will.[157] Indeed, suitable external calls abound in *Confessions* 8. First, Augustine hears about a friend of a friend who reads the life of the desert monk Anthony and who, in language echoing the effect that reading Cicero had on Augustine himself so many years before, is inflamed and inwardly changed by his reading.[158] Later Augustine hears a child chanting what sounds like a nursery-rhyme, "take up and read," which he "interprets as nothing other than a divine command to me" to do as Anthony had done: to open the book of Scripture, to read the first thing he sees and—as the example of Anthony evidently suggests—to obey it.[159] Anthony is admonished by the reading of the Gospel to give up his wealth to the poor so as to have treasure in heaven instead, and "by that oracle he was immediately turned [*conversum*] to You."[160] To put it in terms of Augustine's ethics, Anthony's will is turned from love of temporal goods to love of eternal goods: this is what "conversion" means here. Augustine is then similarly admonished and converted as he takes up the book of Paul's writings. Finally, he shows the book to his best friend Alypius, who is "strengthened by the admonition" he reads a few lines down in the same book.[161] Evidently Alypius's superior moral character, which Augustine had emphasized earlier,[162] means that he need not be turned in a new direction but simply strengthened in his resolve. Not every change of heart need be described as conversion.

But now we must notice the crucial respect in which the narrative in *Confessions* 8 does *not* illustrate the theology of *To Simplicianus*. It illustrates the transition from Law to grace, as well as how a suitable call can trigger a change in the will,[163] but it does not illustrate the key point of *To Simplicianus,* because it is not about a call to *faith*. The narrative cannot illustrate both the transition to life under grace and the beginning of faith, because these belong at two different stages in the order of salvation. As mentioned before,[164] in his early Pauline exegeses Augustine has trouble positioning faith in the sequence or order of salvation because it comes before the life under grace (*sub gratia*) yet not before grace itself. This means there is a prevenient grace that gives us faith before we come to the life under grace, which consists in charity. So we can have faith and even a good will while still under the Law (*sub lege*). Indeed the

defining feature of this stage of life, just before the life under grace, is that we have the will not to sin (i.e., a good will) but are unable to do what we will—which is precisely why we pray *in faith* for a gift of grace we do not yet have. This is exactly young Augustine's situation in *Confessions* 8: already a believer in Christ, he finds himself unable to do the good that he wills, because his will is divided and in conflict with itself. So he prays in faith for the gift of grace, but halfheartedly, in the famous prayer, "Give me continence and chastity, but not yet."[165] He wants what he does not yet have, and he does not yet have it precisely because he does not want it enough, does not will it simply and wholly.[166] What he lacks is not faith but charity, the love of God poured out in his heart by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which enables him to close the gap between willing and doing.

Thus the conversion narrative in *Confessions* 8 is not the story of how Augustine came to faith and in that respect does not illustrate the theology of *To Simplicianus* concerning the call to faith. To bring this point clearly into focus, we must reject the most persistent of all misreadings of Augustine, according to which *Confessions* 8 is precisely the narrative of Augustine's conversion to Christianity.[167] It is astonishing that this interpretation could be so persistent in overlooking Augustine's emphatic words to the contrary. In the previous book he makes it unmistakably clear that he is already a believer in Christ before the events narrated in book 8: "the faith of Your Christ, our Lord and Savior, in the Catholic church stuck fast in my heart, though in many respects ill-formed and fluctuating outside the norm of doctrine."[168] His faith is doctrinally uninformed, but the events narrated in book 8 do not change that, except insofar as they lead him to get baptized and thus become a full-fledged member of the church, where he can learn better. Yet it is already a faith that is Christian enough to take Christ to heart as Lord and Savior, just as the Catholic church (not the Manichaeans) taught. As if to make sure we don't miss the point, he repeats it at greater length a couple chapters later. Despite all the agonized uncertainty of his search for truth at that time, he thanks God that

> You did not allow me to be removed by any of the back-and-forth of thought from the faith by which I believed in Your existence, Your immutable substance, Your care for human beings and Your judgment, and that in Christ, Your Son our Lord, and in the holy Scriptures which the authority of Your Catholic church commends, You established for human salvation a road to that life which is to come after this death.[169]

He is already a believer in Christ, but there is a road he is not yet ready to take, the gate to which is baptism. That is why the admonition from Paul is so

important to him: he reads the words "put on Christ" as a command to be baptized. The sense of security that comes to him at that point stems from his newfound resolution to accept "regeneration through baptism."[170]

The conversion narrated in *Confessions* 8 is thus not a decision to believe in Christ but a decision to join the church, acquiring newness of life by becoming a baptized member of Christ's Body. This is conversion in the ancient ecclesial sense of turning away from all other religious affiliations and being fully incorporated into the Catholic church. The power of the narrative consists in the coinciding of this ecclesial sense of conversion with the Platonist sense of conversion as turning from love of temporal goods to love of eternal goods, which in turn coincides with the Pauline transition from life under Law to life under grace.[171] As Augustine tells the story these are all one conversion, because they all consist in the power of charity, turning the heart to love God above all things as well as one's neighbor in the church, the community of those who love each other in the deepest way possible for human beings—by strengthening in each other the love of God.

To read *Confessions* 8 as if it were the story of Augustine deciding to accept Christ or believe in him for the first time is to assimilate it to Protestant conversion narratives of a much later era. To see why this anachronism persists despite Augustine's own words to the contrary, we should ask what theological purposes it serves, a question we shall be in a position to answer more fully when we come to examine the very different situation of Augustine's theology at the end of his life.[172] But to look ahead briefly, we can note that the notion of a conversion *to faith* comes to prominence in Augustine's writings precisely when the distinctive insights of *To Simplicianus* about prevenience and election become central to the Pelagian controversy—which is the same time when the notion of a suitable external call to faith proves no longer useful.[173] As a result, the cause of our choice to believe comes to be located in a fully inward grace—as inward as the grace that works within us to turn our will toward God in charity. In sum, it takes a while for Augustine to catch up with the doctrine of election he worked out in *To Simplicianus,* and by the time he does, his psychology of grace must take a more radically inward turn. Consequently, as we shall see in the next two chapters, the narrative of *Confessions* 8 is not a good illustration of the crucial new elements of Augustine's doctrine of prevenient grace that emerge in his anti-Pelagian writings.[174]

It is useful to note another way in which *Confessions* 8 cannot be assimilated to a Protestant conversion narrative. The Pauline admonition that results in so great a change in Augustine's heart is an example of what Protestants call Law rather than Gospel. It is not a promise of grace in Christ but a command to do something about changing his life. This serves to illustrate what is new and

non-Augustinian about the distinction between Law and Gospel made famous by Luther: for Augustine the beginning of life under grace may be occasioned by a text that for Luther must count as Law rather than Gospel. So in Augustine Law can do what Luther thinks only the Gospel does. Later we shall see that the reverse is also true, in that for Augustine the Gospel itself can do no more than the Law, "the letter that kills."[175] What makes it "letter" is simply its externality, in contrast to the inner work of the life-giving Spirit, which cannot be found in any external sign, whether text or speech, Scripture or preaching.

However, setting aside Protestant expectations, we can of course call *Confessions* 8 the story of a conversion both in the ancient ecclesial sense and in Augustine's distinctively Platonist sense. Moreover, it remains a model of the *experience* of grace throughout Augustine's life.[176] So there is much more to be said about this extraordinarily complex and subtle narrative, especially when we are in a position to situate the sacrament of baptism in relation to the shared inner life of the church.[177] Above all, we will need to understand why Augustine thinks so much depends on this particular external sign.

But for now, we can already state one crucial distinction: Augustine is willing to say that certain external signs, both words and sacraments, are necessary for our salvation but not that they are efficacious. They do not directly cause any change in our wills or souls (no bodily thing can do that) yet our souls must willingly make use of them in order to find the road to God. They are indeed like road signs, affording us no power to move along the road but providing indispensable markings of the right way to go. Thus they have the same function as all signs according to Augustine's first major treatise on semiotics: they serve as admonitions that are inherently powerless but nonetheless useful, even indispensable, as they can alert us, even command us, to turn both our will and our attention in a new and more inward direction.[178] They are not something to cling to, however, for we reach our destination by passing beyond external things, moving inward and upward.

This is where both Catholic piety of the sacraments and Protestant piety of the word end up taking a different direction from Augustine, as both traditions are more willing to cling devotedly to outward signs than Augustine is. The contrast with Protestant theology is particularly instructive at this point. Protestant devotion to the external word of the Gospel grew out of a pastoral problem raised by the Augustinian notion of the will of God whose origin we have traced in this chapter. Since the problem arises only after Augustinian theology is the established intellectual framework for the whole religious culture of the West, it is one that does not confront Augustine himself with anything like the force it had for Luther or Calvin. The problem is irreducibly first-person singular: if God's choice is all that makes the difference between

the saved and the damned, then it becomes crucial to know what his will is *for me*—whether I belong with Jacob or with Esau. Protestant devotion to the Gospel is grounded in an epistemology which recognizes that hearing the word of another person might afford us knowledge superior to seeing for ourselves,[179] and here it deals with an issue that should be its strong suit: what better way is there for me to learn someone's choice about me than to hear what he has to say about it? So God's word should reveal God's will. Yet the problem does not go away, because Augustinian theology, as we are about to see in some detail, makes God's choices out to be so deep as to be inscrutable and beyond the reach of any word.

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3

Anti-Pelagian Grace

Clarifying Prevenience

The tenacious polemics called forth by Augustine's controversy with the Pelagians eventually require him to be clear about the extent to which God inwardly governs human wills. The initial issue was our need for divine help, as demonstrated by Christian religious practices (our need to pray for divine help and our need to be baptized even as infants) and by an argument derived from Augustine's Platonist psychology, to the effect that without an inward gift of delight we obey God's Law only externally, motivated by fear not love. The ontological roots of this psychology are clearest in the least-known of Augustine's early treatises against the Pelagians, On the Grace of the New Testament, *which mounts a Platonist argument against any view of free choice which cannot acknowledge that every goodness of soul comes by inward participation in the eternal Good. With this doctrine of inner grace in hand Augustine proceeds to critique Pelagian conceptions of grace as consisting of Law (i.e., external teaching) or Nature (i.e., free will), which he regards as two ways of evading the question. A third evasion, which emerges midway in the controversy, is Pelagius's notion that grace is given to those who merit it. To expose this evasion requires Augustine to give up some evasiveness of his own and get clear about the absolute prevenience of grace, and particularly about how the human choice to believe is brought about by the same inner grace as the human will to charity. The missing piece of the puzzle is Augustine's old notion of a divine inner teaching, now expanded to include not only the gift of understanding but also the gift of faith.*

With the onset of the Pelagian controversy in 412, Augustine's conception of grace steps onto a world stage. Before long Augustine's polemics against Pelagius and his followers circulate throughout the Roman empire from Carthage to Jerusalem, Rome, and Gaul, and they have not ceased circulating throughout the Western world since. They are writings that changed the world, but they articulate a conception of grace that does not change drastically over the course of the controversy, because its basic lineaments had already been worked out in Augustine's early exegeses of Paul and its most difficult implications had been brought to light by the end of the treatise *To Simplicianus*.

Still, it is one thing to come to a difficult conclusion at the end of a long argumentative wrestling match like *To Simplicianus*, and another to be willing to defend this difficult conclusion against critics and use it as a weapon in polemics.[1] Thus the demands of controversy do eventually make the more troubling and dangerous implications of Augustine's theology stand out more clearly, even to Augustine himself. When pressed as to whether he really can affirm all the consequences of his new concept of grace, Augustine in the end is willing to write whole treatises defending them, such as his late work *On the Predestination of the Saints*. Moreover, he does make one subtle but very significant change that inaugurates the mature middle phase of his anti-Pelagian writings:[2] he drops the account of coming to faith that he had used in the Pauline exegeses, where prevenient grace works through a divine call based on sensible appearances.[3] This means that grace, like the light of Truth, does not come to us by external means. God's effect on our wills, like his effect on our intellects, is not dependent on outward signs. It reaches us from a place more inward than our inmost selves, where God is most truly to be found. The troubling and dangerous implications of Augustine's doctrine of grace, as we shall see, are inseparable from this increasingly resolute emphasis on its inwardness, conceiving it as God's working directly within our hearts to turn our wills in the direction he chooses.

The Shape of the Controversy

From the outset the fundamental issue of the Pelagian controversy is deceptively simple. Do we need God's help in order to live justly and come in the end to happiness with God? Since no party to the controversy denied this (how many religious thinkers are there who deny we need divine help?) the key conceptual task of Augustine's polemics was to say what grace is and why it is something more than the kind of divine help Pelagius was willing to affirm. To

succeed, Augustine had to persuade the world that Pelagius was evading the issue precisely because he did not conceive of grace as *inner* help.

The controversy took its shape from three lines of argument Augustine used to show the necessity of grace. First and foremost was the argument from prayer: since we pray for God's help in our struggle to live rightly, to do good works, and even to love him, it is clear that this is help he can actually give us. The reasoning is hard to dispute (how could one dispute it without getting rid of much of the religious life?) and became the basis of the official papal condemnation of Pelagius's teachings. In 416, about four years after the controversy began, two councils of African bishops wrote the bishop of Rome urging him to anathematize Pelagius's teachings; their letters were placed in a packet with a longer, more fully argued letter from Augustine and his closest allies in the African episcopate. It is likely that Augustine penned all three letters,[4] which rely heavily on arguments based on the Christian practice of prayer. When Jesus commands us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," does this not mean we are praying to avoid sin, which implies that we cannot avoid sin without the help of the One to whom we pray? So Augustine concludes that "this prayer itself is the clearest testimony to grace."[5] In his replies to these letters the Pope takes Augustine's point, confirming the Africans' appeal to the Lord's Prayer with his own appeals to the Psalms, which of course abound in prayers for God's help.[6]

The second line of argument, more disputable and more dismaying, resembles the first in being rooted in a fundamental religious practice: the sacrament of baptism, and in particular the baptism of infants. Augustine drew on a wellspring of African piety that insisted on the necessity of baptism for salvation and that grieved over the loss of infants who died unbaptized.[7] His reasoning was based ultimately on a principle of justice: if we baptize infants for their salvation, this must mean that without baptism they would be damned. But their damnation would be unjust if they were not sinners. So what kind of sin could they be guilty of, since (like Jacob and Esau in Romans 9:11) they have not yet done anything good or evil? In their own lives they have committed no actual sins, so they must be guilty of the original sin that they share somehow with Adam. This line of argument (which we have already seen emerging in *To Simplicianus*)[8] led Augustine to develop his distinctive conception of original sin, according to which we are not merely born with a corrupted and sinful nature but literally born guilty, meriting eternal punishment because of our share in Adam's sin. Original sin means that the first sin is somehow ours and that we deserve damnation for it. Otherwise, Augustine argues repeatedly, why would baptism be needed for the salvation of infants? This argument, beginning in 412 with *On the Merits and Remission of Sins, and Infant Baptism,* takes on a separate history of its own through a series of controversies about issues

centering around original sin: infant baptism, the damnation of unbaptized infants, the origin of the soul (where does the soul come from if it is born guilty?), and the nature of concupiscence in marriage (is it something about the lust of fallen human procreation that explains how the sin of Adam is passed down to all his progeny?). These are issues we shall largely pass by here in order to focus primarily on the third line of argument, the only one rooted in psychological theory rather than religious practices.

The third line of argument is introduced in Augustine's treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter,* also in 412, right at the beginning of the controversy. It is an argument about the motivations of the soul, which Augustine contends are not sufficient to love God and do good works without the inner help of God. The argument is based on Augustine's distinctive Platonist theory of love and will, which he has already developed in his Pauline exegeses into an argument that our good will needs the help of an inner gift of delight if it is to accomplish anything. Though this psychology of grace came to be institutionalized in the Western church in the next thousand years, at the time Augustine deployed it against Pelagius it was a novelty. This is shown by the fact that Augustine does not use it in the correspondence with the Pope, in which it was important to build a case based on the most familiar and most widely accepted premises.

Nonetheless, Augustine sees a clear logical connection between the first line of argument and the third. That connection leads to the theme of the present book. The grace for which we must pray is help *for the soul,* which for Augustine means it is an inner gift that cannot come from external things such as words. It is a help whose causal efficacy can only be conceived as operating in the inner space of the soul, where we see and love the eternal Beauty, Goodness, and Truth of God. This inward character of grace is essential to Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings, because Pelagius is quite willing to acknowledge that we need God's help so long as that help comes to us by external means such as the teaching of Scripture and the example of Christ's life. So Augustine's anti-Pelagian theology must draw on his Platonist conception of grace as inner help if it is to succeed in exposing Pelagius's evasions. But even before the controversy had proceeded to the point where Pelagius had something to evade, the key connections between Augustinian Platonism and Augustinian grace were firmly in place, as we can see in another major work of the year 412.

The Grace of Participation

The treatise *On the Grace of the New Testament* is a very long letter that Augustine lists as composed between *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins* and *On*

the Spirit and the Letter.[9] It appears to occupy a peculiar place just on the verge of the controversy, for it opens with an exposition of the concept of grace that proceeds as if no one had ever heard of Pelagianism, and concludes many pages later with a polemic against the Pelagians. In the middle of the treatise the polemical targets are Jews supposedly proud of their good works (as in Augustine's early exegeses of Paul), but by the end the target is proud Pelagians.[10] It looks very much as if the letter grew into an anti-Pelagian treatise over the course of its composition. However, because of its place among Augustine's letters it is not usually included in collections of Augustine's anti-Pelagian works. If it were, the Platonist ontology that provides the foundations of Augustine's psychology of grace would be harder to ignore.

The letter does not begin like a polemical treatise introducing a position it aims to attack but rather sets out to answer questions from a brother in Christ named Honoratus, beginning with a fundamental exposition of the patristic consensus on the concept of grace. Commenting on the first chapter of John's Gospel, which of course is the key New Testament text on the Incarnation, Augustine defines grace as the power of participation in Christ whereby we become children of God—not by nature, like Christ himself, but by adoption.[11] Christian believers are like Christ in being sons of God but remain unlike him in being sons of God by grace, not by nature. Thus grace essentially means the divine cause of that spiritual rebirth that is our adoption as children of God. Augustine situates this centerpiece of patristic soteriology in the context of patristic Christology: remaining the Son of God by nature, Christ took upon himself human nature so that we human beings might, while remaining human, participate in the divine nature of Christ the eternal Word of God.[12] This in turn he situates within his overarching concern for the proper happiness of the rational soul, which consists in enjoyment of eternal things rather than earthly felicity.[13] That is why the title refers to the grace *of the New Testament*, because the Old Testament is literally about earthly goods for the earthly people of Israel.[14] Yet there is continuity as well as difference between the two testaments, as the grace revealed in the New Testament is not simply left out of the Old Testament but veiled in prophecies and figures of speech.[15]

Augustine illustrates the point by turning to the Old Testament for an exposition of the grace of the New Testament. In fact the bulk of the treatise *On the Grace of the New Testament* consists in an exegesis of Psalm 22, which makes the continuity between the two testaments obvious because its first verse is one of the most memorable quotations of the Old Testament in the whole New Testament: the cry of dereliction uttered by Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[16] One can learn a great deal about Augustine's theology from his exposition of this psalm. In it he finds Christ

teaching us by example to despise earthly goods and cleave to eternal goods alone—the central theme of Augustine's Platonist ethics from the beginning to the end of his career. Against all modern expectation, Augustine's reading of Psalm 22 confirms his early treatment of the meaning of the crucifixion: Jesus on the cross teaches us not to fear temporal loss, by instilling in us love for better and more lasting things.[17] The forsakenness of Jesus' cry has to do with fleshly felicity, not eternal goods. God forsakes our covetous desire for fleshly felicity when he does not hear our prayers for the good things of this life, but "*he does not forsake us* in regard to the more important things he wants us to understand, to prefer and desire."[18] When Christ speaks of being forsaken, therefore, he does not mean that he is himself forsaken, as if God could have deprived him of anything he really values. Rather, Christ adopts "the voice of our weakness," transferring the words uttered by our sinful flesh to himself, in a figure of speech that attributes the words of his Body (the church) to its Head (himself).[19] Thus for example we should not read the psalm as if it were Christ's own heart of flesh that melted like wax in verse 14, because that is something that happens only to someone who is seized by uncontrollable fear.[20] Likewise his prayers should not be read as if they were "the petition of someone in need."[21] These words express *our* needs and fears, not his, for the point of the cross is to give us an example of one who does not fear the loss of temporal things.

One might wonder if Augustine could really be thinking seriously of someone suffering the gruesome death of crucifixion. Yet his interpretation is consonant with the common patristic view that Christ on the cross triumphed over the suffering of his own flesh.[22] Remaining what he was, he is still the immutable and impassible God even on the cross, conquering his own human suffering and death rather than being overcome by it. To understand the point, it helps to think of early medieval paintings of the crucifixion, which show Jesus impassive, unshaken by the mortal ills of his own body—quite different from the contorted and agonized Christ of later medieval painting, which is more familiar today.[23]

Midway through the psalm, there is a turning point from lamentation to thanksgiving, and at this point Augustine is especially insistent that we pay close attention to the grace of the New Testament hidden in the Old.[24] The psalmist speaks of declaring God's praise in the assembly (*ekklesia* in the Greek translation, which comes out as the word for "church" in Latin), which Augustine naturally takes to be a reference to the life of the church. There God inspires inward praise and joy by "kindling his lover unto himself by the grace of his Holy Spirit" to obey the command to love God with the whole heart, soul, and mind.[25] So as we have seen in the previous chapter, the Platonist moralism

requiring us to love eternal things rather than temporal things is wedded with the Gospel command to love God and the Pauline conviction that such love is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It looks very much as if the grace of the New Testament is God teaching us inwardly to be good Platonists, just as Augustine told Plato.[26] This means, as Augustine would soon explain at length in the treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*, a turn from fear to love, from slavish worship under the Mosaic Law, which is the letter that kills, to the freedom of the Spirit, which gives life.[27] In this sense grace means the triumph of Platonist inwardness over Jewish literalism—a theme that we have encountered before and that remains central in Augustine's thinking about the sacraments.[28]

What "the proud Jews" do not understand, says Augustine, is that our goodness and righteousness depend on the justice of God, which derives not from our works but from participation in the light of God within our own hearts.[29] Combining Plato and Paul, he tells us that "the soul becomes just only by participation in the Better, which justifies the impious."[30] In Augustine's theology of grace, Pauline justification by faith means Platonist participation in the Good. The justice of God that Paul speaks of consists ultimately in a "participation in the eternal Word," which in the meantime begins by faith, as those who imitate Christ not only despise temporal goods but also bear patiently with evils.[31] Drawing on his favorite Platonist imagery, Augustine pictures this participation as illumination by an inner light, which he identifies with God, who is Charity itself.[32] The charity of our souls is participation in this higher, divine Charity, just as (in the exposition of John 1 earlier in the treatise) the true Light is the divine Word itself; but when the Word illuminates the soul, it kindles a light therein that is not the true Light but participates in it.[33] This participation (by grace of adoption) is the key to both our goodness and our happiness, for the changeable rational soul "cannot be its own good, by which it is happy" but rather finds happiness by "being turned to the unchangeable Good."[34] This turning or conversion is its virtue.[35] It must be illumined by the true Light in order to "become better by participating in the Creator, when it clings to him by purest and holiest charity."[36] The soul that does good works by charity is thus on the road of moral progress, "participating to some extent in this Good, and intending to participate more fully and completely."[37] Such participation also makes us wise[38] and its fullness is our ultimate happiness.[39] Thus all goodness in the soul is a participation in the unchangeable Good.[40] To use biblical language, the place of this participation is within the heart,[41] as a result of which (as Psalm 22 says) "their hearts shall live forever."[42]

Thus for Augustine grace is the divine source of our participation in eternity, our having a share in eternal life by adoption as children of God. The Platonist concept of sharing or participation has in fact an unusual prominence

in this treatise. Augustine uses it to forge the link between the theology of grace developed in his Pauline exegeses and the patristic soteriology of participation in the divine nature. Grace enables both participation in the eternal Light of the Word and the transition from the Old Testament servitude of fear under the Law (*sub lege*) to the New Testament liberation of love under grace (*sub gratia*). Grace liberates us for love of eternal things precisely by granting us participation in the eternity of the divine Word, who took on our nature so that we could come to participate in his.

At no point in the treatise, however, does Augustine entertain the un-Platonist thought that grace might work in us by way of participation in Christ incarnate, that is, in something temporal and external. In this treatise the incarnation of Christ serves to signify but not to bestow the grace of the New Testament. Christ's death and resurrection teach us "by the example of his flesh" that we are to despise temporal goods in favor of eternal felicity.[43] They also serve as a sacrament or mystery signifying the soul's inward renewal and transformation from the old carnal life to the new life of participation in eternal Good.[44] But neither as example nor as sacrament is Christ's flesh the source of this new life or the means through which it is given. Grace itself is conferred by the inward gift of the Holy Spirit, so that what our hearts participate in is the eternal Word, not the flesh of Christ. With its emphasis on inner participation, the soteriology of this treatise is more Platonist than incarnational or sacramental. There is no conception here of Christ's life-giving flesh except insofar as this exemplifies our bodily resurrection or signifies our inward change of heart. The true Light is seen in the heart of the rational soul, a more inward place than flesh.

Yet this concept of participation does say exactly what Augustine wants to say against Pelagius. It makes the goodness of the soul dependent on participation in One who is better, ontologically superior to the soul. We have goodness, justice, charity, salvation, wisdom, and happiness only by participation in the true Light illuminating us from within and above. Augustine accuses the Pelagians of being just like the proud Jews who resist this ontological fact about their own souls, "attributing it to themselves if they do anything by way of good works."[45] In their pride they fail to realize that the goodness of their changeable soul comes by participating in the unchangeable Good, not by their own will.[46] The Platonist concept of participation thus serves to explain why even the goods of the soul are included in the Pauline question Augustine keeps pressing upon the Pelagians: "what do you have that you have not received?"[47]

Yet precisely because this Platonist exposition of the grace of the New Testament seems so perfectly suited for use against Pelagianism, it is worth noting which elements of Augustine's anti-Pelagian theology it does not con-

tain. Absent from it are both the opening polemical wedge and the deep, troubling issues that were later to become prominent in the controversy. Unlike the other anti-Pelagian treatises of 412,[48] for example, it does not launch its inquiry by asking about our need for divine help nor even mention the necessity of praying for it. There was no reason to omit such points, which are the basis of the most compelling arguments in Augustine's anti-Pelagian polemics, unless the intent of the treatise was not polemical at all, at least originally. Apparently the usefulness of the treatise's key concepts against the new heresy dawned on Augustine as he got farther along writing it. If that is so, then we are seeing the origin, not of Augustine's concept of grace itself, but of its polemical use. It is at root a Christian Platonist critique of any theory of free will that cannot acknowledge that we are good only by participation in the supreme Good.

Also missing from the treatise are the deep and difficult issues that Augustine had already wrestled with in *To Simplicianus* and that the exigencies of controversy would later bring out into the open. He is ready to dwell on the point that the gift of grace is a great abyss whose causes lie hidden in God rather than in any preceding merit of our own,[49] but we hear nothing of Jacob and Esau or the unsettling question about how God differentiates between them. The focus is on the deep inner relationship between God and the soul, not the difference between one soul and another. Thus Augustine quotes Paul's passage about the unsearchable depth of God's wisdom (Romans 11:33), which he already interprets as words of fear, but he does not connect it to the question why God gives grace to some and not others. The fearful thing, rather, is the secret inner depths of the soul itself, profound enough to contain God with his unsearchable judgments. The charity we receive by grace emerges "from a hidden place, where we are in a sense rooted and founded, where the causes of the will of God are not searched out."[50] There is not a sharp distinction between the depths of the self and the depths of God's judgment, for the one lies within the other. That is why grace leads us to a fearful abyss.

> And this will of his is hidden. Terrified at the profoundness [*profunditatem*], as it were, of this secret the apostle cries out "O the depths [*altitudo*] of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how inscrutable are his judgments and unsearchable his ways!"[51]

Yet this depth seems shallow compared to the problems raised by the question of differentiation: by what inscrutable judgment is grace given to Jacob and not to Esau? Augustine has yet to face the depth of the problems resulting from his attempt to combine the Platonist conception of the supreme Good (shining like the sun, inwardly present and the same for everyone) with the biblical conception of a God who bestows his favor on whom he chooses.

Uncovering Pelagian Evasions

The deep and difficult issues emerge as Augustine refines his concept of grace in order to show why Pelagian concepts of divine help are inadequate. This is part of his agenda from the beginning of the controversy, when he opens the anti-Pelagian treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter* by insisting on the need for a divine help that does not consist simply in God's endowing our nature with free will and addressing to us the commands and teachings of the Law.[52] Expounding the transition from Law to grace that he had elaborated in his early Pauline exegeses, he argues that the Law of God can instill only fear, not love, when it is addressed to our corrupted nature. Law without grace yields an obedience consisting in outward actions seen by men, not the inner will seen by God.[53] The Law of God threatens us with punishment and burdens us with tasks we would rather not perform, with the result that our attempts at obedience are slavish and unwilling—we would rather behave differently if we could get away with it—and this grudging unwillingness merely deepens the sin of our hearts.[54] If the sole help God could give us were Law and teaching, it would only make us worse sinners, leading us to death rather than eternal life. So the Law is "the letter that kills," while the help we need is the grace of "the Spirit that gives life."[55] Augustine is quite self-consciously offering a novel interpretation of the text, "the letter kills but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6), which like other church fathers he is accustomed to treating as a text about hermeneutics, but which he now suggests is also about moral psychology. Letter is to Spirit not just as literal meaning is to spiritual interpretation, but also as Law is to grace—and as outer is to inner. For of course the Spirit of grace affects us inwardly, pouring the love of God into our hearts and causing our wills to delight in doing what pleases him.[56] As in the culminating argument in *To Simplicianus,* the power of grace is the help of an inward delight.[57]

The inner/outer contrast is thus essential in Augustine's campaign to expose Pelagius's evasions. It is not enough to say that God helps us "in that he makes the commands of righteousness sound *outwardly* in our senses," for what divine grace really means is that "he gives the growth *inwardly,* pouring charity into our hearts by his Spirit."[58] So Augustine sums up the main argument of the treatise by setting out the parallels between the pairs: Law and grace, letter and Spirit, fear and love, outer and inner.

