

AUGUSTINE'S ECCLESIOLOGY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE YEARS  
354-387AD

By

PAUL C.V. VUNTARDE

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. J. VAN OORT

CO-SUPERVISOR: PROF. G.A. DUNCAN

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## Summary

This study aims to establish what Augustine's ecclesiology was between 354-387AD and how his ecclesial thoughts developed during that period. Scholarship has tended to neglect the importance of this period in understanding Augustine's ecclesiology as a coherent whole (Alexander 2008:21). Like Harrison (2007: 165-179) and Alexander (2008:18-21), this study establishes that Augustine's early ecclesiology and its development is an essential lens to understanding Augustine's later ecclesiology. The thesis statement, which yielded a positive result, is the defining features of Augustine's ecclesiology were in place by 387AD. A chronological textual approach was used to establish whether the thesis was positive or negative. Primary and secondary sources were used where appropriate to determine Augustine's ecclesiology.

This study established the different phases of Augustine's ecclesial growth, what the contents of his ecclesiology most likely was during these different phases, how his early ecclesial thoughts influenced his future ecclesial thoughts and what lessons can be learnt for the South African church context.

## Key Terms

**Catechumen-** One who has submitted himself/herself to the process of Catholic instruction though not yet baptized.

**Christian-** One who believes that only through Christ's sacrifice is one saved from the consequences of sin and death.

**Competens-** A catechumen who has requested to be baptized and was found worthy of receiving baptism

**Conversion-** When referring to Augustine's "conversion" this author refers to when Augustine became a true and convinced Catholic Christian.

**Donatist-** heretics named after Donatus who believed they were the only true Church in the world. They predominantly lived in North Africa.

**Ecclesiology-** When this author says ecclesiology he is referring to the doctrine about the Church. Encapsulated in this are answers to questions like who is the Church, when did it begin, what authority does the Church have, how one gets into the Church, what the Church's mission is, who is in the church and the purpose of the Church.

**Manichaean-** Heretics who believed in Mani's teachings as salvific.

**Native-** people born in a given country whose ancestors were originally in that country prior to the fifteenth century.

**Neophyte-** A newly baptized Catholic Christian catechumen.

**Scriptures-** the Christian Church's 66 foundational documents made up of 27 books of the New Testament and 39 books of Old Testament which are given by God through holy men to reveal God's salvation plan for all mankind.

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## Abbreviations

- beat.v.* The Happy Life (*De beata vita*)
- c.Acad.* Against the Academics (*Contra Academicos*)
- conf.* Confessions (*Confessiones*)
- c.faust.* Answer to Faustus (*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*)
- ecc.cath.* The Unity of the Catholic Church (*De utilitate ecclesiae catholicae*)
- f. et. Op* On Faith and Works (*De fide et operibus*)
- mor.ecc.* The Catholic way of life and the Manichaeian way of life (*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*)
- mys.* The Mysteries (*De mysteriis*)
- ord.* Divine providence and the problem of evil (*De ordine*)
- sac.* The Sacraments (*De sacramentis*)
- sol.* Soliloquies (*Soliloquia*)
- quant.* The magnitude of the soul (*De quantitate animae*)



## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work , that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this dissertation has not previously in its totality , or partially been submitted for the attainment of a degree at any University.

DATE: 30/10/2012

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PAUL CHAMUNORWA VIRIMAYI VUNTARDE

STUDENT NUMBER: 11369729

## **CHAPTER 1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Problem statement**

This paper aims to investigate the following problem: What were Augustine's ecclesiology and its development between the years 354-387AD?

The challenge then for this study is to explore the beginning of Augustine's ecclesial thoughts, how they developed over the years and how he was poised in his ecclesiological thinking prior to his return to Africa in 388AD.

### **1.2. The relevance of the study**

This study has both a theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study is significant in the field of church history for three reasons. Firstly, it will shed light on Augustine's ecclesiology in a period that receives little attention in scholarship. Secondly, the answer to this question will aid us in coming to an understanding of Augustine's ecclesiology between 354-386AD. Thirdly, since the answer will establish Augustine's early ecclesiology, it will also aid one in partly gauging what sort of impact the Manichaean and Donatist thinking would have had on Augustine's ecclesiology. Did they change him, stimulate him to deeper thought, or did he simply remain unchanged and engage with them from a predetermined ecclesial conviction? This will give one a better understanding of the young Augustine's ecclesial thinking and future thoughts.

This study is also relevant for two other contextual practical reasons to South Africa. When evangelizing native South Africans, one is often met with the response that

Christianity is a “white man’s religion”. As a result, native Africans often reject Christianity as a religion because they say it is a white European religion. To bolster their view they appeal to Church history and claim that white Europeans came with this pure white religious thought during colonization for the first time on African soil. This sort of thinking betrays a lack of knowledge of one of the most influential African Christian’s prior to colonization: Augustine.

There seems to be a real lack of depth in understanding when it comes to Augustine’s life and works among native South Africans. In fact, when one brings up the notion that he was an African one is often greeted with disbelieving faces. This study is relevant because it will to some extent re-address historical misconceptions by looking at one of the most influential Christians of all time after the age of the apostles, namely Augustine and hopefully inspire other African theologians to study his life and works for valuable lessons.

Secondly, there are some elements in South African culture that seem to portray a negative sentiment of native Africans. Perhaps they are inherited notions from apartheid or simply just misperceptions. Whatever the cause, Africans are seen as somewhat inferior in their thought and competency. There are practical lessons to be learned from Augustine’s ecclesiological approach in helping address these misconceptions and even the discipleship process within churches. This study wishes to learn from them and apply them to the South African church context.

### **1.3. The objectives of this dissertation**

The objectives of this study are to do the following:

1. To establish the different phases of Augustine's ecclesial formation. That is to say, this author will aim to discern what the different phases of Augustine's ecclesial thinking are.
2. To determine what Augustine's ecclesiology was in these different phases of his life. Once the different phases of Augustine's ecclesial development have been established, this author will investigate what his ecclesiology was in those phases.
3. To investigate the development of Augustine's ecclesiology through the different phases of his ecclesial formation. How did Augustine's ecclesiology grow, plateau or decline between the different phases.
4. To determine how Augustine was poised in his ecclesiology after 387AD.
5. To determine how Augustine's early ecclesiology coloured his future ecclesiology.
6. To draw some lessons and applications for the South African context.

### **1.4. Approach of the Thesis**

The focus of this work is not on Augustine's future ecclesiology. The main focus will be on establishing what Augustine's early ecclesiology was and how this ecclesiology developed between 354 and 387AD. This necessitates a study limited to the primary texts that reveal Augustine's ecclesiology within the period 354-387AD. Also included will be works that reveal Augustine's ecclesiology during this period, though they might have been written at a later date. An example of this is the *Confessions*. They were

written at a later date than the date restriction (354-387AD) imposed on this study, but the book makes significant comments about Augustine's ecclesial thoughts during his first 33 years of life.

Scholarship on Augustine's ecclesiology may profit much from investigating his early ecclesial formation. Especially, in investigating a continuity and coherence between the early and later Augustinian thought.

Since the scholarship on Augustine's ecclesiology after 388 is considerable, there will be little attention paid to this area. Mostly secondary sources by experts will be used to contrast Augustine's later ecclesiology with his early ecclesiology.

Another limitation of this study is in its contextual application. This author will focus on the church in South Africa and how knowledge of Augustine's ecclesiology may aid the church. It is this author's belief that South Africans can learn from these historical perspectives (from Augustine's early ecclesiological development) which may aid ministry efforts by South African churches.

Augustine became a true and convinced Christian at only 33 years of age. Though he had such little time he used it so effectively that he became one of the most influential and significant contributors to ecclesiology.

## **1.5. Hypothesis**

This author's thesis statement is the defining features of Augustine's ecclesiology were in place by 387AD. Like Harrison (2007: 165-179) and Alexander (2008:18-21), this author believes that the decisive moments in determining Augustine's ecclesiology were not birthed in the 390s. Where this author differs with Harrison (2007: 165-179) and Alexander (2008:18-21) is that there seems to be a traceable continuity and coherence in Augustine's ecclesial development between his birth and 387AD, not just between 386 and 391AD.

## **1.6. The methodology of the study**

This study will employ a chronological textual approach similar to that employed by historian Alexander (2008: 25-28). Since this study focuses on Augustine's ecclesial thinking between 354-387AD, one is compelled to approach the study chronologically. This chronology will have 4 different periods of investigation: Augustine's ecclesial thoughts prior to his conversion (354-373AD), Augustine's ecclesial thoughts after his conversion before his baptism (August 386AD- February 387AD), Augustine's ecclesiology as a neophyte (387AD) and Augustine's ecclesiology between Autumn 387 and the end of 387AD.

Since our access to history is primarily through the lens of literature, this study will have a textual component. The texts that will be examined will be Augustine's works that fall within the period being discussed or comments Augustine himself makes about that period in works produced after 387AD. As a result, textual analysis will be inevitable in answering the research problem at hand- A chronological and textual approach will be

used to discern Augustine's early ecclesiology (between 354-387AD). Included in the method will be lexical, grammatical and cultural analysis where necessary or where the meaning of a passage greatly adds to the value of solving the research question.

This textual analysis will be done by looking at the young Augustine's wider historical, social and cultural settings, and seeing what sources influenced his ecclesial thought at different stages in his life.

Primarily, this author will research Augustine's writings to try come to an understanding of his ecclesial development from 354-387AD.

Secondly, secondary research will be undertaken by using other media like books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, journal articles and other similar sources.

There will obviously be no empirical data involved in this study

### **1.7. Literature review**

Studies on Augustine's ecclesiology are indeed considerable (Augustine 2008:21). As noted by Alexander, most studies on Augustine's ecclesiology seem to neglect the period between 386-391AD and instead focus on his post-clerical ecclesiology (2008:21).

Though he attempts to correct this oversight, Alexander also repeats the same error by not seeing the significance of Augustine's ecclesial development prior to his conversion in 386AD. How was Augustine affected by the Manichaean ecclesiology? How did that ecclesiology affect his future ecclesiology? What is to be said of Augustine's early years prior to 373AD? Did Augustine's early ecclesiology colour his ecclesial outlook?

Frend rightly notes that much of Augustine's religious and political thought was actually coloured by his Berber tradition (1952:231). Experts in Manichaeism have pointed out that Augustine's Catholic Christian theology has traces of his Manichaean phase between 373-383AD (van Oort 2004:38; Kotze 2011:3). Van Oort asserts that "if it is true...then we may go further and say that without Manichaeism, universal Christian Catholic theology cannot truly be comprehended" (2004:34). It is Augustine's early ecclesiology that gives us an essential lens for understanding his future ecclesial contributions (Alexander 2008: 22). This makes his ecclesial development from birth to 387AD significant and a worthwhile study.

This author will aim to look further than Alexander's thoughts and try see what Augustine's early ecclesiology was and how it coloured his ecclesiology as a whole. This author will now turn his attention to various literatures that will be worthwhile to study in the pursuit of answering the research problem.

### **1.7.1. Primary sources**

This author will be using translations of the primary texts due to his inability to translate Latin. These primary sources are essential because they help shed light on Augustine's early Christian and theological development. The primary sources chosen here are those that are written within or discussing the period between 354-387AD. These include the following:

- Schopp, Ludwig 1948. *The Happy life (De beata vita) in Writings of Saint Augustine vol. 1*, edited by Schopp, Ludwig et al. New York: CIMA.

This work was written between Nov.13-15 386AD (Drobner 2007:451).



- Kavanagh, Denis J. 1948. Answer to Skeptics (*Contra Academicos*), in *Writings of Saint Augustine 1*, edited by Schopp, Ludwig et al. New York: CIMA.
- Boulding, Maria 1997. The Confessions, in *The Works of Saint Augustine in: A translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed Rotelle, John E. Hyde Park: New City Press.

This work was written between 397 and 400 AD (Drobner 2007: 429). However it is useful in that it mentions Augustine's ecclesial predisposition during before, during and after his conversion.

- Teske, Roland 2007. Answer to Faustus a Manichaeum (*Contra Faustus Manichaeum*), in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Ramsey, Boniface. Hyde Park: New City.

Though this work is written after Augustine became a Catholic Priest, it does shed light on the kind of Manichaeum thought Augustine had been exposed to prior to becoming a Christian.

- Lombardo, Gregory J. 1988. St Augustine: On Faith and Works (*De fide et operibus*). New York: Newman.

Though this work was only written in 413AD (Drobner 2007:436), Augustine clearly refers back to 386 and his experience as a *neophyte*. This makes it a worthwhile book to investigate.

- Russell, Robert P. 1948. Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil (*de ordine*), in *Writings of Saint Augustine 1*, edited by Schopp, Ludwig et al. New York: CIMA.

This is another of the Cassiciacum writings. It was written between Nov.386-Mar.387 (Drobner 2007:444)

- Gilligan, Thomas F. 1948. "Soliloquies", in *Writings of Saint Augustine 1*, edited by Schopp, Ludwig et al. New York: CIMA.

This work was written between Nov.386-Mar.387 (Drobner 2007:451). This book is written during the period at Cassisiacum where Augustine has a personal reflection about God.

- Teske, Roland 2007. The way of the Catholic Church and the way of the Manichaeon Church (*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*), in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Ramsey, Boniface. Hyde Park: New City.

Though this started to be written in Rome in 387AD Augustine only finished this work in 388AD (Drobner 2007:442). There will be interesting insights on how Augustine viewed the Catholic Church before his return to Africa.

