



Augustine's Early Theology of the Church: Emergence and Implications, 386-391 (Patristic Studies)

David C. Alexander

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The nature and development of Augustine's understanding of the church between his conversion (386) and his forced entry into the clergy (391) provides an essential lens to understanding this seminal period of transition and the foundations of his future ecclesial contributions. Even so, most studies of Augustine's ecclesiology bypass this period, starting with the clerical Augustine (post 391). In fact, research on the 'young' Augustine and the *Confessions* too often stalls over debates between his neo-Platonic or Christian orientation, focusing on dichotomies in Augustine or an individualistic Augustine too rigidly labeled. This book helps fill these gaps and provides a case study supporting arguments for continuity between the 'young' and the clerical Augustine. A careful chronological textual approach to Augustine's early Christian years demonstrates how his ecclesiological thought began during this period and comprised a core component of his first theological synthesis. The emergence of his ecclesiological ideas was intimately intertwined with his overall personal, religious, philosophic, and theological development. As such it is crucial to our biographical and theological understanding of the great North African and will be of interest to specialists and students alike of Augustine's development, *Confessions*, mature ecclesiology, and the late antique world.

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