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# The Life and Conversion of Augustine of Hippo

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## THE LIFE AND CONVERSION OF AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

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By Joe Aaron Gafford II

On November 13, 354 AD, one of the most influential men in all of Christianity was born—*Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis* or Augustine of Hippo. Augustine was crucial for the development of the Catholic Church in the fourth century. He served as the Bishop of Hippo and was one of the most prolific writers of his time. Many of his works survived and continue to be extremely significant among Christians today. Though today he is remembered for being a Church Father, throughout his life, Augustine did not live by many of the principles within Christianity and participated in sects considered to be heretical to the Catholic Church. The road to Augustine's conversion is long and filled with various influences for and against Christianity. Augustine was a philosopher before he professed any genuine belief in Christ, and his thinking eventually led him to pursue Christianity. However, he found it to be entirely too simplistic and unintelligent. Initially, Augustine was one of Christianity's strongest critics, but after studying with other Christian intellectuals, Augustine accepted Christ, was baptized, and today is remembered as one of Christianity's strongest advocates. However, this conversion was not accomplished in a single moment. It occurred overtime through the slow development of Augustine's thought. It began with his early life in Thagaste, continued with his education at Madauros. Augustine was then was introduced to Platonic thought and eventually converted to Manicheanism. Finally, after his encounter with Christian academics, he had his ultimate conversion to Christianity.

In the two centuries prior to the life of Augustine, Christians throughout the Roman Empire were persecuted greatly because of their lack of participation in the ritual worship of Roman gods. Due to their refusal to participate, many natural disasters and famines were blamed on them for incurring the gods' wrath.<sup>1</sup> This Roman persecution was a practice that had begun with Jews; however, the second century marks a time of great change in the thinking of many as Christianity began to spread unexpectedly throughout the Roman Empire. First, individuals in the second century became attracted to the intimate God that Christianity provided; this personal

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (New York: Norton, 1989), 51.

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relationship was very different from the distant pantheon they previously worshipped. Second, they were drawn to the idea of the inner perfection that accompanied becoming a Christian. Third, individuals' views of evil changed drastically, as error ceased to be merely mistake, but in fact, demonic forces acting against them in spiritual warfare. Fourth, Christianity provided individuals who felt disconnected from their surroundings with a group that served as a unified religious community. Ultimately, there was something lacking in Roman communities and Christianity filled that need. Over time this became influential and, by 250, it brought more protection to be a Christian than to be a *civis romanus*.<sup>2</sup> From 260 to 302, the Christian Church was tolerated entirely; however, in 302, Roman Emperor Diocletian initiated what would later be known as the "Great Persecution." This persecution served as the final and most severe persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire. During this time, Christians "found themselves officially outcasts in the society with which they had so strenuously identified themselves."<sup>3</sup> However, immediately following Diocletian was the usurping Emperor, Constantine, who won a victory over his rival and credited the Christian God.<sup>4</sup>

This recognition of the Christian God served as an official act by Roman officials condoning Christianity. Primarily, Constantine's conversion manifested itself with the recognition of the Christian God, the end of the persecution of Christians, and most importantly, special privileges provided to the Christian clergy.<sup>5</sup> The emperors following Constantine, with the exception of Julian the Apostate, continued in the Christian faith. Though Constantine was a Christian, most of his subjects were still pagan and were not required to become Christians; rather, Christians were "merely a respected minority."<sup>6</sup> Over time this privileged minority attracted the wealthy and talented citizens; it was the influx of these citizens, around 370, that mark the beginning of true Christianization of Europe.<sup>7</sup> In the midst of this influx and the beginning of the rapid spread of Christianity, Augustine was born.

