



# Augustine as a Culture Migrant: An Integral Historical Analysis with Contemporary Applications

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This research examines the present cultural challenges of the Church, and attempts to contribute insights and solutions from a historical analysis of Augustine of Hippo. Beginning with the exploration of presenting problems in current ecclesial leadership and structure along with questions that emerge from the identified problems, a synopsis of previous literature on Augustine was arranged to set the stage for a transdisciplinary analysis. Socio-cultural, philosophical, and organizational disciplines are used to observe the key influencers, educational development, occupational roles, preaching ministry, theological ministry, pastoral ministry and philosophical contributions of Augustine. Socio-cultural mapping of Augustine's life revealed the significant themes of culture icons, resisting authority structures, compliance versus volition, and socio-cultural impact upon preaching. From these historical themes, an application to current ecclesial challenges was presented.

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The current ecclesial environment is challenged with a multiplicity of factors that suggest a sea of change for the Church in the near future. As society at large transitions from a positivistic rationally dominated worldview to a culture that embraces the premises found in post-modernity, there are significant challenges awaiting ecclesial organizational structures and leadership. It is in this whirlwind of uncertainty that the Church must find its ontological bearings in order to navigate its future course. Many who are in a position to lead the Church through this era of change look toward the analysis of perceived culture movement as a harbinger of the future essence of ecclesial structure and leadership. However, doing so without a diversified perspective and analysis is dangerously myopic. In addition to inspection of the present condition of the Church, ecclesial leaders would benefit from the ressourcement of authoritative sources of the Christian faith, historical analysis, and a broad range of interpretive lenses that are supplied by various disciplines in their quest to understand the future direction of the Church. It is with this motivation that this research attempts to shed

light upon the modern Church using an integral approach to analyze the historical figure of Augustine of Hippo.

This research begins with the exploration of presenting problems in current ecclesial leadership and structure along with questions that emerge from the identified problems. From here research insights will be drawn from an integral analysis of Augustine that includes socio-cultural, philosophical, and organizational dynamics. Finally, these emerging themes will be addressed in a discussion of how this historical research might inform the current ecclesial challenges.

### **An Ecclesial Conundrum**

Throughout the history of the Church, there has been a convergence of social and cultural factors that contribute to a dynamic and influential environment in which doctrines, expression of worship, forms of leadership, and ecclesial structures are developed. Often changes in these core areas are examined with non-historical or an insulated methodology. There is a need to explore issues of ecclesial leadership and structure with recognition of its complex economy of socio-cultural, philosophical, and historical contributing internal and external factors (Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, 2011). Accordingly, this section addresses current contextual challenges within the Church: cultural dissonance, structural incongruity, leadership distance, and limited epistemological consideration. These challenges frame the shifting socio-cultural realities of the present context in order to reflect on Augustine's interaction with his socio-cultural realities of similar nature.

### **Cultural Dissonance within the Church**

There is an ecclesial crisis for the global church and particularly the church in America that should not be ignored. As one contemplates the major trends in the religious landscape (Cooperman, 2015) there are missional, ecclesiological, and epistemological conundrums revolving around the cultural and philosophical orientations that are clearly vying for cultural dominance. Postmodernity and the emerging movement have become a definite threat to traditional evangelical ecclesiology (McKnight, 2006). With many of its leaders receiving strong reservation or blanket dismissal by those outside of their counter culture, the emergent movement has shown a pervasive ambiguity that is inherent in postmodern philosophy. Consequently, the movement itself lacks a robust identity. Nonetheless, the groundswell of cultural ethos that accompanies postmodernity is clearly surging ahead (Sine, 2008). There are clear problems internally and externally for the church causing it to flounder in a cultural quagmire.

## **Structural Incongruity with Cultural Changes**

Largely defining itself along the lines of generational placement, the ecclesial crisis at hand is crying out for solutions that would bridge the growing gap in Christianity (Cole, 2010). The emergent movement has embraced deconstructionist premises of postmodernity and in so doing have assaulted the more modernist structures of current ecclesial forms (Johns, 1995). By bridging rather than expanding the generational chasm, the church must position itself to carry out the gospel mission into the next generation by using organizational structures that are in congruity to the cultural changes that are taking place in the larger scale of society.

## **Leadership Distance from the Congregation**

There is a widening disconnect between the leadership of churches and the congregations in which they serve (Barna, 2012). The ever-expanding scope of ministry responsibilities and tasks for the local pastor requires an escalating degree of organizational complexity and specialization of ministry (Willimon, 2002). It is not surprising that one key consequence of these changes in ecclesial structure is an increased distance between the leadership and the people that results in ecclesial leaders who are out of touch with their principle mission and the people they serve. This challenge, which is shared with virtually all Christian denominations, is one that cannot be put off as a passing dilemma. Recent social research on the religious landscape in America reveals that 8 out of 10 do not experience a connection with God during worship services, only 9% of born-again believers have a biblical worldview, and only 1 in 4 believers take time to serve other people (Barna, 2012, pp. 31-33). Packard and Hope (2015) conclude from their surveys of 100 in-depth interviews of individuals who have left the Church that two macro-trends stand out as clear rationales for the current disenchantment with Christian churches: 1) a loss of trust in the Church as an institution and in its leadership, and 2) an increasing degree of irrelevance of the Church to an individual's daily life.

## **Lack of a Holistic Epistemology**

Along with the dominant worldview of modernity has emerged a prevailing epistemology that elevates rationality as the exclusive means by which truth is found. Within this positivistic paradigm, proper behavior (orthopraxy) is viewed as a resulting outcome of one embracing a proper belief system (orthodoxy). Feelings, emotions, relationships or other affective components are viewed as the fruit of or externality of orthodoxy and orthopraxy (Johns, 1995). A more holistic epistemology that acknowledges affective elements (orthopathy) as an essential and integral component of truth is not only a biblically sound position, but culturally aligned with the emerging worldview.

## Literature Review of Historical Research on Augustine

This review of historical research on Augustine is comprised of four areas of distinct consideration. Initially, Augustine's personal and ecclesial journey of faith as well as his rhetorical and ecclesial roles will be examined in terms of the chronological stages of his life. Next, two theological/philosophical constructs (love and ethics) will be elevated for consideration due to their impact on understanding Augustine's socio-cultural migration. The final two subsections of the literature review offer consideration of previous historical research regarding the external influences and epistemological dimensions of Augustine's preaching.

### Historical Context

In pursuit of laying a foundation of personal life as well as the rhetorical and ecclesial roles of Augustine, this section of the literature review is divided into three distinct subsections to reflect upon three chronological seasons of his life. Each season reveals developmental markers that identify points of significant influence.

