

JAMES A. ANDREWS



HERMENEUTICS
AND THE CHURCH

IN DIALOGUE WITH AUGUSTINE

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Acknowledgments

This book has taken some five years to finish, but the questions behind it have concerned me for much longer. In my first homiletics course, I could not figure out how to bridge the gap between the biblical exegesis I had learned and the sermon I had to preach on Acts 22:3–11. Only after writing two outlines and one disregarded draft did I discover Calvin’s commentary. This, I remember thinking, is how one interprets the Bible. I know many have similar experiences, and that, in and of itself, is reason enough for the hermeneutical investigation that follows.

For various reasons, I graduated seminary feeling unprepared for ordained ministry and decided to pursue further academic study. Perhaps, I thought, I would fit better in the academy than in the church, and I was unprepared for what actually happened: through a detailed study of Augustine and his hermeneutics, I find myself on the other side of a Ph.D. pursuing the possibility of ordination once more. As with any academic book, attention to a small, theoretical area can lead to much larger, practical conclusions, but these are not necessarily drawn in the text itself. This interaction between academic and practical concerns informs the entire project—even when it is not immediately obvious—and, for that reason, it seems appropriate to take a moment to acknowledge all those whose influence can be felt in the pages that follow.

The initial draft of this book was my doctoral thesis, finished at King’s College, University of Aberdeen, under the supervision of Francis Watson. I am grateful to him for many things, not the least of which is that he encouraged me to pursue a topic in which I

was very interested—Augustine and hermeneutics—rather than a New Testament one I thought was vaguely intriguing. I cannot over-emphasize how delightful it was to work with such an enthusiastic supervisor.

Theology at Aberdeen is a serious occupation, and while there I soaked in things of which I was unconscious until beginning to teach theology myself. Phil Ziegler offered numerous comments on the thesis manuscript in the months before I submitted it, and he deserves thanks for his careful theological eye and insightful comments. I am particularly grateful for the numerous conversations I had with Matthew Edwards, Darren Sarisky, and Don Wood. In addition, I could not have had a better set of Ph.D. examiners—John Webster and Lewis Ayres—to whom I am indebted for their careful engagement with my ideas and their helpful suggestions to improve the work for publication.

The book began at Aberdeen, but it has benefited from a much wider network of people, all of whom deserve mention. I met with both of my primary interlocutors—Werner Jeanrond and Stephen Fowl—and both were kind enough to spend an hour or so talking with me. I have learned a good deal from engaging with their ideas. Several of the discussions and concepts of this book were explored in an earlier article, “Why Theological Hermeneutics Needs Rhetoric” (*International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 [2010]: 184–200), and I am grateful to Stephen Fowl for thoughtfully responding to it when I sent it to him. I am also grateful to Carol Harrison, who read a draft of the initial two chapters and offered helpful comments.

I began working at the University of St. Andrews after completing my Ph.D., and while there I have been fortunate to work with Karla Pollmann on the After Augustine project. Karla kindly met with me and discussed aspects of her own work, while reading portions of my initial manuscript and giving helpful comments. She was kind enough to read the first two chapters once I revised them, and, once more, she offered invaluable remarks that strengthened the material.

I also had the opportunity to work in St. Mary’s College, St. Andrews, as an associate lecturer of theology, and my thinking has

benefited from conversations with Ivor Davidson, Mark Elliott, Gavin Hopps, Alan Torrance, and Tom Wright. I am particularly grateful to the College for the provision of an office, even outside of term time, where I managed to revise the Ph.D. thesis and turn it into the present book. I am thankful for my students, who asked questions and reminded me why one works on a Ph.D. to begin with. Thanks also go to Debbie Smith, Susan Millar, and Margot Clement for their ever-friendly assistance.

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More people impact academic work than those whose influence can be discerned within the pages. Two particular former teachers helped me along the way, neither of whom will likely agree with the conclusions I draw but who nonetheless deserve my sincerest thanks: Bruce Winter and Professor Joachim Schaper. Likewise, one's academic work would suffer without continual interaction with friends and family. There are too many friends to name, but I would particularly like to thank Joseph Hammond, Kristin Lindfield-Ott, Phill Pass, Sarah Schell, and Paul and Amber Warhurst (and Ruby and Margot).

