THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH
IN THE THEOLOGY OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

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by

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Abstract

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This study seeks to recover the richness of Augustine’s ecclesiology by exploring the development of his thought on the Church as a great “mystery” and “sacrament” (magnum sacramentum). It contributes to the scholarship that documents the shift from his earlier, more Platonizing views to his mature Biblical and sacramental theology, particularly after his reading of Paul in the 390s.

Chapter 1 examines the distinction between the Latin terms mysterium and sacramentum for the translation of the Biblical µυστήριον. Augustine inherits this distinction from predecessors such as Cyprian, Hilary, and Ambrose, and applies it to the Church in order to unite the “invisible” and “visible” aspects of the one mystery. For Augustine, the Church resists reduction to an “inner, invisible” reality, for her “outer, visible” condition in history is intrinsic to the mystery revealed by Scripture.
Chapters 2 and 3 trace the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology through his use of two key themes: 1) the body of Christ, and 2) the bride of Christ. Augustine’s early works, such as the Cassiciacum dialogues, reveal the influence of Neoplatonism upon his thought, with an emphasis on the ascent of the Soul that yields vision. After the Biblical shift in Augustine’s thought, he reconfigures the Plotinian ascent according to the paschal mystery, such that vision is subordinated to the charity mediated through the Church’s sacramental life. As the body and bride of Christ on pilgrimage, the Church undergoes a process of transformation and growth in history by participation in a sacramental economy.

Chapter 4 traces the development of Augustine’s theology of sacrifice from an individualistic, spiritual sacrifice of the mind to a communal offering celebrated visibly at the Eucharistic altar. In her celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church learns to offer herself as a sacrifice in conformation to Christ, and so the Church is herself a “sacrament” \((\textit{sacramentum})\), a sacred sign, of the invisible sacrifice of the “whole Christ” \((\textit{totus Christus})\) offered in the daily sacrifice of Christians. Augustine’s mature Eucharistic ecclesiology serves as a patristic resource for \textit{Lumen Gentium}’s notion of the Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation.”
To my father
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ABBREVIATIONS

Augustine¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Work Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. Acad.</td>
<td>Contra Academicos</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Adim.</td>
<td>Contra Adimantum Manichei discipulum</td>
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<tr>
<td>agon.</td>
<td>De agone Christiano</td>
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<tr>
<td>quant.</td>
<td>De animae quantitate</td>
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<tr>
<td>bapt.</td>
<td>De baptismo contra Donatistas</td>
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<td>b. vita</td>
<td>De beata vita</td>
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<td>cat. rud.</td>
<td>De catechizandis rudibus</td>
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<td>civ. Dei</td>
<td>De civitate Dei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conf.</td>
<td>Confessiones</td>
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<tr>
<td>cons.</td>
<td>De consensu Evangelistarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>div. qu.</td>
<td>De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doc. Chr.</td>
<td>De doctrina Christiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en. Ps.</td>
<td>Enarrationes in Psalmos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ench.</td>
<td>Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide spe et caritate</td>
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<tr>
<td>ep.</td>
<td>Epistulae</td>
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<tr>
<td>ep. Jo.</td>
<td>In epistulam Johannis ad Parthos tractatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rom. inch.</td>
<td>Epistulae ad Romanos inchoate expositio</td>
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¹ The abbreviations for Augustine’s works follow Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia, eds. Allan Fitzgerald, O.S.A., John Cavadini, and Marianne Djuth, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), xxxv-xlii.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ex. Gal.</td>
<td><em>Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Faust.</td>
<td><em>Contra Faustum Manicheum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gn. litt.</td>
<td><em>De Genesi ad litteram</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gn. adv. Man.</td>
<td><em>De Genesi adversus Manicheos</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>imm. an.</td>
<td><em>De immortalitate animae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ev. Jo.</td>
<td><em>In Johannis evangelium tractatus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Jul. imp.</td>
<td><em>Contra Julianum opus imperfectum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>mag.</td>
<td><em>De magistro</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>mor.</td>
<td><em>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ord.</td>
<td><em>De ordine</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>persever.</td>
<td><em>De dono perseverantiae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>praed. sanct.</td>
<td><em>De praedestinatione sanctorum</em></td>
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<td>retr.</td>
<td><em>Retractationes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Sec.</td>
<td><em>Contra Secundinum Manicheum</em></td>
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<td>s.</td>
<td><em>Sermones</em></td>
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<td>s. Dom. mon.</td>
<td><em>De sermone Domini in monte</em></td>
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<td>Simpl.</td>
<td><em>Ad Simplicianum</em></td>
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<td>sol.</td>
<td><em>Soliloquia</em></td>
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<td>Trin.</td>
<td><em>De Trinitate</em></td>
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<td>util. cred.</td>
<td><em>De utilitate credendi</em></td>
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<td>vera rel.</td>
<td><em>De vera religione</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACW</td>
<td>Ancient Christian Writers</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Augustiniennes, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enn.</td>
<td>The Enneads</td>
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<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>The Fathers of the Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>Lumen Gentium</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPNF</td>
<td>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Sources Chrétiennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSA</td>
<td>The Works of Saint Augustine</td>
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INTRODUCTION

In a sermon on Psalm 79, Augustine declares that the entire Psalm offers a testimony about the “mystery” (mysterium) of Christ and the Church.

Therefore this is a testimony that confesses both Christ and his vine, that is, the head and the body, the King and his people, Shepherd and flock, Christ and his Church—the total mystery (totum mysterium) of all Scripture.

For Augustine, the totum mysterium of Scripture is the totus Christus, the “whole Christ,” head and members. Scripture “contains” (continet) the “mystery” (mysterium),

1 en. Ps. 79; Augustine’s Latin text follows the numeration of the Septuagint, which is one behind the Hebrew sequence for Psalms 9-147 found in most modern Bibles.

2 en. Ps. 79.1: “denique hoc testimonium et Christum et uineam confitetur; hoc est caput et corpus, regem et plebem, pastorem et gregem, et totum omnium scripturarum mysterium Christum et ecclesiam.” Likewise, Augustine notes that the title of Psalm 80, “concerning olive presses, on the fifth day of the week,” contains “many mysteries” (multa mysteria). The olive presses have a “sacred significance” and refer to something “mystical” (mystice), namely, the “mystery of the Church” (mysteriwm ecclesiae): “nam et si aliquid tale Psalmi textus contineret, non deesset qui putaret ad litteram esse accipienda torcularia, nec aliquid illic amplius requirendum, nec mystice aliquid positum, et sacrate significatum; sed diceret: simpliciter Psalmus de torcularibus loquitur, et tu mihi nescio qui aliud suspicaris. nihil hic tale audistis, cum legeretur. ergo accipite torcularia mysterium ecclesiae, quod nunc agitur” (en Ps. 80.1). English translations follow the editions listed in the bibliography, with modifications noted.


4 Michael Cameron observes that for Augustine, the totus Christus is the hermeneutical center of the Psalms. “The ultimate reference of Augustine’s figurative exegesis is the revelation of Christ as head and body (totus Christus), which he construed not only as a theological reality but as a master heuristic concept for interpretation;” see Augustine’s Construction of Figurative Exegesis Against the Donatists in the Enarrationes in Psalmos (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1996), 242. See also “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” in Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia, eds. Allan Fitzgerald, O.S.A., John Cavadini, Marianne Djuth, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999): 290-6, in which Cameron asserts, “The totus Christus refers not just to objective content as though the Psalms merely taught about Christ and the
and reveals it through many images and figures (figurae). As one body, Christ and the Church form one mystery, and all of Scripture is, in some way, concerned with this mystery. Augustine follows Paul in the development of a “Christo-ecclesial” interpretation of Scripture, such that the “two in one flesh union” of Genesis 2:24 prefigures the great “mystery” and “sacrament” (magnum sacramentum, Eph. 5:31-32) of Christ and the Church. Augustine uses both mysterium and sacramentum in order to speak about the Church as “mystery.” Why make this distinction? In what sense is the Church a “mystery,” precisely as mysterium and sacramentum?

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5 See en. Ps. 67.26, “the title contains the mystery of this thing,” that is, the Church (ecclesia): “cuius rei mysterium continet etiam titulus illius Psalmi: ‘quando domus aedificatur post captiuitatem,’ id est, ecclesia…”; cf. en. Ps. 33 [1].2; 41.2; 45.2; 46.2; 51.5; 58 [1].1; 80.1; 83.2; 87.1; 91.1, 3; 143.1-2.

6 s. 4.25: “multis enim modis significatur una res. id est, ecclesiam quam significant illi duo haedi, ipsam significat uestis ista, quia una res multis modis significatur, quae nihil horum est per euidentiam, omnia per figuram.”

7 Bertrand de Margerie, S.J. notes, “Relating entirely to Christ, Holy Writ nevertheless also relates to the Church, in Augustine’s view…In short, Augustine held that the scriptures, almost universally accepted in one way or another, lead to the Church which they herald and of which they are a part, a universal rather than simply local Church.” See An Introduction to the History of Exegesis: Volume III, Saint Augustine, trans. P. de Fontnouvelle (Petersham, MA: Saint Bede’s Publications, 1991), 18.


9 en. Ps. 138.2. In this case, Augustine follows the old Latin (vetus Latina) Biblical translation of the Greek word ἱστήριον into the Latin sacramentum for Ephesians 5:32. Sacramentum means “mystery,” and so can be translated in this way. Yet as we shall see, sacramentum acquires a distinctive revelatory character in Augustine’s thought, and “sacrament” may be used in order to convey this revelatory aspect.

This study explores the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology by tracing certain key ecclesiological themes. As we shall see, Augustine’s thought undergoes a definitive transformation from a more philosophical framework to a thoroughly Biblical, “sacramental” theology. By the time of his mature works, Augustine offers a rich and sophisticated account of the Church as a great “mystery” and “sacrament” (sacramentum).

**Augustine’s Ecclesiology Reconsidered**

There has been such a proliferation of studies on Augustine’s ecclesiology that one may wonder if anything remains to be said in this conversation.11 Yet as Émilien Lamirande observes, “While scores of essays deal substantially with the same topics and sift the same familiar texts, important areas have remained practically unexplored.”12 Likewise, Michael Fahey asserts that some of the scholarship on Augustine’s ecclesiology has suffered from impoverishment relative to the richness of Augustine’s thought due to certain reductive and “isolationist” tendencies.13 According to Fahey, many of the works published in the 19th and 20th centuries “betray the worst of isolationist theologizing,” and arise out of the attempt to defend particular “confessional”


doctrines using the Augustinian *corpus*. The result is a kind of “isolationism” in which some texts are preferred to the neglect of others, leading to truncated and reductive accounts of Augustine’s thought.

In particular, Augustine’s ecclesiology is often reduced to a “system” whereby the “true Church” consists of an “inner, invisible” reality over against its “outer, visible” condition in history. The Church is, in effect, a purely spiritual, invisible reality. The works of Hermann Reuter, Adolf von Harnack, and Pierre Battifol, among others, contributed to the widespread acceptance of this view in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Reuter concluded that for Augustine, the term “Church” (*ecclesia*) refers primarily to the “communion of saints” (*communio sanctorum*), which stands in contrast to the visible, hierarchical Catholic Church. The “true Church” consists solely of the communion of the predestined, over against the visible communion that celebrates the sacraments. This is what Johannes van Oort terms a “two-fold ecclesiology.” Many German theologians such as von Harnack would affirm this contradistinction between the visible and invisible, such that only the predestined can be considered *ecclesia*.

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14 Ibid: “The earliest studies [from 1861 to 1979]…betray notable confessional prejudices and appear more as apologetical treatises that would have Augustine say what we would like him to have said in support of our confessional allegiances.” The appeal to Augustine as an authoritative source in the midst of doctrinal disputes is not unique to modern times. Jaroslav Pelikan demonstrates Augustine’s significance as an authority in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 5 Volumes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971-1989). Pelikan famously asserts that the history of Western theology since Orange can be described as a “series of footnotes” to Augustine (Vol. 1, 330).


17 Van Oort, 124.
Is the doctrine of a purely spiritual Church commensurate with Augustine’s thought? Does such an interpretation account for the development of Augustine’s complex theology of the Church? As we shall see, for Augustine, the Church is not reducible to a purely spiritual reality. The Church’s historical condition is intrinsic to the mystery revealed by Scripture, and Augustine uses the distinction between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in order to unite the invisible and visible aspects of the one mystery. Augustine inherits this distinction in terminology from the Latin patristic tradition and develops it further, having received instruction in the faith from Ambrose. Following Augustine’s intense study of Paul in the 390s, there is a definitive Biblical, Christological shift in his thought, whereby the Church is a “mystery” and “sacrament” after the pattern of the incarnation. Just as Christ, the eternal “mystery of God” (*mysterium Dei*, Col. 2:2, 4:3), was “manifested” (1 Tim. 3:16) in the “sacrament” (*sacramentum*) of his flesh,\(^{19}\) so the Church is a transcendent mystery manifested visibly in history, for the “Church of Christ” (*ecclesia Christi*) is “the one which rises above and is seen by all.”\(^{20}\)

The Biblical shift in Augustine’s thought becomes increasingly clear after his ordination to the episcopacy (ca. 396), and in his debates with the Donatists,\(^ {21}\) which fueled his ongoing reflection on the mystery of the Church in the context of his life as a pastor and bishop. A reductive interpretation fails to account for the development of

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19 *Trin.* IV.1.3.6; 5.20.27.

20 *c. Faust.* 13.13: “sequitur idem propheta et tamquam motus animi eius ordinatissime excipiens docet eum ecclesiam christi ipsam esse praedictam, quae omnibus eminet et adparet. ipsa enim est sedes gloriae, de qua dicit apostolus: templum dei sanctum est, quod estis ius.”

21 Yves Congar notes that Augustine’s ecclesiology in the anti-Donatist works is primarily Biblical rather than philosophical; see “Introduction générale,” in *Traités anti-Donatistes* 1, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin* 28, Bibliothèque Augustiniennes (Paris, 1963), 105.
Augustine’s thought from a more speculative, philosophical approach to a thoroughly Scriptural, sacramental theology. This study seeks to go beyond reductive and “isolationist” interpretations by tracing the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology in Debate

In 1933, Fritz Hofmann released a nuanced study in which he argued against a “two-fold” conception of the Church in favor of a single ecclesia, whose nature is “multilayered.” According to Hofmann, the Church consists of 3 layers: 1) the visible Catholic Church, which shares the “communion of sacraments” (communio sacramentorum); 2) the invisible “communion of saints” (communio sanctorum), that is, the holy members in the Church’s mixed state; and 3) the “fixed number of the predestined” (certus numerus praedestinatorum). These distinctions within the Church are not entirely separate, but rather lie one within the other like concentric circles. In the innermost circle is the number of the predestined, followed by the invisible communion of saints (communio sanctorum), and finally the visible communion of believers in the Catholic Church, sharing in the sacraments (communio sacramentorum). Membership in the innermost circles presupposes membership in the outermost, though not vice versa.

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23 Ibid., 242-3; cf. van Oort, 125; see also the account by Denis Faul, “Sinners in the Holy Church: A Problem in the Ecclesiology of St. Augustine,” Studia Patristica 9 (1963): 404-15, esp. 410. Yves Congar provides a helpful list of citations for the different kinds of communio in Augustine’s works; see BA (1963), 98-124.

24 Hofmann, 243.
Furthermore, Hofmann outlines the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology “in relationship to his spiritual odyssey.” Hofmann identifies certain stages in the articulation of Augustine’s thought on the Church correlative to his development as priest, bishop, and theologian in the midst of his struggles with various heretical and schismatic sects, particularly Manichaeism, Donatism and Pelagianism. In the polemic with the Manichees, Augustine affirms the need for dogmatic authority; against the Donatists, Augustine focuses on the universality of the Church, as well as the “inter-relatedness” of the Holy Spirit and divine grace. In addition, Augustine increasingly turned to the support of the apostolic Church of Rome in order to settle highly involved disciplinary and doctrinal issues. As Fahey remarks, “More and more the Church became the **catholica**, a visible society with a sacramental function.” In the anti-Pelagian works, Augustine further refines membership in the body of Christ in terms of the necessity of grace, and in *City of God*, he directs more focused attention to the relationship between Church and state.

Hofmann’s work proves useful, particularly in his attempt to unite the “visible” and “invisible” aspects of the Church in favor of a single ecclesia. Yet Hofmann’s “triple-layer” approach does not seem to get beyond an interpretation whereby the “true Church” consists of an inner, invisible reality. Such an approach presupposes that for

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25 Fahey, 174; Hofmann, 74.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Fahey, 175.
30 Ibid.
Augustine, the identification of a “true Church” remains the ultimate priority, and furthermore, that it is possible to uncover a readily available, though hidden and implicit, “system” to resolve the “problem” of the Church. Augustine’s ecclesiology becomes a puzzle whose solution may be found in an “underlying view” that synthesizes and systematizes the loose ends of his thought.

Hofmann’s attempt to depict the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology is laudable, yet one might worry that at times, Hofmann sets too hard and fast distinctions in Augustine’s thought according to the “major” controversies of Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. This could result in an opposition between Augustine’s doctrine of the Church and his doctrine of grace. As we shall see, Augustine’s theology develops according to a Biblical, sacramental framework that comes into place after his reading of Paul in the 390s. This Biblical foundation provides the basis for the continuity in his thought after the 390s, as evident in the debates with the Donatists, and in his most mature works.

The development of Augustine’s ecclesiology according to a Biblical framework has often been neglected in favor of a Platonic interpretation that subordinates Augustine’s Scriptural theology to philosophical categories. In his classic work Early Christian Doctrines, J.N.D. Kelly attributes the distinction between the invisible communion of the predestined and the visible communion of the empirical Church to the

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influence of Platonism.\textsuperscript{32} For Kelly, Augustine’s ecclesiology ultimately arises from and takes shape within a predominantly Platonic framework. According to Kelly’s narrative, during the Donatist controversy:

Augustine came to make a significant admission in order to meet the Donatists’ point that Christ’s bride must be ‘without spot or wrinkle’ here and now. This consisted in drawing a careful distinction between the essential Church, composed of those who genuinely belong to Christ, and the outward or empirical Church.\textsuperscript{33}

Kelly then systematizes Augustine’s ecclesiology according to a Platonic scheme:

With his Platonic background of thought this distinction came easily to him, for the contrast between the perfect essence, eternal and transcending sensation, and its imperfect phenomenal embodiment was always hovering before his mind. From this point of view only those who are ablaze with charity and sincerely devoted to Christ’s cause belong to the essential Church; the good alone ‘are in the proper sense Christ’s body’ (\textit{C. Faust.} 13, 16).\textsuperscript{34}

Sinners “seem to be in the Church,” but have no part in the “invisible union of love (\textit{invisibilis caritatis compages}),” for they are “inside the house, but remain alien to its intimate fabric.”\textsuperscript{35} While sinners enjoy the communion of sacraments (\textit{communio sacramentorum}) and belong to the visible communion of the Catholic Church (\textit{catholicae ecclesiae communio}), “it is the just who constitute ‘the congregation and society of saints,’ the ‘holy Church’ in the strict sense of the words.”\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 415-6.
\end{flushleft}
Within this Platonic framework, the “essence” of the Church is its “inward being,” which is “the communion of all those who are united together, along with Christ their Lord, in faith, hope, and love,” and the “outer” manifestation in the world is the visible Catholic Church.\(^{37}\) The predestined society of saints is analogous to the Platonic ideal that must be liberated from its condition in history as a “mixed body” (*corpus permixtum*) of the “good” and the “wicked.”

Kelly further contends that Augustine’s ecclesiology would undergo refinement in the controversy with the Pelagians.

In the last resort, he came to see, the only true members of the Church (the ‘enclosed garden…spring shut up, fountain sealed…the paradise with the fruit of apples’, spoken of so eloquently in *Cant.* 4, 12f.) could be ‘the fixed number of the elect.’ But ‘in God’s ineffable foreknowledge many who seem to be within are without, and many who seem to be without are within.’\(^{38}\)

The “true Church” is the “fixed number of the elect,” an “inner, invisible” reality, as distinct from the “outer, visible” mixed body that celebrates the sacraments. Kelly asserts, “this line of thought transferred the whole problem of the Church’s nature to an altogether different plane,”\(^{39}\) leading to a conflict between Augustine’s doctrine of grace and his theology of the Church.

Augustine never attempted to harmonize his two conceptions, that distinguishing the Church as a historical institution from the true Church of those really devoted to Christ and manifesting His spirit, and that identifying Christ’s body with the fixed number of the elect known to God alone. Indeed, it may be doubted whether any synthesis was ultimately possible, for if the latter doctrine is taken seriously the notion of the institutional Church ceases to have any validity.\(^{40}\)

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 414.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 416. See *bapt.* 5.27.38; 4.3.5; *en. Ps.* 106.14.

\(^{39}\) Kelly, 416.
In the end, the visible, empirical Church ceases to have “validity,” and is discarded in favor of a purely spiritual communion of the predestined. Like Kelly, Benjamin Warfield sees Augustine’s theology of grace and predestination as rendering null and void the visible, institutional Church. By Warfield’s account, this led to the Reformation. “[I]t is Augustine who gave us the Reformation. For the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the Church.”

For Kelly and Warfield, Augustine’s mature ecclesiology fits into a Platonic scheme. Augustine’s thought does not undergo a definitive transformation, and his Biblical theology is incorporated into a larger Platonic framework. Dennis Faul likewise appeals to “Augustine’s philosophical background” in order to account for Augustine’s varied and complex use of Scriptural figures for the Church.

Many baffling questions aroused by the use of different parables and figures for the Church become clear if one remembers that Augustine uses the Platonic ontology which he held from the time of his conversion to the Church. According to it the truly ‘real’—real in the sense of existing as in the sense of operating—is the invisible, the spiritual: Spiritual Existence is the lasting, the immutable, the true, the united-in-itself: corporal sensible existence is the transitory, mutable, the only apparent in comparison with the spiritual.

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40 Ibid.


43 Ibid., 407.
According to Faul, within Augustine’s Platonic scheme, the “visible” is “more appearance than existence,” such that “[w]here the visible is not the consequence of something invisible, spiritual, upon which it rests as its basis, but only external façade, there one can only speak in a limited sense of existence.”\textsuperscript{44} Faul argues that Augustine transferred “this basic ontological notion to his concept of the Church,” so as to distinguish between “belonging to the transitory form of the visible Church” and “belonging to the \textit{ecclesia stabilis et sempiterna} or to the \textit{unitatis vinculum stabile et sempiternum}.”\textsuperscript{45} Ultimately, Augustine’s use of Scriptural images “can be explained by his Platonic philosophy,” and these figures “must be read with the background of Platonic ‘real’ and ‘ideal’ to avoid puzzlement.”\textsuperscript{46} According to Faul, it becomes clear from Augustine’s use of these and other figures that “he did not regard sinners as really members of the Church.”\textsuperscript{47} The concept of Church (\textit{ecclesia}) is limited to the “inner, invisible” communion of the elect, united in faith, hope, and charity, according to a Platonic framework.

Robert Evans provides a more nuanced interpretation that seeks to account for the influence of predecessors such as Tertullian and Cyprian on Augustine’s thought.\textsuperscript{48} Yet Evans fails to get beyond a reductive approach in which the “true Church” consists of an “invisible” body of believers, as a kind of fixed, eschatological reality that passes through

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 408.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. Such images include the parable of the wheat and the chaff, the lily among thorns from the Song of Songs, and the “figure of the Two Cities,” which is used “most frequently of all, but difficult to understand” (409).

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

Once again, Augustine’s Biblical theology may be subordinated to an overriding philosophy.

Robert J. O’Connell has carried the Platonic interpretation of Augustine further. In his seminal study St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Man, O’Connell claims that Augustine accommodates all of Scripture to the myth of the fallen soul. O’Connell identifies Plotinus as the greatest influence upon Augustine’s thought, for “The Enneads provided the early Augustine with a comprehensive philosophical matrix, an intellectual frame.” Even Peter Brown declares that the “true Church” of Augustine is “deeply tinged with the metaphysical ideas of Plotinus,” such that the “concrete church on earth” is only a certain “shadow” of the reality.

More recently, Philip Cary seems to have taken the Platonic interpretation to its maximal limit, so as to extend what may be called a “hyper-Platonizing” approach to all aspects of Augustine’s thought. According to Cary, the Church’s condition in history has no real meaning or effect. As Cary asserts, “The grace of God uses human social means, but these are inward, consisting in the power of charity to form the invisible unity of the church.” Cary’s trilogy of studies on Augustine represents the fruition of a “hyper-

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49 Ibid., esp. 102.


53 Ibid., 200.
Platonizing” interpretation that absolutizes the distinction between “inner” and “outer,” “invisible” and “visible.” This dichotomy not only minimizes but completely eliminates any kind of “efficacy” of external, visible realities, such as the sacraments, in Augustine’s thought. In Cary’s view, the “invisible” and “visible” operate on completely separate tracks, and as a result, the external cannot be a means of an internal grace. “The visible and invisible are clearly two different orders of causality and therefore of sanctification, one external and the other inward, and Augustine seems deliberately to avoid saying anything about the interaction between them…” Cary cannot resolve the relationship between “visible” and “invisible,” and so he concludes that Augustine the Platonist necessarily holds a kind of dualism that renders the “outward” or historical “powerless” and inefficacious. Cary applies this dichotomy to the Church, such that it is constituted essentially by an inner, invisible unity of charity, over against the outer, visible Church that celebrates the sacraments.

Cary fails to account for the development of Augustine’s thought, and goes too far in the Platonic interpretation of Augustine. Indeed, Augustine certainly is indebted to Neoplatonism, and in this regard, O’Connell and Brown are correct in their assessment that the early Augustine was strongly influenced by Plotinus, as evident in works such as

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55 “Augustine’s anti-Donatist theology does not conceive the external sacrament of baptism as an efficacious means of grace. All spiritual efficacy is inward…This inner gift is not conferred but only marked outwardly by the sacred sign of baptism.” Cary, Outward Signs, 200.