Augustine was born in 354 in the town of Thagaste in North Africa. This city had been in existence for over 300 years and was one of the many

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<sup>2</sup> Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*, 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Smith, *Augustine: His Life and Thought* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle* (New Jersey: Princeton, 2012), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

Roman settlements surrounding the Mediterranean. Unlike many of the settlements, however, Thagaste was sixty miles inland and was closed in by the Medjerda mountain range.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Augustine had no true concept of an ocean; rather, he could only imagine what it would be like by looking into a glass of water.<sup>9</sup> This area of Africa, Numidia, was once very wealthy, but by the fourth century, the city had fallen into decay. The town of Thagaste was technically a part of the old Numidian kingdom, though it was administered by Carthage. The Roman presence in Thagaste was limited as Rome was more concerned with its barbarian neighbors to the North than its African colonies. As a result, the empire's main presence came in the way of taxes and judges. Due to these wars in the North, Rome heavily taxed Africa. This area of Africa was used for farming and was marked by its many land owners. Many were very small properties, while others were extremely large and manned by slave labor. The smaller farms were greatly harmed by these taxes. The farming culture was an influential part of life for nearly everyone living there, but this was not the case for Augustine. Because of his education, Augustine had great aspirations that led him down a different path. Augustine's father, Patricius, was a "poor citizen of Thagaste," but through his father's hard work, Augustine received many opportunities.<sup>10</sup> As a whole, however, the family was forced to make sacrifices—notably, they were poorly dressed.<sup>11</sup> Though poor, Patricius had a position of authority—he was a Decurion, a town counselor who had tax-collecting duties; however, this duty also bound him and his heirs to the land.<sup>12</sup>

Augustine's mother, Monica, was influential in his life. Augustine, though a very prolific writer, did not write much concerning the early years of his life, but what he did write primarily concerned his mother and her guidance. Monica, unlike her pagan husband, was a devout Catholic. She encouraged Augustine at a young age to have a faith of his own as well as a good education. She was responsible for Augustine's participation in an early Christian ritual. Augustine said that he was, "signed with the sign of His Cross and seasoned with His salt as I came new from the womb of my mother, who had great trust in you."<sup>13</sup> Monica's religious teachings were later

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<sup>8</sup> Garry Wills, *Saint Augustine* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* II, iii, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* II, xi, 3.

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beneficial. This was true both spiritually and politically. Later in life, his initiation as a catechumen (a beginner Christian) brought him privileges long before his actual conversion and baptism. When Augustine was young, he fell sick and nearly died. It was at this moment he was nearly baptized; however, he quickly recovered and his baptism was delayed. In his *Confessions*, Augustine questioned the postponement of his baptism and how it affected his life; though ultimately, Augustine trusted in his mother's decision.<sup>14</sup>

Augustine's family was lower middle class. This provided them with aspirations for the education of their son, but it was not something his family individually could afford. Augustine did not particularly enjoy school, nor did he excel in his studies. In fact, one of the main reasons Augustine put any effort into his studies was because he feared being beaten.<sup>15</sup> This fear of beatings was great enough to cause him to pray to God for refuge. Like most children, Augustine would rather have played than learn. In 366, at age twelve, Augustine moved twenty miles north of Thagaste to the town of Madauros. This town had been the home of the great second century Platonist orator Apuleius and, unlike Thagaste, was dominantly pagan. Here Augustine was exposed to mythology and Virgil. Though he greatly enjoyed Latin literature, Augustine detested the Greek language and literature. Augustine enjoyed Virgil so much that in his *Confessions* he speaks of his weeping when he first read *The Aeneid* and of the suicide of Dido.<sup>16</sup> Through the pagan authors he read and the pagan teachers he had in Madauros, Augustine began to identify more with paganism than the Christianity he grew up with. His turn to pagan lifestyle and literature is something that he regrets and speaks of in his *Confessions*; Augustine laments that he was "sinfully delighted" in these things.<sup>17</sup> However, this lamentation of paganism was far from his mind when he returned to Thagaste after his recent exposure to pagan literature and teaching.