- Deferrari, Roy J. 1962. "The Mysteries" in *Saint Ambrose: Theological and Dogmatic Works*, edited by Deferrari, Roy J .Washington: Catholic University, 5-30.

This is not an Augustinian work but rather a work of Ambrose. He used this work to teach the *neophytes* in Milan. It would be helpful in seeing what kind of theology Augustine most likely received from Ambrose through investigating this book.

- Deferrari, Roy J. 1962. "The Sacraments" in *Saint Ambrose: Theological and Dogmatic Works*, edited by Deferrari, Roy J et al. Washington: Catholic University, 265-328.
- McMahan, John J. 1947. "The Magnitude of the Soul (*De Quantitate Animae*)", in *The Father of the Church: A New Translation*, edited by Dressler, Hermigild et al. Washington: Catholic University of America.

This was written between fall 387 to between July and June 388AD (Drobner 2007:451).

- Schopp, Ludwig 1947. "The Greatness of the Soul (*De immortalitate animae*)", *The Father of the Church: A New Translation*, edited by Dressler, Hermigild et al. Washington: Catholic University of America.

Written between Apr.1-24 387 (Drobner 2007:440).

### 1.7.2. Secondary sources

- **Ferguson, Everett 2005. *Church History: From Christ to Pre-Reformation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan**

This is yet another good introductory text that gives a detailed view of the Donatist Schism and also Augustine's involvement in its resolution. Ferguson has a more detailed approach than Gonzalez, and helpfully outlines Augustine's approach in combating Donatist teachings.

He also does a good job of outlining the different periods of Augustine's life and his dealings with the schism (Ferguson 2005: 274). This overview would be very useful in the proposed study as it gives an overview of how Augustine's ecclesial thoughts as he answered Donatist arguments.

- **Gonzalez, Justo L. 1984. *The Story of Christianity*. Peabody: Prince Press.**

Gonzalez writes a very readable overview of the Donatist Schism and Augustine. Gonzalez tackles the main theological issues of the schism, the socio-political reasons

for the schism, how the schism affected the rest of the church in the Roman Empire, interventions taken to resolve the conflict, and Augustine's level of involvement (1984:151-157). Like many other authors, Gonzalez is convincing in his assertion that the Donatist schism was a reaction to the end of church persecution by Constantine's decree (1984: 151).

The book also devotes a section to the life and works of Augustine. However, the greatest contribution this book may make to our study would be in its portrayal of the theological issues and lifestyle of Augustine.

▪ **Frend, W.H.C. 1984. *The Rise of Christianity*. Fort Press: Philadelphia.**

In this work Frend touches on the historical background, work, life and theology of Augustine. Frend also has a section that deals with the young Augustine and his personal development in his early years. This would make this work profitable in an overview of the historical and cultural background

In dealing with Augustine's Manichaean phase, Frend highlights the enormous impact that it had on his emotions and thought from 373-397AD (1984: 662-663). Insights in this section will prove helpful in seeing how Augustine's ecclesiology was affected by Manichaean thought.

In his account of the Donatist Schism, Frend not only looks at the theological factors, but also, the social, political and economic causes of the schism(1984: 653-673). This makes for an interesting as well as informative read on the controversy's issues.

Frend gives an in depth analysis of the Donatist position with regards to their ecclesiology (1984:655). He explains how the Donatists viewed the church as being one like God, and how they saw purity as the greatest hallmark of the church (Frend 1984:655). He goes on to show how they believed that the integrity of the church lay in its members individual integrity, they believed that the Church was in Africa, and that the Church were always victims of the States persecution (Frend 1984:655-657).

This work is useful in that Frend has a section which deals with Augustine's involvement with the Schism. This will be helpful in enabling us to trace whether Augustine's ecclesiastical thinking of the Church might have been precipitated solely by the Donatist opposition.

- **Usry, Glenn & Keener Craig S 1996. Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity be Afrocentric. Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press.**

Though this book deals with a different subject matter, namely the influence black people have had in Christianity; there are a few useful facts on Augustine's life and works. One such fact is how the Donatist Church came to crumble due to some of the Germanic invaders whom they welcomed. They did this according to Usry & Keener because they were reacting against being forced into Catholicism. However the true value of this book to this study is in how it highlights historic misconceptions of Christianity in relation to Africa.

- **Brown, Peter 1967. Augustine of Hippo. Berkeley: California Press.**

This book is considered one of the best works on investigating Augustine's life and works. In this book, Brown does well to give a chronology of event of Augustine's life as

well as highlight important historical and cultural issues of his Manichaean background as well as his education.

Brown has a well written and concise portion on the Donatists. In it he deals with the attitude Augustine had towards the Donatist position and the differences in their approaches to the question of the church. This section alone merits this books inclusion as some insights might be gleaned on the differences in both sides approach to the question of the Church.

- **Fitzgerald, Allan D. 2009. “When Augustine was priest”, in *Augustinian studies* 40 (no.1):37-48.**

Due to the relatively low scholarly attention paid to Augustine’s early years, Fitzgerald attempts to give some attention to Augustine’s socio-cultural context (2009:38). This article primarily deals with the experience of Augustine with Donatists in the time of his priesthood (Fitzgerald 2009:37). All this is done to produce a more clear experience of Augustine’s encounter with the Donatists in his early years as a presbyter and to put his Donatist encounters in a historical and cultural framework, especially as to why he wrote so little on Donatism in the early 390-400 period.

His study is valuable in that it attempts to tie together the writings of Augustine with his personal, cultural and literary elements.

- **Portalie, E 1960. *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*. London: Burns and Oates.**

In this work, Portalie argues that Augustine’s ecclesiology was occasioned chiefly by the Donatist Schism (1960:230). He does a good job of looking at all aspects of ecclesiological significance in Augustine’s thoughts; however he does not give much

attention to the significance of Augustine's early years. This is obviously different to the view of Harrison (2007: 165-179), who sees Augustine's early ecclesiology as the basis on which Augustine's ecclesiology was founded. This book would be useful in ascertaining the broader thoughts Augustine held about ecclesiology.

- **Van Bavel, T.J. 1999. "Church", in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia*, edited by Allen D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 169-175.**

Van Bavel gives an article on Augustine's ecclesiology proper. His article deals with Augustine's main distinctions such as "terrestrial and celestial church, pilgrim church and its eschatological fulfilment" (1999:169), the church as an: institution, social entity, body of Christ, sociological entity, in relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit (1999:169-172). The article also tackles Augustine's perspective on the church's extent, members, Christological nature, unity and universality in light of the Montanist-Donatist controversies (1999:169-172).

Van Bavel highlights some interesting differences between Augustine's conception of the church and 21<sup>st</sup> century ideas. One such difference is seen in the area of the churches origins. Augustine traced the beginning of the church to Abel while contemporary thinkers tend to trace the beginning of the church to the day of Pentecost (Van Bavel 1999:169-170). This article will aid us well in gaining a better appreciation of Augustine's ecclesiology proper.

- **Alexander, D.C. 2008 *Augustine's early Theology of the Church: Emergence and Implications*. New York: Peter Lang.**

In this book Alexander attempts to show that Augustine's thoughts on the church were stimulated between 386-391AD. In other words, this book is concerned with the "processes, emergent forms and coalesced ideas of how which developed into his later ecclesiology" (Alexander 2008:18). Alexander covers a period from Augustine's conversion to the point he became Bishop of Hippo (386-391AD) and investigates Augustine's early experience, understanding, influences and emergent views on the church.

This being said, the works on Augustine's ecclesiology tend to begin with the Donatist Schism and neglect an understanding of Augustine's formative years (Alexander 2007:21). However recent studies by van Oort (2004:38), Kotze (2012: 1) and Alexander have shown that one cannot quite understand Augustine's ecclesiology without seeing how it was influenced by his earlier years (van Oort 2004:38; Kotze 2012: 1; Alexander 2008:22).

- **Van Oort, Johannes 2004. "Augustine and Manichaeism in Roman North Africa", in *Augustine Papers*. Johannesburg: St Augustine, 32-51.**

In this article van Oort aims to answer two questions: what extent Augustine was a Manichaean and what lasting significance did Manichaeism leave on Augustine (2004:34). One of his objectives is to show that one cannot understand Augustinian Catholic theology apart from its Manichaean roots (van Oort 2004:38). This will suit this study in two ways. Firstly, it will help one understand the depth to which Augustine was a Manichaean. Secondly, it will help give an understanding of Augustine's Manichaean phase and how his ecclesiology developed prior, during and after this phase.



Alexander argues rightly that the body of scholarship dealing with Augustine's ecclesiology is considerably large (2007:21). Though there is scarcity in Augustine's early ecclesiology, there are many works dealing with the young Augustine (Alexander 2008:22). These will be useful in helping place Augustine in his proper social, political and historical setting so one can better get to terms with his ecclesiology. Works like the following:

**Tilley, Maureen A. 1999. "Anti Donatist Works", in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia*, edited by Allen D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 34-39.**

Like Fitzgerald (2009:37), Tilley believes that Augustine's only real encounter with the Donatists would have been only at Hippo and not Thagaste- the former being where Augustine grew up (1999:34-35). This seems very likely when one evaluates Augustine's travels and spiritual journey as portrayed by Tilley. However, we will have to investigate whether this assertion is historically correct. Are there any Donatist remains in Thagaste?

Tilley also gives a chronological account of the Augustine's anti-Donatist works in this article (1999:34-37). This will prove to be useful in ascertaining whether he would have been influenced by Donatist tendencies in his upbringing. It will also help us determine any growth, or differences in Augustine's position on the ecclesial issues of the controversy over time.

Tilley's article on the anti-Donatist works of Augustine will be helpful in deepening our understanding of Augustine as a person, his ecclesial thoughts and how the Donatists helped him refine his ecclesial thoughts.

- Dodaro, Robert 1999. "Church and State", in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia*, edited by Allen D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 176-184.
- Bright, Pamela 1999. "North African Church", in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia*, edited by Allen D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 185-190.

Bright gives the background of the North African Church between 312 and 430. This is a most useful character for ascertaining the background within which Augustine received his ecclesial lessons.

- Lancel, Serge 2007. "The Donatist Dispute", in *Saint Augustine*, edited by Tarsicius J. Van Bavel. Mercatorfonds: Brussels, 193-203.
- Coyle, Kevin J. 2007. "The Manichaeism of Augustine", in *Saint Augustine*, edited by Tarsicius J. Van Bavel in collaboration with Bernard Bruning. Mercatorfonds: Brussels, 185-211.

All these articles help shed light on some aspects of Augustine's formative ecclesial thinking in their respective topics and would be useful in this study. Especially the overview works on Augustine and the church like those of Mara, Coyle, Dodaro and Van Bavel.

- **Harrison, Carol 2007. "The early works", in *Saint Augustine*, edited by Van Bavel, T. J. Mercatorfonds: Brussels, 165-179**

Harrison argues that the defining features of Augustine's theology were firmly in place at 386AD. She argues against the view in scholarship that suggests that he had a spiritual revolution only in 396AD (2007: 165). She sees continuity and coherence in the early works of Augustine and the mature Augustine (Harrison 2007:165).

Harrison gives a short but useful account in the purpose behind the Cassiciacum writings—"they attempted to understand ...their new faith in term of their own distinctive

educational and cultural formation” (2007:166). This will be useful in this study when it comes to discerning Augustine’s ecclesial thinking at Cassisiacum.

▪ **Dudden, Homes F 1935. *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*. Oxford: Clarendon.**

Dudden does well to highlight Augustine’s early development, conversion and baptism. These insights will help this author come to an understanding of the young Augustine.

▪ **Mara, Maria 2007. “Augustine and the Church”, in *Saint Augustine*, edited by Van Bavel, James. Mercatorfonds: Brussels. 193-203**

Mara gives an overview of Augustine’s view of the church. She then goes on to show that the context of Augustine’s church views were often polemic in nature in his encounters with the Donatist and the Manichaeen churches. Following this, Mara does well in summarizing the various ecclesiological fruits Augustine gained from his labor against the Manichaeen and the Donatist churches. Manichaeen fruits such as Scriptures are to be read as authoritative and that the Church was about love (Mara 2007:206). She portrays Augustine’s view of the church as a dynamic indefinable entity (2007:205).

This article will be of good use in gaining an in depth understanding of Augustine’s ecclesiology as well as his early ecclesiology.

## **CHAPTER 2. Augustine's ecclesial thoughts before his conversion (354-386AD).**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The period in question is the time period between 354-386AD. In other words, from Augustine's birth to when he was 33 years of age. In this section we will try to determine what Augustine's ecclesiology proper was during this period? More precisely, were there any discernible ecclesial views that Augustine held? How did these ecclesial views develop within this period?

It must be said at the onset that this is a very difficult task. The difficulty arises firstly, and rather obviously, Augustine himself is no longer around to reflect to us his views on the subject. As a result, we are forced to depend on texts and witnesses of the historical events of Augustine's life.

This leads us to our second difficulty; we are also faced with the difficulty in ascertaining Augustine's holistic views on the subject from his extant writings. Augustine may well have left out a considerable amount of what his ecclesial thought in the extant texts. Coupled with this is the reality that Augustine's ecclesial thoughts are to be gleaned from texts that are essentially addressing other topics as part of their main argument. So, one has to take great care and caution, as one observes and interprets the works. Otherwise there is real possibility of introducing a warped perspective into Augustine's pre-baptismal ecclesiology proper.

