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RECOVERING THE AFRICAN FATHER: TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE READING OF AUGUSTINE

Editor's introductory note: The writer was the Charles B. Copher lecturer for 2004. Using a different format for this annual faculty lecture series, he presented twelve theses, "Augustine on Trial," for discussion by the following faculty persons: Drs. Edward Wimberly, Melva Costen, Riggins Earl, and Temba Mafico. This panel, in a provocative discussion, debated the relevancy of Augustine's theses for contemporary society. Being unable to capture this lively discussion in print, the editor chose to present the theses and a general discussion of Augustine by the writer.

Augustine on Trial

1. His emphasis on salvation by grace and freedom from the law (salvation with no strings attached) is a word of liberation and self-respect.

2. His portrayal of God as sovereign links up with Gayraud Wilmore's and Cecil Cone's vision of the heart of African spirituality.

3. His views of eternity (the reality in which all events occur simultaneously) and of life as governed by the principle of survival of the fittest have rich potential for relating Christian

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faith to contemporary evolutionary theory.

4. His view of sin as concupiscence and social sin is a valuable resource for Liberation Theology. This view of human nature also accords well with much Freudian thinking, and so can be a useful perspective for pastoral counseling. Likewise, his view of the Trinity as a union of love (the many are loved into one) has rich implications for social justice as well as for understanding health reactions psychologically.

5. Augustine was a "public theologian," regularly intervening with political authorities when it was in the interest of the Church and the people. He was a realist in his politics, not merely propounding idealistic values, but willing to use pressure to achieve justice (after the fashion of Martin Luther King Jr.). His views on war, slavery, and the Church's responsibility for the poor warrant careful scrutiny by the contemporary Church.

6. His view of the Church as mother reflects an African preoccupation with community. Similarly, his vision of the authority of church leaders links with traditional African models of leadership.

7. His insights on the role of liturgy and hymnody that advocate the use of the traditional liturgy celebrated with joy and passion, as well as his outlook on effective ministry with people (beware of the fickleness of the laity and the church leader's own ego, he warns) remain sound and valid insights for everyday ministry in the twenty-first century.

8. His prayer life can be a model for integrating theology and spirituality.

9. His advice on Christian education (overcoming any sense of weariness we might have with the task by viewing the teacher as a hen covering her brood, by loving those whom we teach, and descending to the audience's level) is still timely and worthy of consideration.

10. He broke with the prevailing model of Systematic Theology in affirming a variety of apparently conflicting doctrinal positions on different contexts. Such a model is a useful way of relating academic theology to the realities of pastoral care.

11. Augustine's attitude towards Judaism (challenging its understanding of the Hebrew Bible, but insisting that the survival of Judaism is essential for Christianity) remains a helpful resource in the present for promoting Jewish-Christian dialogue.

12. Augustine's approach to scripture, theological method, and human nature can help us challenge the relativism and nihilism which plague contemporary American society and its indifference to the oppressed.

Recovering the African Father

Introduction

It is difficult to imagine if anything can be said in a scholarly setting about Augustine that has not already been

said. Indeed, the entire history of theology of the post-fifth century Western Church might be construed as a commentary on Augustine's thought. What makes this approach unique is to affirm most of the classical interpretations of Augustine, to claim that they are correct about the African Father. In so doing, however, an implicit critique of these earlier interpretive traditions as well as of much of the history of Western Christian thought is offered. In essence, earlier interpretive traditions are correct about Augustine; most of them have grasped some essential insights about his thought. But none of them has elucidated the whole Augustine. His thought is richer than its portrayal by his interpreters. Most of them merely stress a particular set of themes in his thought and negate or ignore those themes that seem to conflict with what the interpreters have stressed. Also missing in virtually all of the Western interpreters, save perhaps a growing consensus in some recent scholarship, is a full appreciation of the significance of Augustine's African roots, the degree to which he truly was an African Father.

