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AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO: A HISTORICAL THEOLOGY SURVEY CRITIQUE

By

Zachary M. Monte

Honors Scholarship Project

Submitted to the Faculty of

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Abstract

This study evaluates how current historical theology survey texts understand and present the theology of Augustine. The texts are examined to assess the following: accuracy of presentation on discussed topics, specific theological topics Augustine addressed excluded in the surveys, and theological bias on the part of the authors. The historical theology surveys include Gregg Allison's *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, Justo González's *A History of Christian Thought*, and Alister McGrath's *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*. The three major topics treated include Augustine's Trinitarian thought, the Donatist Controversy, and the Pelagian Controversy. The findings of this research present all examined traditions as favoring either Augustine's biblical hermeneutic or his cultural context as most insightful in understanding and presenting his thought.

Introduction

Historical theology is an essential concern for any theological system of belief. The evolution of theology has implications for the believer of any time or place and thus should be taken into consideration when systematizing and affirming doctrines. Historians of Christianity are concerned with presenting the major events and theologians of Christianity and their contributions to contemporary academic students or scholars; historians attempt to capture their essence with a goal of articulating what the Church of the past has affirmed or thought, how that thought has evolved developed, and what implications the past has for informing the present and the future.

Within the realm of historical theology, St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) stands as one of the most important contributors to the Western theological tradition. His influence was keenly felt throughout the development of medieval Christian thought and had a major impact on the theology of the Reformation era. The breadth and depth of his thought made Augustine an attractive source for theologians who were often on opposite sides of a given issue.¹ Augustine's thoughts, works, and theological categories are at the core of the Western Christian tradition and are often the standard by which new theological systems are evaluated. Due to the scope of his influence, Augustine is given a unique and prominent position in the discipline of historical theology. By including a significant voice from several different traditions of Protestant Christianity, it is possible

¹ Brian J. Matz, "Augustine in the Predestination Controversy of the Ninth Century," *Augustinian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2016): 17–40; Mark Ellingsen, "Augustinian Origins of the Reformation Reconsidered," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64, no. 1 (2010): 13–28.

to approach an objective Protestant perspective on Augustine's work through cross-reference of various theological treatments or texts.

Augustine of Hippo was a central figure at the end of the patristic period of the Church and the start of the feudal period. His theology was also at the center of the Protestant Reformation and continues to be a significant voice in Protestant thought. Thus, Augustine has been studied and appealed to throughout Protestant history, often for different purposes. One example of why an analysis of Augustine is paramount to the Church is a late ninth-century theological controversy wherein "double predestinarians" proposed the idea that God created people to be reprobates. Augustine never held these supralapsarian views but nonetheless was cited as the authority for the double predestinarians thoughts.² Furthermore, Augustine is often linked to the developments of the Reformation, though in reality Augustine's thoughts were far more diverse than how Luther represented him.³ That is to say, Luther's theology and presentation of Augustine does not entirely correspond to the vast complexity of Augustine's work. This essay contributes to the field of Augustinian studies by cross-referencing and evaluating approaches to Augustine within different Protestant traditions, represented by prominent works within historical theology today.

The purpose of this essay is to evaluate how three current historical theology survey texts understand and present the theology of Augustine. The texts will be examined to assess the following: the accuracy of presentation of Augustine's theology

² Matz, "Augustine in the Predestination Controversy," 17–40.

³ Ellingsen, "Augustinian Origins of the Reformation Reconsidered," 13–28.

on discussed topics, specific theological topics that Augustine addressed but that are neglected in the surveys, and theological bias on the part of the authors. The three examined texts, selected as representative of major traditions within Protestantism, include Gregg Allison's *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, Justo González's *A History of Christian Thought*, and Alister McGrath's *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*.

Chapter one presents the context of Augustine's life, the breadth of his thought, and the impact of his theology. This section is primarily reliant on the biographical work of two prominent scholars in Augustinian studies, Peter Brown and James O'Donnell. Augustine's own work, *Confessions*, is also vital to presenting Augustine in his own words. Augustine's journey is followed from his early years in North Africa, through his endeavors in Carthage, Rome, and Milan, and to his bishopric back to North Africa. Through these experiences, Augustine's philosophical journey can also be followed, a journey that informs how his theology and arguments are understood today. The goal of this first chapter is to lay out the essentials of how Augustine is understood.

The second chapter focuses on the work of the three historical theology texts. Each text is presented within a structure centered on three major areas of Augustinian studies: Trinitarian thought, the Donatist Controversy, and the Pelagian Controversy. This approach summarizes all the text has to say about Augustine while giving preference to the three major areas noted above and which are often discussed when Augustine is taught. In sum, this chapter presents and summarizes each text's description of Augustine.

The third chapter contains an evaluation of the three texts. This is done through comparing the three texts to each other, emphasizing the comparison of each text to other major works in Augustinian studies.. This chapter evaluates each text's description of Augustine as compared to current scholarly work in Augustinian studies.

I. The Life and Thought of Augustine

The Context of Augustine's Life

In order to understand the thought of a historical figure, it is necessary to place his or her life in its cultural and social context. Augustine was the bishop of Hippo in Roman North Africa in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The first half of his life is chronicled in his literary masterpiece, *Confessions*, which provides significant detail about his development and eventual conversion to Christianity. Like many ancient recordings, *Confessions* is both historical and theological, thus in certain areas it can be challenging to know for certain whether Augustine is speaking literally or not. Nevertheless, Augustine's *Confessions* have been recognized as reliable for understanding the events of his life until he was thirty-five years old. Knowledge of the latter half of his life is often extracted from Augustine's vast corpus of writings, wherein he gives hints about the trajectory of his life.⁴ Two recent biographies of Augustine bring together the different aspects of his life and presenting them to the modern reader: Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* and James O'Donnell's *Augustine: A New*

⁴ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 159-60.

Biography. These and *Confessions* serve as major sources for biographical information on Augustine.

The first nine books of *Confessions* tell the story of Augustine's tortuous journey to conversion. The text follows a basic chronological approach to recount the formative events in Augustine's development. The events include his upbringing in Thagaste, North Africa, where his mother relentlessly pursued his spiritual well-being, the profound pursuit of his education in Carthage, while he was simultaneously engaged in wild living, his bouts with the philosophies of Manicheanism and Neo-Platonism, and his relationship with Ambrose of Milan, which would inform his conversion to Christianity. After a well-known conversion experience, Augustine became a monk and later Bishop of Hippo Regius (Hippo). During these years overseeing a church Augustine became a prolific writer and handled the prominent issues of explaining the Trinity, refuting Donatism, and battling Pelagianism.

Early in his life, Augustine was recognized as a prodigy. His father, Patricius was not a wealthy man and struggled to pay for his son's education. This necessitated the involvement of a patron, Romanianus, who paid for Augustine's education. Patricius, however, was a Roman citizen, which meant that Augustine grew up with the benefits of a Roman identity while living in North Africa.⁵ His home had become an agrarian center in the Roman Empire and produced a significant amount of the empire's produce. North African society was changing at this time due to increased attention from the Roman administrative structure, and it exhibited tension between the traditional North African

⁵ Ibid, 24.

identity and the imposed Roman identity. Moreover, the influence of Constantine's imperial Christianity was becoming ever more present in the lives of Christians outside of Europe. This created dissonance with the Donatist schism, a theological perspective which rejected imperial Christianity and promoted a North African identity. In this rapidly changing world Augustine's parents found themselves with a son who could climb the socioeconomic scene with the potential to be among the intellectual elite of a society that had traditionally valued intellectual prowess. Augustine's father devoted his life to providing an education for his prodigious son in hopes of a better life for his family and, most importantly, his grandchildren. Although he died during Augustine's school years, Patricius established the expectations for Augustine's educational trajectory.⁶

Monica, Augustine's mother, is a central figure in *Confessions*, and spent much of her life pursuing Augustine's spiritual well-being.⁷ As a vigorously devout Christian Monica found herself in despair over her son's spiritual state as a young man, and she followed him everywhere. In response, Augustine intentionally abandoned his widowed mother to pursue his education and avoid her spiritual influence and the guilt inflicted by their relationship. However, Augustine could not fully escape his mother's presence, as he was influenced by her faith reflective of the combinations of creedal Christianity and dramatic spiritual encounters common in ancient North African religion. Nevertheless, Augustine rejected the religion of Monica as lacking in intellectual rigor and cultural

⁶ Ibid, 24-28.

⁷ Ibid, 16-18.

refinement.⁸ The young Augustine instead embraced Manicheanism, an eastern religion that understood the universe as a dualism of absolute good and uncontrollable evil.⁹

Augustine departed for Carthage at age seventeen to pursue his education as a rhetorician and seek truth from among the Greek Classics, with the eventual goal of becoming a prominent educator and orator. Augustine says this pursuit was “to learn the art of words, to acquire that eloquence that is essential to persuade men of your case, to unroll your opinions before them.”¹⁰ This spirit of influence found at the heart of the writings of Cicero and Virgil impacted Augustine’s search for a consistent understanding of reality and truth. Augustine spent a lifetime synthesizing and aiming toward that end.

In *Confessions*, Augustine presents himself as a divided person. While both seeking truth and romping around the city satisfying his flesh, Augustine begins to become distraught concerning the inconsistencies in his life. The classic example of this divided Augustine is the episode in which Augustine steals some pears, which he recounts in Book 2. Augustine spends much time considering the motivations behind his actions, as he had pears available and did not even enjoy pears. He concludes that he simply enjoyed stealing them with his band of hooligans who fancied themselves intellectuals. Augustine speaks in much depth about how he can sense the divide within himself and that the disharmony of his inner being torments him.

⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁹ Ibid, 22.

¹⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.6.2.

Alongside Augustine's study to become an excellent debater and orator was a deeper meta-narrative of a search for true wisdom. During his time in Carthage, Augustine was impressed with the Manicheans, a group that considered their teacher, Mani, the true "Apostle of Christ." Augustine was impressed with their rhetoric and overall presentation, something he perceived as lacking in the Christianity of his day. He saw in their texts a more eloquent communication than the crude ancient Hebrew writings that comprised the Old Testament. Along with their eloquence, Augustine was initially impressed with the Manichean answer to the question of evil. He found their answer to the question, "From what cause do we do evil?" to be more compelling than his perception of the Christian response.¹¹ The Manichaean solution was to posit a dualistic universe, where good and evil were eternally warring entities and where humans were predestined to good and evil acts.¹² For a time, Augustine was open to the Manichaean answer to the problem of evil, as it provided a simple answer to theodicy and relieved him of responsibility for his actions.

Initially, becoming a Manichean hearer was intellectually liberating for Augustine. He found Manichean thought to have a refined presentation. However, he eventually met one of their leaders and was not impressed with the lack of depth in his thought. The leader, Faustus, had all the style needed to sway an audience but lacked the substance to answer Augustine's crucial questions. Augustine came to understand that the appeal of Manichean thought was the same simple appeal dualistic worldviews had always offered but with a stylistic flair. In a dualistic worldview, individuals often find

¹¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.2.4.

