

The Doctrines of Saint Augustine

(Bishop of Hippo – died A.D. 430)

Purgatory

“That there should be some fire even after this life is not incredible, and it can be inquired into and either be discovered or left hidden whether some of the faithful may be saved, some more slowly and some more quickly in the greater or lesser degree in which they loved the good things that perish, through a certain purgatorial fire.” Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Charity 18:69. A.D. 421

"We read in the books of the Maccabees [2 Maccabees 12:43] that sacrifice was offered for the dead. But even if it were found nowhere in the Old Testament writings, the authority of the Catholic Church which is clear on this point is of no small weight, where in the prayers of the priest poured forth to the Lord God at his altar the commendation of the dead has its place" The Care to be Had for the Dead 1:3 A.D. 421

Old Testament Canon of Scripture

"The whole canon of the scriptures, however, in which we say that consideration is to be applied, is contained in these books: the five of Moses . . . and one book of Joshua [Son of] Nave, one of Judges; one little book which is called Ruth . . . then the four of Kingdoms, and the two of Paralipomenon . . . [T]here are also others too, of a different order . . . such as Job and **Tobit** and Esther and **Judith and the two books of Maccabees, and the two of Esdras** Then there are the prophets, in which there is one book of the Psalms of David, and **three** of Solomon. . . . But as to those two books, one of which is entitled **Wisdom** and the other of which is entitled **Ecclesiasticus** and which are called ‘of Solomon’ because of a certain similarity to his books, it is held most certainly that they were written by Jesus Sirach. They must, however, be accounted among the prophetic books, because of the authority which is deservedly accredited to them" Christian Instruction 2:8:13 A.D. 397

The Authority of Apostolic Tradition

“The custom [of not rebaptizing converts] . . . may be supposed to have had its origin in apostolic tradition, just as there are many things which are observed by the whole Church, and therefore are fairly held to have been enjoined by the apostles, which yet are not mentioned in their writings” Against the Donatists 5:23[31]

"But the admonition that he [Cyprian] gives us, ‘that we should go back to the fountain, that is, to apostolic tradition, and thence turn the channel of truth to our times,’ is most excellent, and should be followed without hesitation" *ibid.*, 5:26[37]

"But in regard to those observances which we carefully attend and which the whole world keeps, and which derive not from Scripture but from Tradition, we are given to understand that they are recommended and ordained to be kept, either by the apostles themselves or by plenary [ecumenical] councils, the authority of which is quite vital in the Church" Letter to Januarius [A.D. 400]

Baptismal Regeneration

"[According to] apostolic tradition . . . the churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal. This is the witness of Scripture too"
Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants 1:24:34 A.D. 412

"There are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptism, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance; yet God does not forgive sins except to the baptized" Sermons to Catechumens on the Creed 7:15 A.D. 395.

The Justified Can Fall From Grace

"[O]f two pious men, why to the one should be given perseverance unto the end, and to the other **not be given**, God's judgments are even more unsearchable. . . . had not both been called and followed him that called them? And had not both become, from wicked men, **justified men**, and both been renewed **by the laver of regeneration**?" The Gift of Perseverance 9:21 A.D. 428.

"But those who do not belong to the number of the predestined . . . are judged most justly according to their deserts. For either they lie under sin which they contracted originally by their generation and go forth [from this life] with that hereditary debt which was not forgiven by regeneration [baptism], or [if it was forgiven by regeneration] they have added others besides through free choice: choice, I say, free; but not freed. . . . Or they receive God's grace, but they are temporal and do not persevere; they abandon it and are abandoned. For by free will, since they have not received the gift of perseverance, they are sent away in God's just and hidden judgment"

Infused Righteousness

The following quote is lifted from the book Faith Alone, written by the Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul. Dr. Sproul quotes another Reformed theologian (Alister McGrath). On page 99 McGrath writes,

"Augustine understands the verb *justificare* to mean 'to make righteous', an understanding of the term which he appears to have held throughout his working life...Man's righteousness, effected in justification is regarded by Augustine as inherent rather than imputed. The righteousness which man thus receives, although originating from God is nevertheless located within man, and can be said to be his, part of his being and intrinsic to his person."