56 Ibid., 163.

57 “Grace comes to the individual soul not by external means but by a kind of inward channel, descending from God to the inner unity of the church, to which the soul is joined by charity.” Ibid., 200.
the Cassiciacum dialogues.\textsuperscript{58} However, there is a significant shift after the 390s, in which the Neoplatonic aspects of Augustine’s thought are reconfigured according to a Biblical, sacramental framework. This shift has been documented by scholars such as Michael Cameron\textsuperscript{59} and J. Patout Burns\textsuperscript{60} in the areas of Christology, Scriptural exegesis, and grace. As we shall see, Augustine’s ecclesiology follows the same developmental trajectory. A “hyper-Platonizing” approach overlooks such development along ecclesiological lines. For Augustine, the Church is a transcendent mystery revealed by Scripture that resists systematization and reduction to a philosophical scheme.

\textit{Ecclesiology in Renewal}

Several important studies have contributed to a recovery of the depth and richness of Augustine’s thought on the Church. Joseph Ratzinger builds upon the work of Hofmann in \textit{Volk Und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre Von Der Kirche}.\textsuperscript{61} Ratzinger’s

\textsuperscript{58} Carol Harrison attempts to reveal a strong continuity between Augustine’s early works, such as the Dialogues, and his later, mature writings. Harrison argues against Peter Brown’s theory of a revolution in Augustine’s thought during the 390s. According to Harrison, if one is to speak of a revolution in Augustine’s thought, it is not to be found in his reading of Paul in the 390s, but rather in his conversion to Christianity in 386; see \textit{Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 18-9. While Harrison presents a welcome invitation to reconsider Augustine’s early works and the continuity of his thought, she overstates the case for continuity and leaves little room for development.


\textsuperscript{60} Burns, \textit{The Development of Augustine's Doctrine Of Operative Grace}. 

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study centers around two Biblical images, the “People of God” and “House of God,” which admittedly were not central categories for Augustine, yet serve as focal points for a fruitful treatment of his ecclesiology. Ratzinger examines the development of Augustine’s theology following his conversion to Christianity in 386. Was this an acceptance of the concrete Christian Church community, or merely a change in philosophical standpoint? According to Ratzinger, the answer is complex. Conversion meant the attainment of a complete and pure philosophy, a vision of truth of eternal Being conferring wisdom, so that the patria (“homeland”) might be glimpsed with the aid of Neoplatonic philosophy. Yet for Augustine there was more, for the Church proposed to mediate to the many what was thought to be attainable only by the few, i.e. the philosophically minded. Augustine accepted the common life of the Church and the way of faith. Nevertheless, Augustine places priority upon the ascent of the soul to Wisdom. Faith is subordinate to vision, for it enables one to see the divine Wisdom in its beauty.

As Ratzinger rightly observes, Augustine’s journey led him from a more metaphysical, speculative theology to an understanding of the Church’s mediation in history. Augustine began to see the divine world no longer as the world of eternal Urgestalten, the primordial and timeless Forms, but as the holy community of God’s angels, the mundus intelligibilis (“intelligible world”), distinct though not entirely separate from the mundus sensibilis (“sensible world”). The Church, as the House and People of God, is at the locus of the union of these two orders or levels of reality, without


62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.
being reduced to either. The Church has a “revelation-character” as the “appearing of the Invisible in this world.” In this way, the Catholic Church is a visible sign of the “holy Church” (ecclesia sancta), precisely as a traveling people, a pilgrim Church, on the way to the patria.

Furthermore, Ratzinger effectively demonstrates how Augustine’s thought grows in contact with the great masters of North African ecclesiology—Tertullian, Cyprian, and Optatus of Milevis. From Tertullian, Augustine learned that grace is communicated neither as a kind of gnosis, nor as the result of individualistic thiasos, i.e. a group of individuals dedicated to a particular god. Rather, grace is mediated through a concrete, visible community that celebrates the sacraments. It was an extreme commitment to the visible Church that spawned Tertullian’s Montanism.

From Cyprian, Augustine would take up the emphasis on the unity of the Church as the “people of God,” on the basis of union with the bishop. This unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit that is not limited to a particular sect, as claimed by schismatic groups in North Africa such as the Donatists. Optatus anticipated Augustine in combating Donatism by stressing the importance of communion with the cathedra Petri (“chair of Peter”) at Rome, and by focusing on caritas (“charity”). The Donatists’ lack of charity reveals their lack of participation in the unity and fellowship of the one Church.

Ratzinger goes on to show how Augustine’s theology of the Church develops in a sacramental, Eucharistic context, as evident in City of God. The debate with a dying pagan civilization in City of God marks another stage in Augustine’s ecclesiology. The Church is distinguished by “true worship,” and the “holy sign” of the Church is the

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64 Ibid, 153.
sacrament of the Eucharist, the one and only sacrifice of Christians. The Church “offers herself” in this offering, and in this way, the Church is defined as a sacrificial community, united in charity at the Eucharistic altar. Ratzinger presents a rich portrait of Augustine’s ecclesiology. Yet in his assessment of Augustine’s later ecclesiology, one wonders if there has been a definitive shift in Augustine’s thinking. Although Augustine no longer sees the world in terms of forms, Ratzinger depicts the Church as a sign of the mundus intelligibilis (“intelligible world”) in a way that seems to map on to a Neoplatonic scheme.

Walter Simonis offers a critique of Ratzinger in Ecclesia Visibilis et Invisibilis. According to Simonis, Ratzinger overemphasizes the centrality of Neoplatonism in the distinction between “visible” and “invisible.” Simonis’s point is well taken, yet he seems to fall into the trap of searching for an underlying view in order to determine the “true Church.” For Simonis, the Donatist controversy raises the question: who is the “true Church”? Augustine has pastoral concerns, for the Church in North Africa is engaged in schism. As Simonis points out, Augustine holds that both the “good” and the “wicked” participate in the sacraments, whose validity is not dependent upon the sanctity of the minister. Nevertheless, the wicked cut themselves off from the life of the body, that is, from the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Church.

Simonis does well to illustrate the development of Augustine’s theology according to his pastoral concerns as a bishop. Furthermore, Simonis rightly guards

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
against an overly philosophical systematization of Augustine’s ecclesiology. Yet one wonders whether Simonis’s criticism of Ratzinger is based on a caricature, for Ratzinger recognizes that while the “holy Church” is found in the visible, Catholic Church, they are not identical since the Church is a “mixed body” (*corpus permixtum*) of wheat and tares until the final coming of the Kingdom. Ratzinger seeks to unite the eschatological and historical aspects of the Church in some way, and in doing so, he provides a foundation for further reflection upon the Church as sign, while leaving room for the development of this theme.

This study builds upon Ratzinger’s work by demonstrating how Augustine’s ecclesiology develops, and is ultimately grounded in a Biblical, sacramental theology that unites the visible and invisible, the historical and transcendent. Augustine reconfigures the distinction between visible sign and invisible reality according to a Pauline theology of “mystery,” distinguished by its particular senses in Latin as *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. As we shall see, Augustine inherits and further develops this theology of “mystery” and “sacrament” from the Latin patristic tradition, including Cyprian, Hilary, and Ambrose, and his mature, sacramental theology comes into place after his extended meditation upon the writings of Paul in the 390s.

Two important contributions came in 1963: 1) Yves Congar’s introduction to the anti-Donatist works in *Bibliothèque Augustiniennes*, and 2) Emilien Lamirande’s *L’Eglise céleste selon saint Augustin*. Congar presents an insightful study of the Donatist controversy, identifying significant ecclesial images including the Church as the

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68 Congar, BA (1963), 9-124.

body and bride of Christ. Congar emphasizes the Biblical character of Augustine’s ecclesiology, and points to certain key passages that demonstrate the unity of *ecclesia* as one subject, one body, with “interior” and “exterior” elements. While Congar offers a fruitful discussion of Augustine’s ecclesiology, he trades upon the distinction between “inner” and “outer” in such a way that seems to lend itself to a dichotomy between invisible and visible.

Emilien Lamirande observes that Augustine’s ecclesiology is far from an easily unified synthesis, yet this complexity is precisely its appeal. Lamirande argues that for Augustine, the Church is formed of two zones, one earthly, the other heavenly. In the Church’s final eschatological state, the two zones will be unified, but for now, the Church on earth is a pilgrim people on the journey toward its heavenly homeland. According to Lamirande, *ecclesia* may be used to describe four different states of the Church: 1) the earthly and heavenly reality; 2) the final eschatological reality; 3) the heavenly Church of the blessed; 4) the earthly Church on pilgrimage. While this set of distinctions seems to be on the mark, one is left wondering how it holds together.

Like Lamirande and Congar, Tarsicius van Bavel asserts that Augustine’s view of the Church is “not a static one but a dynamic one.” The Church is a “reality in process,

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71 Lamirande, *L’Eglise céleste*, 9; see also Fahey, 176.


a reality that has to pass through several phases in order to reach its specific goal.”

The Church extends through time, before Christ, to include all of the just, such as Abraham and Abel. Bavel draws attention to the notion of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus), and its centrality in Augustine’s ecclesiology. He rejects a dualistic view of the Church, and leaves the distinction between the Church on earth and its eschatological perfection as a tension, focusing on the Church as an “invitation.”

Pasquale Borgomeo attempts to get beyond the separation between the earthly and heavenly Church by speaking of the Church of “this time” in *L'Église De Ce Temps Dans La Prédication De Saint Augustin*. According to Borgomeo, the whole Church is heavenly because of her origin and her final end. Her membership includes the angels and saints in heaven, while part of the Church is on pilgrimage on earth, where time and eternity meet to produce history. During this pilgrimage, the Church is a mystery of hope. Borgomeo effectively shifts the focus away from the identification of a “true Church,” although his study is limited to Augustine’s sermons.

Johannes van Oort takes up the theme of the two Cities, Babylon and Jerusalem, as a way of engaging Augustine’s thought on the Church. He offers a helpful survey of scholarship on Augustine’s ecclesiology and a thorough treatment of the sources behind Augustine’s doctrine of the two cities. Van Oort effectively shows that the similarities

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74 Ibid.


between Augustine’s doctrine and this theme as it is found in Stoic and Platonic authors is superficial,\(^7^9\) and in the end, Augustine owes more to the influence of Tyconius and Christian authors, such as Ambrose and Origen, for the development of his teaching on the two cities.\(^8^0\) Van Oort’s study is limited insofar as it traces one particular theme, and it focuses more on the sources of Augustine’s doctrine than on its theological significance.

Robert Dodaro explores key ecclesiological themes in his monograph *Christ and the Just Society in Augustine*.\(^8^1\) Dodaro touches upon significant aspects of Augustine’s thought, such as the mediation of Christ as head of the *totus Christus*,\(^8^2\) the need for transformation by divine wisdom (*sapientia*) in order to understand virtues such as justice,\(^8^3\) and a discussion of Augustine’s use of the terms *mysterium* and *sacramentum* for “mystery.”\(^8^4\) Yet Dodaro stops short of drawing out the consequences of these themes for Augustine’s developing thought on the Church. Dodaro’s vision is limited by an emphasis on an “Augustinian model of the just society.”\(^8^5\) As we shall see, for Augustine, the Church is not merely a model society in the midst of the world. Rather, the Church is a body united in charity whose presence has transformative effects. As a body that

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 244-54.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 254-359.


\(^{82}\) Ibid., 94-107.

\(^{83}\) Ibid., 147-81.

\(^{84}\) Ibid., 147-59.

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 107.
celebrates the sacraments, the Church is an instrument of transformation as a great “mystery” and “sacrament” (*magnum sacramentum*). \(^{86}\)

David Alexandar provides a helpful resource in his monograph on Augustine’s early ecclesiology. \(^{87}\) Yet as Alexandar acknowledges, his study is primarily a “historical” work, and “does not deal with Augustine’s ecclesiology *per se* or aim to add to the explanation of his mature ecclesiology.” \(^{88}\) It offers a useful collection of citations from Augustine’s early writings.

Though not directly concerned with Augustine’s ecclesiology, Goulven Madec’s *Le Christ de Saint Augustin: La Patrie et la Voie* \(^{89}\) and Isabelle Bochet’s *Le firmament de l’écriture: L’herméneutique augustiniennne* \(^{90}\) offer insight into the richness of Augustine’s theology, particularly in terms of his Christology and Biblical exegesis. These works reveal the subtle complexity of Augustine’s thought, and they serve as exemplary approaches to the renewal of Augustinian studies.

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\(^{86}\) In this way, the Church’s transformative effects extend to the world, which is taken up into the mystery of redemption. The Church is not an ineffectual place, or a kind of “locus” of transformation of the soul, as suggested, for instance, by Lewis Ayres, “The Christological Context of Augustine’s *De Trinitate* XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII-XV,” *Augustinian Studies* 29 (1998), 111-39, 126, and Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate*, (Oxford, 2008), 300. By contrast, see the insightful treatment by John C. Cavadi, “Trinity and Apologetics,” forthcoming in *Modern Theology*.


\(^{88}\) Ibid., 18.


Methodology

This study explores the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology by tracing key themes that serve as entry-points into his sophisticated thought. In doing so, it seeks to uncover often-overlooked aspects of Augustine’s ecclesiology, while preserving the complexity of his thought and resisting the temptation to overly systematize it. Augustine is not systematic in any easily recognizable mode; that is, his thought does not fit neatly into organized categories, particularly with regard to the Church. Instead, Augustine uses images from Scripture in order to offer glimpses into the mystery of the Church.

This study follows the trajectory of Augustine’s thought on the Church from his early works, such as the Cassiciacum dialogues, to his more mature writings, including Against Faustus (Contra Faustum), Confessions (Confessiones), On Christian Teaching (De doctrina Christiana), On Baptism (De baptismo), On the Trinity (De Trinitate), and City of God (De civitate Dei). It also takes up Augustine’s preaching, as in his Expositions on the Psalms (Enarrationes in Psalmos), and his homilies on 1 John. These sermons often serve as theological commentary upon important ecclesiological themes. As John Rettig declares, “For Augustine, preaching, and the scriptural exegesis that was a necessary part of preaching, were the truly important theological activities, more important, perhaps, than the more formal treatises.”

Augustine’s theology develops in the context of his pastoral concerns as pastor and bishop, and his sermons reflect the transformation from a wise philosopher to a Biblical pastor.

91 FC 26, 3; see also F. Van der Meer, Augustine the Bishop, trans. B. Battershaw and G. Lamb (New York, 1961), 412, 452.

92 On Augustine’s life as a bishop, see Van der Meer, Augustine the Bishop; Jane Merdinger, Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
As we shall see, Augustine’s ecclesiology develops according to his Biblical, sacramental theology. For Augustine, the Church has both “invisible” and “visible” aspects, yet this distinction serves not so much as a mark of absolute delineation between a “true Church” and a “visible Church,” but rather is taken up into a broader theology of the Pauline “mystery” (µυστήριον), distinguished by its senses in Latin as sacramentum and mysterium. Chapter 1 demonstrates the development of this distinction in terms. The mysterium indicates a transcendent mystery (a term that often carries eschatological resonances), while the sacramentum is the presence of the mystery in history. This distinction is not absolute, for the terms form two poles of the same mystery. Furthermore, Augustine develops this distinction in order to unite rather than to separate the “invisible” and “visible” aspects of the one mystery, further revealing the mysterium as that which is meant to be revealed in history according to God’s salvific plan (Eph. 1). Augustine uses both sacramentum and mysterium in order to speak about the Church in distinct fashion after the 390s, and this subtle distinction in relation demonstrates how the Church’s historical condition is intrinsic to the mystery revealed in Scripture.

Chapters 2 and 3 trace two significant images for the Church in Augustine’s works: 1) the body of Christ, and 2) the spouse of Christ. These Biblical themes resist reduction to Neoplatonic categories. Chapter 2 demonstrates the development of Augustine’s thought from his earlier, more Platonizing views to his mature Biblical theology, as illustrated by his ecclesiology. In his early works, Augustine depicts the Church primarily as a teacher of wisdom. He prioritizes vision over the theological virtues, and he maintains confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts to effect the purification of the mind. The influence of Platonic philosophers, such as Plotinus, is
evident, as Augustine incorporates many aspects of Plotinus’s thought into his own way of thinking, particularly in terms of the ascent of the Soul that yields vision.

By the late 390s, however, Augustine’s theology undergoes a definitive shift away from a Plotinian framework to a thoroughly Biblical and sacramental approach. Augustine recasts the Plotinian ascent according to the paschal mystery. Vision is subordinated to the theological virtues, particularly charity, and Christ is the one Mediator who offers the purification from sin that cannot be found in philosophy. Moreover, the Church is not a purely spiritual reality on ascent away from the body. Instead, the Church is united as one body in charity while on pilgrimage in history. The Church’s condition in history is intrinsic to the mystery revealed by Scripture. In his mature works, Augustine shows how the Church serves as an instrument of the transformation of the world into the heavenly city, such that “Babylon becomes Jerusalem.”93 As the one body of Christ that celebrates the sacraments, the Church is an agent of transformation through incorporation, and in this way, the Church is a sacrament of salvation.

Chapter 3 explores Augustine’s use of the Biblical theme of “spouse” or “bride” (sponsa, conjunx), which comes to the fore particularly in the Donatist controversy. Spousal imagery is used in order to illustrate both the historical and eschatological aspects of the Church, for the bride must undergo a process of transformation and growth through her pilgrimage in history. Against the Donatists, Augustine attributes the unity and holiness of the Church to the spousal love of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Although the Holy Spirit may work beyond the visible bounds of the Church, the

93 en. Ps. 86.6-7.
mediation of the sacraments is never obviated. Furthermore, the Church’s “invisible” communion in charity reflects Augustine’s reordering of the priority of the theological virtues over the vision of truth. The distinction between “visible” and “invisible” does not fit into a Plotinian framework, but rather reveals an incarnational, sacramental theology. On the basis of this incarnational theology, Augustine develops a rich ecclesiology of solidarity that further illustrates how the Church is herself a “sacrament” (sacramentum).

Chapter 4 examines Augustine’s theology of the Church as “sacrifice” (sacrificium), concurrent with the development of his Eucharistic theology. In his early works, Augustine rarely mentions “sacrifice.” In On the Teacher (De Magistro), sacrifice has a philosophical character as the “sacrifice in the temple of the mind.” Sacrifice is depicted as an individualistic, purely spiritual offering of mind and heart. However, by the time of Against Faustus (Contra Faustum), Augustine begins to expand the notion of sacrifice according to his ecclesial exegesis of Scripture. The visible sacrifices of the Jews are sacramenta that prefigured the one true sacrifice of Christ on the cross (mysterium). Likewise, the sacrifice of Abel, the just man, prefigures the sacrifice of Christ. For Augustine, the Church extends from Abel throughout history, precisely because the sacrifice of Abel is linked to the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross, from which the Church is born. Christ’s sacrifice is commemorated at the altar of Christians, that is, at the Eucharistic altar, which is the worship of the whole Christian community.

Augustine continues to develop this theme in City of God. Augustine’s central argument in this work has to do with true religion (uero religio), for worship is what distinguishes the city of God from the city of man. The true sacrifice, the one sacrifice of Christ, is a mystery made present and efficacious in history, precisely at the Eucharistic
altar, where the “invisible sacrifice” is made “visible.” Sacrifice is not a purely spiritual reality, though it remains a spiritual offering of the mind and heart. The “daily sacrifice of Christians” includes the offering of the Church herself, as a body in transformation and conformation to Christ. The “supreme” and “total” sacrifice offered to the Father is the sacrifice of the _totus Christus_, head and members, for as Augustine declares, “we ourselves, we his City, are his best, his most glorious sacrifice.” This is the sacrifice offered on the Eucharistic altar, by which the Church “learns to offer herself” in conformation to Christ, whose sacrifice on the cross is made efficacious through the sacrament. As a Eucharistic sacrifice, the visible Church is herself a sacrament of invisible sacrifice of the “whole Christ,” head and body, and so she is a sacrament of the heavenly city of God, in union with Christ the king. She is the presence of a transcendent mystery in history, the mystery of the _totus Christus_ united as one body in charity.

Augustine’s developing ecclesiology culminates with his Eucharistic theology of the Church as sacrifice.

This study traces the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology from his earlier, more philosophical views to his mature, Biblical theology. The ecclesiological shift reveals the overall trajectory of Augustine’s thought, following his reading of Paul in the 390s. From this point forward, there is a sophisticated, sacramental theology that provides the framework for Augustine’s understanding of the Church as a great “mystery” and “sacrament” (_magnum sacramentum_) revealed by Scripture.
CHAPTER ONE

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

In a homily on Psalm 138, Augustine speaks about the Church as a mystery revealed by Scripture. As the bride and body of Christ, the Church is united with her head so as to form one body and one mystery, the “whole Christ” (totus Christus).

Now, if he is the head, obviously he must have a body. His body is holy Church, and she, to whom the apostle says, You are Christ’s body, and his members (1 Cor. 12:27), is also his bride. The whole Christ (totus Christus), head and body together, constitute a perfect man… Of the first marriage it was written, They will be two in one flesh (Gen. 2:24), and the apostle interprets this saying in the light of the mystery (mysterium), for the statement was made about those two original humans only because in them the marriage of Christ and the Church was prefigured. This is how the apostle explains it: They will be two in one flesh. This is a great mystery (sacramentum), but I am referring it to Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32).1

Following Paul, Augustine interprets the “two in one flesh” union of Genesis 2:24 in light of the “mystery” (mysterium) of Christ and his “bride” (conjux), the Church.2 Yet

1 en. Ps. 138.2: “et utique si caput est, habet corpus. corpus autem eius sancta ecclesia, quae etiam coniux eius; cui dicit apostolus: ‘uos autem estis corpus Christi et membra’. totus itaque Christus caput et corpus, tamquam integer ur: quia et femina de uiro facta est, et ad urum pertinet; et dictum est de primo coniugio: ‘erunt duo in carne una’. hoc autem ad mysterium interpretatur apostolus non frustra esse dictum de illis duobus hominibus, nisi quia in eis iam figurabatur Christus et ecclesia. nam hoc sic exponit apostolus: ‘erunt duo in carne,’ inquit, ‘una: sacramentum hoc magnum est; ego autem dico, in Christo et ecclesia.’”

2 Yet
in his citation of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, Augustine uses the old Latin (*vetus Latina*) Biblical translation of the Greek word ὑστήριον into the Latin *sacramentum* (Eph. 5:32). Why distinguish between *mysterium* and *sacramentum*? In what sense is the Church a “mystery,” precisely as *mysterium* and *sacramentum*?

In order to understand the connotations of these terms, we will begin with a review of such language in various settings, locating Augustine’s own use in the context of the Biblical notion of mystery (ὑστήριον) and its patristic interpretation. Augustine inherits the distinction between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* from the Latin tradition and develops it further, following his reading of Paul in the 390s.

As we shall see, Augustine’s Biblical theology of “mystery” and “sacrament” provides the framework for his mature ecclesiology. For Augustine, the Church is a transcendent mystery that is both visible and invisible. The terms *mysterium* and *sacramentum* may be used in order to indicate particular aspects of the one mystery. This distinction serves to unite rather than to separate the visible and invisible aspects of the one Church. This chapter explores the development of Augustine’s use of the distinction between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in order to demonstrate the significance of such terminology for his developing ecclesiology.

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2 On the use of *mysterium* for the Church (*ecclesia*), see *en. Ps.* 80.1, 67.26, 79.1, 138.2; *ep.* 147.13, 196.3.12; *s.* 4.24; *bapt.* 5.28.39; *doc. Chr.* 2.16.25; *civ. Dei* 15.26, 19.23; see also “Mysterium, -ii” in *Augustinus-Lexikon* v. 3, ed. Cornelius Mayer (Basel: Schwabe, 1986-1994).
The Greek word μυστήριον is derived from the verb μύω, meaning “to close” or “to be shut” with regard to the lips or the eyes.³ In the passive, μύω often meant “to be initiated.”⁴ Accordingly, μυστήριον could mean “something secret” or “hidden,” or it might refer to a “secret rite” of initiation.⁵ In ancient Greco-oriental religions, μυστήριον had the technical sense of a “secret rite by which selected individuals were brought into a special relationship with a deity [i.e. initiated] and assured of certain benefits.”⁶ Many of the cults that flourished between the seventh century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. were called μυστήρια (“mysteries”) after the sacred rites of worship that were performed in order for the initiate to share the lot of the god.⁷ Initiation was received “once for all,” such that the initiate was given the “special protection of the divinity by means of the ceremonies themselves, which worked automatically,” and these ceremonies and their privileges were the exclusive property of a small group.⁸ Only the initiate, μύστης, could participate in the secret cult. The “closed” character was maintained by keeping one’s lips closed, so as not to divulge the secrets revealed at the private ceremony.⁹

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⁵ Ibid., 253.
⁶ Ibid., 252.
⁸ Ferguson, 252.
⁹ Meyer, 4.
Furthermore, initiation was often described as a process of enlightenment.\textsuperscript{10} The initiate discovered new light through reception of the mysteries,\textsuperscript{11} and initiation ceremonies were described in visual terms; one of the priests was called a hierophant (\textit{ἱεροφάντης}), “one who shows sacred things;” the highest stage of the Eleusian mysteries was “beholding” (\textit{ἐποπτεύω}), and an initiate into the great mysteries was called a “beholder” (\textit{ἐποπτης}).\textsuperscript{12} These enlightened initiates formed a sacred society, bound together by a strict obligation of secrecy, symbolic signs, and a particular standard of self-discipline and morality.\textsuperscript{13}

The rites differed in each mystery cult, which could be classified as local or universal. At the beginning of the Christian era, a number of local mysteries flourished in Greece and Asia Minor, such as the rites in honor of Demeter celebrated at Eleusis near Athens, whereas the only mysteries “whose extension may be called universal were the mysteries of Dionysus and those of the eastern gods, especially Isis.”\textsuperscript{14} The Egyptian

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 4-5.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ferguson, 252; see also A.D. Nock, \textit{Conversion} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933). Behind each of the important mysteries was a cult myth, which was not a secret (Ferguson, 255), but rather consisted of “a traditional tale structured by a sequence of actions performed by anthropomorphic ‘actants,’ rooted in oral tradition;” Burkert, 73; Ferguson, 260-1. In the Dionysiac mysteries, Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Semele, a mortal. Hera, out of jealousy, persuaded Semele to ask her lover to prove his deity by appearing in all his power and glory. Semele induced Zeus to give her what she asked for, so Zeus was tricked into granting a request that would kill her. Zeus’s lightning bolts destroyed Semele, but made her unborn child immortal. After maturing, Dionysus descended to Hades and brought his mother up from the underworld. He gave the people the gift of the vine, and planted his worship everywhere (Ferguson, 261). The celebrations of Dionysus were “orgiastic and ecstatic,” and since Dionysus was believed to appear in
deities were the most popular and widespread of the non-Greek deities, including Osiris, the god of vegetation and king of the underworld, and Isis, Osiris’s wife and the mother of Horus.\textsuperscript{15} In ancient Egypt, Isis and her family played a role in the orderly succession of the pharaohs. Eventually, the Greeks came to identify Isis with Demeter, and later with Aphrodite, expanding the cult of Isis outside of Egypt, and making her the most important of the mother goddesses of the Hellenistic world.\textsuperscript{16} Many of these Near Eastern cults, including those of Isis and Mithras, adopted initiations on the pattern of Greek mysteries, and would undergo a revival during the first few centuries A.D., as Augustine attests in \textit{City of God}.\textsuperscript{17}

Mystery terminology was operative in philosophy, as evident in the works of Plato.\textsuperscript{18} Only those who have undergone a specific philosophical training have access to certain kinds of knowledge, and the language of initiation and renewed vision can be found in the \textit{Phaedrus} and \textit{Phaedo}.\textsuperscript{19} Such language was used to describe the ascent from sense perception to the world of Ideas in the Platonic system, and soon came to be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Fergusson, 266.
\item Ibid.
\item See \textit{civ. Dei} 2.6; 6.10; 8.26-27; 10.11; 18.37; Ferguson, 266.
\item \textit{Phaedrus} 250, \textit{Phaedo} 81; Harvey, 321-2; Nock, \textit{Conversion}, 182.
\item In the \textit{Phaedrus}, the vision of true beauty “vouchsafed to souls before they become imprisoned in the body” is described using mystery terminology; \textit{Phaedrus} 250b-c; \textit{Phaedo} 81a; see Harvey, 322.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
adopted in a general way to describe philosophical knowledge. In this sense, μουσηρία meant obscure and secret doctrines, from which the uninitiated were excluded.