This essay, then, is about recovering this richness in Augustine's thought, to present an inclusive reading of the African Father which itself is inclusive of previous interpreters' insights. Many of the classical interpreters are correct about Augustine. They accurately represent him. Each interpreter is especially accurate when considering texts written by the African Father that addressed pastoral concerns akin to those occupying the interpreter in question. This insight, illustrated by this essay, suggests that there may be a pattern to the history of Christian thought, that the theological images logically lend themselves to addressing similar pastoral contexts in different settings and historical areas. Making this case is a long-term project for the

writer's research for an inclusive reading of Augustine. This article is a significant step toward achieving that goal.

Classical Interpretations

One can hardly conceive of the Protestant Reformation and its traditions without Augustine and the Reformers' distinct reading of him. For them, Augustine is *the* theologian of grace (*sola gratis*), the great enemy of everything Plegian.[1] As such, he is also praised for his role in the development of the doctrine of original sin. He is deemed as uncompromising in his insistence on the total sinfulness of human beings, on the forfeiture of free will. Modern heirs of the Reformers like Reinhold Niebuhr have likewise read the African Father in this way. In Niebuhr's case, on the one hand, he highlighted the social ethical implications of Augustine's views in a way most compatible with Calvin's thinking.[2] On the other hand, the classical Roman Catholic tradition has interpreted Augustine's treatment of soteriology as affirming its own position on salvation, as the result of the cooperation of grace and our own efforts.[3]

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[1]Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (15-15-1516), *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)*, (Weimar: H. Bohlaus Nachfolger,1883), vol. 56, 171f; [English translation: Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann, eds., *Luther's Works: American Edition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955), vol. 25, 153]; Martin Luther, *De Servo Arbitrio* (1525), vol.1B, 640, 630; Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John* (1540), vol. 47, 216-217; John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, vol. 43, Corpus Reformatorum ([S.l.]: Apud C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1834), 483.

[2]Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1953); Garry Wills, *Saint Augustine* (New York: Viking, 1999), 119-121.

[3]Council of Trent, *Decree Concerning Justification* (1547), XI.

African Context

As noted, none of these major interpretive traditions really appreciate Augustine's African roots. But Augustine himself reminds his contemporaries of his roots. Perhaps this is nowhere clearer than in his post-conversion interaction with Maximus, an older North African dialogue partner whom Augustine had first come to know during his earlier pagan period. It seems that after the African Father's conversion to Christianity, his former compatriot learned of his friend's new commitments and addressed a criticism against them in 390. Particularly targeted as the African Catholic veneration of certain African martyrs.[4] In response, Augustine seems to have identified himself with Africa, as an African. He wrote in defense of venerating such martyrs: "For surely, you are an African, and that we are both settled in Africa, you could not have so forgotten yourself when writing to Africans as to think that Punic names were a fit theme for censure."[5]

Augustine's reference to the Punic language raises an intriguing question. Is Augustine referring to the Phoenician immigrants and the faithful Christians of this group who had been canonized? If so, it would suggest his own Phoenician background. Subsequently, in the *Letter* as he followed up his rebuttal of Maximus, Augustine wrote:

> And if the Punic language is rejected by you, you virtually deny what has been admitted by most learned

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[4]*Letter from Maximus of Madaura to Augustin* (390), XVI.

[5]Augustine, *Letter to Maximus of Madaura* (390), XVII.2: "Neque enim usque adeo teipsum oblivisci potuisses, ut homo afer scribens Afris, cum simus utrique in Africa constituti, Punica nomina exagitanda existimares."