¹² James O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2015), 180-81.

themselves rejecting responsibility for their guilt and situation because they can blame their evil body, which their good essence does not control. Augustine saw this as a violation of free will. With his intellectual rejection of Manichaeism, Augustine searched for rhetoricians who could truly push his own abilities beyond the shortcomings of what he had found thus far. To pursue his career as a rhetorician, Augustine traveled to Rome and eventually took up residence in Milan.

While in Milan, Augustine's journey to Christianity was, through a series of encounters, completed. Milan was home to Bishop Ambrose (340-397 AD), a famed rhetorician who sparked Augustine's curiosity. Augustine was initially skeptical of Ambrose's religion but was intellectually curious about his rhetorical skill. Ironically, Augustine started to find Ambrose's explanation of Christian truth compelling. For the first time, an articulate Christian leader was feeding Augustine's intellect. It is Ambrose who assisted Augustine in overcoming the apparent crudeness of the language and content of the Hebrew Bible by offering an allegorical approach to the text.¹³ Augustine, however, still struggled with the problem of evil and his lustful nature. He would first have to find his way past the challenges of Neo-Platonism.

Neo-Platonism was essentially the harmonization of classical Hellenistic philosophy, religion, and literature; it was an idealist type of philosophy that relied on a unitary, singular principle.¹⁴ This was one step closer to orthodoxy in Augustine's

¹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.

¹⁴ Christian Wildberg, "Neoplatonism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/neoplatonism/>.

thinking due to the shift from dualism to a singular, decisive principle known as the One. The entirety of existence was derived through emanation from the One and would ultimately culminate with a cosmic re-union. The Neo-Platonists conceived of this divine principle as spiritual, rather than spatial, and showed Augustine that evil was found in moving away from the One through a misuse of the will. This allowed Augustine to intellectually come to terms with the problem of evil and to see the human free will, rather than God, as culpable for the presence of evil. However, Neo-Platonism did not solve all of Augustine's religious questions, and he ultimately found the philosophical system to be lacking a personable God.¹⁵ This ultimately raised a new issue for Augustine: that God was utterly transcendent and the gap between God's perfect moral character and Augustine's was Augustine's great trouble.

Augustine soon went through a dramatic conversion experience. Augustine had only come to Milan to teach rhetoric and hear Ambrose but found himself in a crisis of faith. The *Confessions* contain a narrative in which Augustine is sitting in a garden considering these concerns of evil, death, and the sinful divide between him and a Holy God. He then hears some children from outside the garden singing, "Take up and read, take up and read." He grabs the nearest literature, which happened to be Paul's Letter to the Romans and came to the words, "Let's behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and, make no provision for the flesh in regard to its

¹⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.

lusts.”¹⁶ It was at this moment that Augustine professed his need for Christ to God and understood that the evil that haunted him was the evil within himself.¹⁷ It is these experiences that are at the center of the concerns of Augustine’s *Confessions*. Most importantly, Augustine not only intellectually assented to Christian truth, but also found affections for Christ in his heart. After his conversion, Augustine lives a chaste life and pursues Christ.

The biographical section of *Confessions* closes on the events of Monica’s death while she and Augustine are travelling to North Africa. Augustine eventually became Bishop of Hippo, where he wrote his famed *Confessions*, *City of God*, and much more. Within Augustine’s *Confessions*, he is seen as that Intellectual searching for the truth. His autobiography is a telling of this inner life. “The *Confessions* is very much the book of a man who had come to regard his past as training for his present career.”¹⁸ This was one of Augustine’s earliest works when he returned to Northern Africa as a monk who would soon become the bishop of Hippo. While overseeing a church until the end of his life, Augustine wrote the equivalent of five million words before he died. In an age where most people were illiterate, this feat is likely unprecedented.¹⁹ Augustine died just before Hippo was sacked by the invading Vandal army, leaving a legacy full of responses to theological disputes and major works that influenced the whole of Christianity to date.

¹⁶ Rom. 13:13-14, NASB.

¹⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.9.

¹⁸ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 155.

¹⁹ O’Donnell, *Augustine*, 310.

The Breadth of Augustine's Thought

Hippo was a coastal port of North Africa (located near today's Bône, Algeria) in the fourth and fifth centuries. It was a significant port city that put Augustine in the middle of the myriad theological discussions happening at the time. One significant characteristic of Augustine's corpus is that he attempts to address almost every major section of theology, leading some to consider him the first systematic theologian.²⁰ Others argue that his theology was wide ranging but in response to the numerous controversies of his day and that because of this he developed a very robust and sometimes contradictory theological position.²¹ Nine significant themes of Augustine give a fuller picture of his contributions to Western Christian thought: predestination, philosophy, ethics, ecclesiology, imperial theology, Trinitarian thought, Biblical interpretation, creation, and the afterlife.

Augustine's view of free will changed radically over his lifetime. Early in his move toward Christianity, Augustine found that if evil is viewed as a perverse exercise of free will, the issue of theodicy can be solved. If evil is simply a negation of good, God bares no blame for the existence of evil, because it lacks an actual substance and therefore is not a real thing. Humanity is therefore culpable, as it was humans who used their free will to choose to sin. However, as the Pelagian Controversy unfolded,

²⁰ Due to his work *City of God*, Augustine is often seen as more systematic in Reformed circles than in other circles. The proper name for the Reformed Doctrines of Grace (often called "Calvinism") is Augustinian Calvinism. This facet will be discussed further in the third chapter with the evaluation of Gregg Allison's text.

²¹ This view is more aligned to traditions that can be recognized with Justo Gonzalez's *A History of Christian Thought*.

Augustine's view of free will shifted dramatically.²² Augustine could not conclude that the will, following the introduction of sin in the world, retained the capability of choosing the good because this would ultimately eliminate the need for grace, a position that he believed was central to Pelagian thought.

Augustine's view on predestination was conditioned by his understanding of humanity. Augustine was a major proponent of the Fall and correlated it with the doctrine of Original Sin.²³ After the Fall, humanity was unable to not sin; the human will was under complete bondage to sin and thus only free to choose among all the sins it desired. Augustine concluded that salvation must be completely dependent on the grace of God due to the radical corruption of all humanity. In fact, Augustine believed that unless God extended a special grace toward someone, he or she could not act morally. His view on the reception of grace being pre-determined by God would, in part, lead to conflict with Pelagianism, a system that promoted the radical freedom of the will.²⁴

Condemned in its own time as a heresy, Pelagianism has had a resurgence of interest in current scholarship. Historical evidence shows that Pelagius himself did not in

²² O'Donnell, *Augustine*, 271.

²³ Ibid, 264.

²⁴ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* 340-53, 400-10; O'Donnell, *Augustine*, 37-41, 271-77. Augustine's understanding of humanity can be seen throughout many of his comprehensive works such as *The City of God* or *On Christian Doctrine*, but historically the *Confessions* of Augustine have been incredibly influential to theologians and lay people alike seeking to have a historical contact for their own experience of repentance and receiving grace. Augustine's understanding of the radical corruption of human will is paramount to his understanding of salvation and grace, which will be discussed thoroughly in a later section. Augustine's understanding of his own depravity leavens his understanding of salvation with the absolute need for a savior in anyone's case apart from Christ himself. In his dialogue with Pelagius on the need of forgiveness of sins, Augustine established himself as one of history's greatest theologians and perhaps among the most influential besides Moses, Jesus, and Paul.

fact hold to the general view of the position that bears his name.²⁵ Furthermore, the ascetics who were contemporaries of Pelagius and Augustine also ascribed to the Pelagian view of original sin and free will.²⁶ With a topic such as Pelagianism resurfacing in the last one hundred years, any current study concerning the presentation of Augustine should also be concerned with the presentation of Pelagianism.²⁷

Within his work concerning the Church, Augustine dealt with the sacraments and the role they play in understanding the nature of the church. His contributions were informed by his disagreement with the Donatists. The Donatists essentially believed that if a bishop's position was taken away due to apostasy, his sacramental activity was null, as was the sacramental activity of those who remained in communion with the apostate. Those who received the elements from the lapsed bishop thus received nothing more than an outward sign without the accompanying inner grace, and the sacrament was not efficacious. Augustine's response was that the validity of the sacraments is independent of the actor and completely dependent on the action. That is, the sacraments validate themselves; the bishops do not validate the sacraments.²⁸ The Donatist Controversy was important in Augustine's time and for his theological formation because it took place in North Africa and because Augustine championed an understanding of the sacraments

²⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 384.

²⁶ Gerald Bonner, "Pelagianism and Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 23, (1992): 33-51.

²⁷ Gerald Bonner, "Augustine and Pelagianism," *Augustinian Studies* 24, (1993): 27-47.

²⁸ Lefferts Loetscher, review of *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* by Geoffrey Grimshaw Willis, *Theology Today* 9, no. 3 (1952): 421-23.

with a Christ-centered theology. Augustine believed that the sacraments were valid solely because Christ is worthy.

Augustine's view on the sacraments points toward his understanding of the Church. Whereas the Donatists held that the church was comprised exclusively of holy individuals, Augustine thought that the church was more broadly understood.²⁹ Augustine did not believe it was the Church's duty to separate the "wheat from the tares," and concluded that the church was a mixture of the righteous and the unrighteous. Augustine explained this by distinguishing the Seen Church from the Unseen Church. The Seen Church is the body of worshipers and religious folk who make up the people of the church whether they have true faith or whether they are self-deceived. The Unseen Church are those the Lord has extended his special love for Christ toward and makes up the body of believers that have true faith or will have true faith.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a unique aspect of Christianity that has occasioned much debate. Within theology proper, Augustine is certainly a pillar contributor to the Western understanding of the Trinity in his work *De Trinitate*. In distinguishing how the members of the Godhead relate to one another, Augustine's analogy of the Mind's abilities to remember, to understand, and to will is still praised for describing the mystery of the Trinity.³⁰ This work is significant because the doctrine of the Trinity could be considered extra-biblical or a critical response to early heresies concerning the nature of

²⁹ William Hugh Clifford Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 141.

³⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 35-40.

the Christian Godhead.³¹ The doctrine of the Trinity has been undisputedly one of the most challenging theological concepts to grasp throughout history and Augustine's work is considered one of the best presentations of the doctrine.

Augustine was one of the first scholars of his day to explain *homoousios* (Greek for "same substance") in Latin terms that did not miscommunicate an understanding of the relationship of the Trinity to the Latin thinkers. The issue for the Latin west was understanding the Triune Christian God and simultaneously holding to monotheism. Augustine preferred to refer to the Persons of the Trinity as having the same essence and being con-substantial. Furthermore, Augustine was one of the first theologians of his time to truly articulate the biblical role of the Holy Spirit, for many believers of his day struggled to grasp the purpose of doctrines concerning the Trinity due to the language barrier that Greeks and Latins had faced for hundreds of years.³²

Augustine has often been accused of over emphasizing the unity of God and thus misrepresenting the Trinity. In reality, Augustine was the primary influence to a sophisticated understanding of the Trinity for Latin thinkers. Ayres suggests that Augustine was influenced by many Latin traditions which struggled to separate the persons of the Godhead (plausibly due to the shortcomings of the Latin language).³³

While Augustine is strangely quiet on the person of Christ in areas such as hypostatic

³¹ Augustine viewed the doctrine of the Trinity as a presentation of what that the biblical Canon has to say about the nature of God. Most of these early heresies were prone to leave Christ outside the Godhead as a created being. The earlier ecumenical councils, such as Nicaea and Constantinople were held to consider and establish God's nature.

³² Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* 3 vols., (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001), 115.

³³ Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

union, he is often regarded as the greatest proponent of early thought concerning *Filioque*.³⁴ It is this thinking that allows Augustine to make distinctions within the Trinity that the Eastern Greek church did not because they were practically unaware of the concept. While it is hard to substantiate whether he had great part in formulating this idea, Augustinian thought certainly is the vein of theology that passed down the *Filioque* to believers today. Within Western Christianity, *Filioque* is certainly a standard facet of Trinitarian, Christological, and Pneumatological thought.

Because, as discussed above, Augustine's theological approach was deeply influenced by the Neo-Platonic philosophical system of his day, he understood philosophy as a tool for theology. He is famous for the idea of "plundering the Egyptians," by which he means that philosophy outside of Christianity can be very useful to the Church as long as the Church does not rely on the content within the philosophical framework.³⁵ Augustine saw all truth and right philosophy as belonging to God; however, philosophy falls short in that it doesn't see God as becoming incarnate. Since Neo-Platonism was so pivotal in his move toward Christianity, this concept remained true within Augustine's own worldview. It is in "plundering the Egyptians" that Augustine began to overcome the issues of theodicy and God's incorporeal nature.

³⁴ *Filioque* is Latin for "and the Son," being the decisive term to state that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The general application of *Filioque* thinking is to distinguish the roles of the members of the Trinity as well as express how each member's work intertwines with the others' work. Most importantly, *Filioque* has implications for Christ's continuous role in our life if the Holy Spirit is also sent from Him.

³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.

During the Donatist Controversy, Augustine also developed his understanding of valid violence. Commonly known as his “Just War Theory,” Augustine argued for a basis for war in light of many Donatists becoming violent in response to their opposition. Augustine argued that war is only valid if it met three conditions. The first condition is that the war must be just, by which he excludes using violence to take over property or seek monetary gain. The second condition is that the war must be waged by the proper authorities. In this, Augustine prohibits the Church and other groups from waging war apart from the state. For Augustine, only the rightful political rulers had the authority to wage war. The final condition is that war must be waged out of love.³⁶ Augustine applies the basic Christian ethic of nothing being done unless it is done out of love. Augustine’s Just War Theory is at the center of Western ethics regarding international conflict; Augustine was no pacifist but saw war as a harsh necessity.³⁷

Augustine’s *Retractions* is one of his latest works, in which he critiques his own body of theological works and expresses changes in his understanding of God, Scripture, and numerous other topics. This piece is essential to understanding Augustine’s profound influence on many prominent theologians. Many of these theologians use a certain “era” of Augustine when formulating a systematic or historical theology. Disputes often arise when one theologian understands Augustine to have developed something different or even contradictory to what another theologian has understood Augustine to affirm. These dilemmas can be resolved through an analysis of pieces such as *Retractions* so that

³⁶ This is to say that waging war with another society must be out of loving discipline rather than revenge or hatred. Geoffrey Dun, “Discipline, Coercion, and Correction: Augustine against the Violence of the Donatists in *Epistula* 185, *Scrinium* 13, no. 1 (2017): 114-30.

³⁷ Philip Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 335.

Augustine's stances on a doctrine separated by time can be distinguished. Essentially, many theological historians present either Augustine's early works, prominent works, or late works to be representative of his actual theology. All periods of Augustine must be considered in approaching an objective understanding of his thought. *Retractions* is plausibly his most prominent late work, in which he expresses completely new views on predestination when compared to works from his earlier life such as *Confessions* and so will play a prominent role in the analysis that follows.

The Impact of Augustine's Thought

In the eras between Aristotle and Augustine, materialistic cosmologies, deterministic worldviews, radical skepticism, and creation ideologies decisively influenced Western philosophy.³⁸ Born into a diverse theatre of worldviews, Augustine contended with all of these as he moved toward becoming a Christian and titanic theologian. "His reflection on key areas of epistemology, creation, the problem of evil, and the nature of free will are of abiding importance. He influenced the development of the doctrine of the church, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of grace in salvation. Augustine combated all ancient forms of skepticism, seeking to establish a foundation for eternal, immutable, and independent truth."³⁹

"No other theologian in the Western church has been as influential as Augustine."⁴⁰ Augustine is both a patron saint of the Roman Catholic Church as well as

³⁸ R. C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World* (Wheaton: Crossway Publishing, 2018), 51-56.

³⁹ Ibid, 57-58.

⁴⁰ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1 (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 243.

the primary theological vein from which the theology of John Calvin and Martin Luther developed. “He was the greatest Christian philosopher-theologian of the first millennium and arguably of the entire Christian era.”⁴¹ Augustine’s thoughts, works, and categories are at the core of the Western Church’s influences and have been the standard by which other systems of theology have been judged since the medieval period.

A biographer that lived with Augustine before his death once said, “Anyone who says he has read all of Augustine lies.”⁴² Augustine wrote as if his life depended on it.⁴³ He spent his life addressing issues and articulating solutions to such a great extent that after the Vandals sacked Hippo, the major writings that the church relied upon during the period that followed were Jerome’s Vulgate and Augustine’s writings. Because so much of what he wrote survived, his works are by and large the most influential writings of the Western Church. This makes his works the pioneering Latin texts of medieval theology. Augustine’s ability to address controversies in a manner that communicates to lay people and his achievement in addressing almost every major section of theology are breathtaking. Augustine has “acquired his authority not by being unique and brilliant and original, but by accomplishing the common task of interpretation and teaching in a way that others could share wholeheartedly.”⁴⁴

II. Augustine Presented in Standard Historical Theology Surveys

⁴¹ Ibid, 57.

⁴² Joseph F. Kelly, “Late Carolingian Era” in *Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 127.

⁴³ O’Donnell, *Augustine*, 139.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 310.

Due to Augustine's immense impact on Christian theology, most historical theology surveys include what each historian believes is the "essential" Augustine. The difficulty in presenting the essential Augustine is that his impact on Christian thought is unprecedented in breadth and depth. Though all of the surveys included in this study provide sweeping statements concerning Augustine's lasting influence, significant differences in presentation can be detected upon further study. Alister McGrath's *Historical Theology*, Gregg Allison's *Historical Theology*, and Justo González's *A History of Christian Thought* have been chosen to represent a variety of approaches.⁴⁵ These three works are well recognized evangelical historical theology texts and represent distinct Protestant traditions: Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist, respectively. The distinct theological markers of these Protestant traditions factor into each historian's approach to presenting historical theology and their approach to weaving Augustine into the development of Christian thought.

The following evaluation considers each author's overall treatment of Augustinian thought while focusing on three significant themes: Latin Trinitarian formulation, the Donatist Controversy and its impact on ecclesiology and sacramentology, and the Pelagian Controversy and its impact on freedom of the human will. These three themes were chosen because they are prominent in Augustine's thought, are significant examples of an Augustinian system, and remain impactful for the modern church.

Alister McGrath's Historical Theology

⁴⁵ These texts are commonly chosen for undergraduate and graduate courses on historical theology.

Alistair McGrath's approach to historical theology is topically based within a loose chronological setting. He establishes four chronological periods of development (Patristic, Medieval, Reformed, and Modern) and discusses specific theological topics, characters, and events within those periods, which are commonly used paradigms within church history. Augustine is primarily represented in the Patristic section of McGrath's work; however, Augustine is also represented as influential in the contributions of other later theologians, which illustrates his predominance in Western thought.⁴⁶ In his analysis McGrath recognizes that Augustine is part of the dynamic growth and development of theology, identifying him as the "second founder of Christianity." McGrath further articulates the key contributions of Augustine in ecclesiology, soteriology, and Trinitarian thought.⁴⁷

Beyond Augustine's integral role in the development of Western Christian thought, McGrath details his importance in developing theology as an academic discipline. Like Augustine, his predecessors were great minds responding to occasions of theological dispute and confusion, not simply writing textbooks. Moreover, McGrath also makes a point to clarify that the "early church cannot really be said to have developed any systematic theology," but that its "primary concern was to defend Christianity against

⁴⁶ "In turning to deal with... 'Augustine'- we encounter what is probably the greatest and most influential mind of the Christian church throughout its long history." Alistair McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Malden, MA: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), 25.

⁴⁷ "When the Dark Ages finally lifted over western Europe, Augustine's substantial body of theological writings would form the basis of a major program of theological renewal and development, consolidating his influence over the western church." Ibid, 25.

its critics... and to clarify central aspects of its thinking against heresy.”⁴⁸ According to McGrath, Augustine set out his position in his treatise *On Baptism* where he says the church will include saints and sinners and that “whatever a sacrament does results from the holiness of God, not from holiness (or lack of it) on the part of the minister.”⁴⁹ McGrath later reinforces this emphasis in a biographical section on Augustine included with the major case studies of Augustine’s theology. For McGrath, Augustine is addressing so many occasions and is so concerned with theology as an academic discipline that his content certainly applies to systematic theology but is by no means developed within a system. Why McGrath includes such comments within his section concerning Augustine will be discussed in chapter three. Lastly, McGrath defines his view of Augustine by informing the reader that Augustine never explored the area of Christology.⁵⁰

In reference to Augustine’s Trinitarian thought, McGrath sees Augustine as the prototypical Latin view for those to come after him. Augustine’s endorsement of *Filioque* is paramount to McGrath’s presentation. He is also concerned with the connectedness of the work of Augustine to the current climate of Christianity.⁵¹ According to McGrath,

⁴⁸ McGrath continues to distinguish the difference of creating a systematic theology and how Augustine’s work should be categorized. “Augustine’s contribution was to achieve a synthesis of Christian thought, supremely in his major treatise... ‘On the City of God’... he ended up giving a systematic presentation and exposition of the main lines of Christian belief.” Ibid, 25-26.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 66-67.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 26.

⁵¹ McGrath frames this discussion by stating: “The doctrine of the Trinity represents a rare instance of a theological issue of concern for both the eastern and western churches. Our attention now shifts to two theological debates which were specifically linked with the western church and have both come to be particularly associated with Augustine of Hippo.” Ibid, 32.