While it was once common to interpret early Christianity in terms of Greco-Roman and Oriental mysteries, and to understand many of its concepts as borrowed from them, a better recognition of the differences between pagan and Christian mysteries, along with a greater appreciation of the Jewish context of Christianity, has placed a limit on such an approach. The technical language of mystery religions is absent from the New Testament. Furthermore, Raymond Brown and others have effectively demonstrated that μουσηρίον in the New Testament developed from a Semitic rather than

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20 Harvey, 322, who cites Seneca and Chrysippus. Harvey goes on to observe that in many instances, the application of mystery terminology can be more accurately called literary rather than philosophical. In other words, such language functions as a kind of metaphor, rather than evincing a direct connection to pagan cults. For instance, it struck the earliest observers that initiation into a mystery cult involved a serious degree of moral and often times ascetical discipline. Hence it became possible to use mystery terminology as a metaphor for such discipline, as in the case of Epictetus; Harvey, 324.

21 Ibid.; van Roo, 32.


23 Metzger notes, “Many ordinary, every-day words of contemporary pagan religions are conspicuous by their absence from the New Testament” (12), including words such as “mystes, mystikos, mystagogos, katharmos, katharsia, katharsis, heroi, hieron, hierophantes, telein, telete, atelestos, orgia…” etc. (12). A.D. Nock likewise concludes, “Any idea that what we call the Christian sacraments were in their origin indebted to pagan mysteries or even to the metaphorical concepts based upon them shatters on the rock of linguistic evidence. Paul never uses telete or its correlative, and has myein only once, and then metaphorically to describe what life had taught him (Phil. 4, 12), just as in Epictetus IV I, 140,” Early Gentile Christianity, 132.
Hellenistic background. This does not rule out the influence of mystery religions, particularly Egyptian and Hellenistic, on ancient Jewish literature. However, it places an appropriate limit with regard to the extent to which the pagan mysteries served as a source of meaning for the Biblical word μυστήριον. Furthermore, in the early Church, the mysteries of pagan cults were placed in contrast to the Christian mysteries in order to distance Christian worship from pagan practice in both East and West.

Μυστήριον and the Bible

In the Old Testament, μυστήριον appears twenty-one times, and only in the later books of the Septuagint, where it is often used to translate the Aramaic word raz, as in


25 As in the case of Josephus; see Harvey, 324-6. The complex nature of the question of influence demands greater precision and subtlety. In the case of Philo, for instance, mystery language is very prominent, not because of any direct, personal experience of mystery cults, which is unlikely, but “because of the evident appropriateness of the metaphor to his concept of religious and philosophical knowledge.” That is, the references to holy rites and sacred mysteries, as in Philo’s De Cherubim, as well as to the initiates and hierophants involved, are not simple appropriations of Greco-oriental terminology. Rather, such language functions metaphorically by taking up certain connotations, such as the acquisition of special knowledge and the pledge of secrecy, without assuming others, e.g. commitments to mythology and cultic worship. It is this understanding of “mystery-metaphor” that is perhaps best applied to the interpretation of μυστήριον in the Bible. Bockmuehl confirms this use of mystery language as “metaphor”: “Thus, an important Sitz im Leben of Philo’s allegorical ‘mystery’ language must be the contemporary literary and philosophical idiom, rather than popular religious observance, in which allegory appears to have played no great part. At least in direct comparison to the practice of pagan religion, Philo’s mystery language is indeed ‘pure metaphor’...In sum, therefore, Philo’s middle Platonism substantively dictates an understanding of revelation in terms of a philosophical-mystical knowledge of God as Being. This knowledge, also called ‘prophecy,’ is prompted by the allegorical interpretation of the Torah, a practice to which the term ‘mysteries’ here applies as a metaphor from Hellenistic philosophy and religion” (81).

26 Harvey speaks of the similarity between the Semitic concept of μυστήριον and the Greek mysteries as a kind of “metaphor,” whereby the latter provide a pattern or template for the former (Harvey, 330ff.). However, the differences between these notions of μυστήριον have become increasingly clear, and warrant an appropriate distinction in terms.
the book of Daniel. In apocalyptic literature, *raz* is a technical term meaning the “secrets” of God, with regard to God’s plan for the salvation of his people, as revealed to certain privileged seers.²⁹ It also appears frequently in the Dead Sea Scrolls,³⁰ and in the Targums to replace the Hebrew word *sôd*, which could refer to an assembly, in heaven or on earth, and the secret decrees from such an assembly.³¹ In Daniel 2, μυστήριον appears eight times, always translating *raz*, in reference to God’s hidden designs revealed in a dream or vision through a series of complicated symbols pointing to a further mystery, namely, the future of the kingdom.³² As Brown observes, “here we have *mystêrion* as we shall see it so often: a vision of the future revealed to man by God in figures; and both the vision and the interpretation are the work of God who ‘reveals things deep and secret’ (Dan. 4:6).”³³ Thus μυστήριον has an eschatological sense, insofar as it points to future events predetermined by God for the definitive establishment of his kingdom,³⁴ while its “real meaning is reserved to God alone,” who chooses to reveal his “secret purposes” to those “inspired by His spirit.”³⁵ Brown notes that this is a development of the more

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²⁷ E.g. Tobit, Judith, Daniel, Sirach, 2 Maccabees, and Wisdom.

²⁸ Raymond Brown observes that *raz* is almost certainly a Persian loan word in Aramaic and Hebrew; Brown, 421n22.

²⁹ Harvey, 326.

³⁰ Harvey, 327.

³¹ Raymond Brown, 421; Harvey, 327.

³² Raymond Brown, 423.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Bornkamm, 821.

³⁵ Raymond Brown, 423.
ancient concept of the prophet’s introduction into the heavenly assembly (sôd), and the revelation of God’s plan to his servants.\(^{36}\)

In Wisdom literature such as Sirach, μυστήριον means the hidden secrets of God that lie beyond human knowledge (Sir. 11:4), and include the workings of divine providence.\(^{37}\) In Tobit 12, μυστήριον refers to the secret of a king,\(^{38}\) but also points to the divine secrets of God communicated through an angel, and revealed as God’s plan for the salvation of the just.\(^{39}\) Furthermore, as Brown notes, “It is in Sirach that we meet for the first time Wisdom as an agent of God in revealing mysteries” (Sir. 4:18).\(^{40}\) In the book of Wisdom, originally composed in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew, the “mysteries” have to do with God’s plan for the after-life (Wis. 2:22).\(^{41}\) The mysteries are revealed to a select few (Wis. 6:22), with Wisdom as the “initiate in the knowledge of God” (Wis. 8:4).\(^{42}\)

An important aspect of μυστήριον in the Semitic tradition is the proclamation of the mystery. The Jewish prophets, such as Daniel, to whom the mystery of God’s plan is

\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) Raymond Brown asserts that μυστήριον can have a secular use, as in Tobit 12:17, 11, and Judith 2:2, where it refers to the political confidences or secrets of the king (422); this also applies to 2 Maccabees 13:21, with regard to “secret stratagems;” Harvey, 328. Harvey warns against assuming that μυστήριον was therefore a common secular term for any secret, whether of a secret plan of a campaign, or a secret between any man and his friend, for such usage ignores the proper context for the development of this term, and cannot be applied to its appearance in the New Testament; Harvey, 327-30. “The discussion should be rid of any suggestion that, by using the metaphor, a New Testament author thereby shows some kind of ‘contact’ with a mystery cult” (329).

\(^{39}\) Raymond Brown, 422.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 424.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 425. Brown accounts for the terminology that seems to point to a familiarity with language of the mystery cults; 426. See also Bornkamm, 820: “These passages are not to be considered as anything more than a borrowing of mystery imagery; the mysteries here are not sacramental rites, nor have they any connection with the Gnostic myth of salvation.”

\(^{42}\) Raymond Brown, 427. Brown also explores “mysteries” in the Pseudepigrapha, including Enoch and Baruch, as well as in the Qumran literature; 427-443.
revealed (Dan. 2:17-19), proclaim and interpret the received mystery. King Nebuchadnezzar declares to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of the mysteries” (Daniel 2:47; cf. 2:22, 28-30). In contrast, the mysteries of pagan religions are never to be spoken, for the initiates alone have access to them, and remain bound to secrecy.

The Semitic notion of μυστήριον forms the background for its use in the New Testament, where it appears twenty-eight times. In virtually every case, it stands for the Semitic concept of a secret design of God revealed to certain privileged people, a concept derived from and encompassing the Aramaic raz and the Hebrew sôd. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus speaks of the “mysteries” of the kingdom of heaven, which have been given to the disciples, but are in parables for others (Mt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10). In Revelation 10:7, μυστήριον is used to refer to the secret plan of God, “announced to his servants the prophets,” to be fulfilled “in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel.” Thus μυστήριον retains the eschatological resonances of raz, along with its revelatory character. Furthermore, as Harvey asserts, the other instances of

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43 RSV; as Harvey observes, the revealer of secrets “is ultimately, of course, God himself” (330).

44 Harvey, 330.

45 Cf. Mt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10; Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16; Rev. 1:20, 10:7, 17:5, 7.

46 Ibid., 329.

47 Harvey points out that this technical usage occurs in the New Testament as evident in Revelation 10:7, which refers to the “mystery” (μυστήριον) of God to be fulfilled, as announced to his servants, on the days of the trumpet call sounded by the seventh angel. Harvey notes that this is a clear allusion to Amos 3:7, where the Hebrew word is sôd.

48 RSV.


μυστήριον in Revelation are “equally ‘Semitic’”\(^{49}\)—in 1:20, the μυστήριον of the seven stars is a “secret” of the kind that Daniel was able to reveal. Likewise, in Rev. 17:5 and 7, the μυστήριον is the name Babylon, “a ‘meaning’ which the angel can reveal—a typical double entendre which can be borne by the word raz.”\(^{50}\)

Paul uses μυστήριον twenty-one times in an unambiguously Semitic fashion.\(^{51}\) As Nock points out, Paul never uses the terminology of pagan mysteries, or the “metaphorical concepts based upon them.”\(^{52}\) Moreover, Paul follows the same pattern found in Semitic texts of a secret or hidden “mystery” and its revelation and proclamation, as distinct from a Greek mystery-metaphor.\(^{53}\)

According to Paul, the mystery hidden from eternity “in God”\(^{54}\) (Eph. 3:9, Rom. 16:25) is Christ, the “mystery of God” (μυστήριον θεου; Col. 2:2; 4:3; Eph. 3:4) “manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) according to God’s purpose for the redemption of creation (Eph. 1:10). Christ is the eternal mystery, made visible in history as “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15) in whom “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), and through whom “all things were created, in heaven and on

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\(^{49}\) Harvey, 330.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) Cf. Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3; 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16. On the Semitic character of this term, see Harvey, 330; Raymond Brown, “The Semitic Background of the N.T. Mysterion,” Biblica, 39 (1958), 426-48; 40 (1959) 70-87; Nock, Early Gentile Christianity, 132.

\(^{52}\) Nock, 132. Paul uses the plural mysteria three times, and in each case, the word is used in line with the Semitic concept of raz rather than any Greek mystery-metaphor. The “mysteries” of God are revealed to the “servants of Christ and stewards” (1 Cor. 4:1), who are to proclaim the mysteries in charity and in the Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1-3; 14:1-2).

\(^{53}\) Harvey, 330.

\(^{54}\) RSV.
earth, visible and invisible” (Col. 1:15-16). In Christ, “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col. 1:19), and “by the blood of his cross” all things are reconciled to God (Col. 1:20). This is the “mystery” of God’s will (Eph. 1:9) “ordained before the world” (1 Cor. 2:7), that is, the salvific “plan of the mystery” (Eph. 3:9) through Christ’s incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection, i.e. the paschal mystery. In the person of Christ, the mystery of God’s plan for the salvation of his people is revealed and accomplished, finding its eschatological fulfillment “at the last trumpet,” when the “dead will be raised imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

The Church is intrinsic to the mystery (μυστήριον), for God’s will, “kept secret for long ages,” but now “made known to all nations” according to the “revelation of the mystery” (Rom. 16:25-26), is union with his people through the spousal union of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32). This “great mystery” (μυστήριον μέγα; Eph. 5:32), prefigured by the first marriage in Genesis, is realized in history, for as Paul declares in

55 In 2 Thess. 2:7, Paul speaks of the “mystery of iniquity” which is at work until the “son of perdition” is taken away (2 Thess. 2:3). In this case, Paul does not deem “iniquity” eternal, rather, he accounts for the role of iniquity in history. The iniquity of the present age will ultimately be overthrown at the end times, i.e. the eschaton, when the “lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming” (2 Thess. 2:7).

56 Bockmuehl claims, “Paul’s idea of God’s wisdom in a mystery (1 Cor. 2:7), therefore, is quite akin to contemporary Jewish terms used to speak of God’s eschatological design for the salvation of His people” (161).

57 Modern critical scholarship confirms the continuity of Paul’s typological reading of this passage with the Semitic tradition: “Most plausible, and consistent with the practice not only of the New Testament, but also e.g. of Qumran, Philo, and the Rabbis, would seem to be the idea that we are dealing here with an exegetical mystery: a deeper (in this case either allegorical or prophetic) meaning of a Scriptural text which has been elicited by means of some form of inspired exegesis. In other words, the deeper meaning of Gen. 2:24 points typologically to Christ and the church. This idea is familiar and closely related to Paul’s view of the revelatory value of the Old Testament, as discussed earlier. It may be, as Bornkamm suggests, that through the application of this exegetical mystery to Christ and the church (5:32b) the central ecclesiological mystery of Ephesians is implicitly reintroduced as well” (Bockmuehl, 205). Van Roo also observes when Paul calls matrimony as mystery (Eph. 5:32), he is not referring directly to a rite, but rather “means that matrimony from the beginning was a mystery, a type, foreshadowing the union of Christ and his Church, a reality whose hidden meaning has now been revealed” (31).
Col. 1:27, the mystery is “Christ in you, the hope of glory,”\textsuperscript{58} i.e. Christ in the members of his body, the Church (Col. 1:18, 24; Eph. 1:22-23). Christ is present in the Church in mystery, according to God’s transcendent purpose. This is a mystery of union through incorporation into the one body of Christ by baptism (1 Cor. 12:12-13), a mystery of transformation (Phil. 3:21, Rom. 12:2) whereby the members of the Church are conformed to Christ (Rom. 8:29) as his bride and body (Eph. 4:15-16; 5:23-32). God’s salvific plan is the building up of the Church (Eph. 4:12) “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

Furthermore, it is precisely through the Church that the “manifold wisdom of God” is “made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10). The wisdom of God is “spoken in mystery” (1 Cor. 2:7), for it remains transcendent, yet the “mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19) has been “manifested to the saints” (Col. 1:26; Eph. 3:5) and the “holy apostles and prophets” by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5; 3:3; Col. 1:26; 1 Cor. 2:10, 14:2) in order to be proclaimed and “preached among the nations” (1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 4:3), for God’s plan to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10) includes the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:6).

Paul’s notion of μυστήριον, rooted in the Semitic concept of raz and retaining its eschatological and revelatory resonances, culminates with the union of Christ and the Church. Christ is the mystery made present in history, through the incarnation, and in the Church, according to God’s plan for the salvation of his people. In this Pauline

\textsuperscript{58} Bockmuehl observes “The debate over whether to translate ‘Christ in you’ or ‘Christ among you’ has been long and protracted. Although one rendering tends to bear out a more mystical and the other a more objective slant, the question is perhaps less important than is sometimes assumed: each of the two emphases is consistent with Paul’s thought and in light of the other can be said to obtain at least by implication” (185). Cf. Eph. 3:11, 15, 17; Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 13:5.
understanding of μυστήριον, no link to pagan cult mysteries can be demonstrated. In the early Church, mystery terminology was applied to Christian rites such as baptism and the Eucharist. How did the notion of “mystery” develop in the East and West?

Μυστήριον in Early Christianity

In the first three centuries of Christianity in the East, the Greek μυστήριον and its plural μυστήρια were used sparingly. Gradually μυστήριον would assume a significant role in Christian terminology due to its meaning in Scripture. Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 107) employs μυστήριον twice to refer to the mystery of Christ in a Pauline manner. In the *Letter to the Magnesians*, Ignatius speaks of the saving mystery of the cross of Christ (cf. Col. 1:20-22). In his *Letter to the Ephesians*, Ignatius applies μυστήριον to the incarnation as intrinsic to the economy of salvation. As Bouyer notes, “the Pauline

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59 Van Roo, 31.

60 Paul does not use μυστήριον terminology to designate Christian rites such as baptism and the Eucharist in any clearly recognizable way. Nevertheless, as Nock observes, while there was no clear category of sacraments as in the modern use of the term, “in the first century, baptism and the Eucharist were part of the whole economy of dispensation of salvation…baptism had a public solemnity which it has largely lost…[nor] was there any antithesis between the word of God and a sacrament or institution of ritual, or again between individual and institutional gifts of grace” (126). Paul speaks of the apostolic ministry of the “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” in 1 Cor. 4:1. As Bockmuehl notes, “While the word οἰκονόμος may be unusual for this context, its function is clear and fully consistent with that of the recipient of secret revelation in the texts we discussed earlier…Paul is the responsible mediator and dispenser of the divine mysteries to those who are worthy to receive them. Moreover, this metaphor fits perfectly with the function of Paul’s ministry as a source of revelation” (166). As we shall see, Augustine speaks of Paul as a “man of the highest mysteries” (*altissimorum mysteriorum uirum*); cf. *mor.* 1.20; *conf.* 13.26.40.


63 Bouyer, 132.
perspective is preserved, since this economy always culminates in the Cross." For Ignatius, the μυστήριον is God’s plan of salvation, revealed and carried out in history through the paschal mystery of Christ’s incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection.

Justin Martyr (d. ca. 160) is the first to contrast the pagan μυστήρια directly with the Christian μυστήριον. Justin uses μυστήριον to denote “the Christian revelation as a whole, the appearance and passion of Christ, and anything in the Old Testament which could be interpreted as prefiguring the new salvation.” As Hamilton notes, μυστήριον is often a synonym for παραβολή, σύμβολον, and τύπος, all of which can be used to demonstrate the typological significance of the Old Testament. The Jewish Pasch is a type of the “mystery of the Lamb,” a “type of Christ.” For Justin, the saving mystery of the sacrifice of Christ is a revelation of the mercy and compassion of God. “God has had compassion on believers of all races through the mystery of him who was

64 “Hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her giving birth, just like the death of the Saviour, three mysteries destined to be proclaimed, which had been worked out in the silence of God” (9.1); translation follows Bouyer, The Christian Mystery, 132. Bouyer points out that this is the first known instance in the early Church of the application of μυστήριον directly to the incarnation.

65 Bouyer, 132.

66 Melito of Sardis (d. ca. 180), in his homily on the passion of Christ, uses the Pauline combination of Red Sea, manna, and water from the rock, and repeatedly applies μυστήριον to the Passover as prefiguring the “paschal” mystery of Christ. This is the primary mystery, of which the Passover was a type; Homily on the Passion, 84/5; 16; 33; Nock, 137-8.

67 I Apol. 25, 27, 54, 66. Nock observes, “Justin speaks of the bread and cup of water in the mysteria of Mithras as an imitation in advance by daimones of the Eucharist; but he speaks also of lustral washings before entering a pagan temple as standing in a similar relation to baptism, which means that the point of comparison was not initiation as such” (137).

68 I Apol. 13; Dial. 74, 91; Hamilton, 484.

69 Nock, 137.

70 Hamilton, 484; Hamilton cites H. von Soden, Mysterion und Sacramentum in den ersten zwei Jahrhunderten der Kirche, ZNTW, t. XII (1911), 188-277; Bornkamm, 825.

71 Dial., 11. Cf. 24; 44; 68; 73; 85; 88. Bouyer, 133.
crucified."\textsuperscript{72} While seeking an analogy between Christianity and Hellenistic philosophy,\textsuperscript{73} Justin is careful to avoid any confusion with or appropriation of pagan worship, effectively contrasting the Christian \textmu\textsigma\texttau\textrho\textnu with pagan \textmu\textsigma\texttau\textrho\textnu.\textsuperscript{74}

Irenaeus of Lyons (d. ca. 202) offers an anti-Gnostic apologetic in his understanding of the Christian mystery.\textsuperscript{75} Gnostic mythology is unable to account for the economy of salvation in which the invisible Word of God became flesh, suffered, died and was raised from the dead in order to redeem creation, such that this “mortal flesh” will “put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53).\textsuperscript{76} For Irenaeus, God’s salvific plan is fully realized only when the dead are “raised imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:52-54). The mystery of salvation is not reducible to a saving “knowledge” or “acquaintance” (\textit{gnosis}) according to Gnostic soteriology and mythology, but rather is accomplished in history with the redemption of creation and the resurrection of the dead.\textsuperscript{77}

Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 214) represents a shift in the East toward an increase in the use of \textmu\textsigma\texttau\textrho\textnu. In his trilogy of \textit{Proptreptikos}, \textit{Paidagogos}, and \textit{Stromateis}, \textmu\textsigma\texttau\textrho\textnu appears ninety-one times, one-third of them as references to pagan mystery cults, which he criticizes severely and places in contrast with the “holy

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Dial.}, 106; 74; 91; 121; I \textit{Apol.} 13; translation follows Bouyer, 133.

\textsuperscript{73} Nock, 137.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., Hamilton, 484; Prumm.

\textsuperscript{75} In the Latin translations of Irenaeus, \textmu\textsigma\texttau\textrho\textnu is rendered either \textit{mysterium} or \textit{sacramentum}; Bouyer, 134.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Adv. Haer.}, I.4; Bouyer, 137.

\textsuperscript{77} For a helpful overview of Gnostic mythology, see Bentley Latyon’s \textit{The Gnostic Scriptures} (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), esp. 7-21.
mysteries” of Christianity. For Clement, the true mysteries are the teachings of the Christian religion. These are secret teachings into which one must be initiated. Like Justin, the analogue lies not with pagan cult worship, but with philosophy, such that Christianity is the “true philosophy.” Clement distinguishes between the minor mysteries, which are made known and available to all, and the major mysteries, which are shown “only to a few.” These few must speak in enigmas and maintain secrecy, so as not to confuse the multitudes. In his later writings, such as the Stromateis, Clement often cites Paul’s letter to the Colossians (1:26) regarding the mysteries “reserved for the saints.” This view arises out of Clement’s understanding of the transcendence of God, “above all speech, all conception, all thought.” In the works of Clement, the development of a cultic disciplina arcani can be seen. No signs of the appropriation of pagan cult terminology are evident.

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79 Hamilton, 486. Clement does not apply mystêrion to the rites of baptism and Eucharist, however, he does use related terms such as mysticos concerning the Eucharistic “symbols”; van Roo, 33; Marsh, 75-80.

80 Strom., I, 12, 55, 1.

81 Strom., V, 11, 67.2.

82 Strom., V, 10, 64, 6; Hamilton, 486; van Roo, 33.

83 Strom., V, 10, 65, 1-3; Hamilton, 486.

84 Strom., V, 10, 60-61.

85 Strom., V, 10, 65, 2; Hamilton, 486.

86 Therefore, no sooner than the third century A.D.; Hamilton, 487.

87 Hamilton, 487.
For Origen (d. ca. 254), µυστήριον is part of a fluid terminology associated with Greek terms such as σύμβολον, τόπος, εἰκον, αἴνημα and Latin words including species, forma, sacramentum, argumentum, etc.  