> Let no one . . . be evasive on this point, and say that the reason why we cannot be just without the working of God's *grace* is only that he gave the *Law,* taught doctrine, and made good commandments. For

> without the help of the *Spirit,* this is beyond all doubt the *letter* that kills—whereas when the Spirit comes that gives life, it makes one *love* what is written down *within,* which the Law made one *fear* when it was written *externally*.[59]

The contrast between inner and outer writing is Augustine's segue into a discussion of the grace of the New Testament, a topic that (as in the treatise *On the Grace of the New Testament*) he introduces by examining an Old Testament text. This time the text is the explicit promise of a new testament or covenant (*testamentum* in Latin) in the book of Jeremiah, where God promises, "I will give my laws into their heart, and in their mind I will write them."[60] This is not a mere inscribing of duties on the tablets of the mind but "the very presence of the Holy Spirit, who is the finger of God, by whose presence charity is poured out in our hearts."[61] The shift of metaphor here from the picture of laws written on the heart[62] to a divine presence within the heart—in effect a shift from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional picture of the inner self—is characteristic of Augustinian inwardness, which conceives of the soul not just as a tablet that records impressions from outside but as a whole inner world where God may be found.[63] Thus in contrast to the promises of earthly reward made in the Old Testament, the heavenly and eternal reward promised in the New Testament is "the Good of the heart itself, the Good of the mind, the Good of the spirit, i.e., the intelligible Good."[64] This passage exposes the connection between this treatise and *On the Grace of the New Testament,* with its focus on the soul's participation in the Good found within. It is as if Augustine wanted to make sure we saw that both treatises are talking about the same thing: inner delight in justice (in *On the Spirit and the Letter*) and inner participation in the Good (in *On the Grace of the New Testament*) are one and the same concept of the grace of charity. Indeed, Augustine is making connections with some very old themes here, going all the way back to his early idea that virtue consisted of loving the good will within us.[65] For he adds that under the grace of the New Testament people are to become "lovers of the Law's Justice itself, which dwells within."[66]

So Augustine's persistent and systematic efforts to uncover Pelagius's evasions depend from the first on his distinctive inwardness, and especially his Platonist conception of grace as inner help. For our purposes three evasions—Pelagian conceptions of the grace of God—are particularly important to examine. The first we have seen in *On the Spirit and the Letter:* the identification of grace with the Law or external teaching. The second, already mentioned briefly in *On the Spirit and the Letter,* comes to the fore in Augustine's treatise *On Nature and Grace* three years later. Since our natural endowment of free will is God's gift to us, Pelagius calls that by the name of grace, arguing that by

giving human nature this ability, God gave us the possibility of not sinning.[67] Thus whereas the first evasion is to identify grace with Law, the second is to identify grace with nature. Augustine agrees that both Law and nature are good things given by God and thus can in a very broad sense be called "grace." But neither of them is what we are asking for when we pray such things as: "lead us not into temptation." In uncovering these two evasions Augustine can rely on this argument from prayer, not just on his own distinctive psychology of grace, and he succeeds in persuading not only the Pope but most of his readers to this day. Western Christians are overwhelmingly Augustinian rather than Pelagian in their understanding of prayer and therefore in their doctrine of grace. The practice of prayer teaches us to long for a divine help that does more than just tell us what to do with the natural powers we already have. Grace must be something deeper and more beautiful than that.

Uncovering the third evasion, however, leads Augustine into very deep waters indeed, where many do not want to follow him: the absolute prevenience of grace, election, and predestination. (Yet the deepest thinkers of the Western theological tradition have consistently been willing to swim in these waters with him, including Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin, just to name the most important). This evasion did not come to Augustine's notice until the controversy was several years old, some time after December 415. That was when Pelagius came before an ecclesiastical tribunal in Palestine headed by the bishop of Jerusalem and was questioned about various heretical theses attributed to him by Augustine and his followers. Pelagius escaped condemnation by claiming that he taught no such thing and anathematizing a whole series of "Pelagian" theses. Augustine, reading the proceedings of the trial many months later in Hippo, notes with approval that Pelagius had anathematized the view that the grace and help God gives us consist in "free will, as well as Law and teaching."[68] This means in effect that he was flushed out of the hiding places afforded by his first two evasions. Earlier in his review of the proceedings, Augustine had described both these evasions and announced a kind of programmatic worry about them.[69] Now he declares that he has been set at ease on this score: Pelagius is no longer in a position to treat grace as if it were just unaided human nature obeying the instruction of God's commandments. But immediately a new worry arises. In clarifying one of the contested theses, Pelagius said that "God gives all graces to him who has been worthy [*dignum*] of receiving them, just as he gave them to the apostle Paul."[70] This is Pelagius's third evasion, which makes grace in effect a reward for merit—thus affirming grace in name only while denying its substance. We shall come back to this appeal to Paul in the next chapter,[71] but for now let us attend to the conceptual shape of Augustine's worry.

The worry, of course, is that Pelagius undermines the gratuity of grace by making it into a debt that God must pay to those who deserve it rather than a gift given *gratis*.[72] Uncovering this evasion requires Augustine to expose the roots of his own position in a way that he has not yet had to do in the Pelagian controversy. For on this point he has a great deal in common with Pelagius, at least on the surface. As we have seen, Augustine too is willing to say that grace is deserved: for our faith has a kind of merit when it prompts us to pray for grace.[73] What Augustine needs to make clear is that grace is the source of all our merits, including the merit of whatever good will is inherent in faith. For although some of God's grace does come in response to the merit of faithful prayer, grace can properly be called gratuitous if in the whole process of salvation grace comes before any good act of our will, including the will to believe and pray. So for Augustine grace comes both before and after merit, but what assures that it is gratuitous is its coming before. To that extent the gratuity of grace implies its prevenience—literally its "coming before," as in the psalm that Augustine proceeds to quote: "in bestowing grace upon us so that we may follow the Lord, 'his mercy has come before [*praevenit*] us.' "[74] And in order to be prevenient, what grace must come before, above all, is faith, which is the first movement of the soul in the process of salvation as Augustine conceives it. So for the first time in the Pelagian controversy, faith comes clearly within the widening scope of grace. All our merits stem from faith, and faith too is one of those human goods of which the apostle reminds us, "What do you have that you have not received?"[75]

This is a point on which Augustine had not been so clear in the early phase of his anti-Pelagian writing. In a letter written a year or so before Pelagius's trial, for instance, the prayer for grace is said to stem from our free will, whose good intentions appear to be preceded only by Law, not grace.[76] This would fit the narrative in *Confessions* 8, where young Augustine is a believer with a good will who desires to obey the Law but does not receive the inner help of grace until he prays for it in faith.[77] Likewise, in a letter written about the same time as *On the Spirit and the Letter* and summarizing its argument, Augustine locates faith in the four-stage schema of his Pauline exegeses (something he had not done very clearly in the early Pauline exegeses themselves) by placing it in the stage of life under Law, not under grace, so that he finds it appropriate to say, "the Law leads us to faith."[78] This startling formulation (imagine Luther reading it!) evidently results from Augustine's identifying the Law as the content of the divine calling to faith, which is the concept he used to explain the prevenience of grace in his early Pauline exegeses.[79] But in the present controversy such an identification makes Augustine sound just like Pelagius—as if God's prevenient grace consisted of his Law, to which our free will responds

in faith, which in turn merits grace. This is precisely the position Augustine must soon exclude in order to uncover Pelagius's evasions.

To uncover all three evasions, in other words, Augustine must make it clear that grace precedes faith, yet without recourse to anything like the suitable external call of *To Simplicianus*, which looks too much like the Pelagian conception of grace as Law. This means he must find a different way of explaining how grace causes faith, one that does not rely on any form of external words or teaching. The new account will apply the same Platonist conceptuality to faith that he had already applied to love, making both of them the result of a gift that comes to us from within, like divine illumination. But in the early phase of his anti-Pelagian writing—before coming upon Pelagius's third evasion—Augustine is not yet ready to give such an account, and instead tries to revive the more Stoic account of *To Simplicianus*. The result is a convoluted mess, as Augustine discovers unexpected new problems that he is not yet ready to address explicitly, and ends up engaging in some evasiveness of his own.

Augustine's Evasiveness

Augustine's treatment of the origin of faith in *On the Spirit and the Letter* is in fact notoriously evasive.[80] His evasiveness is the result of the failure, which he himself perceives, of his attempt to uphold both free will and the prevenience of grace. This failure occurs late in the treatise, when Augustine turns to a defense of free will. He argues that the relation of grace to free will is like the relation of faith to Law in Paul: grace does not negate free will but establishes it.[81] To show this, he elaborates yet another version of the process of salvation or *ordo salutis*, one that explicitly makes a place for free will. As always, faith is at the psychological beginning of the process of salvation (i.e., it is the first part of the process consisting of the soul's activity rather than God's) and love results from the grace that God gives in response to the prayer of faith. The only thing that comes before faith in the process (as Augustine sketches it here) is God's Law. The order of the process is: Law, faith, grace, health of soul, free will, love, and good works.[82] The new element in the middle, "health of soul," connects grace and free will: it builds on Augustine's conception of grace as not only assisting but also healing us. This healing in turn restores freedom to the will, so that we can love justice freely rather than obey the Law unwillingly, out of slavish fear. So in the resulting order of salvation, our love of justice is a product of our own freedom of will but our will is made free only when restored to health by the prior gift of God's grace.

But this defense of free will looks like a cheat. For although our will may not be freed from sin until it receives grace to love God wholeheartedly (just like young Augustine's will in *Confessions* 8, which illustrates this sequence perfectly), still we have the natural capacity of free will long before that point, as well as the faith to seek grace by prayer. So the question is clearly: what about the will by which we believe? Is that a gift from God or is it supplied by "the free will that is naturally implanted in us?"[83] As always, Augustine affirms both alternatives: faith is an act of our free will *and* it is caused by grace. And as in the early Pauline exegeses, he tries to secure the prevenience of grace by insisting that God's calling comes first. But it is as if he has not yet caught up with the position he arrived at after the long wrestling match in *To Simplicianus*. For when he gets to the key point, he evades the issue—rather like the Pauline exegeses before *To Simplicianus*, where he is inconsistent on this point.[84] And the source of this evasion is the same as the source of that earlier inconsistency: he is not yet ready to take a firm stand on the question of differentiation: why do some receive this unmerited, prevenient grace and not others?

The conclusion Augustine is aiming for is: "In fact God works [*operatur*] in a human being even the will to believe itself, and 'in all things his mercy comes before [*praevenit*] us.' "[85] He tries to arrive at this conclusion by using the conceptual resources of his earlier Pauline exegeses, especially *To Simplicianus:* once again, we are called to faith by the persuasiveness of sensible appearances (*visa*).[86] But there is one striking difference. The concept of delight, which has been central to the account of love in *On the Spirit and the Letter* as well as to the account of faith in *To Simplicianus,* now drops out of the picture. In its place is the concept of assent or consent, which (as we saw in the previous chapter) plays a central role in the Stoics' compatibilist defense of free will.[87] Thus Augustine defines believing as "consenting that what is said is true," a definition meant to show how faith is both voluntary and dependent on the prior divine call.[88] But this concept of voluntary consent raises new problems that he seems not to have anticipated. For the only call of God that Augustine has identified prior to faith is the Law and Christian teaching. Consequently, Augustine is not saying anything Pelagius couldn't say when he argues here that the will to believe is something a human being receives from God "inasmuch as it arises at the calling of God out of the free will which he received naturally when he was created."[89] In this Augustinian formulation the grace of God is nothing more than human nature and free will (Pelagius's second evasion) responding to God's Law and teaching (Pelagius's first evasion). It seems that precisely in its prevenient form, the grace of God is wholly Pelagian! Suddenly Augustine has a problem that he does not quite know how to get out of.

One way he could get out of it is by referring to some external means of grace. But he has cut himself off from that route by consistently classifying every external discourse by which God may address us as the letter that kills rather than a means of giving any good thing. A little earlier in the treatise, for instance, he had warned:

> Let no one glory in what he seems to have as if he had not received it [alluding to 1 Cor. 4:7] nor think he received it just because *the external letter* appeared so it could be read, or resounded so it could be heard.[90]

The "letter" here can be written or spoken, for what is essential to Augustine's concept of "letter" is not its writtenness but its externality. For Augustine any external word, whether preached, read aloud, or written down in Scripture, is letter rather than Spirit, incapable of bestowing grace.[91] This resolute insistence on the inwardness of grace renders it impossible for him to make a distinction that might be very helpful in this context, the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel. For Luther both Law and Gospel are the external word of God, but the Gospel is not the letter that kills but an efficacious means of grace, by which God gives us his own Son together with all the grace, justice, and eternal life that belongs to him.[92] It is true that Luther's Law/Gospel distinction owes a great deal to Augustine's Law/grace distinction—especially the notion that the way the Law helps sinners is by terrifying them so that they flee for refuge to the grace of God.[93] But this agreement about the Law should not obscure a crucial disagreement about where to find grace, stemming from Luther's distinctive emphasis on finding the grace of God in the external word of the Gospel. For while an Augustinian sinner flees the terror of the Law by praying, a Lutheran sinner flees it by clinging to the promise of the Gospel. The one seeks grace by speaking a good word, the other finds grace by hearing a good word. These are two fundamentally different words, the one human, the other divine—the one our prayer, the other God's promise—the one fundamentally an inner word of the heart and the other an external word of grace.

The contrast can be clarified by Luther's variation on a famous Augustinian formula. Augustine's prayer for grace asks God to "give what you command,"[94] an abbreviated version of the famous formula from the *Confessions,* "Give what you command, and command what you will."[95] Luther sets forth a variant of this formula: "The promises of God give what the commandments of God require."[96] This is the Law/Gospel distinction in a nutshell, since for Luther the Gospel consists of the promises of God, just as the Law consists of the commandments of God. Luther proceeds to argue that justification is by faith alone because it is by simply believing the Gospel promise that we receive the grace of

justification and the justice of God that fulfills the commandments. The solution to Augustine's problem, on this Lutheran reckoning, is to see that through the gracious external word of the Gospel we receive the gift of faith and all that follows from it.[97] This means that the prevenience of grace is vested in what Augustinian semiotics must classify as an external sign, which efficaciously gives the grace that it signifies—operating just like a medieval sacrament.[98]

But even if he had known about this solution, I doubt Augustine could have accepted it. Luther is notoriously no friend to free will,[99] and his utterly unevasive commitment to prevenient grace includes no commitment at all to our will's freedom to choose the path of salvation. Rather, he professes his gladness that "God has taken my salvation out of my hands into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine, and has promised to save me not by my own work or exertion but by his grace and mercy."[100] Augustine, who is explicitly defending free will at this point, as well as insisting on the powerlessness of "the external letter" to give what we need, cannot allow external things such as the Gospel of Christ and the promises of God to have such power over our wills. So his problem here in *On the Spirit and the Letter* is unsolvable. As long as the prevenience of grace takes the form of an external call that cannot cause us to consent, the power of faith belongs ultimately to the human will, not to the grace of God.

Augustine's failure to provide a clear account of prevenience at this point shows that when it comes to the gift of faith, the conceptuality of his early Pauline exegeses is not sufficient to deal with the new problems thrown up by the Pelagian controversy. Perhaps at first it looked to Augustine like the same old problem of reconciling grace and free will that he had dealt with in *To Simplicianus*, but it turns out the range of possible solutions is significantly narrower when the polemical target is Pelagius rather than the Manichaeans. Pelagius is quite happy with an external call to faith that leaves it up to our free will to consent; that is precisely the kind of thing he means by grace. To reject Pelagianism at this crucial point—the point that makes grace prevenient or not—Augustine finds he must deepen the insistence on the inwardness of grace that has been the hallmark of his attack on Pelagianism from the beginning. Even the choice to believe must have its deepest root and ultimate cause not in an external call nor in human consent (real as these both are and indispensable to the overall process of salvation) but in a divine gift of delight, inwardly given. Until Augustine is willing to be clear on this point, his account of prevenience is unclear.

We can see this by examining why Augustine's attempt to reconcile grace and free will in his account of the gift of faith in *On the Spirit and the Letter* ends

in evasion. Augustine starts by making a move that is familiar from the early Pauline exegeses: the will by which we believe is something we receive from God, he argues, not just in the sense that it comes from the free will with which God created us, but also because it is dependent on the persuasion of sensible appearances or impressions provided by the divine calling. Using these appearances (*visa*) God can act on us externally, "by Gospel exhortations, where the commands of the Law also accomplish something, if they admonish a man in his weakness to flee to the grace of justification by believing."[101] Apparently "Gospel exhortations" here work the same way as "the commands of the Law": both are external signs that do not give us the spiritual grace we need but rather tell us where to seek it. Like all Augustinian signs of grace, they direct our attention away from themselves, admonishing us to look for something more inward—just as we would expect from the semiotics of Augustine's treatise *On the Teacher*.[102] Moreover, the efficacy of this external admonition is entirely dependent on our voluntary consent. This is a point Augustine makes even about internal admonitions, "where no man has it in his own power what shall enter into his thoughts." Evidently he is thinking that God can, as we might put it nowadays, "put thoughts in our heads" or get us thinking about things that might not otherwise have occurred to us. Nonetheless, Augustine adds, "to consent or dissent belongs to one's own will." So whether the admonition be external or internal, a matter of perception or of imagination, God's call begins with something sensible appearing to the mind, and it is up to us to give it our consent or not. The conclusion seems to be that it is ultimately up to us whether or not we receive grace.

Augustine briefly tries to avoid this conclusion but does not succeed in convincing even himself. The mere fact that a prior call is necessary, he is thinking, should insure the prevenience of grace. So he points out that no degree of free will is sufficient to get us believing anything unless there is something for our free will to believe in, "some persuasion or calling in which it may believe."[103] From this, he suggests, follows the conclusion he is aiming at, which is that the will to believe is a result of God working in us by prevenient grace. Yet the issue is not really settled, as Augustine immediately realizes. For having introduced the powerful concept of consent, he must now reckon with its implications. It belongs to our own will, he says, "either to consent to the calling of God or to dissent."[104] So can we really say with the apostle, "what do you have that you have not received?" Everything we *have* is *received* from God except the having and receiving itself, which is our own because it arises from the consent of our own will. But that of course only pushes the problem one step further back, as Augustine realizes. Now the decisive question is: where

does the consent of our own will come from? Are we its ultimate cause or God? This is the question Augustine raises only to evade.

Let us suppose, he proceeds to say, that someone presses us to look into the depths and ask, "why is one person urged so as to be actually persuaded, but another not?"[105] Augustine deliberately refuses to answer the question, aside from giving two cryptic and abbreviated scriptural quotations, "O the depths of the riches" (Romans 11:33) and "Is there iniquity with God?" (Romans 9:14). We know what these two quotations mean in his other anti-Pelagian writings: that God's judgments are what make the difference, and that they are inscrutable but not unjust. But to say that right here would mean making it clear that it is God who decides who is actually persuaded by the external call and who is not. That would make our voluntary consent depend on God's prior choices, so that it is ultimately God, not us, who determines whether or not we receive grace. Saying this would certainly vindicate the prevenience of grace against Pelagius, but it would not be such a convincing defense of free will. Evidently that is why Augustine has to be evasive at exactly this point. He says nothing further about the issue, which means he avoids taking a stand on what he knows perfectly well is the decisive question. Given nothing more than what he says explicitly in *On the Spirit and the Letter*, we still have the option of thinking that this most fundamental of differences—that between those who receive the grace to believe and those who do not—is simply a matter of one person choosing freely to consent to God's call and another not. But if this is the case, then Pelagius has every right to speak of people meriting grace by their own free will. In order to expose this Pelagian evasion, Augustine must give up his own.

The Missing Piece of the Puzzle

The logical structure of Augustine's problem about prevenience can be summed up briefly. Pelagius's third evasion threatens the gratuitousness of grace. To affirm the gratuity of grace, one must affirm that it is prevenient, coming before any merit of ours. This means God's choice to give grace precedes our good will, including any choice we make to seek or receive grace. This is a logical and causal, not merely temporal, precedence. If God's choice to give grace is wholly gratuitous, it does not result from any of our choices and their merits, not even by way of his foreknowledge. It follows that any choice we make to receive grace must result from his choice to give it, and his choice is not merely the necessary condition of our choice but its sufficient cause. Thus, wholly gratuitous grace means wholly efficacious and unconditional election: if

God chooses to give us grace, then without fail we freely choose to receive it.[106] So it is God who determines who receives grace and who does not.

The logical foundation of Augustine's mature doctrine of prevenient grace is therefore the answer to the question of differentiation he worked out in *To Simplicianus:* that it is God's choice that ultimately makes the difference between those who receive grace and those who do not.[107] To put the logic of prevenience schematically: the gratuity of grace requires the denial of antecedent merit, which requires the prevenience of grace, which requires unconditional divine election, which means that the answer to the question of differentiation is God. The causal sequence, of course, runs in the opposite direction from this logical deduction: it begins with divine choice, operates through prevenient grace, and results in human choice. So God's choice makes the ultimate difference, which means grace is prevenient, coming before any merit of ours, which is why grace is gratuitous. This causal sequence is the key new development in the middle phase of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings.

Because this causal sequence originates before any movements of the soul or will, it must be distinguished from the psychology of the process of salvation, which for Augustine always begins with faith, proceeds in love, and culminates in eternal life. One may affirm the prevenience of grace without conceiving this psychological order in quite the same way as Augustine, but given Augustine's insistence on putting faith first in the process, the question he must answer about prevenient grace is always how it brings about *faith.* In particular, he must go beyond the position that grace is a necessary condition that precedes faith and makes it possible—a position he has clearly upheld since the beginning of the controversy—and must affirm also that grace is sufficient of itself to cause us to believe, without fail. Prevenient grace is therefore efficacious in itself (as the Thomist tradition puts it) or irresistible (as the Calvinist tradition goes so far as to say). However, the question about how God gives the gift of faith is not always prominent in this phase of Augustine's writings, because this particular conception of the psychological order of salvation (in which faith always comes first) is Augustine's, not Pelagius's. Augustine does not need to give a clear answer to the question about the gift of faith in order to refute Pelagius but only in order to make his own thinking consistent. And that is what takes him a while.

Augustine has the logic of prevenience clearly worked out already by the end of *To Simplicianus* in 397, yet it is not so clear in the early phase of his anti-Pelagian writings, fifteen to twenty years later. Or to be more precise, it is clear with regard to the gift of infant faith but not with regard to the gift of adult faith. For when the initial consent to faith is not at issue, Augustine can forthrightly affirm the full logic of prevenience. He does so in *On the Merits and*

Remission of Sins, right at the beginning of the controversy in 412.[108] After arguing that baptized infants are believers (for they are to be counted among the faithful even though their own hearts do not yet perform the act of faith)[109] he raises a series of questions about the difference between one human being and another. We all start out as infants on an equal footing, deserving nothing but the wrath of God because of our common share in original sin. So why do some infants receive the gift of baptismal faith but not others? Why do some adults have the opportunity to hear about Christ and believe, but not others? And why are some baptized infants taken away by death before they are old enough to commit actual sins of their own, while others have the opportunity to grow up, be tempted, fall from the faith, and suffer damnation?[110] In each case the ultimate cause lies in God's providence (but not, as in the mature doctrine of grace, in his working inwardly on the human will). So in each case Augustine can give a clear answer to the question of differentiation, tracing the difference between one human being and another back to God's inscrutable judgments and reminding us of Paul's cry, "O the depths!" (Romans 11:33). Once again these words are uttered "as if terrified at the depth of this abyss" and even "as if struck with horror at its profundity."[111] Yet the same apostle also insists that there is no iniquity with God (Romans 9:14). So the two suggestive passages Augustine had used in *On the Spirit and the Letter* to evade the key issue[112] here add up to a frank answer to the question of differentiation: "Why this grace comes to one rather than another can have a cause that is hidden, but not unjust."[113] There is no mistaking the point that the cause is hidden because it is found in God's inscrutable choice.

So right at the beginning of the Pelagian controversy Augustine is willing to go very far in giving a frank answer to the question of differentiation, but not so far as to answer the question he evaded in *On the Spirit and the Letter*. In accord with a recently formed orthodox consensus, he repudiates the fundamental alternative offered by Origen, who attempts to explain why some people are born into more difficult moral situations than others by referring to the difference in the gravity of the sins they committed when their souls lived unembodied lives prior to birth.[114] This concept of prenatal sin Augustine now firmly rejects; the only sin we have prior to birth is that which we all inherit together from Adam. In other words, there is such a thing as prenatal sin but it does not differentiate between us. Only the depth of God's inscrutable judgment explains why one person rather than another is born with an agreeable disposition that makes it relatively easy to learn temperance and other virtues, or why one rather than another is born in a Christian land with the opportunity to hear the preaching of Christ's grace and believe. But Augustine adds in passing, "I'm not talking about why one believes rather than another, which is

of their own will."[115] It is as if to say: the logic of prevenient grace extends to everything except the choice to believe. So despite Augustine's willingness to be far more explicit about the question of differentiation in *On the Merits and Remission of Sins* (where the key issue is infant baptism) than in *On the Spirit and the Letter* (where the key issue is the psychology of grace), the position he takes is substantially the same in both. Neither treatise gives him the wherewithal to repudiate Pelagius's third evasion.

This remains true throughout the early period of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings. In *On Nature and Grace,* for instance, he affirms the prevenience of divine mercy (quoting Psalm 59:10) but links it to the divine call in a way that does not go beyond the position of *On the Spirit and the Letter.*[116] Most importantly, he twice presents extended discussions of the question of differentiation in letters to Paulinus of Nola, his most trusted and intelligent correspondent—yet without making it clear whether the ultimate cause of our believing lies in ourselves or in God's grace. In a letter written in 414 (Epistle 149), he answers a question from Paulinus about the concept of election in Romans 11 by referring to the foreknowledge of God, in which predestination is rooted.[117] But he does not say explicitly whether what God foreknows is our choices or his own gifts. He does not raise the question: is the ground of God's predestination his foreknowledge that some will choose to have faith rather than others, or his foreknowledge that he will give the gift of faith to some rather than others? The latter view, which is the kernel of Augustine's mature doctrine of predestination, is needed to rebut Pelagius's third evasion. Once again, it is only the faith of infants (which is not based on their own choice) that Augustine explicitly attributes to God's choice. Just as in *On the Merits and Remission of Sins,* he asks why some infants die soon after baptism, safe from all spiritual harm, while others are allowed to grow up to become apostates. Clearly, the one sort belongs to the predestination of grace and the other does not. But once again, "the cause why one belongs and not the other, can be hidden but not unjust."[118]

Three years later Augustine writes a long letter to Paulinus on the state of the Pelagian controversy after Pelagius's trial (Epistle 186). At this point the logic of prevenience has clearly crystallized in Augustine's mind. There is no agonized wrestling match here. Quite unlike *To Simplicianus,* the answer to the question of differentiation does not emerge at the end of a long, convoluted discussion but is announced at the outset as the logical foundation of everything that follows. Thus, after briefly introducing the issues, Augustine begins by hitting the nail on the head: it is God alone who "makes us different from the mass of perdition" in which all are born lumped together in Adam's sin.[119]

Now Augustine quotes not only the Pauline question, "What do you have that you have not received?" but also its immediate predecessor, "Who makes you different?"[120] The answer to both questions is clear: nothing and God, respectively. On this basis, Augustine rejects any form of antecedent merit, including the merit of faith. For faith indeed merits grace, but faith itself is a gift we receive from God's grace, so that when God rewards the merit of faith, it is really a matter of grace meriting grace.[121]

Still, Augustine stops short here of saying God directly moves our wills and causes us to believe. He uses the key Pauline text about operative grace (where God "works [*operatur*] in you both the willing and the working") to describe God helping us to love in response to the prayer of faith, but does not yet use it to describe God working the initial will to believe in us.[122] It seems the will to believe is not caused but only helped by grace; for he says near the end of the letter that the human will "is not sufficient in itself to be moved to believe true things, unless God helps by grace."[123] This describes assisting grace rather than operative grace—a grace helping our will rather than working a good will in us. It is that clear the help of grace is necessary for us to come to faith, but Augustine does not yet say that grace is sufficient of itself to give us the gift of faith. This leaves open the question of whether faith is ultimately to be ascribed to us or God, for as Augustine has recently observed, "no one is helped unless he also does something himself."[124]

Thus Augustine's picture of prevenient grace still has an area of unclarity when it comes to the will to believe. So when he wants to illustrate the logic of prevenience, he once more turns to the case of infants, who make no choice to believe and in fact often do their best to physically resist their baptism.[125] In this case he can resume his resolute stance. Once again the contrast with *To Simplicianus* is striking: the difference God makes between Jacob and Esau while they are still babies in the womb and there is no difference at all in their merits, is not a difficult problem but the key illustration of Augustine's thesis.[126] Still, the argument for the prevenience of grace in this text is incomplete, because Augustine does not develop the point that the adult choice to believe is caused by grace. Of course it is not really unclear at this late date what Augustine's views must be on this issue. Early in the letter (before he launches into his explicit discussion of faith as God's gift) his opening summary of the issues of the Pelagian controversy includes the claim that without the help of grace we can have "nothing of piety or of justice" (which I take it means neither faith nor love, respectively) in our works or even in our will—and proceeds to quote Paul about God working in us both our willing and our working.[127] But that is as much as he says in this letter about the crucial question of where the will to believe

originates. There is something holding him back on this point—a piece of the puzzle that must be found before his picture of the prevenience of grace is complete.

About a year later something has changed, though Augustine is still not as explicit on this issue as he will eventually be. In 418 he writes an important letter, Epistle 194, to a prominent Roman presbyter who later becomes Pope Sixtus III. It has a great deal in common with the letter to Paulinus, Epistle 186. Both contain thorough criticisms of the notion of antecedent merit (Pelagius's third evasion), both insist that faith is a gift of God, and both make extensive use of the notion of an undifferentiated mass of damnation from which God differentiates some rather than others, not unjustly but out of sheer mercy, for no merits of their own.[128] But now Augustine is finally ready to insist that "we should not attribute faith itself to human choice."[129] Even our prayer for grace is not an example of antecedent merit, because "it is faith that prays, which is given to one who does not pray—indeed unless it were given, one could not pray."[130] Faith comes by hearing, the apostle says, which means it is necessary for someone to preach the faith.[131] But human preaching is only the planting and watering—it is God who gives the growth, by apportioning to each person the measure of faith.[132] This means that the reason one person believes the preaching and another does not is due to the judgments of God, "which are not unjust simply because they are hidden."[133] (This is the third time we have seen him make this point, but the first time it is applied to the adult choice to believe.) How the judgments of God determine who believes is only hinted at, but the hint points toward a new account of the psychology of grace, which makes use of Jesus' saying in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who has sent me draw him in."[134] The foreknowledge of God is mentioned, but this time it is explicit that what God foreknows is not simply our will but his own gift.[135]

Augustine has evidently found the missing piece of the puzzle, which finally allows him to give a fully explicit account of the prevenience of grace in the psychological order of salvation. At last his anti-Pelagian doctrine can catch up with *To Simplicianus* on the crucial issue of the gift of faith. But it will do so by deemphasizing the distinctive concept of that earlier treatise, the suitable call to faith. That call is external and therefore open to an interpretation that would only reinforce Pelagius's first evasion (identifying grace with Law and external teaching). Augustine needs an alternative to such external channels of grace. So the missing piece of the puzzle comes from Augustine's distinctive concept of inwardness. In particular, his Platonist epistemology of inner teaching allows him to say that our choice to believe in Christ is, like our will to love God and neighbor, a result of God's grace working deep within the inner self. For Augustine, prevenient grace is necessarily inward grace.

