

What Augustine Did Not Tell Us About the Nature of Man

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Introduction

During the fourth century A.D. Augustine of Hippo, in bitter controversy with Pelagius,¹ wrote extensively on the nature of man. Augustine argued that in Adam the entire human race had become fallen. Pelagius argued that each person decides for himself whether or not to sin.²

In countering each other both men took positions so extreme that few, even of their followers, accepted all of them.³ Not until Calvin did the full force of Augustine's views on the absolute sovereignty of God and the bondage of the human will become generally accepted by a significant number of people.⁴ A modern counterpart to Pelagius is Jacob Hermensen (1560-1609), also known as Arminius.⁵

It should be pointed out that while Arminius is less extreme than Pelagius, Calvin is more extreme than Augustine, in some cases carrying Augustine's conclusions farther than Augustine did.⁶ Calvin was a great man and did a great work for God.⁷ But in historical perspective his was not a voice of moderation.

Modern followers of Augustine include Lutherans and the many Calvinist denominations, not to mention Roman Catholics. Arminian views are limited for the most part to Methodists and Seventh-day Adventists. Now and again there are attempts to break out into the broad middle ground between the two extremes associated with Augustine and Pelagius, Calvin and to a lesser degree Arminius. One such person was John McLeod Campbell,⁸ who approached that middle ground (with special emphasis on the atonement) from a Calvinist point of view. Seventh-day Adventists do so from an Arminian viewpoint. There is much that Adventists can learn from Campbell and, if he were still alive, I think the reverse would also be true.

By the middle of the sixth century Pelagius had been largely discredited and the church made Augustine the winner by acclamation.⁹ In the near term, however, its verdict was more guarded. Pelagius was a practical reformer (though not a great theoretician) in an age whose need for reform was greater than its need for theory. Some of what he said made sense and he had a small but loyal following.¹⁰ Neither man could be entirely ignored. There were efforts to establish a semi-Pelagian compromise and a semi-Augustinian compromise.¹¹ The former required the opposition of no fewer than ten popes between A.D. 401 and 529.¹² The latter, adopted by the second council of Orange (A.D. 529), effectively put an end to the controversy.¹³ Two popes (Zosimus [417-18] and Sixtus III [432-40]) who had supported Pelagius' views initially later condemned them.¹⁴

Both Augustine and Pelagius made substantial claims and fully explored their implications.¹⁵ Their debate was not characterized by subtlety. Adam's fall either did (Augustine) or did not (Pelagius) affect his progeny. And yet the fact remains that those who supported Augustine, even while considering him their champion, were unable to accept all of what he said.¹⁶

In view of the fundamental nature of the issues raised and the thoroughness with which they were discussed, it might seem that nothing more remains for later generations to say except to repeat with greater emphasis what had been said before and to take one's stand on one side or the other of an already very well defined set of issues.¹⁷ In fact, however, an entire dimension of the nature of man had been passed over in silence.

The Missing Dimension

For the most part both Augustine and Pelagius limited their attention to man's condition after sin. Admittedly this takes in most of human history, but it is not the whole story. Augustine especially makes the doctrine of the nature of man equivalent to the doctrine of man's fallen state and so misses one of the most profoundly significant statements on that doctrine found anywhere in Scripture.¹⁸ The statement is this: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone'" (Gen 2:18).

On five occasions during creation week we read: "God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). And when He was finished, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Only in regard to Adam's lack of a companion did He say, "'It is not good'" (Gen 2:18).

The principle at issue here is not limited either to marriage or to man's moral condition before the fall, nor has the fall materially eroded those needs which called the statement forth initially. Sin makes nothing good and it certainly did not make it good for Adam to be alone. By the time he sinned he was not alone (see 1 Tim 2:14). Instead his sin produced another different kind of isolation. It separated him and all his future children from God. But man's need for companionship was not changed by this fact. Only the ability to satisfy it became limited. The need itself remains in full force and effect after the fall.¹⁹ Nothing happened that would change that. Barring pathological exceptions, everyone at some time feels the need for personal warmth and companionship or the knowledge of someone else's presence. See Appendix.

Marriage is only one level on which Gen 2:18 might be applied. Indeed, in some marriages it does not apply, because companionship is lacking. So while the principle is stated broadly ("It is not good for the man to be alone"), it is applied narrowly ("I will make a helper suitable for him").²⁰ The second part of the verse does not exhaust the meaning of the first part. The principle before us includes marriage as a special case but encompasses a wide range of other interpersonal relationships as well. Nor is it limited to relationships that are interpersonal in nature.

Man's need for God

Another level of companionship, and the one I wish to emphasize here, is man's need for God. No anthropologist has ever found a society, however backward, that is so primitive as to lack religion altogether. On the contrary, in primitive societies the role of religion is much more prominent than in the world's developed nations. The fact is that God has placed a need for Himself in the human psyche.²¹ We can attempt to deny or suppress this need, but doing so only forces it to take some other form--to seek some other object. We can direct our worship to God or to something other than God, but we cannot entirely suppress our need to worship.²² Idolatry in all its varied forms is merely a perversion (i.e., a perverse expression) of our inherent

and deep-seated human need for oneness with an Intelligence over and above ourselves--for fellowship with the Creator.