I owe much to my family. Erin Chandler read the original draft in its entirety, offering many helpful editorial comments. In more ways than one, the following would have been impossible without Randal and Janice Chandler. Many complain about their in-laws, but I have nothing to say to mine but "thank you." My father has always been fascinated by what I am writing, and his constant interest has been a source of encouragement. Throughout my academic studies, my mother did not fail to ring at least once a week. Her support is unwavering, and for that, I am grateful.

Finally, I am most thankful to my wife, Chris. Though she has her own research to do, she only rarely complains that I talk about

my own more than I should, and she reminds me that there is more to life than study. She even patiently read the initial manuscript and offered suggestions. Her reserves of faith and strength are astounding, and she has taught me a great deal. I am grateful for our last nine years, and I look forward to the future. I dedicate this book to her.

Still, coming full circle, I owe one final statement of thanks. When working on Augustine, one cannot help but be impressed by just how important the church is for his theology and, as the following pages will demonstrate, for his hermeneutics. As I said above, I began the investigation to answer my own questions about how one connects biblical interpretation to theology, and while I worked on Augustine, I attended All Saints' Church, St. Andrews. My gratitude to this wonderful congregation goes well beyond any practical thanks I can express here. While there, I was privileged to hear the skillful sermons of Fr. Jonathan Mason. Eventually, I was preaching regularly, once more highlighting the questions that informed this project's inception. Hearing Jonathan's sermons and preaching myself reinforced the conclusions I drew when researching and writing the book. If scripture is an instrument in the divine economy of salvation, established to engender the double love of God and neighbor, the church is indispensable for biblical interpretation and, by extension, for theology. When I think about the conclusions of this investigation, I know they could have been drawn simply by reading *De doctrina* closely, but the actual process was more complex. Seeing how scripture is integrated into the worship at All Saints'—from the weekly sung eucharist to the Stations of the Cross to the Easter Vigil—made it easier to see what Augustine was doing in the pages of his book and easier to put the conclusions of my book into practice.

Abbreviations

WORKS BY AUGUSTINE

In the following pages, I use the abbreviations from the *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Mayer (Würzburg: Schwabe, 1986–).¹ Unless otherwise noted, the translations are my own. The bibliography contains the critical editions of the texts as well as English translations.

<i>agon.</i>	<i>De agone christiano</i>
<i>c. ep. Man.</i>	<i>Contra epistulam Manichaei quam vocant fundamenti</i>
<i>c. ep. Pel.</i>	<i>Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum</i>
<i>c. Faust.</i>	<i>Contra Faustum</i>
<i>cat. rud.</i>	<i>De catechizandis rudibus</i>
<i>civ.</i>	<i>De civitate dei</i>
<i>conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>
<i>Cresc.</i>	<i>Contra Cresconium</i>
<i>doctr. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina christiana</i>
<i>en. Ps.</i>	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>
<i>ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion ad Laurentum de fide spe et caritate</i>
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>ep. Rm. inch.</i>	<i>Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio liber unus</i>
<i>exp. Gal.</i>	<i>Expositio epistulae ad Galatas</i>
<i>Gn. adv. Man.</i>	<i>De Genesi adversus Manichaeos</i>
<i>Gn. litt.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i>

¹ I use a “v” for the consonantal “u.”

<i>Gn. litt. inp.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus</i>
<i>gr. et lib. arb.</i>	<i>De gratia et libero arbitrio</i>
<i>gr. et pecc. or.</i>	<i>De gratia Christi et de peccato originali</i>
<i>Io. ev. tr.</i>	<i>In Iohannis evangelium tractatus</i>
<i>mag.</i>	<i>De magistro</i>
<i>nat. et gr.</i>	<i>De natura et gratia</i>
<i>nupt. et conc.</i>	<i>De nuptiis et concupiscentia</i>
<i>ord.</i>	<i>De ordine</i>
<i>pecc. mer.</i>	<i>De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum</i>
<i>retr.</i>	<i>Retractiones</i>
<i>s. dom. m.</i>	<i>De sermone Domini in monte</i>
<i>Simpl.</i>	<i>De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum</i>
<i>spir. et litt.</i>	<i>De spiritu et littera</i>
<i>trin.</i>	<i>De trinitate</i>
<i>util. cred.</i>	<i>De utilitate credendi</i>

