

Survey of Theology 6.

**Human Nature, Sin, and
Grace**

Outline

The Place of Humanity in Creation

The Pelagian Heresy

Augustine's Doctrines of Sin and Grace

Thomas Aquinas Doctrine of Grace

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Predestination

The Fall = Original Sin

The Place of Humanity in Creation

“Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness. . .

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

- Genesis 1:26-27 (NRSV)

“The glory of God is man”

- Talmud (Derech Eretz Zutta 10,5)

The Place of Humanity in Creation

Implications of humankind being made in the image of God (Latin: *imago Dei*):

- establishes the fundamental dignity and righteousness of human nature
- humanity has the capacity to relate to and partake in the life of God

“To believe that man is made in God’s image is to believe that man is created for communion and union with God, and that if he rejects this communion, he ceases to be properly man.”

- Philip Sherrard

The Place of Humanity in Creation

“*Image of God*” versus “*Likeness of God*:”
a distinction by some early Church Fathers, and
by the Orthodox Church today:

- “**Image of God:**”
 - the human *potentiality* for life in God
 - what we possess at birth
- “**Likeness of God:**”
 - the *realization* of our human potentiality
for life in God, fully achieved only in the
world to come

Redemption involves bringing the “*image of God*” in us to fulfillment – into the “*likeness of God*”

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The Pelagian Heresy

Pelagius

- British monk who came to Rome to teach early in the fifth century
- In 409 A.D. after German General Alaric's sack of Rome, he moved to Carthage in North Africa, where his views on human nature, sin, and grace brought him into conflict with Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa

The Pelagian Heresy

Pelagius:

- Any imperfection in man would reflect poorly on God
- humanity therefore had an unflawed *freedom of will* that was not compromised by any “diseased” tendency to sin
- God knows exactly what we are capable of and requires of us no more or less
 - we are *fully capable* of obeying all commands from God
 - “. . . since perfection is possible for humanity, it is obligatory.”

The Pelagian Heresy

Pelagius:

- Not obeying God's commands is **sin**, a willful act for which there is no excuse
- **Grace** is:
 1. God's gift of **human reason**, which allows us to recognize what is sin, and **human will**, which allows us to choose not to sin.
 - human reason and will are gifts of God and therefore *good* – not compromised or corrupted in any way
 2. God's external enlightenment to guide our actions. Examples:
 - The Ten Commandments
 - the moral example of Jesus

The Pelagian Heresy

Pelagius:

- humanity is **justified** by its **merits**. Our good works are the product of our autonomous, independent free wills choosing to do what God has commanded us

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Augustine's Doctrines of Sin and Grace

Human Free Will

- God has given human beings a **free will**
- our **free will** has been *weakened* but *not destroyed* by sin
 - our weakened free will is like a pair of scales, one good, one evil, biased on evil side
- God's **grace** is necessary to restore and heal our weakened free will

Augustine's Doctrines of Sin and Grace

Sin

Individual sin is:

- a perversity of the will, turning away from God, from that which will bring us happiness
- a form of bondage, keeping us from that which will bring us happiness

Augustine's Doctrines of Sin and Grace

Sin

As a consequence of “**the Fall**,” every human being is born with a *disposition to sin* which we cannot by ourselves overcome (“**original sin**”)

Analogies for “**original sin**:”

1. a hereditary *disease*
 - the Grace of God *heals* us
2. a *power* which holds us captive
 - the Grace of God *liberates* us
3. a *guilt* passed from generation to generation
 - the Grace of God *brings forgiveness and pardon*

Augustine's Doctrines of Sin and Grace

Grace

- grace *heals* and *liberates* us, and *brings us forgiveness*
- three categories of grace:
 - 1. Preventive Grace**
 - God active in human lives before conversion, preparing the human will for conversion
 - 2. Operative Grace**
 - God “operating” on the sinner without any human cooperation. e.g.: Preventive Grace
 - 3. Cooperative Grace**
 - God working in “cooperation” with a liberated/healed/forgiven human will

Augustine's Doctrines of Sin and Grace

The Basis for Salvation

- we are “justified” and “sanctified” through the grace of God:
 - the **Prevenient Graces** of God operate in us and prepares us for conversion
 - the **Cooperative Graces** of God work with (“cooperate” with) our fallen but liberated/healed/forgiven human will and allow us to perform good works

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Thomas Aquinas' Doctrine of Grace

- *Augustine*: grace is God's gracious attention to humanity
 - "God the healer" working in us
- *Thomas Aquinas*: grace can also be like a substance, a divine infusion working in us
 - "God's medicine" working in us

Thomas Aquinas' Doctrine of Grace

- Because of the fall, there is a *great gulf* between God and humanity
- Human nature is so weakened, so corrupted that *God cannot dwell there*
- God gives us a special, permanent grace, a supernatural substance or infusion, that *changes our nature* permanently so that we become acceptable to God, so that God can dwell within us
- Called this special grace **Habitual Grace** (habitual = permanent)

Thomas Aquinas' Doctrine of Grace

Three facets of **Habitual Grace**:

- arises out of God's *love*
- is a *gift*
- causes a *response* in us (fundamentally changes us)
 - termed a **Created Grace** because the grace includes the aspect of our created *response*

The presence of **Habitual Grace** in us is the *basis for our salvation*, for it changes our nature, making it acceptable for God to dwell within us (slogan: *gratia gratis faciens*: “grace which makes pleasing”)

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The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Luther:

- What makes us righteous / acceptable to God?
- Shared Augustine's view of human nature and will as weakened, biased towards sin

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Augustine:

- **prevenient grace** worked in us, preparing us for conversion, *healing/liberating/forgiving* our fallen nature, making us acceptable (i.e. righteous) to God
- the righteousness is *imparted* to us, becomes a part of us