This much is not intended to be controversial. What I am suggesting, however, is that the above widely recognized facts be understood in the context of Gen 2:18. Here is a passage that explains, in a robust manner, why the religious impulse among humankind is manifested on so universal a scale.²³

The nature of sin

Once the above concept has been grasped we are in a better position to understand the nature of sin. Notice Isaiah's reference to sheep in describing man's fallen condition:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. (Isa 53:6)

Sheep are followers. They have little ability to function alone. And yet they wander. During His life on earth one of the comparisons Jesus used in order to help us understand His purpose and work among us was that of a Shepherd. If the sin problem is that "We all, like sheep, have gone astray" (Isa 53:6), the solution is to follow the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep (see John 10:11-18). As our Shepherd, Christ did not come in order to restore in mankind the need to worship. We never lost that. He came to bring us back to Himself.

God's need for man

I would go further and suggest that the human need for God is matched by a corresponding divine need for man. The pronouncement on human nature found in Gen 2:18 shows one aspect of what it means for man to be made in the image of God (see Gen 1:27). It is a statement about us but making it was also an act of self-revelation on God's part. I submit that God's need for companionship was one reason for His creative activity.²⁴ If He had never created our world or any other, He also--although triune--would have been alone.²⁵ ". . . the Lord is God; besides him there is no other" (Deut 4:35; see also Isa 43:11; 44:6, 8; 45:6, 21).

Discussion

Let us once more consider the creation of our world, this time turning 180 degrees so as to see the events through God's eyes rather than our own. What were God's plan and purpose in making our world? What object did He have in view? There is textual evidence that can help us answer this question.

We know from Gen 1:1-31 that God worked six days, making the world and everything on it. Then, on the seventh day, God laid aside all His busy activity and spent that day entirely with earth's first man and woman--His crowning work of creation on this planet (see Gen 2:1-3). All the preliminaries were finally over. Adam and Eve had been given air to breathe, land to live on, and ample vegetation which would provide them both labor and sustenance. Now at last

God could hold communion with this godlike pair, whom He had made in His image specifically for that purpose (see Gen 1:27).²⁶ Here were beings who could, in some measure, understand God and be understood by Him--creatures with whom an infinite God could have intelligent companionship.

God would not claim all of our first parents' time. Six days out of every seven would remain available for their many mundane necessities. But afterward they and the Creator could again enjoy an entire day in each other's company.

God's work during creation week was finished in six days but the week was not yet over. I submit that what He had in mind was not fully accomplished until the seventh day, which had nothing to do with making things. If this is so, we can only conclude that God's primary and overriding purpose throughout creation week was something more than creating. To understand the first six days we must have a very clear understanding of the seventh day. After six days God had still not held communion with the man.

Must we continually see the Sabbath as an obligation? Can it be that we are so important to God that He considers spending time with us worth creating a world to achieve? Later on, with this same object in view, Christ was willing to spend a lifetime with us, which He knew would end in a horrible and ignominious death. How then should we regard the privilege of spending a token amount of time--a day--with Him?

If we are unwilling to go even this far (in obedience to a direct command), how could we ever make ourselves spend an eternity with Him in heaven? No one with such attitudes will have to. Heaven is only for those whose principal delight is in being with Jesus.²⁷ The Sabbath, by providing an index of our feelings on this matter, is an exquisitely appropriate test for our generation, living as we do just before Christ's return. The question it helps us answer before our families and neighbors and before the entire onlooking universe (see Dan 7:9-10) is: When Christ comes, if He should take us to heaven, would we enjoy being there? Or would its companionship merely impose a hiatus--an endless interruption--on things we would rather be doing?

God does not force an answer on us but seeks to know our minds. Nor does He attempt to catch us in our words, as it were, making us say or do something we do not intend. Instead He poses this fundamental question repeatedly--every Friday evening at sunset--and lets us demonstrate by our actions what the answer is, embedding each response in the fair and wise context of all our other comparable responses to the same question over the course of a lifetime. There is nothing unfair in allowing us to express ourselves this way. The Sabbath is a perfect test for our time--just as the tree in the garden was for Adam's time--the product of an infinite and infinitely loving mind.

Applying the Principle

I submit that when Jesus confronts us with Himself in the gospel and invites us to follow Him He is appealing to a nerve within human nature that runs deeper than the fall. By sinning we have lost something of the image of God (see Gen 1:27). But we still have the need for companionship with Him (see Gen 2:18). The change brought about by the fall has weakened the one trait, effacing our moral likeness to the Creator. The more sin, the less likeness. The other trait, however, remains intact and can only strengthen over time--in inverse relation to our

awareness of it. The two passages (Gen 1:27; 2:18) could therefore be thought of as reciprocals of each other. The less likeness, the more need.