At age sixteen, Augustine returned to Thagaste and, at this point in his life, he entered the Roman stage of *adulescentia* (adolescence), which would continue until he was thirty years of age when he could hold any public office.<sup>18</sup> In this time period Roman citizens furthered their education by learning rhetoric, but due to insufficient funds, Augustine was unable to

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* I, xi, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* II, xi, 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, I, xiii, 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I, xvii, 47.

<sup>18</sup> Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 10.

continue his education. At this point in his life, Augustine encountered the great sin of his life—lust. Upon his returning home, Augustine was of age to marry, but his parents had nothing arranged, so he began to seek out and indulge in sexual activity outside of marriage. This lack of an arranged marriage was something that Augustine later used, at least in part, to blame his parents for his sexual desires.<sup>19</sup> In addition to his sexual ventures, Augustine also participated with a gang and commits acts of vandalism. It was in this idle year spent at home that Augustine fell into many of the sins that would haunt him for the rest of his life. After one year back in Thagaste, Augustine traveled to Carthage and continued his education supported by Romanianus, a friend of his father. While in Carthage, Augustine studied, but much like Madauros, Carthage was much more pagan than his hometown of Thagaste. In Carthage, Augustine continued to attend church; however, it was primarily to pursue his sexual conquests.<sup>20</sup>

One of these conquests was the woman to whom Augustine would remain faithful for the next fifteen years. Augustine later regrets how the relationship was founded more out of lust than for any intention for children or Christian marriage.<sup>21</sup> This woman would, however, bear Augustine a son, Adeodatus, when Augustine was just seventeen years old. Though Augustine never named her in his writings, she was his wife in the Roman sense. This meant that if Augustine found a more appropriate marriage he could leave the first according to Roman law.<sup>22</sup> Following his second class marriage, Augustine experienced his first true religious conversion.

In 373, Augustine, at age nineteen, read *The Hortensius*, a now lost work of Cicero concerning philosophy. This work was extremely influential in the development of Augustine's faith. Augustine wrote:

Following the normal order of study I had come to a book of one Cicero, whose tongue practically everyone admires, though not his heart. That particular book is called *Hortensius* and contains an exhortation to philosophy. Quite definitely it changed the direction of my mind, altered my prayers to You, O Lord, and gave me a new

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<sup>19</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> James O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 38.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* IV, ii, 12.

<sup>22</sup> James O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 39.

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purpose and ambition. Suddenly all the vanity I had hoped in I saw as worthless, and with an incredible intensity of desire I longed after immortal wisdom.<sup>23</sup>

From his newly found desire to study philosophy and wisdom, Augustine, due to his Christian upbringing, naturally turned to the Bible to find this wisdom he desired; however, what he found greatly discouraged him. Augustine found the Bible to be nothing compared to the great writing of Cicero, the wisdom that he so fiercely sought was not found in the pages of this Christian book. Augustine also had no love for the cruel and hateful God of the Old Testament. The combination of these factors caused him to turn to Manichaeism, a religion derived from Christianity founded by Mani in 228.

In the time of Augustine, the Manichaeans were a small and mysterious sect with a notorious reputation. In the Manichaean myth, the earth was the battle ground between two kingdoms: the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. The Manichees followers were those who helped the Kingdom of Light by retrieving pieces of light that were trapped in this corrupt world. For their help retrieving these pieces, they would receive a reward. While these followers were on the earth, they would be influenced by the evil world, corrupted by the Kingdom of Darkness, and as a result, would sin and make mistakes, but ultimately these mistakes were caused by the influence of evil rather than the individual. This idea of internal perfection was one of the most appealing pieces of the Manichean faith to Augustine, but later this lack of guilt on the individual is one of his harshest criticisms.<sup>24</sup> This added layer on Augustine's view of Christianity allowed him to remain internally pure while externally living in sin with his concubine.