WORKS BY OTHER ANCIENT AUTHORS

<i>LR</i>	Tyconius, <i>Liber Regularum</i>
<i>Orat.</i>	Cicero, <i>Orator</i>

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BA</i>	<i>Bibliothèque Augustinienne</i>
<i>CCL</i>	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–)
<i>CD</i>	Karl Barth, <i>Church Dogmatics</i> . Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. 4 vols. 12 parts. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936–1977.
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Tempsky, 1865–)
<i>FC</i>	The Fathers of the Church
<i>LCC</i>	Library of Christian Classics

LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
WSA	The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century

Introduction

Scriptural interpretation is an enduring concern of the church and will remain so until the eschaton. There is no shortage of methodologies on offer and, for that reason, it might seem out of place for another book to be written that argues for a certain form of appropriate interpretive practice. Likewise, engaging with Augustine is one of the oldest forms of Christian thought. There is, again, no shortage of research on this Church Father, and it might seem pointless to publish yet another book examining his ideas. Nonetheless, because scriptural interpretation is of utmost importance, theological hermeneutics will always remain a topic worthwhile to reconsider. And because Augustine is one of the preeminent saints of the church, a dialogue with his ideas on scriptural interpretation will never be out of place or outmoded. The church is, after all, the fellowship of the saints in the power of the Spirit. Those who have gone before us still speak to us, and we would do well to listen. And not only that: we would also do well to ask questions.

What follows, then, is a self-conscious dialogue between contemporary theology and Augustine. Because the topic under discussion is scriptural interpretation, interacting with his work *De doctrina christiana* is a logical choice. This text has acquired classical status, and thus one can assume it has something to say even today. Looking to the past may well provide important resources to move beyond problems of the present.¹ Augustine's problems were not our problems, but in *De doctrina* he discusses the reasons, and the tools necessary, for interpreting the words of the prophets and apostles. Because of his time and place, what he has to say will be

different from what theologians in our own context have to say. And that is precisely where his example can be instructive. Moreover, by turning back to Augustine from the present in a self-consciously dialogical manner, I suggest that insights will also be gained with respect to *De doctrina*. Because theological hermeneutics is the topic, and because in this text Augustine speaks theoretically about scriptural interpretation, I confine myself in the pages that follow to discussion of *De doctrina*.

It has been argued on numerous occasions, however, that the work is not representative of Augustine's practice, and, for that reason, it will be helpful to dispel such a notion briefly here at the start.² If one wants Augustine's views on interpretation, so the argument goes, *De doctrina* alone does not suffice. Rather, one should view him in practice; there one finds the "true" Augustine. As Frederick Van Fleteren states, "Without study of Augustine's hermeneutic and exegetical practice, *De doctrina christiana* alone could be misleading."³ While there is some truth to this statement—a hermeneutics would never be complete without some kind of practice to model it—one need not assume that an investigation of *De doctrina* alone will yield a distorted picture of Augustine's practice. As Karla Pollmann states, "Strictly speaking, the idea of a hermeneutics scattered throughout different works is a contradiction in itself, as it is precisely the task of a hermeneutics (in contrast to mere 'rules of exegesis') to display the issue in a coherent and systematic whole."⁴ *De doctrina* is just such a work, written by Augustine to pass on "certain rules for interpreting scripture" (Prol. 1). Perhaps it does not touch on all the issues that arise in Augustine's practice, but it is an outline for what he envisions the interpretation of scripture to require. Indeed, that is perhaps how a hermeneutics should be. Were every aspect discussed, one might as well simply get on with the interpretive act itself. It is not as though *De doctrina* contrasts with Augustine's actual interpretive practice. Because he writes what I will term an "*a posteriori* hermeneutics"—one to aid an existing practice of interpretation—it would be surprising if there were such a conflict. In fact, it can be demonstrated even in his more exegetical works that he sticks to the rules he gives in *De doctrina*, while perhaps going beyond them.