88 The great mystery is the manifestation of the Word in the incarnation, Scripture, and the Church.  

89 Scripture is the vessel of mysteries, for it contains the hidden mysteries of God, and his plan for salvation.  

90 Christ is the teacher and mystagogue; the saving mystery is mediated through the mysteries of baptism and the Eucharist, which are derived from the “mysteries of Jesus.”  

91 The Church enters into a process of growth and transformation in conformation to Christ through participation in the sacramental life.  

By the fourth century, µυστήριον was used frequently in the writings of the Eastern Fathers to denote Christ (and all that he did and suffered), the rule of faith, the rites of baptism and the Eucharist, and the Church, as evident in the works of Basil (330-379), Gregory Nazianzen (329-389), Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) and John


89 Van Roo, 33.  


91 Ibid., 189.  

92 Ibid., 263; 254; 354.  

93 Cels. 3.59-61; van Roo, 34; Balthasar, “Le Mysterion d’Origène,” 513-68; Recherches de Science Religieuse 27 (1937): 38-64, esp. 38-42.  

94 Origen, like Clement, speaks of this growth in perfection as a movement from common faith to a deeper gnosis, as distinct from the gnosis of heretical sects, i.e. the Gnostics; cf. Hom. Jos., 9, 9; Hom. Lev., 5, 3; Hom. Num., 4, 3; Hom. Jud. 5, 6.; H. von Balthasar, “Le Mysterion d’Origène,” (1936), 513-68; (1937), 38-64; Hamilton, 488; van Roo, 33.  

95 Van Roo, 34-5.
Chrysostom (345-407). In the West, μυστήριον could be translated by both the cognate mystērion and sacramentum. Though often used synonymously, these terms began to carry distinct senses within the Latin patristic tradition beginning in the third century, culminating with Augustine in the late fourth century.

Sacramentum and Mysterium

The ancient Latin translations of the New Testament found in North Africa and Italy could be found using either sacramentum or mysterium to translate μυστήριον. During the first three centuries of the Church in the West, mysterium was seldom used, while sacramentum became widespread. Christine Mohrmann suggests this was due to the risk of confusion with pagan Hellenistic terminology since words such as mysteria,

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96 See Hamilton, 489: “There is exceptionally good evidence to show that Basil the Great redacted a Eucharistic liturgy which emphasizes the consciousness of sin, awe and reverence for the ‘great mystery’, and the divinity of the Son. Part of this development can be attributed to the Arian controversy, waged over the essential divinity of the Son...’With what fear,’ Basil says, ‘we ought to receive the Body and Blood of Christ’ (Reg. brev. Tract., 172). This is the beginning of a tradition which remains in the Eastern Church and becomes especially dominant in Chrysostom (345-407 A.D.), who speaks of the ‘table of holy fear’ and the ‘frightful mysteries’...The notion of silence and the protection of ‘the mysteries’ from profanation, the disciplina arcana, are in Basil linked with holy awe...As the emphasis on the transcendent, with the correlative elements of awe, silence and fear, enter into the cultic life of the fourth century church, the line of demarcation between the people and the altar-sanctuary became more and more pronounced” (Hamilton, 489-90). Van Roo observes that Chrysostom attached moral significance to the mysteries: “Let us live in a manner worthy of this mystery...” (Hom. 11 on 1 Tim. 3:8; van Roo, 35).


99 For instance, as Foster points out, Novatian’s treatise De Trinitate uses sacramentum nine times while mysterium is absent; Cyprian tends to favor sacramentum when citing Scripture, such as 1 Cor. 2:7, 1 Cor. 13:2, Eph. 5:32, Rev. 1:20, and in the Gospels; and Primasius notes the four occurrences of mystērion in Revelation, all of which he translates with sacramentum; Foster, 407-9.
sacra, arcana, and initia carried pagan cultic connotations. These terms are notably absent in the early Latin Fathers, while sacramentum is prevalent in the works of Tertullian (ca. 160-225), Cyprian (ca. 200-258), and Novatian (ca. 200-258).

The etymology of sacramentum is complex and not entirely clear. Mohrmann observes that sacramentum belongs to a group of words that carry both religious and juridical connotations. In secular Roman usage, sacramentum meant an oath, as in the soldier’s oath of loyalty, which marked his entrance into military life and symbolized his loyalty to its rules and ruler. In law, it meant the money deposited in a sacred place by the litigants, which also involved swearing an oath to witness to the truth. In religious terms, sacramentum was associated with words such as sacer and sancio, which could signify dedication to the sacred or holy through a “religious engagement” that involved “initiation.” Among early Christian authors, sacramentum possessed a kind of

100 Mohrmann, 143-45.
101 Kolping, Sacramentum Tertullianum; M. Émile de Backer, “Tertullian,” in Pour l’histoire du mot “sacramentum” (Louvain, 1924), 59-152.
102 Foster, relying on the studies of von Soden and Rönsch, notes that in Cyprian’s citations of Scripture, he uses sacramentum for all the appearances of μυστήριον in the Gospels, and the cognate mysterium is absent from von Soden’s word-list, “presumably because in the version quoted by Cyprian it did not occur,” Foster, 407; cf. von Soden, Das lateinische Neue Testament in Afrika zur Zeit Cyprians (Leipzig, 1909).
103 See esp. De Trinitate; Foster, 409.
104 Mohrmann, 145.
105 Nock, 141.
106 Van Roo, 37. The association of sacramentum with oath-swearing might suggest that the Old Testament notion of covenant was in the background when sacramentum was chosen as the equivalent for μυστήριον in the New Testament.
107 Mohrmann, 145.
“plasticity”\textsuperscript{108} sufficient to retain the Pauline concept of the “mystery” of God’s hidden plan for the salvation of his people,\textsuperscript{109} as well as a sense of admission or initiation into a religious community.\textsuperscript{110} By the third century, \textit{sacramentum} was adopted as the favored translation for $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ in the West as it effectively distinguished Christianity from the pagan mysteries.\textsuperscript{111}

For Tertullian, \textit{sacramentum} meant the “sacred mystery”\textsuperscript{112} of the economy of salvation, prefigured in the Old Testament, and fulfilled in Christ.\textsuperscript{113} It could also refer to the teachings of Christianity, as well as sacred rites of initiation, such as baptism and the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{114} Tertullian contrasts the \textit{sacramenta} of baptism and the Eucharist with the \textit{mysteria} of pagan cults, whereby the latter are demonic imitations of the former.\textsuperscript{115} The

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{109} Foster argues that the use of \textit{sacramentum} is not an alien rendering of $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ introduced into the Latin versions of the Bible. “Is it to be supposed, for instance, that such a man as Lactantius (ca. 285) blundered in using \textit{sacramentum} as ‘a sacred thing,’ ‘a mystery’?...The poet Prudentius (348-403), Jerome’s contemporary, is another authority of equal eminence. He often uses the word in the same sense” (Foster, 411-2).

\textsuperscript{110} Hamilton, “The Church and the Language of Mystery,” 492; Mohrmann, 143-6.

\textsuperscript{111} The singular \textit{mysterium} had become a common term meaning “secret” or “mystery,” and did not carry the same connotations as the plural \textit{mysteria}, which was associated with pagan practice. Nevertheless, the use of \textit{sacramentum} removed the possibility of confusion; Mohrmann, 143-5.

\textsuperscript{112} De Backer, 130.

\textsuperscript{113} Van Roo, 37; de Backer, 130-52.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Praesc.}, 40; \textit{Apol.} 7; 39. Hamilton suggests “it would be equally plausible to locate Tertullian’s avoidance of mystery terminology in his rejection of dialogue with Greek philosophy, a contrast to the tradition of Philo, Justin, Clement, Origen and the Cappadocians. For Tertullian, there existed no way of mediating the terms of mystery; Greek philosophy was for him a bad commodity, and no image it used was suitable for expounding Christian doctrine.” See “The Church and the Language of Mystery,” 492-3.
singular *mysterium* is absent in Tertullian’s works, while the plural *mysteria* is used exclusively in reference to the pagan mysteries.116

In Tertullian’s figural exegesis of Scripture, *sacramentum* could be used synonymously with words such as *figura*, *allegoria*, and *aenigma*.117 However, as de Backer demonstrates, *sacramentum* remained distinct in its ability to designate the object or reality of the allegory or figure.118 For instance, Tertullian speaks of the rock (*petra*) in 1 Cor. 10:4 as a figure of the reality of the “mystery” (*sacramenti*),119 namely, Christ. In this case, *sacramentum* designates the person of Christ, the object of the figure.120 Likewise, following Paul in Ephesians 5:31-32, the first marriage is a figure of the reality of that “great mystery” (*magnum illud sacramentum*), the union of Christ and the Church.121 De Backer thus concludes that *sacramentum* is not an absolute synonym for *figura*, but rather has the sense of a sign (*signum, signaculum*) that can refer to the object or reality of a figure.122

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116 Tertullian uses *mysteria* 7 times, while using *sacramentum* 133 times, according to a search using the Cetedoc Library of Christian Latin Texts (CLCLT, Brepols). All Latin word searches will be conducted using CLCLT, unless otherwise noted.


118 De Backer, 124ff.


120 De Backer, 125.

121 *Ieiun.*, 3; *Anim.*, 11; 21; *Monog.*, 5; de Backer, 128-9: “Tertullien considérerait *sacramentum* comme l’interprétation réelle et objective, quoique générale, de *figura*; il la précisera ensuite par l’expression *in Christum et ecclesiam*. Dans ce cas, *sacramentum* désignerait l’objet de l’allégorie, c’est à dire, l’union mystique du Christ et de l’Église, symbole, elle aussi, de la monogamie chrétienne.”
Like Tertullian, Cyprian employs *sacramentum* to designate the teachings of Christianity found in Scripture,\(^{123}\) as well as the rites of initiation.\(^{124}\) Moreover, *sacramentum* could take on a distinctively revelatory character.\(^{125}\) The *sacramentum Christi* is the revelation of Christ’s divinity in history.\(^ {126}\) The figures found in Scripture are prophetic prefigurations of the mystery of Christ revealed in sign and sacrament (*in signo et sacramento*).\(^ {127}\)

Cyprian uses *mysterium* on only one occasion. In this instance, *mysterium* refers to the “mystery” of Christ as the “reality” (*res*) to which all Biblical types point.\(^ {128}\) This appears to be the seed of a distinction that would continue to develop in the West, particularly during the fourth and fifth centuries, when the risk of confusion or contamination with the pagan mysteries had diminished. While Tertullian employs *sacramentum* to signify the reality or object of a figure in order to avoid the use of *mysterium* altogether, his successors, such as Cyprian, could use the cognate to designate the reality or truth contained in and expressed by a *sacramentum*.

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122 Cf. de Backer, 129: “Les sense nouveaux de *sacramentum* (symbole, figure, allégorie; valeur, vertu ou efficacité symboliques; objet symbolique; objet ou personne symbolisée; figure prophétique) se rattachent d’abord au sens de *signum*, *signaculum* (*σύμβολον*): un symbole, une allégorie ‘signifient’ une vérité ou une réalité.”

123 Ep. 63, 2-4; see J. B. Poukens, “Cyprien et ses contemporains,” in *Pour l’histoire du mot “sacramentum”* (Louvain, 1924), 196; Foster notes that Cyprian uses *sacramentum* when citing Paul, as in 1 Cor. 2:7, and 1 Cor. 13:2. Cyprian uses *sacramentum* 66 times.

124 *Ad Quir.* 250; *De eccl.* 15; *Ep.* 59, 4; Poukens, 205.

125 See Poukens,153ff.

126 Cf. *adv. Jud.*, I; 7; *ad Quir* II, 2; *Testim.*, 15; *Ep.* XLV, 1; *Ep.* LXXIV, 10-11; *Sent. Episc.*, 14; Poukens, 189.

127 *Ad Fort.*, 8; *De dom. Orat.*, 34; *De cath. Eccl.*, 7-8; *ad Quir.*, II, 2, 16; *Ep.* 53, 2-4, 12; *Ep.* 59, 4, 15; Poukens, 179.

128 *Ad Quir. Test.* 2, 19: “huius rei mysterium ostensum est apud Jesum Nave”; Mohrmann, 152; Poukens, 177. See also the dubious work, *De Pascha computus*, 10, 16, 18; Poukens, 175-6.
Lactantius (ca. 250-325) speaks of the great “mystery” (*mysterium*), the hidden wisdom of God, found in the divine *sacramenta* of Scripture.\(^{129}\) For Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315-367), *sacramentum* and *mysterium* form part of a rich vocabulary\(^ {130}\) used to express the “deep conviction that Biblical texts have an inner and prophetic meaning, bringing together history and spirit as well as words and actions, *dicta et facta*, in an order which allows true understanding.”\(^ {131}\) The inner, spiritual significance of Scripture is often eschatological, as evident in Hilary’s treatise *De Mysteriis*.\(^ {132}\) For Hilary, future realities are foreshadowed by types and figures found in the Bible, which de Margerie calls a kind of “futurizing interiority.”\(^ {133}\) These are the hidden “mysteries of God” (*mysteria Dei*), revealed through *sacramenta*.\(^ {134}\) This distinction is not absolute, for Hilary can use *mysterium* and *sacramentum* interchangeably in order to speak of the divine “mysteries;” however, *sacramentum* seems to possess a uniquely revelatory character, as evident in his exegesis of the Psalms, which Hilary interprets through a Christological lens.\(^ {135}\)

\(^{129}\) *Div. Inst.* 7, 22; 7, 6; 4, 20; 36, 3; 38, 2; 44, 2. See also de Ghellinck, 264. *Mysterium* appears twenty-nine times in the works of Lactantius, *sacramentum* twenty-eight times.

\(^{130}\) This includes words such as *species, imago, figura, praefiguratio, praeformatio*, and *ratio*; *De Myster. I*, Praef.; de Margerie, *History of Exegesis*, *Vol. II*, 55; J. Daniélou, “Hilaire de Poitiers, Évêque et Docteur,” *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 90 (1968): 531-41.


\(^{132}\) Ibid., 71-3.

\(^{133}\) *In Matth.* 12, 1; 19, 4; de Margerie, *History of Exegesis*, *Vol. II*, 49.

\(^{134}\) “occulta Dei mysteria,” *In Ps. 118; De Trin.*, 5, 17; “Sacramenta enim legis mysterium dispensationis evangelicae praefigurant…”; cf. *De Trin.* 5, 17; 8, 15; 9, 41; 11, 9; “sacramentum non jam mysterio occultatum sed in carne manifestatum…” Hilary also uses *mysterium* to speak of the “great mystery” of Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5:31-32; *In Ps.* 138, 29-31; *De myster. I*, 5; *In. Ps.* 52, 16. *Sacramentum* can be found 492 times in Hilary’s works, *mysterium* 72 times.
Furthermore, Hilary refers to the rites of baptism and the Eucharist as *sacramenta* that contain the divine *mysteria*, and that have effects precisely as *sacramenta*. Baptism is a *sacramentum* of “new birth,” by which the Church is transformed, such that “it is no longer their own flesh which is in them, but that of Christ.”\textsuperscript{136} Likewise, the Eucharist is the *sacramentum* of the *mysterium* of Christ’s flesh.\textsuperscript{137} Victorinus (ca. 300-370), whom Augustine names in *De doctrina Christiana* as “one who spoiled the Egyptians of their gold,”\textsuperscript{138} uses *mysterium* in a Pauline fashion in order to speak of God’s salvific plan through the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of Christ.\textsuperscript{139} Christ is the mystery of God,\textsuperscript{140} the eternal Logos,\textsuperscript{141} through whom God’s will, i.e. the mystery revealed to the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,\textsuperscript{142} is accomplished.\textsuperscript{143} The Church is part of the


\textsuperscript{136} *In Ps.* 91; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:20-21.

\textsuperscript{137} *De Trin.*, 8, 13; 1, 9; Foster, 414.

\textsuperscript{138} *doc. Chr.* 2.40.60-1; Augustine also includes Cyprian, Lactantius, Optatus, and Hilary.

\textsuperscript{139} *Adv. Ar.* 1A.10; 1A.25; 4.31; *In Ep. ad Eph.* 1, praef; 1.1.4; 1.2.14; 1.2.16; *In Ep. ad Gal.* 2.6.17; *In Ep. ad Phil.* 2.6; 2.9.

\textsuperscript{140} *Adv. Ar.* 3.10; 3.16; *In Ep. ad Eph.* 1.3.1; *In Ep. ad Gal.* 1.2.19.

\textsuperscript{141} *Adv. Ar.* 2.1.

\textsuperscript{142} *In Ep. ad Eph.* 1.1.9; 1.3.1; 1.3.5-6.

\textsuperscript{143} *In Ep. ad Eph.* 1.3.9; 1.3.11; 1.3.18.
mystery, built up as the body of Christ in history. Furthermore, the Church is sanctified by faith in Christ, the faith that is mediated through the reception of baptism.

Optatus of Milevus (d. ca. 387) speaks of the rites of baptism and the Eucharist as sacramenta that contain hidden mysteria. Against the Donatists, Optatus argues that the Church shares the same “sacraments” (sacramenta) of faith and the “same mysteries” (mysteria). Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340-397) also distinguishes between the mysterium hidden in and made visible through a sacramentum. Like Hilary, Ambrose sees Scripture as the vessel of the divine “mysteries” (mysteria) contained in and signified by the types and figures (sacramenta) of the Bible. The sacramenta of Scripture often point to future mysteria, above all, the saving mysterium of Christ. For Ambrose,

144 In Ep. ad. Eph. 1.3.10; 2.5.31-33.
145 In Ep. ad. Eph. 2.4.11.
146 In Ep. ad. Eph. 1.1.15-17. Mysterium appears 187 times in Victorinus, while sacramentum is absent in his works.
147 Cont. parm. Don. 2.12.1; 2.1.2; 4.2.4; 5.3.6; 5.4.1; 5.4.6; 5.7.1; 6.1.1.
148 Cont. parm. Don. 2.12.1; 4.7.4.
149 “Denique et apud uos et apud nos una est ecclesiastica conuersatio, communes lectiones, eipsa fidei sacramenta, eipsa fidei mysteria.” Cont. parm. Don. 5.1.11; cf. 2.1.2; 4.2.4; 5.4.5; 6.1.1.
150 Ambrose uses mysterium nearly twice as often as sacramentum, 630 times to 333 times respectively.
151 Exameron 4.4.13; 5.7.17; 6.9.69; De Cain et Abel, 1.4.14; De Abraham, 2.11.86; De Isaac vel anima, 3.7; 4.14; 6.56; De Jacob et vita beata, 2.1.1; 2.3.12; De Joseph, 3.9; 3.14; 8.45; 12.69; De patriarchis 11.47; De apol. Dau. Ad Theod. Aug., 3.10; 4.18; 5.23; 12.58-9; In Ps. XII, 37.57; 38,25; 43.49; 43.52; 43.66; In Ps. CXVIII, 8.59; 13. 4; 13.6; 17.8; In. Luc. 1.564; 2.768; 3.664; 3.853; 5.400; 5.1075; 5.1127; 6.446; 7.134; 7.734; 7.1008; 8.254; 8.303; 8.431; 10.343; De officiis 1.50; De virginibus, 3.18; De viduis 3.20; 15.90; De virginitate 10.58; De fide libri V.3.10; De spiritu sancto 2.prol.1; 2.prol.6; 2.6.54; 2.10.104; 2.10.105; De sacramentis 1.4.11; 4.3.10; De mysteriis 3.9.92; Epistulae 2.8.6; 2.9.4; 6.28.16; 8.54.8.
152 Cf. Exameron 4.8.32; De Cain et Abel, 1.9.36; De apol. Dav. Ad Theod., 17.79; In Ps. 43.49; In Luc. 2.639; 7.985; De fide libri V.4.2; De sacramentis 6.3.15.
mysterium has the sense of the eternal, according to the Pauline notion of the eternal mystery “hidden in God” (Rom. 16:25), and God’s salvific will revealed in history through the incarnation. Furthermore, this mysterium extends to the Church, the “great mystery” in union with Christ, as his spouse. Ambrose uses both sacramentum and mysterium to refer to the rites of baptism and the Eucharist. In this context, mysterium most often means the grace contained in and made visible through the sacramentum. Moreover, the sacraments (sacramenta) as mysteries have effects in history, for it is precisely through the sacraments that the fellowship of the Church is restored.

Like Ambrose, Jerome (ca. 347-420) speaks of the mysteria in Scripture. Each word contains a hidden mystery, revealed through the sacramenta of the text.
works of Jerome and Ambrose attest to the widespread use of *mysterium* in the West by the fourth century. Both authors use *mysterium* more than *sacramentum*,\(^ {162}\) and in the Vulgate, *mysterium* is preferred to *sacramentum* three times out of four.\(^ {163}\) Augustine inherited this tradition and developed it further.

**Augustine**

The *vetus Latina* translation of the Bible Augustine received could use either *mysterium* or *sacramentum* to translate μυστήριον.\(^ {164}\) In Augustine’s works, *mysterium* can be found 1372 times, *sacramentum* 1878 times.\(^ {165}\) In his earliest writings at Cassiciacum (ca. 386/387), *mysterium* appears only eight times, while *sacramentum* is absent.\(^ {166}\) The “divine mysteries” (*mysteria*) are the teachings of the Church, which have been “handed on to us” (*nobis tradunt*)\(^ {167}\) and proclaim Christ as the Son of God (*filium Dei*).\(^ {168}\) Augustine speaks of the “guarded mysteries” (*pro mysteriis custodita*) of Platonic

\(^{162}\) In Jerome’s works, *mysterium* can be found 411 times, *sacramentum* 314.

\(^{163}\) See Foster; in the Vulgate, *mysterium* is used for Mt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10; Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Col. 1:26; 2:2; 4:3; Eph. 3:4; 6:19; 2 Thess. 2:7; Rev. 10:7; 17:5; *sacramentum* appears in Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 9; 5:32; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:20; 17:7.

\(^{164}\) Foster identifies 3 versions of the *vetus Latina*: 1) the African, the earliest, from the middle of the third century; 2) the European Latin, from Western Europe, in the fourth century; 3) the Italian Latin, a later revision of the European version, which Augustine likely used; see Foster, esp. 404. To what extent Augustine knew and used Jerome’s Vulgate is a matter of debate; see also A.-M. La Bonnardière, *Saint Augustin et la Bible* (Paris, 1986).

\(^{165}\) CLCLT, cross-referenced with the CAG.

\(^{166}\) *Mysterium* can be found in *c. Acad.* 2.1, 3.38; *b. vita* 1.4; *ord.* 2.5.15, 2.5.16 twice, 2.9.27, 2.17.46. Augustine uses *sacra* to speak about sacred things, often referring to the sacred rites; cf. *c. Acad.* 3.19.42; 3.20.43; see Madec, *Le Christ de Saint Augustin*, 46-8.

\(^{167}\) *c. Acad.* 2.1; cf. *ord.* 2.5.15; 2.17.46; *b. vita* 1.4.

\(^{168}\) *c. Acad.* 2.1; although Augustine is not dealing directly with the Manicheans in this text, he alludes to 1 Cor. 2:4, a favorite text for the Manicheans, in which Paul names Christ the power and wisdom
philosophy, yet not by way of conflation with the Christian mysteries, but precisely in contrast to the mysteries handed on by the Church. Philosophy cultivates reason and “liberates a few,” yet it compels such learned ones to despise the mysteries (mysteria) of the Church, and to approach them according to the limits of their understanding.

The “venerated mysteries” (veneranda mysteria) of Christianity, on the other hand, liberate those of sincere and firm faith, and teach that “God has assumed a body like ours.” This is the mystery of the incarnation, an act “as merciful (clementia) as it is lowly,” and “as far removed from the pride (superbia) of those ingenious men.”

Augustine does not provide a fully developed incarnational Christology in these early works. Nevertheless, his theology of mystery begins to find its grounding in the incarnation as a revelation of humility and mercy. Pride (superbia) is the greatest

of God; for the Manicheans, Christ borrowed a body, and was only crucified in appearance. The Son’s power resides in the sun and wisdom in the moon (c. Faust. 20.2). In contrast to this Manichean myth, Augustine asserts that the Christian mysteries (mysteria) which have been handed down to us (tradunt) reveal that the Son of God is “assuredly God” (b. vita 4.34: “Deus filius proecto Deus”), begotten and coeternal as the Wisdom of God, who assumed a body like ours (ord. 2.5.16): “oro autem ipsam summi dei virtutem atque sapientiam. Quid est enim aliud, quem mysteria nobis tradunt dei filium?”

169 c. Acad. 3.38.
170 b. vita 1.4: “lectis autem Plotini paucissimis libris, cuius te esse studiosissimum accepi, conlataque cum eis, quantum potui, etiam illorum auctoritate, qui diuina mysteria tradiderunt, sic exarsi, ut omnes illas uellem ancoras rumpere, nisi me nonnullorum hominum existimatio commoueret.”
171 ord. 2.5.16: “philosophia rationem promittit et uix paucissimos liberat, quos tamen non modo non contemnere illa mysteria sed sola intellegere, ut intellegenda sunt, cogit…”
172 ord. 2.5.16: “quem unum deum omnipotentem, cum quo tripotentem patrem et filium et sanctum spiritum, ueneranda mysteria, quae fide sincere et inconcussa populos liberat, nec confuse, ut quidam, nec contumeliose, ut multi, praedicant. Quantum autem illud sit, quod hoc etiam nostri generis corpus tantus propter nos deus adsumere atque agere dignatus est, quanto uidetur uilius, tanto est clementia plenius et a quadam ingeniosorum superstis longe alteque remotius.”
173 Ibid.
174 While Neoplatonism may have had a greater influence upon Augustine prior to his reception of baptism in 387 and his intense study of Paul in the late 380s and 390s, nevertheless, as J.J. O’Meara acknowledges, at Cassiciacum Augustine looked “to the church…as an authority which he could always obey, and he accepted the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity,” The Young Augustine: An
obstacle to attaining the blessed life (*beata vita*), which consists of knowing the Truth (*veritas*) by which one is led, in which one rejoices, and through which one is united to the Supreme Measure. The Son of God is the Supreme Truth and the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:4). Augustine uses philosophical language in these texts while upholding the divine authority, “which not only transcends human power in sensible signs, but also, in the very act of leading man onward, shows him to what extent it has debased itself for his sake.” The debasement of the divine Wisdom, which seeks to lift up humanity to itself, is the self-emptying of the Son of God through the incarnation.

