

**SYSTEMATIC
THEOLOGY
502
DISTANCE**

GRACE

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GRACE: AUGUSTINE AND PELAGIUS

Pelagianism was a major heresy that denied the need for grace. Against the teachings of Pelagius, St Augustine asserted the necessity of grace for salvation. Grace began, continued, and perfected salvation in St Augustine's eyes.

- Pelagius denied the necessity of special grace
- Grace for Pelagius equals keeping God's commandments done through one's own will power
- As John Ferguson wrote of Pelagius:
 - 'Now the fulcrum upon which the controversy with Pelagius turned was the meaning of grace. Pelagius and Augustine were agreed that we are what we are by the grace of God. But Pelagius was speaking of 'general grace' and Augustine of 'special grace.' Special grace came from the sacrifice of Jesus upon the Cross . . . Pelagius asserted the general grace of God in endowment of human nature enabled us, if we were willing, to perform His will.'
- Augustine affirmed the complete priority of grace
- As Augustine wrote of God:
 - 'He operates, therefore, without us, in order that we may will; but when we will, and so will that we may act, He cooperates with us. We can, however, ourselves do nothing to effect good works of piety without Him either working that we may will, or co-working when we will.'



AUGUSTINE ON GRACE

For Augustine, the Doctor of Grace, the whole Christian life is one of grace. Grace is needed to begin the Christian life. Grace is needed daily to keep from sin. Grace is needed to persevere to the end of life. In this regard, Augustine notes four distinct types of grace:

1. Prevenient grace
 - Grace that comes before all human willing, doing, or acting
 2. Operative grace
 - Grace that converts the will to love God by replacing our self-love with charity, i.e., the Holy Spirit
 3. Cooperative grace
 - Grace that aids in our cooperation with God's will
 4. Persevering grace
 - Grace that helps us persevere to the end of our life in the Faith
- St Augustine describes grace as the gift of the Holy Spirit, *donum Dei*, that causes us to love God



ST THOMAS ON GRACE

Aquinas believed grace is a created habit (*habitus*) in the soul. The Holy Spirit dwells in the soul through its created gifts. These created gifts of the Spirit are perfections given by God to move the soul back to God and are therefore termed 'dispositions' or 'habits' by Thomas because they dispose or incline the soul to God's will. The created gifts of the Holy Spirit move the soul by acting like a habit (*habitus*) disposing the soul to act virtuously through its gifts. As Thomas puts it:

- 'the gifts, properly, are certain perfections of the soul's powers, inasmuch as these have a natural aptitude to be moved by the Holy Spirit.'
 - The created gifts of the Spirit act as motions upon the soul disposing it to act by making it do freely things that are becoming to grace, and shun what is opposed to it.
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- There are seven specific created gifts of the Spirit given to the soul to move it back to God (Isa 11:2ff)
 - wisdom, knowledge, understanding and counsel (the four gifts of reason); and
 - fortitude, piety, and fear (the three gifts of appetite).
 - Corresponding to these seven created gifts of the Spirit are the seven virtues which are:
 - prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude (the four cardinal virtues); and
 - faith, hope, and charity (the three theological virtues).
 - The seven created gifts of the Spirit bring forth the seven virtues by inclining the soul to act according to the virtues and work against the seven deadly sins

 - Building upon St Augustine, St Thomas distinguishes six types of grace:
 1. habitual sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) is the grace of union with God
 2. actual gratuitous grace (*gratia gratis data*) is grace for a specific act or which God gives to help you lead others to Christ (i.e., 1 Cor. 12)
 3. operating grace (*gratia operans*) moves persons to think, do, or will a certain thing
 4. cooperating grace (*gratia co-operans*) 'God by cooperating with us perfects what he began by operating in us'
 5. prevenient grace (*gratia praeveniens*) goes before persons' thinking willing, or doing
 6. subsequent grace (*gratia subsequens*) follows and upholds persons' thinking, willing, or doing (Augustine called this persevering grace)

 - Building upon Aristotle, who held 'we become just by doing just acts,' and 'moral excellence comes about as a result of habit,' Thomas also thinks by continual virtuous actions or 'habits' persons actually become intrinsically virtuous and thus obtain 'a happiness surpassing our human nature' which is 'a kind of participation in the Godhead.'
 - Justification is thus a movement from a state of unrighteousness to a state of righteousness

