

The Genesis of St. Augustine's Idea of Original Sin

Author(s): Ernesto Bonaiuti and Giorgio La Piana

Source: *The Harvard Theological Review*, Apr., 1917, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Apr., 1917), pp. 159-175

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Harvard Divinity School

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1507550>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



and Cambridge University Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Harvard Theological Review*

JSTOR

THE GENESIS OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S IDEA OF ORIGINAL SIN

ERNESTO BONAIUTI

ROME, ITALY

Translated by Giorgio La Piana, Harvard University

The thought of Augustine on the two ethical categories of sin and grace is of great importance in the history of Christian theology.¹ His system of grace and predestination prevailed for many centuries, although not without strong opposition, and underwent, through scholastic elaboration, substantial changes in order to save the freedom of the will; and finally it reappeared in the conception of the spiritual life shaped by Luther and the other teachers of the Reformation. It is on account of his doctrine about grace and predestination that Protestant theologians like to call Augustine "der Paulus nach Paulus und der Luther vor Luther."² Whatever may be the exactness of this genealogy, it shows at least the value and efficacy of the Augustinian conception of the natural and supernatural life on the development of the European spirit. In the Catholic tradition this thought of Augustine is at the very basis of the ethical, ecclesiological, and sacramental systems; in the Christian but non-Catholic movements this doctrine, interpreted in a rather paradoxical way, gave a starting-point to the Reformation.

¹ The success of the Augustinian doctrine was amazing. The author was still living when Prosper of Aquitania in his letter to Rufinus said: "Non solum Romana Africanaque ecclesia, sed per omnes mundi partes universi promissionis filii cum doctrina huius viri congruunt."

² Vide E. Troeltsch: *Augustin, die christliche Antike und das Mittelalter*. München, 1915, 1.

No wonder therefore that in the history of Christian dogma no other doctrine has been so largely and deeply explored and discussed as has the Augustinian doctrine of sin and of restoration. And yet it is my conviction that in this analysis there is some gap, if not some mistake. The point in which the work of the scholars on this subject is defective, is that of the relation of the Augustinian thought to the Christian writers who preceded him. Some unexpected coincidences, some passages of the *Retractationes* insufficiently explained and others completely misunderstood to this day, led me on a path which seems to be the safest in order to trace back the origin of the Augustinian thought of original sin, which, it seems to me, is the primitive nucleus of the whole Augustinian system of sin and restoration.

A. Harnack, misled, if I am not mistaken, by Förster's book on Saint Ambrose,³ wrote that while the Augustinian theories on sacraments, faith, and the Church show some connection with Ambrosiaster and with Optatus Milevitanus, yet his ideas about sin and grace were inspired by his baptizer, Ambrose⁴ himself. It is not my intention to discuss here the truth of the first assumption, which I believe is partially wrong; but I affirm that the second one is entirely without basis. I cannot see how Ambrose, the author of the allegoric biblical commentaries, can be the spiritual father of the *De Genesi ad Literam*, neither can I recognize any dependence of the characteristic Augustinian opinions in regard to original sin and its psychologic consequences, which are so impregnated with a crude materialism, upon the very loose assumptions of Ambrose about our responsible

³ Förster: Ambrosius, Bischof von Mailand. Eine Darstellung seines Lebens und Wirkens. Halle, 1884.

⁴ "Haben Ambrosiaster und Optatus die Lehren Augustins über die Sakramente, den Glauben, und die Kirche vorbereitet, so Ambrosius die über die Sünde und die Gnade." Dogmengeschichte, III³, 44 (Tübingen, 1897).

participation in the sin of Adam.⁵ I think that it is exactly in his theories of original sin that Augustine depends closely and in a decisive way upon Ambrosiaster, from whom he derived,

(1) The formula in which he embodies the notion of our responsibility in the sin of Adam.

(2) The interpretation of the most discussed Pauline passages, especially Rom. 5 12.

(3) The fundamental notion of man "servus culpae servus gratiae."

(4) The general method of positive and realistic Scriptural interpretation, which is peculiar to the *Tractatus in Paulum* of Ambrosiaster, and which is so different from the method that Augustine used when under the influence of the sermons and the *Enarrationes* of Ambrose.

It is the purpose of this article to supplement Souter's volume on Ambrosiaster,⁶ and to supply a new proof of the great value of Ambrosiaster in the development of Christian thought during that period which was so rich in great religious writers and so miserable for its tragic political events.