In such deeds (*factis*) the divine Wisdom shows its power (*potestatem*), and through such
humility (humilitate) it reveals its mercy (clementiam).\textsuperscript{181} The incarnation is a revelation of the mystery of divine Wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4) as self-emptying mercy. The divine mysteries (mysteria) have purgative effects, and are mediated through the sacred rites (sacris) of initiation.\textsuperscript{182}

Sacramentum appears for the first time in On the Catholic and the Manichean Ways of Life (De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum, ca. 388), composed after Augustine’s baptism in 387.\textsuperscript{183} By this time, Augustine had begun to study the writings of Paul,\textsuperscript{184} and had received instruction in the faith from Ambrose.\textsuperscript{185}

The influence of Paul and Ambrose on Augustine’s understanding of “mystery” as sacramentum and mysterium begins to show itself, as in De moribus 1.36, where Augustine interprets Paul’s injunction to “strip off the old man and put on the new” (Col. 3:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:47-49). “But he wants us to understand that the Adam who sinned is the old man, while the Son of God assumed the new man (novum) in mystery (in

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\textsuperscript{181} ord. 2.9.27: “doceat enim oportet et factis potestatem suam et humilitate clementiam et praeceptione naturam, quae omnia sacris, quibus initiatur, secretius firmius que traduntur, in quibus honorum uita facillime non disputationum ambagibus sed mysteriorum auctioritate purgatur.”

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{183} In 387, Augustine was enrolled as competens, the final stage for the catechumenate before receiving baptism, during which he engaged in intense Scriptural study; see La Bonnardière, “Augustine’s Biblical Initiation,” 22; William Harmless, S.J., Augustine and the Catechumenate (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995). By the time he left Italy definitively in 388 to return to Africa, Augustine’s knowledge of and facility with Scripture had grown considerably. Although he considered his Biblical formation quite limited (as he confesses in ep. 55.38; 73.5; 104; retr. 1.3.2; 1.5.2; 1.7.2; 1.18), his De moribus gives evidence of his thorough knowledge of Wisdom literature, the recommended reading for catechumens. Furthermore, during this period he likely studied the writings of Ambrose, Jerome, Hilary, and some Greek sources translated into Latin; La Bonnardière, “Augustine’s Biblical Initiation,” 23-5.


sacramentum) in order to set us free.” Likewise, in 1.12, Augustine speaks of the way (via) of salvation God has prepared by the “precepts of true religion,” the “foresight of the prophets,” and the “mystery (sacramentum) of the assumption of man.”

Sacramentum means “mystery” and so is properly translated in this way, yet it takes on the characteristic of a mystery that is meant to be revealed and enacted in history, for God’s salvific plan is revealed and accomplished, above all, by the “mystery of the assumption of humanity,” i.e. the incarnation. Sacramentum begins to take on a revelatory character after the pattern of the incarnation, and in a way consistent with the preceding Latin tradition. Similarly, following Paul in 1 Cor. 4:1, Augustine declares that the “divine sacraments” (divinorum sacramentorum) are the revealed teachings dispensed by the ministers of the Church in history. Yet the relationship between sacramentum

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186 mor. 1.36: “uult autem intelligi Adam qui peccavit ueterem hominem, illum autem quem suscepit in sacramento dei filius ad nos liberandos, nouum.” This is reflective of Augustine’s early Christology, which has not yet developed the technical language of person, nature, and substance to speak of the incarnation. H. R. Drober shows that Augustine begins to use the language of persona in a metaphysical sense to indicate the “acting subject,” i.e. the Word, in the assumption of human nature, at least by 411; see H. R. Drober, Person-Exegese und Christologie bei Augustinus. Zur Hekunft der Formel Una Persona (Leiden, 1986); Brian E. Daley, “A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in Saint Augustine’s Christology,” Word and Spirit 9 (1987): 100-117.

187 mor. 1.12: “uerae religionis fide praeceptisque seruatis non deseruerimus uiam quam nobis deus et patriarcharum segregation et legis uinculo et prophetarum praesagio et suscepti hominis sacramento et apostolorum testimonio et martyrum sanguine et gentium occupatione muniit.”

188 This is the same mystery revealed by those things before the incarnation, e.g. the calling of the patriarchs, the bonds of law, the predictions of the prophets, etc., as well as those things after, e.g. the testimony of the apostles, the blood of the martyrs, and the conversion of nations.

189 mor. 1.69: “quam enim multos episcopos optimos uiros sanctissimosque cognoui, quam multos presbyteros, quam multos diaconos et cuiuscemodi ministros diuinorum sacramentorum, quorum uirtus eo mihi mirabilior et maiore praedicatione dignior uidetur, quo difficilius est eam in multiplici hominum genere et in ista uita turbulentiore seruare.” While Augustine alludes to the rites of baptism and the Eucharist in this passage from De moribus, here sacramentum seems to refer more generally to the teachings of Christianity. Augustine most often uses sacramentum when citing this passage from 1 Cor. 4:1; see C. Couturier, “Sacramentum” et “mysterium” dans l’oeuvre de S. Augustin, in Études Augustiniennes 28 (Paris: 1953), 161-332. The first clear use of sacramentum for the rite of baptism comes in De libero arbitrio 3.6.7 (ca. 388-395). From this time forward, it is used regularly to speak of Christian rites such as baptism and the Eucharist.
and *mysterium* remains unclear, for although *sacramentum* begins to acquire certain revelatory resonances in these early works, it may be used synonymously with *mysterium*.

Augustine uses *mysterium* in *De moribus* 1.1 in order to designate the transcendent truths entrusted to the Catholic Church\(^\text{190}\) that are contained in the Scriptures, such as the Wisdom books and the letters of Paul.\(^\text{191}\) Paul is a man of the highest mysteries (*altissimorum mysteriorum uirum*) as an inspired author of the Holy Scriptures.\(^\text{192}\) Citing the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:51; *ecce mysterium vobis dico omnes quidem resurgemus*), Augustine refers to the “lofty mysteries” (*alta mysteria*) of the future resurrection.\(^\text{193}\) *Mysterium* carries the transcendent and eschatological resonances of the Pauline *μυστήριον*.

While *mysterium* and *sacramentum* begin to convey different aspects of “mystery,” at this point, there is no clear distinction in the relation between terms. Both mean “mystery,” and are grounded in a Pauline theology; thus, there remains a fluidity in mystery terminology. This is evident in *On Genesis, Against the Manichees* (*De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, ca. 389). The creation narrative of Genesis “contains great mysteries” (*continent magna mysteria*)\(^\text{194}\) inaccessible to the proud (*superbi*). The images

\(^{190}\) *mor.* 1.1: “nec si ea discere cupiens in aliquos forte inciderit uel episcopos uel presbyteros uel cuiuscemodi ecclesiae catholicae antistites et ministros, qui aut passim caueant nudare mysteria aut contenti simplici fide altiora cognoscere non curarint, desperet ibi esse scientiam ueritatis, ubi neque omnes a quibus quaeritur docere possunt neque omnes qui quae runt discere digni sunt.”

\(^{191}\) *mor.* 1.45, where Augustine cites the book of Sirach.


\(^{194}\) *Gn. adv. Man.* 1.5. Augustine often speaks of the *mysteria* contained in Scripture: cf. *mor.* 1.20; *util. cred.* 4; 9; *Simpl.* 2.0; *c. ep. Man.* 23; *doc. Chr.* 2.16.25; 4.21.46; *conf.* 3.4.9; 13.24.35; 13.25.38; *c.*
and figures (figurae)\textsuperscript{195} of Scripture are full of mysteries (mysteria) that are inaccessible to those who approach the text as a myth, such as the Manicheans.\textsuperscript{196} The creation of Eve from the side of Adam, whereby a “real, visible woman was made, historically speaking, from the body of the first man”\textsuperscript{197} while he slept, contains a “hidden wisdom” (1 Cor 1:24).\textsuperscript{198} As Augustine asserts, there are many “mysteries and sacraments” (mysteria et sacramenta) here.\textsuperscript{199} The “hidden secret”\textsuperscript{200} of this particular text is Christ and the

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\textsuperscript{195} David Dawson notes that Augustine does not define figura or allegoria precisely, nor is his use of them entirely consistent, and therefore “trying to sort out these terms according to a set of systematically organized categories seems to be an especially futile enterprise.” Nevertheless, Dawson points out that figura is typically used to show how “one thing can represent something else while preserving the significance of a historical reality,” and “embracing the subsequent temporal unfolding of the fullest meaning of that reality;” see “Figure, Allegory,” in Augustine Through the Ages, 365-8, and Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

\textsuperscript{196} Gn. adv. Man. 1.19. The Manichaens interpreted the narrative of Scripture as though it were not about historical events, but as if it were only symbolic of other truths independent of them. It denied the historical events as mysteries themselves. See F. Decret, Aspects du Manichéism (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1970).

\textsuperscript{197} Gn. adv. Man. 2.17: “quapropter etsi usibilis femina secundum historiam de corpore uiri primo facta est a domino deo, non utique sine causa ita facta est, nisi ut aliquod secretum intimaret.”

\textsuperscript{198} Gn. adv. Man. 2.16: “cuius contemplatio quia interior est et secretor, et ab omni sensu corporis remotissima, conuenienter etiam ista saporis nomine intelligi potest. tunc enim ordinatisimme caput mulieres uir est, cum caput uiri est Christus, qui sapientia est dei.” This is a clear allusion to Paul’s proclamation in 1 Cor. 1:24 of Christ as the Wisdom of God. The Manichaens denied the incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, for they hold that Christ borrowed his body, and was crucified in appearance only. Against this docetic Christology, Augustine will demonstrate how the “hidden wisdom” of the passage from Genesis points to the mystery of Christ’s passion and death on the cross, from which the Church is born; cf. c. ep. Man. 8.9; La Bonnardière, “Augustine’s Biblical Initiation,” 10-11.

\textsuperscript{199} Gn. adv. Man. 2.17: “siue ergo ista figurate dicta sint, siue etiam figurate facta sint, non frustra hoc modo dicta uel facta sunt; sed sunt plane mysteria et sacramenta, siue hoc modo quo tenuitas nostra conatur, siue aliquo alio meliore, secundum sanam tamen fidem sunt interpretanda et intelligenda.” Augustine uses similar language in s. 122.3 (ca. 410): “ergo mysterium est, ergo sacramentum est, ergo prophetia est, ergo figura est; ergo intelligamus,” although at this point, he has established a clear relation between mysterium and sacramentum, whereby the sacramentum is a sign of the mysterium; cf. en. Ps. 106.14.

\textsuperscript{200} Gn. adv. Man. 2.17: “aliquod secretum intimaret.”
Church,\(^{201}\) the “great mystery” of Eph. 5:31-32,\(^{202}\) to which Paul refers the “two in one flesh” union of Genesis (2:24).\(^{203}\) Augustine uses both *mysterium* and *sacramentum* in this passage from *De Genesi*, and at this point, there is no clear distinction in relation.\(^{204}\) They can be used equally in order to speak of the teachings of Christianity found in and revealed through Scripture,\(^{205}\) and of rites such as baptism and the Eucharist.\(^{206}\) How does *sacramentum* become distinguished in relation to *mysterium*?

In his classic study, “*Sacramentum*” et “*mysterium*” dans l’ouevre de S. Augustin,\(^{207}\) Charles Couturier classifies Augustine’s use of *sacramentum* in three ways:

1) *sacramentum*-symbole, the symbols or figures found in Scripture, which include Adam and Eve, Jacob and Esau, Noah and the ark, the flood, David, the prophets, and other Old

\(^{201}\) *Gn. adv. Man.* 2.16-17; see also 2.37. Augustine develops this image further in his later works, where he explicitly refers to Christ’s death on the cross as the “slumber” from which the members of the Church are born; the blood and water that flow from his side are symbols of baptism and the Eucharist, cf. *Gn. adv. Man.* 2.37; c. Faust. 12.16; 12.20; 12.39; *Gn. litt.* 9.18; *ev. Jo.* 9.10; 15.8; 20.2; *civ. Dei* 15.26.

\(^{202}\) In *Gn. adv. Man.*, Augustine speaks of the *magnum sacramentum* of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32), likely following the translation from his vetus Latina; see 2.19; 2.37. In *Contra Secundum* (ca. 399), he uses *mysterium* on one occasion; c. Sec. 21.


\(^{204}\) Edmund Hill observes that in *Gn. adv. Man.* 2.17, Augustine uses *sacramenta* “In the altogether wider meaning of the term current in Christian writings of Augustine’s time,” meaning “any sacred or hidden truth or reality signified by some other thing mentioned in scripture” (WSA I/13, 83n29). Augustine has not yet distinguished clearly and precisely between *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, whereby the *sacramentum* is a mysterious sign that contains and makes present a *mysterium*.

\(^{205}\) On divine *sacramenta* found in Scripture in the early works, see *Gn. adv. Man.* 1.34; 2.17; 2.19; 2.29; 2.37; *vera rel.* 33; *util. cred.* 35.

\(^{206}\) On *sacramentum* as rite in the early works, see *lib. arb.* 3.67; *mus.* 6.1; *vera rel.*, 8, 9, 33; s. *Dom. mon.*, 2.25-27, where Augustine speaks of the Eucharist as “spiritual food”: “aut pro sacramento corporis Christi, quod cotidie accipimus; aut pro spirituali cibo, de quo idem dominus dicit: ‘operamini escam quae non corrumpitur’ et illud: ‘ego sum panis uitae, qui de caelo descendi’ (2.25)”; and 2.37: “hoc ipso enim, quod dictus est cotidianus panis - siue spiritualis significetur siue in sacramento aut in uictu iste usibilis -, ad hoc tempus pertinet, quod appellantud Hodie.” On *mysterium* with regard to the rites of the Catholic Church, cf. *util. cred.* 16; 31; *Simpl.* 2.1.5; *doc. Chr.* 4.22.

Testament figures,\textsuperscript{208} as well as John the Baptist, the figures in Paul’s letters,\textsuperscript{209} and all of the words and deeds of Christ in the Gospels;\textsuperscript{210} 2) \textit{sacramentum}-rite, religious rituals, including Jewish rites such as circumcision, legal observances, and the Sabbath,\textsuperscript{211} and Christian rites, particularly baptism and the Eucharist,\textsuperscript{212} but also anointing, ordination, the sign of the Cross, the creed, the Lord’s prayer, feasts such as Easter, and marriage,\textsuperscript{213} and 3) \textit{sacramentum}-mystère, the divine mysteries of Christianity, such as Christ, the Trinity, the mystery of redemption, and the Church.\textsuperscript{214}

Couturier regards \textit{sacramentum} and \textit{mysterium} as synonyms in general,\textsuperscript{215} yet he recognizes certain nuances among them.\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Sacramentum} possesses a prophetic character as a Scriptural figure or type of a future thing.\textsuperscript{217} Moreover, the \textit{sacramentum} contains and expresses the \textit{mysterium (mysteriorum signacula)}.\textsuperscript{218} As Couturier points out, the

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Couturier, 292-95.
\item For instance, Paul interprets the rock from the Exodus narrative as Christ in 1 Cor. 10:4, which Augustine takes up; cf. \textit{doct. Chr.} 4.46; \textit{en. Ps.} 33[1].3; 77.2; \textit{s.} 352.4; see also \textit{ev. Jo.} 7.14 and \textit{en. Ps.} 103[3].4 where Augustine discusses the name of Peter, which means rock, as a figure of the Church.
\item Couturier, 292-98; 189-255.
\item \textit{Gn. adv. Man.} 1.34; \textit{vera rel.} 33; see Couturier’s table of references, 277-80; see also his treatment of Jewish rites, 180-81.
\item \textit{mus.} 6.1; \textit{vera rel.} 8.9; cf. Couturier 280-92.
\item Couturier, 173-88, 280-92.
\item Ibid., 298-301; Couturier groups \textit{mysterium} and \textit{sacramentum} together; cf. 256-74.
\item Ibid., 268.
\item Ibid., 263.
\item Ibid., 263-4.
\item Ibid., 272: “le \textit{mysterium} se présente alors comme le figuré, et le \textit{sacramentum}, la figure: c’est ainsi que nous trouvons comme équivalent de \textit{sacramentum}, l’expression ‘\textit{mysteriorum signacula}’; ‘signes des mystères’; et i lest remarquable qu’on ne trouve pas le rapport inverse.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
inverse relationship is never found. As such, sacramentum has a kind of efficacy (l’efficacité) as the sign of a mysterium. This is not surprising, given the tradition Augustine received in the West. Like the preceding Fathers, Augustine frequently speaks of the mysteria contained (continent) in sacramenta.

Couturier’s helpful analysis would benefit from a closer examination of the development of the distinction between the terms sacramentum and mysterium, with the

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Ibid.

Ibid., 265: “Pour autant que nous en puissions juger, il semble que la seule distinction réelle tire sa source de l’efficacité attribuée en proper au sacramentum ou mysterium: ce qui expliquerait fort bien comment ces termes, et particulièrement le premier, ont tendu de plus en plus à designer exclusivement les symboles efficaces, par opposition aux autres qui conservaient les noms de figure, voile et autres;” 266, 270; for other discussions of “sacramental efficacy” in Augustine, see Camelo, “Réalisme et Symbolisme dans la doctrine eucharistique de S. Augustin,” Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques 31 (1947): 394-410; “Sacramentum fidei” in Augustinus Magister (Congrès International Augustinien, Paris, 1954) vol. II, 891-96; E. Hocedez, “La conception augustinienne de sacrement dans le Tractatus 80 in Joannem,” Recherches de science religieuse 9 (1919): 1-29; F. Van de Meer, “Sacramentum chez saint Augustin,” La Maison-Dieu 13 (1948): 50-64; André Mandouze, “Apropos de ‘Sacramentum’ chez S. Augustin Polyvalence Lexicologique et Foisonnement Théologique,” in Mélanges offerts à Mademoiselle Christine Mohrmann (Spectrum: Utrecht, 1963), 222-32; Basil Studer, “‘Sacramentum et exemplum’ chez Saint Augustin,” Studia patristica 16 (1985): 570-88; Cameron, “The Christological Substructure of Augustine’s Figurative Exegesis,” 74-103; Robert Dodaro, Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Saint Augustine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 154, 163; see Cavadini’s assessment in “It’s a Matter of Worship: Ideology and Solidarity in City of God,” forthcoming, in which he asserts, “The question of sacramental causality in Augustine is a vexed question, because Augustine does not have at his disposal the distinctions so carefully made by Thomas Aquinas in his discussions of the matter… My point here is not to provide a precise theory of Augustine’s idea of sacramental causality, but to emphasize that a merely ‘symbolic’ view, even on its own terms, is forced at some point into deferring to the density and texture of Augustine’s understanding of the issue…” See also “Sacramentality of Marriage in the Fathers,” 454-5: “Augustine does not have an explicit theory of marriage as an ‘efficacious sign’…Yet one can, I think, also exaggerate the differences too much if one is not careful to include a broader range of evidence from the world of imagery that Augustine creates around this topic…[E]ven if one cannot squeeze a full-blown Scholastic theory of sacramentality out of Augustine’s rich and textured imagery, it is not enough to say that marriage is simply and only a sign of something other than itself. One could not learn so much about the reality it signifies if it did not in some way truly make present the reality it signifies, namely, the transformative and healing love of Christ for the church.”

See for instance c. Faust. 12.20; 19.17; cat. rud. 1.32; Trin. 4.3.6; bapt. 1.12; 4.18; 4.31; b. conjug. 15; Gn. litt 8.4; civ. Dei 6.11; 7.32; gr. et pecc. or. 2.45; quaes. 2.172; c. Jul. 3.8; cath. 68; spec. praef.; c. Jul. imp. 1.57; ev. Jo. 7.14; 8.3; 9.10; 15.5; 25.9; 44.2; 57.2; en. Ps. 6.2; 41.2; 46.2; 58[1].1; 67.26; 68 [2].6; 70[2].9; 80.1-2; 91.1; 93.1; 103[3].25; 106.14; 131.2; ep. 54.8; 55.14; 87.9; 137.18; 147.32; 187.34; 196.16; Divjak 2*; 4; s. 2.4; 4.21; 6.8; 7.1; 83.5-7; 99.11; 122.3; 125.9; 130.1; 249.3; 252.1; 259.2; 266.6; 289.5. Augustine will also speak of the mysteries (mysteria) “wrapped up” (involucra) in Scripture; cf. Simpl. 2.0; en. Ps. 30[3].9; 126.11; 127.2; 147.4; 147.23; s. 95.7; 160.3; 160.4; 350.2; 352.3; cat. rud. 1.5.
subtle shift in Augustine’s usage after the 390s. In the end, Couturier concludes that sacramentum and mysterium are used synonymously, and while this is often the case, such a blanket statement overlooks the distinctive revelatory character of sacramentum. This is a significant valence that comes into place after the 390s.

Furthermore, beyond Couturier’s study, an important qualification is necessary. The distinction between sacramentum and mysterium serves not so much to separate but rather to unite the different aspects of the one mystery. The sacramentum, as an outward sign, is not simply an external indicator of a separate, purely transcendent reality. Instead, it is an essential part of the mystery itself, further defining the mystery as a reality that is able and meant to be revealed in history. In this way, the sacramentum is intrinsic to and constitutive of the overall mystery. In a certain sense, the sacramentum represents the fulfillment of the mysterium, precisely as the historical, visible presence of the invisible mysterium, according to the mystery of God’s will. While many sacramenta may be used to signify the same mysterium, this does not mean that they are merely extrinsic markers that can be discarded in favor of the mysterium. Rather, all of the sacramenta that are used reveal and disclose the mysterium in different ways; thus, they are necessary and intrinsic to the mystery. The fact that the mysterium can be signified by so many sacramenta is part of the overall mystery, and further defines the mysterium as a transcendent truth that seeks to be revealed, rather than a philosophical secret.

This development in Augustine’s thought, I argue, may be attributed to his interpretation of Paul, along with his increasing familiarity with the theology of the Latin Fathers. 222 Paul’s incarnational theology of Christ as the eternal Word, “manifested in the
flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), provides the foundation for Augustine’s understanding of the
mystery made present in history through visible signs.\footnote{223} As the mediator between God
and mankind,\footnote{224} Christ did not despise the temporal,\footnote{225} but rather chose to enter history in
order to become the Way (\textit{via}) to the homeland (\textit{patria}).\footnote{226} This is the mystery that those
“ablest and most esteemed of philosophers,”\footnote{227} i.e. the Neoplatonists, cannot accept due
to their pride (\textit{superbia}).\footnote{228} They seek a wisdom “beyond corporeal forms,”\footnote{229} at the
expense of visible, historical things. Christ, on the other hand, as the divine Wisdom,
became flesh and “dwelt among us,”\footnote{230} an event in history, outward and not only

\footnote{222} Michael Cameron points out, “Through Ambrose and translations, he was exposed to Philo and
Origen, and by the time of his elevation as bishop, Augustine had been reading Tertullian, Cyprian, and
Hilary;” Cameron, “The Christological Substructure of Augustine’s Figurative Exegesis,” 98. In \textit{doc. Chr.}
2.40.60-1 (ca. 396), Augustine also mentions the significance of Latin Fathers such as Lactantius, Optatus,
and Victorinus.

\footnote{223} See Cameron, “The Christological Substructure of Augustine’s Figurative Exegesis,” 82-93,
who identifies the turning point in Augustine’s figurative exegesis from a “spiritualist” to an
“incarnational” paradigm to the year 394, after studying Paul’s letter to the Galatians, which enabled him to
understand more deeply the mediation of Christ.

\footnote{224} \textit{conf.} 5.14.24.

\footnote{225} \textit{conf.} 7.19.25: “ego uero aliud putabam tantumque sentiebam de domino Christo meo, quantum
de excellentis sapientiae uiro, cui nullus posset aequari, praesertim quia mirabiliter natus ex uirigne ad
exemplum contemnendorum temporali um praedispensa immortalitate diuina pro nobis cura tantam
au toritatem magisterii meruisse uidebatur. quid autem sacramenti haberet ‘uerbum caro factum’, ne
suspicari quidem poteram.”

\footnote{226} \textit{conf.} 7.20.26: “garriebam plane quasi peritus et, nisi in Christo, saluator nostro, uiam tuam
quarerem, non peritus sed peritus essem;” \textit{conf.} 7.18.24; 7.11, 9.13, 21.27, 8.1.1; \textit{doc. Chr.} 1.10.10.

\footnote{227} \textit{conf.} 7.17.23; \textit{civ.} \textit{Dei} 9.1; 8.6.


\footnote{229} \textit{conf.} 7.20.26.

\footnote{230} \textit{conf.} 7.9.13-14; Jn 1:14. In \textit{De Trinitate} 4.1.6, Augustine identifies Christ’s flesh, i.e. his full
humanity, as the sacrament (\textit{sacramentum}) of the inner man, i.e. his divinity: “sola resurgens, ea sola nobis
ad utrumque concinuit cum in ea fieret interioris hominis sacramentum, exterioris exemplum;” cf. \textit{en. Ps.}
77.13; see also Basil Studer, “‘Sacramentum et exemplum’ chez Saint Augustin,” 570-88. See also \textit{Trin.}
4.2.11: “hoc sacramentum, hoc sacrificium, hic sacerdos, hic deus antequam missus uniret factus ex
femina – Omnia quae sacrate atque mystice patribus nostris per angelica miracula apparuerunt siue quae
inward. By juxtaposing “visible sign” with “invisible reality,” the Neoplatonists left no room for the saving grace of Christ, and therefore could “see the goal, but not the Way to our beatific homeland (patriam).”

Augustine turned to the “writings of the Spirit,” particularly Paul. Augustine learned how to approach Scripture as mystery, so as to penetrate to the “inner

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232 As in the doctrine of recollection (anamnesis) found in Plotinus’s *Enneads* 4.6.3; Pelikan, *The Mystery of Continuity*, 127.