For instance, one need only note that Augustine's major "commentaries" on John and the Psalms are sermons.⁵ As the subsequent pages will argue, the sermon is paradigmatic for his interpretive program. One interprets the scriptural texts in order to share that understanding with others to elicit a certain response: progression in the love of God *and* the love of neighbor. Interpretation—a two-part process involving understanding the text and delivering that understanding to others—is one of the ways humans come together in love. Book 1 of *De doctrina* sets out two primary rules that govern scriptural reading: the *regula fidei* and the *regula dilectionis*. The *regula fidei* comprises those things of faith and hope, the *objects* to which one relates in love. As Augustine's *Enchiridion* stresses, faith, hope, and love are inseparable, but faith and hope are pointless without love: "For when there is a question as to whether a person is good, one does not ask what he believes, or what he hopes, but what he loves."⁶ Likewise, in a late letter, Augustine insists that even *De civitate dei*, a book likely to be deemed simply "historical," follows the "paradigm" of a sermon:

I see that in one of your other letters you make excuses about why you have put off accepting the sacrament of rebirth and thus, in effect, you are throwing away the fruits of all those books you love. What fruits? Not that someone may have some interesting reading nor that he may learn a lot of things he did not know before. But that the reader may be convinced of the City of God so that he enter it without delay or that he become even more determined to stay in it. The first of these two things is conferred by rebirth, the second by the love of justice. If those by whom these books are read and praised do not actually take action and do these things, what good are the books? As far as you yourself are concerned, when they have not been able to get you to take even the first step, however much you praise them, thus far they have failed completely. (*Ep. 2*.3, Ad Firmum*)⁷

Here, when responding to letters from Firmus, Augustine gently rebukes the intellectual for simply enjoying *De civitate dei*, for

reading and discussing it with detachment without actually being moved to accept the cleansing waters of baptism. The work should convince the unbeliever to enter the baptismal waters, from which—as *De doctrina* tells us—“all ascend to bear twins, the two commandments of love, and not one of them lacks that holy fruit” (2.6.7). And it should persuade the believer to desire to remain in the church and to live in the appropriate manner. In other words, *De doctrina*’s emphasis on the sermon and its role in engendering the double love of God and neighbor remains consistent throughout Augustine’s lifelong engagement with scripture.

In *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Augustine deploys another of the principles enunciated in *De doctrina*, what I will call the “*caritas* criterion,” the principle that states if something cannot be connected to the realm of love, then it must be interpreted figuratively:

Do not think that there are wicked people in the world for no reason and that God brings nothing good from them. Every wicked person lives so that he may be corrected or so that a good person may be exercised by him. If only the one who presently exercises us would be converted and so be exercised with us! Nevertheless, as long as they continue to exercise us, let us not hate them because we do not know which of them will persevere in wickedness to the end. In fact, often when it seems to you that you have hated an enemy, you have actually hated a brother and not known it. The devil and his angels alone have been revealed to us in holy scripture as destined for eternal fire. Of them only should we despair of amendment, against whom we have a hidden struggle for which the Apostle arms us, saying, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood”—that is, against people you see—“but against the leaders, the powers, the rulers of the world, of this darkness.” . . . Therefore, since this rule of love [*regula dilectionis*] is established for you, that imitating the Father you should love your enemy . . . how would you be exercised in the command if you endure no enemy?⁸

Such a move is crucial, as anyone who has attempted to pray the Psalms can testify.⁹ In the one under discussion, the speaker is oppressed by his enemies and pleads with God to have mercy on him and to cast them down. Augustine preached this sermon in the midst of the Donatist controversy when it would have been easy to read such a psalm as directly applicable to his current situation, but the *caritas* criterion espoused in *De doctrina* comes into effect. To call down vengeance on one's opponents is not the duty of the Christian who lives after Christ. Rather, Christ commands his followers to love their enemies, and thus Augustine can posit the reason there are in fact enemies to love as well as the reason not to hate them. Furthermore, he insists that only the devil and his minions are assuredly damned. Thus, he implicitly suggests that such a psalm—when calling down wrath on enemies and insisting that they will not change—is figuratively speaking of the devil and his angels. Only God knows the humans who will persevere in their rebellion to the end.¹⁰ The church must love even its enemies and pray that they too will one day be brothers and sisters who must persevere in loving their enemies.