Of the patristic fathers, Augustine of Hippo stands as a pivotal figure that greatly influenced the course of early Christianity. As a testament to his enduring impact, one finds threads of his writings and thoughts interspersed throughout modern theological and philosophical articles and books. The fact that so many have expounded upon and extrapolated Augustinian thought creates a challenge in arriving at an original understanding of his intent. However, as Bradley and Muller (1995) explain, historical research of great thinkers necessarily includes a full gamut of prior and following influences to and from the great thinker's writing. "Meaning resides in the materials and ideas used by individuals and mediated by them to others after further meaning and significance have been added by their own efforts" (Bradley & Muller, 1995, p. 30). Only by analyzing both inward textures of the great thinker and outward influences of the great thinker is a holistic historical picture developed. It is with these guiding principles that the following literature review is premised upon. First, there will be a synopsis of biographical articles on Augustine including his place in Church history, seasons of life and key writings. Next, the theological and philosophical contributions to the ecclesia will be explored with specific attention to the subjects of love, ethics, and pastoral theology. Finally, the future direction of research in the field of historical ecclesiology and leadership as it relates to Augustine will be visited.

Because of Augustine's extensive writings that include both theological and philosophical conjecture, as well as his transparency of the inward journey of self, we are given access to see with peculiar clarity how life experiences interact with, cause, or set the environment for a particular turn of thought or development of theory. Augustine's life can be mapped into three general seasons: 1) birth to conversion; 2) conversion to episcopate; 3) as bishop of Hippo (Portalie, 1907; Alexander, 1997).

### **Birth to Conversion (354-386)**

Born on November 13, 354 in Tagaste, Augustine came from a family whose reputation was strong but was not wealthy. His father, Patricius, was one of the leaders of the city but he was not a Christian. His mother, Monica, provided Augustine the parental background of strong Christian beliefs throughout his childhood and into his adult life. As Patricius observed his son's natural gifting toward intellectual engagement, he sent Augustine to Carthage to prepare for a forensic career. The transitional time between leaving Tagaste and arriving in Carthage proved to be a great moral challenge to the 16-year-old Augustine. The allurements of the big city and licentiousness of fellow students formed an environment where the young scholar excelled in literary success as well as sinful lifestyle. This stage culminated with the illegitimate birth of a son that he later considered the son of his sin (Brown, 2000; Portalie, 1907). Growing more and more disappointed with his lifestyle choices and their consequences, Augustine at age 19 turned toward an impassioned pursuit of philosophy that found its way to the oriental teachings of the Manichaeans. At the core of Mani's teaching was a dismissal of scripture and doctrine of scientific proofs of all things. With this newfound freedom from faith's influence of philosophy and a draw toward the sciences, Augustine grew further and further away from his Mother's Christian influences.

As Augustine began to question the philosophical integrity of Manichaeism, the 29-year-old encountered bishop Ambrose during a season of physical illness. Between the acts of kindness and preaching of Ambrose, Augustine was compelled to go on an inward 3-year journey wherein he initially moved toward the philosophy of academics and then toward neo-Platonic philosophy. Rejoined by his mother in Milan, Augustine took a fresh intensity with the scripture, which led to a complete conversion to Christianity in 386 (Fitzgerald & Cavadini, 1999; Portalie, 1907).

### **Conversion to Episcopate (386-395)**

Following his conversion, Augustine began to fuse his Christian doctrine with Platonic philosophy. It was during this time that some of his most important books, "Against the Academy" (addressing certainty of truth), "On a Happy Life" (addressing happiness in philosophy), "On Order" (addressing the problem of evil), "Soliloquies" and "On the Immortality of the Soul" (addressing God and the soul). Although he wrestled with the intermittent untidiness of the fusion of Neo-Platonism and Christian doctrine, Augustine increasingly asserted that he was first a Christian, then a philosopher (Portalie, 1907).

Intent on assuming a common life of poverty, prayer and solitude with his friends (Alypius and Evodius) in Africa, Augustine sold all that he owned and gave the proceeds to the poor. His books, "LXXXIII Questions," *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, "De Magistro," and "De Vera Religione" were all authored during this season of his life. Though his life was becoming committed to Christian service, Augustine did not see

himself in pursuit of the priesthood. Rather, he actually intentionally avoided this designation until a spontaneous gathering of people in Hippo called for the bishop Valerius to make him a priest in 391. For the next 5 years Augustine established a monastery and upon Valerius' wishes began to take the preaching role that was typically reserved for bishops. With extreme effectiveness, Augustine challenged heresies and rose in ecclesial stature (Fitzgerald & Cavadini, 1999) (Brown, 2000).

### **Bishop of Hippo (396-430)**

As Valerius, Bishop of Hippo, began to enter old age, he requested that the Primate of Africa (Aurelius) confer upon Augustine as the coadjutor with himself to the role of bishop. For the next 34 years, Augustine carried out the role of Bishop of Hippo with remarkable success in pastoral duties, defending the faith, preaching frequently, and writing letters that were broadcast widely. In his fastidious efforts to combat errors within the ecclesia, Augustine changed the course of historical Christianity (Marshall, 1987; Vunderink, 1989).

### **Theological and Philosophical Contributions**

There are many contributions to Christian theology and philosophy that Augustine made through his writing and preaching. Two of these areas (theology of love and ethics) are briefly addressed in this section due to their unique instrumentality in understanding the migration of Augustine through different cultures and how this migration reflects in core contributions the Church theology and philosophy.

#### **Love**

Augustine's theology of love may be mapped longitudinally through the seasons of his life and ministry. His early writing of *De beata vita* (the Happy Life) begins with the premise of gaining one's desires as well as the formation of these desires with the ends of goodness. Yong (2012) sums up this phase Augustinian thought in terms of positive and negative orientation. Framed positively, "happiness is derived from desiring and having God, and doing God's will" (p.4). Framed negatively, "happiness includes being free of unclean spirits, and this involves living chastely" (p.4). Ultimately, Augustine believed that the pursuit of happiness would lead one to God, his love, and to seek to love God. As Augustine matured, so did his theology of love. Within his book *De Trinitate* and sermons on 1 John. Going beyond the characteristics of knowledge, goodness and love of God, Augustine's later works address the question, "how human beings could recognize the divine Trinity sufficiently in order to desire or pursue after God" (Yong, *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian theology of grace*, 2012, p. 5). All of this leads the axiom that as a human experiences love, this experience becomes an avenue for them to recognize and receive God's love and to respond to it.