233 conf. 7.21.27. Augustine recounts: “Not in those [books of the Neoplatonists] pages are traced the lineaments of such loving kindness, or the tears of confession, or the sacrifice of an anguished spirit offered to you from a contrite and humbled heart, or the salvation of a people, or a city chosen to be your bride, or the pledge of the Holy Spirit, or the cup of our ransom”: “hoc illae litterae non habent. non habent illae paginae uultum pietatis huius, lacrimas confessionis, sacrificium tuum, spiritum contribulatum, cor contritum et humiliatum, populi salutem, sponsam ciuitatem, arram spiritus sancti, poculum pretii nostri.”


235 conf. 7.21.27: “itaque auidissime arripui uenerabilem stilum spiritus tui et prae ceteris apostolum Paulum...”

meaning of the text without discarding the particular sacramenta through which the mysteries are revealed. This Pauline notion of mystery as a transcendent reality that is able and meant to be revealed in history provides the fundamental thrust for Augustine’s critique of the Manicheans and Neoplatonists. Both seek, though in different ways, to rise above the economy of salvation mediated through mysterious sacramenta that remain inseparable from the realities (mysteria) they signify. Augustine adopted the Latin distinction between mysterium and sacramentum according to their particular senses of

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237 For Augustine, a mystery is not a puzzle or problem to be solved or explained away. Rather, it is a transcendent truth revealed in history and made lowly (humilem), so as to take one up (excelsam) into the mystery. The revelation “grows along with the little ones,” yet remains concealed (velatam) as a transcendent reality; as such, the revealed mystery is inexhaustible; *conf.* 3.5.9: “et ecce uideo rem non compertam superbis neque nudatam pueris, sed incessu humilem, successu excelsam et uelatam mysteriis…uerum autem illa erat, quae cresceret cum paruulis, sed ego dedignabar esse paruulus et turgidus fastu mihi grandis uidebar.”

238 *conf.* 4.5.9: “non enim sicut modo loquor, ita sensi, cum attendi ad illam scripturam, sed uisa est mihi indigna, quam tullianae dignitati compararem. tumor enim meus refugiebat modum eius et acies mea non penetrabat interiora eius.” In *conf.* 11.2.4, Augustine prays for grace that the “inner meaning of your word might be opened to me”: “uide, pater, aspice et uide et approba, et placeat in conspectu misericordiae tuae inuenire me gratiam ante te, ut aperiantur pulsanti mihi interiora sermonum tuorum.”

the Pauline μυστήριον\textsuperscript{240} as the framework for his theology of the sacraments (e.g. baptism and the Eucharist), and the Church.

In one of Augustine’s earlier works, *On the Advantage of Believing* (*De utilitate credendi*, ca. 391/2), the seed of the distinction between sacramentum and mysterium appears. Augustine speaks of the sacramenta of the divine books of Scripture.\textsuperscript{241} The rituals of the Old Testament contain the “mysteries” (mysteria) of Christianity,\textsuperscript{242} and these mysteria have effects through the sacred rites of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{243} The sacraments confer grace,\textsuperscript{244} not as an external marker that may be thrown away, but as sacramenta that are intrinsic to the mysteria they signify. Augustine’s development of the distinction between sacramentum and mysterium, which he uses in his Scriptural exegesis (sacramentum-symbole) begins to take shape in terms of the sacred rites (sacramentum-rite). This is the beginning of his sacramental and liturgical theology, according to the Pauline framework of mystery (sacramentum, mysterium).

Similarly, in his commentary on Galatians (ca. 394/5),\textsuperscript{245} Augustine continues to develop the distinction between sacramentum and mysterium. Following Paul, Augustine

\textsuperscript{240} Although Augustine certainly did not have modern methods of Biblical scholarship at hand, nevertheless, his reading of Paul seems to be consistent with the fruits of modern scholarship, particularly with regard to the Pauline theology of “mystery” as rooted in the Semitic concept of raz.

\textsuperscript{241} *util. cred.* 1.17.35: “et si unaquaque disciplina, quamquam uilis et facilis, ut percipi possit, doctorem aut magistrum requirit, quid temerariae superbiae plenius, quam diuinorum sacramentorum libros et ab interpretibus suis nolle cognoscere et incognitos audere damnare?”

\textsuperscript{242} *util. cred.* 1.3.9: “in quibus tamen legis praeceptis atque mandatis, quibus nunc christianos uti fas non est, quale uel sabbatum est uel circumcisio uel sacrificia t si quid huiusmodi est, tanta mysteria continentur, ut omnis pius intellegat nihil esse perniciosius quam quicquid ibi est accipi ad litteram, id est ad uerbum; nihil autem salubrius quam spiritu reuelari.”

\textsuperscript{243} *util. cred.* 1.14.31, 2.4, 3.9, 7.14, 16.

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.; see also *Simpl.* 2.1.5; *c. ep. Man.* 23.
is determined to demonstrate continuity between the old law and the new law. Against the Manicheans, Augustine establishes continuity with the Old Testament, since Christ is the mediator of the law (Gal. 3:19). The sacrifices (sacrificia) of the old law, along with other Jewish rituals, are sacramenta that prefigured the sacramenta of Christ, i.e. baptism and the Eucharist.²⁴⁶

This commentary demonstrates the priority of the “contemplation of truth” (contemplationem ueritatis), and so displays Augustine’s more philosophical view of the end of the journey as a kind of vision, for “every sacrament, when understood, refers either to the contemplation of the truth or to good morals.”²⁴⁷ Likewise, Augustine mentions the love of God and neighbor, yet this love seems subordinate to the contemplation of truth, for “the contemplation of the truth is founded upon the love of God alone, good morals upon the love of God and neighbor.”²⁴⁸ Love gives way vision, rather than vice versa. Nevertheless, Augustine’s Pauline theology of mystery continues to develop, though it has not reached full maturity.

Augustine’s On Eighty-Three Questions (ca. 396)²⁴⁹ is a significant text in terms of the development of his overall thought. It is composed of a serious of questions and

²⁴⁵ Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas, ca. 394/5. On the influence of Galatians on Augustine’s thought, particularly in terms of Christology and Scriptural exegesis, see Cameron, “Christological Substructure,” 82-88; see also the fine translation by Eric Plumer, Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians.

²⁴⁶ ex. Gal. 19: “ad sacramenta pertinent circumcisio carnis, sabbatum temporale, neomeniae sacrificia atque omnes huius modi innumerabiles observationes, ad mores autem: non occides, non moechaberis, non falsum testimonium dices et cetera talia.”

²⁴⁷ ex. Gal. 19: “Omne autem sacramentum cum intelligitur, aut ad contemplationem ueritatis refertur aut ad bonos mores.”

²⁴⁸ ex. Gal. 19: “contemplatio ueritatis in solius dei dilectione fundata est, boni mores in dilectione dei et proximi, in quibus duobus praeceptis tota lex pendet et prophetae.”

²⁴⁹ De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus.
responses collected during Augustine’s time at Thagaste (388), but not answered completely until after Augustine’s ordination to the episcopacy (ca. 396). From this time forward, we begin to see certain key aspects of Augustine’s mature thought, particularly with regard to *sacramentum*, as in question 36. This question is on the topic of charity, and Augustine speaks of the sacraments of regeneration, i.e. baptism, which mediate charity. Augustine begins to reconfigure his understanding of the purification of the sacraments, a purification that yields charity, over and above vision. In his early works, Augustine certainly mentions charity, yet it consistently seems to be subordinated to a vision of Truth. In *On Eighty-Three Questions*, however, vision gives way to charity. Growth in charity seems to be the distinctive effect of the Christian *mysteria*.

Augustine maintains an emphasis upon Wisdom in this text, but he begins to emphasize the end of charity from this time forward. Furthermore, Augustine develops a rich understanding of *sacramenta* that contain *mysteria* based on the incarnation of Christ, which is the *sacramentum* “enacted in body and in time.” Augustine’s mature theology of *sacramentum* and *mysterium*, as grounded in an incarnational Christology, becomes increasingly clear. This is the fruit of his study of Paul during the 390s, and it also indicates the transition in Augustine’s life from a wise philosopher to a priest and a

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250 *div. qu.* 36.2

251 *mor.* 7.11; 13.23; 30.63; 33.73.

252 Indeed, even in his mature works, Augustine never leaves behind the aspect of vision, yet it is taken up into a Biblical framework, in which the final aim is a communion in charity, following the two-fold commandment of Scripture to love God and one’s neighbor. Vision is assimilated into this framework, and that vision is from the perspective of divine love that enables one to look upon creation and proclaim, “it is good,” as in the Biblical narrative of Genesis.

253 *div. qu.* 36.4.

254 *div. qu.* 57.2; see also 46.
bishop by 396. Augustine’s concerns as a pastor and bishop direct his focus to the Church and its sacramental life. From Paul and the patristic tradition, Augustine assumes and develops the distinction between *sacramentum* and *mysterium* that provides the framework for his mature ecclesiology. This marks the shift away from his more speculative, philosophical thinking toward a definitively Biblical, sacramental theology.

By the late 390s, Augustine articulates the distinction between *sacramentum* and *mysterium* according to a particular theory of signs. *Sacramentum* retains its revelatory character, and functions as a sign of a transcendent *mysterium*. This is not an imposition of Hellenistic categories of signs on patristic theology; rather, it is the transformation of sign language according to the Biblical notion of the mystery revealed in history according to God’s salvific will.

This development is evident in the important work *Against Faustus* (*Contra Faustum*, ca. 398). In book 19, Augustine speaks of *sacramenta* as visible signs (*signaculorum visibilium*) that have the effect of binding people together in the name of religion. The *sacramenta* of the Old Testament are prophetic figures (*figurae*) of the coming of Christ, and include the legal observances, which were “abolished because they were fulfilled” by Christ’s coming, i.e. the incarnation. For this reason, a Christian

\[255\] Robert Markus notes, “In the typological exegesis of the Bible by St Hilary and St Ambrose—above all a formative influence on Augustine—*signum* acquired a whole range of new resonances.” See “Augustine on Signs,” in *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 77.


\[257\] c. Faust. 19.11: “ipsa quippe talium figurarum obseruatio praenuntiatio Christi fuit.”

\[258\] c. Faust. 19.10; 13. Throughout this text, Augustine cites Paul in order to demonstrate how the Old Testament laws and rituals have been fulfilled in Christ; for instance, see c. Faust. 19.7 (1 Cor. 10:6, 2
does not observe Jewish laws or rituals, following Paul in Galatians 5:2, yet there is a continuity between Judaism and Christianity, precisely insofar as the sacramenta share the same mysterium. Since the prophecy has been fulfilled through Christ’s saving work in history, other sacramenta have been instituted that are “greater in power, yet fewer in number,” including the baptism of Christ (baptismo Christi) and the Eucharist of Christ (eucharistia Christi). The visible sacramenta of the “prophetic religion” are different from the sacramenta of Christians, however, the “reality (res) is the same,”

Cor. 1:19-20; Rom. 7:12-13; Gal. 3:23-25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21-22; Rom. 8:3-4); 19.8 (Rom. 15: 8; 1 Cor. 12:28); 19.10 (2 Cor. 5:17); 19.17 (Gal. 5:2).

259 This is the concern Augustine address, in the context of the wider concern over the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. Christians do not destroy the law and the prophets, just as it was not the work of Christ to destroy them. Rather, all of the observances of the law and the prophecies were sacramenta, visible signs, of a deeper mysterium, namely Christ. In this way, Augustine speaks of the mysterium contained in certain sacramenta such as circumcision (c. Faust. 16.29); the ultimate mysterium is Christ (and his passion, death, and resurrection, i.e. the paschal mystery; c. Faust. 19.16) mysteriously present in sacramenta like circumcision. Christ’s coming has fulfilled such rituals. For this reason, a Christian is no longer circumcised, “precisely because Christ has fulfilled what that same circumcision prophesied” (c. Faust. 19.9). Moreover, with the coming of Christ, fewer sacramenta have been established through which the mysterium of Christ and his paschal mystery is made present in history, until the final resurrection of the dead. As such, baptism is a sacramentum of “our future resurrection;” c. Faust. 19.9.

260 “Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you;” c. Faust. 19.17.

261 For more on the continuity between Judaism and Christianity, see the study by Paula Fredriksen, Augustine and the Jews (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

262 c. Faust. 19.13: “proinde prima sacramenta, quae obseruabantur et celebrabantur ex lege, praenuntiatiuta erant Christi uenturi: quae cum suo aduentu Christus inpleuisset, ablata sunt, et ideo ablata, quia inpleta; non enim uenit legem soluere, sed adinplere. et alia sunt instituta uirtute maiora, utilitate meliora. actu facilioria, numero pauciora, tamquam iustitia fidei reuelata et in libertatem uocatis filiis dei iugo seruitutis ablato, quod duro et carni dedito populo congruebat;” cf. doc. Chr. 3.9.13; ep. 54. Augustine goes on to speak of the sufferings of the righteous of the Old Testament, and how much more a Christian ought to be ready to endure all things for the sacraments instituted by Christ: “si ergo antiqui iusti pro illis praenuntiatuis sacramentis et rerum nondum inpletarum figuris omnia dura et horrenda perpeti parati fuerunt et plerique perpessi sunt… quanto magis nunc pro baptismo Christi, pro eucharistia Christi, pro signo Christi ad omnia perferenda parator debet esse christianus, cum illae fuerint promissiones rerum conplendarum, haec sint indicia conpletarum?” c. Faust. 19.14.

263 c. Faust. 19.16: “interim aduersus calumniosam inperitiuam Fausti demonstrare suffecerit, quanto errore delirent, qui putant signis sacramentisque mutatis etiam res ipsas esse diuersas, quas ritus propheticus praenuntiatiuit promissas, et quas ritus euangelicus adnuntiavit inpletas, aut qui censent, cum res eadem sint, non eas aliis sacramentis adnuntiari debuisse completas quam iis, quibus adhuc conplendae praenuntiabantur…”
namely, the *mysterium* of Christ,\textsuperscript{264} and his incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection. This is the paschal mystery that the Christian *sacramenta* now proclaim.\textsuperscript{265} As signs, the *sacramenta* make present the *mysteria*, and as religious rituals, they have the effect of forming a bond of union among a religious society.\textsuperscript{266} The *sacramenta Christi* however, are distinct from the *sacramenta* of the old law, for they mediate the effects of the “reality” (*res*) that they proclaim and signify. Whereas the Old Testament *sacramenta* prefigured the coming the paschal mystery, and had a kind of efficacy by foretelling the coming of Christ, the *sacramenta Christi* make present the *mysterium*, and carry out its intended effects. Christ instituted these *sacramenta* so that the effects of the paschal mystery might be accomplished in history, as mediated by the Church’s celebration of the sacraments. Baptism in particular, the “sacrament of our regeneration,”\textsuperscript{267} which incorporates one into the body of Christ, has the effect of “uniting the Church in this time” (*quo in hoc tempore consociatur ecclesia*)\textsuperscript{268} to Christ the head, and to the other members of the body as the whole Christ (*totus Christus*)\textsuperscript{269} in faith, hope, and charity.\textsuperscript{270}

\textsuperscript{264} c. Faust. 12.32: “quid uellus conplutum area sicca et postea conpluta area sicco uellere nisi primo una gens Hebraeorum habens occulte in sanctis mysterium dei, quod est Christus, quo mysterio totus orbis uacuus erat?”; cf. 22.94; 30.3.

\textsuperscript{265} c. Faust. 19.16: “quid mirum, si aliis mysteriorum signaculis passio et resurrectio Christi futura promissa est, aliis iam facta adnuntiatur, quandoquidem ipsa uerba, futurum et factum, passurus et passus, resurrecturus et resurrectus, nec tendi aequaliter nec similiter sonare potuerunt?”

\textsuperscript{266} c. Faust. 19.11.

\textsuperscript{267} c. Faust. 12.19: “et hoc in sacramento regenerationis nostrae, id est in baptismo, altum profundumque mysterium e: quindecim cubitis supercreuit aqua excedens altitudinem montium, id est hoc sacramentum transcendit omnem sapientiam superborum.”

\textsuperscript{268} c. Faust. 12.20: “non adhuc in sacramento spei, quo in hoc tempore consociatur ecclesia, quamdiu bibitur, quod de Christi latere manauit, sed iam in ipsa perfectione salutis aeternae, cum tradetur regnum deo et patri, ut in illa perspicua contemplation incommutabilis ueritatis nullis mysteriis corporalibus egeamus.”

\textsuperscript{269} c. Faust. 12.14-20; 12.39.
Augustine further specifies the power of sacraments as distinct kinds of signs in 19.16, where he speaks of certain “bodily sacraments” (corporalia sacramenta), e.g. baptism, as “visible words—sacred yet changeable and temporal.”271 Although the visible actions of such sacred signs272 are temporal, like the “quickly sounded and passing syllables spoken when we say ‘God’,” the power (virtus) that works through them is eternal, for the “spiritual gift” is given by God.273 Such sacramenta, therefore, are unique signs, for the power at work is the eternal Word of God,274 that is, Christ, the mystery (mysterium) of God (Col. 3:4; 2:2).275 The Christian sacraments communicate the mysteries (mysteria)276 through bodily means (corporalibus), which are themselves part

270 c. Faust. 12.20; 12.24. Augustine speaks of baptism as a “sacrament of hope” (sacramentum spei); c. Faust. 12.20: “quod post alios septem dies dimissa reuersa non est, significat finem saeculi, quando erit sanctorum requies, non adhuc in sacramento spei, quo in hoc tempore consociatur ecclesia, quamdiu bibitur, quod de Christi latere manauit, sed iam in ipsa perfectione salutis aeternae, cum tradetur regnum deo et patri, ut in illa perspicua contemplation incommutabilis uritatis nullis mysteriis corporalibus egeamus.” Augustine is offering an exegesis of the story of Noah and the flood. When the dove was sent out after another seven days and did not return, this signifies the end of the world, when the rest (requies) of the saints will no longer be found in the “sacrament of hope” (sacramentum spei), that is, baptism, but will be in the perfection of eternal salvation, where there will be no need for the bodily mysteries (mysterii corporalibus), a reference to the sacraments “of this time;” cf. 19.11. Augustine identifies the Eucharist as that sacramentum which contains the “loftiest mystery” (mysterii altitudinem) of the body of the Lord (ep. 54.8; cf. cons. Ev. 3.1.3; 3.25.72).

271 c. Faust. 19.16: “quid enim sunt alii quaeque corporalia sacramenta nisi quaedam quasi urba uisibilia, sacrosancta quidem uerum tamen mutabilia et temporalia?”

272 Cf. civ. Dei 10.5-6; 10.20.

273 c. Faust. 19.16: “deus enim aeternus est, nec tamen aqua et omnis illa actio corporalis, quae agitur cum baptizamus et fit et transit, aeterna est: ubi rursus etiam illae syllabae celeriter sonantes et transeuntes, cum dicitur deus, nisi dicantur, non consecratur.”

274 c. Faust. 19.16; cf. ev. Jo. 80.3 and 15.4, where Augustine makes clear that it is Christ’s word that has the power to cleanse one from sin, and incorporate one into the body of Christ, the Church; this becomes central piece of Augustine’s argument against the Donatists, particularly in De baptismo.

275 c. Faust. 12.32; 22.94; 30.3.

276 c. Faust. 16.29; 19.11; 12.20. On the mysteries (mysteria) as grace (gratia), see c. Faust. 22.7; 6.5; 12.20, 32; 16.17; 19.11, 16; 22.51, 58, 22.92; 22.94; 30.3; vera rel. 33; Gn. litt 9.18; en. Ps. 6.2; ench. 52; praed. sanct. 1.35-36; c. Jul. imp. 2.109, 3.72, 3.107, 4.122.
of the dispensation of the mysteries (Eph. 3:9).\textsuperscript{277} The Christian \textit{sacramenta} confer the \textit{mysteria} through the power of God, and these \textit{sacramenta} are part of God’s salvific plan enacted in and through history.

Indeed, all of the \textit{sacramenta} are part of the mysterious will of God. The \textit{mysterium} contained in the \textit{sacramenta} of Old Testament rituals, such as circumcision,\textsuperscript{278} has been fulfilled through the coming of Christ. Nevertheless, such \textit{sacramenta} are not to be discarded, for Christ did not come to “destroy but to fulfill the law and the prophets” (Mt. 5:17). Therefore the \textit{sacramenta} of the Old Testament form part of the mystery revealed in Christ, “that faith which was afterward revealed” as Paul declares in Galatians 3:23-25.\textsuperscript{279} That the mysteries (\textit{sacramenta}) of the prophetic religion are, in some way, part of the revelation of the mystery of Christ is rooted in the theology of Paul, who proclaims the law as “good” and the commandment “holy, just, and good” (Rom 7:12), for it is part of the dispensation of the mysteries (Eph. 3:9).\textsuperscript{280} As such, all of the \textit{sacramenta} of the Word of God, as found in Scripture, are intrinsic to the revelation of the mystery of God’s salvific will. Like Paul, Augustine is eager to demonstrate the continuity with the old law. With the coming of Christ, the Christian sacraments have

\textsuperscript{277} c. Faust. 15.8.

\textsuperscript{278} c. Faust. 16.29: “hoc est circumcisionis mysterium quae octauo die fieri iussa est, et octauo die, id est dominica post sabbatum, iam in ueritate a domino inpleta.”

\textsuperscript{279} c. Faust. 19.7: “idem quippe apostolus dicit, ‘quia priusquam ueniret fides, sub lege custodiebamur conclusi in eam fide, quae postea reveleta est. itaque lex, inquit. paedagogus noster erat in Christo Iesu; sed posteaquam uenit fides, iam non sumus sub paedagogou.’ quia nos reatus legis non obligat, iam per gratiam liberatos.”

\textsuperscript{280} c. Faust., 15.8: “ecce Paulus apostolus dicit: ‘lex quidem sancta et mandatum sanctum et iustum et bonum.’ ecce, cuius auctor est, qui diptychium illud, quod stulta inrides, in magni sacramenti dispensatione praemisit. eadem quippe lex, quae per Moysen data est, gratia et ueritas per Iesum Christum facta est, cum accessit litterae spiritus, ut inciperet inpleri iustitia legis.”
been instituted as unique *sacramenta* to be celebrated, whose power comes from the Word. These sacraments mediate the mystery of God’s saving work in Christ.

As this distinction continues to develop in Augustine’s mature works, *mysterium* carries the transcendent and eschatological resonances of the Pauline μυστήριον, as in 1 Cor. 15:51-53, with regard to the *mysterium* of the future resurrection. Christ is the eternal *mysterium Dei* (Col. 3), made present in history through the *sacramentum* of his flesh. God’s salvific will is fulfilled in the person of Christ, the ultimate *mysterium* of all the *sacramenta* found in and revealed through Scripture. God’s will is revealed after the pattern of the incarnation, and so “mystery” is clearly a Biblical, Christological term, not a philosophical one. Augustine also speaks of the *mysterium* of predestination, which is God’s plan for the salvation of his people, enacted precisely

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281 *c. Faust.* 19.16.

282 *c. Faust.* 11.3; 11.7; 16.29. See also *Trin.* 4.3.6, where Augustine cites Paul’s letter to the Colossians in reference to the mystery (*mysterium*) of the future resurrection of the Church, prefigured by Christ’s resurrection in time: “cui mysterio congruity apostolus dicens: si autem resurrexitis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite ubi Christus est in dextera dei sedens; quae sursum sunt sapite’… resurrectio uero corporis domini ad sacramentum interioris resurrectionis nostrae pertinere ostenditur ubi postquam resurrexit ait mulieri: ‘noli me tangere; nondum enim ascendi ad patrem meum…”

283 See also *c. Faust.* 12.32; *cat. rud.* 19.33; *Trin.* 13.6.24; *civ. Dei* 10.8; *c. Jul.* 2.92; 2.113; 4.49; 4.64; 6.34; *praed. sanct.* 40.

284 *Trin.* IV.1.3.6; 5.20.27.

285 *c. Faust.* 12.32; 22.94; 30.3. The hidden *mysteria* are not philosophical, but Christological; cf. 16.17; 22.51; 22.58; 22.77; 22.92.

286 In mature works such as *City of God*, Augustine often contrasts the *mysteria* of philosophy which underwrite pagan worship with the *mysteria* of the Catholic Church; see *civ. Dei* 4.31; 6.11; 7.5; 7.20; 7.28; 8.5; 8.24; 8.26; 18.17; 10.8.

287 *persev.* 23; 37; *praed. sanct.* 35; *ev. Jo.* 8.9.
through the union of Christ and the Church in history. The mystery of God’s salvific plan is realized by the building up of the Church.

The transformation of sign language according to the Pauline notion of mystery is further evident in Augustine’s letters composed after the 390s. In his second letter to Januarius, Augustine defines sacramenta as visible signs of “invisible things” (invisibilia). The sacramenta of Scripture have been chosen by the Holy Spirit because they bear a certain likeness with the “divine mysteries” (divina mysteria) they signify. The visible sacramenta reveal particular aspects of the invisible mysteria. Through the dispensation of sacramenta, the “Word of God” has a kind of eloquence that has the

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288 See c. Sec. 21, the first instance in which Augustine translates the “great mystery” of Eph. 5:32 as magnum mysterium. In this passage, Augustine cites the Pauline text against the Manichaens who believe that “in marriage your God becomes bound in tighter chains of the flesh through the procreation of children.” Augustine cites Eph. 5:31-32 in order to demonstrate that the “union of two in one flesh” is in fact a kind of visible sign of the mystery (mysterium) of Christ and the holy Church, enacted in history. Furthermore, the injunction to increase and multiply (Gn 1:28) is predicated upon the understanding of bodily, visible existence as a good: “I confess that I learned in the Catholic Church that the soul, like the body, one of which rules while the other is subject, as well as the good of the soul and the goods of the body, comes only from the highest good, from which all good things come, whether great ones or small ones, whether heavenly ones or earthly ones, whether spiritual ones or bodily ones, whether everlasting ones or temporal ones, and that the latter goods ought not to be criticized because the former are preferable.”