People need other people. Few would deny this and none can deny it honestly. But people also need God. Moreover, in some sense that we cannot hope to comprehend fully, He also needs us. It is in this sense that Gen 1:27 provides a context for Gen 2:18. If God had made us in some other way--in some way unlike Himself--we would not be able to enter a relationship of genuine mutuality with Him. There had to be a capacity for spiritual understanding in order for us to fulfill God's purpose in creating us. In this context it is the Sabbath that brings His original purpose for mankind to its natural culmination.

This need for mutuality, implanted within us by the Creator, becomes the basis and groundplan of His efforts to rescue us from the condition we have gotten ourselves into. It is to this supremely important fact that He appeals in the incarnation and thus in the gospel.

By clinging to Jesus, as He in turn clung to the Father throughout His earthly life (see John 15:1-17), the sin problem within us finds not a temporary bandage but a cure that is deep and genuine. And just here is a point that must not be missed. Clinging to Christ at every time and in every way--in heartfelt obedience to His Word--does not merely lead us toward an eventual solution of the sin problem. It is itself the solution. If the problem is that we have gone astray ("for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" [Rom 3:23]), then the solution--not the path to a later solution but the solution itself--is to stop going astray, i.e., to follow the Shepherd. When the distance between us and Him is removed, the problem has been truly addressed, even though what we are talking about here is the beginning rather than the end of a person's life in Christ.

I do not say that obedience as such is a solution to the sin problem, because that can be cold and external. What I have in mind is the opposite of this--not the opposite of obedience but the opposite of anything cold and external. Obedience will always accompany the solution I am describing but the two factors must not be confused with each other. They are not identical. The solution is to allow the distance between ourselves and Christ to be removed--to accept Him, to respond to Him and abide with Him, to stop going astray. From this starting point an ample supply of obedience will follow naturally. It will overflow in our lives just as the living water did in the woman's heart at Jacob's well (see John 4:28-30).

Conclusion

Augustine was right to a degree but not entirely right. Not all aspects of human nature were changed as a result of the fall. Man retains his need not to be alone and Christ appeals especially to this fact by becoming one with us in the incarnation. In the same way Pelagius was not entirely right either--or entirely wrong. It is only in sustained union with Christ that our wills become free. There is no natural freedom of the will any more than there is natural immortality of the soul. We have these things from God or we do not have them at all. When we go our own way, as it seems, we merely demonstrate that we are slaves to sin (see John 8:34). And so this one passage ("It is not good for the man to be alone" [Gen 2:18]) simultaneously identifies the weakness in both arguments.

If Augustine's point was that Adam can only convey to his posterity the nature that he himself possesses, the implications will vary depending on which passage we have in view.

Emphasizing Gen 1:27 ("Let us make man in our image"), what Adam passes on to us is diminished, defective, and fallen. Emphasizing Gen 2:18 ("It is not good for the man to be alone"), what he passes on is a need that is stronger than ever before. If man's condition is infinitely reduced by the fall, his need is correspondingly increased. Thus, Pelagius' point about man's ability to obey is supported rather than refuted by Augustine's argument--when that argument is applied in the context of Gen 2:18 and to the extent that Christ draws on our need for Him in inviting us to come to Him. When He asks us to come and we come, that is obedience. Under this understanding of what it means to obey,²⁸ human obedience is intimately connected with our need not to be alone. This need lies at the heart of the gospel's appeal in every age but is most clearly illustrated during earth's last events as every visible support is cut away and the remnant must trust wholly and exclusively in a trustworthy God.²⁹

None of this constitutes a defense of Pelagius, whose understanding of obedience was clearly inadequate. But so was that of Augustine. Paraphrasing Augustine, even with Christ we cannot obey.³⁰ And paraphrasing Pelagius, even without Christ we can obey. In either case it is largely irrelevant, as regards obedience, whether one does or does not have Christ. Both positions are equally wrong.

Salvation, if we believe our Bibles, is freedom from both sin and death (see Matt 1:21; Heb 9:28). I submit that Christ's act of coming to us in human flesh is not irrelevant to our being saved from sin, nor is it relevant only to our being saved from death. Christ did not come in order to break the connection between sin and death but to break the connection between sin and those condemned to death by it--to win them back to Himself.

Epilogue

The central undergirding tenet of any biblical anthropology must be that man has an inner need for the Savior--not merely to be freed from his sin (although he has this need), but to have intelligent and sustained communion with One higher than himself. He has a need not to be alone, although his sin continually works to separate him from the only One who can cleanse Him from it. Man cannot cleanse himself because, quite apart from the fact that the will to sin resides in us, sin is not self-contained. Its implications extend beyond the individual and must always involve at least two parties (see Gen 39:9; Luke 15:18). To deal with sin as a problem confined within the sinner is to mistake the half for the whole. Sin is an act of separation--the good gift of free will cut loose from the controls that would make it a blessing. The gulf that sin has created between our souls and God cannot be removed by anything done only on our side of that gulf or only on His side. The two parties to the broken relationship must be brought together again. God takes the initiative in doing this by giving us His Son (see Isa 9:6; Gal 4:4-5) and we, in turn, must accept the Gift (see Heb 4:2).