Augustine's theology of love not only impacted the progression of the Church's theological construct, but also in a practical dynamic. When considering the historical relationship between the Donatists and Augustine, there is a clear articulation of Augustine's theology of love. The Donatists historical context was deeply rooted in a lack of love (Perez, 2010). Although Augustine was challenging their theological positions, he did so in the context of conveying love. Park (2013) concludes that for Augustine, "love (not cupiditas, but caritas) has primacy above all" (p. 120). Thus, his response to the Donatists' vacancy of love is to address them with loving dialogue.

## **Ethics**

Augustine's writings are rich with ethical and moral implications of Christian doctrine. A general outline of his ethical construct would entail treatments on obligation, relationship, goals, and virtues (Babcock, *The ethics of St. Augustine*, 1991). As referenced in the previous section, Augustine's theology of love had a particular emphasis on the distinctions between cupiditas and caritas (the two forms of love). In addition, the problems of evil, sin and moral agency, sexuality and politics represent the broad scope of ethical arenas that Augustine weighed in on through his voluminous writing. Babcock (1991) reflects that while Augustine did not solve all of the problems in his world or in the current context, he certainly played a pivotal role in opening up the discussion.

One of the historical contexts that positioned Augustine to write on sin and moral agency was his defense of the faith by challenging the Manichees. His effective repudiation of this heretical doctrine centered on the argument that sin had to involve a free exercise of will. Only then would the individual be morally responsible for their behaviors and choices. Through the years, Augustine became convinced that only the first humans sinned by choice. Of course, this created a dilemma within Augustine that he never fully resolved: "How is it that unambiguously good agents (humans or angels as first created) come to will the evil" (Babcock, *Augustine on sin and moral agency*, 1988)?

## **External Influences on Augustine's Development**

This section of the literature review approaches the impact of three external elements on the cultural migration of Augustine. The influence of his parents, Mani, and a variety of disruptive events in his life played a significant role in how Augustine perceived and interacted with his world. Consequently, the reciprocal influence that he exerted upon the Church carries the markers of these external influencers.

## **Familial Impact**

Though Augustine was nurtured in a home with Christian beliefs being taught to him by his mother, Monica, his father, Patricius, not being a believer, provided Augustine

with a set of conflicting belief systems (Brown, 2000). From this foundational familial background, one can see how a dichotomy of Christian thought from his mother and intellectual thought from his widely respected father formed a cauldron of confliction that shows throughout Augustine's sermons and writing. Perhaps this is the source of the unresolved tension that Harrison (2000) spoke of when she identified the dissonance between "...Augustine's own person and mind, between his past, but still enduring educational and intellectual formation, and his present identity as a Christian bishop" (p.217).

### **Manichaeian Impact**

One of the lowlights of Augustine was his time aligned with the teachings of the Manichaeian movement at the age of 19. Straying away from his mother's center of belief, Augustine found an affinity with the philosophical bent of Mani's teachings that dismissed the importance of scripture. With a newfound moral freedom and enticement toward the sciences, Augustine spent his next 10 years in a physically, spiritually, and intellectually tumultuous season that led to the life-changing influence of Ambrose and an inward journey of repentance and conversion to the Christian faith (Fitzgerald & Cavadini, 1999). The season of Augustine's wandering faith emphasize the importance of Scripture through the experience of its absence, but it also marked the potential influence of rhetoric with a bankrupt moral philosophy (Manichaeism). It was from this negative exposure that the positive imagery came to life in the heart and mind of Augustine. His work, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* and *Against the Academics* are two examples of how his emersion in the negative seasons of life actually equipped him to respond with a greater fullness. Augustine had experienced rhetoric's effectiveness and deceptiveness. Likewise he had experienced Scripture's lifelessness when presented philosophically and its transformative quality when brought to life. This dynamic experience was instrumental in Augustine's conception of the relationship between rhetoric and Scripture within the context of preaching.

### **Impact of Emotional Formation**

Historical sources give us a remarkably vivid picture of the early years of Augustine's personal development. The confluence of his familial diversity in faith and philosophical orientation seen in his parents, and his stint of alignment with the Manichaeans, and the multiple episodes of personal crises demonstrate how social challenges paralleled his intellectual development. Being uprooted from Tagaste and replanted in Carthage at age 16 presented Augustine a formative disruption in his social and moral perspectives. Suddenly thrust into a big city with all of its allure, Augustine developed friendships that led to a period of licentious lifestyle and moral abandonment. Culminating in the illegitimate birth of a son, the emptiness and depravity of this lifestyle compelled Augustine to look toward philosophy for answers to the meaning in life as well as justification for his own personal moral failures (Brown,



2000). The resultant excursion into the intellectual positions of Manichaeism that is addressed above is intimately tied to Augustine's emotional and spiritual development. Through his personal emotional formation, Augustine came to understand that having a merely intellectual knowledge of the Scripture (as he had received from his mother) was not adequate in itself to persuade him toward faith in Christ. Rather, in addition to the knowledge of Scripture, there was need of an affective connection with God that was fused together in the intellectual and affective transmission of the Scripture. Rhetoric is an important component of this transmission, in that its substance is both intellectual and affective.

### **Epistemological Dimensions of Preaching**

For Augustine, the pursuit of truth was of paramount concern. Hence, this final section of the literature review identifies three areas of epistemological consideration. Both in preaching and in writing, Augustine elaborated on trinitarian elements of finding truth, identifying affective components of truth that were often diminished in the mainstream of thought and using alternative narrative as a means to discover truth.

### **Trinitarian Considerations in Preaching**

Sypert (2015) sheds light on the assumption of Augustine that the fundamental purpose of humanity was found in the acquisition and distribution of truth. Through being positioned to both receive and give truth, Augustine locates the preacher and the congregant into a divinely constructed epistemological ecology. Clearly, Augustine understood that he was just as much of a recipient of truth from the Scripture as were his congregants. Accordingly, his perspective that the best preacher is the one who is actively receiving truth from the Scripture through the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and subsequently sharing this truth *ex pectore* (out of fullness of heart) with the congregation. It is within this lively synapse of truth being transmitted by the Spirit to the preacher, that the preacher is then positioned to relay the received truth in the delivery of a sermon. Just as the Word of God carries power innately (according to Augustine), so the words of men/women preachers (that are crafted with varying degrees of rhetorical deft) hold the potential of being brought to life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, there is certainly ample room for further research to be conducted on how Augustine's theology of trinitarianism (*De Trinitate*) should be considered when studying his use of rhetoric in sermons.

