

been elected to succeed him. This new Bishop of Rome completely reversed the opinion of his predecessor, and wrote a letter to the North African Church declaring that they should not oppose the teaching of Pelagius and his followers. Augustine indignantly declared that the Bishop of Rome was utterly mistaken, and that Pelagius' teachings were actually outside the pale of Christianity. The whole North African Church agreed with him, and so many of the Christians in Italy saw the truth of Augustine's view that eventually the Bishop of Rome retracted his previous opinions and accepted those which Augustine presented.

This controversy with Pelagius was one of the outstanding events of Augustine's career. Pelagius put a desirable stress on the importance of good human character and lofty ethics. However, he carried this to the point of making the grace of God a mere adjunct or help to a man in living a good life. Augustine saw the great danger of this sort of teaching and emphasized as the central feature of Christianity the fact that man, apart from the grace of God, is utterly lost and there is nothing he can do to save himself. Augustine greatly stressed the grace of God and the necessity of the action of the Holy Spirit in order that anyone can be saved from sin. The Augustine teaching was later advanced and re-emphasized by both Martin Luther and John Calvin, both of whom are often called "Augustinians".

During a long and successful career Augustine carried on the work of the church in the little town of Hippo, but through his writings and his preaching he made his influence felt throughout the Roman Empire. On his deathbed he devoted himself to going over his many works and changing anything in them which, in the light of later study, he thought deserved to be corrected, or where he thought that the expressions could be misunderstood and could lead to wrong views of the Scripture. These so-called "retractions" showed the desire of this godly man to serve the Lord effectively. In the last days of his life, Augustine lay on his death-bed with the penitential Psalms written in large letters on the wall of the room where he could constantly read them over and declare anew to the Lord his belief that nothing that he had done was worthy of God's praise, and that he trusted to the wonderful grace