The freedom we exercise in turning our backs on God is a perversion of the godlike quality of free will, conveyed to us in Gen 1:27. The need for companionship to which the Savior appeals in the gospel is described in Gen 2:18. As a person becomes progressively more mature in Christ both traits (freedom and dependence) heal and strengthen. Our wills become completely free as we become completely dependent upon God. If sin is slavery (see John 8:34), then spiritual freedom is freedom not to sin--something that can only occur in the life of a person who trusts Christ fully, implicitly, and at every juncture. Where is the legalism in such a position? This level of maturity, incidentally, is what Christ is referring to when He says that we

must become as little children (see Matt 18:3). Who is more closely attached to his or her daddy than a little child?³¹

A willingness to be separated from God is the special genius of sin. Over and above all its other baleful implications and results, this is the one reason more than any other why sin is so very repugnant and unacceptable to God. It destroys the communication that man was created to supply and enjoy. It strikes at the heart of God's purpose for creating our world initially and reverses His creative act,³² taking us from companionship back to nonexistence.³³ We are alienated from Christ and have lost even so much as the knowledge that there is Anyone to be alienated from. But we have not lost the need to come back. That remains in full force and effect and can only be truly satisfied by the One who has placed it within us.

Alienation from Christ is at once natural and unnatural, and herein lies a paradox. Adam's sin brought separation from God. In this sense it is natural. But the need for spiritual companionship remains. Thus, when God invites us to satisfy that need by coming to Him in the person of His Son, He is not asking us to become what we are not or to stop being what He made us. On the contrary, He appeals to something that we may not have understood previously but which He knows is within us because He put it there, and He did that because it is also within Him. Thus, in the words, "'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'" (Matt 11:28), we have the natural culmination of all God's work--a clear and unclouded self-revelation of the Creator (see also Heb 4:6-11).

To understand this appeal and yet deny the inner need for fellowship with the One who offers it is inexcusable not only because doing so is unnecessary in view of the gospel, but precisely because it is an unnatural act. It denies the most fundamental feature of what it means, on a spiritual level, to be human.

NOTE: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

¹Jerome (if he is referring to Pelagius) makes Pelagius an Irishman: "a huge and corpulent Alban dog who can do more with his claws than with his teeth, for he is by descent of the Scotie nation" (quoted in Seumas MacManus, *The Story of the Irish Race: A Popular History of Ireland*, rev. ed. [Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1921], p. 105). The term "Scotic" could mean that the individual in question was from the Irish colony in Scotland but he could just as easily have been Irish from Ireland. (The Scots were an Irish tribe. The original inhabitants of Scotland were not Scots but Picts. See Lloyd Laing and Jennifer Laing, *Celtic Britain and Ireland: The Myth of the Dark Ages* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990], pp. 124-39.) In another passage Jerome calls the unfortunate object of his invective a "stupid fellow, loaded with the porrage of the Scots" (MacManus, p. 105). Some apply both passages to Celestius, a disciple of Pelagius, but the majority view is that both refer to Pelagius himself. Thus, Gerhard Herm states that "one of these [disputes] was started by the theologian Pelagius, who came from Ireland" (*The Celts: The People who Came out of the Darkness* [New York: S. Martin's Press, 1976], p. 259). Assuming this is the case, Pelagius' education did not suffer from the fact. He was well read in both secular and ecclesiastical Latin. Church fathers who exerted a special influence on his thinking were Cyprian, Lactantius, Ambrose, and Hilary. The breadth of his reading is discussed at length in Georges de Plinval, *Pélage: ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* [Pelagius: his writings, his life and his reform] (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1943), pp. 72-97, who states in passing that Celestius was "in origin a Campanian or African" (p. 212).

²For Augustine the main issue in his debate with Pelagius was grace: "Because of those who, when we defend the grace of God, imagine that we deny free will and who themselves defend free will in such a manner as to deny the grace of God, while affirming that that grace is given to us according to our merits, I have written a book entitled *On Grace and Free Will*" (Augustine, quoted in Anne-Marie la Bonnardière, ed., *Saint Augustin et la Bible* [Saint Augustine and the Bible] [Beauchesne, 1986], p. 343). For Pelagius the main issue was free will. From my own perspective the main issue was the nature of man. And this appears to be the consensus of modern writers. Philip Schaff describes Pelagius' position as an "anthropological heresy": "The person and the work of the Redeemer presuppose on the one hand man's capability of redemption, and on the other his need of redemption. Manichaeism denies the former, Pelagianism the latter. In opposition to these two fundamental anthropological heresies, the church was called to develop the whole truth" (*History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910; reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], vol. 3: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity from Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-600*, p. 785). The question was anthropological, i.e., dealing with the nature of man.