### **Affective Considerations in Preaching**

As one of the most neglected subjects in pastoral scholarship, the role of the affective in leadership and preaching is locked up in modern worldview (Reed, 2014). Founded in Descartes' axiom, "I think, therefore I am," this tendency to default toward relegating people as primarily rational beings and discounting their affective experience, severely limits our understanding of truth and its transmission. Smith (2009) aptly suggests,

“The point is to emphasize that the way we inhabit the world is not primarily as thinkers, or even believers, but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the world more by feeling our way around it” (p.47). This is not to diminish the importance of beliefs and actions within truth. Rather, the task of preaching is powerfully located squarely in the vortex of the transmission of beliefs, affections, and behavior.

There is substantial evidence in Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine* that suggests that he was broaching these epistemological questions within the realm of preaching. Although there were voices during his era that criticized the use of affect in speech, the dominant worldview was considerably holistic and did not polarize affect and reason (Reed, 2014). Kolbet (2010) pursued another angle on the preaching of Augustine that posited that he used a form of psychagogy that went beyond pedagogical or dialectic methods to account for human affective experience within his sermons. Consequently, the effectiveness of sermons in an epistemological sense requires that they be based in knowledge and adaptive to the affective state of the listeners and the contextual setting. This perspective agrees with Scrutton’s (2005) conclusion that “With respect to affections, (Augustine believed) there is no dichotomy between the heart and the head” (p.171). This line of inquiry is of course highly engaging of the current challenges within the conflicting cultures of modernity and postmodernity. The resulting cultural tensions have migrated to the different generations within the church creating a much-needed dialogue regarding truth and how it is communicated.

### **Preaching as an Alternative Narrative**

Kolbet (2010) observed in *On Christian Doctrine*, that Augustine’s theological doctrine of the disordered human condition provides a powerful framework in which we can get a better grasp of his understanding of the specific role of the Scripture within a sermon. According to this doctrine, when humans’ lives become disordered and in need of the redeeming gospel, they accumulate disordered loves that are calcified by human habits. When this condition exists, Augustine recognized that mere preaching to shed light is not sufficient to re-order one’s life. Rather, the preacher’s role is to present the wisdom of God along with the evidenced power of Jesus Christ. As stated above, the preacher, working in concert with the Holy Spirit, position the gospel to dynamically interact with the disordered life. The Word speaks into (or hovers over) the chaos and brings order (Macchia, 2006).

Part of the malady of a disordered world away from God, is that humans drift away from God’s narrative of intent and end up meandering along destination-less pathways and run-on scripts that make no sense. Augustine suggested that the Scripture provides a counter-narrative that addresses the individual who is lost on a pathway of disordered love (Kolbet, 2010). The role of the preacher is to have intimate knowledge of the gospel narrative as well as the disordered narratives of those he/she is preaching

to. Using both rhetorical skill and power of the Holy Spirit, the preacher weaves emotive and experiential elements that beckon the listener to read themselves into a new narrative that is in harmony with the gospel. As Kolbet (2010) states so well, “By re-directing each hearer’s attention away from competing authorities toward a sacred text divinely arranged in such a way that the very exercise of interpretation that is required for understanding it involves the reform of the mind and retraining of desire” (p.161). With the above foundations, we will now turn to the integral research of Augustine.

## Methodology

This research utilizes an integral methodology in order to provide a meta-theoretical understanding of the confluence of factors that assist in articulating the multi-faceted cultural dynamics of Augustine’s impact.

### Integral Research Method

Research being conducted on current ecclesial leadership and structural challenges has consisted of a growing breadth of disciplines using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Whether approached from an exegetical, social-scientific or philosophical perspective, the emphasis typically emanates from modern organizational/leadership theories or exploration of the Scriptures. Until recent years, little interest has been directed at the pursuit of historical research to address current and future challenges of the Church (Bradley & Muller, 1995). With the current culture of the Church reflecting the changing worldview of society at large, historical research offers a compelling perspective that transcends or perhaps reaches back to periods of time and/or key personalities that represent the Church during past experiences with different worldviews than the present dominance of modernity. Being that leadership/organizational theory, exegetical theory, and philosophic theory (to a lesser degree) are fairly young disciplines considering their relativity to the life of the Church, one cannot escape the reality that a significant source of historical data has been underutilized in understanding the current challenges of ecclesial leadership and structure.

Assessing and analyzing the current challenges of ecclesial leadership and structure is best approached with the integral historical methodology (Bradley & Muller, 1995). This methodology utilizes a broad consideration of theological topics, social concerns, politics and sub-cultures to form a complex matrix of interactive factorial lenses to view a particular historical era or individual thinker. Not only does this method offer fresh insights into the historical sources in an effort to derive a more comprehensive meaning, but because the matrix of perspectives represents timeless schema, conducting research using this integral methodology affords avenues of generalization of findings to current ecclesial challenges.

The social-scientific approach to this research utilized a conceptual framework that has been derived from socio-rhetorical analysis. Resources of other fields of discipline (such as sociology and anthropology) were used to gain a robust insight into intricacies and textures of the life of Augustine. Additionally, rhetorical analysis of speech, thought, arguments, and stories were explored as the nuances of language and communication are considered. Specifically pertaining to the context of this present study (as articulated in the literature review), socio-rhetorical criticism affords the unique blending of rhetorical criticism, literary criticism, social-scientific criticism, theological criticism and postmodern criticism into one integrated interpretation (Robbins, 1996).

When considering the value of analyzing Augustine with a meta-theoretical approach, it is essential to consider how doing so guards the research from being anachronistic. Too often the use of a singular theoretical lens leans toward importing pre-understandings into a disconnected historical context. Feil (1997) posited that Western theoreticians have a propensity to extend their biases and understandings of Western ways into research in a way that is self-serving and out of context. By using a meta-theoretical approach in research, one guards against skewing the findings of their analysis (Belzen, 2010). Thus, the integral methodology implemented in this study affords a robust assessment of a variety of theoretical perspectives on the life of Augustine.

## Research Design

Sources of literature on Augustine's books, transcribed sermons, and peripheral historical data were used to populate a matrix of factorial lenses that include socio-cultural analysis, philosophical analysis, and organizational analysis of Augustine's primary influencers, educational development, occupational role, preaching ministry, pastoral ministry, and philosophical contribution. The populated matrix served as an instrument to identify significant themes that emerge from interdisciplinary consideration. This meta-theory analysis (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010) offers the potential of fresh insights into Augustine.