Taught by God

To see why the missing piece of the puzzle must be Platonist, we need to be clear about the kind of inwardness involved. For we have already encountered a more superficial form of inwardness in Augustine's writings on this subject. When explaining the call to faith in his Pauline exegeses and in *On the Spirit and the Letter,* for instance, Augustine occasionally speaks of *inner admonitions*.[136] Like the external admonitions that he mentions in the same breath, these are based on sensible appearances or *visa*—the Ciceronian epistemological term that covers not only the direct result of external perception but also the stuff of imagination and memory, the sensory content of whatever we are thinking about.[137] As Augustine is aware, the same term is also used to describe visionary experiences in the Latin Bible.[138] This biblical usage seems to be why he uses the word in *To Simplicianus* to describe the calling of Paul on the Damascus road[139] and associates it with internal admonitions and "appearances of the mind or spirit" (*visa mentis aut spiritus*).[140] Augustine plainly sees no conflict between these two usages, Ciceronian and biblical. Since the Ciceronian term covers what we imagine or remember as well as what we see, it aptly describes visionary experiences that take a sensory form, such as hearing a voice or seeing an angel.

We need to distinguish between this kind of inner admonition or vision and the deeper kind of inward illumination that is the basis of Augustine's doctrine of prevenient grace. Fortunately, Augustine himself makes the necessary distinctions for us in the final book of his great Genesis commentary, where he classifies vision into three types.[141] In addition to the standard Platonist dichotomy between the vision of the body, which sees sensible things, and the vision of the mind, which sees intelligible things, he posits an intermediary kind of vision, which uses sensory images but not actual sense perception. He calls this imaginative seeing "spiritual vision." Dreams, imagination, and memory, as well as visions of angels and heavenly voices, fall into this category, which Augustine rates as superior to bodily vision but inferior to intellectual vision. (This takes some getting used to: for Augustine the term "intellectual," when not equivalent with "spiritual," as in his early works,[142] designates something superior to the spiritual.) Every kind of mental image, both those produced by external sense perception and those which are simply dreamed up, is covered by the term *visum* (the singular of *visa*), which is to say there are "two kinds of *visa,* one by the senses of the body and the other by the spirit."[143] So it is no surprise that in the early Pauline exegeses, the term *visum* covers both external and internal admonitions (i.e., both bodily and spiritual vision) but not the more

deeply inward power of the intellect to see intelligible truths. This latter is the area in which Augustine's doctrine of grace must grow after *On the Spirit and the Letter*. For once the concept of consent has been added to the picture any *visum*, whether belonging to an external or an internal admonition, is something to which, if we have free will, we can refuse our consent. A grace that unfailingly causes us to consent (and thus to believe) without negating our free will must have a more inward power than that. It must move our will not with the persuasive but resistible force of some impression of things outside our own minds, but with the irresistible attraction of the light of Truth within, the source of all good things and the substance of perfect happiness. It must move not only our love but even our faith with a delight that comes from nothing less than eternal Beauty itself. To articulate that kind of inner power requires the resources of a specifically Platonist epistemology.

That is how the notion of a divine inner teaching, originally developed to undergird Augustine's program of education in the liberal arts, becomes fundamental to his doctrine of grace as well.[144] The Platonist epistemology of the early treatise *On the Teacher* (389)[145] gets connected with the will to believe in the anti-Pelagian treatise *On the Grace of Christ* (418) at the key turning point in the development of Augustine's mature doctrine of grace. Here Augustine first develops the psychology he needs to back up the point about the prevenience of grace he made in response to Pelagius's third evasion. No merit of ours precedes grace, because even faith is a gift of God, stemming from the same inner power of delight that gave us the gift of charity. In fact the keynote of this pivotal treatise is that, like *To Simplicianus*, it applies the psychology of love to the gift of faith. The difference is that it does not rely on an external call to do so. On the contrary, Augustine launches an extensive polemic against Pelagius's notion that external discourse such as Law and teaching afford us the grace we need. Again, anything like Luther's sacramental notion of the Gospel is excluded: in this treatise it is especially clear that no external word could be an effective means of grace.

The treatise *On the Grace of Christ* proceeds through Pelagius's three evasions in order. After a brief review of some theses Pelagius was required to repudiate at his trial (1–3), Augustine attacks a version of Pelagius's second evasion, the identification of grace as a possibility of not sinning that is built into our nature (4–7). Next Augustine criticizes Pelagius's first evasion, the notion that Law and external teaching are sufficient means of helping us to live a just life (8–12). Then he proceeds to develop his alternative: the concept of grace as inner teaching (13–22). This in turn gives him the resources for a thorough rebuttal of Pelagius's third evasion, the notion that grace is given to those who deserve it by the use of their own free will (23–27). From this third

rebuttal emerges a thorough rejection of the notion of antecedent human merits, which becomes the linchpin of his mature doctrine of prevenient grace.

What calls for our close attention is the particular way that Augustine's criticism of the first evasion sets up his answer to the third. His task is to show what is wrong with Pelagius's unwillingness to accept "anything other than the Law and teaching as the means by which our natural possibility is helped."[146] Law and teaching, it turns out, include a great deal—in essence, every form of external discourse by which God addresses our wills. Pelagius refers for example to promises, revelation, and persuasion as means of grace in the course of interpreting the key passage from Paul about God working in us to will and to do (Phil. 2:13). Augustine quotes Pelagius as saying that God

> works in us to will what is good, to will what is holy, when by promising the greatness of rewards and future glory he enflames us who are given to earthly desires and love present things in the manner of dumb animals; when by the revelation of wisdom he stirs up our sluggish will to desire God, and when . . . he urges us to all that is good.[147]

It is not as if Pelagius has a Law/Gospel distinction in mind here. He does not anticipate Luther's view that God's promises effectually give us that goodness of will that his Law requires.[148] Rather—and it is essential to Augustine's argument that he and Pelagius agree on this point—they promise the reward of eternal life to those who live well. So like the revelation of wisdom and the persuasion to do good, they do not give us a gift but only tell us what to do to earn a reward. All this is no more than Law and teaching, which tell us about the good will we must have but cannot give it to us, as Augustine argues:

> What could be more obvious than that he's saying the grace by which God works in us to will what is good is nothing other than Law and teaching? . . . But we want him sometime to affirm the grace by which the greatness of future glory is not merely promised but also believed and hoped in, by which wisdom is not only revealed but also loved, by which we are not only *urged* toward all that is good but actually *persuaded*.[149]

Once again (as in *To Simplicianus*) the issue is how God is able not only to give the gift of faith but make sure that it is received without fail:

> For not everyone has faith who hears the Lord promising the kingdom of heaven through the Scriptures, nor is everyone actually persuaded who is urged to come to him when he says, "come to me, all ye who labor."[150]

So we have once again arrived at the question Augustine evaded in *On the Spirit and the Letter*: what determines who is actually persuaded to believe? But now Augustine gives a clear, unevasive answer. He turns to a discourse of Jesus early in the Gospel of John, which will henceforth become the key resource in his account of the prevenience of grace. "No one comes to me unless the Father who has sent me draw him," says our Lord, making it clear that this is a gift: "I tell you, no one can come to me unless it is given to him by my Father."[151]

One might think that this divine gift is only a necessary condition of faith, not sufficient by itself to cause us to believe. That is how Augustine read these texts only a few years earlier.[152] But Augustine now picks up on another saying in the same discourse that suggests otherwise: "Everyone who has heard my Father and learned, comes to me" (John 6:45). Not everyone who hears external teaching comes, Augustine argues, but everyone who learns inwardly from the Father "not only *can* come, but *does*."[153] God's grace gives us actualities, not mere abilities. It does not simply make faith possible; it causes us to believe. It does so by a teaching that is different from any of the external discourses of promise, revelation, and persuasion to which Pelagius refers. Grace means we are "taught by God"[154] so that we not only know what is right but actually do it. So Augustine's reply to Pelagius is to insist that grace is an inner rather than external teaching:

> If this grace is to be called "teaching," then surely it is called this because God is believed to infuse it more deeply and inwardly, with an ineffable sweetness, not merely through those who plant and water outwardly but also through himself, who provides his own growth in a hidden way.[155]

It is as the apostle says: human beings plant and water, but God gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:7). It belongs to human teachers to plant the seed of the Gospel in human ears and water it with wholesome discourse, but to make it grow into faith belongs to God alone. The key distinction is between speaking outwardly and working inwardly. That is why being taught by God means being given a grace that cannot fail and cannot even be refused. Outward teaching may be ineffective, but when one learns from the Father, one actually comes to faith.

At this point in Augustine's career all three stages of the road to God are explained by the same psychology of inwardness. We begin in faith, travel by love, and arrive in the end at understanding. The Platonist epistemology that explains how we can understand God with the inmost power of our mind (in *On the Teacher*) is here linked with the conception of love as an uncontrollable delight (from *On the Spirit and the Letter,* whose key argument is summarized here)[156] and finally applied to the gift of faith, so as to explain how grace comes

before every merit of ours. Thus the Platonist conception of inner teaching secures for Augustine the prevenience of grace. Later when he wants to make it absolutely explicit that even the very beginning of faith is determined by God, he will have recourse to these same words of Jesus, emphasizing the same theme of being "taught by God" and interpreted the same way: as an inner teaching that, unlike any external words, unfailingly moves our will to believe.[157] Indeed Augustine's late treatise *On the Predestination of the Saints* is actually a treatment of just this theme, combined with an account of how he came to this position over the course of his career. A fully inward psychology of grace, in other words, is the missing piece of the puzzle needed for Augustine's mature picture of predestination, which comes into view as a consequence of Augustine's owning up, without evasion, to the logic of prevenience.

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4

Predestined Grace

Conversion and Election

The pastoral problems of predestination in Western Christianity have to do with Augustine's use of the biblical concept of divine election to answer the question of differentiation: why do some people receive grace and salvation rather than others? For the Protestant wing of the Augustinian tradition, this tends to become a question about the cause of conversion, understood as a person's first turning to the faith of Christ, which happens once in a lifetime. For Augustine, however, conversion does not mean a particular episode in one's life but an ever-renewed turning of the will in the right direction. Even in the case of Paul, "conversion" does not refer simply to the dramatic episode on the Damascus Road, which Augustine often treats as an experience of coercion rather than conversion. The experiential matrix of grace in Augustine's thought is not a once-in-a-lifetime experience of conversion but the repeated experience of praying for grace and receiving it. The new difficulties about predestination that arise at the end of his life stem from the fact that this is not the matrix for prevenient grace, which comes before every worthy prayer or act of faith in us. Prevenient grace does not answer prayers offered in faith but turns evil wills to the good, thus giving the gift of faith to begin with. Hence in the last period of his anti-Pelagian writings Augustine argues that God can inwardly turn human wills in whatever direction he chooses without injustice or violation of free will. Moreover, grace is needed not just for the beginning of faith but for its perseverance to the end, without which there is no salvation. Unlike his Protestant successors, Augustine does not think believers can know that they will receive this gift of perseverance—whence it

follows that they cannot know they are saved, for indeed they are not yet saved in reality but only in hope. This is the Augustinian context for Western anxieties about predestination, including Calvinist attempts to counter these anxieties by teaching (contrary to Augustine) that we can know we are predestined for salvation, which means we can say that we are saved even in this life. The ultimate source of these anxieties, however, is not Augustine but the much older teaching that Christians succeed the Jews as God's chosen people, which is motivated by a misconception of the biblical notion of election, as if it were good news only for the chosen people rather than a way for God to bless others through his chosen ones.

Platonism is a potent ally of the theology of grace, so long as the latter does not include a doctrine of election. Augustine's Platonist metaphysics readily supports his vigorous arguments for the necessity of a prior divine goodness that makes possible every good in our souls, yet until the last years of his life Augustine is hesitant, even evasive, in the task of forging a consistent account of prevenience, of how the grace of God comes before every good choice in us. For it turns out there is more to biblical conceptions of prevenience than the notion, so easily articulated in Platonist terms, that all our good comes from the divine Good. There is the question of differentiation, of why some rather than others receive the unmerited gift of God. This is a prominent question for attentive readers of the Bible, where the God of Israel takes sides in the terrible cruel mess of human history by choosing some people rather than others, for no merit of their own, as his Beloved: Israel his firstborn (Exodus 4:22) and Jesus Christ his only begotten (John 1:14 and 3:16).[1] Hence a biblical conception of prevenient grace will not just trace all moral goodness back to God as its source, but must have something to say about these particular divine choices and the meaning of the human differences they create.

This is what Augustine's Platonism does not equip him to do, which is why his struggle over prevenience is so prolonged. He must overcome the resistance of conceptual pressures, reinforced by his Platonism, that push him in an opposite direction from the biblical doctrine of election—in favor of a larger role for the human will and a stronger sense of divine justice as equal treatment. He might never have tried to overcome these pressures were it not for the need to expose Pelagius's evasions. Augustine's anti-Pelagian polemics in effect forced upon him a radical consistency about prevenience with which he himself seems at first to have been uncomfortable, and left in addition a legacy of deep pastoral problems that are unimaginable outside the Augustinian heritage. In this chapter we examine the shape of that legacy, the tension between its biblical and Platonist elements, and the pastoral problems that result.

The most familiar one-word label for these problems is "predestination," which is accurate enough, though not quite the most illuminating label available. The "pre-" is a bit misleading, insofar as it makes us curious about what happened long ago or gets us thinking about theoretical problems concerning determinism and free will. The pastoral problems are more immediate and personal, centering on whether I am one of those whom God elects to save. (And one can scarcely state the problem clearly, even in its most general features, without using the first person singular pronoun: this is not about whether "one" is saved but whether I am, and any other way of stating the problem makes for awkward prose as well as unbecoming abstraction.) The issue is about the personal relation between the Christian sinner and the God who chooses (or not) to work in the inmost depth of the human soul, turning it toward its own eternal good. Everything, not only my salvation but even my choice to seek it, depends on whether God chooses that I will receive this gift of grace and persevere in it to the end, and not only do I have no say over God's choice but I am (by Augustine's reckoning) in no position to know anything about it. The resulting anxieties, which would reach a fever pitch much later in the Western tradition, are rooted ultimately not in the concept of predestination but in the doctrine of election, the account of divine choice that Augustine arrived at when he was finally willing to give a forthright answer to the question of differentiation (how am I made to be different from those who remain in the mass of damnation?) and to make this answer fully consistent with the prevenience of grace. "Election" is thus the best one-word label for the problems generated by the final form of Augustine's doctrine of grace and their legacy inthe West, which eventually includes Protestantism itself.

The Grace of Beginnings

Prevenience is about what comes first and therefore about how things begin. Because Augustine makes a big point of putting faith at the beginning of the process of salvation, the question of how faith begins becomes the defining issue in the final phase of his anti-Pelagian writings. When Augustine tells us how he came to understand the prevenience of grace, it is a story about how he eventually realized that the very beginning of faith (the *initium fidei*) is a gift of grace.[2] It is not obvious that faith had to be the defining issue here—as opposed to love or obedience or any other act of the human will. Indeed faith is not the defining issue for a theology of prevenient grace unless one accepts some version of Augustine's *ordo salutis* or process of salvation, in which the

choice to believe is the psychological starting point of the process, the first time our souls are turned in the right direction.

Even if one accepts the priority of faith, prevenience looks different if one has a psychology of grace in which Christians must keep beginning anew, always needing to repent and come to faith. In Luther's theology, for example, all Christians are still sinners, and all sin is unbelief—so that, as Christians are both justified and sinners at the same time, they are both believers and unbelievers at the same time.[3] Therefore whenever believers sin it is due to unbelief and whenever they repent it is a turning back to faith, with the result that the Christian life is a continual battle between faith and unbelief.[4] The beginning of faith means repeatedly beginning again and conversion means turning back to faith in a repentance that should take place daily. So for Luther the Gospel is always prevenient, coming to Christians while they are still unbelieving sinners and turning them around yet again, like the kind words of a good lord teaching a frightened or angry servant to trust him.[5] In such a theology, prevenient grace is not something experienced only once in life.

However, the more common Protestant picture is different, focusing on the very first moment of faith, a once-in-a-lifetime conversion in which the will is turned from unbelief to a faith that must not (or in many versions, cannot) be lost.[6] This is a much narrower understanding of conversion than Augustine's, who uses the words *convertere* and *conversio* for every movement of the will in which it is turned from earthly desires to love of God. Nonetheless, because the initial moment of faith, the *initium fidei*, is so prominent a theme in the final phase of his anti-Pelagian writings, Augustine's mature theology is the seedbed of this Protestant notion of a single, once-in-a-lifetime conversion to faith, which arises in large part as a response to the pastoral problems about predestination bequeathed to Western Christianity by Augustine's way of rooting his theology of prevenient grace in the doctrine of divine election.

Converting Paul's Will

By the same token, however, the Protestant notion of conversion results in serious misinterpretations if it is read back into Augustine's earlier writings. It will help us understand Augustine's development if we clear away this kind of misinterpretation, the most important example of which is the tendency to read book 8 of the *Confessions,* despite everything Augustine tells us to the contrary, as if it were a story about his conversion to faith in Christ.[7] The grace in this narrative is clearly not prevenient, because it comes to young Augustine after he already has a good will and believes in Christ as Savior. It is not that the story

denies the prevenience of grace; rather, it is simply not about the beginning of the process of salvation. By the time we reach *Confessions* 8 that process had been under way for quite some time. Prevenient mercy and grace are visible in abundance early in the *Confessions*. What happens in book 8 is not Augustine's first experience of grace but his transition from living under Law (*sub lege*) to living under grace (*sub gratia*)—a very important transition, but one that is far from the beginning of the process of salvation and therefore does not involve the specifically prevenient aspect of divine grace.

Once again it is easy to be misled by Augustine's own retrospective account of the matter,[8] though in this case it is mainly because our use of words like "conversion" is so different from his. In the last treatise he completed against the Pelagians, he interprets the *Confessions* as a narrative of the prevenient grace that converted him to faith.

> And in those same books I told the story of my turning [*conversio*], with God *turning* me [*Deo me convertente*] to the faith which I was *laying waste* with my most miserable, *raging* loquacity—do you not remember how I told it so as to show that I was granted to the faithful, daily tears of my mother, lest I perish? There I surely *preached* that God *turns* human wills to the right faith which are not only *turned away* from it but *turned against* it.[9]

We get a little closer to Augustine's thought (and further away from our own) by translating the noun *conversio* with "turning" rather than the more familiar "conversion," for in Augustine's Latin this noun is clearly secondary to the verb *convertere,* to turn, and is used mainly as a label for actions that are described using that verb. Nor should the appearance of the language of conversion here distract us from the fact that he refers to the books of the *Confessions* in the plural: he is not speaking just about book 8. Indeed the focus here is not on book 8 at all but on the earlier books when he was a loquacious Manichaean heretic, averse and even hostile to the Catholic faith. Throughout the passage Augustine uses the language of turning in ways that do not always come through in English translation, describing himself as turned away (*aversus*) and even turned against (*adversus*) the right faith to which God can turn (*convertere*) the human will. This averse, even adversarial relationship to the Catholic faith does not fit Augustine's situation in *Confessions* 8, where he is a believer in Catholic teaching who is passionately though not wholeheartedly seeking the help of God to live a virtuous life (as he prays, "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet").[10]

It does, however, closely match Augustine's description of how God turns Paul to faith in the immediately preceding treatise, *On the Predestination of the Saints:*

> For even *the beginning of his faith* is written down, and is well known from being read on church holy days. *Turned away* from the faith which he was *laying waste,* and fiercely *turned against* it, he was suddenly *turned to* it by a stronger grace, with Him doing the *turning* [*convertente illo*] of whom it is said by the prophet that he would do this very thing: "You *turning,* give us life." So not only from one unwilling is he made to be one willing to believe, but even from a persecutor he is made to be one who suffers persecution in defense of that faith which he had persecuted.[11]

Augustine's description of his own "conversion" is thus, nearly verb-for-verb, a reprise of his description of Paul's. In effect, Augustine at this late date in his career proposes that we read the *Confessions* in light of his anti-Pelagian reading of how God converted Paul, whom Augustine takes as a prime example of the operation of prevenient grace. Yet he is not proposing to read specifically *Confessions* 8 that way—that would be too much of a stretch, for *Confessions* 8 is clearly not about "the beginning of his faith." Indeed, he is not comparing two episodes of experience at all, as we might expect from modern usage of the word "conversion." (The very fact that we treat "conversion" as a count-noun, as if it made sense to speak of one or more conversions, is contrary to Augustine's usage, in which one would no more speak of one or more "conversions" than of one or more loves or faiths or waters or airs. These are not words for particular episodes that could be numbered.) It so happens that the beginning of Paul's faith can be identified with a single event, occurring on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1–9), which very usefully illustrates Augustine's point about prevenient grace: that God can give faith not just to the unworthy, but even to the unwilling. This anti-Pelagian use of Paul's story by Augustine lies at the root of the modern genre of Christian conversion narratives. But the fact that the beginning of Paul's faith was a sudden event is not at the center of Augustine's interest, and it is certainly not the point of comparison he is trying to make between Paul's life and his own.

For there is no one episode Augustine points to as the sudden beginning of his own faith in Christ. He speaks of drinking in the name of Christ with his mother's milk[12] and of the faith with which he sought the baptism of Christ as a boy from his two mothers, Monica and the Church.[13] He is quite explicit that "I already believed, as did she and the whole house, except my father alone—who however did not overcome in me the right of maternal piety [*jus maternae pietatis*] that I might believe less in Christ, as he did not yet believe."[14] It is as if his faith has roots older than his flesh, going back to a maternal source that predates his existence in this world. Of course he strayed from that faith and became its

enemy, a heretic, but he never tells us of any one moment when he is converted from someone who lays waste to the church with his loquacity to someone who preaches the Gospel. For him, that change took years. But that does not at all prevent him from describing the change in the language of conversion, because unlike us he does not use such language to single out any one episode in his life.

So when Augustine compares Paul's "conversion" to his own, he is not comparing the Damascus Road episode to the experience narrated in *Confessions* 8.[15] Rather, he is talking about an inward turning of the will that may take years (as in his case) or only a moment (as in Paul's). His focus is on this change of will (what *he* calls conversion), not on a particular episode, experience, or process in which the change takes place (what *we* tend to mean by conversion). In other words, the defining moments of conversion for Augustine are what the will is turned *from* and what it is turned *to*,[16] not the moment or period of time in which the turning occurs. This can be confirmed by reading some of Augustine's many descriptions of Paul's change of will. The focus is always on one key transformation, variously formulated: from persecutor of the Gospel to preacher of it (i.e., from *persecutor* to *praedicator*), from wolf to sheep (or even from wolf to shepherd), or from one who lays waste (*vastat*) to the church to one who builds it up. To describe this change Augustine often, but not always, discusses the episode on the Damascus Road.[17] When he does that, the additional elements of the story include almost always the voice from heaven and often Paul's being knocked down and blinded. What this particular episode adds to Augustine's thinking about Paul's conversion is thus an account of God's action, not of Paul's experience. Augustine's usual label for the episode in fact is not conversion but calling (*vocatio*),[18] related to the voice (*vocem*) that calls Paul from heaven and also to Old Testament passages where God calls prophets like Isaiah or Jeremiah to do his work. This conforms with New Testament usage as well, which relates the story of the Damascus Road three times[19] without ever describing it as a conversion or turning. The point of the episode is not how Paul got saved, but how he was called and authorized from heaven to be an apostle and witness of Jesus Christ. That is why, when his focus is on Paul's change of heart, Augustine often gives as much attention to Paul's own letters, where Paul gives thanks for God's grace turning him from a persecutor to an apostle, as to the Damascus Road episode.[20]

Coercion on the Damascus Road

Augustine's descriptions of the change in Paul have a basic form and a common vocabulary, with or without reference to the episode on the Damascus

Road. What is not obvious from any one quotation is that Augustine puts this basic description to a number of different uses. It is not for him (as it is for much of the Protestant tradition) the archetype of the experience of grace. It is indeed a very handy illustration of prevenient grace against the Pelagians (Augustine uses it at least five times for that purpose),[21] but it has many other uses as well—including some quite contrary to its anti-Pelagian use, as we shall see. Most fundamentally, it is about how big a change God can make in a person's life: from persecutor to preacher, from wolf to shepherd. Thus in a number of sermons the moral of the story is that if such a transformation is possible for one who calls himself "the first of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15) then the rest of us sinners should not lose hope.[22] This basic use of the story sets up its use against the Pelagians, as we can see by returning to the original words of Pelagius's third evasion. Recall that what Pelagius said was: "God gives all graces to him who has been worthy of receiving them, just as he gave them to the apostle Paul."[23] Knowing the basic form Paul's story takes in Augustine's writings, we can see the trap into which Pelagius sets foot here. Augustine the preacher has an arsenal of scriptural texts ready to hand showing that Paul thinks far less of his own antecedent merits than Pelagius does. Augustine does admit that the apostle earns a crown of justice by staying the course and fighting the good fight,[24] but Paul himself attributes this not to himself but to the grace of God working in him; for before receiving the graces that go with apostleship he was not a preacher of the Gospel but a persecutor, unfit to be an apostle.[25] Thus he did not work to earn grace, but rather was given a wholly gratuitous and unmerited grace so that he might do God's work in a way that earns a crown of reward.

Augustine uses a whole barrage of texts against Pelagius here, but not the Damascus Road narrative. That narrative only becomes useful for Augustine against the Pelagians after he is willing to be explicit about how the choice to believe is a result of the inward work of grace. For once he is willing to do that, he can retrieve a memorable reading of the Damascus Road story that he had tried only once before. This reading occurs (as one might have guessed) in *To Simplicianus*. It serves to illustrate how God calls us to faith, and in particular, how "there is no way the will itself can be moved unless something comes up that delights and invites the mind."[26] The language Augustine uses to describe the event on the Damascus Road is not exactly that of conversion, but close enough:

> What did Saul will, but to invade, drag off, conquer and kill Christians? What a *raging,* furious, blind will! Yet he is laid low by a voice from on high—an appearance does indeed come up by which

> that mind and will, its savagery broken, is twisted back [*retorqueretur*] and re-directed [*corrigeretur*] to the faith—and suddenly, from a marvelous *persecutor* of the Gospel, he is made a marvelous *preacher*.

Shorn of the talk of appearances (*visa*) characteristic of the early Pauline exegeses,[27] and adding the new affirmation that God works inwardly to turn the human will, this way of telling the Damascus Road story is a very useful illustration of prevenient grace against the Pelagians. That is how Augustine uses it a couple years or so after finally identifying faith as a gift of grace that results from inner teaching. The story serves to illustrate how God has power to turn our wills without taking away our free will. The general point that needs illustrating is thus:

> No one is forced unwillingly toward either good or evil by the power of God; but when God deservedly abandons him he goes toward evil, and when God undeservedly helps him he is turned toward good. For a man is not good if he does not will to be, but by the grace of God he is helped even to will.[28]

The illustration is this:

> I ask you to tell me what good Paul (at that time Saul) willed—or rather what great evil—when he went "breathing slaughter" to *lay waste* to Christians with horrendous blindness of mind and *rage*? Through what merit of good will did God *convert* him from those evils to good things by a marvelous and sudden *calling*?[29]

This is the first time I have found Augustine using the language of conversion to describe Paul's calling. The new term signals a shift in focus, as Augustine accounts for God's power to give us unfailingly the gift of faith, not by referring to a suitable call (as in *To Simplicianus*) but by insisting that God works directly within our heart to change our will. Here the notion of conversion is tied both to the prevenience of grace and God's working inwardly in our hearts. Augustinian conversion thus means that it is God who directly turns the human will within us, even if the will is averse to God.

> Is this given for the merit of his good will to someone who already wills to believe—or is it rather that, in order that he may believe, this same will is stirred up from above like Saul's, even if he is so *averse* to the faith that he *persecutes* believers?[30]

The story of how Saul became Paul thus illustrates the point of John 6:44, that no one comes to Christ unless the Father draws him. For it is the unwilling

who need to be drawn or pulled toward faith—not against their will, but precisely by making them willing.

> Who is drawn if he is already willing? And yet no one comes unless he wills to come. Therefore he is drawn in a marvelous way *so that* he wills, by him who knows how to work in the human heart itself.[31]

Here we have the standard anti-Pelagian use of the Damascus Road story.

