

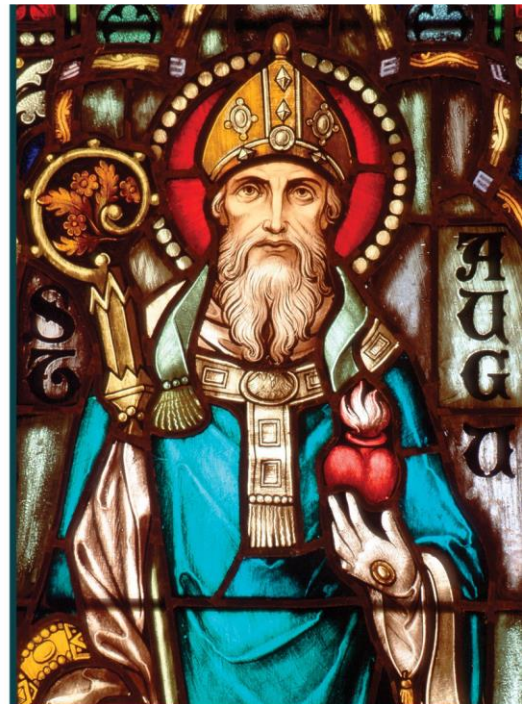
The Heroes and Shapers of Christian Faith: From Yesterday to Today

With the end of the Exodus series, I have decided to do a short church history series, a brief summer diversion. My thought is to take significant figures from our heritage as Christians and highlight one each week, men and women who have very much shaped our present understanding of the teachings of the Bible (both negatively and positively). My thought is to survey their lives, tell their stories, and then explain how they have shaped Christian understanding.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo
(13 November 354- 28 August 430)

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

The most influential
churchman in the annals
of the Lord's church



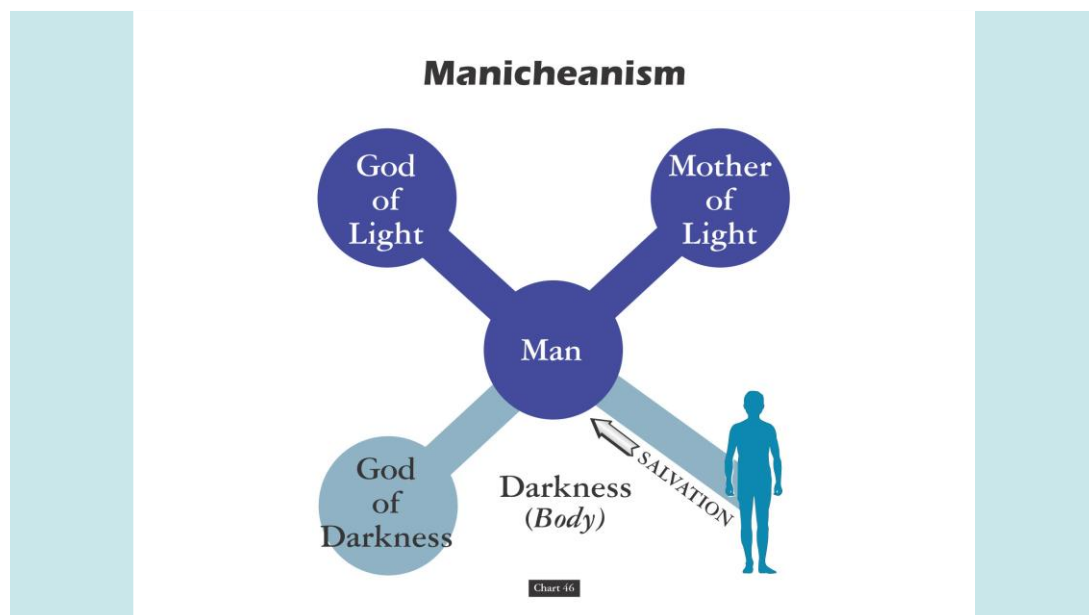
I. The Outline of Augustine's Life

354 - Augustine was born in the Roman province of Numidia, part of the great Roman Empire north of the Sahara Desert in Africa (today, Tunisia), in Tagaste. His parents, Patricius and Monica, were not aristocratic, his father

being a local official of middle-class means. His mother embraced the Christian faith; his father did not. Because he evidenced intellectual capacities as he pursued education in the local schools, his father encouraged him further.