289 ep. 55, ca. 401.

290 ep. 55.2, 9, 11-14. Cf. ep. 138.7 (ca. 411), where Augustine defines sacramenta as signs that pertain to “divine things” (res divinas): “nimis autem longum est conuenienter disputare de uarietate signorum, quae cum ad res diuinias pertinent, sacramenta appellantur.”

291 ep. 55.9: “ac per hoc spiritus sanctus de uisibilibus ad inuisibilia et de corporalibus ad spiritalia sacramenta similitudinem ducens transitum illum de alia uita in aliam uitam...”; 55.11: “ex eis aliquando similitudo ad diuina mysteria figuranda”; 55.12: “aut quia ex his rebus ad mysteria uerbi dei similitudinum signa sumuntur”; 55. 14: “in sanctis mysteriis nobilitato fluio Iordane rerum figurate insinuandarum mysticas similitudines duxit”; cf. ep. 98; doc. Chr. 3.9.13.

292 Mysterium may also mean invisible, “spiritual realities” (mysteriis rerum spiritualium), see Gn. litt. 8.4; cf. 4.11; 12.8; 12.19; cat. rud. 33; bapt. 5.38; en. Ps. 7.1; 61.7; 77.2; ep. 196.12-16; 8.17; s. 4.21.

293 ep. 55.12: “: “aut quia ex his rebus ad mysteria uerbi dei similitudinum signa sumuntur.”

294 Augustine further develops this idea in De doctrina Christiana; see John C. Cavadini, “The Sweetness of the Word: Salvation and Rhetoric in Augustine’s De doctrina Christiana,” in De doctrina
power to “move the affections” from visible things to invisible realities, from corporal to spiritual, from temporal to eternal, for the benefit of salvation. All of the sacramenta that mediate the mysteria are part of the mystery of the economy of salvation, realized visibly in history. Therefore, the sacramenta cannot be dispensed with in favor of some separate, purely transcendent mysteria, for this would, in effect, limit the divine mystery. For Augustine, the mystery extends to its visible signs in history. For this reason, the terms mysterium and sacramentum may function as synonyms, for both terms convey the same mystery. The presence of many sacramenta reveals the mysterious and loving will of God to enter history through “visible signs” (signaculorum visibilium).

By the time of Contra Faustum, Augustine has developed a theory of signs in which the signum mediates the power of the res, such that the res is present within and is fully disclosed through the signum. In Augustine’s theology of mystery, the “sign”

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295 ep. 55.13: “si quae autem figulae similitudinum non tantum de caelo et sideribus sed etiam de creatura inferiore ducuntur ad dispensationem sacramentorum, eloquentia quaedam est doctrinae salutaris mouendo affectui discentium accommodata a visibilibus ad invisibilia, a corporalibus ad spiritualia, a temporalibus ad aeterna.”

296 c. Faust. 19.11.

297 See also Cameron’s insightful discussion in “The Christological Substructure of Augustine’s Figurative Exegesis,” 80; Cameron calls this a “dramatic perspective,” which is predicated upon a conjunctive theory of signs, as opposed to a disjunctive theory in which the sign is rendered obsolete in favor of the thing it signifies. The conjunctive understanding, on the other hand, which develops after 394 due in large part to Augustine’s study of Galatians, “binds a reality of the spiritual world to its sign in such a way that, despite their incomensurability, the effectiveness of the reality depended on the presence of this particular sign…Ultimately the difference between disjunctive and conjunctive signs lies in discriminating between a reality which is merely signified and the signified reality which in turns signifies some other reality; e.g. the geological reality which is signified by the word ‘rock,’ but which in turn also signifies Christ;” Cameron, 88. Cameron asserts that this conjunctive view of signs begins to take shape in Contra Adimantus (ca. 394), where Augustine interprets Paul in 1 Cor. 10:4, “the rock was Christ,” in a way that does not make the sign obsolete. Rather, “Signifying power is generated from the qualities of an already existing thing in such a way that sign and reality intimately meet in a relation which the bishop increasingly reserved for the idea of ‘sacrament.’ It is sacramental because in some way ‘our Lord did not hesitate to say ‘this is my body’ when he gave the sign of his body,’ the same conjunctive operative in the Old Testament rite whose reality he understood to have been ‘placed within the sign’ [in signo esse positum; c. Adim.
(signum) cannot be separated from the “thing” (res) it signifies. This is due to Augustine’s theology of mystery, whereby the sacramentum is intrinsic to the mysterium. The distinction in relation does not separate the mystery, but rather unites its particular aspects, and provides the theological framework from which the various sacramenta may be understood as intrinsic to the mysteria they signify. This allows Augustine to go beyond a simple signum/res distinction in which the signum is incidental to and separable from the mystery. The signum/res distinction is taken up and transformed according to Augustine’s theology of mystery, defying any kind of rigid distinctions between signum and res that might separate or reduce the mystery.

In effect, the Latin patristic tradition, culminating with Augustine, developed two terms to express particular aspects of the same Pauline mystery. The mysterium is the eternal, transcendent reality, which can be made present in history; the sacramentum is the mysterium revealed in history. These terms form two poles of the same μυστήριον. Furthermore, sacramentum, as Augustine uses it, has the effect of integrating the historical and transcendent, the visible and invisible, for it further specifies the mystery as a transcendent reality that is meant to be revealed in history.

12.3]. This conjunctive understanding binds a reality of the spiritual world to its sign in such a way that, despite their incommensurability, the effective of the reality depended on the presence of this particular sign;” Cameron, 87. See also Cameron, Augustine’s Construction of Figurative Exegesis, 178-85. Correlative to this view, I argue that such an understanding of signs developed from Augustine’s theology of the Pauline mystery.

298 Using Augustine’s classic distinction between signum and res in De doctrina Christiana, the sacramentum is a sign (signum) of a divine thing (res); cf. N.-M. Feret, “Sacramentum, Res, dans la langue théologique de S. Augustin,” Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques 29 (1940): 218-43. Although Augustine does not make an explicit distinction on the basis of mysterium and sacramentum in De doctrina Christiana, this does not necessarily mean that such a distinction was absent in his thought. Nevertheless, he does not articulate a theology of “mystery” in this text, although the terms mysterium and sacramentum carry particular resonances. In doc. Chr., he uses mysterium three times to speak of the mystery of the Church (2.25), the sacred teachings of Christianity (4.22), and the salvific work of Christ spoken in mystery (4.46). Books 1-3.25, 27 were written just after Augustine was ordained a bishop (ca. 396), and the rest was written at the time of the Retractationes (ca. 426/7). Despite this gap in composition, the entire work seems to reflect Augustine’s mature Biblical, sacramental theology.
This development of Augustine’s thought may be attributed to Augustine’s intense study of Paul, along with his increasing familiarity with the theology of the Latin Fathers. From Paul, Augustine learned how to approach mystery as both transcendent (which might be further specified as eschatological) and revelatory, distinct senses that could be attached to particular terms without separating the mystery. Augustine applied this distinction to Scripture, and to the realities revealed by Scripture, such as the sacraments and the Church.299

The Mystery of the Church

Augustine uses both sacramentum and mysterium to speak of the Church as mystery. In his earlier works from the late 380s and early 390s, Augustine employs sacramentum exclusively in order to refer to the “great mystery” of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32).300 At this point, Augustine has not yet established the distinction between sacramentum and mysterium. He follows the vetus Latina in the use of sacramentum. By the late 390s, however, the distinction between sacramentum and mysterium is in place.

Augustine uses mysterium in direct reference to the Church for the first time in On Christian Teaching (De doctrina Christiana, ca. 396) 2.16.25, where the number 153,301 the number of fish caught in the apostle’s net in John 21, is a “wonderful sacrament” (sacramentum mirabile) of the “mystery of the Church (mysterium ecclesiae) in its most


300 Cf. Gn. adv. Man. 2.19; 2.37; c. Adim. 3.

301 See also div. qu. 57.1-3, 81.3; ev. Jo. 122.8-9; s. 248.4-5, 252.7-8; en. Ps. 49.9.
purified state.” Mysterium carries eschatological resonances, for the mysterium hidden in and revealed by the sacramentum is the Church in its perfect, eschatological unity. Likewise, in On the Instruction of Beginners (De catechizandis rudibus, ca. 399), Augustine takes up Noah’s ark as a figure of the Church in history, which “now floats on the waves of the world, and is saved from drowning by the wood of Christ’s cross.”

The ark with its members, precisely as the historical Church, serves as a “sacramentum futurae ecclesiae,” a “sacrament of the future Church.” The Church’s condition in history is intrinsic to the mystery revealed in Scripture, and anticipates the final perfection and unity of the “future Church” by virtue of the saving wood of Christ’s cross. While the final unity of the Church will be perfectly realized eschatologically,

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302 doc. Chr. 2.16.25: “deinde ita quaeritur, quomodo quinquagenarius de quadragenario numero existat, qui non mediocrer in nostrae religione sacrus est propost pentecosten et quomodo ter duc tus propter tria tempora ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia, uel propter nomen patris et filii et spiritus sancti adiuncta eminientius ipsa trinitate ad purgatissimae ecclesiae mysterium referatur perueniatque ad centum quinquaginta tres pisces, quos retia post resurrectionem domini in dexteram partem missa ceperunt. ita multis alis atque alis numerorum formis quaedam similitudine in sanctis libris secreta ponuntur, quae propter numerorum imperitiam legentibus clausa sunt.”

303 See div. qu. 57.2, and ev. Jo. 122.1, where the number of fish are a sacramentum of the Church “as regards its future character, in the final resurrection of the dead.”


305 cat. rud. 19.32: “praenuntiabatur tamen etiam diluuii sacramento, quo per lignum iusti liberati sunt, futura ecclesia, quam rex eius et deus Christus mysterio suae crucis ab huius saeculi submersione suspendit. neque enim deus ignorabat, quod etiam ex illis qui fuerant in arca seruati, nascitur erant mali, qui faciem terrae iniquitatis itum impleverunt; sed tamen et exemplum futuri iudicii dedit, et sanctorum liberationem ligni mysterio praenuntiavit.”

306 cat. rud. 27.53: “factum est aliquando diluuium per totam terram, ut peccatores delerentur: et tamen illi qui euaserunt in arca, sacramentum futurae ecclesiae demonstrabant, quae nunc in fluctibus saeculi natat, et per lignum crucis christi a submersione liberatur.” See also bapt. 5.28.39, in which Augustine uses mysterium to designate the mystery of the Church’s eschatological perfection contained in the figure of the ark: “quapropter si apparent hominibus in unitate catholica baptizati, qui saeculo uerbis solis et non factis renuntiant, quomodo pertinent ad huius arcae mysterium, in quibus non est conscientiae bonae interrogatio?”
according to the mystery of God’s eternal plan, this unity is not simply reserved for the eschaton, but is accomplished to some degree in the visible, historical Church. As such, the historical Church is a “mystery” and “sacrament” (sacramentum) that reveals and makes present the transcendent mysterium of the Church’s perfect eschatological unity, according to a Pauline framework. This unity is realized in the Church’s sacramental life, and in a particular way at the Eucharistic altar, as we shall see in later chapters.

Similarly, in City of God (De civitate Dei, ca. 413-427) 15.27, Augustine again uses Noah’s ark as a figure of the unity of the visible Church. “For nations have already filled the Church, and the clean and the unclean are contained as it were in the framework of the Church’s unity, until the appointed end is reached.” The “clean and unclean” are the good and the wicked in the Church, for during this time, the Church is a mystery as a mixed body (corpus permixtum) of wheat and chaff that continues to undergo purification. The wicked have cut themselves off from union with the Church.

Nevertheless, precisely in this condition, with all of its ambiguities, the Church is united as one body, and thus serves as a visible sign or “sacrament” of the union of the

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307 See bapt. 5.28.39, in which the unity signified by the ark is accomplished through baptism: “quapropter si apparent hominibus in unitate catholica baptizati, qui saeculo uerbis solis et non factis renuntiant, quomodo pertinent ad huius arcae mysterium, in quibus non est conscientiae bonae interrogatio?”

308 civ. Dei 15.26, 27: “procul dubio figura est peregrinantis in hoc saeculo ciuitatis dei, hoc est ecclesiae…sed si et hoc ad mysterium pertinebat, ibi erant…non autem ad praefigurandam ecclesiam pertinere tam multiplicia rerum signa gestarum, nisi fuerit contentiosus, nemo permittitur opinari. iam enim gentes ita ecclesiam repleuerunt, mundique et inmundi, donec certum ueniatur ad finem, ita eius unitatis quadam compagine continentur, ut ex hoc uno manifestissimo etiam de ceteris, quae obscurius aliquanto dicta sunt et difficilius agnosci queunt, dubitare fas non sit.”

309 Cf. cat. rud. 17.26; 19.31; 25.48; 27.53.

310 civ. Dei 15.26-27; cf. c. Faust. 12.20; ep. Jo. 1.2; en. Ps. 44.3.
“whole Christ” (*totus Christus*). Thus, the Church cannot be reduced to a purely spiritual, invisible reality, for it is a transcendent mystery made present visibly in history, precisely in the Church that celebrates the sacraments. The visible Church thus serves as a “sacrament” (*sacramentum*) of unity, for it makes present and effects the mysterious union of the *totus Christus*.

Augustine has developed a fundamentally Biblical framework for his ecclesiology, following his intense study of Paul. For Augustine, as for Paul, God’s plan is to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10),\(^{311}\) for Christ is the mystery (Col. 2:2, 4:3),\(^{312}\) hidden from eternity in God (Rom. 16:25-27),\(^{313}\) manifested in the flesh according to the mystery of God’s will (Eph. 1:7-9).\(^{314}\) God’s plan for union with his people is accomplished through the great mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32), enacted in history, and perfectly fulfilled at the eschaton (1 Cor. 15:51).\(^{315}\) As the body of Christ, the Church is intrinsic to the mystery, such that Augustine declares the “total mystery” (*totum mysterium*) of Scripture is the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*), Christ and the Church.\(^{316}\) The Church is part of the mystery now revealed visibly in history according to

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\(^{311}\) *praed. sanct.* 35; “ut ostenderet nobis mysterium uoluntatis suae, secundum bonam uoluntatem suam, quam proposuit in illo, in dispensatione plenitudinis temporum instaurare omnia in Christo quae in caelis sunt et quae in terris in ipso;” *praed. sanct.* 36; *persev.* 15; s. 1.3: “dicit enim apostolus: ut ostenderet nobis mysterium uoluntatis suae secundum bonam uoluntatem suam, quam proposuit in illo in dispositione plenitudinis temporum, instaurare omnia in Christo quae in caelis sunt, quae in terris, in ipso.”

\(^{312}\) Cf. c. *Faust.* 12.32; *cat. rud.* 19.33; *Trin.* 13.6.24; *civ. Dei* 10.8; c. *Jul.* 2.92; 2.113; 4.49; 4.64; 6.34; *praed. sanct.* 40.

\(^{313}\) c. *Max.* 2.13.2.

\(^{314}\) E.g. *persev.* 15; *praed. sanct.* 35-36; s. 1.3.

\(^{315}\) c. *Faust.* 11.3; 11.7; 16.29; c. *Adim.* 12; *Trin.* 4.3.6; ep. 205.14; he also refers to the *mysterium* of the kingdom, citing Mt. 13:11 and Rev. 10:7; cf. *Gn. litt.* 5.19; *persev.* 35; 37; *praed. sanct.* 40; and on the “mystery” (*mysterium*) of eternal life, see *civ. Dei* 7.32-33.

\(^{316}\) *en. Ps.* 79.1; 138.2.
God’s purpose for the redemption of creation (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20-22), after the pattern of the incarnation. The assumption of human nature by the eternal Word in time and space means that the saving mystery of God’s plan is a redemption of the Church in history, not a redemption from history. In the Church’s visible celebration of the sacraments, the mysterium is made efficacious in history, so that God’s salvific plan for the salvation of his people is carried out. The Church mediates the saving mysterium precisely through her celebration of the sacramenta, and thus in her visible sacramental worship, the Church is herself a “mystery” and “sacrament” of salvation.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the primary framework for Augustine’s mature ecclesiology, as well as his theology of the sacraments, is the Pauline notion of μυστήριον, distinguished according to its particular senses in the Latin patristic tradition as mysterium and sacramentum. The eternal, transcendent reality is made present and efficacious through the sacramentum, such that the historical aspect is intrinsic to the mystery in an irreducible way. Such a distinction serves to unite rather than to separate the mystery, as evident in Augustine’s works, particularly after his sustained meditation on the writings of Paul in the 390s.

In the end, there can be no separation of the invisible and visible, for the mystery necessarily encompasses both aspects. This is a re-casting of categories according to a

317 This link between Augustine’s incarnational Christology and ecclesiology is essential. Robert Dodaro observes that in Sermon 183.10-11, Augustine proclaims that “Christians do not properly understand the incarnation unless they believe that in becoming man, Christ united himself to the Church as it exists in history, in such a way that to reject the Church in its historical form and mission is to deny what Christ became when he came in the flesh;” see Robert Dodaro, “‘Omnes haeretici negant Christum in carne uenisse’ (Aug., sermon. 183.9.13): Augustine on the Incarnation as Criterion for Orthodoxy,” Augustinian Studies 38:1 (2007), 169.
Biblical rather than philosophical framework to unite the eternal and temporal.\textsuperscript{318} The incarnation provides the foundation for Augustine’s understanding of history, for as Jaroslav Pelikan asserts, “[Augustine] learned to go beyond Neoplatonism to cherish time and history as the locus of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God within the temporal process… The ‘unbroken continuity’ of creatures having their being in time and therefore coming into existence and passing, while not perfect in the way that the continuity of eternity was, did nevertheless have a reality and a goodness of its own.”\textsuperscript{319} The following chapters examine how Augustine goes “beyond Neoplatonism to cherish time and history” in his developing theology of the Church as the body and bride of Christ, and as sacrifice.

\textsuperscript{318} See the discussion by Jaroslav Pelikan, \textit{The Mystery of Continuity}, esp. 38-9, 127.

\textsuperscript{319} Pelikan, \textit{The Mystery of Continuity}, 38-9.
CHAPTER TWO

THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Biblical image of the Church as “body” (corpus) is one of the most prevalent themes in Augustine’s ecclesiology.¹ It has been used to suggest that Augustine holds a “double concept” of the Church: an “empirical church” and a “spiritual community of saints,” a “visible church and the soul of the church,” the “earthly Church and the city of God.”² However, a “two-fold” concept of the Church³ fails to capture the complexity of Augustine’s ecclesiology.

As we have seen, Augustine develops a Pauline theology of mystery that provides the foundation for his mature ecclesiology. The Church is a transcendent “mystery” (mysterium), made present in history as a sacramentum. The distinction between mysterium and sacramentum serves to unite the visible and invisible aspects of the one mystery. This mature theology, however, is not in place until the late 390s. Augustine’s

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² Tarsicius van Bavel, “Church,” in Augustine Through the Ages, 173.

³ Van Oort, 124.
early works demonstrate the influence of Neoplatonism upon his thought. While he upholds the authority of the Church and her sacred rites, his confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts seems to undermine the distinctive mediation of the Church and the sacraments. The Church is portrayed as a teacher of wisdom, and the goal of the Church’s life is a kind of vision through the purification of the mind. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are framed within this goal of vision.

After Augustine’s focused reading of Paul in the 390s, he reconfigures the Plotinian ascent according to the paschal mystery. The aim is no longer a kind of vision that may be achieved through the purification of the mind by philosophy. Rather, the sacraments of the Church offer the unique purification of the one Mediator that has the power to forgive sins, and to bring the Church to the heavenly homeland \((patria)\). Any Plotinian elements are assimilated into a fundamentally Scriptural and sacramental framework.

For Augustine, the Church is not on pilgrimage away from the body. As the body of Christ, the Church is on journey \((iter)\) to the \((patria)\) through a process of growth and transformation during its pilgrimage in history. This chapter traces the theme of the Church as the body of Christ, which displays the development of his Biblical thinking, and provides a fruitful way of exploring the Church as “sacrament” \((sacramentum)\).

*Plotinus and the Early Augustine*

Augustine incorporates many of Plotinus’s ideas and often adopts characteristic turns and phrases of Plotinus, as evident in the early works. For Plotinus, purification
consists of an “inward” turn away from all material things.⁴ “He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away for ever from the material beauty that once made his joy.”⁵ The “inner” turn is, at the same time, a turning away from the “outer” so as to escape history. In the end, there is nothing to be gained from embodiment in history. It must be discarded entirely, for it represents a degradation of Soul.

So, we may justly say, a Soul becomes ugly—by something foisted upon it by sinking itself into the alien, by a fall, a descent into body, into Matter…Gold is degraded when it is mixed with earthly particles; if these be worked out, the gold is left and is beautiful…And so the Soul.⁶

For Plotinus, the movement within leads to a rejection of bodily, historical existence. The Soul must return to a pristine state through a liberation from history. The “loveliness of this world” comes only in “communion in Ideal-Form,”⁷ for the only way a “material thing” may become beautiful is “by communicating in the thought that flows from the Divine.”⁸ This is possible only by an unmediated, “inward” turn. “It is that you find in yourself, or admire in another, loftiness of spirit; righteousness of life; disciplined purity; courage of the majestic face; gravity, modesty that goes fearless and tranquil and passionless; and, shining down upon all, the light of god-like Intellection.”⁹ The Soul purifies itself,¹⁰ so as to ascend to the Light.

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⁴ Enn. 1.6.5, 9.
⁶ Enn. 1.6.5; in Greek, “Soul” most often appears as ψυχή.
⁷ Enn. 1.6.1.
⁸ Enn. 1.6.2; see Gerard O’Daly, “The presence of the One in Plotinus,” in Platonism Pagan and Christian (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001): 159-69.
And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful...cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast...When you know that you have become this perfect work, when you are self-gathered in the purity of your being, nothing now remaining that can shatter that inner unity, nothing from without clinging to the authentic man, when you find yourself wholly true to your essential nature, wholly that only veritable Light which is not measured by space...when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become very vision: now call up all your confidence, strike forward yet a step—you need a guide no longer—strain, and see.\(^{11}\)

The ascent yields vision via an “inward” turn away from the material, such that the Soul returns to the One Light, Truth, Beauty and Goodness. The ascent of the Soul means an escape from history by turning within. “How are you to see into a virtuous Soul and know its loveliness? Withdraw into yourself and look.”\(^{12}\) The journey is not “by feet,” rather it is an ascent to Truth.

What then is our course, what the manner of our flight? This is not a journey for the feet; the feet bring us only from land to land; nor need you think of coach or ship to carry you away; all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see: you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use.\(^{13}\)

For Plotinus, the end of the journey is vision. The Soul contemplates the True, Good, and Beautiful. History has no meaning or effect, except insofar as the liberation of the Soul is accomplished. The purpose of purification is to enable the ascent that yields vision.

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\(^{9}\) Enn. 1.6.5.

\(^{10}\) See Gerard O'Daly, “Plotinus' philosophy of self,” in Platonism Pagan and Christian, 1-121.

\(^{11}\) Enn. 1.6.9.

\(^{12}\) Enn. 1.6.9.

\(^{13}\) Enn.1.6.8.
Augustine’s early works demonstrate his indebtedness to this kind of Platonism. In the dialogues of Cassiciacum (ca. 386/387), Augustine places a certain degree of primacy upon an achieved vision through the ascent to Truth. In *De beata vita*, Augustine recognizes the authority of the mysteries (*mysteria*) handed on by the Church.\(^{14}\) The Church’s mysteries (*mysteria*) have purifying effects for the many who participate in the sacred rites (*sacris*). “The life of good men is most easily purified, not indeed by circumlocution of disputation, but by the authority of the mysteries (*mysteriorum auctoritate*)”\(^{15}\) The rites “into which we are now being initiated,” i.e. baptism and the Eucharist, bring one to “that blessed life (*beata vita*) by strong faith, lively hope, and burning love.”\(^{16}\) However, Augustine places priority upon the vision of truth over the virtues in these early works.\(^{17}\) The “blessed life” (*beata vita*) consists of knowing the Truth (*veritas*) by which one is led, in which one rejoices, and through which one is united to the Supreme Measure.\(^{18}\) The goal is union achieved through vision, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are framed within this goal, as evident in *Soliloquies*.\(^{19}\)

\(^{14}\) *b. vita* 1.4: “lectis autem Plotini paucissimis libris, cuius te esse studiosissimum accepi, conlataque cum eis, quantum potui, etiam illorum auctoritate, qui divina mysteria tradiderunt, sic exarsi, ut omnes illas uellem ancoras rumpere, nisi me nonnullorum hominum existimatio commoueret.”

\(^{15}\) *ord.* 2.9.27: “doceat enim oportet et factis potestatem suam et humilitate clementiam et praeceptione naturam, quae omnia sacris, quibus initiatur, secretius firmiusque traduntur, in quibus honorum uita faciilime non disputationum ambagibus sed mysteriorum auctoritate purgatur.”

\(^{16}\) *b. vita* 4.35: “beata vita…ad quam nos festinantes posse perduci solida fide alacri spe flagranti caritate praeustum est.”

\(^{17}\) *b. vita* 2.28; *sol.* 1.6.13; *ord.* 2.19.51.

\(^{18}\) *b. vita* 4.35: “illa est igitur plena satietas animorum, haec est beata vita, pie perfectque cognoscere a quo inducaris in veritatem, qua veritate perfuarius, per quid connectaris summo modo.”

\(^{19}\) *sol.* 1.6.12-7.14.
Furthermore, Augustine displays confidence in the purification of the mind through the liberal arts and philosophy.\(^{20}\) The truths attained by philosophy will not contradict the mysteries of Christian faith,\(^{21}\) although only the educated few will attain to the heights of wisdom apart from the sacred rites. In this way, the mediation of the sacraments is mitigated, for it is not clear how, if at all, the sacraments of the Church offer a unique kind of purification. The end of vision may be achieved either by participation in the Church’s sacred rites, or by the purification of the mind through philosophy and the liberal arts.