However, this should not be taken as *the* meaning of the story for Augustine. Some four years earlier Augustine uses the story to make a quite different, even incompatible point. For this is a very useful story, and Augustine has more than one set of opponents against whom to use it. In this case the opponents are the African schismatics known as Donatists. Acting on behalf of the Catholics, the Roman government has recently imposed legal sanctions on the Donatists, who object that coercion is not the way of Christ. Augustine replies that it was precisely the way of Christ with Paul on the Damascus Road:

> What about how the Donatists are used to crying out: "To believe or not is free! What force does Christ introduce? Whom does he coerce?" Look, here is Paul the apostle: recognize in him Christ first coercing, then teaching.[32]

Here Paul's experience on the Damascus Road looks very different from the inner teaching of faith. Indeed it is not teaching at all, for what one gains from teaching is learned voluntarily, and this experience is quite involuntary. Paul is under compulsion, just like the Donatists who are compelled to enter the Catholic Church, where they can be taught sound Catholic doctrine. Augustine's point is that they are being treated just as Paul was treated by Christ: first coerced (like Paul on the Damascus Road) then taught (like Paul instructed by Ananias in Damascus).[33]

Even more striking is an earlier anti-Donatist use of the same story, where the language is, for Augustine, almost unbearably crude. As if one could use force to make someone understand, Augustine says Paul is "compelled by the great violence of Christ coercing him to know and hold the truth."[34] But most striking of all for our purposes is Augustine's use of John 6:44 to back up the policy of coercion:

> You hear Christ saying, "No one comes to me except whom my Father draws in," which happens in the hearts of all who turn themselves [*se . . . convertunt*] to him in fear of divine wrath.[35]

Here the very same biblical passage that Augustine later uses to explain how God inwardly turns our wills by the power of delight is used to support a policy

of external coercion inducing hearts to turn themselves by fear. The passage, after all, does have its ambiguities. The verb "to draw in" (*attrahere*) also means "to drag in," and that is the sense in which Augustine interprets it here. So this saying of Jesus can join the story of Paul on the Damascus Road as a justification of coercion, even though Augustine later uses it to support the notion that God works in our hearts inwardly, without external compulsion. Augustine in fact takes a careful look at this ambiguity on more than one occasion, explaining that God "drags" us to faith, as it were, by the sweet attractiveness of truth and the force of our own desire and delight in it.[36]

What these texts show, I think, is the weight of opposition in Augustine's own mind (i.e., in his deep-seated habits of thought) to the notion that our will can be directly moved by God contrary to its own inclination without violating our freedom. The Platonist psychology of the inner teaching of faith helps him overcome this opposition, since it means that God turns the resisting will not by external force but by the sweet inner compulsion of delight and desire. Who, after all, can resist a grace that causes us to fall in love with nothing less than our eternal happiness?[37] Still, the notion of coercion lingers in the background—it is certainly there for many of Augustine's critics, and perhaps even for Augustine himself. For in his last use of the Damascus Road story he returns to the theme of coercion, even though it is not directed against the Donatists. Replying to the Pelagian polemicist Julian of Eclanum, Augustine argues:

> Now if, as you say, a man ought not be called back by any necessity [*ulla necessitate revocari*] from his own intention—even if it is evil—then why is the apostle Paul (at that time Saul) "breathing slaughter" and thirsting for blood, recalled from his extremely evil intention by a violent physical blindness and a terrifying voice from above, and from a prostrate *persecutor,* arises a *preacher* of the Gospel he had opposed, who will work harder than all the rest?[38]

As with the anti-Donatist use of the story, the keynote here is coercion, as registered in the language of violence, terror, and necessity. It is not irrelevant to note that by this time the Pelagians had joined the Donatists in being subject to legal sanctions for their beliefs. Yet unless Augustine is to be read as being simply inconsistent on this point, we must take it that he realizes that external coercion—even the violence of Christ blinding Paul—can do no more than compel obedience of the body, not delight of the will. His contention, rather, is that mere external coercion has its uses: it bans the seductions of false teaching and makes opportunities, even for those who are currently unwilling, to hear the preaching of truth. But when someone actually does turn and embrace the

truth, this can only be an uncoerced act of will motivated by delight, drawn by the inner teaching of the Father. The latter motivation is, as it were, the official psychology of prevenient grace in Augustine's mature anti-Pelagian teaching. The deep problem is that this psychology comes to seem less and less relevant to Augustine's increasingly biblical account of prevenient grace.

The Experience of Grace in Disarray

Augustine's conception of grace originally grew out of a distinctive kind of experience, which it turns out does not help him much in thinking about prevenience. Both in his early exegeses of Paul and at the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, this experience is conceived in Platonist terms: the faithful prayer for grace (originally a prayer for divine help in inquiry) is rewarded by an experience of inner delight (originally the experience of Platonic *eros*) leading to insight into unchanging Truth (like seeing the intelligible Sun in the Allegory of the Cave). This Platonist experience of grace I would contrast with the more usual attempt to interpret Augustine's experience on the basis of the narrative in *Confessions* 8, as if he were the kind of Protestant who experienced the power of grace only once in life, in a single dramatic moment of conversion. My contention, on the contrary, is that the experiential matrix of Augustine's doctrine of grace is not to be found in any single episode of his life but in the ongoing practice of praying for grace and receiving it, in which the goodness and truth of God become ever sweeter to him as he continues in prayer and virtue. This is not the experience of those who receive grace for the first time at the very beginning of the process of salvation or the spiritual life, but rather the kind of religious practice that formed the backbone of monastic spirituality for many centuries. The inner experience of grace, for Augustine, is more like that of monks at prayer than that of Protestants getting saved. The episode narrated in *Confessions* 8 did not create this ongoing experience in Augustine's life (as if one experience would suffice) but the narrative does provide a particularly dramatic illustration of it. It is the story of a man praying with tears and sighs to be given a purer heart and a firmer will, and finding that his prayer is indeed answered with a taste of inner sweetness and joy. This is surely not the only time this sort of thing happened in Augustine's life. Therefore, so long as we do not read *Confessions* 8 in the Protestant manner as a one-time conversion to faith, we can in fact find Augustine's experience of grace there, because that is precisely what the narrative is designed to illustrate.

Once we see the difference between the experience of grace in *Confessions* 8 and Protestant conversion narratives (the latter being closer to Augustine's

later, anti-Pelagian reading of the Damascus Road episode as a sudden 180-degree conversion of Paul's will) we can see better how Augustine's mature concept of prevenience goes far beyond the original experiential matrix of his doctrine of grace. A prevenience that turns one's heart from unwilling to willing is not what his earlier experience of grace had prepared him for. What grace feels like to Augustine is an inner delight in divine things, a delight that is itself desired and prayed for—not Christ attacking you on the road, striking you blind, and giving you a faith you had hitherto hated. But precisely because prevenient grace is about beginnings, it is independent of our prior desires, prayers, and choices. It can do without the whole Platonist psychology that Augustine had originally used to interpret his religious experience and formulate his theology of grace. So the prevenient gift of faith is hard for Augustine to come to terms with, for it fits neither his philosophical categories nor his lived experience.

The problem can be put this way: it does not come naturally to Augustine to imagine prevenience as gracious. For according to Augustine's process of salvation or *ordo salutis*, prevenient grace necessarily comes to us before we are living under grace, while we are still in bondage to sin (*ante legem*) or under the terror of the Law (*sub lege*). So for example the mercy that goes before him in the early books of the *Confessions* is harsh and unwelcome to the young sinner. The *Confessions* pictures God sprinkling all the sweetness of young Augustine's earthly pleasures with bitterness to make him realize that this is not the food of life he really yearns for.[39] Throughout his wayward adolescence God is rough on him for his own good, teaching him not by the inner delight of insight but by the hard experience of grief, jealousy, and fear that love for mortal things cannot lead him to enduring happiness. So the taste of grace is bitter until he makes the transition from his sinful life under the Law to the sweetness of life under grace at the end of book 8.

With the striking exception of *To Simplicianus*, that bitterness remains the taste of prevenient grace until Augustine reconceives prevenience in terms of the sweetness of inner teaching in the treatise *On the Grace of Christ* in 418.[40] This is a pivotal moment in the development of Augustine's mature psychology of grace, but it does not help him create a new experiential matrix for the doctrine. For the new development is precisely that Augustine takes concepts used to describe the experience of the grace of charity and applies them to the prevenient grace of faith.[41] But the two forms of grace cannot really work the same way psychologically, as long as Augustine conceives of faith as coming before charity in the process of salvation. Prevenient grace must come before the life under grace (*sub gratia*), affording us not the sweet delight of charity but the good will of faith that desires and prays for the gift of charity. Conversely, if

prevenient grace really is a gift of delight, then faith cannot play a fundamentally different role in the order of salvation from charity. For if faith originates from an inward delight toward God, then it too is at root a form of charity.

The problem can be illustrated by looking at his treatise *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* written a few years later—the treatise where he first uses the Damascus Road episode against the Pelagians to illustrate prevenient grace. There he also picks up a verse from the Psalms that connects prevenience and delight, speaking of the king of Israel who is blessed when God "goes before [*praevenisti*] him with the blessing of sweetness."[42] On this basis Augustine conceives prevenient grace as a gift of sweetness and delight that makes us do good out of love, not fear. This is his standard psychology of grace, but now deployed in the new way just recently developed in *On the Grace of Christ,* in order to rebut the Pelagian contention that God cannot give the desire for good to people who are "unwilling and resistant."[43] Prevenient grace makes the unwilling willing, precisely by giving them a gift of delight they did not want. Augustine even goes so far as to call this gift "charity." But that seems to be a mistake, obliterating the distinction between charity and faith: for on that account both charity and faith must consist in a good will that not only desires but delights in the good, and both must result directly from the prevenient grace that gives us a good will in the first place. This eliminates the usual intermediary stage in Augustine's sequence of salvation, the stage of a good will that prays in faith for the grace of delight in order to bring about a wholehearted obedience one does not yet have.

Augustine's mature psychology of prevenient grace, in short, tends to collapse the distinction between faith and charity. Moving the concept of faith inward,[44] so as to make it the effect of the same inner grace as charity, undermines the whole idea of a definite psychological sequence or order of salvation. This disarray in Augustine's order of salvation can be read in two ways. On the one hand, it opens up the possibility of a Protestant Augustinianism in which true faith necessarily includes a love of God that embraces Christ.[45] On the other hand, a more Catholic reading can describe the difference between the beginning and the end of the psychological sequence of salvation as a matter of degree: it begins with a faith that delights at least a little in the good, but not enough to accomplish it—and perhaps (for consistency's sake) not enough to deserve the name charity. This description seems to fit better the quantitative language Augustine uses in his last great account of the psychology of grace, in the treatise *On Grace and Free Will*, where the gift of faith at the beginning of the sequence of salvation is described as a "good will" and the gift of charity as a "great will."[46] This is language Augustine had used decades

earlier in *Confessions*,[47] but here it seems to suggest a kind of continuity that was not mentioned in the earlier work: even the initial good will of faith apparently must include some degree of the inner delight called charity, or else it could not be conceived as the effect of prevenient grace. By contrast, the description of a good will that is not yet a "great will" in *Confessions* 8 makes no mention of prevenient grace but only of a grace that comes in answer to prayer, which is to say, after the good will but before the great will. In the treatise *On Grace and Free Will* the same language of good will and great will is part of an argument that all prayer for grace is preceded by grace: we always pray for grace as those who have already received it, which seems to imply that all believers already delight in God but always long to delight in him more. Once again, monastic practices of prayer seem to be a better way of fleshing out this experience of grace than Protestant conversion narratives.

God Turns Hearts

The fact that Augustine's psychology of grace falls into some disarray toward the end of his career is not often noticed, because other issues loom larger. As he works out the logic of biblical notions of prevenience, the psychology of delight in fact takes a back seat to the crucial implication that divine election has for free will, namely, that God's choices cause our choices. Augustine finds abundant evidence in support of this implication in the Scriptures. We have already seen how he uses the story of Paul to exemplify God's power to give grace to those who are not only unworthy but unwilling. According to the logic of prevenience this must be the rule rather than the exception: it is always by the grace of God that we have a good will, which means that before prevenient grace touches our souls there is nothing in us but unwillingness to believe, obey, and love God. Accordingly, Augustine follows up his earliest anti-Pelagian use of the Damascus Road episode with a reference to God's promise to give Israel a new heart,[48] and then to God's turning the heart of the king of Persia to make him favorable to the prayer of Esther.

The latter is a striking new departure, however, because it is not specifically a gift of grace. "By an extremely hidden and efficacious power," God turns the heart of the king and transforms his anger at Esther into mildness, so that Esther may be granted her petition to save the people of Israel from extermination.[49] While this turning is a good thing, its purpose is to save not him but Israel, the chosen people. So this story is not about the inner working of grace turning the heart toward God but simply about God's power to turn the human will in whatever direction he chooses. Here Augustine's biblical exegesis leads

him quite beyond the Platonist psychology of grace. For that psychology was entirely concerned with how we receive our soul's own good from the one who is most truly Good. By contrast, the possibility that opens up here is that God may move people's hearts in any direction, whether or not it is good for them, simply to achieve his own good purposes.

This possibility is explicitly affirmed in the late treatise *On Grace and Free Will*, which is dedicated to the proposition that grace and free will are compatible and also contains what is probably Augustine's most thorough treatment of the logic of prevenience. Written in response to some African monks (not Pelagians) who were troubled by his defense of prevenient grace in the letter to Sixtus (Epistle 194), most of the treatise tackles issues that are by now familiar to us: Augustine attacks the notion of antecedent merit, contends that faith is a gift of grace, and argues that even our good will is due to God's grace. This last point, however, leads him to a new, unqualified affirmation that God has the power to move our wills to undertake whatever action he chooses, including evil deeds. Augustine backs up this startling claim with a long series of biblical examples, taken mainly from Old Testament narratives. For instance, when King David is fleeing Jerusalem he bears patiently with a man who savagely curses him because, as David says, "the Lord has told him to."[50] As Augustine points out, it is clear from the narrative that the Lord has not *commanded* David's enemy to curse him—that would make the cursing a praiseworthy act of obedience. The man sins when he curses David—yet this act is nonetheless prompted by God, "who by his own just and hidden judgment inclined this man's will, evil by its very own vice, to this particular sin."[51] The formulation is precise and its details are important: God does not make good people do evil, but he does justly cause wills that are already vicious to commit sins that will be useful for his own good purposes (in this case, teaching David humility and patience). In a similar vein Augustine quotes biblical passages where the Lord stirs up Israel's enemies so that they come (quite willingly) to attack his people and thereby punish their sins.[52] Augustine also has a sharp eye for a particular kind of biblical tale, in which a powerful man of dubious virtue makes a bad decision by dint of ignoring good advice—and the biblical text tells us that "this was from God."[53] (It makes a good story: why does some faithless king make a stupid mistake that does him in? Because God is on the scene making sure he won't listen to good advice. Serves him right!) Also, Augustine tells the story of Esther again and this time adds the general principle, formulated by the biblical proverb: "Like the rushing of water, the heart of a king is in God's hand: he deflects it wherever he wills."[54]

Augustine's reasoning about how God can do this is straightforward enough. Fundamentally, it follows from the Creator's power over his creature:

"He who made everything he willed in heaven and on earth, works also in human hearts."[55] But Augustine explains this power using his own distinctive vocabulary of inwardness, treating the heart as an inner space in which God may be present to act directly on the will:

> For the Almighty acts [*agit*] in human hearts even on the motion of their wills, so as to do [*agat*] through them what he wills to do through them—he who knows not how to will anything at all unjustly.[56]

Augustine's implicit assumption here is that when God inwardly moves our wills it is not coercion, because it is not like an external force moving our bodies against our will. Precisely because God is present deep within us, his power over our wills does not violate our wills. Thus Augustine affirms a kind of biblical compatibilism between human free will and divine power over the human heart. Taking the most famous example of a faithless king who fails to heed good advice, he points out that Scripture says *both* that God hardened Pharaoh's heart so he would not listen to Moses *and* that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.[57] The two are not in conflict, for like divine power and free will in general, this is a both/and proposition.

But even more than free will, Augustine is concerned to uphold the justice of God. At every point he affirms that God turns human wills to some particular sin only when they are already evil, whether by their own prior sinning or by the inheritance of original sin.[58] The fundamental justice of this has long been an essential ingredient in Augustine's thinking about original sin, according to which "sin punishes sin": that is, our inability to avoid further sinning is a penal consequence of our sinning in Adam.[59] More deeply, this defense of the justice of God is also a consequence of the way Augustine's approach to the problem of evil intersects his doctrine of election. The fundamental principle here is that God "judged it better to make good from evils than to permit no evils to exist."[60] In particular, God allows the existence of sin, the evil that comes from our free will, for the benefit of the good (e.g., by making possible the glory of martyrdom, which is a great good) or for the punishment of the wicked (which, being a form of justice, is also a good).[61] Thus when God chooses not to give grace to some, it is because he knows how to make good use of evil wills for his own just purposes.[62] For Augustine the deepest examples of this are Satan and Judas and the Jews who killed Christ.[63]

It is a terrifying thing when a psychology designed to explain how God turns our inmost souls to delight in the Good is used to support a doctrine of election in which God chooses to leave a great many people turned toward evil. There is a mismatch here between Augustine's Platonist psychology of grace

and the biblical doctrine of election. The Bible in fact shows very little interest in the process of salvation by which the soul comes to God, and its doctrine of election has something quite different in view, which we can illustrate by turning one last time to the episode on the Damascus Road. Given the dramatic change this episode makes in Paul's heart, it is reasonable enough to call it a conversion. Yet the Bible doesn't. The vocabulary it uses makes plain that it is not interested in Paul's experience of grace, how he gets converted or saved, but in relating how he was chosen and called to be a witness of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.[64] This interest in how one person is chosen for the sake of others is not an exception, but is the very heart of the biblical doctrine of election. Even Judas and those who killed Christ (Romans and Jews alike, Pilate and Caiaphas and the rest, and let us not forget all those who forsook him and fled, the disciples Christ chose, who were of course all Jews) were chosen for the purpose of bringing about the salvation of the world. However terrifying the choice may be, the God of the Bible chooses no one who is not an instrument of mercy and blessing for others, except on those occasions when he chooses one who will bring punishment upon his chosen people, whom he loves.[65] That is the ultimate reason that Augustine cannot get his psychology of grace to mesh with the doctrine of election. The biblical doctrine of election is not about the soul's relation to God. It is properly the complex story of how the God of Israel takes sides in human history so that his chosen people may live and be a blessing to all nations.

Problems of Perseverance

Unlike the biblical doctrine, Augustine's doctrine of election is very bad news for those who are not elect. This is compounded by there being no news of who actually is elect. As a result, Augustine's mature theology of grace raises a distinctive set of pastoral questions, which are most aptly expressed in first-person terms: am *I* one of the elect, destined to be saved in the end, or am I one of those whom God will justly abandon to the eternal punishment that is all I am able to merit without the help of grace? Might I be one of those whose hearts are eventually hardened, whose will is turned to evil even by God himself? How can I know whether I ultimately belong with Jacob or with Esau? It turns out, on Augustine's reckoning, that I cannot know. For although I may know by experience the sweet inner delight given only by grace, that is no guarantee that I will be saved in the end. I must get to the end of my life on earth remaining in this state of grace (as later Catholic theology calls it). This perseverance in faith and charity is itself a gift of grace, Augustine teaches.[66]

No choice I now make can guarantee that I will not eventually abandon the faith of Christ and turn to the way of destruction. Only God can determine that I will be a believer in Christ up to the hour of my death, by continually renewing the gift of grace in me so that I will continue to seek justice with love and delight. In Augustine's terms: only God can give the gift of perseverance.

What is more, there is no way I can know whether God intends to give me this gift. Only a divine knowledge can ascertain what my choices will be before I make them. No one knows whether I will continue to pray for and receive the gift of grace except God. This knowledge in fact is precisely what Augustine means by the term "predestination," which he defines as God's foreknowledge of his own good gifts.[67] The elect are therefore "chosen before the foundation of the world by that predestination in which God foreknew his own future doings."[68] This doctrine of predestination follows from Augustine's conviction that God's choices are not improvised in response to unfolding events but are informed by his knowledge of all that will happen from the beginning of time to the end, including all that he will do and in particular how he will distribute his gifts of grace. The frightening thing about this is not so much that God's choices are made before we are born (indeed, strictly speaking they are made eternally, outside the sequence of past, present, and future, not in a time before we were born)[69] but that his choice to give grace to some rather than others is not determined by any antecedent merit of ours—and that this is true even of the gift of perseverance. For this means that no choice of ours, no prayer or faith, nothing in our conduct of the Christian life, ultimately determines whether we are saved. Of course if we are to be saved we must make the choices that lead to salvation, but we make those choices because God first chose to give us the gift of perseverance.

Protestantism begins by accepting Augustine's doctrine of predestination together with its pastoral problems—but also feeling the problems more deeply than Augustine ever could, because Augustine was not born and raised in an Augustinian culture. The Reformers were raised in a religious culture founded on Augustine's theology of grace, which made questions about how to obtain the grace of God a deep concern of every pious soul. Protestantism does not emerge as a distinctive theology until John Calvin goes so far as to disagree, implicitly but firmly, with Augustine's view of perseverance in faith. The gift of perseverance, according to Calvin's teaching, is given to everyone who truly believes, because true faith is saving faith, which is to say it is permanent rather than temporary.[70] So a particular choice or experience of faith—later identified with conversion—can in fact determine whether I will be saved in the end. For in a true conversion I acquire for the first time, by the prevenient grace of God, a saving faith that is sure to persevere. That is why, in later Protestantism, the

moment of conversion is identified with the moment I am saved. It is also why both the Damascus Road episode and *Confessions* 8 are read by modern scholars (heirs of Protestantism still) as narratives of conversion to faith. Behind both is Calvin's innovation in the doctrine of predestination: the notion that I can know I am predestined to be saved, because once I have true faith I should know that I will be given the gift of perseverance. This is what makes Calvin's doctrine of predestination something radically new in the Christian tradition.[71]

Even in Augustine's latest writings this radical response to the pastoral problems of predestination was far beyond the horizon. But Augustine did see the shape of the pastoral problems, and indeed had help in doing so in the form of pressing questions asked even by his friends and theological allies. To complete our examination of the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace we need to look at the shape of these problems as Augustine left them to us at his death. First of all it is important to be clear, in contrast to later Protestant appropriations of the Augustinian doctrine of grace, that for Augustine even true believers are not necessarily saved; for they have the rest of their lives on this earth left to live, which will afford them plenty of opportunities and temptations to fall away from the faith of Christ. That is why Augustine frequently contrasts the hope (*spes*) of salvation with its reality (*res*), saying "we bear already the hope of salvation but not yet its reality."[72] That of course is why the gift of prevenient grace is not enough without the further gift of perseverance: the first is about the beginning of the process of salvation but the second is about reaching the end; hence the one is necessary, the other sufficient for salvation. For prevenient grace is the indispensable starting point of the process of salvation, but only the gift of perseverance suffices to bring us to eternal salvation at last. This latter gift is by its very nature not prevenient, for perseverance in the faith is of course only given to those who already have the gift of faith, but it is nonetheless gratuitous, for none of us attain perfection in this life, flawlessly using all God's gifts so as not to merit any withdrawal of divine grace.[73] Throughout our lives we are dependent on a grace that is more gracious than we deserve.

The pastoral problems this creates for Augustine himself are, significantly, mainly problems about the use of words. First of all, how is predestination to be preached? What do you say about it to a Christian congregation? Do you warn them that not all of them will persevere to the end? Augustine's concern here is that of a good pastor and expert rhetorician. It does the preacher's audience no good to say things like, "Some of *you* are not elect and therefore will not persevere to the end." It sounds like a malediction, which is not an appropriate way to address a congregation of believers in Christ. Therefore in preaching to the church a pastor should speak in the abstract of those who are

not elect, using the third person and not applying the point to his audience.[74] Indeed he should make a point of reassuring his hearers, exhorting them not to cease praying for grace and trusting that God will continue to answer their prayers—in effect reaffirming what I have called the experiential matrix of Augustine's doctrine of grace. Believers should be taught to hope for the gift of perseverance and to "be confident that you are not a stranger from the predestination of his people."[75] Hence according to Augustine's theology Christians do not have what the Calvinist tradition calls "assurance of salvation," but they do live in hope, for although "no one can be assured [*securus*] of eternal life," all believers should nevertheless live in hope that God "will make us to persevere in himself to the end of this life, to whom we daily say, 'Lead us not into temptation.' "[76] This Augustinian hope is not incompatible with a salutary fear that prevents what Augustine calls presumptuousness (*praesumptio*) and complacency (*securitas*).[77]

Of course there is also the question of what to say to someone who does abandon the path to salvation. A sterner word is needed here, though it is to be spoken privately to the individual rather than preached in public. It is the word of rebuke, a concern for which precipitates Augustine's most important exposition of the concepts of predestination and perseverance, the late treatise *On Rebuke and Grace*. In the Augustinian theology of grace, one must never think that any particular sinner (including oneself) is predestined to damnation, any more than one can be complacent about which particular Christians are predestined to persevere in the faith.[78] For as long as this mortal life endures, any of us can change, for better or for worse—and no one but God knows exactly which changes are to come. So there is a place for the well-deserved word of rebuke, the sting of which results in a certain "useful pain" that may stir up a sinner to more heartfelt prayer.[79] Of course whether this turning of the will actually happens depends not on the external word but on God working inwardly, "so that with the noise of the rebuke sounding and lashing outwardly, God may cause inwardly, by a hidden inspiration, the willing also."[80] It is the same general rule as before: in Christian preaching, human teachers plant and water outwardly, but it is God alone who gives the growth by teaching inwardly.[81] This explains why, when the Gospel is preached, some believe and others do not:

> those who believe the preacher sounding outwardly, inwardly hear the Father and learn; while those who do not believe, hear outwardly but do not inwardly hear and learn; i.e., to some it is given to believe, to others not. For "no one," he says, "comes to me unless the Father who has sent me draw him."[82]

This teaching by the Father is emphatically inward, "far removed from the senses," a gift given to the human heart in secret.[83] This is where the real efficacy of grace is to be located. That is why Augustine can do without the concept of an external word of grace, such as Luther's concept of the Gospel. God can use any kind of word, gracious or reproachful, promising or commanding, as an occasion to turn the will as he chooses. For the external word is in any case merely an external admonition, in precisely the sense explained in Augustine's epistemology and semiotics: it is a sign directing our attention in a more inward direction, where alone the inward teacher can give us what we need.[84]

Yet at this point we can see a second reason why there is no concept of what Luther would call Gospel in Augustine.[85] Not only can an external word have nothing like a sacramental power to give the grace it signifies, but also the divine choice about which individuals receive the gift of perseverance is inscrutable and incommunicable. In Augustinian theology, no word can tell me what is God's eternal will toward me in particular. Strikingly, this is also true in the Reformers. To know that I am saved I must (it follows of logical necessity) know that I am predestined to be saved, and the Gospel of Christ does not tell me this. That is why the Calvinist tradition ended up relying on experiential evidence that I have faith in order to secure the "assurance of salvation."[86] If I can be sure that I have true faith then I can be sure that I am among the elect, predestined to be saved. Luther, interestingly, is less sure. The difference is usefully brought out by the Roman Catholic council of Trent, which condemned separately the teaching that one can be certain of being predestined for salvation and the teaching that one can be certain of having the grace of God.[87] Calvin firmly taught both, but Luther is absolutely clear only about the latter: he fiercely repudiates the scholastic notion that we should be uncertain whether we have the grace of God, because (according to Luther's view of the Gospel) that would mean doubting whether God is telling me the truth when he promises me the grace of Jesus Christ.[88] But about whether we are predestined to be saved (which is the same as to say, whether we will persevere to the end and be saved for eternity) Luther is less fierce and assured. Often he will suggest that we should know nothing about it, simply holding on to the promise of grace for the present day.[89] Other times he gives pastoral advice just like later Calvinists, insisting that if we know we believe, we can know we are saved.[90] The problem is that believers are not always certain that they truly believe, and on many occasions Luther insists that we should not pretend to such certainty but rely only on the Gospel, not putting faith in our faith but only in the Word of God.[91] But he can't have it both ways: if he wants faith to rely on God's word alone and not also on the experience of faith, then he has

just blocked the only route to an assurance of eternal salvation. He is left with only the revealed God, who makes himself known in the word of Christ, and must try to forget about the hidden God, the God of predestination, who makes the eternal choice about which ones of us will be saved in the end.

Biblical Election

The odd thing about the Augustinian doctrine of election, which causes all these problems in Augustine's theology of grace, is that it is so unbiblical in the separation it makes between the will of God and the word of God. In the Bible God's choices are often surprising but not ultimately hidden—that is why we keep hearing about them, after all. Even the inscrutable divine choice between Jacob and Esau comes into Paul's discussion in the letter to Romans because it has been *revealed* in the Scriptures. So how is it that the Augustinian doctrine of election frustrates the biblical expectation that God's word should reveal God's will? I have already suggested that there is a certain mismatch between the Platonism of Augustine's doctrine of grace and the biblical doctrine of election, which is so Jewish.[92] But the deepest root of the problem is not Augustine's Platonism but rather the way he handles the very un-Platonist theme of God's particular choices. He assumes that God's choice to give grace to some and not others is completed by a choice ultimately to save some and not others. This latter choice, made from all eternity, is what the Calvinist tradition aptly calls a "hidden decree": hidden because its details are not revealed in God's word. I cannot find out who in particular is predestined for salvation except in my own case—hence the need to express the problem in first-person terms—and even then it is not the word of God that assures me of this but the fact that I believe. (For Scripture does not tell me directly that I am saved, but rather that all who believe are saved; so by the usual Protestant reckoning, assurance of salvation can be mine only insofar as I know I believe.) And yet the original paradigm of divine election is God's choice for Jacob, which is not a hidden decree but proclaimed loudly and unmistakably in Scripture. So why does the Bible keep proceeding as if God's inscrutable choice is something it can tell us about?

Karl Barth hits the nail on the head when he points out that in Scripture the doctrine of election is good news. In a move of extraordinary simplicity and depth, Barth begins with the supposition that the doctrine of election must be focused on Jesus Christ: that the choice which is at the beginning of all God's works and ways is not a hidden decree but the very substance of the Gospel, the good news that the man Jesus is chosen from before the creation to be none other than the incarnate Son of God given for the salvation of the world.[93] This

choice remains in an important sense inscrutable, just as Paul says: for what reason can we possibly give why this one man, this particular Jew, should turn out to be God incarnate? But the fact that the choice can be proclaimed as Gospel rather than hidden as an eternal decree has everything to do with its being a different kind of choice from the terrifying differentiation that Augustine reckoned with: it is good news even for those who are not chosen. Barth's focus on Jesus Christ uncovers the fundamental structure of the biblical doctrine of election, which differs profoundly from Augustine's doctrine of election (and therefore from Luther's and Calvin's, and for that matter from Aquinas's). For the point of divine election is not that grace is given to one *rather than* another, but that grace is given to one *for the sake of* others.