During the period in question (354-386AD), Augustine seems to have had three main influences on his ecclesial thoughts. Firstly, his mother Monnica, who raised him in Christian instruction, against his pagan father's wishes (Di Bernardino 1999: 570). Secondly, the Manichaean influence he held when he became a "hearer" of the

Manichaeen Church in Carthage (van Oort 2004:38). Thirdly, he would have also have had considerable influence from Ambrose and the Milanese Church (Portalie 1960: 248). In this section this author will investigate the period within which Monnica, and the Church would have played a key influence on his ecclesiology.

## **2.2. Augustine's ecclesiology between birth and 19 years of age**

O'Meara rightly argues that "men have too often forgotten these first years of Christian belief and piety when Augustine was a willing pupil at his mother's knee" (1954:38). It is clear that Augustine had heard some theology from the recounting of his childhood experience in Book 1 of *Confessions*: "While still a boy I heard about eternal life promised through the humility of our Lord and God" (*conf.*1.11, 17 Boulding 1997:50). He continues to say "I pleaded with my loving mother and with the mother of us all, your Church" for this eternal life (*conf.*1. 11, 17 Boulding 1997:50-51). This makes one realize that, somehow, Augustine had learnt about salvation and that the church was in some way the custodian of this promised eternal salvation. He would have thus been acquainted with some sort of ecclesiology.

What specific ecclesiology would this have been? One cannot be certain save to say that Augustine had come to know something of the Catholic Church's teachings on ecclesiology as he doubtlessly went to church with his mother and was a catechumen.

Where did the source of such teachings come from? The source of this teaching most likely came from his Christian mother and the church. We know this because Augustine constantly remarks on her influence upon his life throughout the *Confessions*. We know of the Church influence because Christians had a long tradition of gathering under the apostles teaching (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42). There is a possibility that he also learnt

from those who were in their household and fellow believers (*conf.1.11*, 17 Boulding 1997:51).

How deep was Augustine's ecclesiology between birth and 17 years of age? This by no means tells us that Augustine could have written out a systematic theology on ecclesiology! Augustine seems to have had a strong distaste for study compared to play (*conf.1.9*, 15 Boulding 1997:49). He also would have been so burdened by the demanding schedule of pagan study and memorization that he would have hardly had time to focus on Christian ecclesial thought (Brown 1967:36). So Tilley rightly asserts how Augustine had "little or no interest in or respect for the traditional Christianity of his homeland" in his early years (1999:34). Moreover, Augustine betrays a lack of depth in his theology by stating that he actually learnt how to pray from observing schoolmates during his boyhood years (*conf.1.9*, 14 Boulding 1997:51). Now if that is true, how can we expect him to have had an in depth ecclesiology when he had barely learnt how to pray?

Another consideration to take into account here is that Augustine was still young. Even in the twenty first century most youth do not have a deep ecclesiology. So, taking all these facts into consideration, at best we can say, Augustine's theology would have been shallow. However, we specifically know he knew that the Church offered a form of salvation (*conf.1. 11*, 17 Boulding 1997:50-51).

Between 371-374AD, at age 17, Augustine went to Carthage, where he seems to have developed little in his ecclesiology. The reason for this anemic ecclesiology would have been the cauldron of lusts that held Augustine spell-bound (*conf. 1*, 1-3 Boulding 1997: 75-76). In fact in *conf.3.5* Augustine declares "How great were the sins on which I spent all my strength, as I followed my impious curiosity! It led me to abandon you and plunge

into treacherous abysses, into depths of unbelief.” (*conf.* 3.3, 5 Boulding 1997: 78). So still it seems that Augustine’s ecclesiology was shallow at best or even receding.

While Augustine indulged in his lusts he fell in love with philosophy. In it he found a burning desire for wisdom kindled. After sometime studying philosophy he was troubled that it never seemed to mention Christ. Of all things to be bothered by he still esteemed Christ. It is as if Augustine sees him as central, wise and to be admired. As a result he turned to the second century Old Latin translation and found it wanting in comparison to the flowing prose of Cicero. He thus thrust the foul tome aside as his pride recoiled from its style (*conf.*3.5, 9 Boulding 1997:80). What is notable about this is that Augustine says he turned to Scripture “to find out what they were like” (*conf.*3.5, 9 Boulding 1997:80). What is implied here is that Augustine had not read the Scriptures! This is a very important observation because it implies that Augustine had not yet studied and paid attention to the Church’s very foundational documents. Therefore, one can expect Augustine’s ecclesiology to be shallow in content at this point. It seems clear that it is very difficult to determine what exactly Augustine’s ecclesial thoughts were at this stage. The best one can say is that they would have been shallow.

This would lead us to conclude that whatever his ecclesiology proper in Thagaste and Carthage, between his infancy and adolescence, it would have been shallow in content and depth. Perhaps the content was merely memorized parrot fashion from the influence of his mother, other Christians, his father’s view and perhaps at church gatherings. Consequently, one can say the depth of Augustine’s ecclesiology was shallow at best but not non-existent. What child goes to church every Sunday and does not have a view of what church is? Perhaps an area for future study would be what children’s ministry occurred in Thagaste. What sort of theology did parents teach their children about the church?

There is one other thing that needs to be mentioned here. Was Augustine influenced by Catholic Christian instruction or Donatist instruction? It must be said that there was very little difference in the ecclesiology of the Catholics and Donatists (Markus 1999:286). So which ever influence that he received most, Augustine would have in anyway had much in common with the opposing party. There is a milieu that says Monnica was a Donatist and thus Augustine had Donatist influence in his life. Thagaste, the city Augustine was growing up in, seems to have been a Donatist city at some point. However, Thagaste converted fully to Catholicism (Fitzgerald 2009:37).

Later on in the Confessions Augustine does point out the fact that his mother gave offerings to the martyrs graves (*conf.*6.2, 2 Boulding 135) - One suspects that this was a Donatist practice she still held on to. She dared not offer any more to the martyrs when she discovered that Ambrose banned such proceedings in Milan. Ambrose's ban however was not because it was a Donatist practice, but rather for two reasons- He wanted to prevent excess alcoholic drinking, and prevent the look of participating in pagan rituals. This perhaps shows that to some degree it was not uncommon in pagan cultures to do similar offerings. Even if it was a remnant of her Donatist heritage, when the bishop forbade her to, Monnica shows that her loyalty was now to Catholic Church instruction.

So it is reasonable to think his mother might have been a Donatist but she clearly would have become Catholic and thus taught the Catholic views to her son. How much did Augustine know then of Donatism? It is quite possible that Augustine would have known of the Schism because of the way in which North Africa had been engulfed in the Schism between 312 and 362AD (Bright 1999:185-187).



Surely he would have come to know of it before he encountered them. In an area dominated by Catholic teaching, his mother having converted to the Catholic Church, it would be reasonable to assume that he knew very little (*conf.*1. 11, 17 Boulding 1997:51).

So in conclusion between birth and age 19, Augustine seems to have had very little ecclesiology, a very rudimentary knowledge. At least Augustine knew that God's people were the church and that the Catholic Church was the custodians of God's salvation and that they could bestow this salvation on people who asked for it.

### **2.3. Augustine ecclesiology between age 19 and 28 years of age**

While at Carthage, between 373 and 382, Augustine got involved with a group known as the Manichaean Church (Ferguson 2005: 269; cf. Frend 1984:662). In the Confessions, Augustine reflects on how he was drawn to Manichaeism due to 4 influences. Firstly, it was partly due to his disappointment with the Holy Scriptures style (*conf.*6.6, 10 Boulding 1997: 80).

The second part was his lack of knowledge (as he points out in *conf.*3.7, 12) -"The trouble was I knew nothing else; I did not recognize the other, true reality. I was being subtly maneuvered into accepting the views of those stupid deceivers" (Boulding 1997:83).

Thirdly, Augustine also came to reject the Scriptures due to interpretive issues- especially those rational questions relating to the "discrepancies between the Evangelists in their accounts of the genealogy and birth of the Saviour" (O'Meara 2001:68).

Fourthly, there seems to have been a rational lure that the Manichaeian Church exploited to bait Augustine. They claimed to have a rational truth, the very thing Augustine was hungering after.

What is the significance of Augustine's reasons for becoming a Manichaeian to addressing the research question? It must be stated that it is significant because it shows that Augustine had not quite come to intellectual grips with the Catholic teaching on a lot of pertinent issues like its ecclesiology.

How were Augustine's ecclesiological views influenced by his Manichaeian phase? Frend rightly notes the profound effect Manichaeian thought had on his mind and emotions (1984:662). It may have even heightened his view of the universal church as this was a point of Manichaeian emphasis (Frend 1984:663).

Augustine viewed the Manichaeian Christianity as a better Christianity than his mother's version because it emphasized reason above authority (Coyle1999:184). A belief he would later change when he became a Catholic. Moreover, Augustine had come to embrace Mani's teachings as being more authoritative than Scripture (*conf.5.13* Boulding 1997: 121). Augustine had also spent a considerable amount of time under their influence of Manichaeian thought (a total of over 9 years) between the ages of 19 and 28 years old (*conf.3.20* Boulding 1997:90). This leads us to say that it is very likely and reasonable, that Augustine would have had a Manichaeian ecclesiology during these years.

It is this author's view that here we begin to see Augustine ecclesiology develop and grow. This is seen by two facts. Firstly, Augustine was maturing in his thoughts like any young man at this age. He was beginning to maturing in his thinking and now seeking to

find truth. Secondly, he accepts a belief system that had ecclesiological entailments.

Here are 3 such entailments:

1. Manichaeans believed they were true Christians and that the Catholic Christians were only half Christians (*c.f. Faust. 1.1,1*),
2. They believed 3 types of people in the world, the elect, the hearers (who are both part of the church) and the wicked (those not of the church), the *Hearers* supported the *Elect*.
3. The *Hearers* provided the *Elect* with financial support within the church.

There is however one point of caution- Augustine still had questions he needed answered by his Manichaean colleagues. This is evidenced by how he didn't quite agree with all that the Manichaean Church taught astronomically, due to his knowledge of some more accurate astronomical calculations writings (*conf.5.3, 3 Boulding 1997:115*). He held on to being a Manichaean though in hope that Faustus would iron out the kinks in his theology and astronomy at some point.

Coyle suggests another perspective on the question under investigation - Augustine was a hearer, he would not have had access to all of Mani's teachings and hence his knowledge of the doctrines would be considerably incomplete (Coyle 2007:185-6).

In his synthesis Coyle suggests that he knew the following:

1. Cosmogony and basic doctrine
2. Manichaean approach to proselytizing
3. Rejection of some OT and some NT teachings
4. The cultic and ethical code of Manichaeism

5. A fondness, like the Manichaean Church, for the teachings of the Apostle Paul's writings
6. Some concepts of Christology and Pneumatology (Coyle 2007:185-6).

Is it possible that such an inquisitive mind as Augustine would have for nine years followed a philosophy without access to its foundational documents? A careful reader of the Confessions might come to a very different conclusion! Especially when one considers the following:

1. Augustine says "O truth, truth , how the deepest and innermost marrow of my mind ached for you ,even then while they prattled your name to me unremittingly and in so many ways , though only in words and in their huge and copious tomes!" (*conf.*3. 6, 10 Boulding 1997: 81).

Augustine seems to be saying that he came to know what the Manichaean's taught through words (probably a reference to audible instruction) and "their huge tomes"- their books. This is further strengthened by *conf.*5.7, 12- Augustine, referring to Manichaean teachings, states that "Their books are full of interminable myths" (Boulding 1997:121).

Augustine clearly distinguished what he observed in their books and in philosophical books; we can therefore infer that he had some sort of access to them.

2. Augustine notes how he compared the calculations of the astronomers "with the assertions of Mani, who had written voluminously (and incoherently) on these subjects. "(*conf.*5.6, Boulding 1997:117). Just the fact that he says this means he

must have had some form of access to Mani's works. He continues to say that what he "read there was confirmed neither by any rational account of solstices and equinoxes and eclipses, nor by anything else of this kind that I had learned from books of secular philosophy" (*conf.*5.6, Boulding 1997:117) further strengthening the reality that Augustine read the Manichaeian works.

3. Van Oort states that "Augustine, already as a hearer; became thoroughly acquainted with the teachings of the Manichaeian Church and that he even read their writings" (van Oort 1991: 45). He uses as one of his supports *conf.*3. 12, 21 (van Oort 1991: 45). In that portion of the Confessions, Augustine speaks of a certain bishop who attempts to comfort Monnica by claiming Augustine would read himself out of Manichaeian teachings (van Oort 1991:45) -"he will find out for himself through his reading how wrong these beliefs are, and how profoundly irrelevant" (*conf.*3.12, 21 Boulding 1997:90).The question now is, what reading would lead him out of the Manichaeian beliefs? It might refer to studying philosophy, studying scripture or the Manichaeian teaching itself. One need only read further and the veil is lifted when the bishop says:

"he had himself been handed over to the Manichees as a little boy by his mother, who had been led astray; he had not only nearly read all their books but had even written some himself" (*conf.*3.12, 21 Boulding 1997:91). The bishop clearly draws a parallel with his experience and Augustine's. He is aiming to show that just like he read himself out of the Manichaeian group, Augustine will do likewise. The books he read, he identifies as the Manichaeian books ("All their books"). This means that Augustine would likewise read himself out of the Manichaeian books (van Oort 2004:35-37).

Furthermore, in *The Catholic Way of life and The Manichaeian way of Life*, Augustine says that he is not lacking in knowledge of the Manichaeian way of thinking (*mor.ecc.* 1.17, 30 Teske 2007:45). This suggests that he is speaking from a point of researched authority and not just out of ignorance to the Manichaeian way of life.