Augustine's major contribution was synthesizing patristic Trinitarian thought, which led to modern conceptions of the Trinity.⁵²

A distinguishing factor of McGrath's presentation of Augustine's understanding of the Trinity is the inclusion of Augustine's preference to refer to the members of the Godhead as "aspects" rather than persons. McGrath argues that this language comes with the inherent weakness of depersonalizing the Holy Spirit. "Perhaps the most distinct element of Augustine's approach to the Trinity concerns his understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit."⁵³ McGrath capitalizes on the classic understanding of Augustine's pneumatology in which he claims that the Holy Spirit *is* the "bond of love" between the Father and the Son, which demands *filioque* to be true.⁵⁴ Since the concern is whether or not the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the Son being a mutual contributor to the bond between Himself and the Father would require Augustine's view to be true. According to McGrath, both the preference for the term aspects and referring to the Holy Spirit as a bond suggest that the Augustinian model is more distinct and original than it is often known to be.

McGrath summarizes the historical criticism of Augustine's model which focuses on the potential weakness of a Holy Spirit who does not have a distinct person from the

⁵² McGrath emphasizes one of Augustine's major concerns in translating Trinitarian monotheism into terms that Latin thinkers can understand, for the early struggle was in Latin categories lacking sufficiency in containing Trinitarian thought. "The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that beneath the surface of the complexities of the history of salvation and our experiences of God lies one God, and one God only." Ibid, 57.

⁵³ Ibid, 58.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 59, 62.

other members of the Trinity.⁵⁵ McGrath also points out that the idea of “being bound to God” is a central feature of Augustine’s spirituality, and it is perhaps inevitable that this concern will appear prominently in his discussion of the Trinity.⁵⁶ Furthermore, McGrath states that many have found Augustine’s approach to developing Trinitarian analogies to be informed by his Neo-Platonic worldview.⁵⁷ McGrath takes his stance on the matter in claiming that “Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity is not ultimately grounded in his analysis of the human mind, but in his reading of Scripture, especially of the Fourth Gospel.”⁵⁸

Within this, McGrath points out that while Augustine is the major reference on a Latin understanding of the Trinity, Augustine does not truly ever address Christology as he does the major doctrines of this research. The issue here is that Christology evolved from the Trinitarian controversy of the centuries leading up to Augustine’s life. McGrath contends that Augustine was a proponent of the views of the Ecumenical Councils and

⁵⁵ Ibid, 59.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 59.

⁵⁷ A particularly important difference between McGrath’s text and the others is that his is far briefer. While this inherently results in him treating many topics with less depth, the proportion of attention he gives to each topic is an important comparison to make. With that in mind, McGrath is in a sense emphasizing Augustine’s Neoplatonic worldview compared to other commentators. “One of the most distinct features of Augustine’s approach to the Trinity is his development of “psychological analogies.” “Augustine argues, we should look to humanity in our search for the image of God... However, Augustine then takes a step which many observers feel to have been unfortunate. On the basis of his Neoplatonic worldview, Augustine argues that the human mind is to be regarded as the apex of humanity. It is therefore to the individual mind that the theologian should turn, in looking for “traces of the Trinity” in creation.” Ibid, 59.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 60, 62.

that his view of Christ and the Trinity are found there.⁵⁹ In all, McGrath focuses on Augustine's inter-connectedness and minimizes his Christological considerations.

In regard to the Donatist Controversy, McGrath has a major focus on the dichotomy between the two groups that came out of the Schism: the Donatists and the Catholics. For McGrath, Donatism was a movement in Roman North Africa in the fourth century, "which developed a rigorist view of the church and sacraments."⁶⁰ The framework of the dispute between the two groups is presented as having more to do with political and socioeconomic aspects than theological disagreements.⁶¹ The church in Africa had become more Donatist in its thinking than it was Catholic, which meant Augustine was debating as the minority opinion.⁶²

McGrath presents Augustine's theological victory as due to the fact that Augustine was able to resolve the tensions with the legacy of Cyprian and put forward an 'Augustinian' view of the church, which has remained enormously influential ever since.⁶³ Furthermore, McGrath is particularly precise in defining the two sides of the debate. McGrath presents a major theme of Augustinian thought through his section on

⁵⁹ "Augustine takes up many elements of the emerging consensus on the Trinity." The four Ecumenical Councils being the Council of Nicaea, the Council of Constantinople I & II, and the Council of Chalcedon. Ibid, 58.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 280.

⁶¹ McGrath informs the reader that "Donatists tended to draw their support from the indigenous population, whereas the Catholics drew theirs from Roman colonists." Ibid, 63.

⁶² Ibid, 64.

⁶³ By 249 AD, Cyprian of Carthage was a bishop who had written extensively on lapsed persons, arguing to allow them to return to the fold upon earnest repentance. "Both Donatist and Catholics appealed to Cyprian as an authority." Ibid, 64.

the Donatists by expressing Augustine's emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ being the primary producer of effort in the Christian's approach of Justification and action.

McGrath's Augustine declares that the church must expect to remain a "mixed body" of saints and sinners and refuse to weed out those who had lapsed under persecution or for other reasons. The validity of the church's ministry and preaching did not depend upon the holiness of its ministers, but upon the person of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

McGrath frames the entire theological impact of the controversy thus: "The Donatist debate... was the first to center on the question of the doctrine of the church... many of these issues would surface again at the time of the Reformation... The same may be said of the doctrine of grace."⁶⁵ Ultimately, McGrath recognizes that "Augustine argues that Donatism is fatally flawed" due to its divisiveness.⁶⁶ He closes this section by simply explaining that the "Sacraments are efficacious *ex opere operato*- literally, on account of the work which is worked. Here, the efficacy of the sacrament is understood to be dependent upon the grace of Christ."⁶⁷ He also connects these issues to the Reformation as he does the issues of grace and free will.

McGrath's presentation of the Pelagian controversy is given priority over the other topics discussed.⁶⁸ McGrath defines Pelagianism as follows: "Pelagianism came to

⁶⁴ Ibid, 32.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 32.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 65.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 66.

⁶⁸ "The Pelagian controversy, which erupted in the early fifth century, brought a cluster of questions concerning human nature, sin, and grace into sharp focus... The controversy is complex at both the

be seen as a religion of human autonomy, which held that human beings are able to take the initiative in their own salvation.” Essentially, McGrath’s definition emphasizes that Pelagianism held that human individuals are capable of moving toward salvation before God moves them toward salvation. Augustine was entirely opposed to the free will dynamic of Pelagianism and responded with a view of predestination that the Church still discusses today.⁶⁹ McGrath contends that a “central theme of Augustine’s thought is the fallenness of human nature” and compares Augustine’s view of humanity’s love for sin to an addiction to heroin or cocaine.⁷⁰

In short, McGrath says that Augustine and Pelagius are “diametrically opposed.”⁷¹ He also summarizes that the “ethos of Pelagianism could be summed up as ‘salvation by merit,’ whereas Augustine taught ‘salvation by grace.’”⁷² Concerning the

historical and theological levels, and, given its impact upon the western Christian theology, needs to be discussed at some length.” Ibid, 67.

⁶⁹ “Augustine reacted forcefully against Pelagianism, insisting upon the priority of the grace of God at every stage in the Christian life, from its beginning to its end. Human beings did not, according to Augustine, possess the necessary freedom to take the initial steps toward salvation. Far from possessing “freedom of this will,” humans were in possession of a will that was corrupted and tainted by sin, and which biased them toward evil and away from God. Only the grace of God could counteract this bias toward sin. So forceful was Augustine’s defense of grace that he later became known as “the doctor of grace.” Ibid, 33.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 33.

⁷¹ Ibid, 284.

⁷² McGrath presents Pelagius as “A British theologian who was active at Rome in the final decade of the fourth century and the first decade of the fifth. No reliable information exists concerning the date of his birth or death. Pelagius was a moral reformer, whose theology of grace and sin brought him into sharp conflict with Augustine, leading to the Pelagian controversy. Pelagius’s ideas are known mostly through the writings of his opponents, especially Augustine... Pelagius spelled out... all the commands given to us are capable of being obeyed, and are meant to be obeyed. Pelagius thus makes the uncompromising assertion that since perfection is possible for humanity, it is obligatory...” and Pelagianism in the glossary as “An understanding of how humans are able to merit their salvation which is diametrically opposed to that of Augustine of Hippo, placing considerable emphasis upon the role of human works and playing down the idea of divine grace.” Ibid, 34, 69.

freedom of the will, McGrath portrays Augustine as believing “the total sovereignty of God and genuine human responsibility and freedom must be upheld at one and the same time, if justice is to be done to the richness and complexity of the biblical statement on the matter.”⁷³

Interestingly, it is here that McGrath contrasts Pelagianism as an extreme pole to Manichaeism.⁷⁴ With Manichaeism, each can reject responsibility for their actions because it was already determined that one’s flesh would bring iniquity upon them. In Pelagian thought, all responsibility was placed on the individual because they began life with enough grace from God to will themselves to have a sinless life. In essence, McGrath contends that Augustine “attempted to restore a more Pauline meaning to it by emphasizing the limitations placed upon the human free will by sin.”⁷⁵ This means that, for Augustine, it is clear “that we have no control over our sinfulness” but that we are born sinners.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid, 68.

⁷⁴ McGrath says Manicheism was a form of fatalism that upheld the total sovereignty of the Divine but denied human freedom, whereas Pelagianism upheld the total freedom of the human will while denying the sovereignty of God. Ibid, 68.

⁷⁵ In defining humanity’s free will according to Augustine, McGrath writes: “natural human freedom is affirmed: we do not do things out of any necessity, but as a matter of freedom... Augustine argues that human free will has been weakened and incapacitated – but not eliminated or destroyed – through sin. Free will really does exist; it is, however, distorted by sin.” In presenting Pelagian concerns, McGrath writes: “According to Pelagius, any imperfection in man would reflect negatively upon the goodness of God.” Ibid, 68-69.

⁷⁶ “For Pelagius, however, sin is to be understood in a very different light. The idea of a human disposition toward sin has no place in Pelagius’s thought.” “Pelagianism thus seems to be a rigid form of moral authoritarianism- an insistence that humanity is under obligation to be sinless, and an absolute rejection of any excuse for failure.” Ibid, 70.

Concerning grace, McGrath states that, “For Augustine, we are totally dependent upon God for our salvation, from the beginning to the end of our lives.”⁷⁷ This has major implications for salvation and even theodicy. McGrath presents Augustine as believing that “humanity is justified as an act of grace” and “the present imperfection of the world does not result from God’s creation, but from original sin and the abuse of human free will.”⁷⁸ McGrath summarizes the impact of Augustine’s thought in this controversy in stating: “Augustine thus draws the theologically important conclusion that the basis for our justification is the divine promise of grace made to us.”⁷⁹

McGrath’s presentation of Augustine is a topical approach, focusing on Augustine’s contributions to the current formation of Christianity. Augustine’s thought is a paradigm for the West; his is the theological and philosophical framework for all who follow him. In reference to Augustine’s influence, McGrath claims that Augustine “is probably the greatest and most influential mind of the Christian church throughout its long history.”⁸⁰ With McGrath’s statement in mind, it is interesting that only about one page of *Historical Theology* is committed exclusively to Augustine. This suggests that McGrath’s approach to presenting Augustine and historical theology is more concerned with presenting theological trends than individual theologians.

