

Questions for Augustine's
De Doctrina Christiana III, IV

Book 3: Ambiguous signs

1. Augustine lists a number of things that have been accomplished so far in this book. What are they? What, then, does Augustine intend to teach about in the rest of this third book? (3. 1)
2. What three options does Augustine present for dealing with ambiguous signs used in their proper sense? What examples does he use to illustrate these options? (3. 2-3. 5)
3. What principles and examples does Augustine present in dealing with ambiguities over pronunciation? (3. 6-3. 7). And the same for ambiguities over grammatical construction? (3. 8)
4. What dangers does Augustine see in taking figurative expressions literally? 3. 9 What serious consequences resulted from Jewish literalism? 3. 10 What does Augustine have to say about the literalism of pagans? 3. 11.
5. What are the additional rules for determine figurative and non-figurative expressions that Augustine specifies? In this section, analyze his discussion of the power of customs (assumptions) in evaluating sin. What do you think of his theory of crime in this section as well? What examples illustrate these basic rules for determining figurative and non-figurative texts? What do you think of his treatment of polygamy? (3. 14-3.24)
6. Augustine deals with the ambiguous texts on polygamy again, including David and Solomon. What is your response to his discussion? (3. 25-3.33)
7. What specific interpretive insights are you able to glean from Augustine's discussion, especially in terms of multiple meanings of terms in different contexts, his understanding of seeking to ascertain the "author's intended meaning," using reason and arguments to elucidate meanings, and his discussion of tropes? (3. 34-3. 41)
8. Any comments about the seven rules of Tychonius? Helpful, unhelpful? Agree, disagree? What is especially helpful in Augustine's comments in the next to last paragraph of this entire book? (3. 42-3. 56)
9. How do you understand the entirety of book III to fit into Augustine's overall argument and purpose in this book?

BOOK IV: Christian Rhetoric or Preaching

10. What is the overall subject of *DDC* and of this fourth book in particular? What does Augustine claim this fourth book is not? Do you think he is consistent here? (4. 1-4. 2)
11. How does Augustine define rhetoric? And what arguments does he marshal to demonstrate that those who know the truth should be just as capable of defending and proclaiming the truth as those who know and promulgate falsehood? (4. 3)
12. What all does Augustine have to say about the time, place, candidates, and methods for teaching rhetoric? (4. 4)
13. Do preachers need formal rhetorical training to become eloquent? How does Augustine argue his point by means of an analogy from infants? (4. 5)

14. What are the duties of those who are teachers of the Scriptures, especially with respect to - 2 - diverse audiences? (4. 6)
15. Enumerate the basic points Augustine sets forth regarding the relationship of wisdom and eloquence (4. 7-4. 8)
16. How do St. Paul and the prophet Amos illustrate eloquence in their biblical texts? How do both show the connection between wisdom and eloquence? (4. 9-4.21)
17. Unpack the aspects of Augustine's injunction to preachers to imitate the clarity but not the obscurity of biblical texts. What are the purposes of biblical obscurity? If a text is not understood, why should that be the case? (4. 22)
18. What does Augustine value most highly in the rhetorical process, in conversations, the quest for evidence, in preaching, and in teaching? What is the point of his golden and wooden key analogy? (4. 23-4. 26)
19. Analyze Augustine's discussion of the three purposes of eloquence. (4. 27)
20. Analyze the order and priority of teaching, delighting and swaying (4. 28)
21. Analyze the need to add delight to teaching and of adding swaying to teaching and delighting (4. 29)
22. Analyze Augustine's condemnation of rhetoric to communicate evil and iniquity and to communicate the value of slight and fragile goods (4. 30-4. 31)
23. What role does Augustine give to prayer and the Holy Spirit in this matter of eloquence? (4. 32) How does Augustine handle the objection that if the key is the Holy Spirit, then why do preachers need to study rhetoric? Unpack his concluding medical analogy (4. 33)
24. In addition to the three purposes of rhetoric or eloquence are three styles appropriate to each function: what are they, and how does Augustine critique this from a Christian point of view? (4. 34-4. 36)
25. For Augustine, all Christian matters are great matters, but do they all have to be communicated in the grand way? How does he apportion the functions of rhetoric to the various styles of speaking? (4. 37-4. 38).
26. How does he illustrate the calm, moderate, and grand styles in Paul, Cyprian, and Ambrose? (4. 39-4. 50)
27. What additional principles does Augustine suggest regarding the mixture, context, effectiveness, purpose, flexibility, and inter-dependence of the various styles of speaking? (4. 51-4. 58)
28. What are the points of contact (positive and negative) between the character of a speaker and his message and its impact on an audience? What advantages does a good man as a good speaker have? (4. 59-4. 61)
29. What does Augustine have to say to those who cannot compose their own sermons? How does he deal with the plagiarism issue? What is the content of his hypocritical gold analogy? How ought those who "borrow" sermons, pray? (4. 62-4. 64)
30. What did you think of this book?

Final question:

What are points of comparison and contrast between Plato's and Augustine's paideia proposals?