## Results

The results of this integral research emerge within four arenas of inspection. Beginning with a map of Augustine's cultural migration through the use of visual figures, the subsequent sections serve to articulate research results regarding the influence of culture icons, his resistance to authority structures, dialectic tension between compliance and volition, and finally the socio-cultural impact on Augustine's preaching.

## Findings

The integral trans-disciplinary design yielded mixed results in terms of significant themes emerging from the analytical matrices. Analysis of influencers (Table 1), educational development (Table 2), occupational roles (Table 3), preaching ministry (Table 4), theological and pastoral ministry (Table 5), philosophical contributions (Table 6) and personal crises (Table 7) were independently observed with the strongest insights were being found between the socio-cultural interaction with primary influencers and preaching ministry of Augustine. Moderate insights were found between analysis of ecclesial structure/power distance with primary influencers and preaching ministry. Additionally, themes of reasonable significance emerged in the literature analysis of the interactivity between philosophy and influencers, educational development, and preaching ministry.

Augustine experienced his initial personal crisis that motivated cultural migration away from the Christian culture that his mother represented and into an intellectual culture that his father represented (Figure 1). As a young adult, Augustine migrated from the intellectual/philosophical culture to the Manichaeian sub-culture (Figure 2). Championed by Mani, this sub-culture continued to elevate the valuation of intellectual progress and philosophical grounding. However, Manichaeism further diminished the importance of Scripture and normative behavior that emanated from religion. Figure 3 depicts the migration of Augustine from Manichaeism and into a second personal crisis that has described as a tumultuous season of physical, emotional and spiritual chaos. Not really drawn to another cultural alternative, Augustine came to a limbo space of despair. Within this crisis, Augustine observed the sincere and compelling preaching ministry of Ambrose as well as his acts of kindness. With a fresh perspective of the founding culture of his mother, Augustine was drawn back into an embrace of the socio-cultural context of the Christian Church.

Table 1

Integral matrix of influencers

Socio-Cultural	Ecclesial Structure	Ecclesial Power Distance	Philosophical
Mother: Monica	Monica immersed him in the Church at an early age	Ambrose's acts of kindness demonstrated an impactful low ecclesial power distance	Maternal: Christian, ethical and moral focus
Father: Patricius	Mani influenced him to disregard an authority of the Church	Valerius' willingness to assign bishop's roles (preaching & pastoral ministry) to Augustine while only a priest	Paternal: pagan, civil leadership (curiales of the city), intellectual focus
Peers (in transition to Carthage)	Ambrose in function of Bishop	Valerius' willingness to share role of Bishop of Hippo with a "lower" priest	Conflicting belief systems
Mani	Valerius in function of Bishop		Cicero
Bishop Ambrose			Mani: dismissal of Scripture; scientific proofs of all things, philosophy
Peers (in transition to Africa)			Ambrose: kindness, value of Scripture
Bishop Valerius			

Table 2

Integral matrix of educational development

Socio-Cultural	Ecclesial Structure	Ecclesial Power Distance	Philosophical
Sent to Carthage for training in forensics	Observation of Bishop Ambrose.	Community life in the monastery	Childhood indoctrination to Christian worldview, enrolled in the catechumens
Migration into a philosophical & intellectual counterculture	Self-discovery as founder of monastery	Use of rhetoric to lessen power distance through preaching	Trivium of classical Roman education (language, literature, and oratory)
Migration into the Manichaeian sub-culture of the dominant philosophical/intellectual culture	Assignments of Bishop Valerius (to priesthood, pastoral, ministry, preaching, coadjutor bishop)		Cicero philosophy informed his years of study and practice of rhetoric
Crisis (spiritual, physical, emotional, social) causes abandonment of all cultures into a period of isolation			
Observation of Ambrose as refreshed representation of his mother's founding culture			
Migration to his founding culture of Christianity			
Formation of an integrated culture of Christianity and Philosophy			

Table 3

## Integral matrix of occupational roles

Socio-Cultural	Ecclesial Structure	Ecclesial Power Distance	Philosophical
Student	Teacher of rhetoric	Role in monastery kept the power distance small	As teacher of rhetoric, he explored the philosophical position of Cicero and others
Professor of rhetoric	At 38 reluctantly enters priesthood	Notoriety begins to elevate him leadership	
	Founded monastery		
	Ecclesial stature grew as he challenged heresies	Promotion to Bishop of Hippo	As priest, he began to form an integrated understanding of theology and philosophy that was expressed in his sermons, books and letters
	Became bishop of Hippo at 42 years of age		As bishop, he further developed his integrated philosophy and holistic worldview



Table 4

Integral matrix of preaching ministry

Socio-Cultural	Ecclesial Structure	Ecclesial Power Distance	Philosophical
<p>Early influence of Christian worldview, value of scripture, and morality</p> <p>Rhetorical skill development during and after education</p> <p>Afforded role of preaching (a bishop's activity) by Valerius while he was only a priest</p> <p>His preaching served as a polemic activity to redress the contra-cultures of Manichaeans, Donatists, Pelagians</p> <p>Premises of a new integrated culture of Christianity and Philosophy</p>	<p>Begins preaching ministry at the behest of bishop Valerius while the monastery (this function was typically carried out by bishops)</p> <p>During 5 years at monastery, challenges heresies with effectiveness</p> <p>Began writing letters that were widely broadcast</p>	<p>Preaching with rhetorical skills that connected to the common people served to diminish ecclesial power distance</p> <p>His transcribed sermons served as examples of how other preachers could use scripture and rhetoric to have a functional ministry in a low power distance context.</p>	<p>Because his preaching reflected deeper holdings in both scripture and philosophy, Augustine communicated major theological and philosophical content that moved the worldviews of the Church and Philosophical cultures</p>

Table 5

Integral matrix of theological and pastoral ministry

Socio-Cultural	Ecclesial Structure	Ecclesial Power Distance	Philosophical
<p>Linking salvation history with world history</p> <p>His books and letters contained targeted academic content that created a strong articulation of a holistic worldview to both ecclesial and philosophical leaders</p>	<p>Polemic response to contra cultures: Manichaeans, Donatists, Pelagians</p>	<p>Through the inclusion of rhetorical devices and colloquial language in his theological and philosophical content, Augustine demonstrates the importance of common people understanding deep truths. Consequently, the power distance within the ecclesial context is reduced</p>	<p>Augustine's views of the Holy Spirit and Love have significant epistemological ramifications. He asserts that one can only recognize the goodness and love of God if we have experienced some form of goodness or love in the past. This asserts a precognitive acceptance of affection as a means to attain knowledge.</p>
	<p>Established a monastery</p> <p>Began pastoral duties upon becoming bishop at 42</p>		<p>Paying attention to the affections along with Scripture, introduced a pre-cognitive philosophical premise that changes spiritual formation from being viewed only as orthodox and orthopractic exercises</p>