> men, that many things have been wisely preserved from oblivion in books written in the Punic tongue. Nay, you even ought to be ashamed of having been born in the country in which the cradle of this language is still warm, i.e., in which this language was originally, and until very recently the language of the people.[6]

These comments could be taken as implying that the "Punic" to which Augustine referred and praised is ancient Phoenician, which could, in turn, suggest that he himself was of this ethnic background. However, in Roman North Africa the term "Punic" seems to have referred to anyone of a non-Roman cultural background. In fact, a number of scholars have concluded that the language of the Phoenicians had largely been displaced in Augustine's lifetime by Latin and Libyan (an ancestor language of modern Berber).[7] That Augustine himself used the term "Punic" to refer to ancient Libyan seems evident in a point he made in one of his sermons in *Ten Homilies on the Epistle of John to the Parthians*, as he criticized the Donatists. These African Christians who refused fellowship with

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[6]Ibid.: "Quae lingua si improbatur abs te, nega Punicis libris, ut a viris doctissimus prodifur, multa sapienter esse mandata memoriae Poenitea te certe ibi natum, ubi hujus linguae cunabula recalent."

[7]H. Basset, "Les Influences Puniques Chez les Berberes," *Revue Africaine* LXII (1921): 340-375, a conclusion based on the fact that on the whole there a few Latin loan-words in modern Berber; there are no Punic loan-words in modern Berber. The dearth of loan-words in a language suggests that it (in this case ancient Berber), was not displaced by Punic.) Indirectly, Augustine seems to confirm this observation in *The City of God* (413-425), XVI.IX.6, as he notes how many diverse people in his region spoke but one language (presumably the ancestor of Berber), for he refers to these Africans as *barbaras gentes*. The key question is whether this phrase should be translated as "barbarous nations," as has been the norm, or as "Berber people," which seems equally authorized. In that case, we can conclude that most of the "Punics" about whom Augustine spoke, were Berbers.

the Church catholic—the majority of whom were residents of small towns or farmers—were likely Berber in ethnicity,[8] as he claimed: But these men, who much love Christ, and therefore refuse to communicate with the city which killed Christ, so honor Christ as to affirm that He is left to two tongues, the Latin and the Punic, i.e., African.[9] Apparently, when Augustine used the term "Punic," he intended to refer to indigenous African languages, especially ancient Berber. If so, his dialogue with Maximus was likely a defense of ancient Berber (not Phoenician) traditions and could imply his identification with Berber culture.

Even more data suggestive of a Berber background in Augustine's family tree can be identified. His mother's name, Monica, seems to have Berber origins, in the name of the Libyan/Numidian god "Mon." Another Berber identified in the African Father's family background is his choice of the name for the son born to him and concubine. To name one's first-born son Adeodatus (Godsend) as they did was a Berber custom.[10]

Of course, none of these facts demonstrate that Augustine might have had Berber blood in his veins. In fact, Monica's Berber-derived name was typical of the Donatist Christians in this era, as they frequently employed Berber names. But

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[8]W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1952), esp. 211-212; Brown, 220; Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI and Lawrenceville, NJ: William B. Eerdmans and Africa World Press, 1995), 36-37.

[9]Augustine, *Ten Homilies on the Epistle of John to the Parthians* (ca. 416), II.3: "Isti autem qui multum amant Christum, sic honorant Christum, ut dicant illum remanisse ad duas linguas, latinam, et punicam, it est afram."

[10]For these insights, see Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 2; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 32-33.

as already noted, the majority of Donatists were likely Berber in ethnicity. Consequently, can we assume that even if Monica's name and Augustine's embrace of the Berber custom of naming his first-born son were the result of contact with the Donatist community (perhaps through his mother), is it possible that the reason the Donatist practices persisted in Augustine's family were because on his mother's side there was Berber family?[11]

One of the most provocative indications of the possibility that Augustine might have had a Berber background is suggested in his dispute with the young Pelagian bishop Julian. The Italian bishop had been quite critical of African Christianity for its bishops' condemnation of Pelagius and eventually successful demand that the pope do likewise. In response to Julian's rhetoric about "Punic donkeys," Augustine wrote: "Don't out of pride in your earthly ancestry, dismiss one who monitors and admonishes you, *just because I am Punic.* Your Apulian birth is no pledge over Punic forces. . ."[12] Augustine expressly identifies himself here as a Punic. Thus, we can authoritatively rule out the possibility of his having an Italian ethnic background. But in view of his tendency to employ the term "Punic" for both Berbers and those of Phoenican origin, as well as other Berber-like cultural artifacts evident in his own family history, this quotation does nothing to discredit the possibility of his Berber ethnicity.

