

ORATING FROM THE PULPIT: THE DUTCH AUGUSTINE  
AND THE REFORMED GODLY UNTIL 1700

John Exalto

The adjective “Augustinian” is often attached to the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation; sometimes the whole movement is even labelled as “Augustinianism.”<sup>1</sup> Such categorization, though, suggests that the Reformers were in complete accord with Augustine. This is not true in the case of John Calvin (1509–1654), for whom Augustine and the other early Christian writers were not sacrosanct, as they seemed to be for Roman Catholics of that day.<sup>2</sup> While Calvin and other Reformers gave Augustine great weight, recent research gives no clear evidence as to whether he was well known beyond Latin-speaking academic circles (including those to which Calvin belonged).<sup>3</sup> Much recent scholarship identifies books as the primary means by which Augustine’s thought was transmitted; by contrast, my contribution will focus on five other modes of communication: teaching, preaching, reading, writing, and meditating. The ordering of this list is not meant to suggest a prioritization; rather, it moves from (semi-) public to more private types of communication. This intermedial analysis shows that traces of Augustine permeate all types of communication. An intermedial approach, relatively new in the field of research for early modern Protestantism, provides a valuable, new perspective.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided, 1490–1700* (London, 2003), pp. 106–15; cf. Alister E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2004), pp. 168–82; William J. Bouwsma, ‘The Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought,’ in *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 19–73.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes van Oort, ‘John Calvin and the Church Fathers,’ in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1997), pp. 661–700.

<sup>3</sup> Backus, ed., *The Reception of the Church Fathers* (see above, n. 2); Leif Grane, Alfred Schindler, and Markus Wriedt, eds., *Auctoritas Patrum: Contributions on the Reception of the Church Fathers in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, 2 vols. (Mainz, 1993–1998); Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> As evidenced, for instance, in Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005), and Willem Heijting, *Profijtelijke boekskens. Boekcultuur, geloof en gewin: historische studies* (Hilversum, 2007).

The parameters of my research are limited geographically to the Dutch Republic, chronologically to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and confessionally to the Reformed Church. The subtitle of this article suggests two more qualifications: “Dutch Augustine” refers to Augustine in the Dutch vernacular context, to which I will give most attention, while “Reformed godly” refers to Puritan believers, both lay and ordained. These Dutch Puritans championed a spirituality that combined word and deed equally, and for this reason Dutch historiographers have commonly referred to seventeenth-century Puritans as “Reformed Pietists.” As this term would have been unknown to the Puritans of the sixteenth century, I shall use the adjective “godly,” following English historiography.<sup>5</sup>

Outside godly circles like those of Voetius and the Van Schurmans, Augustine also enjoyed new life among believers of all stripes. After the international Synod of Dordrecht (1618–19), the Counter-Remonstrants in 1621 published two Dutch tracts of Augustine to defend their position and to support the doctrines of unconditional election and irresistible grace.<sup>6</sup> Sympathizers of the Catholic theologian Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638)—condemned by Rome because of his defence of Augustine’s doctrine of grace—made Augustine’s teachings available to the broader Dutch market in the 1680s.<sup>7</sup> These translations put Augustine directly into the hands of academics and non-academics, Protestants and Catholics alike. Believers were free to make their own judgements based directly upon the writing of the Church Father himself. Because the “Jansenistic” translations of Augustine were closely related to the Protestant emphasis on *sola gratia*, the Reformed godly would have read these tracts with great

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘The Godly: Aspects of Popular Protestantism,’ in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), pp. 1–17; John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603–1689* (New York, 1998), pp. 17–27. For Dutch Reformed Pietism (also named “Further Reformation”), see Fred A. van Lieburg, ‘From Pure Church to Pious Culture: The Further Reformation in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic,’ in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. Fred Graham (Kirksville, MO, 1994), pp. 409–29.

<sup>6</sup> *Twee tractaten, beschreven door den heylighen oudt-vader Augustinum. Het eene handelende van de goddelijcke praedestinatie. Het ander van het goedt der volhardinghe* (Amsterdam, Jan Evertsz Cloppenburgh, 1621), trans. Dirck Vlack of *De praedestinatione sanctorum* and *De dono perseverantiae*.

<sup>7</sup> *Drie brieven van den H. oudvader Augustinus, noopende het stuk van Gods eeuwige verkiezinge en genade* (Rotterdam: François van Hoogstraten, 1684), trans. François van Hoogstraten of *ep. 194, 186, 217; Het boek van den H. Augustinus van de berisping en de genade* (Utrecht: Arnold van den Eynden, 1686), trans. Andreas van der Schuur of *De correptione et gratia*.