³Many, even opponents of Pelagius, recoiled from a position so wide of the older fathers as Augustine's doctrines of the bondage of man and the absolute election of grace, and preferred a middle ground" (Schaff, *Church History*, 3:859). What made Augustine in turn recoil from Pelagius was the latter's apparent disregard of man's need for grace and dependence on God.

⁴The Council of Trent met, with occasional recesses, from 1545 to 1563. It is significant that at this council, where Augustine was held in high esteem, Calvin's views were condemned (in canon 5), which should alert us to the fact that the two men's views are not fully identical. "If any one saith, that man's free-will moved and excited by God, by assenting to God exciting and calling, nowise cooperates towards disposing and preparing itself for obtaining the grace of Justification; that it can not refuse its consent, if it would, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive: let him be anathema" (Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. [New York: Harper, 1877], 2:111). The above canon can only be interpreted as an attack against Calvin. John Calvin had published his *Institutes* only nine years before, in 1536.

⁵Schaff gives the name variously as James Arminius, Jacob van Hermans, Hermanson, Harmensen (*Creeds*, 1:510, see also n. 1). The views of Arminius were condemned at the Protestant (Calvinist) Synod of Dort (1618-19), which Schaff compares in content and significance "to the Pelagian and the Jansenist controversies in the Catholic Church" (*ibid.*, p. 509). "The Arminian controversy is the most important which took place within the Reformed Church" (*ibid.*). For all their theological significance, however, if it had not been for the efforts of John Wesley, Arminius' views would be largely unknown today. Wesley (following Arminius) held: (1) that man has freedom of the will, (2) that God respects man's exercise of such freedom, (3) that foreordination is conditioned by foreknowledge, (4) that redemption is freely available to all, and (5) that it is possible to fall from grace (see *ibid.*, 2:894-95). "Herein Methodism entirely agrees with Arminianism, and is even more emphatically opposed to the doctrines of absolute predestination, limited atonement, and the perseverance of saints than Arminius was, who left the last point undecided. . . . On the other hand, however, the 'evangelical' Arminianism of Wesley, as it is called, differs from the Dutch Arminianism, as developed by Episcopius and Limborch, and inclines as much towards Augustinianism as Arminianism inclines towards Pelagianism. In this respect it resembles somewhat the Lutheran anthropology of the Formula of Concord, though it differs altogether from its christology and sacramentalism" (*ibid.*, pp. 895, 896).

⁶Calvin's conception of the sovereignty of God is essentially Augustinian, though with more consistency than Augustine's warmly human, mystical nature would permit" (Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics* [New York: Abingdon, 1958], p. 69). This is

also the area in which Augustine's contemporaries had considered his views extreme many long years before Calvin.

⁷Of Calvin Ellen White writes that, "For nearly thirty years Calvin labored at Geneva, first to establish there a church adhering to the morality of the Bible, and then for the advancement of the Reformation throughout Europe. His course as a public leader was not faultless, nor were his doctrines free from error. But he was instrumental in promulgating truths that were of special importance in his time, in maintaining the principles of Protestantism against the fast-returning tide of popery, and in promoting in the reformed churches simplicity and purity of life, in place of the pride and corruption fostered under the Romish teaching" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950], pp. 219-36).

⁸See David P. Duffie, "John McLeod Campbell and Thomas Erskine: Scottish Exponents of Righteousness, Faith, and the Atonement" (M.A. thesis, Loma Linda University, 1985).

⁹Augustine's influence extends equally to both Catholics and Protestants. Before his conversion Luther was an Augustinian monk. After his vow to St. Anne in the thunder storm, "Two weeks were required to arrange his affairs and to decide what monastery to enter. He chose a strict one, the reformed congregation of the Augustinians" (Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* [New York: Mentor, 1950], p. 25). Calvin also was a disciple of Augustine. Thus, Augustine's influence pervaded the mother church and both major camps of those attempting to reform her. In England--a third camp--the changes brought about by the Reformation were not primarily doctrinal. "The church remained Catholic, but the break with Rome was complete" (John W. Howe, *Our Anglican Heritage* [Elgin, IL: Cook, 1977], p. 21). But even to the extent that it did not remain Catholic it did remain Augustinian, under Luther's influence. "By the time Henry VIII declared his independence from Rome, perhaps 50 percent of the English bishops were of Lutheran persuasion" (*ibid.*, p. 19). The only possible change here would have been from Aquinas back to Augustine. Thus, it was not until Arminius (as interpreted by Wesley) that any significant non-Augustinian body of thought existed among Protestants. In the theological differences between Calvin and Arminius (carried forward, for example, by Whitefield and Wesley) we have a reenactment of some of the issues raised so long before by Augustine and Pelagius--not all, but some. This fact is of special interest to Seventh-day Adventists because we owe a larger debt to Methodism than we might realize.