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[11]Several scholars have concluded that Monica may have been of a Donatist background. See Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 2.

[12]Augustine, *Contra Julianum Opus Imperfectum* (429-430), VI.XVIII: "Noli istum Poenum Monentem vel admonentem terra inflatus propagine spernere. Non enim quia te Apulai genuit, ideo Poenos vincendos extimes gente." (Italics are the writer's for emphasis.)

Is it not time for the scholarly community to take a hard look at the possibility of Augustine's ethnic Berber background and how that might affect the way that we interpret him? It is not an option that most of us typically put before our students, and until we do so that he will continue to be presented as a European doing a proto-European theology. Only when we begin to appreciate Augustine's own context, can we begin to appreciate the contextuality of his thought and why his great interpreters have only appropriated pieces of his beliefs.

Theological Method

Much to the surprise (or neglect) of most of his interpreters, the African Father acknowledges the unsystematic contextual character of his thought. This is especially evident in his reflections in the *Retractions*. For example, at one point, he wrote:

> Because this [refutation of the Manichees] was the subject we proposed to debate, there is no discussion in these books of the grace of God whereby He had predestined His elect and Himself prepares the wills of those among them who make use of their freedom of choice. But wherever an occasion occurs to make mention of this grace it is mentioned. . . .It is one thing to inquire into the origin of evil, and another to seek the means of returning to man's original good estate or even to a better one.[13]

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[13]Augustine, *Retractions* (426-427), I.ix: "de gratio [sic "vero"] dei, qua suos electos sic praedestinauit, ut eorum qui iam in eis utuntur libero arbitio, ipse etiam praeparet uoluntatea [sic "vouluntates"], nihil in his libris disputatum est propter hoc propsita quaestione. Ubi autem incidit locus, ut huius gratiae commemorati fieret, transeunter commemorata est, non, quasi inde ageretur, operosa vatiocinatione defensa, aliud est enim quaerere, unde sit malum, et aliud quaerer, unde redeatur ad pristinum uel ad maius perueniatur bonum."

Augustine seems to concede that in different contexts he stressed different theological themes. Indeed, he claims explicitly elsewhere in his *Retractions* that he adopts his works "to the situation of him whom I was addressing"[14]—the theological method observed throughout this paper. A good way first to illustrate this methodological commitment is to examine it in connection with another methodological issue, the relationship between faith and reason.

Observing a shift in the African Father's approach to relating reason and faith, in his hermeneutics, is not a new interpretive insight in Augustinian studies. Interpreters have commonly referred to an Augustinian synthesis of reason and faith, which set the agenda for Medieval Scholasticism.[15] This is certainly a valid reading of many Augustinian treatises. For example, in his *Homilies on the Gospel of John* as he sought to affirm that Jesus' words were for all his followers, not just those who heard them originally uttered; Augustine insisted that the energy of God is not hidden from reason, and so is known to all nations even apart from faith.[16] Likewise against the Manichee devaluation of the goodness of the physical creation, he posited a similar continuity of reason and faith, insisting that what faith affirms, reason also understands.[17]

It is interesting to note that at least two prominent interpreters of Augustine who posited the continuity of reason

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[14]Ibid., I.xiii.6.

[15]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1259-1264), I.7; Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 16-24.

[16]Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel* (ca. 416-417), 106.4; cf.3; also see Augustine, *Soliloquies* (387), I.12-14.