Another major influence Manichaeism had on Augustine was its practices in regard to sexual purity. There were two major divisions of the Manichees: the Elect and the Hearers. The Elect had been chosen by Mani and followed a very different set of rules than the Hearers. One such belief of the Manichees was the practice of complete transcendence from sexual urges. Though Augustine was just a Hearer and was not required to behave according to these conditions, it was here that he attained his ascetic beliefs towards sexual purity.<sup>25</sup> Augustine's ideas of sexual purity would later

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<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* III, iv, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 50.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988),

become a major part of his life and even during his time as a Manichee, he still prayed, “Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.”<sup>26</sup> Another influence Manichaeism had on Augustine was his career path. Prior to becoming a Manichee, Augustine’s education dealt with Roman law, but following his conversion to philosophy and his devotion to wisdom Augustine became a teacher.

In 375, after Augustine’s finished his education, Romanianus requested his return to Thagaste to teach literature. It was while back in his hometown that Augustine converted many of his close friends and colleagues to Manichaeism, including his patron Romanianus.<sup>27</sup> Upon returning home, Monica refused him entrance into her house because of his conversion to Manichaeism.<sup>28</sup> Also upon his return home, though he does not leave her until 385, there was no mention of his concubine or his son. During his time back home, he reunited with many friends. One of these close friends became very ill. Though Augustine did not mention him by name, the details of their friendship are discussed at length in his *Confessions*. Augustine said their friendship had been “very dear” and was “made warmer by the ardor of studies pursued together.”<sup>29</sup> Augustine had converted him to Manichaeism, but when his friend was close to death and was unconscious his parents gave him a Catholic baptism. When his friend was awake yet again, Augustine thought his friend would laugh at the silly Christian practice; however, his friend accepted baptism and rejected Augustine’s friendship. Shortly after his baptism and rejection of Augustine, he dies. The combination of these two events—rejection and death—caused Augustine to become depressed. Then in 376, twenty-two year old Augustine, against the wishes of his patron, Romanianus, returned to Carthage to pursue a career in teaching.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine’s desire to teach stemmed from his love of wisdom, and it was this same wisdom and rhetoric that he taught while in Carthage. His classroom would have been in the middle of public life in Carthage; the only separation from the busy town would be a curtain.<sup>31</sup> This method of teaching and his rowdy students he was teaching caused him to desire more. This desire for more encouraged him to make connections with the proconsuls in the area. These men would need teachers to educate their sons. Augustine

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<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* VIII, vii, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 160.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* III, xi, 19.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, iv, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 64.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

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planned to use this influence to rise in status. In Carthage, Augustine became friends with Vindicianus, a Roman Proconsul. This man became a father figure to Augustine and discouraged him from learning astrology.<sup>32</sup> In 380, Augustine published his now lost work—*The Beautiful and the Appropriate*. He addressed the book to Hierius, a rhetorician in Rome. During the next two years in Carthage, Augustine became more and more critical of Manichaeism and he began to distance himself from his Manichean friends. Augustine's questioning led him to Faustus, an African spokesman of Manichaeism. Ideally, Faustus would be able to answer Augustine's questions, however, this proved not to be the case—Augustine who wanted, so desperately, to be the student had become the teacher.<sup>33</sup> By 382, Augustine was ready to leave Carthage; he was very impressed with his students from Rome and made plans to move there. When his mother Monica learned of his plans to move to Rome, she traveled to Carthage and begged him to stay; when he declined she threatened to move to Rome with him. Augustine told her when they were leaving so she could come, but he lied and left in the night without her.<sup>34</sup> Augustine's first year in Rome was rather miserable as he suffered illness and the students were not as responsible as he hoped, but he did attract notice from a very important person—Symmachus.