It is one of those things that is obvious once you see it. I do not suppose the Jews ever lost sight of it, for the same structure is equally plain in the scriptural doctrine about God's chosen people Israel. Their election, too, is for the sake of those who are not elect. Israel is chosen for the blessing of all nations, just as Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, is chosen for the salvation of the whole world. The structure of the biblical doctrine of election is the structure of the whole biblical story of God's gracious love for Israel, which can be summed up in the way God chose the father of them all for blessing. Calling Abraham to leave his country, his family, and his home, God promises him a place and a posterity and concludes with a blessing:

> I will make you into a great nation
> and I will bless you;
> I will make your name great
> and you shall be a blessing;
> I will bless those who bless you
> And him who curses you, I will curse;
> And in you all families of the earth will be blessed.[94]

The purpose of divine election is blessing for all nations. But not all nations are elect: there is one chosen people for the blessing of all the families of the earth. Consequently it is good news for all the Gentiles that the Jews are the chosen people. This is the open secret of the biblical doctrine of election, hidden in plain sight, which the Gentiles (especially Gentile Christians) have yet to learn.

As a result there is curse as well as blessing in the biblical doctrine of election, though the curse has no independent standing but subserves the blessing, its purpose being to vindicate the chosen people in the face of those who hate them. The Gentiles fall under no curse by being other than the chosen, but rather are blessed through God's people. The curse is only for him

who curses this blessing, like Pharaoh, whose heart was hardened against Israel. Paul's discussion in Romans 9 brings up the example of Pharaoh as well as that weighty passage, so formative in Augustine's doctrine of predestination, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated."[95] This too is about the election of Israel and the curse of him who curses Israel, in this case the nation of Edom, Esau's descendents. In its original context the saying reminds the people of Israel (i.e., Jacob, whose name is also Israel) that the destruction of Edom fulfills a divine curse against this people that had jeered while Israel was defeated and dragged off to exile:

> For the violence against your brother Jacob
> shame will cover you;
> you will be cut off for ever.
> On the day you stood aside
> when strangers carried off his wealth
> and foreigners entered into his gates
> and cast lots for Jerusalem,
> you too were like one of them.
> But you should not have looked on the day of your brother,
> the day of his misfortune.
> You should not have rejoiced over the Jews
> on the day of their destruction.[96]

Though this particular situation is not what Paul has in view in quoting the passage about Jacob and Esau, the jealousy and conflict between two brothers which this exemplifies is very much on his mind. What good news can there be when brothers are fighting over who ought to have the blessing of God and one apparently wants to kill the other? This seems to be the situation Paul thought he was facing, and in a different way it may still be our situation today.

Divine election means that God does take sides in the terrible cruel mess of human history, declaring his love to his chosen people, fighting for them and vindicating them against their enemies. But it is a difficult vindication, with words of love spoken sometimes to a people being dragged off to exile. For if the chosen are to be a blessing to the whole world they cannot conquer the world but must suffer in it. It would not be an election of grace and blessing if God simply chose one favorite nation to defeat all others. Turning again to Christ, one must say: God's favorite Son is chosen for a triumph that comes only through suffering for the sake of the whole world. Once again, the structure of election is the same in both testaments: it is good news for those who are not elect, which means it is deep suffering as well as glory for the elect.

The difference between Augustine's doctrine of election and the Bible's can be put using the following comparison. One can imagine a foolish father who has only foolish children, and one of them is his favorite, on whom he lavishes all his wealth (far beyond what any of his children deserve) bequeathing his whole estate to this chosen one, knowing that as a result his other children will starve—as is only just, given their improvidence and disobedience. But one can also imagine a gracious father who has many rebellious children, but chooses one for special discipline so that when he grows up his father can say: "Son, I give you my whole inheritance so that you can spend it on your brothers and sisters, who will need it but who would squander it if I gave it to them directly. I want you to put them through school, pay their medical bills, buy them each a house, and throw a grand wedding when they get married. I know you could have done better things for yourself if your time and efforts were devoted to your own ambitions, but I need you to do this for them, even though it will cost you a great deal of trouble and heartache." The problem with the Augustinian doctrine of election, which leads to the outright disaster of the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, is that it has the structure of the first story rather than the second.

This is surely not all Augustine's fault. When he comes to Paul's quotation of the passage about Jacob and Esau which caused such a deep crisis in his thinking, it never occurred to him to think of it as anything other than God choosing one for grace and salvation instead of the other—as if divine election meant blessing only for the elect. To think otherwise would have required Augustine to conceive himself as a Gentile receiving the grace of salvation only through the Jews, and that possibility was by this time closed to him, through no particular fault of his own. The Gentile church of his time—which was indeed the whole church he knew—could not imagine itself as other than the elect, which meant that the Jews must no longer be the chosen people, having been superceded in that role by the church.[97] This supercessionism (as it has recently come to be called) makes it unthinkable for Augustine to read the doctrine of election as anything but bad news for those who are not elect. The biblical structure of election, where one is chosen for the blessing of others, is unavailable for a community that in effect thinks of itself as a Jacob who has the right to steal the blessing from his brother and keep it.[98] That is why, I take it, in the biblical story itself Jacob gives a blessing back to Esau in the end.[99] But it turns out what Esau really wants back is his brother, and the two literally kiss and make up, even before he gives in and accepts Jacob's blessing. It is a happy ending for both, surely a lesson meant for all of us who need to understand the ways of God's election, though it suggests a reconciliation we can scarcely imagine from where we currently are, still remembering when not so long ago

Gentile Christianity looked as if it were trying to vindicate its claim to the blessing of God by getting rid of its brother, which is to say the children of Jacob.

In any case, the curse contained in the biblical doctrine of election has its consequences. No one can understand the gracious will of God who despises what God loves, which means the doctrine of election will inevitably be bad news to those who despise the Jewish people, whom God has chosen as his own forever. I do not suppose it is an accident that Luther, so torn by problems of predestination, is also more violent in his hatred of the Jews than any theologian of comparable stature in the Christian tradition.[100] Supercessionism is bad theology that leads to a doctrine of election that is a torment and anguish for those who believe it, because it is a doctrine that separates God's good will from his good word—with the result that the divine choice can only look like a hidden decree that irrevocably dooms some of us willy-nilly to damnation, though no one knows who.

This is not what Paul was getting at in Romans 9 or in Romans 11, where he concludes his deepest meditation on the relation between Jews and Gentiles by breaking into words of praise:

> O the depth of the riches
> of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
> How inscrutable his judgments
> and unsearchable his ways![101]

These are not words of shuddering horror, as Augustine says,[102] but a doxology. God's inscrutable choices are wise, and we can see this wisdom well enough to give hearty praise for it. Paul's point is not only that in Jesus the Gentiles are blessed through the Jews, but also something that in light of the biblical doctrine of election is much more astonishing: that through the Gentiles' belief in Jesus the Jews also are to be blessed, even through their jealousy (Rom. 11:11–15). It is as if the one brother is to bless the other by stealing the blessing and making him jealous. But of course biblical stories are full of astonishing reversals, for the blessing of both Israel and the nations, and Paul is contemplating one more, perhaps the most astonishing of all: that not only are the Jews for the blessing of the Gentiles, but the Gentiles are for the blessing of the Jews.

This is the choice made by God's inscrutable judgment, which Paul praises in his doxology. It is inscrutable not in the way that causes Augustine to shudder, as if God for no discernible reason decides not to save some people. Rather, it is like the choice made by a great artist telling a story that comes to an unexpected happy ending after a stunning plot-twist, which no one could have anticipated but which looks absolutely perfect once you see it. In the course

of human history, the great artist who creates the story of the world makes particular choices no one could have predicted, for no reason other than his gracious love: Israel will be his beloved, and Jesus of Nazareth his only begotten son. These choices for the blessing of the world come from a deep and unsearchable wisdom that is nevertheless glorious to behold, a cause for words of praise.

So the doctrine of election does mean that God has a favorite son—and all the rest of us are to be blessed by this gracious choice. For each receives the blessing of God only from the other: Gentile from Jew and even (O the depths!) Jew from Gentile.[103] The latter blessing, the deepest and most astonishing good news of the biblical doctrine of election, we Gentiles can only hope for as a future reconciliation we have not deserved, which we can now anticipate only by bearing in mind the first, more obvious biblical truth: that because the Gentiles receive the blessing of God only through the Jews, it is good news for all nations, including Gentile Christians, that the Jews remain the beloved people of God forever, chosen and precious. Using the terms of the theology of grace, we could put it this way: the grace of God is prevenient because it is external, a gift received from others outside us, outside our community and outside our own souls. We make it bad news if we make it an inner gift. For we receive it only by hearing with gratitude and obedience the word of those outside us, believing and loving both the word and those who speak it. Grace is prevenient because salvation is from the Jews.

Conclusion

To tell a true story about ourselves is to gain some insight about how we came to be where we are. It also makes it seem less inevitable or at least less taken-for-granted that we ended up exactly where we are, because the story informs us that getting here was the result of a number of contingent events, some of which we might wish had turned out differently. And to tell a story about the development of Augustine's thought is indeed to tell a story about ourselves, if we are Catholics, Protestants, or perhaps simply influenced in some way by Western Christendom. To tell a story about the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace in particular, presenting it as a kind of synthesis of the traditions of Plato and Paul, is to see one of the central concepts of Western Christian thought as a conglomerate of several conceptual elements that do not always fit neatly together, or even as an unstable mixture that has a tendency to set off explosions as it is carried further down the road.

Since we can never erase our own story and start afresh, the way to deal with our wishes for something different is to think about what is really true in the doctrines we have inherited—in other words, to think theologically. This is a more complex task than the usual scholarly business of trying to distinguish between the various sources of Augustine's thought (how Platonist is he? how Pauline?) for we cannot simply assume that Plato contrasts with Paul as falsehood with truth. Not only do Plato and the Platonists get a few things right, but Augustine's interpretation of Paul gets a few things wrong.

Sorting through the rights and wrongs, the true and the false, in Augustine's thought is a task not very different from critically assessing Western theology as a whole, which is to say it is an essential part of the on-going tradition of Christian theology but a task far too large for one book.

Still, it is only fair to tell you how I would begin trying to sort these things out, given the story I have just told. Supposing that Augustine's way of bringing together Platonism and Paul in the doctrine of grace was not inevitable, where do I think he got it right, and where would I suggest we should learn to think differently? In roughly the order of topics raised in this book, I would say:

(1) The ancient philosophers were right to put the search for happiness at the center of the ethical agenda, and Augustine was right to see that this was really the search for God. This is indeed why love is at the center of our lives, and why the love of God is not simply a duty but aims at ultimate happiness, at the delight of all delights, at the Good from which flows all that is good and lovely. So Christians will always find something worth learning from Platonist accounts of the Good, love, and happiness.

(2) The most fundamental Platonist concept that I would urge Christian theologians to reject is intellectual vision, the notion that our mind has an innate capacity to see unchanging things—which for Augustine defines the goal of all our love, the seeing of God that makes us happy. Despite being labeled "supernatural" by Aquinas, this account of beatific vision seems to me about as purely Platonist a concept as there is in the Christian tradition, and the problem is that it defines the nature of happiness without reference to Christ incarnate. So while the Platonists are right that our happiness consists in knowing the Truth and embracing the Good in love, we need a more Christian conception of that Truth and Good and what it means to see it. The Good, the Truth and the Beautiful is a particular Jew, his Father, and his Spirit—one God—and the truly beatific vision must be more like that which took place on the Mount of Transfiguration than like that which Plato pictures us enjoying when we climb out of the cave. It is not enough to say it is an insight into unchanging Truth. We must add: it is seeing the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). We should let this vision of Transfiguration serve as the proper interpretation of beatific vision. Call this the Eastern Orthodox corrective to Catholic theology.

(3) But no mere seeing is enough. We walk by faith, not by sight, because faith understands more deeply than vision. Just imagine yourself trying to venerate an icon without knowing the story of the saint whose face you are looking at. Unless you know the saint's story and believe it, you are in no position to see the particular light the image has to give, reflected from the

uncreated light of the face of Christ, as the Orthodox teach. Because what we aim to see is another person, we must hear his story and believe it if we are to know him. The name of the story that brings us to ultimate happiness is the Gospel of Christ, and we become part of the story by faith, because it is by faith that we receive, understand, and are united to the one whose story it is. It is not enough to say that faith purifies our hearts so that we can see, perceive, or understand God; faith *is* how we perceive God and understand him as he truly is. Call this the Protestant corrective to Eastern Orthodox theology.

(4) Faith is the fundamental form of the knowledge of God in Christ; this does not make it the beginning of a sequence in time or the starting point of a psychological *ordo salutis*. It is therefore not enough to say that prevenient grace precedes the first moment of faith, the *initium fidei*. For one thing, there may not be an identifiable first moment of faith, as is often the case with people who are baptized as infants and taught the faith of Christ beginning at a time long before they can remember, when they are far too young to make a responsible decision about whether to believe what they are told. Moreover, even among adults there is, contrary to most Protestant teaching, no irrevocable moment of deciding to believe, no once-in-a-lifetime conversion experience that cannot be undone. We lose our faith all the time, we believers, for that indeed is at the heart of all our sin. We are at the same time righteous and sinners, says Luther, and the reason why is not far to seek: because we are at the same time believers and unbelievers, justified by faith and sinners by our unbelief. So every time the word of the Gospel comes to our unbelieving hearts and obtains the assent of faith, this is the work of prevenient grace. Thus there is such a thing as the experience of prevenient grace—it is really rather common—and recognizing this will enrich the experiential matrix of grace that the concept of prevenience had left in some disarray late in Augustine's career.

(5) That there is no one psychological starting point of faith, no one sacred moment of conversion, does not mean there is no true starting point in the life of faith. It means, rather, that this starting point is external, not a psychological change but a sacramental event. For it is baptism, not conversion, that is the true starting point of an individual's Christian life. Call this the Catholic corrective to Protestant theology. Prevenient grace must come to us in external form, or we end up relying on the genuineness of our experience of conversion to tell us we are really Christians. This is a peculiarly Protestant type of self-righteousness or self-torture (depending on whether it seems to be going well) that is very much worth avoiding—and I say this as a Protestant. To avoid it, we must find the power of prevenient grace in an external sign. But precisely this is already the structure of the Gospel, as Luther understands it: an external

word through which God gives what he promises to those who believe. And what he promises, of course, is nothing less than himself, Christ in the flesh, as when he says: "This is my body, given for you." The great weakness of Augustine's theology of grace is that it has no place for the power or efficacy of such external signs. But that is the subject of my next book.

(6) There is a reason why grace must come to us from outside. In the Bible, *God* comes to us from outside, for he is other than us, and the Bible knows of no Augustinian inner self where we can turn inward to find this Other within the self. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, says Scripture (Eph. 3:17), which means by our believing a story called the Gospel of Christ, which we could never have learned by turning to look inside ourselves. This is always how it is with coming to know other persons, after all. We have to hear their stories if we want to understand who they are and the choices they make. Above all we have to listen to what they have to say for themselves, and especially if they are good people we cannot possibly know them if we do not ever believe what they say. (Consider Othello, who ceased to know his wife when he ceased to believe her, relying instead on his power of vision, "ocular proof.") So it is that God's word reveals God's will, telling us who he is. The biblical doctrine of election, for example, is not about a hidden decree but about the divine choices that are revealed in the words of the prophets and apostles.

(7) The God of the Bible is outside us in a quite particular way, however, in that he is the God of Israel. The great mark of God's otherness and externality is his Jewishness, his election of Israel to be his people, so that the Gentiles must find the living God outside themselves among the Jews, who are a blessing to all nations. There is no God to be found apart from this particular people. Call this the Jewish corrective to Christianity. And now, suggests Paul at the end of Romans 11, even the Jews are to receive mercy through the mercy bestowed upon others, which is to say: they are to find their own God outside themselves, in the Messiah believed by the Gentiles, Jesus Christ the savior of all nations. Here, of course, Christian faith offers itself as a corrective to Judaism. How that corrective will be received is literally a story for the ages. It is an eschatological story essential to the completion of the Gospel story, which means that only God gets to tell this part of it, and we must all wait to hear.

Appendix

Phases of Augustine's Anti-Pelagian Writings

I. Precursors
   A. *On Free Choice,* against the Manichaeans (ethics of eternal vs. temporal goods)
      1. Book 1: Good Will as the divine within us, 388 (see chapter 2, "Divine Good Will")
      2. Book 2: divine Wisdom above the human mind, c. 391 (see *Outward Signs*, chapter 6, "Public Inner Wisdom")
      3. Book 3: deepening doctrine of the Fall, c. 395 (see chapter 2, "Willing Becomes Difficult")
   B. Early Pauline exegeses, c. 394–396
      1. *On Eighty-Three Different Questions*, 66: the four-stage schema (Law and grace) (see chapter 2, "Four Stages")
      2. *Propositions from Romans*: the four-stage schema, Romans 9 (see chapter 2, "The Place of Merit")
      3. *On Eighty-Three Different Questions*, 68: Romans 9 (faith and merit) (see chapter 2, "Early Inconsistency")
      4. *To Simplicianus*: Romans 9 (faith and merit); the question of differentiation squarely faced and the full prevenience of grace affirmed for the first time (see chapter 2, "Jacob and Esau," "Call to Faith," "Assent or Delight?" and "No External Cause of Grace")

C. *Confessions*, book 8: illustrates the transition from Law to grace, c. 399 (see chapter 2, "Reading Paul's Admonition" note also chapter 4, "The Experience of Grace in Disarray" and *Outward Signs*, chapter 6, "Puzzles in *Confessions* 8")

II. Early phase of Anti-Pelagian Writings, 412–416. Central theme: Law and grace (love)
   A. Transitional text: Ep. 140, *On the Grace of the New Testament*, 412 (see chapter 3, "The Grace of Participation")
   B. Initial positions on original sin and the psychology of grace, 412
      1. *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and Infant Baptism*, on original sin (see chapter 3, "The Missing Piece of the Puzzle")
      2. *On the Spirit and the Letter*, on the psychology of grace: the need for delight against Pelagius's first evasion (see chapter 1, "From Fear to Love," and chapter 3, "Uncovering Pelagian Evasions" and "Augustine's Evasiveness")
   C. Letters, 412–414
      1. Ep. 145, on Law and grace: summary of *On the Spirit and the Letter*
      2. Ep. 149, answers Paulinus's questions on Scripture, including Romans 11 (see chapter 3, "The Missing Piece of the Puzzle")
      3. Ep. 157, on grace and free will and on infant baptism according to Romans 5
   D. *On Nature and Grace*, against Pelagius's second evasion, 415 (see chapter 3, "Uncovering Pelagian Evasions")
   E. *On Human Perfection in Justice*, against Caelestius, 415
   F. Episcopal Correspondence, 416/7 (see chapter 3, "The Shape of the Controversy")
      1. Ep. 175–177: letters of African Bishops to Pope Innocent asking for condemnation of Pelagian teaching
      2. Ep. 179: Augustine to bishop John of Jerusalem, on Pelagius's trial
      3. Ep. 181–183: Pope Innocent's replies, condemning Pelagian teaching

III. Middle Phase of Anti-Pelagian Writings, 416–425. Central theme: prevenience of grace (faith)
   A. Transitional text: *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, on Pelagius's third evasion, 416 (see chapter 3, "Uncovering Pelagian Evasions")
   B. Letters on prevenience and differentiation (see chapter 3, "The Missing Piece of the Puzzle")
      1. Ep. 186: to Paulinus, Augustine's friend, 417
      2. Ep. 194: to Sixtus, later Pope, 418
   C. *On the Grace of Christ*, pivotal text on psychology of grace as inner teaching, 418 (see chapter 3, "Taught by God")
   D. Treatises on original sin and its implications
      1. *On Original Sin* (book 2 of *On the Grace of Christ*), 418
      2. *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, 419–421
      3. *On the Soul and Its Origin*, 419/20
   E. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians,* written against Julian of Eclanum, 421
   F. *Against Julian*, 421/2

IV. Late Phase of Anti-Pelagian Writings, 426–430. Central theme: divine election
   A. To the monks at Hadrumentum (on crisis precipitated by Ep. 194), 426–427
      1. *On Grace and Free Will*, on the role of free will (see chapter 4, "God Turns Hearts")
      2. *On Rebuke and Grace*, on the role of external words; includes the most important exposition of predestination and perseverance (see chapter 4, "Problems of Perseverance")
   B. To Prosper and Hilary, 428
      1. *On the Predestination of the Saints*, on the beginning of faith; gives an account of the early development of his doctrine of grace (see chapter 2, "The Call to Faith")
      2. *On the Gift of Perseverance*, includes definition of predestination and pastoral advice on how to preach it (see chapter 4, "Problems of Perseverance")
   C. *Against Julian, An Unfinished Work,* 429–430

BASIC NARRATIVE

The precursors to Augustine's anti-Pelagian writing all had Manichaean opponents in view. The early treatise *On Free Choice* is a defense of free will whose purpose is to show that free will (not God or some primal evil nature) is the source of *evil*. This is broadly compatible with his much later anti-Pelagian purpose of showing that free will cannot be the source of our arriving at our eternal *good*. But first the concept that underlies book 1, the inseparable presence in the soul of a divine element (called Good Will), must be dropped. Then in books 2 and 3, Augustine develops an increasingly deeper understanding of the difficulty the fallen soul has in willing the good.

Augustine's early exegeses of Paul's letter to the Romans develop a four-stage schema of human life (before Law, under Law, under grace, and in peace) in which the crucial transition is from stage 2 to stage 3, from Law to grace. The transition takes place through the gift of charity given inwardly by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Later, this transition becomes central to the early phase of Augustine's anti-Pelagian work with *On the Spirit and the Letter*. In the same exegeses, the issue of faith and merit is treated in connection with Romans 9 and not quite clearly connected with the four-stage schema. The culmination of this treatment of Romans 9 takes place in *To Simplicianus*, which includes a clear account of the prevenience of grace (i.e., the priority of grace to all human merit) based on divine election as the answer to the question of differentiation: it is God who ultimately chooses that one person rather than another is saved by grace from the mass of damnation in which all humanity is involved by original sin.

In the anti-Pelagian period, this book focuses on the psychology of grace (issues related to Law and grace, faith and merit) rather than on original sin (issues related to infant baptism, marriage and concupiscence, the origin of the soul and the transmission of sin). In the early and middle periods, the focus is primarily on writings directed against Pelagius himself, who is Augustine's subtlest opponent, not those directed against the flashier but shallower Caelestius or the more determined polemicist Julian, whose main concern is with original sin.

The central text for the psychology of grace in the early phase is *On the Spirit and the Letter*, which criticizes Pelagius's first evasion (that grace is law) by emphasizing the transition from Law to grace developed in the earlier Pauline exegeses. Augustine's other treatments of the psychology of grace in this period are based on this treatise's fundamental teaching that the inner help of grace, which we experience as a kind of delight, is necessary for our will to love rightly. Also, Pelagius's second evasion (that grace is nature) is addressed in *On Nature and Grace*.

The problem in this period is that Augustine has not figured out how to deal with the key question of prevenience: how exactly grace comes before faith, which is at the beginning of the psychological process of salvation. It is a tough problem for him, because the concept of an external call to faith that he used in the early Pauline exegeses doesn't work against Pelagius: it plays right into his first evasion, because it doesn't exclude the possibility that Law constitutes the prevenient call to faith.

The middle phase is precipitated by Augustine's recognition that he must give a clear solution to this problem in order to expose Pelagius's third evasion (that grace is

merited). He recognizes this in *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, works out the logic of prevenient grace in letters 186 and 194, and makes the key adjustment to his psychology of grace in *On the Grace of Christ*. The resulting theses (the election of grace, prevenience, no antecedent merit, faith as the result of an irresistible grace operating within us) together with the earlier treatment of law, grace, and love (as developed in *On the Spirit and the Letter*) constitute Augustine's mature doctrine of the effect of grace on our souls.

In the late phase, Augustine squarely faces some difficult implications of this mature doctrine. He continues to defend free will but argues that God has power to act within our hearts to move our wills and can thereby cause us to choose good *or evil* without violating our freedom or being unjust to us (*On Grace and Free Will*). Augustine also defends the usefulness of external preaching, exhortation, and rebuke, even though these are only occasions, not causes, of the inner work of grace (*On Rebuke and Grace*). He notes the implication that none of us can either know or control whether we will persevere in faith to the end of our lives, so we cannot know if we will be saved in the end or are among those predestined for eternal life. These doctrines of the grace of *perseverance* and *predestination* are developed in *On Rebuke and Grace* (which contains his most important statement of both doctrines). They are defended in *On the Predestination of the Saints* (important mainly for its account of the beginning of faith and its retrospective on the development of Augustine's doctrine of grace) and *On the Gift of Perseverance* (which includes his definition of predestination).

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Abbreviations

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers* series
AS	*Augustinian Studies*
BA	*Bibliothèque augustinienne* series
CR	*Corpus Reformatorum*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* series
Ep.	Letter (= *Epistola*)
ET	English Translation
LCC	*Library of Christian Classics* series
LW	*Luther's Works*
Orat.	*Oration*
PG	Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*
PL	Migne, *Patrologia Latina*
RA	*Recherches augustiniennes*
REA	*Revue des études augustiniennes*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes* series

WORKS OF AUGUSTINE

Ad Simp.	*To Simplicianus, on Various Questions*
Adv. Jud.	*Against the Jews*
C. Acad.	*Against the Academics*
C. Duas Ep. Pel.	*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*
C. Ep. Fund.	*Against the Letter of Mani called "Fundamental"*
C. Faust. Man.	*Against Faustus the Manichaean*

C. Jul.	*Against Julian*
C. Jul. Op. Imp.	*Against Julian, an Unfinished Work*
C. Max. Arian.	*Against Maximinus the Arian*
Civ. Dei	*City of God*
Conf.	*Confessions*
De Bono Conjug.	*On the Good of Marriage*
De Cat. Rud.	*On Catechizing the Unlearned*
De Corr. et Grat.	*On Rebuke and Grace*
De Dial.	*On Dialectic*
De Div. QQs 83	*On Eighty-Three Different Questions*
De Doct. Christ.	*On Christian Doctrine*
De Dono Pers.	*On the Gift of Perseverance*
De Duab. Anim.	*On Two Souls, against the Manichaeans*
De Fide et Oper.	*On Faith and Works*
De Fide et Symb.	*On Faith and the Creed*
De Fide Rerum Invis.	*On Faith in Things Not Seen*
De Gen. ad Litt.	*On Genesis according to the Letter*
De Gen. c. Man.	*On Genesis against the Manicheans*
De Gest. Pelag.	*On the Proceedings of Pelagius*
De Grat. Christi	*On the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin*
De Grat. et Lib. Arb.	*On Grace and Free Will*
De Immort. Anim.	*On the Immortality of the Soul*
De Lib. Arb.	*On Free Choice*
De Mag.	*On the Teacher*
De Mend.	*On Lying*
De Mor. Eccl.	*On the Morals of the Catholic Church*
De Mor. Man.	*On the Morals of the Manichaeans*
De Nat. Boni	*On the Nature of the Good*
De Nat. et Grat.	*On Nature and Grace*
De Nupt. et Concup.	*On Marriage and Concupiscence*
De Ord.	*On Order*
De Pecc. Mer.	*On the Merits and Remission of Sins, and Infant Baptism*
De Perf. Just. Hom.	*On Human Perfection in Righteousness*
De Praedest. Sanct.	*On the Predestination of the Saints*
De Sp. et Litt.	*On the Spirit and the Letter*
De Trin.	*On the Trinity*
De Quant. Anim.	*On the Quantity of the Soul*
De Util. Cred.	*On the Usefulness of Believing*
De Vera Rel.	*On True Religion*
Enarr. in Pss.	*Expositions of the Psalms*

Ench.	*Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Charity*
Exp. Ep. Gal.	*Commentary on Galatians* (= *Expositio Epistolae ad Galatas*)
In Joh. Evang.	*Tractates on the Gospel of John*
Prop. ex Rom.	*Exposition of Certain Propositions from the Letter to the Romans*
QQs in Hept.	*Questions on the Heptateuch*
Retract.	*Retractations*
Sol.	*Soliloquies*

OTHER PRIMARY LITERATURE

Eud. Eth.	Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*
De Ben.	Seneca, *On Benefits*
De Fin.	Cicero, *On Ends*
Inst.	Calvin, *Institutes*
N. Eth.	Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See chapter 3, "The Grace of Participation."

2. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 4, "The Great Shift in Augustine's Teaching."

CHAPTER 1

1. For Augustine's Ciceronian starting point in philosophy, see Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 6, "Ciceronian Point of Departure," and *Outward Signs*, chapter 2.

2. *Conf.* 3:7–8. For the place of this Ciceronian episode in Augustine's project of Christian philosophy, see Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 4, "Wisdom by Another Name."

3. For Platonist philosophy as the love of divine Wisdom, and hence love of God, see *Civ. Dei* 8:1 and the same view ascribed to Plato himself in ibid. 8:5, 8:8, and 8:11

4. The groundbreaking work uncovering the roots of Augustine's doctrine of grace in his epistemology is the profound article by Lorenz, which highlights the structural parallel between the epistemology of inner teaching in the early treatise *De Mag.* (cf. Cary, *Outward Signs*, "Christ the Inner Teacher") and the decisive notion of being inwardly taught by God in the anti-Pelagian writings (cf. chapter 3, "Taught by God"). Much less illuminating than Lorenz, in my judgment, is the work by Lössl, which instead of relating ethics to epistemology tends to eliminate the former in favor of the latter, so that grace and understanding are simply identified in the concept of *intellectus gratiae*, "intellect as grace" (p. 413).

5. See Cicero, *De Fin.* 2:86, 5:12, and 5:86; likewise Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 8:3 (the issue of "what is necessary for happiness" is "the one thing that the effort of all the philosophers is for") and ibid. 19:1. For an historical overview of the philosophical context of Augustine's ethics, its teleological character and focus on wisdom, see Holte, part 1.

6. See Augustine's rather brusque dismissal of the Epicureans in Sermon 150 and *Civ. Dei* 14:2, in contrast to his more respectful critique of the Stoics in the same texts.

7. See for instance the connection made by Augustine: "Since it is in Truth that one knows and possesses the supreme Good, and this Truth is Wisdom, let us recognize and possess in it the supreme Good and enjoy it. For whoever enjoys the supreme Good is happy," *De Lib. Arb.* 2:36.

8. Cicero tells us that for the Stoics, neither virtue nor happiness is a matter of degree, *De Fin.* 5:84. There is progress *toward* virtue but no progress *in* virtue, no growing more or less virtuous, *De Fin.* 3:45–48. For how the early Stoics came to this position, see Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, chapters 1 and 5.

9. Although he does not in general endorse this Stoic view, Augustine uses a variant of it to argue for the necessity of authority in *De Util. Cred.* 27: "What man has virtue unless the mind of a wise man is present to him? Thus the wise man alone does not sin. Every fool sins, except in what he does in obedience to the wise man." ("Fool" is a technical term in Stoic philosophy, referring to everyone who is not wise.)