Those who are familiar with the books of Augustine have noticed the great change that his thought underwent between the years 396 and 397.⁷ In his book *De libero Arbitrio* (394-395) Augustine thinks of the

⁵ For instance, Ps. 495: "Iniquitas calcanei mei circumdabit me." Hoc est iniquitas Adae non mea. Sed ea non potest mihi esse terrori; in die enim iudicii, nostra in nobis non alienae iniquitatis flagitia puniuntur, unde reor iniquitatem calcanei magis lubricam delinquendi, quam rectum aliquem nostri esse delicti." Ambrose, Comm. in Paul. III (Edition by Ballerini, Milan, 1876).

⁶ A. Souter: A Study of Ambrosiaster; Texts and Studies, VII, 4. Cambridge, 1905. Souter has already published a good edition of the Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti of Ambrosiaster in the Corpus Scrip. Eccl. Lat. of Vienna. A new edition of the Pauline Comment is announced by Brewer.

I believe that Augustine did not know the Quaestiones at all. The passage of the Quaest. XIX is insufficient to prove such knowledge in Augustine. Quaest. XXIII, about the possibility of a material transmission of the soul through the act of generation, is in open contradiction to the thought of Augustine.

⁷ I follow here the chronology of Augustinian writings as given by Rottmanner. On this evolution of Augustinian thought, see Turmel: Histoire du dogme du péché originel. Macon, 1904, 73.

organism of Adam and Eve in Eden as of ethereal substances, which were transformed into bodies of flesh because of their disobedience. The consequences of their fault were death, ignorance, and the body itself—"mortales et ignari et carne subditi" (III, 54). Furthermore he does not assume that the traducianistic system is the best explanation of the origin of the human soul; on the contrary he insinuates, in a rather indefinite way, that original sin alone is not a sufficient cause for a man, otherwise innocent, to be condemned for ever (III, 66).

To this moment Augustine, still under the strong influence of Neoplatonic philosophy and of Ambrose's thought, conceives of the nature of Adam and Eve before the sin as of an impalpable and ethereal nature, and of our body as a consequence of the sin; in other words he thinks that sin brought an organic modification in the human being and not a helpless perversion of a fleshly organism already in existence. But afterwards Augustine does not wish to teach, as he did before, that men after the sin were "carne subditi," but that they became "concupiscentiae subditi." At first sight it seems that the first and older opinion was more pessimistic than the second; but if we consider carefully we shall find that this is not true. The radical transformation of the human nature from an ethereal to a bodily substance possibly might have left intact in the human compound the capacity of the spirit to work for its rehabilitation. On the contrary, introducing into an organism, already material and fleshly, the incessant trouble of corrupted sensuality, the sin, in the new attitude of the Augustinian thought, effaces at once the very possibility of free will, which became slave of the evil. The old Manichæan spirit of hatred against human generation and the conservation of the race was thus still underlying the thought of Augustine.⁸

⁸ Augustine himself in *De Dono Perseverantiae*, XII, 30, emphasizes the legitimacy of his spiritual evolution.

His change of view about original sin is already effected in his writings of 396–397, which inaugurated his episcopal career in Hippo, namely the *De Divinis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* and the collection *De LXXXIII Quaestionibus*. From that time mankind appeared to Augustine identified with Adam, in his sin and in his condemnation. Original sin is then described as an infection which propagates itself from father to son through the act of generation, which being an act of organic trouble caused by the sin, is a sin itself and determines the transmission *ipso facto* of the sin to the new creature. The stigma of original sin is impressed upon the body of the human being through the persistent stimulus of an unreasonable sensuality, and it is equally impressed upon his soul, because—for the logical exigencies of the system—it is considered as transmitted with the body through the material act of generation and therefore guilty itself of the guilt of the first father. Mankind is thus an agglomeration of condemned creatures which cannot acquire any merit before God, and whose hopes for forgiveness and atonement are only in the benevolent grace of the Father and the infallible decree of his predestination.