⁷⁷ “Pelagius uses the term grace in a very different way... grace is to be understood as the natural human faculties... Augustine was quick to point out, this does not seem to be what the New Testament understands by the term.” Ibid, 71.

⁷⁸ “For Pelagius however, humanity is justified on the basis of its merits: human good works are the result of the exercise of totally autonomous human free will, in fulfillment of an obligation laid down by God... Jesus Christ is involved in salvation only to the extent that he reveals, by his actions and teaching, exactly what God requires of the individual.” Ibid, 72.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 72.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 25.

Justo González's A History of Christian Thought

Justo González's three-volume *A History of Christian Thought* is more exhaustive than the previous survey included in this research. González's treatment of history takes an individual, chronological approach as opposed to a topical approach. In his approach to Augustine, González presents him as a medieval rather than a patristic theologian. The reader is first introduced to Augustine within the context of the Trinitarian controversy before Augustine's time. This occurs toward the conclusion of González's first volume and prior to the formal introduction to Augustine which appears at the start of the second volume. Though González recognizes him as the synthesizer of the latter and the template for the former, he certainly constructs an Augustine that reflects the medieval period of theology.

González's initial treatment of Augustine begins with a short biographical sketch that leads to a discussion of his thought. Both in general and particularly with the Trinity, González presents Augustine as a translator of Greek thought for Latin thinkers.⁸¹ Rather than a strict controversy, González seems to suggest that there was an issue in transmitting Christian philosophy phrased in the Greek language to the categories of Latin logic. Augustine is presented as the solver of this great problem through applying the categories his Neo-Platonic background provided. The most important triumph of this was providing a template for Trinitarian thought in the West. "It was early in the fifth

⁸¹ "In the West, Arianism was not as great a threat as it was in the East. This seems to have been due to three main reasons: the trinitarian tradition of Latin Christianity, its occupation with other matters of a more practical nature which seemed more urgent, and the influence of Stoicism." Justo González, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. I (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 334.

century, with Augustine, that the West showed the depth and originality of which it was capable. In his fifteen books *On the Trinity* (399-419), Augustine determined the way that Western trinitarian theology would follow, so that the later differences between Eastern and Western trinitarian theology stem from this work.”⁸²

Thus, Augustine is the great Latin translator of Trinitarian thought who “builds upon the foundation laid by the three Cappadocians.”⁸³ González summarizes Augustine’s Trinitarian impact by stating, “one can say that Augustine pointed the way that Western Trinitarian theology would later follow at least in three fundamental points: his insistence upon divine unity above the diversity of persons; his doctrine of the procession of the Spirit; and his theory of the *vestigia Trinitatis*, especially in the field of human psychology.”⁸⁴ González also states that Augustine avoids using the term persons as McGrath does.⁸⁵ Moreover, González distinguishes how Augustine deviates from the authorities he followed. The Cappadocians spoke of three persons of the same substance, whereas Augustine intentionally reversed that to talk of one God having three aspects⁸⁶

⁸² Ibid, 336.

⁸³ Ibid, 337.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 342.

⁸⁵ Quoting Augustine from *On The Trinity*, González cites: “...the term *persona*, which by that time was generally accepted in Western trinitarian discourse with the prestige given to it by a long tradition, is simply a conventional way of expressing what is inexpressible.... ‘it would be much more exact to speak of ‘relations,’ for this is what is meant when one speaks of the different ‘persons.’” Ibid, 339.

⁸⁶ Although Augustine follows Greek theologians in his discussion of Trinitarian doctrine, theologians such as the Cappadocians tend to take as their point of departure the diversity of the persons or hypostases, and from it move to the unity of essence of *ousia*, whereas Augustine, on the other hand, begins from the essential unity of God, and from it moves to the distinction of persons. He never quite understood what the Cappadocians meant by *hypostasis*- which he translated as *substantia*... The difference is... that Augustine will not grant to the diversity of persons the importance that it had in the Cappadocians. Ibid, 338.

Augustine is addressing the monotheistic concerns of the Latin thinkers. To close the section, González addresses the function of *Filioque* in Augustine's thought, and is precise in relating it to Arianism.⁸⁷ González presents the procession of the Holy Spirit as one of two great contributions from Augustine to Trinitarian thought.

González details Augustine's second great contribution to Trinitarian thought which was his insistence on "*vestigia Trinitatis*- the vestiges or signs of the Trinity to be found in its creatures," which is to say that "all things, by mere fact that they have been created by the triune God, carry the imprint of the Trinity."⁸⁸ Following this, González discusses Augustine's Trinitarian analogy as "the inner relationships of the faculties of the soul" or "psychological sensibility."⁸⁹ Interestingly enough, González comments on all of these points in order to emphasize their historical importance.⁹⁰

It is not until the second volume of his work that González summarizes Augustine as "the end of an era as well as the beginning of another. He is the last of the early fathers and the forerunner of medieval theology. The main currents of ancient theology converge in him, and from him flows the rivers, not only of medieval scholasticism, but also of

⁸⁷ Augustine proposes the theory, "which would be common in the West- that the Holy Spirit is the bond of love that exists between the Father and the Son." Ibid, 338.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 341.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 342.

⁹⁰ González comments: "The first of these points, while avoiding the danger of tritheism which existed in other theologians, came very close to that Sabellianism which earlier conservative Eastern bishops had feared would be the result of the Nicene *homoousios*... The Second point greatly contributed to clarifying and pointing the way for the Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and its most important consequence would be the later controversy regarding the *filioque*... Finally, the third point was paramount in Western medieval theology, and eventually became the basic framework of a mystical theology that attempted to reach God through the contemplation of his imprint in creatures." Ibid, 343.

sixteenth-century Protestant theology.”⁹¹ González sheds much light on his thinking on how to present Historical Theology in saying: “As his theology was not developed in abstract meditation, nor out of the requirements of a system, but rather within the context of the various issues that faced him throughout his life, the best introduction to that theology is through his biography.”⁹²

González addresses the major theological debates that Augustine was involved with, including Manichaenism, Dualism, Neoplatonism, and Augustine’s conversion. Most importantly, González claims “the influence of Neoplatonism on Augustine’s thought was such that, as will be seen later on, he always understood the incorporeal nature of God and the problem of evil in Neoplatonic terms.”⁹³ Nevertheless, González does recognize that Augustine “would develop a theology that would be less and less Neoplatonic and more and more characteristically Christian.”⁹⁴ González closes this section in stating: “What led him to produce a number of works of great significance for the development of Christian theology was a series of controversies in which he became involved—mainly with the Manichees, the Donatists, and the Pelagians.”⁹⁵ It is this

⁹¹ Justo González, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 13.

⁹² *Ibid*, 13.

⁹³ González even goes as far as to state: “The question is whether the conversion that took place in the garden of Milan really led Augustine to the Christian faith held by the church and by his own mother or led him rather to that type of life and of belief which was set forth by the Neoplatonist philosophers. As has already been said, this is the main point at which the historical truthfulness of the *Confessions* has been questioned.” *Ibid*, 19, 21.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 24.

context that González emphasized before diving into the particulars of the Donatist Controversy.

Concerning the Donatist Controversy, González refers to Augustine as the one who distinguished the regularity of the sacraments from the validity of the sacraments. That is, Augustine's stance was the sacraments validate themselves, even if the circumstances of administration (such as the bishop giving the Eucharist later becoming an apostate) were irregular. González focuses much on how the controversy came to be and less on how the controversy was solved.

González illuminates the Donatist Controversy in stating that most North African leaders believed that the validity of a bishop's acts did not depend on his personal purity, but rather on his own office and consecration as a bishop. "In truth, the controversy had many social, racial, and political overtones, and the question of the steadfastness of the bishops was not always paramount."⁹⁶ González's concern for sociopolitical context can be seen throughout his work. The extent to which he goes to explain the implications of such contexts is fairly unique. He goes on to summarize the event as consisting of three basic issues which include the nature of the church, the relationship between church and state, and the sacraments.⁹⁷ He closes with some statements on how this controversy informs Augustine's theory of Just War.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ González includes a helpful fact that many Donatists were actually *traditores*. Ibid, 25.

⁹⁷ González mentions: "[I]t was over and against this position that Augustine developed his distinction between the visible church and the invisible." Ibid, 26.

⁹⁸ González comments: "This situation... led Augustine to develop the theory of the just war, for which he drew from Cicero as well as from Ambrose and others. According to Augustine, a war is just if it is carried on with a just purpose- that is, the establishment of peace- if it is led by the proper authorities, and if,

González presents Augustine as a theologian who favors aspects of freedom of the will and determinism. He depicts this apparent dichotomy as developing out of Augustine's response to controversies.⁹⁹ In this way, González shows Augustine as an occasional theologian rather than a systematic theologian. In terms of the reception of Augustine, he principally focuses on Augustine's doctrine of Grace as one that has set the tone for deterministic soteriology throughout church history. González also focuses on Augustine's answer to theodicy in his understanding of free will.

González tends to include biographical information between every transitional figure and theological development, including Pelagius. He stresses how little is actually known of the person and insists that Augustine was debating more with Pelagius's less moderate followers than Pelagius himself. Moreover, González calls Pelagian theology a "reaction against the moral determinism of the Manichees."¹⁰⁰ He is saying that Pelagian thought grew out of a concern for people to be responsible for their own sin and not simply blame the depravity of their bodies. González distinguishes the two sides from each other in stating: "the difference between Augustine and Pelagius was that the former was not willing to relinquish the absolute need for grace, even while defending freedom,

even in the midst of killing, the motive of love still subsists." "Only those sacraments are regular which are administered within the church and according to its ordinance. But the validity of a sacrament, as will be seen further on, does not wholly depend on its regularity." Ibid, 27.

⁹⁹ "The last great controversy that contributed to shape Augustine's theology was that which he held against Pelagianism. This controversy is probably the most significant, for it gave him the occasion to formulate his doctrines of grace and predestination, which would have enormous consequences in the future." Within this comment, the reader can see that González understands the circumstance to shape Augustine's theology, rather than Augustine's theology leading to his addressing the circumstance. Ibid, 27.

¹⁰⁰ The interesting facet here is that throughout Augustine's career, he will detest being treated as a Manichee. Ibid, 29.

whereas the latter believed that Augustine's doctrine of grace was a threat to human freedom and responsibility.”¹⁰¹ Interestingly, González gives much more credibility to Pelagius than the other writers by highlighting Pelagius's focus on human responsibility for sin rather than merely imputing personal sin to human nature.¹⁰² However, González critiques Pelagius for overvaluing the grace of teaching, which he equates with the giving of the law and the expectation to follow it, over the grace of pardon, which is akin to forgiveness.

González continues by addressing Pelagius's interpretation of Paul concerning predestination which is of course the prescient view.¹⁰³ Overall, González certainly give Pelagius and Pelagianism a close look in order to reveal the concerns of the times aside from the jargon to come from later periods of theology on the topic. In this section, González further stresses that Augustine's theology (concerning original sin, grace, and predestination) developed in response to this controversy, departing from an emphasis on free will and arriving at a predestined view of salvation. He also stresses that the church was not eager to follow Augustine in his understanding of predestination; the church was not ready to affirm that some of humanity was predestined for evil by God.¹⁰⁴ González closes the major section on Augustine by listing his famous works and discussing

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 29.