¹⁰The Pelagian controversy did not begin with the doctrine of grace or with the nature of man. All of this was later theorizing. The controversy began with Pelagius' declaration that it was unchristian to possess excessive wealth. "The condemnation of riches was not a new thing in the church, but it was presented with such vivacity by our author that in 414 the Syracusan Hilarius considered that point as one of the most important on the Pelagian agenda" (Plinval, *Pélage*, p. 222). It was on this that he was first accused of heresy. But in Plinval's words, "What heresy?" (*ibid.*, p. 225). When Pelagius talked about not sinning, the sin that he had primarily in view was the sin of avarice.

¹¹John Cassian of Massilia (Marseilles) was an early and highly respected semi-Pelagian. "In opposition to both systems he taught that the divine image and human freedom were not annihilated, but only weakened, by the fall; in other words, that man is sick, but not dead, that he cannot indeed help himself, but that he can desire the help of a physician, and either accept or refuse it when offered, and that he must co-operate with the grace of God in his salvation" (Schaff, *Church History*, 3:861). "Semi-Pelagianism prevailed in Gaul for several decades. Under the lead of Faustus of Rhegium it gained the victory in two synods, at Arles in 472 and at Lyons in 475, where Augustine's doctrine of predestination was condemned, though without mention of his name" (*ibid.*, p. 865). The triumph of semi-Augustinianism took time.

¹²The popes in question, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (J. N. D. Kelly, ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986]), under their respective articles, were Innocent I (401-17), Zosimus (417-18), Boniface I (418-22), Celestine I (422-32), Sixtus III (432-40), Leo I (440-61),

Felix III (483-92), Gelasius I (492-96), Hormisdas (514-23), and Felix IV (526-30).¹³The synods of Arles (472) and Lyons (475) "were only provincial, and were the cause of a schism. In North Africa and in Rome the Augustinian system of doctrine, though in a somewhat softened form, attained the ascendancy. . . . These transactions terminated at length in the triumph of a moderate Augustinianism, or of what might be called Semi-Augustinianism, in distinction from Semi-Pelagianism. At the synod of Orange (Arausio) in the year 529, at which Caesarius of Arles was leader, the Semi-Pelagian system, yet *without mention of its adherents*, was condemned in twenty-five chapters or canons, and the Augustinian doctrine of sin and grace was approved, without the doctrine of absolute or particularistic predestination. A similar result was reached at a synod of Valence (Valencia), held the same year, but otherwise unknown" (Schaff, *Church History*, 3:865-67).

¹⁴See *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*. Regarding Zosimus Schaff writes, "This temporary favor of the bishop of Rome towards the Pelagian heresy is a significant presage of the indulgence of later popes for Pelagianizing tendencies, and of the papal condemnation of Jansenism" (Schaff, *Church History*, 3:798).

¹⁵"Polemics are here brought forward that deal with fundamental questions of Christian doctrine, or of the institutional and sacramental aspects of the church" (la Bonnardière, *Saint Augustine*, p. 350). Schaff makes a similar statement, referring to Pelagius' views on the nature of man as a "fundamental anthropological heresy" (see n. 2 above).

¹⁶The church's ability to accept Paul while holding back with regard to Augustine is one of many reasons why Augustine should not be simply equated with Paul. In the same way, the fact that, at the Council of Trent, Catholics could accept Augustine while condemning Calvin (see n. 4 above) shows that Calvin cannot be equated with Augustine either.

¹⁷We should make it our business to understand what was said. Calvinists are well aware of their historical roots. In following Calvin they are also followers of Augustine. But what Arminian would claim Pelagius? Arminians need to understand Pelagius, if for no other reason than to dissociate themselves from his more extreme positions intelligently. The two largest Arminian churches today are Methodists and Seventh-day Adventists. Major studies should be coming from the universities operated by these two denominations (not just footnotes in papers like this) in order to determine what Pelagius believed and thus to establish where we agree or disagree with him. Such knowledge is germane. The current liberal-conservative debate within Adventism, for example, resembles the earlier one between Augustine v. Pelagius, although, whereas liberal Adventists might be Augustinian in outlook, conservative Seventh-day Adventists are not Pelagians (see n. 19 below). Because they lived a thousand years closer to our own time, we are more familiar with Calvin (1509-64) v. Arminius (1560-1609) (who opposed Calvin posthumously), but that debate also was merely a reenactment of the earlier one.

¹⁸It would be nice to have a Scripture index to the writings of Augustine. The closest substitute for such a document that I have been able to find is an article in Anne-Marie la Bonnardière, ed., *Saint Augustin et la Bible* [Saint Augustine and the Bible] (Beauchesne, 1986) entitled, "Bible et polémiques" [Bible and polemics], by the editor of the above volume (see pp. 329-52). But in her paper it is not stated whether Augustine ever comments on Gen 2:18, the passage in question. In the absence of further information we can at least say that that passage did not figure prominently enough in the debate for its place to be remembered in the above article. It should have.