[17]Augustine, *Concerning the Nature of Good, against the Manichees* (404), 24; cf. Augustine, *On Free Will* (394), III.xxiii.70.

and faith had similar pastoral purposes in view as the African Father when they posited these commitments. The apologetic concern to reach out to all is evident in the theologies of both Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. And, as Augustine was concerned to affirm the goodness of the physical creation against the Manichees, so Calvin was concerned to affirm a strong doctrine of creation.[18] The affirmation of the continuity of reason and faith seems closely linked to these two pastoral purposes, throughout the history of Christian thought (especially the history of Augustinian interpretation). The continuity of reason and faith is not the only position that Augustine took on this issue. At several points in his career, he insisted on the impotence of reason in matters of faith, most notably when he encountered the Manichee overemphasis on reason or against Pelagianism in all its forms.[19]

Although other interpreters have not typically highlighted this appreciation of the African Father's dialectical relation between reason and faith, some like Martin Luther have seen him as an ally in the sense of inspiring their own dialectical thinking. Thus, Luther invokes him as an ally in teaching that God commands the impossible and in maintaining a letter-spirit (Law-Gospel) dialectic, even hinting that the African Father was a proponent of freedom from the Law. In making these affirmations the Reformer was responding to Pelagian-like views, just as these same concerns inspired Augustine's insistence on the contrast between reason and faith.[20] In fact, it is in

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[18]Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.4; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), pref.; I.III.2; I.XIV-I.XVI.

[19]Augustine, *On the Profit of Believing* (ca. 412), 9,23,26-27; Augustine, *The City of God* (413-425), XVIII.XLII.41.

[20]Luther sees him as an ally in teaching that God commands the impossible (*Lectures on Romans* [1515-15163], *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol.56, 356 and the letter-spirit (Law-Gospel) dialectic (*Heidelberq Disputation* [1518], *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. l, 355-356,369. He attributed to Augustine the position that which the Law demands is given by the Gospel without the Law (Ibid., 364). He cites Augustine as wishing to be unfettered by other writings unless they agree with Scripture, *Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's Writings* (1539), *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 50, 657.

response to Pelagius that Augustine himself asserted in *On Grace and Free Will* that God commands the impossible and in the same work as well as in *On the Spirit and the Letter* posited the Law-Gospel distinction. In his *Commentary of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* he went so far as to claim that you can "act as you desire, so long as you are acting with love."[21]

A pattern in the history of the interpretation of Augustine is evident in this data. His interpreters tend to correctly portray the African Father's thought when addressing pastoral concerns similar to the ones Augustine identified upon discussing the points stressed by a particular interpreter. This is because his interpreters naturally gravitate to those Augustinian treatises *in* which the African Father was addressing concerns like the ones which motivated them. On the one hand, such dynamics suggest that there may be a pattern to the use of Christian concepts throughout the history of the Church, that some concepts more logically address certain perennial pastoral issues better than others. In the case of theological method we can tentatively conclude that positing a continuity between reason and faith works best when the theologian's purpose is to do apologetics or to assert the goodness of the physical creation. On the other hand, stressing the discontinuity of reason and faith seems best employed when combating Pelagianism.

Grace and Free Will

It is also generally recognized that neither the Catholic nor the Protestant Reformers' readings of Augustine have the whole story. Certainly, in many of the anti-Pelagian

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[21]Augustine, *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (n.d.), 57; Augustine, *Ten Homilies on the Epistle of John* (ca. 416), VII. 8; Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, (426/427), 32, 37; Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* (412), 29; Augustine, *Letter to Anastasius* (412/413), CXLV.3.

writings the Reformers have interpreted the African Father with precision. Their concern to affirm that salvation is by grace alone, the bondaged will, and even Calvin's endorsement of the doctrine of double predestination are unambiguously endorsed by Augustine.[22] In fact, the African Father makes all these affirmations with concerns like theirs, to refute the Pelagian heresy (except in the case of double predestination) when he is expounding on the logic of the Christian faith (telling the Story). For example, in *A Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints* he writes:

> And He [Jesus] says that a man is justified by faith and not by works, because faith itself is first given, from which may be obtained other things. . . .Faith, then, as well in its beginning as in its completion is God's gift; and let no one have any doubt whatever, unless he desires to resist the plainest sacred writings, that this gift is given to some, while to some it is not given.[23]

There has been general scholarly consensus that the characteristic Eastern Church's concept of *theosis* is not typically advocated by Augustine. However, at least on one occasion, in *On the Trinity,* he employed images either

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[22]For Augustine's affirmation of the bondaged will, see *A Treatise on Nature and Grace* (415), 79; Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith. Hope and Love* (421), XXX. For his teaching of justification by grace, see *On the Spirit and the Letter* (412), 15; Augustine, *A Treatise on the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin* (418), 14.