¹⁰² González seems to be giving some level of credence to Pelagius's concerns but not necessarily his conclusions. Ibid, 29.

¹⁰³ Pelagius believed that “to predestinate is the same as to foreknow.” Ibid, 31.

¹⁰⁴ In the earlier chapter of this text, this is simply referred as the “final end” of Augustine's system of grace. Ibid, 31, 60.

Augustine's theory of knowledge. González contends that his theory of knowledge is also influenced by Neo-Platonic thinking.

The closing section on Augustine expresses what an impact Augustine had on the Latin paradigm by discussing his influence on the understanding of God's existence, creation, evil, time, free will, Original Sin, grace and predestination, the church, the sacraments, the meaning of history, and eschatology. González states that Augustine relies on Platonic presuppositions for God's existence being in line with the existence of truth. He states that Augustine interprets Genesis chapter one poetically. He presents Augustine as believing that evil is a negation of the good and thus in a sense it does not exist the same way God's creation exists. Finally, González states that this thinking that is informed by Neo-Platonism was his escape from the inconsistencies in Manichaean philosophy.¹⁰⁵

Unlike the other two survey texts, *A History of Christian Thought* includes far more biographical information. González's approach is thus more concerned with the context in which theologies and theologians developed than how those theologies and theologians are used today. While clearly being the most exhaustive of the three texts, González's work certainly expresses the importance of context in the same way one might include such a concern within a biblical hermeneutic.

Gregg Allison's Historical Theology

Gregg Allison's text is unique because it is an historical theology text organized as a systematic theology; that is, it is organized by doctrine rather than chronological

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 39-40.

events or chronological characters. It does however lay out each topical chapter in a chronological order. No one section is directly concerned with Augustine, but rather Augustine's work can be seen in almost every chapter of Allison's text, with nearly every chapter featuring many quotations from Augustine's works.

Within Allison's first few chapters, he builds for the reader a detailed understanding of Augustine's understanding of Scripture. Most interestingly, Augustine believed that the Septuagint was inspired and should be considered the priority text over the Masoretic Text because it was "Christ's Bible."¹⁰⁶ Moreover, Allison states, "Augustine opposed those who complained that Jesus Christ had written nothing himself. The reality was that Christ, as head of his body, had used his disciples 'as if they were his own hands' in composing the Gospels."¹⁰⁷ Alison even goes as far to say that "because of its divine authorship, inspired canonical Scripture was considered completely authoritative by the early church. Although in fighting against heresy, the church often appealed to its own authority and tradition, these were never regarded as supplements to or opponents of Scripture."¹⁰⁸ Allison give much more attention to Augustine's Biblical

¹⁰⁶ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology, a companion to Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 49.

¹⁰⁷ Alison adjusts Augustine's major comment on Scripture from *City of God*: "Augustine joined together the inspiration, canonicity, and authority of Scripture: "(God) produced the Scripture which is called canonical, which has paramount authority, and to which we yield assent in all matters of which we ought not to be ignorant, and yet cannot know of ourselves." Ibid, 61, 82.

¹⁰⁸ Allison states that "Augustine expressed his complete trust in the Word of God, which he referred to as "infallible Scripture" and that Augustine believed "The origin of humanity [was] no more than six thousand years before his time." Moreover, He states Augustine "clearly... beloved that biblical inerrancy extended to matters of cosmology, human origins, genealogy, and the like. No contradictions exist in the Bible" and that "we are bound to believe" everything in Scripture. Ibid, 82, 102.

hermeneutic than the other authors. Allison also often demonstrated that Augustine emphasized an allegorical approach to Scripture.

Allison then moves to theology proper where he capitalizes on Augustine's theory of knowledge. "Augustine insisted that all people know of God's existence through what exists in the created world"¹⁰⁹ He also references Augustine's belief that reflections of the Trinity can be seen in all of creation and particularly in human beings. Augustine will reference this to *Imago Dei*. In chapter eleven, Allison begins to discuss Augustine's view of the Trinity. He states that "Augustine echoed the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity" and added his "unique touches," particularly the double procession of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁰ Allison closes the Trinitarian section on Augustine by concisely explaining his psychological analogies for the Trinity. Allison says Augustine "culled these from the human soul" because it is the image of God, or the supreme Trinity. In other words, Allison is allowing Augustine to explain his understanding of Trinitarian vestiges in his own words. Allison includes Augustine's analogy of love, his analogy of memory, will, and understanding, his analogy of the mind, and even his analogy of remembering.¹¹¹ The section is closed by considering Augustine's own concerns about the shortcomings of these analogies and how analogies are still attempted today.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 191.

¹¹⁰ Allison states: "Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity was followed closely by the Western church" and "The doctrine of the Trinity had developed to become an essential doctrine of the Christian faith." Ibid, 241-242.

¹¹¹ Allison's section on Augustine's Trinitarian analogies has some breadth but lacks depth. While he includes each element of each analogy, he does not explain them. He does however include footnotes of extensive quotes from many of Augustine's works that capture what Augustine is trying to do. Ibid, 242.

Allison continues with the systematic approach to doctrine, touching briefly on Augustine's views of time and creation. He then comes to a decisive statement concerning Augustine's view of providence which is essentially articulated as the classical Reformed view of compatibilism. He continues to quote extensively from Augustine's *City of God* which states that whatever God foreknows will certainly come to pass.¹¹² Following this, Allison explains that in addressing the problem of evil, "Augustine offered the free will defense. Evil is nothing but a privation of the good."¹¹³

In the following chapters concerning anthropology, sin, and atonement, much of what Allison has to say is concerned with Pelagius. The chapter concerning the Person of Christ is also in this section, which is the first major chapter that Augustine is not a part of, as might be expected. Allison states that Augustine, "developed his doctrine of humanity in opposition to the view of Pelagius, whose anthropology he denounced."¹¹⁴ Augustine put forward the definitive understanding of Original Sin through this controversy. He even discussed its implications for creation and transmission. Allison also discusses traducianism and creationism, doctrines concerning the creation of human

¹¹² Allison states: "With the theology of Augustine, the church presented its most extensive case for God's inexhaustible and meticulous providence working in conjunction with human free will: "We assert both that God knows all things before they come to pass, and that we do by our free will whatever we know and feel to be done by us only because we will it." "Our wills themselves are included in that order of causes which is certain to God, and is embraced by his foreknowledge": Our wills are among those causes (City of God 5:9 in NPNF 2:91." Ibid, 282.

¹¹³ Ibid, 283.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 327.

souls. Traducianism states that human souls proceed from the soul of the parents whereas creationism holds to God creating a new soul at the moment of conception.¹¹⁵

Concerning sin, Allison opens his comments on Augustine by stating that Pelagius was “deeply troubled by Augustine’s Confession Prayer: ‘Give me what you command, and command [me to do] what you will.’”¹¹⁶ Allison stresses that Pelagius believed God did not create human souls corrupted so no one can inherit a corrupted soul from Adam.¹¹⁷ This would negate the idea of Original Sin and thus a sinless life is possible because sin would then be tangential to the human experience. Allison closes this section with emphasizing that “the church reacted [to Pelagius] with deep concern and criticism.”¹¹⁸

Allison’s decisive distinction comes later when he says: “Augustine did not mean that people have no free will whatsoever. Rather, he meant that whenever unbelievers use their free will, they always use it to choose evil instead of good. Clearly, this was the complete opposite of Pelagius’s position.”¹¹⁹ In other words, the radically corrupt nature of fallen humanity will always choose its desire, thus simply choose among different sins.

¹¹⁵ Augustine favored creationism, according to Allison. Ibid, 327.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 345.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 345.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 347.

¹¹⁹ In the following discourse, Allison substantially explains Augustine's response, centered upon the fact that “Augustine maintained that both death- the punishment for sin- and the corruption of human nature are passed down from Adam.” Ibid, 348-349.

To finish the topic, Allison says, “Augustine both defeated Pelagius and left a legacy of a robust theology of sin” and that “the church followed Augustine’s lead.”¹²⁰

Allison follows these sections with discussions of Augustine’s views on the Resurrection and Ascension and then move back into Pelagian topics with Election and Reprobation. Allison states that Augustine’s doctrine of predestination “was set in the context of grace and original sin (doctrines on which Augustine was at polar opposites from Pelagius).”¹²¹ Allison also states that “Augustine ultimately admitted that predestination is largely mysterious and a cause for wonderment.”¹²² It is here that Allison includes Augustine’s understanding of the seen and unseen Church. Some of those who are currently outside of the church are ultimately among the people of God, and some who are currently inside the church are ultimately not among the people of God.

In the following chapter concerning Regeneration, Conversion, Effective Calling, and Justification, Allison states that Augustine was a chief architect of infant baptism and includes a much more substantial amount of biographical information than in previous chapters by including quotations from the *Confessions*.¹²³ Allison then connects these

¹²⁰ Ibid, 349.

¹²¹ Ibid, 456.

¹²² Ibid, 457.

¹²³ Allison connects Pelagius’s thought to Augustine’s view of conversion. “In all this discussion, Augustine stood opposed to the view of human free will and divine grace as put forth by Pelagius. According to Pelagius, God created all human beings with the power to act; it now depends on them to will and to engage in the action. Indeed, in his grace, God provided people with free will, including the capacity not to sin.” Ibid, 479.

ideas to the Reformation stating: “In [explaining the general and particular calls] Augustine anticipated and provided the foundation for a very important development, the fruit of which would not be seen until the Reformation.”¹²⁴

In chapter twenty-six, Allison arrives at his discussion of the Church and thus Donatism. However, Allison seems to be more concerned with Augustine’s view of the fall of Rome in this chapter rather than that of the issues of Donatism. In explaining Augustine's view of Donatism, Allison writes: “Augustine was most critical of the Donatists: in their misinformed zeal for purity, they had separated themselves from the one and only catholic church; therefore, they were “openly guilty of the manifest sacrilege of schism.”¹²⁵

In chapter twenty-nine, Allison begins to discuss the Sacraments. “Augustine’s contribution to the theology of the sacraments was determinative for the church for centuries to come... He defined a sacrament generally as an outward and visible sign of an invisible yet genuine grace.”¹²⁶ Allison then includes much on Augustine’s view of the sacraments but addresses little more concerning the Donatist Controversy. Rather, in the last three chapters concerning eschatology, Allison explains that Augustine made

¹²⁴ Ibid, 480.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 572.