So is it accurate to say that Augustine never read Manichaeian works as a *hearer*? It is more probable that Augustine read and studied the Manichaeian works. Brown similarly says that Augustine must have not only listened to the preaching by the Manichaeian Church but also read their works (1967:48). This seems not to have been just a cursory reading but an in depth study in search of truth and understanding. However, when he became disillusioned he slowly detached himself from the Manichaeian beliefs.

The ecclesiology he would have come to embrace was from Mani. Mani claimed this teaching was apostolic and that he was the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) himself. With such a sweeping claim, an error by Mani would have disastrous consequences for his authenticity. An error in the many astronomical insights would prove fatal to their theological claims. Augustine saw his astronomy questions as a testimony to the type of theology Manichaeian' taught. If their astronomy was inaccurate, their theology thus hung on a shaky foundation. So the Manichaeian ecclesiology that Augustine would have more likely than not embraced would also have proven to be on shaky grounds.

One has to conclude that Augustine probably believed in the following ecclesiological distinctions during his Manichaeian phase:

1. Superiority of the Manichaeian Church to the Catholic Church

2. One enters the church through Gnosis-the knowledge of light and darkness (Coyle 2007:182; Frennd 1984:315)
3. There are two types of believers in the church, the elect and the hearers
4. A strict hierarchy of the Manichaeian community due to the strict Manichaeian rules (Lancel 1999:35-36).
5. Hearers may get saved by their meritorious works for the elect (Coyle 2007:182)
6. The Church's mission is to release light particles held captive in the intermingled darkness and light of creation (Coyle 2007:182; cf. Frennd 1984:662)
7. Elect were arranged in a hierarchy (Coyle 2007:183)
8. How the Church is to go about proselytizing
9. Some OT and some NT ecclesial teachings
10. Ecclesial nuances in the cultic and ethical code of Manichaeism
11. Some Pauline ecclesiology. How much? There is no way we can possibly now. However he shows that he read the works of Paul during this phase of his life. Paul was a favourite among the Manichaeian Church.

It is important to mention here that the Old Testament would not have been wholly and intricately included in his ecclesial thoughts at this time. This is because the Manichaeian Church rejected most of the Old Testament and some New Testament passages as spurious (Teske 2007: 108). This leaves some gaping holes in Augustine's ecclesiology in comparison to Christianity's foundation documents as a whole. However, it is here one sees that Augustine's view of Scripture begins to affect his ecclesiology.

#### 2.4. Augustine's ecclesiology between 29 and his conversion

If Augustine had taken up Manichaean ecclesiology, what happened when he became disenchanted with it at age 29 years old? When Augustine realized that Faustus and the Manichaean Church could not give him a reasonable explanation for the questions he raised, he lost faith in their teachings. He however did not completely sever his connections with them, or their teachings.

Did Augustine maintain the same ecclesiological worldview? In *conf. 5.17* Augustine says that he held the Manichaean teachings only half-heartedly and thought very little of them (Boulding 1997:127). Augustine simply held the beliefs of the Manichaean Church simply because there was nothing better in his estimations (*conf.5.13* Boulding 1997:122). Since he also found it of great advantage to believe that his sin was not his fault but merely some other nature within him that was responsible, he continued to cling to Manichaean teachings in part (*conf.5.10,18* Boulding 1997:126).

It must be said though that Manichaean dualism has profound ecclesiological consequences. If there is no responsibility for sin there is no church discipline that can be administered to individuals for their misconduct.

What then can we say of the developments of his ecclesiology? This seems to be a static phase where he did not grow. He did not wish to advance in the Manichaean faith (*conf.5. 10, 18* Boulding 1997:127). However he found profit in still maintaining his *hearer* status, for sinful, social (*conf.5.19* Boulding 1997:127) and financial reasons.



Is there a possibility that Augustine was drawn back to the faith of his boyhood? Augustine could not see the possibility of any truth being found there (*conf.5.19* Boulding 1997:127). That is another sign of how committed he still was to the Manichaeian teachings. He even later says that he had given up any hope of finding any truth there.

However, Augustine seems to have left his Roman associations' in order to flee the Manichaeian Church (*conf.5. 13, 23* Boulding 1997:131). Perhaps he felt that their false doctrines had become somewhat cumbersome. Nonetheless, he left for Milan under the pretense of seeking a better job.

It is in Milan where he meets Bishop Ambrose. Ambrose initially didn't influence his Manichaeian views because he cared little for his content: "With professional interest I listened to him conducting disputes before people...I hung keenly on his words but cared little for their content" (*conf.5.13, 23* Boulding 1997: 131). However, slowly the seeds of God's word began to slowly sprout in Augustine's heart. He began to see that the Catholic way of viewing Christianity had not yet been conquered by the Manichaeian rebuttals. However Augustine still could not see which was more plausible. He thus sided with his senses and took on the Academic position- "doubting everything and wavering" (*conf.5.14, 24* Boulding 1997: 132). He eventually left the Manichaeian Church because in his view, Academic skepticism had superior teachings. He also enlisted as a catechumen in the Catholic Church. His initial catechumen status was simply until he could figure out where the truth truly lied (*conf.5.14, 24* Boulding 1997: 132).

So at the end of Confessions book 5 we find an Augustine adrift in the world of theological ideas without a direction. He had become a doubter at heart. From this we can imply that his ecclesiology went down with his Manichaeian teachings.

This being said one cannot doubt that this Manichaean phase had some positive and negative influence on Augustine's later ecclesiology. This is seen through Augustine's antithetical attitude towards Manichaean Church after he becomes a Catholic Christian (van Oort 2004:38). Negatively he defended the canonical Scriptures against Manichaean criticism (van Oort 2004:38). Positively he was exposed to reading of scriptural material that would have influenced his ecclesial view, like the reading of the Pauline corpus and other Manichaean references to Christ and the Church (van Oort 2008:40-41). In fact van Oort goes as far as to say that Catholic Christianity and Manichaean Christianity did have quite a lot in common (2004:38).

Did Augustine view the Manichaean Church as equally Christian as the Catholics? Augustine came to view the Manichaean Church to be non-Christian because of the way he says, "if they are willing to wake up and set aside their stubborn dreams and to desire the light of the Christian faith, they may notice how the life that they exhibit is not the Christian life and how the scripture that they tear to shreds is the Scripture of Christ" (*mor.ecc.1. 2, 3* Teske 2007:32).

Clearly and demonstrably Augustine saw a contrast between the Christian faith and the Manichaean faith. He says that if they are willing to desire "the light of the Christian faith" (*mor.ecc.1. 2, 3* Teske 2007:32), meaning they don't have the light of the Christian faith. "They may notice how the life that they exhibit is not the Christian life..." (*mor.ecc.1. 2, 3* Teske 2007:32) -are we to ignore such a damning indictment?

Augustine saw his Manichaean status as a total detachment for he says to his mother that "he was no longer a Manichee" (*conf.6.1, 1* Boulding 1997:134). He saw himself as one who had been delivered from falsehood. This does not mean Augustine was now a

blank slate but rather he was seeking reasonable answers to his questions, objections, and doubts which he knew the Manichaean Church were not capable of answering.

This is contrary to the argument posited by van Oort- namely that Augustine viewed the Manichaean Church as a heresy but nevertheless Christian (2004:37). What are we to make of this? Is there a possibility that Augustine changed his mind later in Africa and saw them as a Christian religion that spread fables? These questions are beyond the scope of this study however we can safely say that Augustine before 388AD saw the Manichaean Church as non-Christian. Van Oort however is correct in arguing that this phase in his life did influence how he approached his exegesis, ecclesiology, debate and also whom and how he reasoned (2004: 38).

In *conf.*6.5, 7 Augustine gradually began to accept the Catholic Christian doctrine. So from a place of ignorance; he began to see how the Catholic Christian doctrines were put together. There is yet again a season of growth and development in his ecclesial views. It becomes very unclear what his specific ecclesiology was at this point. What is clear though is that the teachings of the Catholic Church began to make their way into his mind.

Augustine, in *Confessions*, focuses more on the other struggles he was having with understanding sins source, and his own struggles with lust in book VI and VII. What we can say for sure though is that whatever struggles he might have had he was bound to have read the Apostle Paul's ecclesiology (*conf.*8. 14 Boulding 1997:195). So Augustine finds himself growing in a Pauline and Catholic Ecclesiology is all that one can safely say. It might be worthwhile investigating what Catholic ecclesiology was like at this point in time? Perhaps even delving into what Catholic catechumen content was in this period? This may unlock the kind of specificity to the question of Augustine's ecclesiology.

It is very probable that Augustine's theology began to flourish again because he says he intensely studied these books (*conf.8. 14* Boulding 1997:195). If this is the case, one finds it hard to imagine that he would have overlooked all the Pauline ecclesiology.

In Book 8 of the Confessions we get another keyhole look at Augustine's ecclesiological influence prior to his Conversion. Augustine goes to see Simplicianus and hears a story of Victorinus' conversion. Victorinus after studying Scripture would say to Simplicianus, he was already a Christian. Simplicianus would respond "I will not believe that, nor count you among Christians, until I see you in Christ's Church" (*conf.8.4* Boulding 1997:187). At this Victorinus would sarcastically reply, "It's the walls that make Christians, then". One day Victorinus said to Simplicianus "Let us go to church: I want to become a Christian" (*conf.8. 4* Boulding 1997:188).

This story welled up a sense of passionate desire in Augustine to do likewise. He desired to imitate Victorinus. This tells us that Augustine had come to believe, to some extent, that it was through the Catholic Church that one is born into Christ's church and not simply by reading the Scriptures (*conf.8. 5, 10* Boulding 1997:192). This was reflected earlier in *conf.6.3, 4* where he says "Christians who are reborn in their mother the church" (Mara 2007: 205). It also means that Augustine had begun to accept that reason was not above authority as the Manichaean Church thought. He was now eager to receive this promised salvation by the Church's authority.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

What was Augustine's ecclesiology proper from his birth to his conversion? We see that throughout the first thirty three years of his life Augustine constantly changed and adapted his view of the church (Mara 2007:205). It seems that Augustine had a very

shallow Catholic ecclesiology between birth and 17 years of age. At best it was rote memorized creed. This he would have learnt from his mother, those who were believers in his household and the Catholic Church which they attended.

At the age of 19 we see Augustine abandoning this childhood view for the Manichaean ecclesiology. This he holds for 9 years and then forsakes it when he discovers the flaws within Manichaean cosmology. This Manichaean influence affects his future exegesis, writings, sermons and view of Scripture in both positive and negative ways (van Oort 2004:34). This is the first evidence in our study that there is a coherence and continuity in Augustine's early and later ecclesiology.

He then turns to Academic Skepticism where he entrusted his mind but could not bring himself to entrust his soul there. Here we see a doubting ecclesiology in Augustine's thinking. This was a static phase in ecclesial development.

After this phase we see Augustine grow in his Catholic Christian ecclesiology once again. This is due to Ambrose's influence over Augustine which helped Augustine grow in the teachings of Catholic ecclesiology. It is from Ambrose where he picks up an allegorical way of viewing scripture-which later has a profound impact on his encounter with the Donatists.

Coupled with this Augustine immersed himself in Pauline theology which is remarkably ecclesiological in content. One thing must be mentioned about Augustine's ecclesiology- Though Augustine's ecclesiology is in flux, the motivation for accepting a certain ecclesiological view was his search for truth. Truth was what he sought and he finally found this truth in the Catholic Church where he then accepted its ecclesiology.

## CHAPTER 3. Augustine's ecclesial thoughts after his conversion before his baptism (August 386AD- February 387AD)

### 3.1. Introduction

We have seen in the previous chapter how Augustine had developed in his theology of the church. Book 9 of the *Confessions* reveals to us what he did between his conversion and baptism. After staying in Milan, Augustine went and stayed at Cassisiacum with a group that included his Mother, his brother, his son, some friends and two students. He spent a total of 6 months there awaiting baptism (Boulding 1997:219).

Alexander sees Augustine's departure to Cassisiacum as a departure from professional and ecclesiastical communities (2008:97). He sees the whole affair at Cassisiacum as being an attempt at directed leisure with no link to institutional Christianity (Alexander 2008:97). He argues that the ecclesial references in the *Dialogues* are merely relating a need for being officially Christian rather than indicating any intent towards continued involvement in or need for the Church (Alexander 2008:97). Though in the physical sense this is a reality there is more to be considered.

An idea that Augustine was detached from the Church's authority and functioning independently from the church becomes a weird notion indeed when one considers the following six reasons:

1. Augustine's had a desire to abandon his "professional chair of lying" (*conf.* 9.2,2 Boulding 1997:212). In other words, he wanted to leave the job he was doing because he did not see it as becoming of one who had converted to Catholic Christianity. So he was escaping his career to embrace his Catholic Christianity more wholly. He was not detaching himself from institutional Christianity per se by running away from his religion at Cassisiacum, rather he was embracing it.