Symmachus was a prominent senator in Rome and was prefect of the city. He was charged with the task of appointing a professor of rhetoric for the city of Milan. Currently, Milan was the imperial residence and had functioned as the capital of the Western Empire for over 100 years. The position as the leading professor of rhetoric meant that one would teach and advise the most important men in the empire including the consuls and the Emperor.<sup>35</sup> Symmachus was a devoted pagan who valued greatly the pagan heritage of Rome; however, the Emperors and other prominent figures were all Catholic. Symmachus' desire was to appoint an individual who would combat these Christians.<sup>36</sup> Symmachus had served as proconsul in Africa and was very familiar with the Manichaeans in the area. Though Augustine was no longer an ardent Manichean, it was his Manichean friends who arranged for his audition before Symmachus. Impressed with Augustine's ability with rhetoric, he received the appointment to the position in Milan. The city of

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<sup>32</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* IV, iii, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* V, viii, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 69.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Soul* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 66.

Milan was the capital in more ways than one: it served as a society overflowing with knowledge. For Augustine, “Milan meant new interests, new learning, and great changes of success.”<sup>37</sup>

In Milan, Augustine continued to climb the social ladder. After a short time spent in Milan, he had an estate large enough to accommodate his wife, son, mother and brother, two cousins, and a body of students.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, he had slaves, stenographers, and copyists. In Milan, Augustine reached a point in his career where having great success in government was a very real possibility. For that career to be possible, however, Augustine had to have a legitimate marriage to a woman of some position. This meant that his companion for the past fifteen years, the mother of his son would be forced to return to Africa. Augustine mourned her departure saying, “She with whom I had lived so long was torn from my side as a hindrance to my forthcoming marriage. My heart which had held her very dear was broken and wounded and shed blood.”<sup>39</sup> Another reason for the departure of his concubine was the sexual purity practices he found so appealing in his time as a Manichaen. Though he found this lifestyle appealing, he was still unable to remain sexually pure and took on a mistress to occupy him until marriage.<sup>40</sup> It was only after his conversion that he gave up his ambitious goals and sinful lifestyle.

In Milan, Augustine met one of the most significant men in his life—Ambrose. Concurrent with Symmachus choosing Augustine to be the professor in Milan, Symmachus was also having a dispute with the Emperor and Ambrose over the removal of an altar of Victory from the Senate chamber. Through this dispute, Augustine received his first impression of Ambrose. Another early impression Augustine had concerned Ambrose’s fame as a great orator. Augustine, a connoisseur of exceptional rhetoric, began to attend sermons of Ambrose out of professional curiosity.<sup>41</sup> Though Ambrose was famous for being a skillful orator, Augustine was unimpressed and thought that Faustus, the Manichean rhetorician, was more impressive.<sup>42</sup> However, over time, the sermons of Ambrose affected his faith. These sermons caused Augustine to seek guidance from Ambrose; however,

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<sup>37</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 72.

<sup>38</sup> Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 40.

<sup>39</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* VI, xv, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Garry Wills, *Font of Life* (Oxford: University Press, 2012), 70.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* V, xiv, 1.

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Ambrose was too busy to help him.<sup>43</sup> Augustine recorded one such occasion in his *Confessions*. On one such occasion there was a group of individuals who wanted to ask questions of Ambrose, but Ambrose was too busy studying a Greek text. Instead of acknowledging them he continued in his studies.<sup>44</sup> In his *Soliloquies*, Augustine spoke of Ambrose and how “it is cruel not to help” those seeking answers.<sup>45</sup> Though Augustine took on Ambrose as a spiritual father, and despite Catholic tradition in regard to the conversion of Augustine, it was not Ambrose who was the most influential role in Augustine’s conversion; it was Simplician who nurtured Augustine’s faith.<sup>46</sup> Simplician was the mentor of Ambrose, and would later be Ambrose’s successor as the Bishop of Milan. Simplician, unlike Ambrose, regularly met with Augustine.<sup>47</sup> Later letters between Simplician and Augustine confirmed their close relationship. In once such letter Augustine wrote, “I have drunk deep of your fatherly affection for me.”<sup>48</sup> Simplician introduced Augustine to Christian Neoplatonism. This belief was very important to Augustine as he later became very interested in the writing of Plotinus. Simplician also told Augustine stories of others who had converted and these stories encouraged Augustine. Augustine then officially converted and began the process for baptism. Though the relationship Augustine desired with Ambrose never developed, his close relationship with Simplician contributed to his conversion.