“Ex quo in paradiso natura nostra peccavit, non secundum spiritum, sed secundum carnem, mortali generatione formamur, et omnes una *massa luti* facti sumus, quod est *massa peccati*. Cum ergo meritum peccando amiserimus, nihil aliud, peccantibus, nisi aeterna damnatio debetur” (*De LXXXIII Quaestionibus*,⁹ 9, 68, 3). . . . Tunc facta est *una massa omnium*, veniens de traduce peccati et de forma mortalitatis. . . . Sunt igitur omnes homines *una quaedam massa peccati*, supplicium debens divinae summaeque justitiae, quod sive exigatur, sive donetur nulla est iniquitas. A quibus autem exigendum est et quibus donandum sit, superbe judicant debitores; quemadmodum conducti ad illam vineam iniuste indignati sunt, cum tantummodo aliis donare-

⁹ In *Retractationes* (edition by Knoell in *Corpus Scrip. Ecc. Lat.*, XXXVI, 1, 26) Augustine says that his *LXXXIII Quaestiones* were revised for publication after his elevation to the episcopate, between 396 and 397.

tur, quantum illis reddetur" (*De Divinis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, I, 16).¹⁰

In these words we find clearly outlined the two fundamental ideas of Augustine in his anti-Pelagian struggle about grace and predestination in their relation to free will: the first, the conception of mankind as of a people condemned; the second, the idea of the initial movement of grace as of a free gift of God. Which one of these two ideas came first to the mind of Augustine?

Towards the end of his life Augustine himself, writing his book *De Predestinatione* to instruct his friends Prosperus and Hilarius, both Gallic, attributed a peculiar efficacy for the development of his thought to the words of Paul (1 Cor. 4 7), "quid habes quod non accepisti," etc. But we think that we do no wrong to the consistency of the great bishop if we assume that this later remark of the *De Predestinatione*, like the other in the *Retractationes* II, 1,¹¹ was determined by the peculiar way in which the problems of forgiveness and spiritual vocation were shaped in his mind during the period of the harsh polemics caused by his treatises to the troublesome monks of Adrumetum, *De Gratia et de libero Arbitrio* and *De Corruptione et Gratia*.¹² In reality the logical development of Augustine's system requires the priority of the idea of the radical perversion of mankind before the idea of its inability to merit restoration and salvation. The effort towards

¹⁰ Ambrose died April 4, 397, and was succeeded by Simplicianus. The treatise of Augustine must be assigned to that year.

¹¹ Augustine recalls in this passage, while writing to Simplicianus, how deeply influenced he was by the words of Paul (1 Cor. 4 7) when he felt in himself the harsh contrast between the notions of grace and freedom of the will. By the virtue of these words, he says, "vicit gratia Dei."

¹² Although there is no doubt about the sincerity of Augustine, yet sometimes his memory played him false. For instance, when in the *Retractationes* he speaks of his treatises written immediately after his baptism, there is some inaccuracy in the chronology which he gives. Timme, in *Augustins geistige Entwicklung in den ersten Jahren nach seiner Bekehrung* (Berlin, 1908), claims to be the first to notice these inaccuracies, but the Maurin Editors had already remarked the fact in their Augustinian biography.

restoration and the gift of divine grace for that purpose presupposes necessarily the fall. Other of Augustine's writings confirm this conclusion. In fact the fundamental idea that recurs with remarkable frequency in those writings, especially those belonging to the hot period of Pelagian controversy (412-418) and of polemics about Predestination (426-429), is the appalling definition of mankind as a "massa peccati, massa luti, massa damnationis, massa damnata."

How did Augustine undergo this change in that decisive period of his life (395-396), and why was his thought modified so deeply? What influence of Christian writers, or what way of personal thinking, led him to such a pessimistic conception of original sin?

In the passages of the *Retractationes* where he speaks about his works of those years we may find perhaps, besides the intention of the author, some help toward a better understanding of the interior evolution of his spirit. In Book I, Chapters 23-25,¹³ he mentions that "adhuc presbiter" he wrote some comments on the Epistle to the Romans (about which he had already talked with several friends), under the title *Expositio quarundam Propositionum ex Epistola ad Romanos*. He confesses with a kind of regret that he was at that time unable to grasp the true meaning of the passage 7 14, because he did not dare to apply to the Apostle the qualification of "carnalis." But later he says, "lectis quibusdam divinatorum tractatoribus eloquiorum, quorum me moveret auctoritas, consideravi diligenter, et vidi etiam de ipso apostolo posse intelligi quod ait: 'scimus quoniam lex spiritalis est, ego autem carnalis sum.' Quod in eis libris, quos contra Pelagianos nuper scripsi, quantum potui, diligenter ostendi." Finally he recalls