2. The other reason was that his health had been compromised by the work load he carried (*conf.* 9.4 Boulding 1997:211). This gave him an apt excuse to leave his professional carrier and also an opportunity to recover his health. So his escape to Cassisiacum was also necessary from his health and not necessarily because he felt a need to function independently of the Catholic Church. In the process, he would express his new found devotion to God without drawing the wrong kind of attention to himself. Even in his departure there is a sense of Catholic devotion to do it in such a way as not to draw accolades for his commitment.
3. Augustine saw his work at Cassisiacum as being “unquestionably devoted to you [God]” (*conf.* 9.4,7 Boulding 2007:214). This is seen by the obvious liturgical and devotional elements that are found there such as prayer, contemplation, reading of scripture, and Church did not end at Cassisiacum in Augustine’s view, it simply moved with Him there. The problem in this author’s view is that it seems that Alexander compartmentalizes church as being in the proximity of a building rather than a community of Christians.
4. Augustine’s mother and other Christians went with them to Cassisiacum. If Augustine had left to be free of ecclesial entailments his mother would have been doing likewise for she joined him on the trip (*conf.* 9.4,7 Boulding 1997:214). It seems more likely that he took his mother precisely because he needed her help in his new found faith which she was wiser in.
5. Harrison is helpful in noting that the Cassisiacum Dialogues were not merely an exercise of purely philosophical reasons detached from Christianity (2007:166). She sees the works as standing in a long line of Christian reflection and apologetics (Harrison 2007:166). They stand providing answers to important questions on human existence and experience (Harrison 2007:166). She argues rightly that the works are

an attempt to make sense of their new found faith in their own distinctive education and cultural formation (Harrison 2007:166).

6. Augustine still associated himself with the church and simply states that he was a catechumen on holiday (*conf.* 9.8 Boulding 1997:214). Saying Augustine was leaving ecclesiastical community seems to be stacking the deck. Going to Cassisiacum was in no way (other than physical absence) a retreat from Catholic Christianity.

In this next section, this author shall look at what Augustine's ecclesiology was after his conversion prior to his baptism? Why look at such a short period of time? It is here we see Augustine write his first post-Conversion works (Lancel 1999:102). These books cast an interesting light onto the state of mind of Augustine when he had just been converted to Christianity (Dudden 1935:335). These books are also known as the *Dialogues* (Alexander 2008:30). They are namely, *Answer to the Skeptics (Contra Academicos)*, *The Happy life (De beata vita)*, *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil (De ordine)*, and the two books of the *Soliloquia* (O'Meara 2001: 196; cf. Alexander 2008: 30). If these books relate his ecclesiology we will be able to see what the young Augustine's ecclesiology was between the age of 32 and 33years old. One will also be able to see how his ecclesiology developed within this time.

Augustine was converted to Catholic Christianity in August 386 and soon afterward retreated to Cassisiacum (Alexander 2008:59). The period of the Cassisiacum retreat spans August 386 till about February 387 (Alexander 2008:96). He then returned to Milan approximately three months before the Easter vigil in order to prepare for baptism (Alexander 2008:59; cf. Brown 1967:74). After receiving baptism in 387, Augustine did not remain in Milan for long (Alexander 2008:60). In the summer of 387, Augustine departed with his mother Monnica, his son Adeodatus, Augustine's brother Navigius,



and friends Nebridus, Alypius and Evodius (Alexander 2008:106). They left for Africa in order that they may serve God in their home town of Thagaste (Alexander 2008:106). This is the background of travel that is inherent in the period this author will be investigating.

One must note that when Augustine goes to Cassisiacum, he had limited hermeneutical experience with handling Scripture. This is best seen by his inability to see which book would best prepare himself for baptism and also his lack of insight into how to read and understand the book of Isaiah (*conf.* 9.5.13 Boulding 1997: 218). He even goes further to say that he wanted to wait till he was more “proficient in the word” (*conf.* 9.5.13 Boulding 1997: 218). As a result, one sees him struggling to interpret and understand Scripture. Therefore, one can expect to see an Augustine growing in his ecclesiology but by no means an expert.

In order to see what Augustine’s ecclesiology was at this stage, this author shall look at the *Dialogues* to see what kind of ecclesiology Augustine betrays to have held in his writings held.

### **3.2. Augustine’s ecclesiology in *De beata vita* (The Happy Life)**

In *The Happy life*, Augustine shows little interest in discussing the church. This should not be taken to mean that Augustine was not interested in the Catholic Church or that he had not been thinking about the Catholic Church. Augustine had been exposed to a mother who was entirely Catholic Church orientated. As the veil was lifted from his eyes and he was converted, he must have wondered how church fits into the picture.

This concurs with Alexander’s view that Augustine’s ecclesial beliefs are minimally portrayed in the *Dialogues* (Alexander 2008:57). The reason for this is, in *The Happy life*

Augustine is examining “the vital problem of man’s longing for that perfect happiness which can be found only in God, the highest Good” (Russell 1948:229). So the main argument of the work is directed towards a different topic. However, he indirectly portrays three ecclesial thoughts as he tackles this subject.

Firstly, we see that Augustine knew about baptism as the salvific initiatory rite of the Catholic Church. What is the evidence for this claim? In Chapter 3 of the *Confessions*, Augustine continues his discussion on the happy life by asking the question who possess’ God (*beat.v* 3.17 Schopp 1948: 65). He gives three options that were given by his audience in the previous chapter. He then comments on the third of these options, namely, the pure spirit. It is here that he indirectly lets us see a glimpse of his baptismal ecclesiology (*beat.v* 3.18 Schopp 1948: 66).

Augustine describes a rite performed to purify one from an evil spirit during baptism (*beat.v* 3.18 Schopp 1948: 66). Clearly Augustine knew some of this baptismal rite while he was a child (*conf.* 1.11. 17 Boulding 1997:50-51). He had thrown this belief aside when he had taken hold of paganism, Manichaeism and later Academic worldviews. However, he eventually turned back to Catholic Christianity, accepting it as superior to other worldviews- one can conclude that any Catholic teachings he might assert were essentially his ecclesial beliefs. What was Catholic teaching on baptism at that time? In his eyes this baptismal rite was not just a symbol but it actually was the giving of the grace of God to an individual (*conf.* 1. 11.17 Boulding 1997:50-51). This is the Catholic position on baptism at this period in time. Alexander captures it well when he says that Augustine was “familiar with the rite of baptism and affirmed its efficacy” (2008:46).

Secondly, not only did he know of the baptismal rite, but Augustine also knew at this stage the entailments of the baptismal rite. This is was an obvious thing to know since he desired to become a Catholic Christian formally. What entailments of baptism did he know? As mentioned earlier Augustine describes a rite performed to purify one from an evil spirit during baptism (*beat.v* 3.18 Schopp 1948: 66). His ecclesial thinking included this rite at this stage.

Thirdly, by mentioning the exorcism in the manner he does, Augustine betrays that he saw some sort of a hierarchical arrangement within the Church. What evidence is there for this claim? He tells of part of the method for this exorcism- through the laying on of hands by the “ones over us” (*beat.v* 3.18 Schopp 1948:66). Who does “ones over us” refer to? It clearly refers to those who preside over the rite. More specifically, it probably refers to Bishop Ambrose and perhaps some assistants- Bishop Ambrose was known to carry out the baptismal rite personally (see Harmless 1995:94).

It is clear that there is a form of hierarchy in Augustine’s mind at this point. This should not be surprising since he grew up seeing this hierarchical arrangement in the Catholic Church and also the hierarchical arrangement of the Manichaeian Church. This point is further strengthened by the fact that Augustine was willing to submit himself to the practice and to petition for it from Bishop Ambrose (Harmless 1995:93).

Fourthly, Augustine had accepted Scripture and tradition as a rule for faith and practice. What evidence is there for this claim? In the Happy Life Augustine quotes the Gospel according to John and also uses it as an authoritative reference (*beat.v.4.35* Schopp 1948:83; see Alexander 2008:44). This is just one example of many such quotations in the *Dialogues*- Augustine in the *Dialogues* uses Scripture as an authoritative in matters

of faith and practice (Alexander 2008:42). This would vastly influence his ecclesiology. He was now positioned with a foundation of Scripture as a guideline for his ecclesiology.

Not only was Scripture his authority- Augustine had taken on the theology of the Catholic Church which had mixed in elements of tradition and Scripture as a rule of faith and practice. Nowhere in the Old or New Testament is the rite of exorcism done in the context of baptism or to a person about to be baptized. So we see an intermingling of Scripture and tradition that Augustine had embraced at this point.

Surely in Augustine's view of Scripture we begin to see the foundations for his future ecclesiology. This future ecclesiology would be governed by Church tradition and Scripture. Already at this point we see the foundation of these two aspects being laid in Augustine's framework.

Summary:

Augustine's ecclesiology at this point is:

1. Baptism is a salvific initiatory rite.
2. Exorcism is a rite performed during such baptisms
3. There is a hierarchical Church Government structure within the Church
4. Scripture and Catholic Church tradition are authoritative in matters of faith and practice of the church.

### **3.3. Augustine's ecclesiology in *Contra Academicos* (Answer to the Academics)**

Another work that Augustine labored over was *Against the Academics* (*contra Academicos*). In this work, Augustine gives us an insight into some of his practice and beliefs- Augustine comments on how he had read the Apostle Paul's writings (*c.Acad.*

2.2.5 Kavanagh 1948:139). Alexander suggests Augustine would have most certainly have been referring to the book of Romans (2008:43). However, when one looks at *conf.* 7. 21(27), one sees that Augustine refers to the writings in the plural. This would suggest that there was more than one book making Alexander's view unlikely. Furthermore, Augustine quotes from 1 Corinthians, Galatians and Colossians in the *Dialogues* (Alexander 2008:43) - this further supports the notion that he would have been familiar with the Pauline Corpus (especially the books mentioned above) not just Romans.

How did Augustine read the Pauline corpus? From *Contra Academicos*, we become aware of the fact that Augustine was in the habit of reading Scripture thoroughly and with great attention before Cassisiacum (Alexander 2008:43-45). This concurs with Dudden who notes that Augustine would have meticulously read the Pauline Epistles (1935:330).

This careful attention was driven by his desire for truth. As a result Augustine would have come to notice that the Pauline corpus is dominated by letters written to different churches addressing different ecclesial issues. These letters would be a rich well for Augustine to be nourished in his ecclesial thinking. How did Augustine's ecclesiology develop at this stage? If this was the material that Augustine was investigating thoroughly, it is reasonable to pose that Augustine's ecclesiology grew proportionally rich with his investigations.

What specific issues would Augustine have come to appreciate? In *c.Acad.* 3.19.42, Augustine says: "It is not the philosophy of this world that – the philosophy which our sacred mysteries detest"(Kavanagh 1948:219). This allusion is most likely from Colossians 1:18 (Alexander 2008:44; cf. Kavanagh 1948:219):

“And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

Since we have already determined that Augustine read through these works thoroughly, it is doubtful he would have missed such allusions to the church, philosophy and their connection with Christ. So it is no wonder that he would say, “I am resolved never to deviate in the least from the authority of Christ, for I find none more powerful” (3.19.42 Kavanagh 1948:219).

From the above observations we can say Augustine would have learnt that the Church is Christ’s body. Not only so but that Christ himself is the very head of the Church. When Augustine later encounters the Donatists, his response, has its center around Christ being the head of his body (Bonner 1987: 453). Yet again we see that Augustine’s future ecclesiology is founded upon his earlier ecclesial understanding.

Augustine speaks in Book 2 of how: “in my daily devotions I do not cease to pray for prosperous winds on your behalf” (*c.Acad.* 2.1.2 Kavanagh 1948:135). This gives us an insight into the fact that Augustine had learnt that part of what it means to be in Christ is to worship. This may seem an arbitrary connection but Augustine himself would have come to know that part of what it means to be church is not only reading scripture but also praying to God.

Something must also be said of Augustine with regard to evangelism. Lancel makes it clear that Augustine wrote *contra Academicos* as a protreptic (1999:104). In other words; he sought to convert Romanianus to the true philosophy. It is at this point where we should ask what was motivating him to do such a thing? Could this have been learnt from his Manichaean evangelism? Could the pursuit of his mother to convert him been a

model for his own Christian actions? Whatever the case Augustine betrays the fact that he believed in evangelism of the lost at this point.

There is also something else to consider. Augustine knew the books of the Bible either individually or as a group of books (O'Donnell 1999:100). Augustine had been pursued by his mother to convert to Christianity. Alexander notes that O'Donnell makes the claim that Augustine has already read through the Gospels by the time he left Milan (Alexander 2008:42). In *Contra Academicos* Augustine quotes a passage from the book of Matthew (c.*Acad.*2.3.9) - the very book that gives the great commission as the mission of the church. What is one to make of this evidence? Augustine had grown up with a mother who pursued him relentlessly for conversion to Catholic Christianity. Whether through her example or through reading the Great Commission in the Gospel according to Matthew, he must have come to understand that one of the entailments of Christians is to fulfill the mission of the church which is to evangelize the lost. This might better explain why he writes *contra Academicos* to convert his reader or readers.

Yet again here we see that Augustine already has in his framework a desire to pursue the lost in order to bring them in the Catholic Church. In fact he often reflects on how he wished the Manichaean Church would have seen what he now saw in the Old Testament.

Summary of Augustine's ecclesial thoughts from *De Beata Vita*:

1. The Church is Christ's body
2. Christ is the head of the Church
3. Pauline Ecclesiology
4. Church worship in prayer

### 3.4. Augustine's ecclesiology in *De Ordine* (On Order)

Two points can be gleaned from the *De ordine* about Augustine's ecclesiology. Firstly, in *De ordine*, Augustine makes reference yet again to the book of Colossians (*ord.* 1.11.32 Russell 1948: 271). He quotes it in the context of his mother's objection that her questions be recorded, (*ord.* 1.11.31 Russell 1948: 271). Augustine points out that the philosophy which is not of this world but of Christ's kingdom should be embraced (*ord.* 1.11.31 Russell 1948: 271). Since the Catholic Church was the custodian of Christ's philosophy, Augustine is speaking of the exclusivity and superiority of the Catholic Church teaching among other philosophies.