Grace and Merit

"What merits of his own has the saved to boast of when, if he were dealt with according to his merits, he would be nothing if not damned? Have the just then no merits at all? **Of**

course they do, for they are the just. **But they had no merits by which they were made just**" Letters 194:3:6 A.D. 412.

"What merit, then, does a man have before grace, by which he might receive grace, when our every good merit is produced in us only by grace and when God, crowning our merits, crowns nothing else but his own gifts to us?" *ibid.*, 194:5:19.

The Sacrifice of the Mass

"In the sacrament he is immolated for the people not only on every Easter Solemnity but on every day; and a man would not be lying if, when asked, he were to reply that Christ is being immolated. For if sacraments had not a likeness to those things of which they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all; and they generally take the names of those same things by reason of this likeness" Letters 98:9 A.D. 412.

The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

"I promised you [new Christians], who have now been baptized, a sermon in which I would explain the sacrament of the Lord's Table. . . . That bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ" Sermons 227 A.D. 411.

"Christ was carried in his own hands when, referring to his own body, he said, 'This is my body' [Matt. 26:26]. For he carried that body in his hands" Explanations of the Psalms 33:1:10 A.D. 405

Priest, Bishops, See of Peter and the Catholic Church

"[T]here are many other things which most properly can keep me in [the Catholic Church's] bosom. The unanimity of peoples and nations keeps me here. Her authority, inaugurated in miracles, nourished by hope, augmented by love, and confirmed by her age, keeps me here. The succession of priests, from the very see of the apostle Peter, to whom the Lord, after his resurrection, gave the charge of feeding his sheep [John 21:15–17], up to the present episcopate, keeps me here. And last, the very name Catholic, which, not without reason, belongs to this Church alone, in the face of so many heretics, so much so that, although all heretics want to be called 'Catholic,' when a stranger inquires where the Catholic Church meets, none of the heretics would dare to point out his own basilica or house" *Against the Letter of Mani Called The Foundation* 4:5 AD 397

Praying to the Saints

"A Christian people celebrates together in religious solemnity the memorials of the martyrs, both to encourage their being imitated and so that it can share in their merits and be aided by their prayers" *Against Faustus the Manichean* A.D. 400

"There is an ecclesiastical discipline, as the faithful know, when the names of the martyrs are read aloud in that place at the altar of God, where prayer is not offered for them. Prayer, however, is offered for the dead who are remembered. For it is wrong to pray for a martyr, to whose prayers we ought ourselves be commended" Sermons 159:1 A.D. 411

The Primacy of Peter

"If the very order of **episcopal** succession is to be considered, how much more surely, truly, and safely do we number them [the bishops of Rome] from Peter himself, to whom, as to one representing the whole Church, the Lord said, 'Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not conquer it.' Peter was succeeded by Linus, Linus by Clement. ... In this order of succession a Donatist bishop is not to be found" Letters 53:1:2 A.D. 412

"Among these [apostles] Peter alone almost everywhere deserved to represent the whole Church. Because of that representation of the Church, **which only he bore**, he deserved to hear 'I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven'" Sermons 295:2 A.D. 411

The Authority of the Catholic Church

"If you should find someone who does not yet believe in the gospel, what would you [Mani] answer him when he says, 'I do not believe'? Indeed, **I would not believe in the gospel myself if the authority of the Catholic Church** did not move me to do so" (Against the Letter of Mani Called 'The Foundation' 5:6)

The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Mary "remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin." Sermon 186

Summary

Most Protestants consider Augustine an evangelical amongst the Church Fathers. In light of the above, how can this be? There are two reasons. First, most Protestants are unaware of Augustine's beliefs. Second, his views on predestination and grace are embraced by the Reformed tradition. But this implies the Church embraces Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. In fact, these heresies were rejected at the Councils of Ephesus (AD 421) and Orange (AD 529). The Catholic view on salvation is "by grace alone, by Christ alone", while rejecting it is by faith alone. Even R.C. Sproul, a Reformed theologian says it is **slander** to claim the Catholic Church is Pelagianⁱ. And the predestinational views of Aquinas and Augustine are permitted.

It is true Augustine was a Father of the faith. But it is **undeniable** Augustine was a **Catholic Father**. Holding Catholic doctrines, the revered Bishop of Hippo would today be denied membership in any Reformed evangelical church; in fact he would be regarded as a heretic.

^{i i} See Sproul's essay entitled "Justification by Faith Alone"