[23]Augustine, *A Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints* (428/429), 12,16: "Ex fide autem ideo dicit justi£icari hominem, non ex operibus, quia ipsa prima datur, ex qua impetrentur caetera, quae proprie opera nun cupantur, in quibus juste vivitur." "Fides igitur, et inchoata, et per£ecta, donum Dei est: et hoc donum quibusdam dari, quisbusdam non dari, omnio non dubiet, qui non vult manifestissimis sacris Literis repugnare." Cf. Augustine, *A Treatise on the Gift of Perseverance* (428/429), 25.

affirming this concept or the idea of conformity to Christ (the idea that the believer has been united to Christ like a bride to the groom sharing all things in common, so that every spiritual gift that the believer has derives from Christ, the groom). The African Father wrote:

> And we must understand it to be said on account of this perfection [our renewal in Christ], that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. . . . 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit'. . . .The mind will be raised to the participation of His being, truth and bliss which is His own. In the being, joined to it is perfect happiness, it will live a changeless life and enjoy the changeless vision of all that it will behold.[24]

Alongside these affirmations, though, one can also identify texts in which Augustine spoke of salvation in terms of the cooperation of grace and good works, and others in which he expressly affirms free will. Correlated with such affirmations is a construal of Providence and election in relation to divine foreknowledge.[25] These affirmations tend to emerge in situations when he was addressing moral

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[24]Augustine, *On the Trinity* (ca. 410), XIV.XIX.25; XIV.XIV,20: "Propter cuius perfectionem dictum intelligendum est: Similes ei erimus quoniam uidebimus eum sicuti est. . . .Oui autem adhaeret domino unus spiritus est, accedente quidem ista ad participationem naturae, ueritatis et beatitudinis illius, non tamen crescente illo in natura, ueritate et beatitudine sua. In illa itaque natura cum feliciter adhaeserit immutabile uidebit onme quod uiderit." For a clear instance of Augustine's endorsement of the concept of Conformity to Christ, see *Letter to the Lady Juliana* (416), CLXXXVIII.

[25]For Augustine's unambiguous affirmation of free will against the Manichees, see *On Free Will* (ca.396), 55, 65. For instances when he posits a relationship between predestination and divine foreknowledge, see Ibid., 8,11; Augustine, *A Treatise on the Gift of Perseverance*, 35. Of course in other contexts, the African Father insisted that predestination is not contingent of foreknowledge; see *Treatise on Rebuke and Grace* (426/427), 36.

laxity, the general refusal of the Manichees to acknowledge human responsibility, or the importance of preaching. It is no accident that on these occasions, when his remarks seem almost Pelagian, the African Father was addressing concerns not unlike those which motivated his British opponent. In a similar manner, when dealing on one occasion with the question of whether God causes evil, Augustine claimed that God merely withdraws aid when evil transpires.[26]

As previously noted, Augustine's soteriology has been claimed by Roman Catholic theology and with valid warrant.[27] The characteristic Catholic affirmation of justification as the result of the cooperation of grace and works (with a priority on the work of grace) was articulated by Augustine. Typically, he affirmed this concept in works when he addressed concerns about sloth in the Christian life, or that grace might reduce us to mere robots. For example, in *On Grace and Free Will* he wrote: "He operates, therefore without us, in order that we may will; but when we will, and so will that we may act, He co-operates 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."[28]

There is much consensus among scholars that this sort of preoccupation with sanctification seems to underlie Catholic theology.[29] Thus, it is hardly surprising that in instances when Augustine addressed his concern, his Roman

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[26]Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John* (416), LIII.6, 4.