The preceding—admittedly brief—discussion demonstrates that Augustine follows the principles laid out in *De doctrina* throughout his career. Perhaps there are other ideas that can be gleaned from his works, but this treatise presents at least a starting point for understanding why and how one interprets the Bible theologically. As will be discussed in the following chapter, Augustine actually completed *De doctrina* rather than let it be catalogued as unfinished in *Retractiones*. It is, therefore, entirely accurate to state that the dialogue that follows is between Augustine and contemporary theology precisely because *De doctrina* is Augustine's theological hermeneutics, that is, his theoretical reflection on the practice of interpretation.

I write what follows with two groups of people in mind. For scholars of Augustine, I offer a reading of *De doctrina* that takes the entirety of the work seriously and seeks to allow him to speak through the words he wrote at the beginning and end of his bishopric. My goal is to allow him to be a living voice, and that necessitates

a close textual engagement with his ideas. Several works have been written about *De doctrina*, and I do not intend my study to replace them but to supplement them.¹¹ Still, it does appear that—in recent English-language scholarship anyway—a full textual engagement with this work is missing.¹² I intend here to follow one of Lewis Ayres’s suggestions for reading texts of the tradition: when studying figures from the history of theology, theologians “need to develop the same sense of attention to the dead as they consider it appropriate to show towards the living.”¹³ I aim to push this idea further than Ayres himself likely intends: if such attention is demanded, then it seems reasonable to put the ancient theologian into *direct* conversation with contemporary ones. Of course, the use of “direct” can only really be metaphorical, since a good deal of historical work must be done to bring Augustine forward. But the dialogue is more than just “mediated,” because the goal is actually to do the historical work so that Augustine can speak through his text into our contemporary context, in close proximity to modern interlocutors. This exercise, I propose, will allow new insights and new ways of describing the ancient text to come to the surface.

My argument seeks to provide a new and faithful way of talking about Augustine’s text, but it also aims to offer an example in practice of how one engages theologically with the texts of the past. For theologians, therefore, I offer a model, and more than that, I offer the actual fruits of the engagement: suggestions for the discipline of theological hermeneutics and the practice of scriptural interpretation. One of the issues present in theological appeals to Augustine is that he often falls victim to a partial reading. One need look only at recent theological uses of *De doctrina* to see that the work is often fragmented and only a portion of it used to advance the theologian’s viewpoint.¹⁴

Telford Work appeals both to Athanasius’s *On the Incarnation of the Word* and *De doctrina* in order to develop an ontology of scripture.¹⁵ He discusses Augustine’s text in terms of its fundamental “analogy of the Word.”¹⁶ Work follows Mark Jordan and appeals to this analogy to argue that scripture’s words are analogous to the divine *logos*. Just as the *logos* emptied himself and came in the form

of a servant, so God “makes his words vulnerable, for a time, to abuse.”¹⁷ For Work, scripture is “God’s *self*-involvement in the world, somehow analogous to his personal involvement in the incarnate Jesus.”¹⁸ Such a construal of scripture is at once compelling and provocative. By using Athanasius’s text and Augustine’s, Work develops a sophisticated trinitarian ontology of scripture that accounts both for the text’s divine and human attributes without falling victim to some of the more polarizing versions of this construal.¹⁹ By arguing for such an ontology, he perhaps attaches scripture much more firmly to God’s presence than Augustine would do. Work states: “Our ecclesiology of Scripture focuses on the Bible as a means of God’s presence to his earthly, eschatological community, and as an instrument of the worshiping community when it is present before God.”²⁰ Augustine would agree that scripture is an instrument in the divine economy, but a close reading of *De doctrina* would put more emphasis on God’s presence in the *interpretation* of scripture, thus moving the stress away from scripture’s ontology—a particularly Protestant concern—and on to the biblical texts’ instrumentality in the divine economy. This point touches on the discussion below in chapters 4 and 5. Work’s theology of scripture remains thought provoking, and his use of Augustine in conjunction with Athanasius is commendable. The subsequent pages will differ, however, in their more precise engagement with Augustine’s text.²¹