¹³ Before the end of the year 395. What Augustine says in these chapters coincides exactly with the contents of the book *De libero Arbitrio*, ended about 394-395.

that it was his intention to write comments on the whole Epistle to the Romans, but that he was overcome very soon "operis magnitudine ac labore deterritus."¹⁴

These words are very significant, and I wonder that they have been passed by without remark by the historians of the Augustinian system. They give us a clear statement of what happened. While Augustine was writing the last chapters of his *De libero Arbitrio*, he was led by talks with some friends to find a deeper meaning in the Pauline sentences of the Epistle to the Romans. Some passages proved to be very hard and inconsistent with his conception of spiritual life and of the elective power of the human soul. He tried to explain them in the best way, and attempted even a complete exegesis of the obscure Pauline Epistle. But he happened then to read a Pauline comment by an authoritative Christian writer, and while reading it he realized the difficulty of the work he had undertaken; yet, on the other hand, he found in those comments a new explanation of the mysterious words of the Apostle. From that source the mind of Augustine drew new light and under that influence his anthropological and soteriological system took a new direction. This change wrought consequences which were weighty for the development of the religious spirit of the Christian world. Who is this "tractator divinorum eloquiorum," who influenced so deeply the mind of Augustine in this very critical moment of great mental stress?

The first thing to notice is the idiomatic peculiarity of the phrase by which Augustine expresses the solidarity of all men in the sin of Adam—"massa damnata." To-day we take the word "massa" in its figurative rather than its original meaning, and therefore we fail to realize that in the use of it by Augustine there is a bold and

¹⁴ The fragment that survives bears the title, *Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata Expositio*, and was written also in 394.

original metaphor. "Massa" originally means only an indistinct amalgam of inorganic elements. Figurative language in its development is a good guide to discover the development of ideas. The point is this—who first used this metaphor, "massa," upon which we may say without exaggeration is built up the whole anthropological system of Augustine?

The dictionaries give us very little help in this regard. Besides the well-known meaning given to the word "massa" as a conglomeration of farms and rural tenements, which is common in the writings of mediæval authors, we find another meaning of the word in a passage of Orosius, which is not quoted by dictionaries. With reference to the sack of Rome in the year 410 he says that it was a riddle for the chosen people, like "ex magna massa frumenti grana viva" (Hist. adv. Paganos, VII, 39).¹⁵

In the Vulgate we find "massa" about a dozen times, only four of which appear in the New Testament (Rom. 9 21; 11 16; 1 Cor. 5 6; Gal. 5 9), where the correspondent Greek word is *φύραμα*.¹⁶ The meaning is in every case "paste," or an amorphous compound of inorganic or vegetable substances. That gives no clue for our purpose. In two of the four Pauline passages the word is used in the well-known proverb, "Modicum fermentum totam massam corrumpit."¹⁷

Now it was only a commentator on the Pauline Epistles living in Rome under Pope Damasus (366–384), who made a paraphrase of the passage Rom. 5—"in quo

¹⁵ Tertullian too speaks of "massa frumenti." De Prescr. III, 9.

¹⁶ Originally "massa" must have been the transliteration of *μάζα* (barley bread), which probably was a word of Hebrew derivation. Cf. H. Van Herwerden: *Lexicon graecum suppletorium et dialecticum*. Lugduni, 1910, II, 909.

¹⁷ Jerome, who besides being a good translator, is, when he likes, a subtle critic, observes (Gal. 5 9): "Male in nostris codicibus habetur modicum fermentum totam massam corrumpit, et sensum potius interpres suum quam verba apostoli transtulit; modicum fermentum totam *consersionem* fermentat." Tertullian too in De pudicitia, quoting 1 Cor. 5 6, says "consersionem." Cf. Rönisch: *Itala et Vulgata*. Marburg, 1875, 309.

omnes peccaverunt" — exactly with the figurative word "massa," and it was Ambrosiaster.¹⁸ He wrote:

"*In quo, id est in Adam, omnes peccaverunt.*¹⁹ Ideo dixit 'in quo,' cum de muliere loquatur, quia non ad speciem retulit sed ad genus. Manifestum itaque est in Adam omnes peccasse, *quasi in massa*; ipse enim per peccatum corruptus, quos genuit, omnes nati sunt sub peccato. Ex eo igitur cuncti peccatores, quia ex ipso sumus omnes."