[27]See note 3, for a reference.

[28]Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* (426/427), 33: "Ut ergo velimus, sine nobis operatur; cum autem, volumus, et sic volumus ut faciamus, nobiscum cooperatur: tamen sine illo vel operante ut velimus, vel cooperante cum volumus, ad bona pietatis opera nihil valemus."

[29]Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue, *Denver Report* (1971), 7.

Catholic interpreters most correctly represent him. (Another context in which such a Catholic-like construal of justification as the cooperation of grace and works, correlated with a notion of God's "permissive will," appears is in works of apologetics like *Of True Religion*.[30]) We have noted that this traditional version of the African Father is a bit less accurate in instances when he addressed other concerns (especially the Pelagian heresy or articulated the narrative logic of the Christian faith). Thus, the classical interpreters of Augustine all seem to have some validity. They are most correct about his thought, it seems, in contexts when the African Father was addressing concerns like those of the interpreter in question.

Conclusion

The case for this sort of a more inclusive reading of Augustine can be readily expanded to other doctrinal loci, like the sacraments, atonement, social ethics, and eschatology. Regarding sacraments, we would, of course, expect Augustine to endorse the idea that Christ is *really present*. He does this when describing what the Church is doing in worship and how it relates to Christ's Work.[31] But in other contexts, when defending faith from the onslaughts of reason or when urging the practice of Christian living in face of con-

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[30]Augustine, *Of True Religion* (390), 24, 28, 11.

[31]Augustine, *On the Trinity*, III.X.21; Augustine, *On Baptism. against the Donatists* (ca.400), vol.8.9; Augustine, *Sermons* (391-430), 227. While merely describing the logic of what Christ has done for us, in *Lectures on the Gospel of St. John* (416), LXXX.3, Augustine employs the idea of the sacraments as a "visible Word," a theme employed by seventeenth century Protestant Orthodoxy (See John Gerhard, *Loci Communes Theologici* [1610-1622], XVIII.11.) and modern heirs like Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 3ff.

frontation with evil, Augustine takes a different position. He employed language suggesting that the sacraments had the status of "signs," perhaps more like Calvin taught. Thus, in his *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, describing the evil that David and Jesus confronted with forebearance, the African Father wrote: " . . .by that so great and so wonderful forebearance of our Lord; in that He bore so long with him [Judas] as if good, when He was not ignorant of his thoughts; in that He admitted him to the Supper in which He committed and delivered to His disciples the figure of His Body and Blood."[32]

Similar contextual patterns are evident when the Augustine reflected in his thinking about the atonement. When merely explaining the logic of Christian faith, telling the Story, he opted for a view of Christ as conquering the forces of evil, death, and chaos.[33] But when addressing matters related to living or practicing the Christian life, the African Father portrayed Christ's atoning work as a sacrifice paid not to the devil, but to God.[34]

Likewise diversity in Augustine's thinking about eschatology can be identified, and this diversity also seems relat-

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[32]Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* (n.d.), III:I: "... ipsa Domini nostri tanta et tam miranda patientia, quod eum tamdiu pertulit tamquam bonum, cum eiua tamdiu pertulit tamquam bonum, cum eius cogitationes non ignoraret, cum adhibuit ad conuiuium in quo corpis et sanguinis sui figuram discipulis commendauit et tradidit. . . . " cf. Augustine, *Lectures on the Gospel of St. John*, XXVII.1; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.XIV; IV.XVII.

[33]Augustine, *The Confessions* (397), IV.XII.19; Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XV.XIX.34; Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* (426/427), 27.