Matthew Levering provides another recent example when he utilizes *De doctrina* briefly on his way to analyzing Thomas Aquinas.²² Levering pulls from the treatise a purpose for reading scripture: “Thus, understanding the texts of Scripture in themselves is not, in itself, the purpose of reading Scripture. Instead, understanding the texts has as its purpose the encounter with Love—none other than incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ—teaching through them, so that we might be caught up into Love’s wise pattern for our lives. This proper reading and hearing involves us in Christ’s communion, the church, in which we are configured to the heavenly image that Christ teaches us.”²³ For Levering, Augustine is helpful because he points to the instrumentality of scriptural reading: it is not an end in itself but is instead an activity that brings about certain

forms of participation with Christ and his church. God's teaching and humanity's are not in conflict, and Levering finds this stance helpful in Augustine's model. On the basis of Augustine and Aquinas, Levering combines the focus on history as currently understood with precritical exegesis, what he calls a "participatory-historical" mode.²⁴ His model focuses not only on the biblical texts but also on participation with the divine teacher speaking through them. Such a construal is undoubtedly nearer to Augustine's than speaking, as Work does, of scripture's ontology. But because Levering is interested in the theological reasons for scriptural interpretation, he stops short of examining the final three books of *De doctrina*, describing them as "filled with practical advice on how to acquire the canonical, linguistic, historical, grammatical, and rhetorical gifts useful for discerning and teaching persuasively the true meaning of Scripture."²⁵ He contends that Augustine's "most important contribution" is the first book, where he expands the hermeneutical task to include "existential participation."

While such a reading is helpful, and while Levering is correct to point out that Augustine does discuss the "why" of scriptural interpretation in Book 1 and the "how" in Books 2–4, too quickly dismissing the final three books leads to a truncated version of what Augustine develops in *De doctrina*. The "why" requires the "how" precisely because Book 4 emphasizes the communal nature of Augustine's program, and this communal location is integral to his hermeneutics. Levering does stress the communal location, and—as with Work—his construal is compelling. But because Levering utilizes two interpreters in order to develop his theology of biblical interpretation, he must skip some parts of *De doctrina* for pragmatic reasons.

In contrast to these two recent theological engagements with *De doctrina*, the discussion that follows will engage with the entirety of Augustine's work, allowing him to establish the parameters of the dialogue, precisely to avoid reading my own ideas back into *De doctrina*. If the goal is to hear Augustine's voice in order to help us move beyond current issues, a few things are necessary: a thorough

engagement with the text, with its historical situation, and with contemporary scholarship on it.

Chapters 1 and 2 represent such an exercise. They will demonstrate that what I construe Augustine's version of hermeneutics to be is in fact his and not mine. In discussions about *De doctrina*, scholars often divide the work into two independent parts: Augustine's hermeneutics (Books 1–3) and his thoughts on rhetoric (Book 4). By dividing the work in such a way, Augustine's clear statements about its unity are ignored. In the first chapter, I will argue that its four books and prologue represent a unified treatise, and more than that: it is an eclectic hermeneutics originally written primarily for the clergy. For that reason, I will argue further that *De doctrina* represents an "expanded hermeneutics," that is, a hermeneutics that includes a turn to rhetoric. In contrast to Schleiermacher, Augustine's hermeneutics is not only the inverse of rhetoric, but it also includes a turn to rhetoric. Scriptural interpretation, the *tractatio scripturarum*, is not complete unless one understands scripture and then turns to deliver that understanding to the church. Understanding and delivery are two aspects of the one act of scriptural interpretation. In chapter 2, it will be concluded that Augustine utilizes philosophical and rhetorical concepts in what is at all times a theological hermeneutics. Such conclusions will set the parameters for the discussions that follow.

Because Augustine is writing a theological hermeneutics that engages with philosophical concepts, and because there are several modern proponents of theological hermeneutics who appeal to philosophical concepts in their construals, it will be useful to put *De doctrina* into dialogue with a representative advocate of this kind of hermeneutics. Chapter 3 will therefore analyze the nature of the discipline and will engage with those who discuss this topic in detail. As the chapter will demonstrate, discussion typically revolves around the relationship between general and local, theological, hermeneutics. Some argue that general hermeneutics must be privileged and that theological hermeneutics can only be developed on that basis; only after a detailed account of hermeneutics can the practice of

interpretation go forward in a safeguarded manner. I will argue that such a dichotomy between general and local hermeneutics needs to be supplemented by a further delineation between *a priori* and *a posteriori* hermeneutics. Rather than simply addressing whether a theologian prefers general or local hermeneutics, this logical, or temporal, delineation will allow a more precise discussion concerning the relationship of theory to practice. On the basis of a reading of Augustine's text, I will argue that the point of contention between theologians is less about whether general or local hermeneutics should be privileged than about how hermeneutics and the practice of interpretation are related. In theological hermeneutics, the debate does not really concern the scope of hermeneutics—how many texts it accommodates—but it instead concerns the sequential order of the move from theory to practice.