It is well known that Augustine was acquainted with this Pauline comment and held it in great consideration as coming from Hilarius of Poitiers. In the *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum* addressed to Pope Boniface about 420, Augustine, holding the opinion that the words "in quo" are to be related to Adam, writes, "Et sic Sanctus Hilarius intellexit quod scriptum est 'in quo omnes peccaverunt,'" and he quotes the passage above to the letter.²⁰

Is it not very significant that this metaphor "massa," brought in to express the idea of the original participation of mankind in the sin of Adam, is to be found here in a passage known and quoted by Augustine?²¹

As we stated above, the two fundamental elements of Augustine's thought about original sin and spiritual

¹⁸ It is known that Ambrosiaster, commenting on 1 Tim. 3, says about the Church: "Cujus rector hodie est Damasus."

¹⁹ The passage is invariably given by all the quotations of the New Testament prior to the Vulgate. See *Novum Testamentum*, etc., F. Wordsworth et H. White. Partis II, fasc. I, *Epistola ad Romanos*. Oxford, 1913, 85.

²⁰ This metaphor of "massa" is so characteristic that I think that Pelagius himself was acquainted with Ambrosiaster when he commented on the Pauline passage in the following words, quoted by Augustine in his *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, III, 5: "Iniustum est ut hodie nata anima non ex massa Adae tam antiquum peccatum portet alienum." I submit this remark to Mr. Souter.

²¹ The word "massa" is used three times by Optatus Milevitanus, edit. by Ziwsa, *Corpus Scr. Ecc. Lat.* XXVI. Twice (V, 9; VI, 21) the meaning has nothing to do with our purpose; the third time it is very significant. Speaking (II, 26) about the rigorous discipline imposed by Donatists upon the Catholics who had joined their party, he says that they made them "massam poenitentium." Augustine was acquainted with the work of Optatus or rather with its sources, but there is no reason to think of any influence from that side, because Augustine disliked Optatus, whose ideas on anthropological and political problems were very far from his own.

rebirth are the real and full responsibility of all human individuals in the sin of Adam, and the gratuitous character of grace. Now we think it right to assume that Augustine took from Ambrosiaster, with which he became acquainted in 395, the metaphor of "massa peccati," and from it, through a natural reference to the words of Rom. 9 21, "massa luti," from which the potter makes pots according to his will, Augustine drew the notion of the absolute and inscrutable freedom of God in electing his own people, the saints. Other passages which bear evident traces of the influence on the writings of Augustine of Ambrosiaster's comment, justify our assumption, and throw a new light on the question of the theological relations between Ambrosiaster and Augustine, which to this day has been superficially viewed by the historians.

An old and unsatisfactory article attributed to C. Marold²² affirms that Augustine shows plainly his knowledge of the writings of Ambrosiaster only from the passage quoted above on the interpretation of Rom. 5 12, and dubiously from another passage of the "De Peccatorum Meritis" (I, 11-15), where Augustine opposes the reading of Rom. 5 14 as it is given by Ambrosiaster. Souter²³ remarks that the assumption of Marold is very unsound, especially if we think of the extraordinary comprehensiveness of Augustine's theological work, but he does not point to any other passage showing dependence on Ambrosiaster. The alleged affinity between the definition of fornication given in Augustine's sermon 162 and a passage of Ambrosiaster on 1 Cor. 6 18, is very dubious, because this passage, which is lacking in some manuscripts, cannot be taken as authentic. Turmel²⁴ repeatedly says that the patristic knowledge of Augustine, very poor in

²² Der Ambrosiaster nach Inhalt und Ursprung, in Zeitschrift f. wissenschaft. theol. XXVI, 415-470. 1883.

²³ Page 3.

²⁴ Cf. Histoire de la théologie positive, 227. Paris, 1904.

the beginning of his theological career, was greatly enriched during the Pelagian controversy, and that as far as it concerns Ambrosiaster, Augustine knew it as a work of Hilarius, but very soon discovered his mistake and in his later writings carefully avoided making use of it. There is no serious basis for such an assumption. Augustine himself confesses in his *Retractationes* (I, 21) that because of his insufficient knowledge of texts he did wrong to Donatus, reproaching him for adulterating some biblical passages. Moreover he engaged in harsh polemics with Jerome for the sake of sincerity in regard to his comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. But in all his work there is no hint that he was ever aware of his mistake about Ambrosiaster; and such a gap, in so far as we may argue from the other instances, would lead us to think that he never doubted the Hilarian authorship of the Ambrosiaster comment.