[34]Augustine, *The Enchiridion* (420), 33, 41, 62. The treatise's preoccupation with Christian life is evident in Ibid., 6. Themes suggestive of both the classic view and the satisfaction theory appear side-by-side in Augustine, *The Confessions*, X.XLII, as he both considered the logic of Christ's atoning work and how to live the Christian life.

ed to the different pastoral concerns or contexts which he addressed. For example, one finds him referring to the redeemed in heaven both having a body, when describing the logic of Christian faith, and without a body, when seeking to encourage Christian living. When articulating the logic of faith (how heaven compares to our earthly existence) in *The City of God* and elsewhere when responding to Pelagian-like views, Augustine articulates a view most compatible with Protestant readings of him, claiming that we are saved by faith.[35] Yet in other contexts, when addressing questions about the character of the Christian life, he sounded more Catholic referring to a kind of purgatory where the faithful dead can be benefited by acts of faith of the living and to levels in heaven based on earned merit.[36] Indeed when addressing sloth in the Christian life he even spoke of our being judged by works.[37]

Even Augustine's views of church-state relations and his social ethic reflect this sort of conceptual richness in different contexts. Thus, he can sound so much like Martin Luther's two-kingdom ethic and our constitutional system in *The City of God*, particularly when articulating the his-

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[35]Augustine, *The City of God*, XXII. XXIX; XX.VI; Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, XCVI.15; Augustine, *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* (415), XV.34; Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance* (428/429), 31. See Augustine's claim that in heaven the faithful have bodies, *Of True Religion*, 82; *The City of God*, XXII.XIXff.; *The Enchiridion*, 91. In his *On Faith and the Creed* (ca.393), 24, he claimed that the faithful have no body. Augustine also took different positions on millennialism, *Sermons*, 259.2, he embraced such speculations and affirmed that the faithful would rule with Christ for a millennium, while renouncing such speculation, *The City of God*, XX.VII, claiming that the thousand years to which Revelation 20 refers pertains to the history of the Church.

[36]Augustine, *The City of God*, XX.XXVI; Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, 90.

[37]Augustine, *Sermons*, 60.9; Augustine, *Letter to Valentius* (n.d.), 215.1,7.

tory of humankind from a Christian outlook. In those contexts he claimed that government is the embodiment of self-love and the quest for power. Consequently, it cannot legislate love. The best that can be done politically, he argued, is to ensure that all citizens have an equal opportunity to pursue their own interests.[38] A different construal of church-state relations merges in the Augustinian corpus in other contexts, when the African Father defended Christianity from charges of being detrimental to society or found himself in the midst of ecclesiastical disruptions. In those contexts, he advocated, in the traditions of Calvin, Puritanism, and Medieval Catholicism, that the state may be used to spread Christianity and that the state is well governed when it reflects Christian principles.[39]

It is evident that there are many "Augustines," and that all the classical interpretive traditions have a legitimate piece of him. This paper (and more detailed studies to follow) confirms the old "truism" that the theological diversity of the Western Church is clearly Augustinian. Theological disputes in the West are debates about the soul of Augustine. But it seems that the heirs of the Augustinian heritage most correctly represent his views with regard to texts written by the African Father where he addressed concerns akin to those of interpreters representing him. This implies that there is a logic to the use of Christian concepts (at least in Western Christianity), that theologi-

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[38]Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV.XXVIII; XVIII.II; XIX.Vff.; cf. James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (1788), 10, 51; Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (1523), *D Martin Luther's Werke*, vol. 11, 251-252.

[39]Augustine, *The City of God*, II.XIX; Augustine, *Lectures on the Gospel of St. John*, XI.14; cf. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.XI.3-4; Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine Principum*, I.14.

cal formulations lend themselves to use in certain contexts (to address certain pastoral concerns) rather than others. Significant implications for the history of Christian thought and Christian theology would follow from the identification of such a pattern to the logic to the use of Christian concepts.

There is also an irony to this appreciation of the richness of Augustine's thought and its legitimate impact on Western theology. It implies that such a truly inclusive reading of Augustine entails the recognition that most of the great traditions of Western theology are rooted in the work of one with indigenous African blood in his veins, at least likely not European. Of course, if the pattern of the use of Christian concepts noted in the thought of Augustine and his interpreters can be shown to be rooted in pre-Augustinian and biblical uses of these concepts, then in a truly inclusive reading, ethnicity ultimately does not matter.