370 - In his sixteenth year, as he awaited finances to study rhetoric in Carthage, his life took a downward turn. He turned to pagan vices (licentiousness, the theater, preoccupation with literary success) that culminated in the birth of a son to his paramour (relationships that lasted fifteen years).

373 - Augustine became attracted religiously to the Manichaeans, a cult-like group, followers of Mani, a Persian. The sect claimed the Bible contained errors, advocated a radical dualism that explained the origin of evil, and a platonic view of salvation through intellectual pursuits.



After nine years as a follower of Mani, he became disillusioned.

“During the space of those nine years, from the nineteenth to the twenty-eighth year of my life, I was led astray myself and led others astray in my turn. We were alike deceivers and deceived in all our different aims and ambitions, both publicly when we expounded our so-called liberal ideas, and in private through our service to what we

called religion. In public we were cocksure, in private superstitious, and everywhere void and empty. On the other hand, we would hunt for worthless popular distinctions, the applause of an audience, prizes for poetry, or quickly fading wreaths won in competition. We loved the idle pastimes of the stage and in self-indulgence we were unrestrained.”

Completing his studies, Augustine became a teacher of rhetoric, apparently quite successful in his profession.

383 - Having rejected Manicheism, and much to the fright of his mother, he left Carthage for Rome (he secretly left Carthage fearing his mother’s reaction). In Rome he became quite ill, but, upon recovery, advocated he opened a school of rhetoric (his students defrauded him of tuition, so he abandoned the city for Milan and a new start).

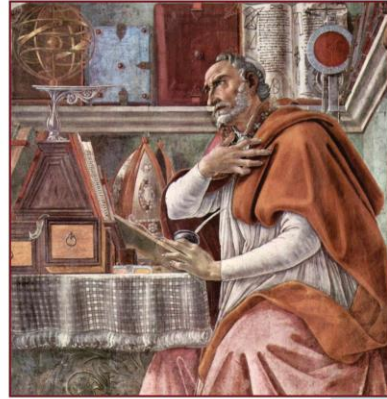
384 - Augustine’s hopes faded in Milan, but he continued his studies. His mother joined him in Milan. Sadly, he dismissed the mother of his son, Adeodatus, but her place was filled with another and another.

*Parenthesis: Monica (c. 332-387), the mother of Augustine
Monica has been idealized as a woman that anguished within a broken marriage, an unfaithful husband, and a derelict son. Her persevering prayer for her husband and son bore fruit after year of anguish and disappointment. Her outstanding Christian virtues, particularly the suffering caused by her husband's folly, and her prayerful life dedicated to the reformation of her son, are celebrated as models of motherly compassion.*

386 – In a Milan Garden that September, reading the Scriptures (he was reading through Romans and came to 13:14), he found peace, not so much in the quest for intellectual accomplishment and understanding, but in the grace of God through Christ.

Augustine, *Confessions*

“I began to search for a means of gaining the strength I needed to enjoy you, but I could not find this means until I embraced the mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who is a man, like them, and also rules as God over all things, blessed for ever. He was calling to me and saying, ‘I am the way; I am truth and life.’”



387 – He was baptized in Milan by Bishop Ambrose on Easter Sunday. When he was about to leave Italy to return to North Africa, Monica died.

388 – He began writing against the Manichees, returned to Africa, and set up a monastery seeking to live the solitary life (a life of poverty, prayer, and the study of the Scriptures).