As a matter of fact, the patient and detailed comparison of the Augustinian doctrines in their development during the Pelagian controversy, with the anthropology and the soteriology of Ambrosiaster, gives us the conviction that the Pauline comment of the latter underlies the arguments and the capital points of the Augustinian polemical writings. Furthermore, it seems to me that Augustine, far from repudiating Ambrosiaster's comment because he had become aware of the usurped Hilarian authorship of it, on the contrary, makes constant allusions to it when he invokes generically the authority of Hilarius against his adversaries. That may seem too much, but it is evident from the context of the passages themselves.

In the *Retractationes* (I, 23) Augustine reminds us that he was at first very unwilling to apply to Paul, already converted and called to the apostleship, the word "carnalis" of Rom. 7 14, and that afterwards he was persuaded to do so by the authority of a Christian writer

commenting on the passage. Now it is exactly in this passage of the Epistle to the Romans that Ambrosiaster not only applies to the apostle himself the appellative "carnalis," but also outlines some ideas which are of capital interest in the Augustinian controversy against Pelagius and Julianus. Notice, for instance, the following passage:

"Hoc est, conditum esse sub peccato, ex Adam qui prior peccavit, originem trahere. Adam vendidit se prior; per hoc semen ejus subjectum est peccato. . . . Homo fragilis est, et paterno subjugatus delicto, ut potestate sui uti non possit, circa obœdientiam legis. . . . Quid est enim subjectum esse peccato, nisi corpus habere vitio animae corruptum, cui se inserat peccatum, et impellat hominem quasi captivum delictis, ut faciat voluntatem ejus?"

I noticed already that the interpretation of the "in quo omnes peccaverunt" through the figure of "massa," suggested by Ambrosiaster, led Augustine to associate the passage Rom. 5 12 with the other passage Rom. 9 21, where there is the comparison of the potter, who "has power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor." Combining these two passages, Augustine formulated his doctrine of grace gratuitously given by God and predestination. This course of development of Augustinian thought is clearly shown in his letter²⁵ to the Roman priest Sistus (afterwards pope, succeeding Celestinus), who seemed to be favoring some doctrinal points opposed by Augustine, before Pope Zosimus had decided the question. There is in this important document a remarkable passage: "Ubi quia universa ista massa merito damnata est, contumeliam debitam reddit justitia, honorem donat indebitum gratia, non meriti prerogativa, non fati necessitate, non temeritate fortunæ." If we compare these words with those of Am-

²⁵ Number 194 of the collection. It was written in 418.

brosiaster commenting on the Pauline sentence about the potter—"Deus, cum omnes ex una atque eadem massa simus in substantia, et cuncti peccatores, alius miseretur et alterum despicit non sine iustitia"—we cannot fail to realize that the words of Augustine are the true echo of Ambrosiaster.

But there is something more. Among the various details of the anthropological doctrines of Augustine the most peculiar is his idea of free will. Free, according to Augustine, is not he who can choose between two acts morally opposite, but only he who accomplishes with delight the will of his master. In a remarkable chapter of the *Enchiridion*, written about 420, Augustine says:

"Liberaliter servit, qui sui domini voluntatem libenter facit. Ac per hoc ad peccandum liber est qui peccati servus est. Unde ad iuste faciendum liber non erit, nisi a peccato liberatus, esse iustitiae coeperit servus. Ipsa est vera libertas propter recti facti laetitiam, simul et pia servitus propter praecepti obœdientiam."²⁶

Hence he emphasizes the necessity of humility because men by themselves are unable to accomplish anything but wrong and sin.

The thought of Ambrosiaster coincides with the definitions given by Augustine. In fact in his comment on Rom. 6 20 Ambrosiaster holds that to be free from God is to be slave of sin: "Manifestum est, quia qui liber est a Deo est servus peccati; dum peccat enim recedit a Deo, et fit sub peccato." Later, commenting on Ephes. 2 10, he too affirms that man has no merit whatever in accomplishing his salvation, and he speaks of the predestination of the saints with the following words, which remind us very closely of Augustine:

"Omnis gratiarum actio salutis nostrae ad Deum referenda est, qui misericordiam suam nobis praestat. . . . Ideoque non est gloriandum

²⁶ The same ideas reappear in *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum*, II, 9, even in a more definite way.

nobis in nobis ipsis, sed in Deo qui nos regeneravit nativitate cœlesti per fidem Christi, ad hoc ut bonis operibus exercitati, quae Deus nobis jam renatis decrevit, promissa mereamur accipere.”

