

# **Ancient Church History**

## **After The Council of Constantinople (381), Aurelius Augustine of Hippo and the Rise of Pelagianism**

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**Augustine's Time Period (The Church since the Second Ecumenical Council-381)**

### **The growth and primacy of the Papacy in Rome**

The Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals and more remote Germanic tribes, such as the Burgundians and the Lombards had embraced the Arian faith and were invading the Roman empire (ca. 376). After the death of Theodosius I in 395 (the Emperor who called the Council of Constantinople), the empire is split between his two sons and they are unable to resist the attacks of these tribes. Alaric and the Visigoths plundered to the walls of Constantinople and moved all the way to Greece. In 410, Alaric captures Rome.

### **Jerome (d. 420)**

Jerome was one of the ablest scholars of the ancient Western Church. Born in 340 in Dalmatia, he studied in Rome. He was overtaken with illness on a visit to Antioch where he believed Christ Himself appeared to him and reproached him for his devotion to the classics. He now turned solely to the study of the Scriptures, studying Hebrew, and living as a hermit from 373 to 379, not far from Antioch. He was ordained a presbyter in Antioch later in 379 and studied under Gregory of Nazianzus in Constantinople. In 382 he was in Rome with Pope Damasus (d.384), where he preached continually on the merits of the monastic life.

Jerome soon had a large following, but met with much trouble from the clergy because monasticism was not as yet popular in the West. He established monasteries and nunneries in Egypt and Bethlehem. He died in Bethlehem in 420. He was a translator of the Scriptures. He completed a New Testament translation under the supervision of Pope Damasus in 388. Jerome translated the Old Testament while in Bethlehem with the aid of Jewish friends. The Vulgate was the result of his work and is still in use in the Roman Church as the official translation. He wrote in support of Augustine against the teachings of Pelagius.

### **Ambrose (d. 397)**

Elected Bishop of Milan in 374. Strongly pro-Nicene (Anti-Arian in theology) and would make no compromise with the Arians. His moral courage caused him to direct Emperor Theodosius I to manifest public repentance after he in quick temper ravaged Thessalonica because he was angry at the governor in 390; Theodosius obeyed the admonition. Ambrose was a theological writer that has been called by the Roman Church as "Doctor," or an authoritative teacher. He contributed greatly to the development of Christian hymnology in the West. "I will not glory because I am righteous, but I will glory because I am redeemed. I will not glory because I am free from sin, but because my sins are forgiven."

### **Augustine of Hippo (354-430)**

Born in Thagaste, in Numidia (Algeria) on November 13, 354. Son of a heathen father and a godly mother named Monica. He pursued the study of rhetoric in Carthage, North Africa at 17. He took a concubine for 14 years and had a son named Adeodatus in 372. He tried studying the Scriptures at 19 but found them "unworthy compared with the writings of Cicero." He turned for spiritual and intellectual comfort to the dualistic system known as Manichaeism for 9 years. He became a teacher of rhetoric in Milan in 384, the Western capital of the empire at this time. Augustine became drawn and fascinated by the teachings of Ambrose. He longed to sit under his preaching and described Ambrose as the "perfection of pulpit eloquence." He became filled with

shame over his moral life and the fact that "ignorant men like monks could put away temptations which he, a man of learning, felt powerless to resist." Romans 13:13 was the verse of Scripture the Spirit of God used in his conversion in 386. In 387, he was baptized by Ambrose. He was ordained to the priesthood in 391 and became Bishop of Hippo in North Africa in 395. He died on August 28, 430, during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals.

### **Augustine's Doctrines of Grace- "*Command what thy will; and give what thy command.*"**

Salvation comes by God's grace, which is wholly undeserved, and is wholly free as a gift of a sovereign God. Adam's sin and subsequent fall affected all of Adam's posterity (Doctrine of Original Sin).

Augustine taught that grace comes to those to whom God chooses to send it (from Romans 9 and Ephesians 1-2). He predestinates whom He will "to punishment and salvation." Grace is irresistible and man cannot reject God's call. Grace after conversion frees the enslaved will to choose that which is pleasing to God, "not only in order that they may know, by the manifestation of that grace, what should be done, but moreover in order that, by its enabling, they may do with love what they know." Through us, God does good works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10), which He rewards as if they were men's own and to which He ascribes merit. The Sacraments are signs of spiritual realities, rather than the realities themselves. They are essential; but the truths to which they witness are, whenever received, the work of divine grace.

### **Who is Pelagius?**

Pelagius was a British monk of excellent reputation and much learning. He settled in Rome about 400. He was shocked at the low tone of morals in Rome and he labored earnestly to secure strict ethical standards. Pelagius won over a disciple named Celestius, a Roman lawyer. In 410, he went to North Africa to visit Augustine and did not find him. He journeyed to the East and Celestius stayed in Carthage and sought ordination as a presbyter by Bishop Aurelius. A letter was sent from Paulinus, a deacon of Milan to Aurelius charging Celestius with six errors that Pelagius had taught him (see Pelagius' Doctrines below). An advisory synod in Carthage rejected his ordination and he traveled to Ephesus where he obtained it. Three synods were held by 420 condemning the teachings of Pelagius that were spreading. Pelagius disappears and dies c. 420.

### **Pelagius' Doctrines of Sin and Grace**

Pelagius believed in the power of the human will. "*If I ought, I can*" summarizes his understanding of how God's grace comes to man by faith (in other words, if God commands us to do something, we must be able to perform as God has commanded- this rejects the biblical doctrine of Original Sin). Pelagius taught that "As often as I have to speak of the principles of virtue and a holy life, I am accustomed first of all to call attention to the capacity and character of human nature and to show what it is able to accomplish; then from this to arouse the feelings of the hearer, that he may strive after different kinds of virtue."

Pelagius denied Original Sin inherited from Adam (cf. Romans 5:12-21; Psalm 51), and affirmed that all men now have the power not to sin. Adam's sin merely set an ill example and many have been quick to follow.

### **Introduction to the Council of Ephesus (431)**

An edict of the Emperor Honorius in 419, required the bishops of the West to officially condemn the teachings of Pelagius and Celestius. Julian and 18 others in Italy refused. Several were driven into exile and sought refuge in the East. In Julian, Augustine found an able opponent, and Pelagius' chief systematizer. About 429 Julian and Celestius found some support from Nestorius in Constantinople, though Nestorius was not a Pelagian. This favor worked to Nestorius's

disadvantage in his own troubles, and together with the wish of the Pope led to the condemnation of Pelagianism by the **Third General Council of Ephesus in 431**.

Pelagianism, thus officially rejected in the West and the East, lived on in less extreme forms, and has always represented a tendency in the thinking of the church.

<b>Comparisons</b>	<b>Pelagius</b>	<b>Augustine</b>
Effect of Fall	Only Adam affected	All humanity affected
Original sin	No	Yes
Hereditary sin	No	Yes
Humans at birth	Born Neutral	Born with fallen nature
Man's will	Free	Enslaved to sin
Fact of universal sin	Due to bad examples	Due to man's innate sinfulness: <i>posse non peccare</i> - man is "not able to not sin."
Turning to God in salvation	Is possible independent of God's grace	Only possible through God's grace