Table 6

Integral matrix of philosophical contributions

Socio-Cultural	Ecclesial Structure	Ecclesial Power Distance	Philosophical
	Similarity of Augustine's era and that of the present day political establishment		Against the Academy (certainty of truth)  On a Happy Life (philosophy of happiness)  On Order (problem of evil)  On the Immorality of the Soul (God and the soul)  Soliloquies  LXXXIII Questions  De Genesi Contra Manichaeos  De Magistro  De Vera Religione  Similar rudimentary thoughts of future philosophers: Darwin, Newman, Freud, Jung
	Influence on the reformed community		

Table 7

Integral matrix of personal crises

Socio-Cultural	Ecclesial Structure	Ecclesial Power Distance	Philosophical
Relocation to Carthage			Manichaeism involvement (19-29)
Moral challenges at age 16			Introspection that lead to emersion in philosophy of academics and neo-platonism
Birth of illegitimate son			
At 19 turned to philosophy and Manicheanism			Fusion of Platonism with Christian doctrine
Emotional breakdown at age 32			
Full conversion to Christianity			

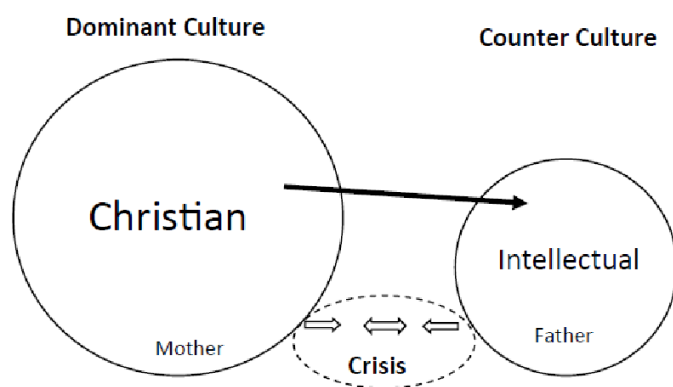


Figure 1. Childhood and adolescent migration

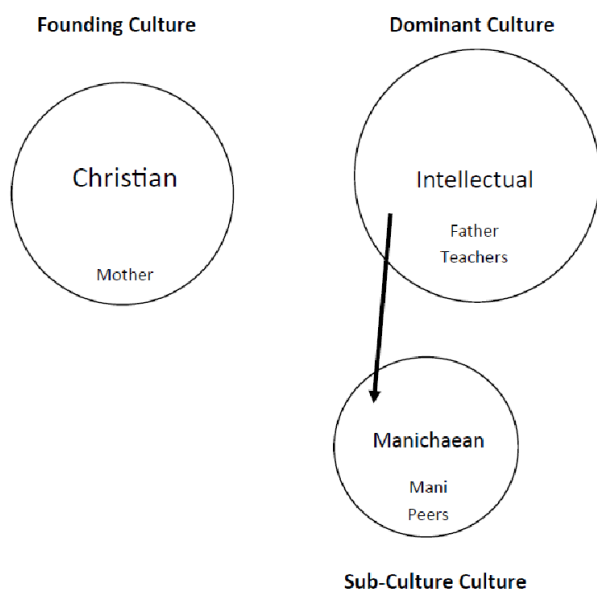


Figure 2. Young adult migration

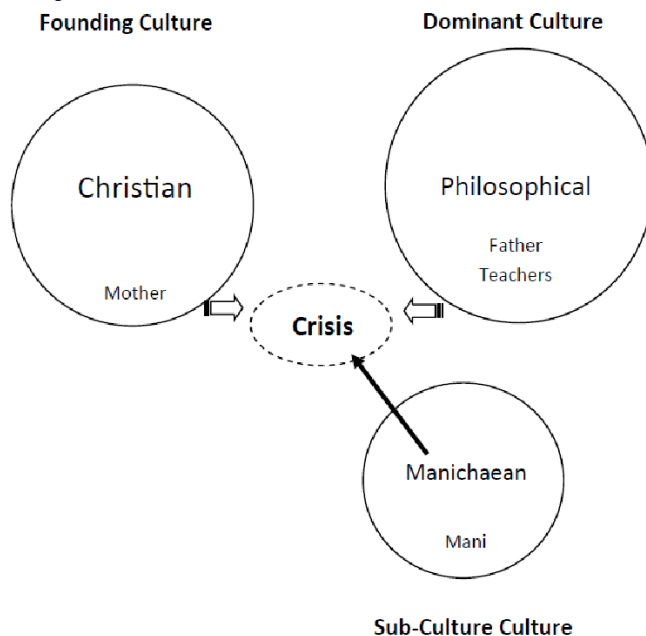


Figure 3. Mid adult migration

The final figure portrays the formation of a new sub-culture that Augustine established as his social, emotional, educational and professional experienced convergence (Figure 4). Integration of philosophy and theology positioned Augustine to articulate through his sermons, letters and books a holistic worldview impacted the Church's epistemological and pedagogical approaches. In addition, this integrative sub-culture equipped Augustine to effectively challenge the contra cultures of Manichaeism, the Donatists, and the Pelagians.