Luther:

- God *imputes* righteous to the sinner
- the righteousness remains *outside* the sinner: “alien righteous of Christ”
- God “reckons” the Sinner righteous even though the Sinner is *internally* unchanged: “**forensic justification**” (justification is recorded in the heavenly court)

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Luther:

- the righteousness of Christ clothes us, *externally* covering / shielding our *inner* sinfulness in the sight of God
- to be “declared righteous,” by God, all that is required is the *faith* of the Sinner (and faith itself is a *gift* from God)

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Calvin:

Faith unites the believer to Christ in a “mystical union.” This union provides a two effects (a “double grace”)

- 1. believer *justified*, i.e. *declared righteous* before God
- 2. believer can begin process of being *made Christlike* (“regeneration”)

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

*Some terminology (Protestant: Luther,
Melancthon, Calvin):*

Justification

- individual “*declared* just/righteous”
- “Justification is by faith alone:” God active, human being passive

Sanctification

- individual “*made* just/righteous”
- Once justified, believer can grow in holiness, be made Christlike through “**regeneration**”
- both human being and God active

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Some terminology (Roman Catholic):

Roman Catholic “**Justification**” includes the both Protestant **Justification** and **Sanctification**. Includes sense of both the *beginning* and the *continuation/growth* of Christian Life. Considered two aspects of the same thing:

- **Objective Justification** = equivalent to Protestant “Justification” = “*declared* just/righteous”
- **Subjective Justification** = equivalent to Protestant “Sanctification” = “*made* just/righteous”

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Catholic View:

- *Augustine would say: we are justified (objectively and subjectively, a.k.a. justified and sanctified) by God's grace (**prevenient** and later **cooperative**) *healing / liberating / forgiving* our sinful natures*
- *Thomas Aquinas would say: we are justified (objectively and subjectively, a.k.a. (justified and sanctified) by the God's **habitual grace** within us, *permanently (habitually)* changing our sinful natures, making us acceptable for God's indwelling*

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Catholic View:

Council of Trent: “we are said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification. . . .”

“This is perhaps a classic case of theological misunderstanding, resting upon the disputed meaning of a major theological term”

- McGrath

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Augustine:

- Grace is a *gift*. God can choose to give or withhold this gift.
 - Therefore God's grace is *particular*, not *universal*. It is granted only to some individuals.
- Human nature is corrupted from the Fall, and God's grace is required for it to be healed/liberated/forgiven – i.e. God's grace is required for salvation
- Hence only some will be saved

Predestination

Augustine:

Predestination: God chooses who will be saved (the “elect”) by deciding who will be given God’s grace

- this is not unjust, for we are all sinners and deserve only condemnation
- God’s choice is inscrutable

At least once Augustine suggests there is “double” predestination” – God elects some to salvation – *and* elects the rest to damnation.

Predestination

Calvin and Theodore Beza, Reformed
Orthodoxy: **TULIP** (Synod of Dort
1618-19)

- Human nature **T**otally depraved
- Election is **U**nconditional (not based on merit, achievement, etc)
- Atonement is **L**imited. Christ died for the elect
- For those who receive God's grace, it is **I**rresistible. The elect are infallibly redeemed
- The saints **P**ersevere: those predestined cannot defect from their calling

Predestination

The Angst of Calvinist Spirituality: “Am I really among the elect?”

- Good works are not the grounds of salvation, but, good works are “the testimonies of God dwelling and ruling within us” (Calvin)
 - a good tree bears good fruit
- Answer: a believer who performs good works is among the elect

Predestination

Arminianism

Jakob Arminius (1560-1609) Reformed Minister who opposed the Reformed doctrine of limited atonement (= “particular redemption”)

- Christ died for all, not just the elect
- Proposed God predestined not individuals believers, but a *specific group* of people for salvation – those who believed in Jesus Christ
- Individuals who believe in Jesus Christ become part of that predestined group

Predestination

An Anglican View on Predestination

The classic Reformed Orthodoxy view of predestination is not "good news" (= gospel).

"God wills to save all people, to bring them to their fulfillment in relation to God and to their fellows (1 Tim. 2:4). God does not will to save only certain persons and to reject others. The doctrine of double predestination turns God into a monster who does not deserve our worship and obedience. It also undercuts human freedom and responsibility and makes the mission of the church pointless."

- Owen Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, In Introduction to Theology. Third Edition, page 216

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The Fall = Original Sin

Human nature is weakened, corrupted,
biased towards evil.

- A good God who creates only that which is good could not have intended this. We are made in the image of God
- What happened?

The Fall = Original Sin

Classic Explanation:

- Adam and Eve, our first parents, sinned, losing the holiness God created them with.
 - Sin caused God's wrath and the punishment of death
- The consequences of this "original" sin is transmitted to all human beings as:
 - a corrupted human nature. It is impossible for us not to sin
 - an inherited guilt for Adam's sin
 - even infants are born with the guilt for Adam's sin and thus under condemnation

The Fall = Original Sin

Problems with classic view:

Story of Adam and Eve not historical fact,
but must be considered a myth telling us
something of the nature of human
existence

The Fall = Original Sin

Haight:

“Human existence is fallen, not from a past state, but from its essential potentiality and what it is designed by God to be”

- “Paradise is not a state at the beginning of the human race, but a utopic symbol of the goal of human existence”

Human beings do not simply participate in individual sin, they discover it as an objective power that is already present prior to the exercise of their human freedom

The origin of sin is not God. Sin seems to emerge out of the tensions within human freedom.

The Fall = Original Sin

The ultimate explanation for this must be considered a mystery that is related to the mystery of theodicy (the problem of why there is evil and suffering in the world)

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