¹²⁶ After this, Allison applies this to the Donatist Controversy in stating:” the sacraments are effective in communicating this grace *ex opere operato*... This perspective stood in stark contrast with heretics like the Donatists, who insisted that sacraments are valid only when administered in a true church by a duly ordained minister.” Ibid, 640.

amillennialism the “reigning” eschatological view, that Augustine believed those who reject Christ will be “eternally dying.”¹²⁷

Allison’s approach to presenting Augustine is distinct from the other two texts due largely to the structure and premise of his text. His certainly includes the most content that is taken directly from primary texts, yet also includes the least amount of contextual information. While Allison’s text can be exhaustive like González, he certainly spends more space connecting Augustine to the confessional nature of the text and its companion text.¹²⁸ Allison gives far more treatment to Pelagianism and Trinitarianism than Donatism. One outstanding facet of Allison’s take on Augustine is that he does not distinguish between Pelagius and Pelagianism as González would.¹²⁹

III. Evaluation of the Treatment of Augustine

Introduction & Biographical Interpretations

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an evaluation of the presentation of Augustine in the three historical theology surveys. This evaluation will be done through engagement with modern scholarly works on Augustine on the topics of the Trinity,

¹²⁷ The glossary statement entitled “Augustine of Hippo” reads: “Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, who stands as one the greatest theologians in church history. He played a crucial role in the Donatist and Pelagian controversies, contributed significantly to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, wrote the first “autobiography” (his *Confessions*, a prayer to God in which he recounted his conversions), articulated a philosophy of history from a Christian perspective (*The City of God*), and explained many theological issues such as the nature of the sacraments, original sin, grace, and predestination. His work contributed to both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies.” Ibid, 688, 706, 738.

¹²⁸ Allison’s text is written as a companion to a popular systematic theology text written by Wayne Grudem.

¹²⁹ Among the three authors, the separation between the person of Pelagius and the following Pelagianism is treated with depth by González, mentioned by McGrath, and practically ignored by Allison.

Donatism, and Pelagianism and contrasting these presentations with the presentations in the survey texts. Finally, the historical theology surveys will be evaluated based on the aspects of Augustinian thought that are left out of the discussion, but which modern scholarship identifies as integral to the understanding of Augustine's thought. All the scholars included in the following discourse were chosen due to their content being representative of the Augustinian studies community.

Within Augustinian studies, a number of scholars stand as major interpreters of Augustine. The standard biographical introductions are typically credited to Peter Brown and James O'Donnell, while Gerald Bonner and Lewis Ayres are attached to Augustine's understanding of grace and the Trinity respectively. In order to evaluate how Augustine has been treated in the three historical theology survey's that have been analyzed, these scholars and others must be utilized to establish a scholarly view of Augustine's understanding of the Trinity, Ecclesiology, and Predestination.

A View of Augustine's Trinity from Scholarship

Augustine has often been accused of over emphasizing the unity of God and thus misrepresenting the Trinity, especially among theologians within Eastern Orthodoxy.¹³⁰ In general, Augustine is widely accepted as the primary influence on the historical understanding of the Trinity for Latin thinkers. In his work, *Augustine and The Trinity*, Lewis Ayres suggests that Augustine was influenced by many Latin traditions which struggled to distinguish the persons of the Godhead while also retaining a monotheistic

¹³⁰ Christopher Iacovetti, "Filioque, Theosis, and Ecclesia: Augustine in Dialogue with Modern Orthodox Theology," *Modern Theology* 34, no.1 (2017): 70-75.

approach (plausibly due to the shortcomings of the Latin language).¹³¹ Moreover, “Lewis Ayres shows how Augustine uses the Platonic idea of ‘divine simplicity’ precisely in order to develop a fully Nicene Trinitarianism.”¹³² This is informing the distinctives between Augustine’s Latin Trinitarian model and the Greek Trinitarian model. Whether a historical theology survey expresses this central issue within early theology is a critical concern; these are the issues at the heart of the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western churches. Since Augustine is the great thinker connected to this paradigm shift (that is, the Latin West becoming the major mover in Christian theology), it would be expected that such a concern would be mentioned along with presenting his thought. This is an issue concerning categories of communication which Ayres connects to Neoplatonism’s influence on Augustine.

A second scholar to consider concerning Augustine’s Trinity is Yves Congar. Congar’s work *I Believe in The Holy Spirit* is one of the most prominent theological interpretations of Augustine’s work, and is particularly focused on his Trinitarian thought. More specifically, this piece is concerned with “Augustine’s understanding of the person and the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the other two persons of the Most Holy Trinity.”¹³³ Augustine was truly one of the first scholars of his day to explain *homoousias* (Greek for “same substance”) in Latin terms that did not miscommunicate an understanding of the relationship of the Trinity to Latin thinkers. Augustine’s goal was to

¹³¹ Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 44.

¹³² James Wetzel, “Snares of truth: Augustine on free will and predestination,” in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2002), 129.

¹³³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 85.

show the West that Trinitarian thought upheld the concern for monotheism while also retaining the equality of the persons of the Godhead. Augustine preferred to refer to them as having the same essence, which has been used throughout history to communicate the Orthodox Trinity to Latin based languages. Furthermore, Augustine is one of the first theologians to truly articulate the biblical role of the Holy Spirit; He is the applier of faith and the sanctifier of life. Many believers of his day struggled to grasp the purpose of the doctrines concerning the Trinity due to the language barrier that Greeks and Latins had faced for hundreds of years.

Martin Westerholm's work considers Augustine's understanding of God when writing *De Trinitate*. His article is useful in distinguishing different periods of Augustine's thought and historian's use of his periods in discussing the shifts in Augustine's theology. This resource deals with how Augustine was employed by theologians such as Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. Furthermore, this text explains how scholars have systematized Augustine's work and yet clearly understand that his theological views changed over time. The major claim that Westerholm makes concerning Augustine's view of the knowledge of God is that an exegetical view of the Trinity is valid.¹³⁴ It is important to present Augustine's understanding of the Trinity as an exegetical presentation. Augustine presents his model as if he has demonstrated the facts concerning the nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as presented

¹³⁴ Martin Westerholm, "The Work of the Trinity and the Knowledge of God in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 1 (2012): 5–24.

throughout Scripture. Augustine always operates on the presupposition that Trinitarian thought is essentially biblical.

The most prominent topic in Augustinian studies which concerns Trinitarian thought is *Filioque*; it divided the church, and for Latin thinkers it was an essential exegetical aspect to a biblical model of the Trinity. When considering the progression of a historical theology survey, *Filioque* would certainly be the most prominent aspect of Augustinian Trinitarianism as the piece moves through Augustine's impact.

In summary, current scholarship on Augustine stresses three important emphases on presenting Augustine's Trinitarian Theology. First, Augustine has translated the truth of Trinitarian doctrine which was developed by the early church fathers into the categories in which Latin thinkers operate. Second Augustine is not the originator of *Filioque* thought but certainly affirms it at a decisive time for the western Church to merge the doctrine to the greater Trinitarian thought as inherent and essential. Third, Augustine pushes Trinitarian thought as soundly exegetical. Most scholars find that Augustine's use of Neoplatonic categories is an important facet in presenting his Trinitarian thought and even his theology in its totality.

A View of Augustine's Ecclesiology from Scholarship

Lefferts Loetscher offers a detailed depiction of how Augustine's Ecclesiology and Sacramentology influenced the church of his day and how his understanding of the sacraments are still held by many Christians today. By the end of his extensive review of Augustine's literature on the subject, Loetscher submits that the Donatist Controversy was not only decisive in Augustine's formation of his doctrines of the Church and

sacraments, but also for his understanding of “church-state relations.”¹³⁵ The controversy resulted in Augustine considering how just warfare would be enacted. Moreover, it resulted in Augustine considering the motivation for conflict and the ethics of resolving those conflicts. While the Donatists were unjustified in their violence because of their politicizing of an ecclesial issue, Augustine still puts forth a model for controversies to come that has directly impacted how the West has handled war, defense, internal conflict, and international policing since Augustine first considered the topic. That is to say that topics ranging from Just War to current conceptions of the separation of church and state are inherently connected to Augustine’s views.

Another consideration in Donatist studies of recent years is the expansion of this topic into Augustine’s understanding of “Christian participation in non-Christian political orders.”⁷ For example, the ethic that Augustine puts forth has implications for how Christians approach taxes that are used in war, draft laws for wartime, and general voting rights. Gregory W. Lee argues this point in his work *Using the Earthly City: Ecclesiology, Political Activity, and Religious Coercion in Augustine*.¹³⁶ Lee draws attention to how much Augustine has to say about not only division in the Church and Sacraments, but also how Christians should interact with the state. In summary, modern scholarship points toward two distinct marks of representing Donatism well. First, Donatism was not only a theological bout within the Church but more so a cultural and socioeconomic tension. Second, Augustine’s response to Donatism initiated much of how

¹³⁵ Loetscher, review of *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 421–23.

¹³⁶ Gregory W. Lee, “Using the Earthly City: Ecclesiology, Political Activity, and Religious Coercion in Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 47, no.1(2016): 41, 63.

the west understands politics. It is imperative to present this controversy as culturally rooted and a conflict of political philosophy in order to grasp the weight of what Augustine accomplished.

A View of Augustine's Predestination from Scholarship

Gerald Bonner is widely known as a perennial Augustinian scholar and has had an entire *Festschrift* written in his honor concerning his work on Augustine. In his article “Pelagianism and Augustine,” Bonner depicts Pelagianism as an honest attempt to communicate Christian doctrine that intended for Christians to know how responsible they are for their own sin. The debate between Augustine and Pelagius is essentially concerned with Predestination and anthropology. Augustine concluded that salvation must be completely dependent on the grace of God due to the total depravity of humanity. Bonner presents Pelagianism as holding to the critical element of human responsibility and spiraling into works-based righteousness as the controversy continued. Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy in its own time. Pelagianism has however had a resurgence in scholarship as something that should be readdressed. A fresh take on historical sources shows that Pelagius did not hold to the extreme views he has been thought to have endorsed, but it was his followers who developed a hyper Pelagianism.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the ascetics that were contemporaries of Pelagius and Augustine also ascribed to the Pelagian view of original sin and free will. Significant and respected sects of Christianity

¹³⁷ Bonner, “Pelagianism and Augustine,” 33-51.

were not appalled by Pelagius's concerns. Bonner's view of Pelagius has been emerging in scholarship, hoping to distinguish between Pelagius and the following Pelagianism.

In his follow up article, "Augustine and Pelagianism," Bonner emphasizes the question of why Pelagius was condemned at all. Modern scholarship concerning Pelagius has often been vague and uninformed concerning the difference between Pelagius and later Pelagian ideas, particularly those of Julian of Eclanum, who was Augustine's main foil in the Pelagian controversy.¹³⁸ The piece is also concerned with the ministerial implications of both arguments, such as the Reformation conflicts, and synthesizes hypotheses concerning the acceptance of Augustine throughout the church. With a topic such as Pelagianism resurfacing in the last one hundred years, any current study concerning the presentation of Augustine should also be concerned with the presentation of Pelagius *and* Pelagianism.¹³⁹ It is critical for scholars who discuss the Pelagian Controversy to include information about where knowledge of Pelagius and his radical followers is found. Most what is known of Pelagius is received from Augustine. Thus, presenting Pelagianism rightly is essential to presenting Augustine rightly.