There is a reasonable objection against this attempt to bring together Augustine and Ambrosiaster in a mutual dependent relation. Could he not have elaborated his anthropologic and soteriologic system directly upon the Pauline data, without any reference to the intermediate exegesis of the unknown Roman commentator? Such an objection would be valuable if the parallelism shown above were only representing some abstract coincidences in the writings of men working on the same topic. But in our case, the dependence of Augustine upon Ambrosiaster is proved by circumstances of fact, like the explicit quotation from the *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum*, the words of the *Retractationes* about the authoritative comment on the Pauline Epistles which gave a new direction to his own exegesis; and finally the method of interpretation peculiar to Ambrosiaster, a positive and realistic method which only from the year 396 becomes the method adopted by Augustine, against the one he had followed to that time under the influence of Ambrose.

The question now arises by itself, whether Augustine, when he refers generically to the authority of Hilarius against the Pelagians, is alluding to the Pauline comment, the supposed work of Hilarius, rather than to the other genuine writings of the Gallic bishop. There is no doubt that Augustine had in mind in those passages the Pauline comment. Quotations from Hilarius are not very numerous in Augustine, about twenty altogether.²⁷ Some of them have reference to Trinitarian doctrine, and they have nothing to do with our purpose. Others are second-hand quotations, like those in *De Natura et Gratia* 72, which are drawn from the *De Natura* of Pelagius himself, against whom Augustine argues in that treatise. Another

²⁷ See the indexes of the Maurin Fathers in their Augustinian edition.

quotation, which comes in several times and which seems to be made directly, is from the *Tract. super Ps. CXVIII*. Finally, Augustine more than once invokes the authority of Hilarius and Gregory of Nazianzus without a specific quotation of the passages alluded to. A typical instance will prove that this Hilarius in the mind of Augustine was the author of the Pauline comment known as Ambrosiaster. In the *Contra Julianum Pelagianum*, VI, 23, 70, Augustine remembers once more his mental evolution of the year 396, and he says that after long hesitation he was convinced that the word "carnalis" could be applied as well to the apostle, who wanted to express "gemitum sanctorum contra carnales concupiscentias dimicantium"; and he adds immediately, "Hinc factum est ut sic ista intelligerem, quemadmodum intellexit Hilarius, Gregorius, Ambrosius." The reference is undoubtedly to the interpretation of "carnalis" given by Ambrosiaster, and therefore the Hilarius invoked by Augustine here is but Ambrosiaster himself.

We think that the dependence of the Augustinian anthropology upon Ambrosiaster cannot now be denied, and that it will solve not only a literary problem. In a remarkable essay on Julian of Eclanum,²⁸ A. Brückner observes that in the Augustinian doctrine of sin several Manichæan survivals found place. As instances he refers first to the notion of the Not-being hypostatized and almost opposed to the creative principle; then to the idea of human nature as naturally wrong and to the diabolic origin of the sexual instinct. Although these specific instances do not betray a direct Manichæan influence, yet I agree that an exaggerated pessimism left its traces in the anthropology of Augustine. But I should like to point out rather the significant affinity of the Augustinian conception of man as the servant of goodness or of evil

²⁸ Julian von Aeclanum, sein Leben und seine Lehre. Texte und Untersuch. XV, 3, 66-68. Leipzig, 1897.

according to his status of affranchisement, with the Manichæan doctrine of the elements of light destroyed by the king of darkness and his sons after the defeat of the primordial man and restored through “ἀσχησις.”²⁹ As a matter of fact, there are in the Augustinian notion some elements obnoxious to the real status of the human soul and its possibility of working out spiritual salvation, and these elements were repudiated by the Church. It is therefore not untrue to affirm that his Manichæan fellowship left in the mind of Augustine a pessimistic background which was unconsciously brought to light again by the fervor of Pelagian controversy. But the influence that led him from Platonic speculation and from the symbolism of Origen and Ambrose to a realistic point of view and a literal exegesis, was undoubtedly the influence of Ambrosiaster; to whom therefore it would be fair to do justice and to give some credit for his part in the system which gained for Augustine the name of “Doctor gratiae.”

²⁹ F. Cumont: *Recherches sur le Manichéisme: I, La cosmogonie manichéenne*, 19. Bruxelles, 1908.