¹⁹Pelagius made a similar point. He argued that the fall did not affect that part of man's nature which allows him to choose whether or not to sin. And if we limit the discussion to man's motor control over his muscles (which was the extent of Pelagius' concept of sin), he was right. But the reason why it is possible to say this is that Pelagius had a shallow understanding of the spirituality of the law. For him obedience was merely a physical act. "Pelagius, sufficiently trained in the usage of Aristotelian categories to separate the instance from the essence,

argued that sin could not constitute a real being (*substantia*), nor a penalty (*vindicta*), nor a source of other sins: that it is nothing but an 'act' of disobedience, a free manifestation, and thus responsible for our *superbia* [pride]" (Plinval, *Pélage*, pp. 235-36).

²⁰See Richard M. Davidson, "The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26 (1988): 1-4.

²¹The following story is reported by Esther Matteson, Wycliffe Bible translator to the Piro Indians living along a tributary of the upper Urubamba River in southern Peru (one of the remotest headwaters of the Amazon). A man who had been converted to Christ through her efforts says, "I think of my father who is dead. He kept searching for God's Word. He went far in his search for God's Word. This is the way he would talk when he told us about it. He said he was waiting, wanting to know God. "Is God the sun, or a star, or a stone?" he would say. And then he told us that he went far off where there was a vine called *ayahuasca*, which was said to cause one to see God. He pressed out its juice and drank it, because he wanted to see God. That's the way he told it to us" (Ethel E. Wallis and Mark A. Bennett, *Two Thousand Tongues to Go: The Story of the Wycliffe Bible Translators* [New York: Harper & Row, 1964], pp. 180-81). What a spectacle this man's quest must have been for angels present on both occasions who had seen Adam walk and talk with God face to face in the garden.

²²The phenomenon of religion has been studied in any number of ways. Here are two of them. In their book, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, use techniques developed in connection with linguistic universals to understand religious ritual. They speak of "substantive and formal universals" (*ibid.*, p. 122) and of "functional universals" (p. 123). What they say about these universals is immaterial. My point is that they speak in universal terms, thus confirming that all cultures express the religious impulse in some way.

Ninian Smart, on the other hand, takes a psychological approach. Chapter 6 of his book, *The Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), is entitled, "On Some Theories of Religion." The theories he discusses are those of Sigmund Freud, Karl Jung, and Emile Durkheim. Freud saw religion as a mental scar that has developed over time due to the "operation of natural drives or instincts" (see *ibid.*, pp. 181). Jung saw it as "a set of inherited unconscious traits" (p. 182) deriving from psychological abstractions called "archetypes." For Durkheim religion develops, not at the level of the individual, but at the level of society as a whole. Their various theories make very barren reading, but in whatever way, all three men--and every other who has ever studied the subject--derive religion from something. We may explain it however we are able, and the explanations may all differ, but the fact is everywhere we go it exists. On this there is no disagreement.

²³Some make a religion of denying religion. Whole societies have done this, or tried to. Nina Tumarkin, in her book entitled, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), argues that when Vladimir Ilich Ulianov-Lenin (1870-1924) died his political heirs made every effort to capitalize on his memory by turning him into an object of quasi-religious veneration. "Lenin attracted individuals excited by strong leadership. . . . Valentinov recalled that when he arrived in Geneva from Russia in January 1904, he had been greatly struck, even 'shocked' by the 'atmosphere of worship' with which the Bolsheviks had surrounded Lenin" (*ibid.*, p. 43-44). After his death in 1924 the veneration Lenin had inspired during his life developed into a state cult and the man who had never had any use for religion became one in his capacity as "the man-god of Communism" (*ibid.*, p. 23). Even in an atheistic state --especially in an atheistic state--people must have something to worship.

²⁴It is true that God has other creatures and so for that reason might not need us in the way I have suggested. But an infinite God would be infinite in love as well as power and have a correspondingly infinite need to manifest His love. Otherwise, He could have stopped after

creating the first angel and that would have sufficed. But it did not suffice and our existence is one evidence of the fact.

²⁵The above should be considered in any discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. The triune God we worship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is still one God. The fact that there is a universe, however, shows that God could not find fulfillment in whatever companionship there might be within the Trinity. Within the Trinity there is no other. But God had a need for others. Here is a second context in which passages such as Deut 4:34; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Chr 17:20; Isa 43:11; 44:6, 8,; 45:5, 6, 21, 25; 64:4; and Hos 13:4 should be read. The need for others led God to create. More than this, God's orientation toward others should give us insight also into the nature of the church.