10. See especially Plotinus's treatise "On Virtues" (*Ennead* 1:2) whose treatment of higher and lower virtues resembles Augustine's early description of Plato's virtue theory (*C. Acad.* 3:37) more than anything in Plato does (cf. Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 2, "The Status of the Truthlike") and thus is a likely source of Augustine's understanding of the Platonist concept of virtue.

11. Paul's resonant phrase, "Christ the power [*dynamis*] of God and the wisdom of God," is always rendered in Augustine's Latin as Christ the Virtue [*virtus*] of God and the Wisdom of God. The Latin *virtus* (like the English "virtue," in older usage) could mean both power and ethical virtue. Paul's Greek term did not have this double meaning: it meant only power. But Augustine, relying on the Latin, always reads Paul as if he were speaking here of the two key terms of Hellenistic ethics, virtue and wisdom. For occurrences of or allusions to this Pauline phrase in Augustine's early works, see *De Beata Vita* 34, *C. Acad.* 2:1 (imploring divine aid from the virtue and wisdom of God), *De Lib. Arb.* 1:5, *De Musica* 6:7 and 52, *De Mor. Eccl.* 22 and 27, *De Mag.* 38 (cf. Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 4, "Christ the Inner Teacher"), *De Div. QQs 83*, 11, 25, and 26, *De Vera Rel.* 3 (discussed later in this chapter, "Dialogue with Plato"). Because it was an important passage for the Manichaeans (cf. *C. Faust. Man.* 20:9), it is one of the few passages of Scripture we can be confident played a role in Augustine's thinking long before his conversion to the Catholic church (see Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 4, "Wisdom by Another Name") and I argue it plays a key role in his early changes of mind about the divinity of the soul and the task of ethics (ibid., chapter 8, "Soul as Creature").

12. Fonteius's treatise *On Purifying the Mind to See God* is unknown except for the excerpt in Augustine's *De Div. QQs 83,* 12 (discussed in Cary, *Outward Signs,* chapter 5, "Witnesses to Christ"). Although Fonteius was a pagan at the time he wrote it (according to Augustine, *Retract.* 1:26), we need not assume that he was ignorant of the beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). The point is precisely that he could take up this biblical language to pursue a pagan Platonist agenda.

13. Plato, *Republic* 515c.

14. For this usage, which is important in the philosophical tradition after Plato, see Aubin, pp. 24–26 and 55–59. The attention that gets turned in conversion is the "intention of the mind," *intentio animi*; see Lorenz, pp. 87–89.

15. For conversion of will as movement of the soul, see *De Lib. Arb.* 3:2.

16. In *De Div. QQs 83,* 8, the activity of will is identified with "that movement which is not in place" (*illo motu qui localis non est*). In ibid. 35:1, "love is a kind of movement" (*amor motus quidam sit*). See also Ep. 155:13: "We go not by walking but by loving . . . not by feet but by morals" (*Imus autem non ambulando sed amando . . . non pedibus ire licet, sed moribus*).

17. *Conf.* 8:19, echoing Plotinus, *Ennead* 1:6.8. For the importance of this favorite Plotinian passage in shaping Augustine's understanding of the nonspatial character of the soul's movement of will to or away from God, see Cary, *Augustine's Invention,* chapter 8, "Voluntary Separation?"

18. For this famous Augustinian metaphor of love as weight, see below, "Connections of Love."

19. See *Conf.* 8:22–24, which plainly has the Manichaeans in view, and the more extensive critique of Manichaean fatalism in *De Duab. Anim.*

20. Thus I argue that Neoplatonism helped Augustine accept the Christian affirmation of the goodness of human embodiment in Cary, *Augustine's Invention,* chapter 9, "Resurrection Avoided Then Accepted."

21. Plato, *Republic* 514a. The old Jowett translation at this point has "enlightenment," but the word is *paideia* and is properly translated "education."

22. Ibid. 518b–c.

23. Ibid. 518d.

24. Ibid. 515e.

25. See esp. the conclusion of Plato's *Euthyphro* (15d), where the acknowledgment of ignorance Socrates seeks from Euthyphro would result in the latter giving up his impious efforts to kill his father.

26. Plato, *Republic* 517a. Surely what Plato has in mind here is Athens executing Socrates.

27. Ibid. 516c–d; cf. 517d.

28. The metaphor of purification is introduced in Plato, *Phaedo* 65e, and thence becomes central to the dialogue, which turns repeatedly on the contrast between pure and impure souls (e.g., 80d–83e; note how the three concepts of liberation, conversion, and purification all come together at 82d). The experience of Socratic refutation is described as a purification in Plato's *Sophist* 230a–d. Plotinus identifies purification

with conversion in *Ennead* 1:2.4 (as Augustine does in *De Musica* 6:52). For the theme of purification in the Platonist tradition, see Trouillard. For an introduction to the theme in Augustine, see Burnaby, pp. 67–78. Purification remains one of Augustine's favored terms for talking about the moral progress of the soul in his later works; he uses it frequently in *Civ. Dei,* for instance, where he shows himself quite aware of its Platonist provenance (e.g. *Civ. Dei* 8:3, 10:23–24).

29. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:6.6 and 1:2.3.

30. Ibid. 1:6.7.

31. *Sol.* 1:12.

32. Ibid, *praeceptis medici obtemperat.*

33. Plato, *Timaeus* 29c, quoted in Augustine, *De Trin.* 4:24. The *Timaeus* (in Cicero's translation) is the only treatise of Plato's that we can be confident Augustine read *in extenso.* See Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers,* pp. 168–171.

34. See esp. *De Fide et Symb.* 8.

35. *De Vera Rel.* 13.

36. *De Trin.* 13:25, summing up the relation of the theological doctrines of Incarnation and Atonement (13:12–14) to the Ciceronian philosophical conviction that every human being by nature desires to be happy (13:6–11).

37. That *justification by faith,* in Augustine's theology, covers basically the same ground as *purification by faith* is particularly clear in *De Div. QQs 83,* 68.3, one of Augustine's earliest treatments of Paul's doctrine.

38. Acts 15:9.

39. Hebrews 10:22.

40. Ibid. 9:10–14.

41. For attachment to sensible images (phantasms) as a form of evil or impurity, see also *De Ord.* 2:43, *De Musica* 6:32 and 50–51, *De Vera Rel.* 65–74, and *Conf.* 7:1–2. G. R. Evans, chapter 3, presents a useful discussion of the epistemology of evil in Augustine, which centers on this project of turning away from phantasms.

42. *Sol.* 2:34–35. Note Augustine's previous remark that geometrical figures "dwell in Truth itself, or else Truth dwells in them" (*Sol.* 2:32).

43. Since Platonic Forms are all found within God as Ideas in God's mind (*De Div. QQs 83,* 46.2), the intellect that sees intelligible Forms or unchangeable truths is catching a partial glimpse of God's own essence. See Cary, *Augustine's Invention,* chapter 3, "Ideas in the Mind of God."

44. *De Lib. Arb.* 2:33.

45. *De Mag.* 39, *De Duab. Anim.* 19.

46. *De Div. QQs 83,* 68.3.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid, quoting Matt 5:8.

49. *Nec in loco Deus videtur sed mundo corde,* says Ambrose, commenting on Matt. 5:8 in a sermon quoted at length in Augustine's treatise *On Seeing God* (= Ep. 147:18). On the difference between Augustine's use of the language of inwardness and Ambrose's, see Cary, *Augustine's Invention,* chapter 4, " 'Inner Man' Language."

50. *Conf.* 7:16. See Cary, *Augustine's Invention,* chapter 3, "In Then Up."

51. That beauty is the essential object of all love is a key conviction of the Platonist tradition since Plato, *Symposium* 201a. For Augustine's version of this conviction, see *De Musica* 6:38. That we must be purified from love of lower beauties, even though they are good things, is explicit in *C. Ep. Fund.* 48.

52. Much of the vast literature on Augustine's doctrine of love is a response to Anders Nygren's thesis that Augustine's concept of charity was an unsuccessful attempt to synthesize Platonist *eros* and Christian *agape* (*Agape and Eros*, pp. 449–558). Nygren's account has been nearly universally rejected, not because he sees so much *eros* in Augustine but because he attempts to exclude all *eros* from Christian love of God—as if God were not the desire of our hearts. Later accounts all try to find a reasonable balance between discomfort and acceptance of the Platonist *eros* built into Augustine's concept of charity; see for example Burnaby, O'Donovan, Holte (chapter 17), and Rist, *Augustine* (chapter 5). Where there is no disagreement is that Augustine's conception of love owes a great deal to the Platonist tradition.

53. Plato, *Symposium* 210a–212b. Plotinus's treatise "On Beauty" (*Ennead* 1:6) is another version of this ladder of love ascending to vision of divine Beauty. Cf. Augustine's ascent from the beauty of temporal numbers to the unchanging numbers in *De Musica* 6:43–55, an ascent combined with a strong emphasis on virtue as purification.

54. Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a–256e.

55. Plato, *Symposium* 215a–222b.

56. See Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 3, "Some Plotinian Readings."

57. For the influence of this treatise on Augustine, see O'Connell, *Early Theory*, chapter 8.

58. See Forschner, chapter 8, and Annas, chapters 4 and 5. Augustine will resort to an account of choice that is more Stoic than Platonist when he wants to emphasize human freedom; see chapter 2, "Assent or Delight?" and chapter 3, "Augustine's Evasiveness."

59. For this line of reasoning in Augustine, see esp. *In Joh. Evang.* 26:2–7, discussed in Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Spiritual Eating."

60. Ep. 157:10.

61. *De Sp. et Litt.* 52, mimicking what Paul says in Rom. 3:31 about faith and Law.

62. Peter Brown alerted a whole generation of scholars to the importance of the theme of delight (*delectatio*) in *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 148–149. Delight was central to Augustine's understanding of love and beauty as early as *De Musica* 6:29–33. So Carol Harrison (pp. 267–268) is right to point out that delight is a theme that appears in Augustine's work long before *Ad Simp.*, but I do think there are developments in Augustine's use of this theme that she does not notice: in particular, the psychological fact that delight is not in the command of the will does not become prominent until the early Pauline exegeses, and the association of delight not only with love but with faith is a distinctive new development in *Ad Simp.*; see chapter 2, "Assent or Delight?"

63. "We all certainly will to be happy," says Cicero at the beginning of his lost treatise *Hortensius* (quoted in Augustine's *De Trin.* 13:7), which is the book of

philosophy from which Augustine first learned his burning love for divine Wisdom (*Conf.* 3:7–8). Cicero's dictum becomes the foundation of Augustine's psychology of will, as can be seen in his numerous quotations and allusions to it (e.g., *De Beata Vita* 10, *C. Acad.* 1:5, *De Mor. Eccl.* 4, *De Lib. Arb.* 1:30, 2:28, *De Mag.* 46, *Conf.* 10:29, Ep. 130:10 and 155:6, *Civ. Dei* 10:1). The ultimate source of Cicero's dictum is Plato's *Euthydemus* 278e, which is the beginning of an exhortation to the love of wisdom (ibid. 278e–282d) that served as the model for Aristotle's exhortation to philosophy, the *Protrepticus*, which was in turn the model for Cicero's *Hortensius*.

64. The identification of the classical conception of happiness with the biblical term "eternal life" (because a truly happy life must be an eternal life, so that *beata vita* is necessarily *aeterna vita*) is central to Augustine's synthesis of classical philosophy and Christian faith, and found all over his writings, sometimes defended by elaborate argument; see e.g., *De Div. QQs 83*, 35.2, *Civ. Dei* 14:25, *De Trin.* 13:11, Sermon 150:10, *Ench.* 20.

65. Hence the famous saying in *Conf.* 1:1, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

66. The medieval doctrine of "infused charity" (or translating more literally from the Latin, "love poured in") originates with Augustine's interpretation of Rom. 5:5: "The charity of God is poured out [*diffusa est*] in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given to us" (translating from Augustine's quotation in *Prop. ex Rom.* 60).

67. See chapter 4, "Converting Paul's Will" and "God Turns Hearts."

68. In one sense God simply *is* happiness: as the soul is the life of the body, "so God is the happy life of the soul" (*De Lib. Arb.* 2:41). More precisely, since happiness is "joy in the Truth" (*Conf.* 10:33), seeking true happiness means seeking God (ibid. 10:29)—for of course God is Truth (ibid. 10:35).

69. James Wetzel helpfully underlines this point in his explanation of Augustine's conception of irresistible grace: "Augustine does not say . . . that we have no capacity to resist, but for him the source of that capacity is not some special reserve we maintain to protect our autonomy, but our will held back in mortgage to its past. What Pelagians see as a source of freedom . . . Augustine sees as bondage, the resistance that habit offers to renewal. From Augustine's point of view, our reserve towards grace must be eliminated altogether before we can be said to be genuinely liberated" (pp. 201–202).

70. See e.g., *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 41: "by the grace of God the human will is not taken away but changed from bad to good, and helped when it is good."

71. Rom. 6:20.

72. I am here summarizing one aspect of the relation of Law and free will in *De Lib. Arb.* 1:16–23.

73. See *De Gen. c. Man.* 1:6.

74. The fact that this rejection of autonomy occurs so early in his career, in a book written a year or so after his baptism, is one reason for rejecting the many efforts to portray Augustine's doctrine of grace as a reversal of an earlier belief in the possibility of humans achieving happiness by their own unaided efforts. Unlike Wetzel, who in his second chapter offers one of the most sophisticated versions of such a

portrayal, I do not think Augustine's early interest in Stoicism ever included a belief in something that could be called "self-determination." The only sense in which Augustine's ethics is fundamentally Stoic is that he desires a happiness that is invulnerable to the vicissitudes of fortune and the loss of external goods. But already in his earliest extant writing, he argues that such happiness requires possession of what is unchangeable (see below, "Fear and Love"), which means that the ethical goal of Stoicism is only possible under the aegis of Platonist metaphysics, where human happiness is not a matter of self-determination but of participation in what is eternal and more than human.

75. This analysis of pride, which recurs throughout Augustine's writings, is introduced in *De Musica* 6:40 and his earliest exegetical treatise, *De Gen c. Man.* 2:5 and 2:22. For its Platonist resonances, cf. O'Connell, *Early Theory*, pp. 173–182.

76. *De Trin.* 10:11.

77. For the unitive power of love in general, see *De Ord.* 2:48, *De Trin.* 8:14, as well as Burnaby, pp. 100–103. For love as glue, see *De Lib. Arb.* 1:33, *Conf.* 4:15, *De Trin.* 10:7, *Enarr. in Pss.* 63:17–18, as well as the study by Lienhard. The desire for union with the beloved is a key theme of Platonist eroticism, as in Plotinus, *Ennead* 6:9.9.

78. *Conf.* 4:18.

79. Ibid. 4:11.

80. Ibid. 4:13.

81. This is the opening of an extended discussion of fear and love in *De Div. QQs 83*, 33–35.

82. *De Sp. et Litt.* 5.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid. 13.

85. Ibid. 6.

86. Ibid. 28.

87. Ibid. 5. The phrase "delight and love" (*delectatio dilectioque*) underlines how close these two words are in Latin as well as how tightly linked they are in Augustine's thought.

88. *De Nat. et Grat.* 83.

89. *De Beata Vita* 11. Fear of loss is what makes those who are fortunate in this world miserable at heart, thus showing that they do not possess a truly happy life, ibid. 26.

90. Ibid. 33–34.

91. For this distinctive relation between love and fear in Augustine, see *De Div. QQs 83*, 33–36, and Babcock, "*Cupiditas* and *Caritas*."

92. *De Div. QQs 83*, 25. See similarly *De Musica* 6:7. We will run into Augustine's later elaboration of this account of the meaning of Christ's crucifixion in chapter 3, "The Grace of Participation."

93. *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.5, translating Augustine's rendering of Rom. 7:24–25. Modern translations, following the best ancient texts, have "thanks be to God" rather than "the grace of God." For more on Augustine's early interpretation of grace as external example, see chapter 2, "Four Stages."

94. *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.6.

95. *Prop. ex Rom.* 48.

96. Amid a flood of literature on this topic, I am particularly indebted to the works of E. P. Sanders and Richard Hays.

97. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "The Education of the Human Race."

98. Consider from this vantage point why the last chapter of the book of Exodus is a happy ending. The "earthly reward" here is the presence of God in the tabernacle in the midst of Israel. When Christians await the coming of Christ, they are hoping for a similar happy ending (see Rev. 21:1–4).

99. On the presence of God in the temple, see 1 Kings 8:22–53 and Ezekiel 8–11. For the presence of God among his people studying Torah, see *Mishnah*, Aboth 3:2–6.

100. On the absence of the concept of "life-giving flesh" in Augustine's piety, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Spiritual Eating."

101. For what "literalism" means in Augustine, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Fewer and Less Burdensome."

102. This is the view taken by Blumenkranz in his earlier work, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins*, p. 59. He notes that Augustine's writings only once mention his having a conversation with a Jew (ibid., p. 62) and suggests that his acquaintance with Rabbinic exegesis was almost entirely secondhand, mainly through Jerome (ibid., p. 66). However, in his later work, "Augustin et les juifs—Augustin et le judaïsme," Blumenkranz evidently changed his mind, not on the basis of new evidence but apparently on the supposition that Augustine could hardly have lived in North Africa, where there were so many lively Jewish communities, without having had frequent personal contacts with Jews. I find the earlier conclusion more plausible, given the paucity of references to individual Jewish contemporaries in Augustine's texts. Cohen, in "Slay Them Not," pp. 82–83, argues against Blumenkranz's later view.

103. *C. Faust. Man.* 16:21, *De Fide Rerum Invis.* 9, Ep. 149:9, *Civ. Dei* 18:46. The series of articles by Fredriksen beginning in 1995 situate this "witness" doctrine in the development of Augustine's thought, especially his hermeneutics and theory of history, with instructive results for Augustine scholarship: it is precisely in defending the Old Testament, the Jewish heritage of Christianity, from Manichaean attack that Augustine begins developing a robust view of the significance of history.

104. For a study of Augustine's "witness" doctrine and its influence on Christendom, see Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*.

105. See chapter 3, "The Grace of Participation."

106. What follows in the text (in installments, interspersed with commentary) is a mostly continuous quotation from *De Vera Rel.* 3. In the Latin the whole passage, including Plato's answer as well as the student's question, is one sentence. It is introduced by Augustine first imagining Plato alive so that Augustine himself could ask him this question, then taking it back and imagining a student during Plato's own lifetime asking the question. So Augustine both is and is not the student speaking to his teacher Plato.

107. The Platonists' failure to instruct the many is the theme of the opening paragraphs of the treatise (*De Vera Rel.* 1–2) and plays a persistent role in Augustine's

criticisms of pagan Neoplatonists generally, as O'Meara has shown in *Young Augustine*, chapter 10. An especially important example is *Civ. Dei* 10:35 on the failure of the Platonists to find "a universal way for the liberation of the soul." The main target of these criticisms is the Neoplatonist Porphyry, student and editor of Plotinus.

108. Nietzsche, Preface to *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (=*Beyond Good and Evil*). For his double-barreled attack on the heritage of both Socrates and Christ, see *Götzendämmerung* (=*Twilight of the Idols*).

109. Cf. the judgment of one of the most astute readers of ancient Platonism, commenting on this passage as well as Augustine's Ep. 118: "The content of Platonism is thus identified with the content of the message of Christ. In itself the theme is not new: under different forms and appealing to different models of explanation, it was traditional within the church. But it seems to me it has never been presented with so much force before Augustine. To underline the paradox, one could express it this way: Christianity appears, in this perspective, as a kind of Platonism for the people, which is to say that it becomes in a way the means of spreading among the multitude a knowledge which until then had been reserved for a small elite. We touch here on a problem central to the whole of human history: how to make Reason, which is ideally universal, become concretely and effectively universal? For Augustine, only Christianity can assure this universal reign of Reason which, until now, has made no sense except to a small group of Platonic wise men" (Hadot, p. 278). This more sympathetic judgment is Hegelian rather than Nietzschean, but it too does not fit the usual self-understanding of orthodox Christian theology, for which the meaning of the Incarnation is not adequately described as "the universal reign of Reason."

110. The continuity of Augustine's thought, both as Platonist and as Christian, is a point repeatedly made by Goulven Madec (e.g., *St. Augustin et la philosophie*, chapters 2 and 15, *Petites études*, chapter 12) often by way of comparing this passage from *De Vera Rel.* with other passages, early and late, on the relation of Platonism and Christianity, esp. *C. Acad.* 3:42, *Conf.* 7, Ep. 118, and *Civ. Dei.* 8. Despite his disagreements with Robert J. O'Connell about the sources and character of Augustine's Platonism (on which see Madec, "Une lecture," and O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Platonism*), this is a fundamental point on which Madec and O'Connell agree, in contrast to the general run of scholarship that is less well informed on Augustine's philosophy: in all Augustine's writings, he takes Platonism to be right about the nature of God and therefore about the character of true human happiness. Developments in Augustine's doctrine of grace originate within this Christian Platonist framework and never simply leave it behind.

111. In Augustine's earliest writings, see especially the tearful reproach Augustine levels at his vainglorious students, who are too blind to see the darkness in which their minds lie (*De Ord.* 1:29; for commentary, see Cary, "What Licentius Learned," pp. 151–152), as well as his own moral self-examination in *Sol.* 16–26, which ends with him abandoning every pretence of moral health and begging with tears for Reason, his inner examiner of conscience, not to torment him any further.

112. In both 1:1 and 2:1 (i.e., at the beginning of both books of *Sol.*), Reason insists that Augustine pray for divine help before the inquiry begins.

113. Ibid. 1:30.

114. *De Lib. Arb.* 1:4.

115. Ibid.

116. Plato, *Republic* 4:432c, *Timaeus* 27c and 48d, *Philebus* 61c, *Laws* 10:893b (for divine aid in inquiry, see also *Theaetetus* 151d); Plutarch, "On Isis and Osiris" 351c; Plotinus, *Enneads* 4:9.4, 5:1.6, and 5:8.9; for the role of prayer in the moral life according to Neoplatonist piety, see Porphyry, *To Marcella* 11–13.

117. For prayers for help in inquiry, see e.g., *De Beata Vita* 9, *C. Acad.* 1:1, *De Ord.* 3:52, *De Lib. Arb.* 1:4 and 1:14, *De Util. Cred.* 20, *De Quant. Anim.* 13. But of course the most lavish examples of the joining of prayer and inquiry are found throughout the *Confessions*, where indeed all of Augustine's inquiries are conducted as prayers.

118. *Civ. Dei* 10:29.

119. Ibid.

120. *Sol.* 1:26.

121. *De Ord.* 2:52.

122. *Retract.* 1:3.3. Interestingly, this interpretation of the early Augustine by the mature Augustine is harsher than necessary. The passage could be interpreted to mean that a good life is not a precondition of God hearing our prayer, but making the utmost effort is. Perhaps the mature Augustine ignores this possible interpretation because he sees no difference between being good and doing one's best, at least as preconditions of grace. If either is a precondition, then there is no grace for sinners, which is to say, there is no grace at all.

123. *De Ord.* 2:52.

124. *Sol.* 1:14, part of an argument that only love, not faith and hope, remains after this life.

125. Plato, *Symposium* 199e–200e.

126. *De Div. QQs 83*, 35.

127. *De Doct. Christ.* 1:42.

128. *De Trin.* 10:17–19.

129. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 4, "The *On the Teacher* Thesis" (end).

130. See Calvin, *Inst.* III,ii,11, the first of many treatments of the problem of "temporary faith" in the Calvinist tradition. See R. T. Kendall's study of this issue, which he describes as "the chief pastoral problem in Calvin's theology and in the experimental predestinarian tradition" (p. 22).

131. See *De Trin.* 15:38: "What else is love but will?"

132. *Civ. Dei* 14:6.

133. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 20–21; cf. also *De Corr. et Grat.* 42, Ep. 194:21. On the relation of grace and merit in Augustine, Burnaby (pp. 235–241) is very helpful.

134. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 20, with explicit denial that "faith alone is sufficient" without good works. Augustine wrote a whole treatise *On Faith and Works*, against "the false assurance that faith alone is sufficient for salvation" (*De Fide et Oper.* 21). But his target was not a position like Luther's, which seems unexampled at the time, but the much less interesting position that it was acceptable for people to present themselves for baptism without any intention of living a Christian life afterward

(ibid. 1). Luther and Calvin would hardly disagree with Augustine's disapproval of *that* position. From this I conclude that Protestant versions of salvation by faith alone can only arise (because they only make sense) when an Augustinian psychology of grace is already built into the religious culture of an era.

135. For a sample of Augustinian texts on this point, see Burnaby, pp. 244–245.

136. For examples of merit language in Augustine's works prior to his exegeses of Paul, see *De Lib. Arb.* 1:28 (good will merits eternal life), ibid. 1:30 (merit lies in will), *De Mor. Eccl.* 1 (we must merit knowledge), ibid. 47 (eternal life is the promised reward, but it cannot be given without merit), *De Gen. c. Man.* 1:8 (believing so as to merit understanding), *De Div. QQs 83*, 24 (unmerited punishment and unmerited reward are both unjust), *De Fide et Symb.* 1 (the faith taught by spiritual men who merit not only to believe but to understand). Particularly intriguing is the disapproval, toward the end of *Sol.* 1:3, of "the error of those who think that merit is nothing before Thee," which is probably a reference to Manichaean fatalism.

137. "My love is my weight," *Conf.* 13:10. An earlier version of the metaphor makes delight the weight of the soul, *De Musica* 6:29. Cf. also *De Gen. c. Man* 2:34 and *Civ. Dei* 11:28.

138. Dante, *Inferno* 32–34. See Cary, "The Weight of Love."

139. *De Lib. Arb.* 1:27.

140. *De Musica* 6:50–54.

141. *De Mor. Eccl.* 25–46. The commandment is quoted at ibid. 18.

142. Ibid. 25.

143. Ibid. 31. The paragraph is of particular interest because it sets the virtue/wisdom relation in trinitarian context: love is here identified as charity inspired by the Holy Spirit (according to Rom. 5:5, quoted in paragraphs 23 and 29), which leads us to Wisdom, explicitly identified here with the Son of God (as in 1 Cor. 1:24, quoted in paragraph 22), through which we come to know the Father. The implication is that philosophy (which is love of wisdom) is nothing other than love of Christ (which is virtue) and that, whatever name we give it, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

144. On the subordination of the four moral virtues to contemplative wisdom as means to end, see Plotinus, *Ennead* 1:2.6. Like a good deal of Plotinus's Neoplatonism, this point is as much Aristotelian as Platonic, reflecting in this case Aristotle's privileging of contemplation over action: cf. e.g., Aristotle, *Eud. Ethics* 8:3(=7:15), 1249b10–25 and *N. Eth.* 10:7–8. Especially important in this regard is the fragment of Cicero's *Hortensius* preserved in Augustine *De Trin.* 14:12, which Ross counts as belonging to Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, Fragment 12; in it the four active virtues are treated as temporary, leading to the permanent beatific enjoyment of contemplation.

145. *Ennead* 1:6.6.

146. *Ennead* 1:6.6 begins by referring to Plato, *Phaedo* 69c, which concludes Plato's derivation of the four classical virtues from the love of wisdom, *Phaedo* 68b–69b. My phrase "die to this world" is of course more biblical than Platonic, but it reflects Augustine's identification of the Gospel injunction to lose one's life in this world with the Platonic conviction that to philosophize is to learn to die, Ep. 95:2 (reflecting *Phaedo* 64a as well as John 12:25).

CHAPTER 2

1. It cannot be stressed too strongly or too often that Augustine's doctrine of will and love makes no sense apart from his view of the intellect, and particularly his identification of happiness with intellecual vision. See chapter 1, "Wisdom and Virtue."

2. See chapter 1, "The Widening Scope of Inner Help."

3. Babcock, "Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394–396)" is a particularly illuminating exposition; see more recently Fredriksen, "Beyond the Soul/Body Dichotomy." Burns treats the same material in the course of his much larger narrative, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, pp. 30–44.

4. *De Div. QQs 83* is a collection of Augustine's answers to questions asked by "the brothers" (probably friends sharing the monastic life with him) in the early years of his return to Africa (*Retract.* 1:26). Though individual questions cannot be dated, it seems likely the collection is arranged in chronological order (see Mosher's introduction to his translation, pp. 10–13). Even if this is not so, the document is extremely valuable for those interested in the development of Augustine's thought, giving us a brief record of many insights that bridge the gap between Augustine's early philosophical dialogues and the great theological works of his maturity.

5. See Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 7.

6. This three-tiered hierarchy of being first emerges in Ep. 18:2. See Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, pp. 55–56 and appendix 2, as well as the exposition in Bourke, *Augustine's View of Reality*, pp. 3–7 and the collection of passages on this topic in Bourke's anthology, *The Essential Augustine*, pp. 43–66.

7. In *Conf.* 3:11, the Truth Augustine longs for, explicitly identified with God, is *interior intimo meo*.

8. Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 10.

9. A point Augustine learned from Plotinus. See ibid., chapter 8.

10. The first time Augustine affirms the possibility of a voluntary separation of the soul from God, he speaks in terms of conversion: the soul's turning away from or back toward Reason and Truth, *De Immort. Anim.* 12.

11. For this movement of psychological functions "inward," see chapter 1, "The Widening Scope of Inner Help."

12. *Retract.* 1:9.1.

13. *De Lib Arb.* 1:25. "Rightly and excellently" (*recte honesteque*) are two key terms from Cicero's (largely Stoic) ethics.

14. Seneca, *De Ben.* 5:3.2.

15. Luke 2:14. Augustine early on uses this passage as a gloss on the concept of good will, *De Mor. Man.* 10. See also *De Div. QQs 83*, 68.5 and *Prop. ex Rom.* 18.

16. See *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.7 and *Prop. ex Rom.* 53.

17. *De Mor. Eccl.* 10.

18. *De Lib. Arab.* 1:34–35.

19. *De Mor. Eccl.* 37.

20. Ibid. 48–49. On the point that loving your neighbor "as yourself" means primarily to help your neighbor come to the same happiness in God that you ought to desire, see O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love*, pp. 32–36.

21. *De Doct. Christ.* 1:20.

22. Ibid. 1:4.

23. O'Donovan, "*Usus* and *Fruitio*," p. 390. The whole essay is devoted to supporting and documenting this claim, presented more briefly in O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love*, pp. 24–32.

24. *De Doct. Christ.* 1:35 and 3:16.

25. *De Lib. Arb.* 1:28.