It is important to understand Augustine's view of philosophy at this point. Dudden asserts that the *Cassiciacum Dialogues* show more philosophy than they do religion, and that they show Augustine's preoccupation with philosophy rather than religion (1967:334). This is incorrect. Why? Augustine's main search was for truth on how to live life. In the *Dialogues* at Cassiciacum thinks he has found this truth in what he calls "true philosophy" (Alexander 2008:33). Djuth notes that "true philosophy" was in such wide usage that it was even synonymous with living a monastic life (2009:221). Not only did it have a wide usage in Christianity but also in pagan writings (Djuth 2009:221). We must understand that philosophy then is not as we view it today - disciplines that teaches one to ask questions and doubt everything. On the contrary, Augustine sees philosophy as a "lifestyle -a mental framework which was to work itself out in daily routine" (Alexander 2008:33). His religion was his philosophy and his philosophy was his religion.

This is an important note in understanding Augustine's ecclesiology of the church at this point. Just because he was not in our formal definition of the Catholic Church did not mean that he was not following Catholic Church instruction as a true philosophy. Here



we see an Augustine who saw philosophy as being bound up with what it means to be a Christian. In other words, he saw Christianity as a philosophy in its own right, and the church was a necessary part of that philosophy. He saw the Christian philosophy as superior and exclusive in relation to all other views.

Secondly, we see an interesting view that Augustine had of female wisdom (*ord.* 1.11.31 Russell 1948: 270-271). Augustine saw that his mother had something to contribute in this true philosophy. He hints at this earlier in *De beata vita* when he says “Mother you have really gained the mastery of the very stronghold of philosophy” (*beata.v* 1.2.10 Schopp 1948:56). This he says in contrast to his own admission that he was not yet skilled in the Christian Philosophy (*beata.v* 1.1.5 1948:49). Augustine goes on to say that “At these words[of praise to her] our mother exclaimed in such a way that we, entirely forgetting her sex, thought we had some great man in our midst, while in the meantime I became fully aware whence and from what divine source this flowed” (*beata.v* 1.2.10 Schopp 1948:56).

Augustine at this point realized that women had some significant wisdom to share with men even in philosophical discourses! Not only that, but one could learn a great deal from women who had received their philosophy from Christ’s Kingdom. This has huge ramifications on Augustine’s ecclesiology. He did not at this stage believe that women should be silent always and never able to teach men.

Summary: What ecclesial thoughts do we glean from *De Ordine*?

1. Christ’s philosophy on the church was the only philosophy to live by
2. Women could also teach men in true philosophy.

### 3.5. Augustine's ecclesiology in the Soliloquies (*Soliloquia*)

Augustine's introductory prayer reveals a lot of his own personal understanding of who God is (*sol. 1.1. 2-6* Gilligan 1948:344-350). While he is praying this way he indirectly mentions the church in the following statements:

1. "O God, who, to those few who have their refuge in that which truly is, dost show that evil is nothing" (*sol. 1.1.2* Gilligan 1948:344). Who are the few mentioned here? It is obviously a reference to the Catholic Church who is said to take their refuge in that which "truly is". What does "truly is" refer to? This is fleshed out for us when Augustine says later "O God the Truth" (Gilligan 1948:345). So God is this truth.

Two points emerge from the above texts. Firstly, Augustine saw that those who are in the true church are few compared to those who are without.

Secondly, those who are in the church are those who take refuge in the truth. So spelled out by Augustine is that those who find their refuge in God are the Church.

2. "O God, to whom Faith moves us, Hope raises us, Charity unites us" (*sol. 1:1.3* Gilligan 1948:346). The "us" in this context yet again refers to the Catholic Church. He notes here that faith moves the church. To what end? Augustine also reveals that he believed in Unity within the church through the binding glue of love.

Apart from this first section of the soliloquies there is really no other mention direct or indirect that would reveal Augustine's ecclesial perspective.

However, when we look at the list of Augustine's Scripture references in this book we realize that the limits of what his ecclesiology would have been. Since the Christian foundational documents contain the very essence of ecclesial thinking in them.

### **3.6. Augustine's scripture usage in *Soliloquia***

Augustine quotes from Genesis, 1 John, Galatians (see Watson 1990:27), 1 Corinthians, John and Matthew (Alexander 2008:44). What is noteworthy about the use of scripture in these passages is that they are either paraphrases from the Scriptures or a direct quotations (Alexander 2008:44). Coupled with the idea that Augustine was searching deeply for truth one can only assume that he had read the books carefully, and with great attention.

There is also another point to keep in mind. During Augustine's tenure with the Manichaean Church he had read the Pauline writings. Yet again we see the Pauline corpus appearing in the writings of Augustine. This leads us to believe he would have been familiar with their ecclesial contents.

Summary of Augustine's ecclesial thinking as found in Soliloquies:

1. One becomes a part of the church by faith
2. In comparison with the world, the church is in the minority
3. Unity in the Church through love
4. Pauline Corpus as source for ecclesiology
5. Augustine knew the mission of the Church

### 3.7. Augustine ecclesiology as one of the *competentes* in Milan

In this section, one sees Augustine continuing to grow more in his ecclesiological views as he becomes one of the *competentes*. A little background on the Church's view of catechumens is helpful here. The Catholic Church at large required her converts to submit to four stages of instruction- this was known as entering catechism (Christopher 1946:3). A catechumen could be a child or an adult (Harmless 1999:146).

In the *Confessions*, Augustine notes indirectly, that he was a catechumen when he was young (*conf.* 1.1 Boulding 1998:50). Harmless says that children routinely received these rites as a sort of inoculation against demonic forces and for joining the catechumenate (Harmless 1995:80).

What was the content of the teaching he received at this stage? Boulding makes it clear that Augustine would not have received any formal systematic Christian instruction at this stage (1998:50). Perhaps this was left up to the parents to instruct their children on the way they should go. Nonetheless, not much can be expected of Augustine's ecclesiology at this first stage of catechism.

Augustine then abandoned the Catholic Church for a while. However, at the end of Book 5 of the *Confessions*, Augustine notes that he became a catechumen again in the Catholic Church (*conf.* 5, 25 Boulding 1998:133). This does not mean he went to special classes of some sort. Rather it meant he joined the regular church for liturgy as he had done before when he was young (Harmless 1999: 146). So the congregation would sing hymns together, have a sermon preached to them and read the same Scriptures together (Harmless 1999: 146). This group of catechumens' was known as the *accidentales*- they consisted of pagan, heretics, and children (Christopher 1946:4). They were also known as *rudis* (raw) - this referred to their status of being untaught in the

Christian religion (Christopher 1946:4). This confirms the finding of Chapter 2 that Augustine had a shallow understanding of the Catholic Church and its ecclesiology at this point.

After the sermon Augustine would then have been dismissed along with those who were not baptized; The Eucharist would then proceed for those who were baptized (see Niederwimmer 1998:152). Harmless interestingly notes that Augustine seems to have continued this practice of Eucharistic and Baptismal secrecy in his own catechetical instructions (Harmless 1999:147). This author concurs with that view. Yet again we see a coherence and continuity between the young Augustine and the later Augustine. So Augustine had in his theological framework a secrecy rite for the Eucharist and Baptism.

The next stage of being a catechumen was to become one of the *competentes*- these were those who requested to be baptized and were found worthy of receiving baptism (Harmless 1995:93; cf. Brown 1967: 124). Bishop Ambrose was responsible for instructing the *competentes* in Augustine's days in Milan (Harmless1995:94). It is thus very likely that Augustine was instructed by Ambrose. They trained in rigorous ascetic disciplines and also received special instruction unlike the other catechumens (Harmless 1999:148).

What was Augustine taught at this time? We find a hint in Augustine's *On Faith and Works*. Augustine comments on Phillip and the eunuch's baptism in *On Faith and Works*. He notes that the eunuch did not know anything except that Jesus was the son of God (*f. et. Op. 9, 14* Lombardo 1999: 19). He then poses the question "What about other truths of the faith, those, namely, concerning the Holy Spirit, the Church..." (*f. et. Op. 9:14* Lombardo 1999: 19). What we observe here is that Augustine viewed ecclesial teaching as an important part of Christian instruction. He then goes on to say something

interesting- “why do we not act in a like manner and do away with all these truths which must be professed by everyone who is baptized?” (*f. et. Op.* Lombardo 9, 14 1999: 19).

Augustine saw the ecclesiology of the church as an essential part of one’s spiritual formation before baptism. This comes as no surprise considering that he pursued Christianity as a true philosophy with ecclesial entailments.

Did Augustine have such a formation in his own baptism? The answer is simply yes. A few stanzas earlier he comments on his experience as one of the *competentes*-“Or have we become strangers to ourselves that we no longer remember our own conversion and how anxious and eager we were to receive instructions” (*f. et. Op.* 6, 9 Lombardo 1988: 14).

Augustine was eager and expectant to receive these special instructions which included ecclesiological teachings (*f. et. Op.* 6, 9 Lombardo 1988: 19). He saw these instructions as an important part of his pursuit of the true philosophy of Christ’s Kingdom.

What specific ecclesiology might have Augustine learned as a *competentes* in Milan?

1. What Augustine learnt is best seen when one considers the teachings of Ambrose during his catechetical instructions. Ambrose saw the Lenten period as one of moral instruction (Harmless 1995:94). The protocol is reflected in *De mysteriis* :“We have given a daily sermon on the deeds of the Patriarchs or the precepts of Proverbs were read , in order that ,being informed and instructed by them , you might become accustomed to enter upon the ways of our forefathers and to pursue their road...”(*mys.* 1,1 Deferrari 1962:5).

From this we can see that Augustine would have come to see the OT Patriarchs as examples of what it meant to be a part of the Catholic Church. They were examples of how that faith is lived out. Van Bavel highlights some interesting differences between Augustine's conception of the church and 21<sup>st</sup> century ideas (see Van Bavel 1999:169-170). One such difference is seen in the area of the church's origins. Augustine traced the beginning of the church to Abel while contemporary thinkers tend to trace the beginning of the church to the day of Pentecost (Van Bavel 1999:169-170). Could he have learnt this definition from Bishop Ambrose? It seems very probable that this is where Augustine learnt the point of the Church's conception.

What were the specific teachings the *competentes* received? This is best seen by looking at Bishop Ambrose's teaching regiment. Ambrose taught a Creed (*traditio symboli*) to the *competentes* (Harmless 1995:96; see Ambrose epistula 20.4). The explanation of the Creed is found in *explanatio symboli* (Harmless 1995:96). He would explain the Creed phrase by phrase to the *competentes* after the worship service (Harmless 1995:97). The *competentes* had to memorize this Creed before their baptism (Tilley 1999:254). The actual Creed had a section that dealt with the church (Harmless 1995:98). It is this section where we will find another well from which to draw Augustine's ecclesial thinking.

What were the contents of this Creed? Harmless rightly asserts that the Creed *traditio symboli* would give us the content (1995:93). The explanation of this Creed by Ambrose is given in *Explanatio Symboli* (Alexander 2008:131). In it we find the following ecclesial ideas:

1. “Tares are mixed up with the wheat” in the church (Alexander 2008:133). That is to say there are believers and unbelievers to be found in the church. Only final judgement will rid the church of the unbelievers.
2. Ambrose shared the idea of the church as having a divine role in God’s salvation plan for all people (Alexander 2008: 137)
3. The universal nature of the church (Alexander 2008:134-135)

It is helpful to contrast this with what Augustine spells out as the contents of this Creed in Sermons 212-214 later on in his life. The earliest of these sermons is sermon 214 is preached in 391 (Hill 1993:150). It would be reasonable to assume that whatever Augustine would share with his catechumens about the Creed, it would be reminiscent of his own baptismal experience since the Catholic Church taught a specific perspective. It is also not unreasonable to assume that Augustine would have also made his own adjustments to suit his own audience and perhaps even changed some of the explanations that he received from Ambrose. Which of these two is the more probable?

Augustine highlights the fact that the church is mother, Jerusalem above, universal, has mixed in her both the saved and the unsaved in Sermon 214 (Hill1993:157). So we see that Augustine and Ambrose’s teaching were very similar in content, lending weight to the fact that Augustine had learnt of these ecclesial concepts from Ambrose. What do we do with the idea of the Church being mother and Jerusalem above? Were these Augustinian interpolations? That would make for interesting future study; however this is beyond the scope of this study.



There is also one other thing worth mentioning at this point. While in Milan, Augustine would have been exposed to Ambrose's civil jurisdiction. That is to say, there were legal matters with which Bishops were given power to preside over as judges (Dodaro 1999:176). Augustine would find himself 10 years later doing a similar duty within his bishopric (Dodaro 1999:176). Could this be perhaps the place where Augustine's view between church and state relations was modeled? There is a very strong likelihood that this is the case.

The following is a summary of Augustine's ecclesiology during *competentes* phase:

1. The conception of the Church is in the Old Testament with Abel
2. The rite of secrecy of baptism and the Eucharist
3. The Church as universal
4. The Church as mother
5. The Church as teacher
6. The Church as mixed.

### **3.8. The influence of scripture on Augustine's ecclesiology**

This author has mentioned in the preceding sections that the Pauline corpus, the Gospels, and Psalms were a part of Augustine's reading before and during his stay at Cassisiacum. Dulaey suggest that Augustine did not start to read the Bible until he was over 30 years old (2007:110). This is highly unlikely because during the nine years he was a Manichaeen he was exposed to the letters of Paul as well as when he became a Catholic *competens*. He must have studied them carefully and rationally like any other work he came across as he was being disciplined among the Manichaeen Church.