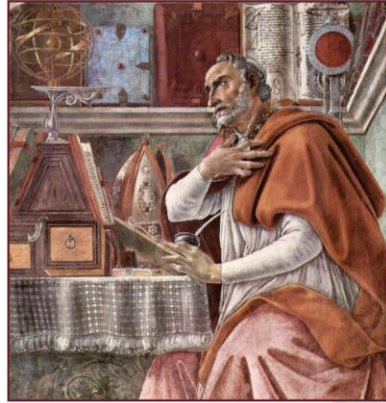
391 - Though not seeking ordination as a priest, he was summoned to Hippo by Bishop Valerius (he begged not to be appointed in tears).

396 - At the age of forty-two, he was appointed Bishop of Hippo, succeeding Valerius. (At this time, individual churches appointed successors. There was not centralized power in the Bishop of Rome).

400 - He completed the *Confessions*.

Augustine, *Confessions*

“The thought of you stirs him so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.”



412 - He began writing against Pelagianism.

413 - He began writing *The City of God* (completed in 426).

426 – He retired from official duties as bishop, appointing his successor.

430 – He died in his seventy-sixth year (August 28th) while Hippo was under siege by the Vandals. The empire was collapsing!

II. The Contribution of Augustine to Christian Understanding.

Augustine is celebrated in the Roman Catholic tradition, as well as the Protestant, for his contribution. Each tradition selection from him certain ideas while rejecting others. This is why we, as Protestants, do not equate the teachers of the church as having equal authority with Scripture.

A. From the Roman Catholic Perspective

1. That justification is a process, not a definitive declaration, confusing sanctification with justification.
2. That sin is the absence of the right and good.
3. That church is a mixed people of the saved and lost; that the end of time will separate them. He got this from the wedding parable of Matthew 22: 9 (the Latin text reads “compel them to come in”).
4. The necessity of the baptism of those incapable of learning for salvation and the practice of confirmation.

B. From the Protestant Perspective

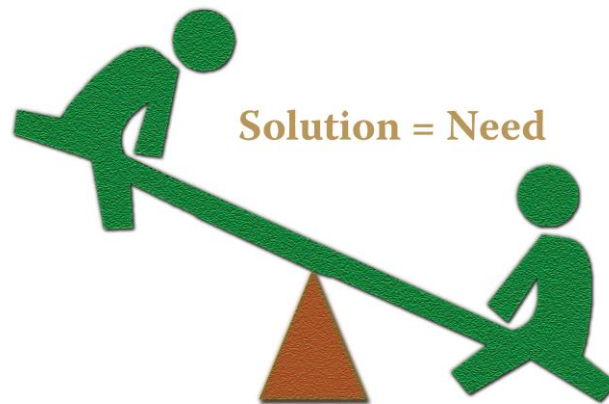
1. An understanding of the unmerited grace of God in redemption.

Sin and Grace: The Augustinian/Pelagian Controversy

What need did mankind have that Christ addressed?

How does the sin of mankind explain the grace of the divine?

Doctrine of the Depravity of Man



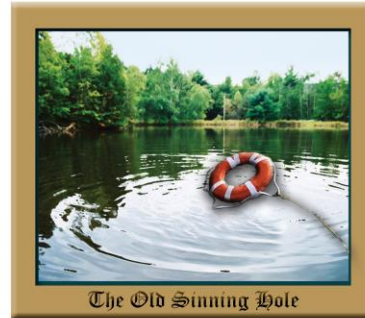
The Anthropology of Augustine

Sin corrupts man's

- mind
- emotion
- will

He is spiritually dead.

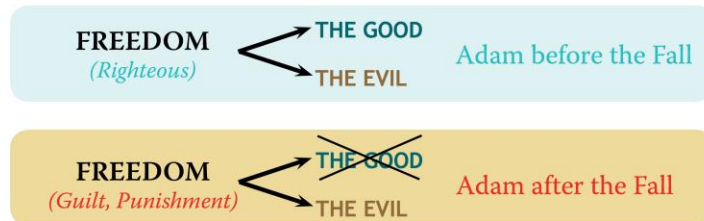
Plenary Inability
Total Depravity



Augustine's Doctrine of Regeneration

(Adam and Genesis 3)

Proposition: All men make choices; those choices come freely according to our constitution.