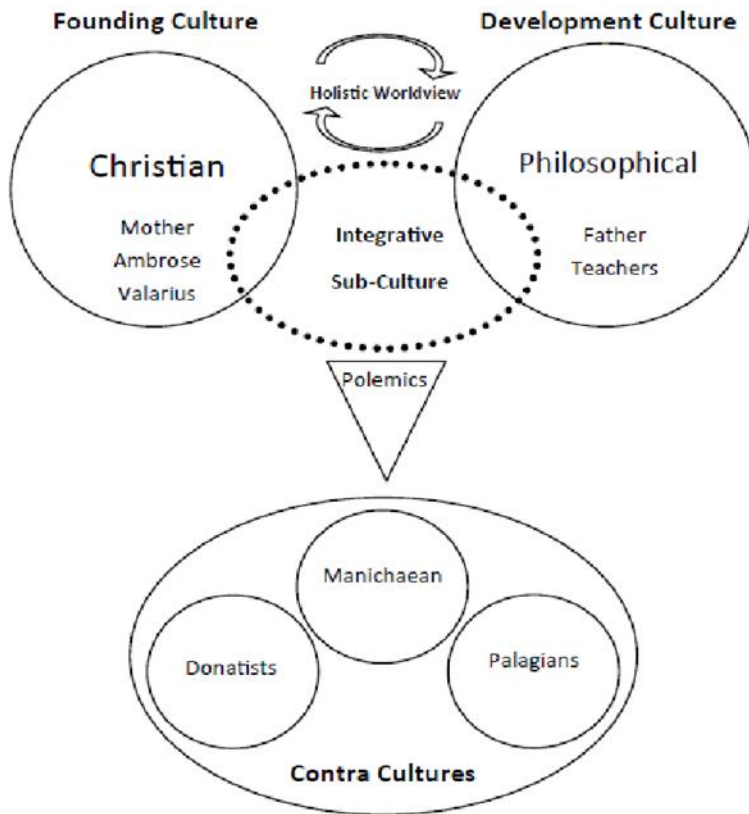


Figure 4: Development of an integrative sub-culture

### Cultural Icons

Through a trans-disciplinary perspective of the socio-cultural migration of Augustine and the personalities that exerted influence in his life, it is apparent that there were cultural icons that embodied the nature and rhetoric of the cultures that he engaged. Monica (his mother) embodied the Christian culture that was the foundational culture in which Augustine was raised as a child. Petricius (his father) represented the thoughts and voice of the intellectual/philosophical counter culture. The namesake of Manichaeism, Mani, was the personification of an offshoot philosophical sub-culture. Ambrose was the charismatic personality that captured the essence of a deeper version of the Christian culture that Monica had raised him in. Ambrose's preaching and acts of kindness enhanced Augustine's understanding of Christianity by revealing a scriptural gravitas and eloquent communication that offered a robust expression of his founding culture. Finally, Valerius contributed to Augustine's enhanced view of the Church by exemplifying a practically decentralized ecclesial structure.

The role of charismatic leadership within a culture is a critical component to grasp when considering patterns and progressions of socio-cultural migration. Augustine's life gives us an historical example of how a small set of individuals representing varied cultural perspectives served to guide the path of his socio-cultural alignment. While there may be some legitimacy in asserting that any particular personality could have represented the culture that Augustine was drawn to, the overwhelming evidence is that the unique qualities of these "culture icons" were the essence of influence, rather than a generalized representation.

### **Resisting Authority Structures**

From the analysis of Augustine's key influencers and their rhetorical intent, it is apparent that they fall into two camps: 1) those who challenged the legitimacy of authority and its sources, 2) those that defended the legitimacy of authority by affirming its sources. Both Patricius and Mani sought to present a culture that was free of the normative constraints of the Church culture by de-legitimizing the authority of the Church structure via diminishing the import of Scripture. Conversely, Ambrose and Valerius sought to solidify the legitimacy of the Church culture by reaffirming the authoritative nature of Scripture.

The progressiveness of both sets of culture icons was not invested in the preservation of the institutional hierarchy. Rather, a commonality existed between all culture icons that Augustine gravitated toward in their actions and rhetoric of minimizing power distance between those who had positional authority and the common people. Perhaps this reveals a core theme of low power distance in Augustine's ultimate worldview. When convergence came, Augustine's increased positional authority was consistently accompanied with consideration of the common people.

### **Compliance versus Volition**

The mapping of the cultural migration of Augustine reveals a telling component of personal crises. Monica represented a staunch cultural position of Christianity that impinged on Augustine's freedom to voluntarily select the Church culture. Likewise, Patricius represented a staunch cultural position of intellectualism that forced Augustine into a rigorous education that was meant to shape young men into the intellectual/philosophical culture. Hence, both mother and father were pulling Augustine toward their own culture creating a static tension. At the same time Augustine was pushing away from the obligatory force of both parents creating an internal resistance to both. Because both of these cultures were presented in an obligatory manner to Augustine, he experienced a season of rejecting both cultures in favor of choosing an alternative lifestyle that was neither Christian nor intellectual/philosophical. It could be asserted that a lack of freedom sets the cultural migrant up for personal resistance.



Augustine's first volitional migration into a culture was when he aligned with Manichaeism. Pushing away from both his mother's and his father's cultural preferences, Augustine selected a counter-culture that was distanced from both. His second volitional migration was back into the Church culture. It must be noted that the cultural icons of both of these latter alignments were presenting a compelling rationale rather than compliant rationale for alignment.

### **Socio-Cultural Impact on Preaching**

Evidence from the trans-disciplinary integral approach reveals a significant influence of socio-cultural factors on Augustine's preaching ministry. The formative impact of Monica and the foundational culture of Christianity on Augustine's preaching are clearly seen in how he approaches the value of Scripture, institution of the Church and moral lifestyle. Each of these areas were key themes of Monica's worldview and reflected in the sermons and writing of Augustine. Likewise, the rhetorical education that Augustine experienced in his adolescence and early adulthood uniquely shaped both the theological and pragmatic presentation of truth through the vehicle of preaching.

When Valerius commissioned Augustine into the priesthood, he charged him with the responsibility to frequently preach. Of particular interest is the fact that preaching was usually reserved for the bishop. However, Valerius, recognizing the giftedness of Augustine (both theologically and rhetorically) charged him to preach. In addition to exemplifying a selflessness that coincided with a position of higher authority (low power distance), Valerius gave opportunity for Augustine's preaching to mature without the constraints of holding a higher authority. Consequently, Augustine's preaching was bold, compelling and adapted to the common person via rhetorical devices. Again, this practical experience allowed him to experience the robust nature of a low power distance in the ecclesial arena.

Augustine's immersion into Manichaeism positioned him to know its weaknesses via firsthand experience. This practical knowledge assisted in his ability to refute not only Manichaeism, but also the Donatists and Pelegians. Further, Augustine carried out his polemic challenges with a disposition of love that most likely was derived from having been aligned to such a counter-culture in the past.

As Augustine entered the role of preacher upon becoming a priest, he drew strongly from his years of education and experience in teaching rhetoric. Additionally, influenced by the charismatic communication styles of Mani and Ambrose, Augustine approached his preaching of the truth with a strong conviction of connecting with the masses of common people by integrating rhetorical devices along with Scriptural truths. This style proved to be a sea change for communication models in the Church. His

preaching impact quickly took on a manifold effectiveness in reaching people. Further, the transcription of his sermons served as a model for other ecclesial leaders to emulate.