It is exceedingly difficult to spell out which ecclesial teachings Augustine would have picked up during these readings. However, this author believes we can make informed estimations by stating simply that he might have known the ecclesiology of the books he read. So the most ecclesiology Augustine knew would be that contained in the Gospels, Psalms, Ambrose's sermons and the Pauline writings.

### **3.9. Conclusion**

This author has shown that Augustine's catechumenate phase was a phase of great growth in ecclesial thought. Not only did he seem to grow from what he learnt from Scripture, but also from the preaching by Ambrose, the worship services in Milan, his mother and friends and also private prayer and devotion.

Augustine's ecclesiology emerged way before he actually wrote about it directly as a topic. This is contrary to Alexander's belief that only after Augustine departed Milan do we start to see the emergence of his ecclesiology (2008:62). Careful examination of Augustine's works yields an earlier emergence of ecclesial concepts.

Though Augustine's ecclesiology was mostly basic, these basics would become the bedrock with which he would ward off schism from the Donatist camp and other heretics. This is very important to realise when one evaluates the impact the Donatist schism would have had on Augustine's ecclesiology.

## CHAPTER 4. Augustine's ecclesiology as a *neophyte* (387AD)

### 4.1. Introduction

After his baptism on the 24<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> April 387AD, Augustine became a neophyte or in other words a new convert to the Catholic Church (Harmless 1995:98; cf. Brown 1967:126). He must have learnt much in that following week as the lessons to the *neophytes* progressed. In this section this author will attempt to reconstruct the kind of ecclesial teaching Augustine would have received and also the type of ecclesial thinking he would have had as a result.

### 4.2. Augustine and hymns as a *neophyte*

Three observations must be made before we begin. Firstly, one must not think that Augustine only learnt his ecclesiology from the teachings he received during 384-387AD. He also learnt from the actual worship services conducted in Milan (Alexander 2008:45-46). After his baptism Augustine recalls how the hymn singing had moved him intensely (*conf.* 9.6, 14 Boulding1997:219). It is very probable that through such an experience Augustine learnt that worship was an important part of the Church's mission. It is no wonder then that when his mother died one of those hymns gave him comfort (Harmless 1995:99). The hymns did indeed catechize him to such an extent that he included hymn singing in his own discipleship of other catechumens later in his ministry (Harmless 1995:99). As a result a part of Augustine ecclesiology was the understanding that part of what it means to be a part of Christ's Catholic Church is worship. This would include singing, prayer, reading of Scripture and listening to preaching (Harmless 1995:94).

A second observation is that Augustine reminisces on his *neophyte* experience by saying “The days were not long enough as I meditated and found wonderful delight in meditating upon the depth of Your design for the salvation of the human race” (Brown 1967:126). Yet again one sees that Augustine had already become accustomed with the idea of the universality of the Church’s mission- to teach the world of God’s salvation plan.

Thirdly, Augustine in this passage also notes that he was captivated by the Canticles (*conf.* 9.6, 14 Boulding1997:219). It is important to note that the Canticles were often interpreted in an allegorical manner at this time by Ambrose. They were seen to be portraying the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church by Bishop Ambrose (Deferrari 1962:16). This was undoubtedly impressed upon Augustine at the time of his instruction. This way of viewing the Catholic Church would have further implications on how Augustine would tackle ecclesial disputes in the future. In fact, he was very fond of images from the Canticles in relating what the true Catholic Church was to the Donatists (Mara 2007:206). So we see yet again the link between the young and later Augustine in this aspect. What he learnt during this time he used to rebuff the Donatists.

#### **4.3. Augustine and *neophyte* instruction**

After his baptism Augustine was instructed on the sacraments during Easter week (Dudden 1967: 336). Looking into the sacramental curriculum at Milan will probably give one an insight into what sort of ecclesial aspects Augustine may have adopted during this period. Ambrose would have been in charge of instructing them further. Apparently he would teach them Catholic Christianity every day for a week (Harmless 1995:998). This lends weight to the fact that Augustine would have already have started engaging

with ecclesial thoughts during this time. There was a spiritual significance in Catholic Liturgy that taught and at least invoked one's curiosity as to why certain things were done. Augustine's mind must have been buzzing like it did when he sought answers from the Manichaean Church to the significance of all those acts.

What content might Augustine have heard? Since, Ambrose was in charge of *neophyte* instructions, Ambrose's post-baptismal works would be a good place to start to look. However, there are complexities and a virtual impossibility of dating Bishop Ambrose's works (see Alexander 2008:94-96). As a result, the closest one can get to linking Ambrose's extant works with Augustine is in asking which works most probably illustrate the kind of lessons Augustine might have heard (Alexander 2008:95).

In the case of Augustine's *neophyte* catechesis, Harmless is correct in stating that by reading *The Sacraments* and *The Mysteries* (which were catechesis lessons for *neophytes*), we come closer to understanding what Augustine was exposed to in Milanese catechesis (1995:99). These two books are an example of the sort of catechetical instruction *neophytes* might have received. They were both most likely written before 392AD (see Deferrari 1962:267). This makes it very likely that Augustine was exposed to these teachings.

#### **4.3.1. Augustine's ecclesiology from *The Mysteries* (*De Mysteriis*)**

There are relatively few references to ecclesial teaching in *The Mysteries*. However the little that is there sheds some interesting light on what Augustine may have heard and/or absorbed into his ecclesial thinking. There are four thoughts that this author picks up from investigating the texts.

Firstly, Bishop Ambrose teaches the *neophytes* that the “maiden of the captives” in the Naaman narrative is a pre-figuring (or foreshadowing) of the Church of the Gentiles (*mys.* 3:18 Deferrari1963:11). The implication is that in the same way that the maiden counseled Naaman; the Church counseled them to have their sins washed in the cleansing baptismal waters. What could have Augustine picked up from that teaching? Clearly this passage shows the Church as teacher of the Gentiles. Augustine being a Gentile would have seen the significance behind Bishop Ambrose’s instructions. This is in line with Alexander’s thought that the authority of the Church was explained to the *neophytes* (2008:91). Part of that authority was exercised in teaching the world of the Catholic Christian faith.

This idea of the Church being teacher is confirmed in Augustine’s *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* written between his departure from Milan to Thagaste between 387-388AD (Alexander 2008:106). This makes the link between his catechesis and ecclesial thoughts very strong. This also strengthens the idea that Augustine learnt a considerable amount of ecclesiology from Ambrose.

Secondly, Dudden notes that there was a post baptismal unction which signified the consecration of the newly baptized to the priesthood possessed by the whole body of the Christian Church in *De sacramentis* (1967:340). This is similar to what Ambrose says in *De Mysteriis*:

“for we are all anointed unto the kingdom of God and unto the priesthood with spiritual grace” (*mys.* 6.30 Deferrari 1962:16). Augustine probably came to know the Church as priesthood.

Thirdly, we also see a glimpse of how Bishop Ambrose interpreted the Canticles. He saw the bride as the Church and Christ as the bridegroom (*mys.* 7.35-42 Deferrari 1962: 17-20). Augustine clearly makes an emotive reference to the Canticles during this learning period (*conf.* 9.6, 14 Boulding 1997:219). This view of the Canticles would have illuminated not only how to interpret the book but also the way we are to view the intimacy between Christ and his Church.

Plody notes that Augustine's "dove-raven contrast" is only found in Ambrose and no other Latin antecedent (2011:66). Augustine uses this contrast against the Donatists to show that they are the ravens who need to return to the ark of Catholicism (Plody 2011:67). What shall we make of all this? The allegorical approach of interpreting Scripture enables Augustine to interpret Scripture in order to combat the Church's opponents.

Fourthly, Ambrose also then speaks of how the sacraments of the church are more ancient and more powerful than that of the Jews (*mys.* 8:47 Deferrari 1962: 22). It is very important to realize that Augustine had a very informed understanding of what the baptismal rite symbolized from Bishop Ambrose. This is seen clearly in the way that Bishop Ambrose tries to go beyond the water and the external activity and explains the eternal dimension reflected in the external symbols (*mys.* 3. 8 Deferrari 1963:7).

Summary of Augustine's possible ecclesiology from his neophyte catechesis:

1. The Church as teacher
2. The Church is a made up of a priesthood of believers
3. Baptismal rite significance
4. Church as bride of Christ

#### 4.3.2. Augustine's ecclesial thoughts from *The Sacraments (De sacramentis)*

There are yet again four ecclesial insights that Augustine probably picked up from his neophyte phase. The first reference to the church in *De Sacramentis* is found in chapter 2 paragraph 5; It is here that Augustine most helpfully describes the Church's grace by saying "How much greater is the grace of the Church in which all are saved" (sac. 2.2.5 Deferrari 1962:280 ). By saying this, Bishop Ambrose is showing that he believes that the Church is universal. In other words all people can be saved through the grace of the Church.

Secondly, like in *De Mysteriis*, we see Bishop Ambrose teach on the Church being pre-figured by the slave girl of Naaman (sac. 2.3.8 Deferrari 1962:280). Though he doesn't say it explicitly, the implication of this analogy is that the Church is teacher.

Thirdly, Bishop Ambrose makes an interesting statement in *The Sacraments* about Christ and Baptism in the Church as follows: "Now I ask you whether you should believe that you have the presence of the Trinity at this baptism, with which Christ baptizes in the Church" (sac. 2.3.9 Deferrari 1962:283).

Bishop Ambrose seems to see beyond the visible to the invisible workings of the baptism. Here he is implying that they see the Bishop baptizing them in the name of the Trinity but it is actually Christ who performs the invisible and eternal reality of the baptism. This would have some ramifications on Augustine's ecclesial beliefs when he encounters the Donatists. The Donatists saw the efficacy of the sacraments being bound up with the minister's holiness. Augustine saw things differently when he



encounters the Donatists. He sees Christ as the one who performs the religious rites through the minister regardless of his holiness.

Fourthly, Bishop Ambrose draws an allegory by saying that the Canticles speak of Christ and the Church (*sac.5.2.5-9* Deferrari 1962:311). Bishop Ambrose speaks of the Church being married to Christ (*sac.5.2.8*. Deferrari 1962:311). This image would have been something that must have struck Augustine powerfully, because of the impressions that the Canticles made upon him (*conf. 9.6, 14* Boulding1997:219).

Summary of Augustine's ecclesial thoughts from *De Sacramentis*:

1. The Church is Universal
2. The Church is teacher
3. Christ baptizes in through the sacraments
4. The Church as Bride
5. Baptismal rite significance

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

What should we make then of Augustine's *neophyte* learning experience? One is struck by the similarity between the teachings in *The Sacraments* and *The Mysteries*. This strengthens the idea that Ambrose's catechetical classes were generally the same in content. This makes it even more likely that Augustine would have learnt similar teachings in the Church. He would more likely have come to know that the Church is universal, the teacher, the Bride and it is Christ who baptizes through the sacraments. One needs to ask now whether this outcome is confirmed by the writings that follow his *neophyte* catechesis. That is what the next section will deal with.

## CHAPTER 5. Augustine's ecclesiology between Autumn 387 and the end of 387AD

After the *neophytes* had been instructed, Augustine and his friends decided head back to Africa in order to “pursue a life of service to God”. For the remaining 8 months of 387AD Augustine began to make and execute plans to travel back to Thagaste in order to serve God there.

### 5.1. Introduction

On his journey back to Africa Augustine begins to write material implicitly revealing his ecclesiology. 387-388AD represents the period which Augustine explicitly writes down his own thoughts on the church (Alexander 2008:105). This would aid us in not only confirming whether the previous chapter's conclusions are accurate, but also shed light on what he actually thought himself before arriving in Africa and engaging with the Donatists.

Augustine for the first time uses explicit references to the church (*ecclesia*) during this time (Alexander 2008:105). What works did Augustine write during this period which enable one to see establish his ecclesiology? *The Immortality of the Soul* and *The Greatness of the Soul* which were completed by Augustine by the time he arrived in Thagaste from Milan (Alexander 2008:109). Alexander also rightly argues that the following were at least begun in part during this time:

1. *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* (On the Morals of the Catholics)
2. *De libero arbitrio libri tres* (On free will)

This seems reasonable enough. So what picture do these writings paint of Augustine's ecclesial development and thinking? These writing confirm that Augustine had begun to see the Catholic Church as mother, teacher and universal (Alexander 2008:115)! Just

the fact that Augustine begins to write against the Manichaean Church in itself suggest that he had come to grips with most of the Catholic teaching and was now in a position to start writing apologetics for it. Mara notes that one of the most frequently used images to typify the church in Augustine's encounter with the Donatists was the image of the church as mother (2007:206). This tells us that Augustine used some of his ecclesiology that he learnt as a catechumen later on in fighting schism.

## **5.2. Augustine's ecclesiology in *De quantitate animae***

This book was written and finished by Augustine by the time he arrived in Thagaste (McMahon 1947; cf. Alexander 2008:110). The first ecclesial thought we see in Augustine's work here is the idea that the Church "is Mother" (*quant.* 33.76 McMahon 1947:143). Augustine says here "how excellently and healthfully we were nourished by Mother Church" (*quant.* 33.76 McMahon 1947:143). By saying this Augustine is highlighting that he was taught very well by the Catholic Church during his own catechesis. This confirms that catechetical classes for Augustine were not merely a must in order to get some form of cult initiation- he was trained in an excellent manner in the teachings of the Church. One of the teachings that he learnt to accept was that the Church was to be seen as Mother. So before encountering the Donatists, Augustine became aware of how the church was mother to all Christians. Perhaps it is possible that Augustine had already come to read Cyprian- "You cannot have God for your father if you do not have the church for your mother" (*ecc.cath.* 6 Bevenot 1956:48-49). This yet again is beyond the scope of this study however would be a most useful thing to investigate.