Augustine's Doctrine of Regeneration

(Mankind and Romans 5)

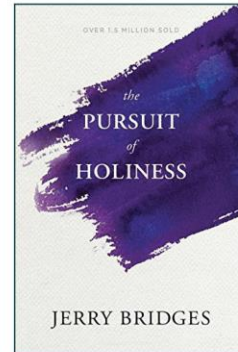


Proposition: God shows man the wonderfulness of Christ so as to cause him to want to be saved.

Freedom

“While the will is the ultimate determiner of all choices, it is influenced in its choices by the strongest forces brought to bear upon it.”

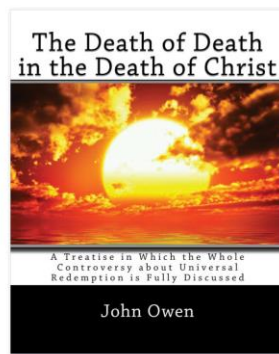
Jerry Bridges
Pursuit of Holiness, 127



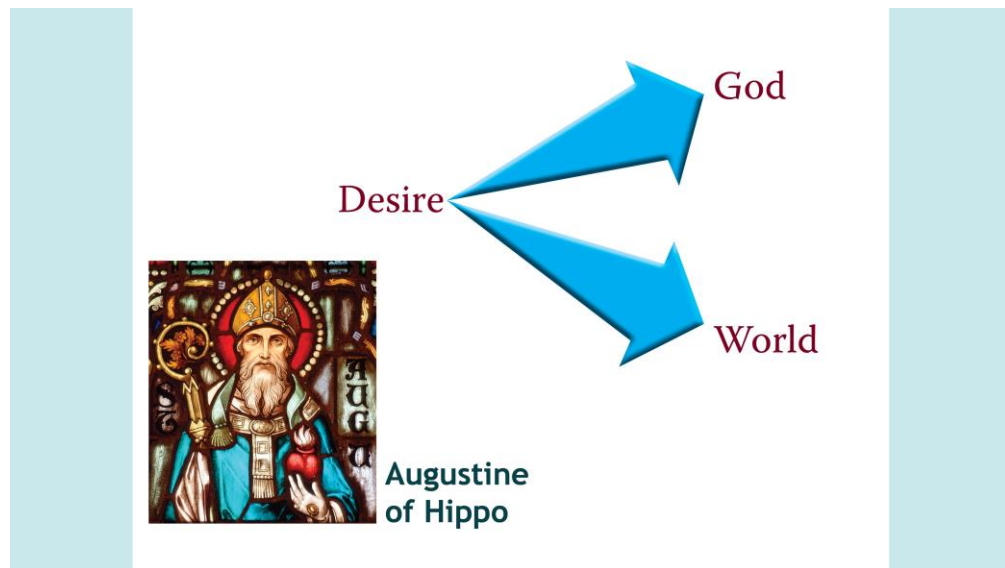
Grace and Freedom

“Grace proves irresistible just because it destroys the disposition to resist.”

J.I. Packer
Preface: *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, 8

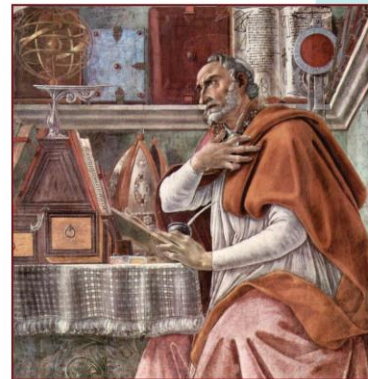


2. An understanding of the world in which we live with the rise and fall of nations.

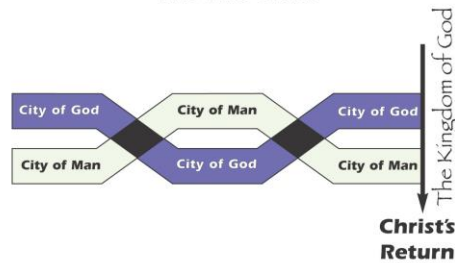


Augustine, XV, 7

“The good use the world that they may enjoy God; the wicked, on the contrary, wish to use God that they may enjoy the world.”