²⁶Later on the Son of God would take human flesh and be made in the likeness of man (see Heb 1:3; Phil 2:6-8). There are differences between Adam being made in the image of God (see Gen 1:26) and Jesus being born "in the likeness of sinful man" (Rom 8:3). There are differences between Christ as Giver of all things ("he made the universe") and Receiver of all things ("whom he appointed heir of all things") in Heb 1:2. But there is an instructive symmetry between such pairs of statements. Let us learn from it what we can. ²⁷This is one reason why the Sabbath is such a perfect test now during the end time. (See Hardy, "The Ten Commandments, Part 3: Christian Perfection," *Historicism* No. 11/Jul 87, pp. 33-34; "More on Verse 40b: Does Babylon Rise or Fall During the Time of the End?" *Historicism* No. 23/Jul 90, pp. 39-42.) What it tests is our response to spending time with Jesus--any amount of time, a day is one example--preparatory to His second coming. We will then spend not only a thousand years with Him in heaven but all eternity here on a newly created earth. The Sabbath is literally a foretaste of heaven.

²⁸In a paper entitled, "Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Jesus Factor" (*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 270-91), Dennis Hamm states that, "The final major passage in which the author of Hebrews describes the subjective disposition of Jesus vis-à-vis God the Father is the *peshet* on LXX Psalm 39 given in 10:1-18. Although the Greek words for obedience and faith are not used here, the passage nevertheless illustrates Jesus' self-offering as an act of 'heart-obedience,' which is elsewhere described as faith" (ibid., p. 284). "Part I of this study showed, first of all, that our author, in his project of encouraging a Christian community facing persecution, draws upon the OT and Jewish heritage regarding this notion of faith and stresses the fiducial side: *pistis* is obedience to divine initiative and persevering trust in God as one who keeps promises. . . . But Jesus, as 'perfecter of faith,' is more than merely a model. As Son offering himself in the perfect act of worship, he implemented the new covenant (Jeremiah 31) and actually made possible a true heart-obedience on the part of the people of God (Heb 10:5-25)" (ibid., p. 290).

²⁹Ellen White concluded her April 23, 1889 *Review and Herald* article entitled, "The Duty of the Present Hour," with the words: "I pray that we all may understand the signs of the times, and that we may so prepare ourselves and our children that in the time of conflict God may be our refuge and defense" (*Review and Herald* 2:299; April 23, 1889). That is, we must learn now under less trying circumstances what it means to make God our refuge and defense so that when the final test comes we will continue to do so. From this I draw that our preparation for last events should not consist in trying to become super people, but in learning to trust God implicitly in everything. We will have perfect strength for the events before us when we become perfectly confident of our inability to do anything that God requires. "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Cor 12:9). Learning that all-important lesson is the preparation needed and having learned it, the remnant will indeed do everything that God requires.

³⁰St. Augustine's theory is in fact this; faith is a gift of grace which infused into men, enables them to produce works good and acceptable to God. The point of view is clearly not

that of St. Paul, and it is the source of the mediaeval theory of grace with all its developments" (William Sanday and Arthur C. Hedlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed., International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902], p. 150). If I understand Augustine correctly, he makes what is infused the locus of obedience rather than what it is infused into. Thus, God within us obeys but this skirts the issue of whether we also obey. It is certainly true that we cannot obey without God, as Pelagius appears to have taught. But why could we not say that the Holy Spirit softens our hearts, leads us into all truth, and brings about a genuine heart response to Christ that is our own? In this way we are not merely the stage for a charade but neither are we in any way independent of grace. Both men were equally wrong. See nn. 3 and 16 above.

³¹I say this as the father of a little girl who has just turned five. These have been the most precious five years of my life. What I write in these pages is not profound theology. Profound theology is what I see on my child's face every time I come home from work.

³²"That the expression 'bottomless pit' represents the earth in a state of confusion and darkness is evident from other scriptures. Concerning the condition of the earth 'in the beginning,' the Bible record says that it 'was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.' Genesis 1:2. Prophecy teaches that it will be brought back, partially at least, to this condition" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950], pp. 658-59). See Hardy, "A Layman Looks at the Fossil Record," *Historicism* No. 23/Jul 90, p. 58; see also Rev 20:1-6. Thus, the earth ends as it began, with Christ at the center of all history. Next the earth is purified by fire (see Rev 20:7-15). And finally it is recreated in all its original beauty (see Rev 21:1-4).

³³Here is the context for such passages as Ps 73:16-17 ("When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny"), where the reference is to the fat of the various sacrifices, which burned until it was entirely consumed; Isa 1:31 ("The mighty man will become tinder and his work a spark; both will burn together, with no one to quench the fire"); 10:17 ("The Light of Israel will become a fire, their holy One a flame; in a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and his briers"); 33:12 ("The peoples will be burned as if to lime; like cut thornbushes they will be set ablaze") 47:14 ("Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up"); Nah 1:10 ("They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble"); Mal 4:1, 3 ("Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. 'Not a root or a branch will be left to them. . . . Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,' says the Lord Almighty") (see also Isa 7:23; Amos 5:6; and other similar passages). It is Satan's studied purpose to transform the punishment for sin, which is death (see Rom 6:23), into eternal dying, which can only mean eternal living--his substitute and counterfeit for eternal life. He then seeks to blame God for the misery that would result if such were the case, which it is not, and further seeks to make this entire package of preposterous falsehood an integral part of Christian theology. That He has succeeded so well is one of earth's great mysteries.