In 386, Augustine, a newly converted Christian, moved to Cassiciacum to make a clean break with his previous life. He left his court position and lived in a villa loaned to him by Verecundus. It was there that Augustine established a community of Christians dedicated to study and prayer. This country life was very different from the life he had experienced in Milan. Among the people with him were his mother, son, two cousins, two friends, and two paying students. They read Virgil daily, and Augustine would stay up many nights deep in prayer. In addition to study, Augustine wrote a great deal. During his time in the countryside, he wrote his *Soliquies*, in which he asked and answered many religious questions. Additionally, Augustine wrote many letters to close friends including Hermogenianus,

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<sup>43</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VI, xi, 18.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, *Confessions* VI, iii, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies* II, xvi, 12.

<sup>46</sup> O’Donnell, *Augustine*, 301.

<sup>47</sup> Augustine, *City of God* X, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Augustine, *Letters*, 37.

Zenobius, and Nebridius.<sup>49</sup> This time spent in Cassiciacum also marks the first time Augustine remained celibate. Although this was not required in the Catholic church, it was a tradition across the Mediterranean that philosophical individuals in a moral program would become ascetic.<sup>50</sup> This ascetical lifestyle had less to do with Christianity and more to do with Neoplatonism. In 387, at age thirty-five, Augustine made the decision to be baptized and sent Ambrose a notice of his intent.<sup>51</sup>

In January 387, Augustine and his companions returned to Milan to celebrate Epiphany and were enrolled in baptism process. During this time of Lent those enrolled in the baptism process abstained from all sexual activity. Additionally they were inspected daily and every week an exorcism would be performed to rid the body of all evil. This prebaptismal process marked a time of great change for Augustine, as it was here under the tutelage of Ambrose that Augustine was finally able to rectify many of his Manichean criticism of the Old Testament. It was during Ambrose's sermons, as well as the twice daily sessions, that Augustine fell in love with Ambrose's metaphorical interpretation of scripture. The next major step in the baptismal process occurred on Palm Sunday when the individuals would take the secret Apostles' Creed. Finally, the climax of all these preparations came on Easter morning with the procession to the baptistery. Before dawn, Ambrose would perform a ceremony outside the baptistery to enhance the spiritual awareness of the individuals. They would then enter the baptistery, face west and renounce the devil, then facing east they would welcome Christ to their heart. Next, they would strip nude, be anointed with oil, and would enter the baptismal pool. Ambrose would then dunk their heads underwater three times to represent the Trinity and they would exit the pool and be wrapped in a white garment to signify their innocence. They would be anointed yet again and their feet would be washed. Finally, they heard the Lord's Prayer and participated for the first time in the Eucharist.<sup>52</sup> Following this ceremony they would end Lent with a celebratory feast. After his baptism Augustine, along with his family, began their long journey back to Africa. This journey, however, would not be completely joyous, as Monica, Augustine's mother would never make it back to Africa. Throughout Augustine's life, Monica

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<sup>49</sup> Augustine, *Letters*, 1-3.

<sup>50</sup> Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* IX, xiii, 12.

<sup>52</sup> Wills, *Saint Augustine*, 106.

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had been a huge proponent for Augustine's Christian growth, it was only fitting that she lived to see her son become a full-fledged Christian.

Augustine was one of the most prolific Christian writers of his time; however, the early years of his life he spent indulging his sinful desires. For Augustine, the road to his ultimate conversion to Christianity was a slow developing process affected by a multiplicity of factors. Long before his ultimate conversion to authentic Christianity, he held many heretical and controversial views and it was only after working through these views that he came to genuine Christianity. Although his alliances and beliefs changed over time, he never completely abandoned Christianity and in whatever religion he practiced the "name of Christ" was present in every one.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *Letters*, 21, 2.