26. Ibid. 1:27.

27. Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 8, "Immutable Good Will." Note that according to Augustine's little treatise on Platonic Ideas (*De Div. QQs 83*, 46.1), reason (*ratio*) is Augustine's preferred translation for *logos*, which is the key New Testament term for Christ's eternal being with God (John 1:1). Hence there should be nothing particularly surprising about the identification of an inner teacher named Reason (*ratio/logos*) with Christ.

28. For Augustine's use of this Plotinian model of the higher part of the soul calling the lower to turn inward and see higher things, see Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 6, "Who is Reason?" For Plotinus's distinctive conception of the higher part of the soul, see ibid., chapter 2, "Identity in Plotinus's Hierarchy."

29. See chapter 3, "Taught by God."

30. *De Lib. Arb.* 2:33–37, using some of the same verbs as *De Lib. Arb.* 1:27, discussed above.

31. Given his earlier acceptance of a divine power (*virtus*) in the soul, Augustine must make a point of arguing that Virtue is not an inherent part of ourselves in *De Mor. Eccl.* 9–10. See Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 8, "Soul as Creature."

32. These identifications are implicit throughout Augustine's writings, indispensable to the argument of *De Lib. Arb.*, and made explicit at ibid. 2:36–37.

33. Ibid. 2:41–43 (a precursor to the famous passage about the need to turn from outer to inner beauty in *Conf.* 10:38: "You were within, I was outside"). The notion that creation stems from Number as well as Wisdom is a theme developed at length in Augustine's Pythagorean-Platonist meditations on number in *De Musica* 6, though its immediate biblical warrant is Ecclesiastes 7:25, "I also turned my heart about, that I might know and consider and seek wisdom and number" (quoted in *De Lib. Arb.* 2:24).

34. *De Mag.* 38.

35. *De Lib. Arb.* 3:17, a lapidary saying that sums up a key theme of Augustine's inward turn throughout *De Lib. Arb.* 2 and later in *Conf.* 7.

36. That Truth, while itself simple and indivisible, can nonetheless be seen by us "in part" is a key Plotinian concept in Augustine's epistemology and ontology; cf. Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 2, "Unity and Division," and chapter 4, "Ideas in the Mind of God."

37. *De Lib. Arb.* 2:20. For the intimate trinitarian relationship between Number and Wisdom, see ibid. 2:30–32, which in turn builds on the neo-Pythagorean meditation on eternal Number in *De Musica*, book 6.

38. *De Lib. Arb.* 2:43. For the Allegory of the Cave as the ultimate source of this metaphor, see chapter 1, "Conversion and Purification."

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid. 1:22.

41. For a succinct argument for this as the foundation of Augustine's ethics of love, see *De Div. QQs 83*, 35.

42. *De Lib. Arb.* 2:37. Note also the argument in *De Div. QQs 83*, 35 that happiness consists in knowledge because knowledge is possession of something that cannot be lost.

43. The conception of freedom of will as freedom from external compulsion is developed most explicitly in *De Duab. Anim.* 14, though it is also used in *De Lib. Arb.* 1:19–21. The root of the conception lies in *De Immort. Anim.* 21, where Augustine argues that nothing outside the soul can forcibly separate it from Truth or Reason. The point goes back to Augustine's arguments against the Manichaeans: cf. Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 8, "Voluntary Separation?"

44. *De Beata Vita* 11.

45. *De Lib. Arb.* 1:26.

46. Ibid.: *velle solum opus est, ut habeatur.*

47. Seneca, Ep. 80:4: *Quid tibi opus est, ut bonus sis? Velle!*

48. *De Lib. Arb.* 1:26.

49. Ibid. 3:7.

50. As we learn in *Retract.* 1:9.3.

51. Ibid. 1:9.3–6.

52. *De Lib. Arb.* 3:52.

53. Ibid.

54. E.g., *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:68 and 2:26 (notice in this latter passage that moral weakness is defined as a lack of delight in doing what is right), *De Nat. et Grat.* 81.

55. *Conf.* 8:21.

56. Ibid. 8:20.

57. Ibid. 8:10.

58. See Pohlenz, pp. 124–125 (no Greek term for will), p. 274 (Cicero's usage of *voluntas*), p. 319 (Seneca's usage), p. 333 (Epictetus on *prohairesis*), p. 439 (Tertullian on will), and pp. 457–458 (Augustine on will). Taken together, these passages make a cumulative case for Augustine as the first thinker to conceive of the will as a central and irreducible faculty of the soul, though not the first Latin speaker to make much of the term *voluntas*.

59. Aristotle, *N. Eth.* 6:2,1139b4. For reasons of their own, the early Stoics did not speak of "choice" (see Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, chapter 1), but Epictetus put the term at the center of Roman Stoicism.

60. *Civ. Dei* 14:6.

61. For Augustine as inventor of a new conception of will—perhaps *the* conception that we now call will—see, in addition to Pohlenz, Sorabji (chapter 12), Dihle (chapter 6), and the lucid essay by Kahn.

62. Burns points out this important shift from carnal habit to concupiscence as the central explanation of our difficulty in willing rightly ("The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy," p. 46). One might have expected the two concepts to work together (bad habits reinforcing inborn concupiscence), but this does not happen often (but see *Ad Simp.* 1:1.10–11, *De Doct. Christ.* 1:25, and Ep. 157:15). For the most part, therefore, *carnalis consuetudo* and *concupiscentia* belong to two different phases in the development of Augustine's moral psychology.

63. Rom. 7:7, prominently discussed at the beginning of the argument in *De Sp. et Litt.* 6. Paul's usage is quoted already in *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.5 and *Prop. ex Rom.* 37, but *concupiscentia* does not yet function as a technical term in Augustine's moral psychology, which still centers around *consuetudo carnalis* at this point (e.g., at ibid. 45). Note that although *concupiscentia* was eventually used in the Pelagian controversy to designate the lust that infects the transmission of the soul from parents to child, it is not solely or originally a term for sexual desire. Even in Augustine's usage, it refers to any kind of greediness for external things—hence "covetousness" is a better translation than the traditional "lust." It is important to keep in view the connection with the commandment "Thou shalt not covet" (*non concupisces*).

64. Differences in will account for differences in our place in the cosmic order, according to the argument in *De Lib. Arb.* 3:32–35 and *De Musica* 6:30, employing what O'Connell calls the *dimissio* insight: fallen souls are dismissed or sent away to the place in the world that suits the level of their voluntary attachment to temporal things (O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul*, pp. 37–40).

65. The stages are sketched in *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.3 and *Prop. ex Rom.* 13–18, then used in the latter text to sort out Paul's meaning throughout Rom. 3–8. They also show up at about the same time in *Exp. Ep. Gal.* 36 and remain the framework for Augustine's thinking about grace as late as *Ench.* 118. Augustine uses the analogy between stages of the human race and stages in an individual human life to address issues in biblical interpretation very early in his writing; see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "The Education of the Human Race."

66. See the analysis of *Prop. ex Rom.* 41 and 48–49, which restates the key themes of love for temporal goods versus love for eternal goods developed in *De Lib. Arb.* 1. *Prop. ex Rom.* 52 and *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.1 draw the systematic correlations: Law is to grace as fear is to love, as slavery is to freedom, and as Old Testament is to New Testament.

67. The theme of delight comes to prominence in the Pauline exegeses in *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.6.

68. Judging by when new themes of permanent importance in Augustine's later thought first appear, I will read these texts in the following order, which I find to be the likely chronological order: first question 66 of *De Div. QQs 83* (on Romans 7:1–8:11 and the 4 stages), then *Prop. ex Rom.* (which comments on the whole epistle from

beginning to end), then question 68 of *De Div. QQs 83* (on Romans 9). (Question 67, on Romans 8:18–24, is not important for our purposes.) This means that in the treatment of the four stages of humanity, *De Div. QQs 83* (question 66) comes before *Prop. ex Rom.*, but in the treatment of Romans 9, *Prop. ex Rom.* comes before *De Div. QQs 83* (question 68). This is important because the conceptuality of Augustine's exegesis of Romans 9, which concerns issues of faith and merit, is not explicitly tied to the four stages schema. The resulting unclarity about the relation between Romans 9 and the four stages leads to key difficulties concerning prevenient grace, as we shall see next chapter.

69. Chapter 1, "From Fear to Love."

70. On the Platonist origin of "inner man" language in Paul, see Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 4, " 'Inner Man' Language."

71. *De Div. QQs 83*, 66.5. The person under Law "should therefore ask for help" (*imploret ergo auxilium*)—and that is as far as the concept of praying for grace is developed in question 66.

72. Ibid. 66.6.

73. Ibid. This interpretation of Christ's death is repeated in *Prop. ex Rom.* 48, where it is however not the only interpretation of the meaning of grace. We will meet it again in an early anti-Pelagian text; see chapter 3, "The Grace of Participation."

74. See *De Grat. Christi* 1:2 and more generally, chapter 3, "Uncovering Pelagian Evasions."

75. *Prop. ex Rom.* 26.

76. Ibid. 18.

77. Ibid 19 and 20.

78. See the beginning of "The Widening Scope of Inner Help" in chapter 1.

79. Ibid. 60. Bible translations, here as elsewhere in this book, are from Augustine's text, not from the original Greek nor from the Vulgate, from which Augustine's version sometimes differs significantly.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid. 13. See similarly 44. Harrison (pp. 136–142) makes an interesting and plausible argument that Augustine's anti-Manichaean focus on the importance of merit and free will at this point in his career leads him temporarily to downplay the extent of our need of grace in a way that is actually uncharacteristic of his basic theological commitments before this time as well as after. I would add: the issue of the prevenience of grace with respect to faith only becomes pressing once Augustine starts dealing with questions about the *ordo salutis* that arise in his exegesis of Paul in the 390s, a time when refuting the Manichaeans is foremost on his mind. The result is that at first he tries to avoid widening the scope of grace to include faith, a move that would weaken his polemical stance against the Manichaens, but this is pushing against the overall trend of his theological development and perhaps never really had a chance of becoming his settled view of the matter.

82. Ibid. 60 and 64.

83. Ibid. 60.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid. 61

86. Ibid. 60.

87. Ibid. 62

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid. 55. Augustine is commenting on Rom. 8:29–30, where Paul puts God's foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification of human beings in a temporal and (apparently) a causal sequence.

90. *Prop. ex Rom.* 52; see also *De Ord.* 1:19 and 2:22, *De Lib. Arb.* 1:27, and *De Div. QQs 83*, 2.

91. *De Div. QQs 83*, 24. Like the insistence on free will, the necessity of merit seems to be an anti-Manichaean theme; see *De Mor. Eccl.* 47 and *Sol.* 1:3 (praying against "the error of those who think there is no merit of souls before Thee").

92. In *De Ord.* 2:22 Augustine argues that God can be just even if there is no evil to be distinguished from the good, in the way that human beings can possess the virtue of justice without exercising it (as for instance a just person is just even when sleeping). But by implication, the *exercise* of justice requires a prior distinction between good and evil, since the justice of God "separates between the good and the evil, and renders to each his due [*sua cuique tribuat*]." As one of his interlocutors put it earlier, God is just "by distributing to each his due [*sua cuique distribuendo*]. But what distribution can there be to speak of, where there is no distinction?" (*De Ord.* 1:19). So justice is a form of distribution, distribution requires distinction, and the distinction on which justice must be based is that of merit. For the justice of God "renders to each his own according to the merits of the good and the evil" (ibid). What makes the concept of choice so deeply troublesome in a Platonist framework is that it always concerns particular acts, not a virtue or a power such as justice or will. Hence unlike the concept of divine will, which can be stated in general terms (God wills justice, truth, beauty, etc.), the concept of divine *choice* requires some kind of differentiation among temporal particulars. The deep question then is where this differentiation comes from.

93. *Prop. ex Rom.* 60: *Si enim nullo merito, non est electio. Aequales enim omnes sunt ante meritum nec potest in rebus omnino aequalibus electio nominari.*

94. *De Div. QQs 83*, 68.3. All quotations in the paragraph are from this extremely dense passage, which is important also because of the clear connection Augustine makes between purification by faith and justification by faith; see chapter 1, "Conversion and Purification."

95. *Prop. ex Rom.* 62.

96. *De Div. QQs 83*, 68.2.

97. Ibid. 68.3

98. Ibid. 68.4.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid. 68.6.

102. *Ad Simp.* 1:2.2.

103. As he notes at the end of ibid. 1:2.10—less than halfway through the discussion!

104. Ibid. 1:2.4.

105. Ibid. 1:2.5.

106. Ibid. 1:2.7.

107. Ibid. 1:2.8.

108. See ibid. 1:2.11.

109. Ibid. 1:2.16–17.

110. Ibid. 1:2.20.

111. For the profoundly un-Platonist character of Augustine's doctrine of election with its concept of "mass of sin," see Armstrong, pp. 24–26.

112. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 7–8, quoting from the long discussion of *Prop. ex Rom.* and *Ad Simp.* in *Retract.* 1:23 and 2:1. Note also the comment on *Ad Simp.* in *De Dono Pers.* 52 and 55, written in the same year.

113. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 7.

114. See *Prop. ex Rom.* 62, *De Div. QQs 83,* 68.5, and *Ad Simp.* 1:2.12.

115. *Prop. ex Rom.* 60.

116. Ibid. 61.

117. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 8.

118. Ibid. 7.

119. *Prop. ex Rom.* 61.

120. Ibid. 62.

121. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 7.

122. *De Div. QQs 83,* 68.5.

123. Ibid. The verb *operatur,* used here and in the previous quotation, is taken from Phil. 2:13 ("It is God who works [*operatur*] in you both willing and working"), a passage Augustine does not explicitly mention here but which plays a central role in his theology of grace beginning in *Ad Simp.* 1:2.12. This remains the key verb for God's grace *causing* the will to believe: God "works" faith and good will and good works in us.

124. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 7 (proceeding to quote Rom. 9:5—"a remnant is saved by the election of grace").

125. *Ad Simp.* 1:2.13.

126. Ibid.

127. Ibid. 1:2.14.

128. Ibid. 1:2.13.

129. Ibid. 1:2.12.

130. See Cary, *Outward Signs,* chapter 2, "The Grasping Appearance."

131. Cicero, *De Fato* 41–43, reporting an argument of the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus. Augustine is acquainted with this Ciceronian treatise, as we can see in *Civ. Dei* 5:9.

132. *De Div. QQs 83,* 40. Cf. also the much more complex discussion of the first sin of Adam and the Devil in the final chapter of *De Lib. Arb.,* which begins by assuming the same basic theory of motivation: "But since nothing can attract the will to do something other than some *visum* . . ." (*De Lib. Arb.* 3:74).

133. *Ad Simp.* 1:2.13. I take it that Augustine's verb *consentire* is equivalent to Cicero's verb *assentire* in the latter's report of the Stoic argument for free will in *De Fato* 41–43; the two verbs are very close in meaning (just like their cognates in English) and they do the same conceptual work in connection with the term *visum*. Therefore it does not signal any change of mind when Augustine replaces one term with the other many years later, defining faith as "to think with assent" (*cum assensione cogitare*) in *De Praedest. Sanct.* 5.

134. Ibid. 1:2.21. Here as elsewhere, I have scrupulously rendered Augustine's passive voice phrasing in English passive voice constructions, even at the price of some awkwardness, because this is important when issues of causation are in view.

135. Previous uses of the concept of delight in Augustine's exegesis of Paul had been associated with love rather than faith (*De Div. QQs 83*, 66.6 and *Ad Simp.* 1:2.7) and this association with love was to remain characteristic of the anti-Pelagian psychology of grace beginning with *De Sp. et Litt.* 5.

136. Ibid.

137. A striking example is when Luther characterizes justifying faith thus: "True faith with arms outstretched joyfully embraces the Son of God given for it and says, 'He is my beloved and I am his,' " (*Theses Concerning Faith and Law*, thesis 22 on faith, in LW 34:110).

138. See chapter 3, "Taught by God."

139. See chapter 4, "The Experience of Grace in Disarray."

140. See above, "Four Stages."

141. For the phenomenon of functions of the soul like faith and love being "moved inward" as Augustine's theology of grace develops, see chapter 1, "The Widening Scope of Inner Help."

142. See chapter 1, "From Fear to Love" (end).

143. The thesis that Augustine never has a place for the notion of sacraments as external causes of grace is argued in Part II of Cary, *Outward Signs*. The underlying principle is what I call the Platonist axiom of downward causality (ibid., Introduction, "Downward Causality"), according to which causal power always flows downward in the three-tiered hierarchy of being (mentioned above, "Divine Good Will"): God has causal power over souls and bodies, and souls have causal power over bodies, but never vice versa. So no external or bodily thing can ever exercise causal power over the soul, just as the soul has no power to cause changes in God.

144. This account of sense perception is developed in *De Musica* 6:10–15. See the helpful exposition in Gilson, I,iv.

145. *Ad Simp.* 1:2.21.

146. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 3, "Signs Moving Souls."

147. *De Musica* 6:7.

148. Ibid. 6:29–33. This is a precursor to the famous passage in *Conf.* 13:10, "My love is my weight."

149. *De Musica* 6:35–36.

150. See above, "The Inward-Turning Will."

151. *Conf.* 10:38.

152. Ibid. 10:9.

153. See ibid. 4:19, where we are to find Christ within, and follow his example so that we are not delayed by clinging to his flesh.

154. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 5, "Testimony about Temporal Things."

155. *Conf.* 8:29, quoting Romans 13:13–14 (translated from Augustine's Latin).

156. *Conf.* 9:1.

157. See Wetzel, pp. 138–160, making an extensive comparison of Augustine's early Pauline exegeses with the narrative in *Conf.* 8, focusing particularly on the question of where Rom. 7 fits in the sequence.

158. Ibid. 8:15. The language about being inflamed (*accendi*) and inward change (*mutatabur intus*) echoes his description of how, many years earlier, reading Cicero "changed my affection" (*mutavit affectum meum*) and inflamed him (*accendebar*) in ibid. 3:7–8.

159. Ibid. 8:29.

160. Ibid. That the Gospel reading functions for Anthony as an admonition is explicit: *ex evangelica lectione . . . admonitus fuerit.*

161. Ibid. 8:30.

162. The biographical sketch of Alypius in *Conf.* 6:11–16 contrasts with Augustine's autobiography by emphasizing its subject's virtues, treating his passion for gladatorial shows as if it were almost his sole vice. Note also the emphasis on Alypius's chastity, another strong contrast with Augustine himself, in ibid. 6:21–22.

163. The fact that Augustine's will is changed by a suitable call is noted by Burns in *Development*, p. 47, as well as TeSelle, p. 197, and Wetzel, p. 158. None of these authors notes that the fitting call in *Confessions* 8 is not, as in *To Simplicianus*, a call to *faith*. However, Wetzel is exceptionally aware of the fact that the notion of a single moment of conversion is never what Augustine actually gives us. As Wetzel aptly puts it: "Those who come to the scene of their conversion expecting to encounter God for the first time come too late" (p. 191).

164. See above, "The Place of Merit."

165. *Conf.* 8:17.

166. See above, "Willing Becomes Difficult."

167. Perhaps the most important critic of this view is Madec, who rightly insists that "Augustine lived out his conversion and even his decision to be baptized within the philosophical tradition. But it is a philosophical conversion which takes place entirely within the field of Christianity . . ." *Petites études*, p. 73.

168. *Conf.* 7:7; the details of his doctrinal error in Christology are given in 7:25.

169. Ibid. 7:11.

170. Ibid. 9:6.

171. For the ancient ecclesial sense of conversion, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 7, "Conversion and Perseverance." For the Platonist sense of conversion, see above, chapter 1, "Conversion and Purification."

172. See chapter 4, "The Grace of Beginnings."

173. See chapter 3, "The Missing Piece of the Puzzle."

174. See esp. chapter 4, "Converting Paul's Will."

175. See chapter 3, "Augustine's Evasiveness."

176. See chapter 4, "The Experience of Grace in Disarray."

177. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 6, "Puzzles in *Confessions* 8."

178. *De Mag.* 36. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 4, "Admonitions to Look Inside." Because of the inherent powerlessness of all external things in Augustine's ontology, I think it is crucial to observe the distinction between admonitions, which are necessarily external, and the inner power of grace (in contrast to Harrison, pp. 242–243). For the sense in which even what Augustine calls "inner admonitions" are external by comparison to the inward power of grace, see chapter 3, "Taught by God."

179. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 5, "Secondhand Knowledge."

CHAPTER 3

1. In what follows I trace the development of Augustine's thinking in the worldwide controversy over Pelagianism, using not only treatises but also letters, which were often important public documents. (An example is Ep. 194, which is written to a Roman presbyter who later became Pope and which also circulated in the monastery at Hadrumentum on the coast of Africa, where it caused a stir that precipitated the third and final phase of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings). Sermons will serve occasionally to fill out the interpretation of related passages in the treatises or letters, but will be used sparingly because their dating is usually less reliable and their formulation of the issues not quite as careful.

2. See appendix for a summary of the three phases of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writing. I date Augustine's mature anti-Pelagian doctrine from the beginning of the middle phase. Thus when I speak of "Augustine's mature theology of grace" I mean the teaching of the two later phases. Note that I conceive these as phases of Augustine's *writing*, not of the controversy itself, whose course I have not attempted to map in any detail.

3. This change and its implications are a central interest of J. Patout Burns in his *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, a fundamental study to which this chapter is indebted at nearly every turn. I have of course interpreted many of these turns differently from Burns. I also make much more than he does of Ep. 140 (the treatise *On the Grace of the New Testament*), which is the only major Augustinian treatment of grace about which he has little to say. This is connected to the fact that I see Augustine through a much more Platonist lens than Burns does, with accordingly much less concern for the (rather anachronistic) concept of human autonomy. It should be noted, however, that Burns adopts a Platonist lens in his more recent article on "Grace," which is much closer to the approach developed here but does not go into the same level of detail as his book.

4. Both sides of this African correspondence with Rome are contained in the collection of Augustine's letters. Augustine describes the African bishops' letters as part of his own literary labors against Pelagianism in Ep. 186:2.

5. Ep. 177:4. Similar arguments in 175:4 and 176:2.

6. Ep. 181:5–6 and 182:3–4. The appeal to the Lord's Prayer has deep roots in the African theological tradition going back to Cyprian's treatise "On the Lord's Prayer"; see Augustine's use of this treatise in *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 4:25, *De Corr. et Grat.* 10, and (most extensively) in *De Dono Pers.* 4–9, as well as the implied authority of this treatise in Augustine's writings to the monks at Hadrumentum, Ep. 215:3 and *De Grat. et. Lib. Arb.* 26.

7. The key document here is Cyprian's Ep. 64 (in ANF ed., numbered 58) to which Augustine often refers: e.g., Sermon 294:19 (in which Augustine read from Cyprian's letter to a congregation at Carthage, itself a memorable event referred to in *De Gest. Pelag.* 25), *De Pecc. Mer.* 3:10, *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 4:22–23. For the power of this piety at the grassroots, see the miracle story about the mother grieving for her unbaptized infant related by Peter Brown, p. 387. For Augustine's appeals to this African piety, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 7, "Unity in Adam."

8. See chapter 2, "Jacob and Esau."

9. Ep. 140, commented upon in *Retract.* 2:36 and there given the title, *De Gratia Testamenti Novi.*

10. Ep. 140:20.50–22.54 (proud Jews), 140:31.74–37.85 (proud Pelagians), and in between them, 140:27.66–28.68 (an analysis of pride that could apply to either). Cf. the Jews who boast of their works according to *Prop. ex Rom.* 64. The similarity of Jews and Pelagians, both of whom "are ignorant of the justice of God and want to establish a justice that is their own" (Rom. 10:3), is clear in Sermon 131:9–10 and Ep. 157:6, 186:38, and 196:7.

11. Ep. 140:3.9. The theme is not new to Augustine; see *Prop. ex Rom.* 52 and 56.

12. Ep. 140:4.10. The theme of "remaining the Son of God by nature" echoes the formula of Gregory of Naziansen, "He remained what he was and took up what he was not," *Orat.* 29:19 (the third "Theological Oration"), which is fundamental for Augustine's Christology; cf. Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 5, "Outward Voice and Inner Word." The notion of participating in the divine nature comes from the key New Testament text on participation, 2 Peter 1:4, a cornerstone of patristic conceptions of deification. The overall message was formulated perhaps most famously by Athanasius: "He was made man so that we might be made God," *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 54:3.

13. Ep. 140:2.3.

14. Ibid. 2.5.

15. Ibid. 6.15. For this theme of veiling and unveiling in the heremeneutics of the Old Testament, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Sacraments Promising Christ."

16. Ibid. 5.14, quoting Matt. 27:46 or Mark 15:34, which quotes Ps. 22:1. (I cite the usual English chapter and verse numbers; in the Latin, this is Ps. 21:2). I use "cry of dereliction" as the traditional designation for this utterance, derived from the Latin, where "why have you forsaken me?" is "*quare* dereliquisti *me*?"

17. Ep. 140:5.19–9.25. See *De Div. QQs 83*, 25, quoted in chapter 1, "From Fear to Love." The theme remains to the end of Augustine's career: cf. Ep. 220:1, written in 427, where he tells us that Christ "was crucified in order to teach us to despise the good things of this world rather than love them."

18. Ep. 140:7.19; cf. the oxymoron in 24.59: "in forsaking, he does not forsake." He forsakes in the one respect (temporal goods) but not the other (eternal goods). Augustine makes the same distinction when explaining the crucifixion to catechumens: what Jesus' cry from the cross means is that God "forsook him with respect to present felicity, but did not forsake him with respect to eternal immortality" (*De Symbolo ad Catechumenos*, 10 [end]).

19. Ibid. 6.15 and 6.18. This figurative transfer of terms is at the heart of Augustine's *totus Christus* theme; cf. Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 7, "The Soul of Christ."

20. Ibid. 14.36.

21. Ibid. 16.43.

22. Cf. for example Cyril of Alexandria, *Quod Unus Sit Christus* (PG 75:1325–26); ET, *On the Unity of Christ*, pp. 105–106.

23. For an understanding of how both pictures may be true at the same time, see Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae*, chapters 229–232. According to Thomas's analysis, not only does Jesus' divine nature retain its blessedness but his higher human reason enjoys the fullness of beatific vision even while the lower, sensible faculties of his soul are in utmost pain because of the crucifixion.

24. Note the prominent word of exhortation, "Listen and hear as much as you know how, drink as much as you can . . . see in this Psalm the grace of the New Testament," Ep. 140:17.43 (commenting on Ps. 22:22).

25. Ep. 140:16.44 (in the next paragraph Augustine refers to Rom. 5:5 as well as the Gospel command of love). One should not mistake Augustine's reference to the Church for a turn to external things. The life of the Church depicted here consists of inward songs of praise, love, and joy ("For this joy is inward, where the voice of praise is both sung and heard. . . . "). As I argue in *Outward Signs*, chapters 6 and 7, the heart of the Augustinian church is not an external institution but an inward unity of souls bound together by love of God. On the fundamentally inward nature of prayer, which does not consist of speech or signs, see ibid., chapter 4, "The *On the Teacher* thesis."

26. See chapter 1, "Dialogue with Plato."

27. Ep. 140:46, quoting 2 Cor. 3:6 ("the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life").

28. See chapter 1, "Against Augustine on the Jews," as well as Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "The Education of the Human Race" and "Fewer and Less Burdensome."

29. Ep. 140:22.54.

30. Ep. 140:21.52, quoting from Rom. 4:5 ("God who justifies the impious"). I take "the Better" (*melioris*) as a reference to the Platonist conception of the divine Good—for in Augustine's ontology, everything that is by nature better than the soul is in the strictest sense divine (Ep. 18:2).

31. Ep. 140:27.66.

32. Ibid. 22.54. See the similar identification in *Conf.* 7:16.

33. Ep. 140:3.7–8, expounding John 1:9. Cf. the very similar use of this imagery at about the same time in *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:37–38.

34. Ep. 140:23.56.

35. Ibid. For virtue as the result of conversion, see Plotinus, *Ennead* 1:24, Augustine *De Musica* 6:52, and chapter 1 above, "Conversion and Purification."

36. Ep. 140:23.56.

37. Ibid. 33.77.

38. Ibid. 29.69.

39. Ibid. 34.80.

40. Ibid. 35.81.

41. Ibid. 33.77. The equation of Biblical "heart" with Platonist "rational soul" is essential to the exposition from the very beginning (cf. the use of "rational soul" at ibid. 2.3) but is especially evident at 22.54 and 24.61, where the heart stands in for the soul as the inward place of the mind's eye, in contrast to the body and its senses.

42. Ibid. 26.61, quoting Ps. 22:26.

43. Ep. 140:9.25. For Christ's *life* as example, see ibid. 28:68.

44. Ibid. 12.30. The old life and the new life are defined here in terms already set out in ibid. 2.3. For the treatment of Christ as both sacrament and example, see the discussion of *De Trin.* 4:6 in Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Powerless Blood."

45. Ep. 140:33.77.

46. Ibid. 140:31.74

47. 1 Cor. 4:7, alluded to in Ep. 140:21.52 and 26.63 and used throughout Augustine's anti-Pelagian works, e.g., in *De Pecc. Mer.* 2:28–31 in connection with grace giving us good will.

48. See *De Pecc. Mer.* 2:2–5 and *De Sp. et Litt.* 4–5; in both cases, the question that launches the inquiry is about the need for divine *help*. That "grace" is the proper name for this help does not become clear until Augustine turns to his exposition of Paul to answer the question. The result is a significant expansion and enrichment of the fundamental patristic understanding of grace reflected in *On the Grace of the New Testament*, whose focus is not on the notion of divine help but on the notions of adoption and new life.

49. Ep. 140:26.63.

50. Ibid. 25.62, alluding to Eph. 3:17 as well as Rom. 11:33.

51. Ep. 140:25.62, quoting Rom. 11:33.

52. *De Sp. et Litt.* 4–5.

53. Ibid. 12.

54. Ibid. 13.

55. *De Sp. et Litt.* 6.

56. Ibid. 5; cf. also ibid. 16, 26, and 28.

57. See chapter 2, "Assent or Delight?"

58. *De Sp. et Litt.* 42.

59. Ibid. 32.

60. Ibid. 33. Augustine quotes all of Jeremiah 31:31–34 in a Latin translation that follows the Septuagint. The Vulgate translates more accurately, "I will give my Law into their bowels [*visceribus*] and on their heart I will write it" (Jer. 31:33).

61. *De Sp. et Litt.* 36.