Werner Jeanrond provides a concise, lucid, and forceful argument for why hermeneutics must in theory come before practice to guard both the text and the reader, that is, for an *a priori* hermeneutics. By placing Augustine in dialogue with Jeanrond, conclusions can be drawn about the nature of the relationship between philosophical and theological hermeneutics as well as between theological hermeneutics and the practice of theological interpretation. Briefly, the investigation will demonstrate that Augustine can utilize philosophical ideas without subordinating the ongoing ecclesial practice of biblical interpretation to theory. Such a view will highlight that he has a communal location in mind and that he therefore espouses an *a posteriori* hermeneutics. Because some argue that he does in fact develop a general semiotic theory that constrains a subsequent biblical interpretation, the third chapter primarily argues that Augustine actually locates both his semiotics and his hermeneutics in a theological web, mitigating the force of the argument that he develops a disinterested theory to discipline a subsequent practice.

Because the third chapter will not be able to demonstrate just what kind of community *De doctrina* presupposes, chapter 4 picks this up in order to fill out just how Augustine's hermeneutics is in fact *a posteriori*. This chapter engages at a close textual level with the work, making the case for the argument announced in chapter 1:

that *De doctrina* is an expanded hermeneutics that intends to be read in the first instance by the clergy. There are certainly theological reasons for widening the audience, and the work itself has generalizing tendencies. But such a construal is not only historically accurate and persuasive on internal and external grounds, it also will have tremendous theological pay off. The sermon, on Augustine's model, is paradigmatic for theological interpretation, "paradigmatic" because Book 4 of *De doctrina* actually allows for books and conversations to be the form of delivery, but always as an extension of a sermon, that is, as directed toward the ecclesial community to engender the double love of God and neighbor.

Because chapter 4 emphasizes the church's connection to biblical interpretation due to the *a posteriori* nature of Augustine's hermeneutics, chapter 5 places *De doctrina* into dialogue with Stephen Fowl, an interpreter who also stresses the ecclesial location of interpretation. Several interpreters highlight the necessity of locating scripture in its relationship to the church, and Fowl represents one of the more nuanced proponents of such a view. By putting him into dialogue with Augustine, both interpreters' programs will be thrown into sharp relief. In particular, Augustine's intense focus on scriptural interpretation as the activity that begets virtue stands in marked contrast to Fowl's dismissal of the term "meaning" in favor of the community whose (non)existing virtue affects interpretation. The differences between the two theologians, I will argue, concern how they construe the nature of grace and the human recipients of it and how they construe the way in which the Holy Spirit works through the community and through the text. Nonetheless, Fowl brings up important points for a theological hermeneutics to examine, and these points are taken up in connection with Augustine's text.

The goal in these chapters is never simply to criticize "bad" interpretive programs. The goal is to let the dialogue between the past and present highlight strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary projects, allowing the discussion to move beyond current proposals. But I have intentionally not selected interlocutors who are easy to dismiss simply because they are different from Augustine.

Both Jeanrond and Fowl appeal to him as a voice to be heeded. Both offer programs similar to his. To engage with them is to engage with some of the stronger examples of combining theology and interpretation. To allow Augustine to dialogue with them will inevitably reveal potential weaknesses and provide ideas for moving beyond them, but this occurs only on the basis that they offer compelling arguments for their programs, programs that—at the start—have much in common with *De doctrina*. Indeed, Augustine himself is open to questions from the contemporary practitioners.

In the pages that follow, I intend to provide an example of how one can appeal to the tradition, read it well, and also apply its insights to the contemporary context. By reading the ancient text through the questions of the present and by responding to current issues in Augustine's voice, this work will yield new ways of talking about the patristic text while providing helpful correctives for the ongoing practice of theological interpretation. Ancient and modern hermeneutics in dialogue, each mutually affecting the other, both given due attention: this is the method and the goal. By turning to the past in faith, we seek to hear a voice from outside, one not concerned with our immediate problems but one nonetheless describing the same object: holy scripture and the triune God who speaks through it.