Another scholar who should be seriously considered is Matthew Alan Gaumer, who has done substantial work on Augustine's use of the Pauline corpus in confronting Pelagianism. In his article "Augustine's Feud with the Donatists & Pelagians: A Problem

¹³⁸ Julian of Eclanum became the leader of what comes to be known as Neo-Pelagianism, and it is from his work that Augustine develops his main critiques of Pelagianism. As Bonner identifies, later Pelagian ideas did not necessarily match with the thought of Pelagius himself. Bonner, "Augustine and Pelagianism," 27–47.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 27–47.

of Interpreting Paul,” Gaumer “attempted to ascertain how Augustine was able to... assimilate himself into a theological reading of Paul that was digestible to his audience in North Africa.”¹⁴⁰ Gaumer argues that Augustine was able to continue in the tradition of Cyprian and yet innovate upon it for pastoral needs and the theological problems he encountered, namely Donatism and Pelagianism. Cyprian argued for the readmission of lapsed believers upon repentance and faith in light of Christ’s worthiness. Both the Donatists and Pelagians seem to leave Christ’s righteousness out of their arguments. This article has an undertone of emphasis that encourages the reader to not look at Augustine’s work as systematic but occasional and reactive to his opponents.

In summary, when it comes to Pelagianism, modern scholarship encourages readers to pay close attention to the difference between Pelagius and the following Pelagianism that is comparatively radical. Moreover, readers should also consider how authors represent Pelagius when considering Augustine, as the majority of knowledge of Pelagius’s thought comes from the pen of Augustine rather than Pelagius’s own works. Furthermore, scholars want to point out that while topics such as the Trinity, Ecclesiology, and Election are highly associated to systematic theology today, Augustine’s responses are not coming out of a system but are responses to the conflicts of his time. The three responses come from different periods of his life. Some authors go as far as to say that these responses come from very different Augustines.

¹⁴⁰ Matthew Alan Gaumer, “Augustine’s Feud with the Donatists & Pelagians: A Problem of Interpreting Paul?,” *Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi* 30, no. 2 (2013): 439-448.

With the essential discussions in modern scholarship represented, an evaluation of the historical theology surveys can now be precise in distinguishing the benefits and compromises in each survey's form and priorities. While none of the surveys used could be called neglectful nor inaccurate, they certainly have different emphases. Moreover, the structure of each work shows what kind of information is prioritized. Each survey has proven to be useful in research yet in different situations.

Alister McGrath's Historical Theology

Concerning the Trinity, McGrath's presentation certainly gives more priority to addressing current issues. Moreover, McGrath certainly prioritizes his discussion of *Filioque* over the other two major concerns. This is not unwarranted, for one of Augustine's major contributions endorsing *Filioque*. Concerning the Latinization of and exegesis of Trinitarian thought, McGrath presents Augustine as more of a synthesizer and solidifier of Trinitarian doctrine. McGrath certainly gives Augustine the titanic position he truly holds within the movement of western Christian thought but is more general relative to the comprehensive nature of the other two surveys. This could be because his survey is substantially more concise than the other two surveys. This of course is a substantial and decisive factor that plays into the overall approach of the text.

On the topic of Donatism, McGrath is very much in line with modern scholarship in emphasizing the political nature of the Donatist Controversy. He is concise and clear to express the nuance of Donatism and loses little in using considerably less words than the others. McGrath is also concerned with connecting this controversy to the Reformation, as many others are concerned with connecting Augustine to Martin Luther and John

Calvin. While many authors are prone to connect Augustine to Calvinism, McGrath connects Augustine equally to all his areas of influence.

McGrath treats Pelagian controversy far more heavily than the other two major topics. This is likely because it has proven to be the most popular of the three topics for a few reasons. Augustine's view of predestination was not received with eagerness at any point by most of the Church. Furthermore, it has inherent connections to debates such as the Calvinist-Arminian debate which is relevant today. When compared within the theological climate of the Modern era, disputes concerning Trinitarian thought of ecclesiology are vastly outweighed by discussions concerning predestination. It is a difficult topic, thus McGrath seems to give it more attention as the core contribution of Augustine.

Justo González's A History of Christian Thought

González's text is quite clearly oriented in a narrative format to a far greater extent than the other two surveys. It is exhaustive for a survey and includes a vast amount of biographical and historical information compare to the other two works. Furthermore, González stresses the influence of Neoplatonism more than the other two texts. This is valid because Augustine is operating out of Neoplatonist logic. It is interesting that González includes a substantial section on Augustine's view of the Trinity in the volume before Augustine is introduced.

González stresses Augustine's influence in translating Greek thought to Latin thought from the start, which is not surprising since he is obviously more concerned than the other two authors with the cultural context of a theologian. González also give the

most in-depth explanation of Augustine's Trinitarian analogies. González's even raises Augustine's understanding of the vestiges of the Trinity in creation as one of the three most important points of Augustine's Trinitarian approach, the other two being *Filioque* and stressing unity over diversity within the Godhead.

On the topic of Donatism, González certainly approaches the topic with the major movers being political factors rather than theological factors. His focus on how the controversy came to be helps to expand the controversy over valid Sacraments and into western philosophy. The distinguishing factor in González's approach is that he believes biography and relaying the narrative achieves a higher understanding for the reader rather than a systematic approach. This idea is stressed most highly in the Donatist and Pelagian Controversies. González's Augustine is certainly the most dynamic.

González presents the Pelagian Controversy with far more attention to Pelagius the person than the other authors do. Like the other historical theologians, González treats Pelagianism with more priority than the other topics but is more careful to distinguish between Pelagius the man and Pelagianism the movement. For González, it seems that Neoplatonism has a radical effect on Augustine's thinking, even if it wanes near the end of his life. This is in line with the current conversation in scholarship concerning Pelagianism and Augustine.

Gregg Allison's Historical Theology

Concerning Trinitarian thought, Allison leaves nothing out concerning *Filioque*, and capitalizes on Augustine's Trinitarian view being exegetical. He stresses this much more than the other authors. What Allison does not stress as much as the other authors is

the role Neoplatonic thought or at least categories play in Augustine's presentation of the orthodox doctrine. The reader would be hard pressed to find a few sentences that even imply the topic. Allison's text is significantly longer than McGrath's, and is shorter than González's text.

On the topic of Donatism, Allison certainly treats the controversy differently than the other authors. He simply minimizes the controversy considering other concerns to be of a higher priority. He does not neglect ideas of Just War, but proportionately lacks deep description of Donatism and its effect on the church. This could be due to the fact that his text is organized by content, not context, thus the major doctrines he is concerned about are given greater treatment than those which may seem secondary.

Allison treats Pelagianism extensively throughout many chapters of his text. Pelagianism can be seen in almost any section concerning salvation and grace. It also takes a major position in the Soteriology section. Allison's treatment of Pelagius is full and simple, not really distinguishing between Pelagius and Pelagianism. Allison is thorough in explaining how Pelagius is received, acknowledging that Augustine is the one who decisively presents him to the church at large and then conquers Pelagianism. He also treats Semi-Pelagianism with extensive work. One challenge that would be hard to overcome given Allison's structure is displaying Augustine as occasional rather than systematic. Today's scholarship would be highly interested in Allison's choice to engage Pelagius and Pelagianism as a somewhat interchangeable in presentation.

IV. Conclusion

Alister McGrath's Historical Theology

Due to the breadth of his work and its lacking length compared to the other surveys, McGrath's survey can lack depth in places that are unoriginal to Augustine. However, wherever Augustine makes a major contribution, McGrath addresses it with precision and clarity. His text is incredibly accessible and expresses a titanic Augustine who towers over the west. McGrath has published much and certainly has more expansive works on the four periods of Christian Thought. This text is an excellent introduction to all three topics, but a limitation of this study at almost every stage has been McGrath's text being far less comprehensive than the other two texts.

The major implications this has for the text's use is that it is simply more accessible and concise than the other two texts and offers arguably the best introduction to Donatism and Pelagianism. McGrath does not favor the context over the content, nor the content over the context. McGrath clearly engages today's scholarship in discussing Neo-Platonism, North African Politics, and Pelagianism being separated from Pelagius.

Justo Gonzalez's A History of Christian Thought

Due to the extensive treatment of historical characters, González's work gives a vastly different presentation than the other two surveys. González's work is far more contextualized and detailed concerning the narrative and history of the church, and yet the theology is certainly less clear-cut. González seems to allow theology to be as dynamic as the culture and context of the theologian and event that is being discussed. He says little of Augustine's hermeneutic or view of Scripture and says much concerning the vast difference between early and late Augustine.

The major implications this has for the text's use is that it is not as accessible as the other two surveys. It discusses each topic with more depth than the other two surveys and is organized as a history of Christianity would be with significant discourses on theology within that structure. Structuring the theology of a period within the history of the period is certainly beneficial in assuring that nothing is taken out of context, yet the limitation is always clarity as a text become more exhaustive. González's *A History of Christian Thought* is certainly not an ideal introduction to each topic but is certainly a prime resource for understanding the context of a belief system. González contextualizes historical theology far more than the other author's surveys. González chooses to enrich the content by giving exhaustive context.

Gregg Allison's Historical Theology

Due to the structure of Allison's text, the reader gets the best understanding of Augustine's breadth within any of these three texts. All three texts include valid sweeping statements on his impact, but it is only in Allison's text that the reader can realize that out of the thirty-three chapters of nearly fifteen hundred pages, Augustine has substantial sections of his own in almost every chapter of the book. Thus, Allison lacks context but makes very few compromises with stating the content of Augustine's thought. Particularly, Augustine's understanding of Scripture is put on a very full display.

While Alison does not prioritize Neo-Platonism nor Pelagianism as distinct from Pelagius, he certainly gives the most context concerning Augustine's hermeneutic and use of Scripture. Allison also does well to include many quotes from Augustine, thus making a strong case for his presentation. Overall, Allison deals with Augustine's perceived impact today over and above Augustine's impact on the original context.

Closing Remarks

All three of these texts capture the essence of what Augustine has passed down to the whole of the Western Church. McGrath did not miss any essentials of Augustinian thought, but certainly lacked the depth that the other works had. Nevertheless, McGrath seems to have the best balance of context and content. This makes McGrath's text to be the ideal introduction. While González favors context and a narrative approach to ensure nothing is dealt with tritely, clarity can be lacking for the beginner or intermediate student, and organization was certainly a challenge. González's text makes for ideal references for research. Allison easily had the most consistent structure but lacks context by prioritizing crystalized doctrine over theology in process. Allison particularly stressed Augustine's Biblical hermeneutic and view of inspiration. I doubt González and Allison would agree on Augustine's view of inspiration. While González expresses Neo-Platonism as a major informer of Augustine's theology, Allison stresses Augustine's understanding of Scripture to be the decisive force. Both of these Academic traditions tend to lean these two ways, respectively. Allison seems to make Augustine out to be the great supporter of predestination. He also focuses on the later works of Augustine, thus the movement within Augustinian thought is not as important to Allison's presentation. Allison's text makes for the best theological encyclopedia of primary quotations and the essentials of Historical Theology.

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