62. One should not read the sentimental modern dichotomy between heart and mind into this passage, as if the one had to do with feeling and the other with mere thinking. For Augustine, just as for the Bible, the term "heart" designates the locus of understanding and thus can be used equivalently with the term "mind." Hence a few chapters later (ibid., 43), Augustine speaks of Paul's notion of "laws written on the heart" (Rom. 2:15) as equivalent to "laws written on the mind," as I do here.

63. There is an important similarity between this two-dimensional biblical picture of the self and the Greek philosophical picture of writing on the soul like a wax tablet, discussed in Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 1, "Words Written on Platonic Souls." This is a point on which the Bible and Plato agree and Augustine is the innovator, inventing the new picture of the inner self as a three-dimensional space in which one may enter and seek God; see Cary, *Augustine's Invention*, chapter 10.

64. *De Sp. et Litt.* 36.

65. See chapter 2, "Divine Good Will."

66. *De Sp. et Litt.* 36

67. *De Nat. et Grat.* 53, quoting Pelagius's formulation of this point and beginning a rebuttal that extends to 59.

68. *De Gest. Pelag.* 30.

69. Ibid. 20–22.

70. Ibid. 32.

71. See chapter 4, "Coercion on the Damascus Road."

72. Ibid. 33.

73. See the discussion of this point in the Pauline exegeses, chapter 2, "The Place of Merit." On the place of merit in the anti-Pelagian works, which I am summarizing here, see esp. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 13–20.

74. *De Gest. Pelag.* 34, quoting Psalm 59:10 (which the King James translates, "The God of my mercy shall *prevent* me," reflecting the Vulgate as well Augustine's Latin). This is the source of the technical terminology of *prevenient* grace.

75. *De Gest. Pelag.* 34, quoting 1 Cor. 4:7.

76. Ep. 157:10. However, there is a very brief allusion to divine calling in the discussion of a later topic, ibid. 157:16.

77. See chapter 2, "Reading Paul's Admonition." That *Conf.* 8 does not fit the pattern of Augustine's mature doctrine of prevenient grace is a point to which we will return in chapter 4, "The Experience of Grace in Disarray."

78. Ep. 145:3. See *De Sp. et Litt.* 56, where those under the Law are explicitly identified as believers, but not as those in whom faith works by love (see Gal. 5:6). So a fearful faith is characteristic of life *sub lege*, but justifying faith belongs only to the life *sub gratia*. Thus the dynamic by which Law leads to faith would seem to be the terrifying "lawful use" of the Law described in *De Sp. et Litt.* 16. This is confirmed by the later formulation, "the Law which leads to faith by terrifying" in *C. Duas. Ep. Pel.* 4:11. So interpreted, Augustine's view is closer to Luther than the startling formulation in Ep. 145:3 superficially suggests. Yet there is still a radical difference, because for Luther the Law can certainly terrify but only the gracious word of the Gospel can produce a faith that is worthy of the name.

79. See chapter 2, "The Call to Faith." Augustine's phrasing (*lex . . . adducit ad fidem*) resembles Tyconius's account of the Old Testament Law leading people by compulsion to a faith that was not yet revealed (e.g., *Book of Rules* 3:8, *lex cogebat in fidem*, and 3:9, *in fidem necdum revelatam . . . necessitate deduceretur*). But if Augustine is thinking of Tyconius's explanation of how Law leads to faith, he still has the same problem about prevenience: that the turn to faith does not seem to be preceded by grace but only by Law.

80. See especially Burns, *Development*, pp. 127–131.

81. *De Sp. et Litt.* 52, alluding to Romans 3:31, "So are we destroying the Law by faith? Far be it! Rather, we are establishing the Law."

82. *De Sp. et Litt.* 52.

83. *De Sp. et Litt.* 57.

84. See chapter 2, "Early Inconsistency."

85. *De Sp. et Litt.* 60, quoting Psalm 59:10.

86. *De Sp. et Litt.* 60. For the role of "appearances" (*visa*), see chapter 2, "Assent or Delight?"

87. See again chapter 2, "Assent or Delight?"

88. *De Sp. et Litt.* 54. Of course many forms of belief are involuntary. We do not really have a choice about whether to believe that snow is white, that two plus two is four, and that November comes after October. But typically we do have a choice about whether to believe what we are told. Augustine's discussions of Christian faith always assume it consists of believing something we are told, and hence that it is voluntary—which means it may also be meritorious.

89. *De Sp. et Litt.* 58.

90. Ibid. 50.

91. Luther's opponent Karlstadt emphasized this Augustinian point in his commentary on *De Sp. et Litt.*, remarking that "external things do not save" (*quae foris sunt non salvant*), p. 84 note k. For Luther, this amounts to a rejection of the Gospel. See Kähler's discussion in his introduction to the text, pp. 40*–42*.

92. See for example Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (LW 31:348–353) and "A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels" (LW 35:113–124).

93. *De Sp. et Litt.* 16. Cf. Luther's 1535 *Lectures on Galatians* on Gal. 3:23 (LW 26:335–345).

94. *De Sp. et Litt.* 22.

95. *Conf.* 10:40 (repeated 10:45 and 10:60). Pelagius hated this formula, as Augustine knew (see *De Dono Pers.* 53).

96. Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31:349.

97. Cf. Luther's *Small Catechism* on the third article of the Creed: "I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ. . . . But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel. . . ." (Tappert, p. 345).

98. For the parallel in Luther between the power of the Gospel and the efficacy of the sacraments, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, Preface, "Powerless Externals," and chapter 8, "When Promising Is Giving." The parallel is explored more extensively in Cary, "Why Luther Is Not Quite Protestant."

99. See of course Luther's *On the Bondage of the Will*, where he argues that when it comes to sinners concerned for their own salvation, "nothing remains of free choice but the empty name" (LW 33:110). It is worth clarifying here: Luther never hesitated to affirm that we quite willingly (and in that sense quite freely) choose to do evil (LW 33:64; cf. 33:39). This is not a trivial point but central to Augustine's early defense of free will in *De Lib. Arb.*, which explains the origin of evil by tracing it to our free will. However, the role of free will in the Pelagian controversy is quite different: the question there is what *good* our free will can do without the help of grace. To this question Luther's answer is resoundingly negative, and he thinks Augustine is entirely on his side, as for instance when Augustine says that apart from the gift of grace, "human free will is capable of nothing but sin" (*De Sp. et Litt.* 5, quoted in *On the Bondage of the Will*, LW 33:112). Less clear is Luther's attitude toward the freedom to do good that *follows* from grace; he does not want to call it by the name "free will," yet I do not think his position is very far from Augustine's on this score, apart from Luther's resolute denial of merit.

100. Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will* (LW 33:289). See also the previous page: "For my own part, I frankly confess that, even if it were possible, I would not wish to have free choice given to me, or to have anything left in my own hands by which I might strive toward salvation."

101. *De Sp. et Litt.* 60. Because the grammar here is almost as subtle as the concepts, I include the Latin for the whole passage from which all the quotations in this paragraph are taken:

non ideo tantum istam voluntatem [sc. qua credimus] divino muneri tribuendam, quia ex libero arbitrio est, quod nobis naturaliter concreatum est; verum etiam quod visorum suasionibus agit Deus, ut velimus, et ut credamus, sive extrinsecus per evangelicas exhortationes, ubi et mandata legis aliquid agunt, si ad hoc admonent hominem infirmitatis suae, ut ad gratiam justificantem credendo confugiat; sive intrinsecus, ubi nemo habet in potestate quid ei veniat in mentem, sed consentire vel dissentire propriae voluntatis est.

102. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 4, "Admonitions to Look Inside." For the meaning of "inner admonitions," which should not be confused with the inner power of grace, see below, "Taught by God."

103. *De Sp. et Litt.* 60. Again the Latin for the passage under discussion here: *His ergo modis quando Deus agit cum anima rationali, ut ei credat (neque enim credere potest quolibet libero arbitrio, si nulla sit suasio vel vocatio cui credat) profecto et ipsum velle credere Deus operatur in homine, et 'in omnibus misericordia ejus praevenit nos'* [Psalm 59:10].

104. Ibid. Once again, the Latin: *consentire autem vocationi Dei, vel ab ea dissentire . . . propriae voluntatis est. . . . 'Quid enim habes quod non accepisti?* [1 Cor. 4:7].*' . . . Accipere quippe et habere anima non potest dona . . . nisi consentiendo; ac per hoc quid habeat et quid accipiat, Dei est. Accipere autem et habere utique accipientis et habentis est.*

105. Ibid. *Jam si ad illam profunditatem scrutandam quisquam nos coarctet, cur illi ita suadeatur ut persuadeatur, illi autem non ita; duo sola occurrunt interim quae respondere mihi placeat: 'O altitudo divitiarum! et 'Numquid iniquitas apud Deum?'* The crucial difference between *suadere* (to try to persuade) and *persuadere* (to succeed in

persuading) cannot be rendered elegantly in English. For clarity's sake I will use two different verbs and speak of "urging" and "actually persuading." But note that earlier I have rendered the noun *suasio* as "persuasion."

106. This was the decisive point about the causality of grace in *To Simplicianus;* see chapter 2, "The Call to Faith."

107. See chapter 2, "Jacob and Esau."

108. O'Connell argues that the text we have of *De Pecc. Mer.* is a revised version of the treatise that should be dated 417 or 418 (*The Origin of the Soul*, pp. 198–200). He particularly identifies *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:28–31, which is part of the passage under consideration here, as belonging to the later strata of the treatise's composition (pp. 192–193). That would push Augustine's public clarity about the question of differentiation back to the beginning of the middle phase of his anti-Pelagian writings, just as he was working out his response to Pelagius's third evasion. There is much to be said for this dating—in particular, that it eliminates the odd picture of Augustine evading the question of differentiation in *De Sp. et Litt.* after taking a clear stand on it in *De Pecc. Mer.* just a few months earlier. However, in my judgment, Augustine's failure to make the will to believe dependent on grace at *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:31 tips the balance in favor of the traditional dating, at least for this particular passage. The upshot is that from the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine was clear about the question of differentiation so long as the initial consent to faith was not at issue.

109. *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:28. Cf. ibid. 1:62 and the extended argument in Ep. 98:7–10. Underlying the arguments in all these texts is the baptismal practice of sponsors giving the ritual answer "yes" when asked if the infant they present for baptism is a believer. Augustine appeals to this practice explicitly in Sermon 294:12.

110. *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:29–31.

111. Ibid. 1:29. See above, "The Grace of Participation" as well as chapter 4, "Biblical Election."

112. See the discussion of *De Sp. et Litt.* 60 in "Augustine's Evasiveness," above.

113. *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:29.

114. Ibid. 1:31. For how the Origenist controversy, centered in the East, intersected Augustine's career, see O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul*, chapter 2.

115. *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:31. O'Connell recognizes that this remark poses a difficulty for his dating of the treatise and proposes that Augustine is speaking here for the view of his opponents (*The Origin of the Soul*, p. 192). I find O'Connell's interpretation plausible but less convincing than the more straightforward interpretation that Augustine is presenting his own position with this interjected remark.

116. *De Nat. et Grat.* 35.

117. Ep. 149:20–21.

118. Ibid. 149:22.

119. Ep. 186:4.

120. Ibid. Both questions are in 1 Cor. 4:7.

121. Ep. 186:10.

122. Ibid. 7, quoting Phil. 2:13.

123. Ibid. 38.

124. *De Perf. Just. Hom.* 43.

125. Ep. 186:11–12.

126. Ibid. 13–15.

127. Ibid. 3, quoting Phil. 2:13.

128. The especially insistent use of the "mass of damnation" argument (Ep. 186:4, 12, 16, 18–19 and 194:4–5, 14, 22–23, 38–39) is a key point binding these two letters together as a distinctive moment in the development of Augustine's doctrine of prevenient grace. Augustine himself indicates that these two letters belong together as a milestone in his anti-Pelagian writing, *De Dono Pers.* 55. Yet precisely their extensive similarity allows us to see the piece of the puzzle that is missing in Ep. 186.

129. Ep. 194:9.

130. Ibid. 10

131. Ibid., quoting from Romans 10:14–17.

132. Ibid., quoting 1 Cor. 3:7 and Rom. 12:3.

133. Ep. 194:10.

134. Ibid. 12.

135. Ibid.

136. *De Div. QQs 83*, 68.5, *Ad Simp.* 1:2.12, *De Sp. et Litt.* 60.

137. For the use of this term in *Ad Simp.*, see chapter 2, "Assent or Delight?" and for its use in *De Sp. et Litt.*, see above, "Augustine's Evasiveness." For its use in Ciceronian epistemology, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 2, "The Grasping Appearance."

138. In the Vulgate, for example, *visum* is used to describe the voice heard by Ananias in Acts 9:10 and the angel appearing to Cornelius in Acts 10:3. However, the same Greek term, *horama*, is rendered *visio* when describing what Peter saw during his trance (Acts 10:17 and 10:19) and what happened to Paul on the Damascus Road (Acts 26:19).

139. *Ad Simp.* 1:2.22.

140. Ibid. 1:2.2.

141. *De Gen. ad Litt.* 12:15–30. For the superiority of intellectual to spiritual vision, see 12:50–54.

142. E.g., *De Mag.* 39 and *De Duab. Anim.* 19. For the Platonist point behind this equivalence, see chapter 1, "Conversion and Purification."

143. *De Gen. ad Litt.* 12:15. This twofold classification of *visa* contrasts with *visio*, a term that covers all three kinds of vision.

144. This is not to say the Platonist epistemology of inner light was simply missing in the anti-Pelagian works prior to *De Grat. Christi.* Quite the contrary: see *De Pecc. Mer.* 2:5, *De Nat et Grat.* 29 and 56, but above all *De Pecc. Mer* 1:37–38, with its reference to learning from the inner "light of Truth, which is God." But *De Grat. Christi* is the first anti-Pelagian treatise in which a doctrine of inner *teaching* is central, and used to explain precisely the *prevenience* of grace.

145. On the Platonist concept of inner teacher developed in this treatise, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 4, "Christ the Inner Teacher."

146. *De Grat. Christi* 1:8.

147. Ibid. 1:11.

148. See above, "Augustine's Evasiveness," as well as Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "When Promising Is Giving."

149. *De Grat. Christi* 1:11. As in the quotations from *De Sp. et Litt.* 60 above ("Augustine's Evasiveness"), "urge" and "persuade" here render the untranslatable pairing of the verbs *suadere* and *persuadere*.

150. *De Grat. Christi* 1:11, quoting from Matt 11:28.

151. John 6:44 and 65, translated from Augustine's Latin in *De Grat. Christi* 1:11. Two points about the wording of John 6:44, a text we will be meeting frequently hereafter, need to be noted. First, Augustine's translation sometimes has "can come" (*potest venire*) rather than "come" (*venit*). Since this is a distinction that makes a logical difference, as Augustine realizes, my translation will always reflect the exact wording of Augustine's quotation in whatever passage of Augustine's writings is under discussion. Second, Augustine's translations of this text usually have *traxerit*, a subjunctive form of the verb *trahere*, which can mean both "draw" and "drag," an ambiguity that often enters into his discussion of the text (see chapter 4, "Coercion on the Damascus Road," and Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Spiritual Eating"). But sometimes the verb he uses is *attraxerit*, a subjunctive form of the verb *attrahere*, literally meaning to draw or drag in (though it is also the verb from which we get our "attract"). My translations reflect this difference also, though it is one that seems to have made no difference to Augustine. Cf. the wording of John 6:44 as quoted from Ep. 194:12 above, "The Missing Piece of the Puzzle" (end).

152. *De Perf. Just. Hom.* 41 and Ep. 186:38. For another earlier use of John 6:44, see *In Joh. Evang.* 26:2–7, discussed in Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Spiritual Eating."

153. *De Grat. Christi* 1:15: *non solum potest venire, sed venit*. In this passage, the inner teacher is identified as God the Father, not Christ as in *De Mag.* 38, or the Holy Spirit as a Calvinist might prefer to say (e.g., Calvin, *Inst.* 3:1.1). These three identifications do not exclude one another, however, for inner teaching is always the work of one and the same God, as Augustine emphasizes elsewhere, citing the rule that the works of the three persons of the Trinity are indivisible (Ep. 194:12 and *De Praedest. Sanct.* 13). So Calvin will freely quote from Augustine's passages on the Father drawing us (*De Grat. Christi* 1:15 as well as *De Praedest. Sanct.* 13–14) and combine them with a reference to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his doctrine of the "effectual call," *Inst.* 3:24.1.

154. *De Grat. Christi* 1:14, where Augustine quotes 1 Thess. 4:9 ("for you yourselves have been *taught by God* to love one another") as well as John 6:44 ("it is written in the Prophets: 'they are teachable by God' [*docibiles Dei*]").

155. *De Grat. Christi* 1:14, alluding to 1 Cor. 3:7, which this time is explicitly linked with the inner/outer contrast.

156. *De Grat. Christi* 1:14.

157. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 13.

CHAPTER 4

1. Jesus Christ is no exception to the rule that grace is not given in response to antecedent merit, as Augustine points out. No man could possibly merit being God incarnate (contrary to the early "adoptionist" heresy, which taught that Jesus was a man chosen and adopted as Son of God because of his justice and holiness). The man himself did not exist prior to being united, gratuitously, with the eternal Word. So Augustine can present the man Jesus as the prime example of predestined grace in *De Praedest. Sanct.* 30 and *De Dono Pers.* 67 (see also *De Corr. et Grat.* 30 and Sermon 174:2).

2. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 7–10.

3. That every Christian is both justified and a sinner at the same time (*simul justus et peccator*) is one of Luther's distinctive teachings (the *locus classicus* is his 1535 *Lectures on Galatians* on Gal.3:6, LW 26:232); that this is equivalent to saying that every Christian is a believer and an unbeliever at the same time follows from Luther's doctrine that we are justified by faith alone (so that "justified" covers the same ground as "believer") together with his conviction that all sin is rooted in unbelief (so that "sinner" covers the same ground as "unbeliever"). See, for example, Luther's Preface to Romans, LW 35:369: "as . . . faith alone makes a person righteous . . . so unbelief alone commits sin."

4. For a powerful dramatization of this battle between faith and unbelief, which Luther describes as contrast between times of Law and times of Grace, see the 1535 *Lectures on Galatians* on Gal. 3:23, LW 26:340–351.

5. For Luther's view of prevenience, see esp. his *Sermons* 1:25–27 (Sermon for first Sunday of Advent, §§19–25), one of the most beautiful things Luther ever wrote, commenting on the prophetic description of Christ's advent in Jerusalem, "Behold! Thy king cometh unto thee" (Matt. 21:5): "There is no other beginning than that your king comes to you and begins to work in you. . . . This is what is meant by 'Thy king cometh.' You do not seek him, but he seeks you. You do not find him, he finds you. For the preachers come from him, not from you; their sermons come from him, not from you; your faith comes from him, not from you; everything that faith works in you comes from him, not from you. . . . Therefore you should not ask, where to begin to be godly; there is no beginning except where the king enters and is proclaimed."

6. For the motives of this Protestant view, see Cary, "Why Luther Is Not Quite Protestant," pp. 474–480.

7. See chapter 2, "Reading Paul's Admonition."

8. See chapter 2, "The Call to Faith."

9. *De Dono Pers.* 53. Italicized words all echo Augustine's descriptions of Paul.

10. *Conf.* 8:17.

11. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 4; the quotation, "*Tu convertens, vivificabis nos*" is a rendering of Psalm 85:6.

12. *Conf.* 3:8.

13. Ibid 1:17.

14. Ibid.

15. Some scholars read the comparison in the opposite direction, arguing that the narrative in *Conf.* 8 was originally constructed in imitation of the Damascus Road narrative (Ferrari, "Saint Augustine on the Road to Damascus," and Fredricksen, "Augustine and Paul"). While I tend to think Augustine's narrative is of greater historical accuracy than they do, my crucial disagreement with these scholars is that I do not think *Conf.* 8 contains a conversion narrative at all, because the very idea that a single episode in a person's life could be called a conversion has no place in Western thought until Augustine's anti-Pelagian readings of the Damascus Road episode quite late in his career.

16. See chapter 1, "Conversion and Purification."

17. A sampling of texts not quoted here: *De Cat. Rud.* 23.43, *De Sp. et Litt.* 12, Sermon 278:1 (without explicit discussion of the Damascus Road episode); and *C. Faust. Man.* 22:70, 22:76, *De Cons. Evang.* 1:16, Sermons 175:6–9, 176:3–4, 279:1–2, 297:10 (with discussion of the Damascus Road episode).

18. See especially texts where Augustine merely refers to the event without narrating it, e.g., *C. Ep. Fund.* 6, *C. Faust. Man.* 16:11 and 28:4. When he needs a one-word label for the event, it is clearly *vocatio*, not *conversio* (a noun that is only used once for this purpose, *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 1:37).

19. Acts 9:1–18, 22:4–21, 26:9–20.

20. E.g., Sermon 278:1, *De Gest. Pel.* 36, and *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 12.

21. The initial use is *De Gest. Pel.* 36, without reference to the Damascus Road episode, then (in chronological order) *C. Duas. Ep. Pel.* 1:37, *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 12, *De Praedest. Sanct.* 4, *C. Jul. Op. Imp.* 1:93. Note the earlier use (also without reference to the Damascus Road episode) at *De Sp. et Litt.* 12, where Paul is taken as a particularly obvious example of grace, though the issue of prevenience had at that point not yet been raised.

22. Sermons 175:6–9, 176:3–4.

23. *De Gest. Pel.* 32. See chapter 3, "Uncovering Pelagian Evasions."

24. *De Gest. Pel.* 35, discussing 2 Tim. 4:7–8.

25. *De Gest. Pel.* 36, discussing 1 Cor. 15:9–10.

26. *Ad Simp.* 1:2.22.

27. See chapter 2, "Assent or Delight?"

28. *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 1:36.

29. Ibid. 1:37, quoting from Acts 9:1.

30. *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 1:37.

31. Ibid.

32. Ep. 185:22. See Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, p. 152, who notes that this treatment of the Damascus Road episode comes after *De Gest. Pel.* (which, as we have seen, stresses Paul's antecedent unworthiness but does not mention the Damascus Road) and before *C. Duas Pel.* (which uses the Damascus Road story to show that God can inwardly change the will of the unwilling). Burns points out that what intervenes between the anti-Donatist use of the Damascus

Road episode to illustrate coercion and its anti-Pelagian use to illustrate grace is the concept of an inwardly operating prevenient grace developed in *De Grat. Christi* and Ep. 194.

33. Acts 9:17–19.

34. Ep. 93:5 (written in 408). There is a precursor to this passage in Sermon 279:4, confidently dated to 401, where Augustine points out that Christ was not gentle with Paul on the Damascus Road.

35. Ep. 93:5.

36. Cf. Sermon 131:2 and esp. *In Joh. Evang.* 26:2–7, discussed in Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 8, "Spiritual Eating."

37. See chapter 1, "Beauty and Love."

38. *C. Jul. Op. Imp.* 1:93, quoting Acts 9:1.

39. See *Conf.* 2:4 for perhaps the most vivid elaboration of this recurrent theme.

40. See chapter 3, "Taught by God."

41. This telescoping or collapse of the sequence of faith and love in *De Grat. Christi* has been noted by TeSelle (p. 334) as well as Burns, who points out that in this text "[t]he interiority and efficacy peculiar to the grace of charity are transferred to the operation of conversion [i.e., to faith]" in *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, p. 144.

42. *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 2:21, quoting Ps. 21:3.

43. *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 2:17.

44. On the notion of moving faith inward, see chapter 1, "The Widening Scope of Inner Help," as well as chapter 2, "No External Cause of Grace."

45. Luther rejects the scholastic notion that faith in Christ needs to be informed by love in favor of a definition of faith as that which embraces Christ as beloved. Thus faith *alone* already loves and possesses Christ, as a bride loves and possesses her bridegroom, and therefore needs no further gift of love. See thesis 22 on faith in *Theses on Faith and Law*, LW 34:110, as well as the 1535 *Lectures on Galatians* on Gal. 2:16 (LW 26:137).

46. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 31.

47. *Conf.* 8:20.

48. *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 1:38, quoting Ezek. 36:26–27.

49. *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 1:38. Augustine quotes from the apocryphal additions to the book of Esther, where Esther prays for God to "turn the heart" (*converte cor*) of the king (Esther 14:13), and the narrative later tells us that "God turned [*convertit*] and transformed [*transtulit*] his indignation into mildness" (Esther 15:11, Vg.). Augustine's Latin version differs widely from the Vulgate.

50. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 41, quoting 2 Sam 16:11.

51. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 41.

52. Ibid. 42, quoting 2 Chron. 21:16.

53. Tales of this sort involve Absalom (*De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 41, quoting 2 Sam. 17:14), Rehoboam (*De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 42, quoting 1 Kings 12:15), and Amaziah (*De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 42, quoting 2 Chron. 25:20—"a Deo erat").

54. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 42, quoting Proverbs 21:1.

55. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 42.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid. 45, alluding to passages like Exodus 5:21 and 8:32, respectively.

58. See esp. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 43.

59. See e.g., *De Pecc. Mer.* 2:36 and *De Nat. et Grat.* 24.

60. *Ench.* 27.

61. *De Continentia* 15.

62. Ep. 186:23–26.

63. *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* 41.

64. See Acts 9:15, 22:14–15, and 26:16–18.

65. Perhaps the most illuminating example of this biblical theme is the treatment of the king of Assyria in Isa. 10:5–25.

66. *De Dono Pers.* 1 states the thesis, but the more illuminating discussion of why this thesis emerges at this stage of Augustine's thinking about grace is *De Corr. et Grat.* 10–25.

67. *De Dono Pers.* 35.

68. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 34.

69. God's "foreknowledge" is not literally a knowledge of what is to come in the future but an eternal knowledge that takes in past, present, and future with one glance, as it were; see *Conf.* 11:13–16 and *Civ. Dei* 11:21.

70. Calvin, *Inst.* 3:2.12 and 3:24.6–7. For the classic Calvinist statement of this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, see the fifth chapter of the Canons of Dordt, Schaff 3:592–594.

71. On Calvin's radical innovation in the Augustinian tradition, see Cary, "Why Luther Is Not Quite Protestant," pp. 473–477.

72. Ep. 140:17; cf. similarly *De Pecc. Mer.* 2:10 and *Civ. Dei* 19:4, in both of which Augustine is quite explicit that those who believe in Christ are "not yet saved" (*nondum salvos*).

73. On the inevitable imperfection of the Christian life, see *De Sp. et Litt.* 62–66, as well as the treatise *De Perf. Just. Hom.*

74. *De Dono Pers.* 61.

75. Ibid. 61.

76. Ibid. 62.

77. *De Corr. et Grat.* 40.

78. For the reasons why, see Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 7, "Conversion and Perseverance."

79. *De Corr. et Grat.* 7.

80. Ibid. 9.

81. *De Grat. Christi* 1:14, alluding to 1 Cor. 3:7. See chapter 3, "Taught by God."

82. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 15, quoting John 6:44.

83. *De Praedest. Sanct.* 13.

84. *De Mag.* 36. See Cary, *Outward Signs*, chapter 4, "Admonitions to Look Inside."

85. See chapter 2, "Reading Paul's Admonition."

86. This becomes explicit in most forms of what the Calvinist tradition called "the practical syllogism." See especially the tradition of "experimental divinity" (seventeenth-century English for "experiential theology") studied by R. T. Kendall.

87. The canons of the council of Trent deny that anyone can be certain of being justified or in a state of grace (6:9), of being predestined (6:12), or of persevering (6:13). There is no clear distinction between the latter two kinds of certainty, but the context makes a clear distinction between these and the first. Trent does not share the Protestant tendency to run together justification and salvation, as if they were the same thing. For according to Catholic theology, it is clear that one may be justified (e.g., by receiving baptism as an infant) but not saved in the end.

88. See especially the 1535 *Lectures on Galatians* on Gal. 4:6 (LW 25:377–380).

89. The advice that we should want to know nothing about the "hidden God" of predestination is prominent in *On the Bondage of the Will* (e.g., LW 33:139 and 147). One recorded example of his table talk has him saying, with a bit of bravado, "What do I care if I am predestined or not?" *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, p. 122 (=Table Talk 2631b).

90. See especially *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, p. 116 (Letter to Barbara Lisskirchen, 4/30/1531) and pp. 132–133 (=Table Talk 5658a). For the reasons why Luther vacillates in this way, see Cary, "Why Luther Is Not Quite Protestant," pp. 481–485.

91. This refusal to rely on faith is particularly prominent in Luther's defense of infant baptism, e.g.: "There is quite a difference between *having* faith, on the one hand, and *depending on* one's faith, on the other. Whoever allows himself to be baptized on the strength of his faith . . . denies Christ. For he trusts in and builds on something of his own . . . and not on God's Word alone," *Concerning Rebaptism*, LW 40:252.

92. See chapter 2, "Early Inconsistency."

93. For these themes, see Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, §§32–3.

94. Gen. 12:2–3.

95. Rom. 9:11, quoting Mal. 1:2–3.

96. Obadiah 10–12.

97. A nonsupercessionist view seems to have been still conceivable for Origen, as Gorday suggests, pp. 202–213, 227–236.

98. Spiritually, Jacob is now the Christian people, according to Augustine in *Adv. Jud.* 9.

99. Gen. 33:11. As usual, the King James translates the key vocabulary more closely than recent translations. The "blessing" Jacob offers Esau in this verse is the same word as that which designates what he stole from Esau in chapter 27. I am grateful to my colleague Prof. Raymond Van Leeuwen for pointing this out to me.

100. The text to consult here is Luther's foul treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies*, LW 47. The hatefulness of this treatise has to be read to be believed. The recommendations on pp. 268–274 stop short of actual violence, but since they include confiscation and destruction of property, they could not be enforced without threat of violence. In a second set of recommendations, all public Jewish worship becomes a

capital crime (p. 286). There is nothing like this in Augustine, nor indeed in any other major Christian theologian known to me.

101. Rom. 11:33.

102. *De Pecc. Mer.* 1:29, *C. Duas Ep. Pel.* 2:15. The Latin word *horror* in these texts, echoed in Calvin's admission that the decree of predestination is indeed *horribile* (*Inst.* 3:23.7), has the original sense of "causing to shudder."

103. Throughout this discussion of the relation of Jew and Gentile I am deeply indebted, in the reading of Romans 9–11 among many other things, to Kendall Soulen's critique of supercessionism and his way of spelling out the proposal that "[t]he Lord's blessing is available only through the blessing of an other" (p. 117) in *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*.

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