The second ecclesial thought Augustine gives is that the Church teachings have the 7 principles he is discussing with Evodius (*quant.* 34.78 McMahon 1947:146). Rather

indirectly Augustine is showing that in some sense the Church is teacher to those who wish to learn about the 7 principle he has stated. Another interesting reality in this passage is that Augustine confirms yet again his knowledge of the writings of the Apostle Paul by quoting 1 Corinthians (*quant.* 33.76 McMahon 1947:143).

Summary of Augustine's ecclesiology from *De quantitate animae*

1. Church as mother
2. Church as teacher

### **5.3. Augustine's ecclesiology in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* (Started in 387)**

Since this book was only started in 387, the first question we need to answer here is: How much of the book was written before he arrived in Thagaste? This author concurs with Alexander who posits that the parts of *moc.ecc.* that were completed by the time Augustine was in Thagaste are 1.2-12.21, 15.25 and 19.35-30.64 (2008:109-110; see Coyle1978:94-98).

Augustine says "this book will contain our view in conformity with Catholic teaching concerning life and morality" (*moc.ecc.* 1.1 Teske 2007:31). He characterizes the book as containing Catholic teaching. From this phrase alone one can discern that the Catholic Church is slowly being unveiled as teacher with some kind of authority.

From the beginning to *moc.ecc* 7,11 Augustine makes the case that reason "When it comes to divine realities it turns away, it cannot see; it gropes, is set afire, gasps with love, is struck by the light of the truth, and turns back, not by choice but out of fatigue, to its own familiar darkness" (Teske 2007:36). In other words reason can only take one so far but cannot give one the truth they seek.

This is obviously an attack on the Manichaean position that states that reason can lead one to the light of truth (*moc.ecc.* 2,3 Teske 2007:32). Later on Augustine fleshes the idea when speaking of the Catholic Church saying “You train and teach children in a way suited to children” (*moc.ecc.* 1.64 Teske 2007:32). He clearly saw the Catholic Church as having a teaching role and capacity. That in its authority lay the way to truth that the Manichaean Church wrongly seeks.

In *moc.ecc.*10,16 Augustine says to the Manichaean Church “Your stupid and wicked arguments cannot be compared in anyway , after all, to the words of the most pious and most learned men who explain the Scriptures in the Catholic Church” (Teske 2007:38).

This reference to the “Catholic” Church betrays three things about Augustine’s view of the Church- Firstly, Augustine viewed “Catholic” to distinguish it from other schisms and sects, and secondly to denote its universality (Alexander 2008:115). Thirdly, the implied notion is that the Catholic Church has some form of authority. An authority that is synonymous with the teachings of the whole Old and New Testament. The implication is that “church provides the necessary authority by which people come to see God” (Alexander 2008:117). So Alexander is correct when he argues that Augustine here shows that the teachings of the church and of scripture are congruent (Alexander 2008:118).

Alexander notes that during Augustine’s stay at Cassisiacum he referred to the Scriptures as Ambrose saw them and that after Milan he refers to the teachings of the Catholic Church (Alexander 2008: 116). This distinction is incorrect and rather arbitrary seeing that Ambrose taught Catholic doctrine! So Augustine mentioning it one way or

the other is not necessarily a sign that prior to his *neophyte* phase he was not concerned with the church.

Augustine also calls the Church the “truest mother of Christians” (*moc.ecc.* 30.62 Teske 2007:59). There is no mistaken that he saw the Church as mother.

Summary of Augustine Ecclesiology in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*:

1. The Church is universal
2. The Church is teacher
3. The Church is mother

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

It is clear that during the last months of 387 Augustine shows that he has absorbed Catholic teaching and has adopted their theological stance on matters. It must also be stated that at this stage the church was still working out the kinks in her theology and as a result the Catholic position might be a little more fluid on certain issues. Nonetheless, Augustine still had come to embrace the ideas that the Catholic Church was universal, teacher and mother. These understandings would help Augustine later when he was faced with the Donatists. He would indeed later appeal to the very universality of the Catholic Church to rebut the Donatist narrow view of the church and insistence on being the only true church(Lancel 2007: 200).

What then can we conclude about Augustine’s ecclesiology between 354-387AD? We can safely say that it seems very unlikely that Augustine encountered the Donatist church until he was actually back home in Thagaste in 387. This means that

Augustine's initial ecclesiology within the stated time period was not influenced by the Donatist thinking.

## **CHAPTER 6. Applications for the South African Context**

This author began his research by noting that there are relevant lessons to be learnt from this study to aid ministry in South Africa.

Firstly, Augustine was a Berber and as a result was a black person (Van Oort 2004: 32). He was a native of Africa. A man, whose ecclesial thinking as a whole, ended up influencing Western Christendom most profoundly. One cannot overstate how important it is to teach this to native South Africans. Usry & Keener note how many have argued that Christianity came to Africa only through colonialism (1996:21). This mindset is also pervasive among the average black South African population. Christianity is viewed as a merely white European religion. Teaching church history accurately will aid South Africans in understanding that Christianity is for all men from every nation tribe and tongue.

Secondly, part of readdressing the negative and sometimes racist stereotypes (such as the inability of black people to think, their incompetence at work, and their inferiority as a people group) is simply to teach the legacy of the African Augustine. Here is an African whose influence had a profound impact on the Christian world. In fact Gonzalez puts it this way- “the most influential theologian of the West since the apostle Paul” (2010:222; cf. Gonzalez 1984:209). These are indeed important racial needs that need to be addressed

Thirdly, we only have access to Augustine’s thoughts because he wrote so many works during 354-387AD. People have had access to these works and are able to study them and use them in understanding Scripture better, to gain a historical perspective on the African church and other various themes Augustine addressed. There is an important



lesson yet again here. Native South Africans need to begin to learn from their fellow North African the value of writing down theological content as it relates to their context.

One, however, should not just write for the sake of writing books. No that would be foolish. Augustine wrote to address the challenges the Church, culture or himself faced. Whether it was the Manichaean Church, the Academics or the Donatists, Augustine faced and addressed these challenges. South African native Christians need to begin to write books that address the different cultural challenges peculiar to the South African context. This approach will aid the church in being relevant and avoiding the problem of losing Christians to dangerous independent Christian groups. The natives in African Churches need to begin to pass on their exclusive knowledge on how Christianity and culture relate to one another in the African context through written works.

Fourthly, Augustine used his training in the liberal arts to address important issues in his day. African professionals can learn that one of the most influential Christians after the Apostles was an African liberal artist. This would give them a good role model for using their professions as a means of addressing the various challenges South Africa faces. Christian professionals need such good examples. Our Universities and experts should learn from Augustine's example and also begin to focus their attention on addressing South African challenges.

Fifthly, the Church in South Africa must begin to disciple its young preachers from an early age. Augustine only became what he was because of the careful discipleship he received. His ecclesial views have influenced much of the Western world. It is important for the church to begin to identify and disciple its people in the hope that the next generation will have a more profound Christian impact.

Lastly but not in any way least, Augustine's ecclesiology needs to be read in the light of his early ecclesiology. It is not enough to simply start with the Donatist Schism in trying to see his ecclesiology. One needs to realize that there is a background within which Augustine's theology developed.

Sixthly, scholars should begin to look at Augustine's ecclesiology in light of his early ecclesial development. He did not begin to think ecclesiology when he encountered the Donatists! Augustine's theology was influenced by Manichaean and Berber roots. So we cannot come to an understanding of Augustine's ecclesiology until we have come to see it through the lens of his early ecclesial thinking.

## CHAPTER 7. Final Conclusion

It has been shown that Augustine's ecclesial thoughts before the age of nineteen years (354-373AD) were most likely very shallow in depth and content. Though it was difficult to determine the exact specifics of this thought, we know that Augustine was influenced by Monica, the Catholic Church and other Christians. At the very least, Augustine's retelling of events in the *Confessions*, shows that Augustine knew that the Catholic Church were the custodians of salvation and that they could bestow such a salvation through baptism (*conf.* 1. 11,17 Boulding 1997:50-51). This is all that can be said of Augustine's ecclesiology until he was the age of 19 years old.

It has also been shown that between 19 and 28 years of age (373-382AD), Augustine's became a Manichaean. As a Manichaean, Augustine's ecclesiology grew as he adopted their ecclesiology in accordance with their teaching. The Manichaean Church presented itself as a more rational kind of Christianity (O'Meara 2001:68). He would have read the works of Paul and their own Manichaean writings as well. A likely summary of Augustine's ecclesiology at this point would have been the following:

1. Superiority of the Manichaean Church to the Catholic Church
2. One enters the church through Gnosis-the knowledge of light and darkness (Coyle 2007:182; Frend 1984:315)
3. There are two types of believers in the church, the elect and the hearers
4. Hearers may get saved by their meritorious works for the elect (Coyle 2007:182)
5. The Church's mission is to release light particles held captive in the intermingled darkness and light of creation (Coyle 2007:182; cf. Frend 1984:662)
6. Elect were arranged in a hierarchy (Coyle 2007:183)

7. How the Church is to go about proselytizing
8. Some OT and some NT ecclesial teachings
9. Ecclesial nuances in the cultic and ethical code of Manichaeism
10. Some Pauline ecclesiology. How much? There is no way we can possibly now.

Between the Age 29 and his baptism Augustine had slowly started to notice the gaping holes in the logic of the Manichaean Church. The final straw came when Faustus could not give him the answers he needed (*conf.5, 17* Boulding 1997:127). At this point Augustine became disenchanted with Manichaeism and his ecclesiology stagnated yet again. We saw that he loosely held their ecclesiology and then became a doubter of finding truth in anything or anyone. He became a doubter of everything aligning himself with the Academics, including doubting ecclesial teachings. However, Augustine's ecclesiology began to grow when again when he began to understand the Catholic teachings through the influence of Bishop Ambrose's sermons.

Augustine grew in his ecclesiology and came to understand during this phase that Christians are reborn into their mother the church. He came to see that there was a way of explaining away the antinomies found in Scripture. This welled up into him making a decision to convert to Christianity. It is here that Augustine came to embrace Catholic Christianity's ecclesiology.

This study showed that it is here we see the first positive signs that Augustine's early ecclesiology was foundational to his later ecclesial thinking. This study showed that Augustine was affected both positively and negatively by the Manichaean experience. Negatively in that he wrote against the Manichaean way of thinking taking an antithetical stance against the Manichaean teaching (van Oort 2004:38). Positively in that Augustine

came to better understand why Scripture better from his encounter with the Manichaean Church (van Oort 2004:38). These are the very Scriptures he would use later on in his ministry of preaching, teaching and apologetics. Their authority in his life was established early on.

This author then looked at the next period in Augustine's life, August 386AD- February 387AD, the period between his conversion and baptism. This author showed that at Cassisiacum Augustine and his companions attempt to make sense of their new found faith in their own distinctive education and cultural formation (Harrison 2007:166).

This author also showed that Augustine had limited hermeneutical skills during this time and was still learning how to interpret scripture rightly. The following were the fruits of combing Augustine's ecclesiology:

1. Baptism is a salvific initiatory rite.
2. Exorcism is a rite performed during such baptisms
3. There is a hierarchical Church Government structure within the Church
4. Scripture and Catholic Church tradition are authoritative in matters of faith and practice of the church.
5. The Church is Christ's body
6. Christ is the head of the Church
7. Pauline Ecclesiology
8. Church worship in prayer
9. Christ's philosophy on the church was the only philosophy to live by
10. Women could also teach men in the church
11. One becomes a part of the church by faith

12. In comparison with the world, the church is in the minority
13. Unity in the Church through love
14. Pauline Corpus as source for ecclesiology
15. Augustine knew the mission of the Church

We see a definite growth in ecclesiology when we carefully investigate his works in their historical background. Understanding that Augustine had arrived to such an ecclesiology reveals that before he had begun engaging the Donatist Schism or Manichaean Church, Augustine had already an ecclesial framework from which he was working from. Augustine's also learns the allegorical way of looking at Scripture. This is very important to note. This framework of interpreting Scripture is used by him in his sermons and letters throughout his life for teaching purposes on ecclesial aspects.

This study showed that there is definite marked growth in ecclesiology during this phase. After Cassisiacum, Augustine's ecclesiology grows to an even greater extent between August 386AD- February 387AD. This study showed that during this period in time Augustine became a *competens*, and then a *neophyte*. Within this period there were clear ecclesiological teachings in the form of sermons, liturgy and special instruction in Milan. This author showed that Augustine most likely came out believing the following:

1. The Church as teacher
2. The Church is a made up of a priesthood of believers
3. Church as bride of Christ
4. The Church is Universal
5. Christ baptizes in through the sacraments

6. Baptismal rite significance
7. The conception of the Church is in the Old Testament with Abel
8. The rite of secrecy of baptism and the Eucharist
9. The church as mixed.

This author noted that yet again we saw that he would have embraced Catholic ecclesiology by this point. Thus Augustine already had a Catholic ecclesial framework for his worldview.

Having taken all of this evidence into account, this study has shown that the thesis statement is positive- the defining features of Augustine's ecclesiology were in place by 387AD. These defining features were Augustine's belief in the authority of the church as teacher in matters of faith and practice, and the authority of God's word which the church correctly interprets for faith and practice and the various teachings that he came to appreciate by 387AD.

This author also identified the following as areas for future study:

What sort of theology did parents teach their children about the church between 354-373AD? The answer to this question might aid one better understanding how Augustine would have thought of the Church during his boyhood and teen years.

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