Augustine's Theory of History: The Two Cities



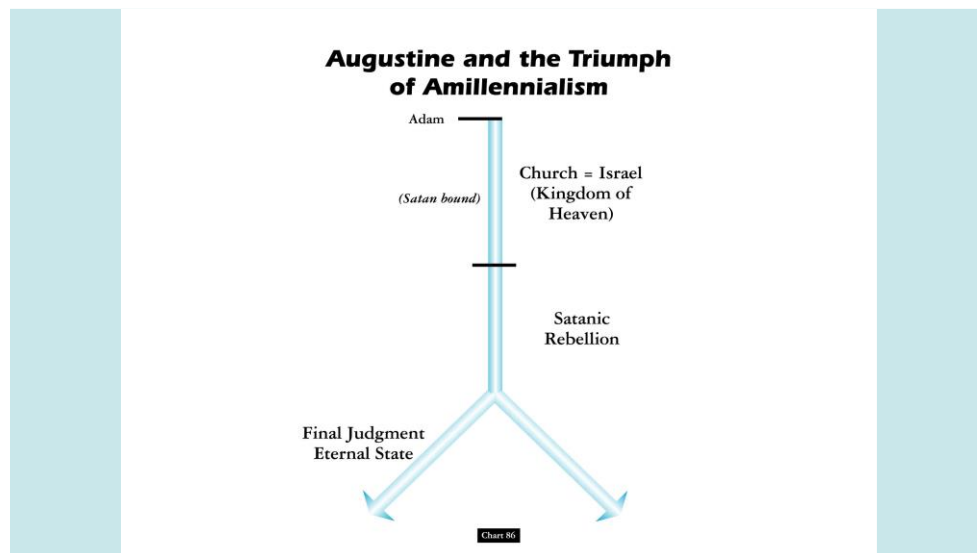
Characteristics:
Dualism (constant struggle)
Alienation (constant secularity)
Denial of progress of the city of God in history
Rejection of prophetic fulfillment in time

Chart 85

Augustine and Christian History

Why do nations rise and fall?

3. An understanding that the Second Coming of Christ will be before the eternal state (classic Amillennialism), the prophetic statements in Scripture being fulfilled outside of time.



4. A Prayer of Augustine

*Remember, Christian soul, that thou hast
this day and every day of thy life...*

God to glorify.
Jesus to imitate.
A soul to save.
A body to mortify.
Sins to repent of.
Virtues to acquire.
Hell to avoid.
Heaven to gain.
Eternity to prepare for.
Time to profit by.
Neighbors to edify.
The worlds to despise.
Devils to combat.
Passions to subdue.
Death, perhaps, to suffer.
Judgment to undergo.

Applications:

1. Augustine should encourage us as parents that the folly and immaturity of our children need not be the final chapter in their lives. God may be teaching them the emptiness of darkness so that they might become shining lights of his grace.
2. Prayer is a mighty power and source of strength when directed to God on behalf of our loved ones. Monica's influence through prayer and care is a

model for all of us. She did not abandon her husband or son, though broken she did not cease to care being a part of her son's life. Patricius is said to have come to faith late in life; Augustine became a champion of the faith!

3. Sometime brilliant minds have difficult submitting their hearts to the Savior because they are prideful, trusting themselves to find the way. They little understand redemption culminates in a change of affections (the heart) and knowledge, while the means can be an obstacle if the wrong kind.
4. Augustine helps us to understanding what we see around us: two loves and two kingdoms. He helps us understand that nations are temporal political entities that pass with time; that the true kingdom is not of this world! He teaches us where our heart should be!
5. Augustine is clearly correct that we have nothing to offered God be a profound need. That salvation is ab absolute gift from God uncaused by anyone because there is nothing we can offer God that is consistent with His justice and righteousness (we are broken people). Salvation is all of Grace!