## Discussion

Many of the findings that have arisen from this research's effort to provide a transdisciplinary observation of the life of Augustine, have applicable insight into the current challenges facing the cultural landscape in the Church today. As identified at the outset of this paper, there are significant cultural problems in the present ecclesiology: a) cultural dissonance, b) structural incongruity, c) leadership distance from the congregation, and d) lack of a holistic epistemology that includes the importance of affective knowledge. Addressing these problems, the findings of Augustine provide insight into potential areas of consideration for ecclesial leaders.

## Culture Mapping

One of the most beneficial aspects of this research is found in the mapping of Augustine's cultural migration. Using Robbins (1996) treatment of final cultural categories (pp. 86-88), dominant culture, counter culture, and contra cultural nomenclature was utilized to identify the various socio-cultural contexts that Augustine migrated through. Addition terms of "foundational culture" and "integrated culture" were coined by the researcher to uniquely identify the nature of these cultures in a comprehensive picture of Augustine's lifetime.

There appeared to be a cyclic dynamic where the founding culture was eventually revisited with greater depth that emanated from Augustine's personal experience and the influence of others. Current ecclesial leaders can effectively interject new identities that are currently interacting into the general cultures that Augustine migrated through. As such, the foundational culture, counter cultures and integrated cultures of today's ecclesial challenges can be mapped for similarities.

Much consternation exists in the current ecclesial context with regard to the emerging counter cultural rejections of the dominant Church culture. Determining the distinction between a counter culture of substance and contra cultures of heresy requires time to elapse and thoughtful engagement. One might note that Augustine approached his polemic ministry that challenged the veracity of the Manicheans, Donatists, and Pelegians with a strikingly poignant demeanor of love (Park, 2013). Similarly, challenges aimed at contra ecclesial cultures that have wavered in fidelity to truth are most effectively addressed by those who approach the conversation in love and who have had personal exposure to the sub-culture for a period of time. If allowed, these counter cultures (whether from within the church or secularly based) can actually provide essential insights into blind spots of neglect in the present ecclesial structures (Deck, 2016)

## Culture Icons

When looking at the Church today and the cultural transitions occurring within society at large, consideration must be given to the charismatic personalities that are representing the cultures themselves. The ideas and ideals of any culture will have outstanding cultural icons that provide the key influence of the migration patterns of Christians finding their way. These cultural icons will either exert positive/compelling influence or negative/repulsive influence upon the crowd of cultural migrants in the Church. Somewhat like a contest, the vying cultures compete for the heart and mind of the migrants. The culture that successfully engages the migrant population gains personal equity, momentum and dominance.

## Institution Check

The institution of the Church, like any other form of organization, wrestles with the tendency of its structural form drifting into increasing disconnection from its ontological purpose. Culture alternatives, whether emanating from within the Church or from a secular origin often serve to reveal mission drift and institutionalization that overvalues form over purpose. Scripture anchors the true Church as it struggles through these challenges, as it is the ultimate source of the Church's authority. Barth (1936) in *Church Dogmatics* warns that the Church has a propensity for domesticating the Bible. When this happens, the distance between the Scripture and the Church positions the Bible to testify against the Church (pp.298-300). In an effort to correct institutionalization, some counter cultures will attack the source of legitimacy (such as Manichaeism) in an attempt to discredit the institution. Others will segregate the source of authority from the institutional structure. It is essential for ecclesial leaders to hold strongly to fidelity with the Scripture. In so doing, they create openness toward legitimate criticism of the Church.

Examples of this are found in the emergent movement's varying degrees of diminishing the authority of Scripture. An opportunity presents itself for a legitimate critique of the Church that comes from *ressourcement* of the Scripture. This could begin with a fresh holistic epistemology that includes orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy. The inclusion of affective knowledge offers a hermeneutic that transcends mere positivistic modernism while retaining fidelity to the Scripture.

## The Danger of Demands

Whether by intention or by simple perplexity, ecclesial leaders and family members often create an environment of cultural absolutism that demands compliance to the normative behavior of the foundational Church culture. Taking a lesson from our findings of Augustine, this sort of absolutism would likely create a migrant resistance to the foundational culture rather than compliance. Equally, counter cultures are just as

guilty of exerting as obligatory compliance that has no tolerance of variation in perspective. Often this takes the form of a harsh criticism of the existing institution of the Church with no room given for alternative viewpoints or honor.

Both of these dispositions will increase the likelihood that the cultural migrant will spiritually stall outside of all Church cultures and thus experience a season of crisis. Taking a cue from Ambrose and Valerius, Church cultures would do better to let the integrity of their perspective be compelling enough for people to voluntarily align.

### **A Word on the Word**

In concert with the actions of Valerius, it would be beneficial for ecclesial leaders in higher positions to create room for younger voices that have the aptitude and giftedness to speak into contexts above their typical listenership. Doing so would have the effect of infusing bold fresh truth that has not been neutered through age, experience or prestige. It would also lend toward a lower ecclesial power distance that can correct wayward institutionalization and groupthink from within the Church culture. Proactivity toward empowering and giving stage to ecclesial leaders from the younger generation will position the Church to positively shape future ecclesiology from a positive and assertive disposition rather than a negative and reactive disposition.

It would be safe to assume that the errant contra cultures that will emerge in opposition to the Church (this is not to say that all counter cultures are errant) will best be refuted by those who will have had a personal experience in those very cultures as did Augustine with Manichaeism.

As the means of communication changes with lightning speed in this current culture, ecclesial leaders can learn from Augustine's innovative use of rhetoric to take the gospel forward in an unprecedented way. Young ecclesial leaders will have similar opportunities as they tap into other disciplines, experiences and areas of external expertise to enhance presentation and receptivity of the gospel.

### **Conclusion**

The intent of this research was to consider the present condition of the Church, and to attempt to contribute toward finding insights and solutions from a historical analysis of Augustine of Hippo. Beginning with the exploration of presenting problems in current ecclesial leadership and structure along with questions that emerge from the identified problems, a synopsis of previous literature on Augustine was arranged to set the stage for a transdisciplinary analysis. The researcher sought to use socio-cultural, philosophical, and organizational disciplines to observe the key influencers, educational development, occupational role, preaching ministry, theological ministry, pastoral ministry and philosophical contributions of Augustine. Socio-cultural mapping of

Augustine's life revealed the significant themes of culture icons, resisting authority structures, compliance versus volition, and socio-cultural impact upon preaching.

From these historical themes, a unique and holistic perspective is considered that seeks understanding of how individuals migrate through religious and social cultures along their life's journey. The multi-faceted influence of cultural icons and varied experiences become the ingredients through which God guides the individual leader into convergence of experience, community, knowledge, aptitude and opportunity.

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### About the Author

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