*The Body of Christ: Early Works*

Augustine speaks of the Church as body for the first time in *On Genesis Against the Manichees (De Genesi adversus Manicheos, ca. 388/389).*\(^{22}\) Augustine is aware of this Scriptural image, however, he does not develop it in these works, and the definitive Biblical framework of his theology is not yet in place. The Church is born from Christ’s side on the cross, just as Eve was created from the side of Adam,\(^{23}\) such that the Church is built up as a body in history through the sacrament of baptism, symbolized by the water that flowed from Christ’s side.\(^{24}\) This is a mystery of transformation through

\(^{20}\) *Ord. 2.5.16*: “philosophia rationem promittit et uix paucissimos liberat, quos tamen non modo non contemnere illa mysteria sed sola intellegere, ut intellegenda sunt, cogit…”

\(^{21}\) *c. Acad. 3.20.43*: “quod autem subtilissima racione persequendum est - ita enim iam sum affectus, ut quid sit umer non credendo solum sed etiam intellegendo apprehendere impatenter desiderem - apud platonicos me interim, quod sacris nostris non repugnet, reperturum esse confido.” See also *mor.* 8.15.


\(^{23}\) *Gn. adv. Man.* 2.19.
incorporation. The sacraments have effects insofar as they mediate the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, leading to the formation of the Church from Christ’s side, just as “a real, visible woman was made, historically speaking, from the body of the first man.”

The Church’s growth in history is essential to the mystery revealed in Scripture, and this growth is mediated through the sacraments. Yet in his early works, Augustine effectively undermines the mediation of the sacraments by virtue of his confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts, which are sources of wisdom that offer the purification of the mind toward the aim of vision. It is unclear how the Church offers a distinctive kind of purification.

The goal of vision remains in place in Augustine’s On the Advantage of Believing (De utilitate credendi ca. 391/2). Augustine portrays the Church as a teacher, whose authority (auctoritas) “is there for those who are incapable of gazing on the truth, so that they may become fit to do so by allowing themselves to be purified.”

The soul (anima) must be purified in order to see truth, and the mysteries of the Church (mysteria ecclesiae catholicae) provide such purification for the uneducated masses, since otherwise only a few would come to know truth. The rites of the Church have the effect

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24 Ibid.

25 Gn. adv. Man. 2.17: “quapropter etsi uisibilis femina secundum historiam de corpore uiri primo facta est a domino deo, non utique sine causa ita facta est, nisi ut aliquod secretum intimaret.”

26 util. cred. 1.17.35; quant. 34.77; mor. 7.11; 10.16; 28.55-56.

27 util. cred. 1.16.34: “homini ergo non ualenti uerum intueri, ut ad id fiat idoneus purgari que se sinat, auctoritas praesto est.”

28 util. cred. 1.16.34: “uerum igitur uidere uelle, ut animum purges, cum ideo purgetur, ut uideas, peruersum certe atque praeposterum est.”

29 util. cred. 1.14.31, 2.4, 3.9, 7.14, 16.
of cleansing the mind, for belief in Christ has to do with “instilling into the mind” the truth of what Christ said.\textsuperscript{31} Charity is subordinated to vision,\textsuperscript{32} and the present aim is “to become wise,” that is, “to cling to the truth.”\textsuperscript{33} Philosophy and the liberal arts are sources of wisdom that provide the purification that enables one “to cling to the truth.”\textsuperscript{34}

Augustine’s works from the mid-390s demonstrate the priority of vision over charity. In his commentary on Galatians (ca. 394/5),\textsuperscript{35} Augustine emphasizes the “contemplation of truth” (\textit{contemplationem ueviratis}) as the meaning revealed behind the \textit{sacramenta} of Scripture, for “every sacrament (\textit{sacramentum}), when understood, refers either to the contemplation of the truth or to good morals.”\textsuperscript{36}

Although Augustine never abandons the aim of “clinging to truth,” nevertheless, as we shall see, in his mature works the final end is to cling to God in charity. This is not a solitary activity achieved through an “inward turn” so as to yield vision. Rather, it is the worship of a whole community of believers in union with God and one another in charity. In the end, the enjoyment of God is not a speculative vision of Truth, but a communion with Christ and the members of his body, the Church.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{util. cred.} 1.7.16, 11.25, 14.31, 15.33-18.36.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{util. cred.} 1.14.31: “deinde fateor me iam christo credidisse et in animum induxisse id esse uerum, quod ille dixerit, etiamsi nulla ratione fulciatur, hoc, haeretice, principio me ducturus es?”

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{util. cred.} 1.18.36.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{util. cred.} 1.16.34: “sed id nunc agitur, ut sapientes esse possimus, id est inhaerere ueritati: quod profecto sordidus animus non potest.”

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{ord.} 2.5.16; \textit{util. cred.} 1.7.16.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas}, ca. 394/5.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{ex. Gal.} 19: “Omne autem sacramentum cum intelligitur, aut ad contemplationem ueritatis refertur aut ad bonos mores.” Augustine mentions the love of God and neighbor, yet this love seems to be subordinate to the contemplation of truth. “Contemplatio ueritatis in solius dei dilectione fundata est, boni mores in dilectione dei et proximi, in quibus duobus praeceptis tota lex pendet et prophetae.”
The movement toward the priority of charity over vision can be seen in the first work after Augustine’s ordination to the episcopacy, *On Eighty-Three Questions* (ca. 396). In this text, Augustine begins to emphasize charity as the goal of Christian life, and as a means for the purification of the soul (*anima*). Augustine speaks of charity using Latin terms such as *caritas*, *dilectio*, and *amor*. Charity (*caritas*) is none other than the love of God above all things. Charity leads to freedom from clinging to temporal things, and from the slavery of fear. This charity is mediated by the “sacrament of regeneration” (*regenerationis sacramentis*) of the Church, i.e. baptism, by which the “old man” is transformed and becomes the “new man,” following Paul in 2 Cor. 5:17. Augustine identifies the two-fold commandment to love God and one’s neighbor (Matt. 22:37-39) as the completion of wisdom. In this way, Augustine prioritizes charity over wisdom. The Church offers the “first fruits of the spirit” (Rom. 8:23) by being “seized by

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37 *De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus*; some of the questions and responses were collected when Augustine founded a community at Thagaste in 388, while other responses were not written until Augustine began his episcopacy in 396.

38 *div. qu.* 38.1: “*deus igitur et animus cum amantur, caritas proprie dicitur, purgatissima et consummata, si nihil aliud amatur; hanc et dilectionem dici placet.*”

39 *div. qu.* 38.1-4.

40 *div. qu.* 36.1.

41 *div. qu.* 36.2: “*iam uero cum aliqua non peccandi consuetudo quod onerosum putabatur facile esse persuaserit, incipiat gustari dulcedo pietatis et commendari pulchritudo virtutis, ut caritatis libertas prae seruitut e timoris emineat.*”

42 *div. qu.* 36.2: “*tunc iam persuadendum est fidelibus praecedentibus regenerationis sacramentis, quae necesse est plurimum moueant, quid intersit inter duos homines, ueterem et nouum, exteriorem et interiorem, terrenum et caelestem, id est inter eum qui bona carnalia et temporalia et eum qui spiritualia et aeterna sectatur, monendum que ne peritura beneficia et transeuntia expectentur a deo, quibus et inprobi homines abundare possunt, sed firma et sempiterna, pro quibus accipiendis omnia quae in hoc mundo bona putantur et mala penitus contemnenda sunt.*”

43 *div. qu.* 36.4: “*quapropter dei timor non solum inchoat, sed etiam perficit sapientiam, id est in illo qui summe diliget deum et proximum tamquam se ipsum.*”
the divine fire of charity.” Furthermore, the “divine charity” mediated through the sacred rites has the effect of purifying the soul, not for the purpose of achieving a static vision, but rather for the end of communion with God and neighbor in charity.

The Reconfiguration of the Journey

By the late 390s, Augustine subordinates vision to charity, and the blessed life (beata vita) comes not by way of philosophy, but by participation in a community united in love. This is evident in *De doctrina Christiana,* in which Augustine reconfigures the “journey” (iter) in terms of the means and the end. As we have seen, Augustine has developed a thoroughly Biblical, sacramental theology by this point, due to his reception of the patristic tradition and his reading of Paul.

During the Church’s pilgrimage through history, we are all “exiles in a foreign land,” seeking to reach the “homeland” (patria) where we may find true happiness. The “life of bliss” can be found in God alone, and all of the things of this world are to be used

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44 *div. qu.* 67.6: “et bene dixit primitias habentes spiritus, id est quorum iam spiritus tamquam sacrificium oblati sunt deo et divino caritatis igne comprehensi sunt.”

45 *doc. Chr.* 1.38.42-44.

46 *De doctrina Christiana* was not completed until 426/7, even though Augustine had already composed most of books 1-3 around 396. On the gap in composition, see C. Kannengiesser, “The Interrupted *De doctrina christiana,*” in *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture,* eds. Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 4-14.

47 *doc. Chr.* 1.4.4: “quomodo ergo, si essemus peregrini, qui beate uiuere nisi in patria non possemus, ea que peregrinatone utique miseri et miseriam finire cupientes in patriam redire uellemus, opus esset uel terrestribus uel marinis uelliculis, quibus utendum esset, ut ad patriam, qua fruendum erat, peruenire ueleremus; quod si amoenitates itineris et ipsa gestatio ueliculorum nos delectaret, conversi ad fruendum his, quibus uti debuimus, nollemus cito uiam finire et peruersa suauitate implicati alienaremur a patria, cuius suauitas faceret beatos, sic in huius mortalitatis uita uerumtemporalibus que rebus aeterna et spiritalia capiamus.”
(uti) in order to bring one to enjoy God as end.\textsuperscript{48} God alone is to be enjoyed (frui),\textsuperscript{49} for “enjoyment consists in clinging to something lovingly for its own sake,”\textsuperscript{50} and “a thing is to be loved for its own sake” if it “constitutes the life of bliss” (\textit{in eo constituitur beata uita}).\textsuperscript{51} Yet, we are “beaten back” from our home country” due to the “contrary winds of crooked habits,” and by clinging to things “that are inferior and secondary” to what is “better and more worthwhile.”\textsuperscript{52} All of humanity is in a state of exile and sickness due to sin,\textsuperscript{53} a kind of sickness demonstrated by the inordinate love of temporal things.

For Augustine, the journey (\textit{iter}) to the \textit{patria} is possible only because of the mercy (\textit{misericordia}) of God in the incarnation.\textsuperscript{54} Christ, the Wisdom of God,\textsuperscript{55} became flesh in order to heal our ills,\textsuperscript{56} becoming the way home by “deliberately making himself the pavement under our feet along which we could return home.”\textsuperscript{57} This journey is “not from place to place, but one traveled by the affections” (\textit{affectum}), a way that was “being

\textsuperscript{48} doc. Chr.1.4.4.

\textsuperscript{49} doc. Chr.1.4.4, 22.20-34.38.

\textsuperscript{50} doc. Chr.1.4.4.

\textsuperscript{51} doc. Chr.1.22.20.

\textsuperscript{52} doc. Chr. 1.9.9: “praorum igitur morum quasi contrariis flatibus ab ipsa patria repercutiuntur homines posteriora atque inferiora sectantes quam illud, quod esse melius atque praestantius confitentur.”

\textsuperscript{53} doc. Chr.1.14.13.

\textsuperscript{54} doc. Chr.1.17.16.

\textsuperscript{55} doc. Chr.1.10.10-14.13.

\textsuperscript{56} doc. Chr.1.14.13.

\textsuperscript{57} doc. Chr.1.17.16: “porro quoniam in uia sumus nec uia locorum est sed affectuum, quam intercludebant quasi saepa quaedam spinosa praeteritorum malitia peccatorum, quid liberalius et misericordius facere potuit, qui se ipsum nobis, qua rediremus, substernere uoluit, nisi ut omnia donaret peccata conuersis et grauiter fixa interdicta reditus nostri pro nobis crucifixus euelleret?”
blocked, as by a barricade of thorn bushes, by the malice of our past sins.” Augustine evokes Plotinus’s language of the journey, yet he recasts it in terms of the path of the healing of the affections. Christ was crucified “for us to root out the ban blocking our return that had been so firmly fixed in place,” thereby enabling us to “enjoy that truth which is unchangeably alive.” Christ is the One Mediator, who became the Way (via) by his paschal sacrifice that forgives sins and heals the affections. The Church is the locus of mercy and forgiveness, and the journey is a way of healing for a communal body in a process of purification, whereby “our minds have to be purified” in order to “perceive the light” of truth and “to cling to it once perceived.”

Augustine continues to use Platonic imagery, however, he reconfigures the final end, just as he has reconfigured the ascent. The return to the patria does not come about by an “inward turn,” in unmediated fashion. Instead, it is made possible by the “mercy” and “compassion” (misericordia) of the Mediator, who became the Way (via) through his paschal mystery (mysterium) that heals humanity. The members of the Church are taken up into this mystery, so as to undergo the journey of the healing of the affections, whereby “our minds” may “perceive” and “cling” to the light of truth. This truth is not the Neoplatonic One, for as Augustine asserts, “the light of truth reveals God as Trinity

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58 doc. Chr. 1.17.16.
59 doc. Chr. 1.17.16.
60 doc. Chr. 1.10.10.
61 doc. Chr. 1.17.16.
62 doc. Chr. 1.10.10: “quapropter, cum illa veritate perfruendum sit, quae incommutabiler uiuit, et in ea trinitas deus, auctor et conditor uniuersitatis, rebus, quas condidit, consultat, purgandus est animus, ut et perspicere illam lucem ualeat, et inhaerere perspectae.”
63 doc. Chr. 4.21.46: “iam tunc igitur in mysterio declaratum est, quia dominus iesus in carne sua totius mundi peccata crucifixus aboleret nec solum delicta factorum, sed etiam cupiditates animorum.”
(Trinitas), who provides for all the things he has made as author and maker of the universe.” The enjoyment of God does, in fact, yield a vision, yet not by a turning away from the material, but precisely as a renewed vision of all of creation from the perspective of divine love. In this light, one is able to gaze upon creation and to see all things as good (Gen. 1:31), due to God’s providential care. Vision does not come at the cost of creation, but instead is taken up into the economy of God’s love, such that one may see and proclaim that creation is good.

The Church’s purification takes place in and through her earthly pilgrimage. “During this age [Christ] trains and purges [the Church] with various kinds of salutary vexation and distress, so that once it has been snatched from this world, he may bind his wife the Church to himself for ever, having no stain or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:27).” Through the Church’s pilgrimage in history, Christ purifies his bride, the Church, so that she may cling to him and travel the way of the healing of the affections. This is the work of Christ, the Mediator. It is not the purification accomplished by the individual soul in solitude. Moreover, while the one body, i.e. the Church, is still “on the way” to its home country, Christ has given the Holy Spirit to the members, so that “in the Spirit we already possess, amid the adversities of this life…the gifts proper to each one of us for the building up of his Church.” The Church is built up as a body precisely during

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64 Doc. Chr. 1.10.10: “quapropter, cum illa ueritate perfruendum sit, quae incommutabiliter uiuit, et in ea trinitas deus, auctor et conditor uniuersitatis, rebus, quas condidit, consulat, purgandus est animus, ut et perspicere illam lucem ualeat, et inhaerere perspectae.”

65 Doc. Chr. 1.16.15: “est enim ecclesia corpus eius, sicut apostolica doctrina commendat, quae coniux etiam eius dicitur. corpus ergo suum multis membris diversa officia gerentibus, nodo unitatis et caritatis tamquam sanitatis adstringit. exercet autem hoc tempore et purgat medicinalibus quibusdam molestiis, ut erutam de hoc saeculo in aeternum sibi copulet coniugem ecclesiam non habentem maculam aut rugam aut aliquid eiusmodi.”
its earthly pilgrimage, according to the diversity of gifts given through the dispensation of
God’s providential care. As the one body of Christ, the members are bound “in unity and
love,” for “while his body consists of many parts, having different functions, he binds it
tightly together with the knot of unity and love, as its proper kind of health.” The
Church’s union in charity is mediated through the sacrament of baptism. In the “holy bath
of baptism,” each member is incorporated into Christ’s body and “conceived by the Holy
Spirit,” so as to “give birth” to the “twin fruit of charity, that is to love of God and
neighbor,” the two-fold commandment of Scripture. In the Church’s sacramental life,
the mysterious union of the one body of Christ is accomplished.

Augustine further reconfigures the journey as an ascent to God’s mercy
(misericordia) through a sacramental economy in Confessions. In 7.10.16, Augustine
describes an ascent that seems to follow a Plotinian scheme. “I entered under your
guidance the innermost places of my being.” Yet Augustine asserts that this is possible
“only because you had become my helper.” Then “with the vision of my spirit, such as
it was, I saw the incommutable light…Your rays beamed intensely upon me, beating

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66 doc. Chr. 1.15.14: “quibus autem uerbis dici aut qua cogitatione capi potest praemium, quod ille
in fine daturus est, quando ad consolationem huius itineris de spiritu suo tantum dedit, quo in aduersis uiae
huius fiduciam caritatem que tantam eius, quem nondum uidemus, habeamus et dona unicuique propria ad
instructionem ecclesiae suae, ut id quod ostendit esse faciendum, non solum sine murmure, sed etiam cum
delectatione faciamus?”

67 doc. Chr. 1.16.15: “corpus ergo suum multis membris diuera officia gerentibus, nodo unitatis et
caritatis tanquam sanitatis adstringit.”

68 doc. Chr. 2.6.7: “qui boni fideles et ueri dei serui deponentes onera saeculi ad sanctum baptismi
laacrum uenerunt atque inde ascendentes conceptione sancti spiritus fructum dant geminae caritatis, id est
dei et proximi.”

69 See Cavadini, “Eucharistic Exegesis in Augustine’s ‘Confessions’,” Augustinian Studies, 41:1

70 conf. 7.10.16: “et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intraui in intima mea duce te et potui,
quoniam factus es adiutor meus.”
back my feeble gaze.”  

Augustine is “beaten back” as he ascends, declaring, “I knew myself to be far away from you in a region of unlikeness.”  The only way to reach the patria is by receiving the mercy of God, mediated through a Eucharistic economy. “I seemed to hear your voice from on high: ‘I am the food of the mature; grow then, and you will eat me. You will not change me into yourself like bodily food; you will be changed into me.’” This is a far cry from the ascent of the Platonists, for it is predicated upon the incarnation of the Word, who descends into history in order that humanity might ascend to God. This is not an “inner” ascent in solitude, in Plotinian fashion; rather, it is entirely dependent upon Christ the Mediator and the mercy (misericordia) of God, which is mediated in a distinctive manner by the sacrament of the Eucharist. The merciful love of God is made efficacious in the Eucharistic sacrament, enabling one to cling to God as the unchanging good. By participating in the Eucharistic economy, one receives the renewed vision that leads one to proclaim, “everything is good.” Christ, the eternal Word, is the one Mediator whose humility has healing effects, and provides the strength needed in order to enjoy God.

71 conf. 7.10.16: “et reuerberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei radians in me uehemerenter, et contremui amore et horrore.”

72 conf. 7.10.16: “et inueni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis;” cf. Enn. 1.6.8.

73 conf. 7.10.16: “tamquam audirem uocem tuam de excelsa: “cibus sum grandium: cresce et manducabis me.”

74 Augustine has called to mind the incarnation through his exegesis of John 1 and Phil. 2 in conf. 7.9.14.

75 conf. 7.11.17.

76 conf. 7.11.17-12.18.

77 agon. 11: “The Son of God then assumed a human nature and bore patiently therein all human misery. The healing power of this medicine for men is beyond all comprehension. For, what pride can be cured, if it is not cured by the humility of the Son of God?”
Accordingly I looked for a way to gain the strength I needed to enjoy you, but I did not find it until I embraced the mediator…nor had I known him as the food which, though I was not yet strong enough to eat it, he had mingled with our flesh; for the Word became flesh so that your Wisdom, through whom you created all things, might become for us the milk adapted to our infancy.\(^{78}\)

The Eucharist is the sacrament of humility that “heals the swollen pride” of the pretentious ones, i.e. the philosophers, and “nourishes their love, that they may not wander even further away through self-confidence, but rather weaken as they see before their feet the Godhead grown weak by sharing our garments of skin.”\(^{79}\) Yet the philosophers reject this economy of mercy, for they cannot accept the weakness of God that “raises up to himself those creatures who bow before him.”\(^{80}\) For this reason, the philosophers “see the goal” from afar, “but not the way to it and the Way to our beatific homeland.”\(^{81}\) In 7.21.27, Augustine declares that he learned from his reading of Paul that “it is a matter of grace that the searcher is not only invited to see you, who are ever the same, but healed as well, so that he can possess you.”\(^{82}\) Vision is reconfigured according

\(^{78}\) *conf.* 7.18.24: “et quaebam uiam comparandi roboris, quod esset idoneum ad fruendum te, nec inueniebam, donec amplecterer mediatorem dei et hominum, hominem christum iesum, qui est super omnia deus benedictus in saecula, uocantem et dicentem: ego sum uia et ueritas et uita, et cibum, cui capiendo inualidus eram, miscentem carni, quoniam uerbum caro factum est, ut infantiae nostrae lactesceret sapientia tua, per quam creasti omnia.”

\(^{79}\) *conf.* 7.18.24: “uerbum enim tuum, aeterna ueritas, superioribus creaturae tuae partibus supereminens subditos erigit ad se ipsam, in inferioribus autem aedificauit sibi humilem domum de limo nostro, per quam subdendos deprimeret a se ipsis et ad se traiceret, sanans tumorem et nutriens amorem, ne fiducia sui progresserentur longius, sed potius infirmarentur uidentes ante pedes suos infirmam diuinitatem ex participatione tunicae pelliciae nostrae et lassi prosternerentur in eam, illa autem surgens leuaret eos.”

\(^{80}\) *conf.* 7.18.24.

\(^{81}\) *conf.* 7.20.26; “quid interesset inter praesumptionen et confessionem, inter uidentes, quo eundum sit, nec uidentes, qua, et uiam ducentem ad beatificam patriam non tantum cernendam sed et habitandam.” See also *Ev. Jo.* 2.2, in which Augustine asserts that the only way to the fatherland is to cling to the Cross of Christ, which carries one across the sea of this world.
to the enjoyment of God that comes from the healing of the affections by the merciful love of God in Christ, who became the Way under our feet so that “whoever is too far off to see may yet walk in the way that will bring him to the place of seeing and possession.”  

This Way cannot be found in the books of the Neoplatonists, for they cannot teach what they have not received.

Not in those pages are traced the lineaments of such loving kindness (misericordia), or the tears of confession, or the sacrifice of an anguished spirit offered to you from a contrite and humbled heart, or the salvation of a people, or a city chosen to be your bride, or the pledge of the Holy Spirit, or the cup of our ransom.

The “cup of our ransom” (poculum pretii nostri) is a Eucharistic reference that recasts the ascent according to a sacramental framework, predicated upon the humility of the one Mediator who entered history in order to redeem it. The sacraments are efficacious mysteries insofar as they mediate the love of God that heals and transforms the Church in history.

Furthermore, as Augustine shows in De doctrina, charity is mediated not only by the sacraments, but also by the members of the body of Christ, i.e. the Church, through the “works of mercy” (opera misericordiae) offered to one another. The works of

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82 conf. 7.21.27: “et coepi et inueni, quidquid illac uerum legeram, hac cum commendatione gratiae tuae dici, ut qui uidet non sic glorietur, quasi non acceperit non solum id quod uidet, sed etiam ut uideat quid enim habet quod non accepit? et ut te, qui es semper idem, non solum admoneatur ut uideat, sed etiam sanetur ut teneat.”

83 conf. 7.21.27: “et qui de longinquo uidere non potest, uiam tamen ambulet, qua ueniat et uideat, quia, etsi condelectetur homo legi dei secundum interiorem hominem, quid faciet de alia lege in membris suis repugnante legi mentis suae et se captuum ducente in lege peccati, quae est in membris eius?”

84 conf. 7.21.27: “hoc illae litterae non habent. non habent illae paginae uultum pietatis huui, lacrinas confessionis, sacrificium tuum, spiritum contribulatum, cor contribitum et humiliatum, populi salutem, sponsam ciiutatem, arram spiritus sancti, poculum pretii nostri.”

85 doc. Chr. 1.30.33.
mercy lead all to enjoy God as final end, by virtue of the ultimate work of mercy of Christ in the incarnation, for “he has mercy on us (miseretur), so that we might enjoy him, while we have mercy (miseremur) on each other, again so that we may all enjoy him.”

The Church’s journey is not an ascent of the soul in solitude, but rather a transformation of the whole body as a community of mercy (misericordia). As we shall see, in *City of God*, Augustine brings the works of mercy into a liturgical context with his Eucharistic theology and his understanding of the Church as sacrifice.

For Augustine, the Church as a “body” is not a collection of individuals enjoying the same vision. Instead, the Church is intended to be a “fellowship,” united in the love of God and one another (in societate dilectionis dei), such that “the supreme reward is that we should enjoy [God] and that all of us who enjoy him should also enjoy one another in him.”

The home country is a living body of charity. As Augustine declares in his *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, at the eschaton, “there will be one Christ, loving himself,” that is, one Christ, head and members, united in charity by virtue of the infinite love of God in Christ. This eschatological state is not an escape from bodily

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86 doc. Chr. 1.30.33: “ille enim nobis praebet misericordiam propter suam bonitatem, nos autem nobis inuicem propter illius: id est, ille nostri miseretur, ut se perfruamur, nos uero inuicem nostri miseremur, ut illo perfruamur.”

87 doc. Chr. 1.29.30: “si autem contrauenientem inuenerit, odit in illo uehementer odium dilecti sui et, quibus modis ualet, instat ut auferat quid nos in societate dilectionis dei agere conuenit, quo perfrui beate uiuere est et a quo habent omnes, qui eum diligunt, et quod sunt et quod eum diligunt, de quo nihil metuimus, ne cuiquam possit cognitus displicere, et qui se uult diligi, non ut sibi aliquid, sed ut eis, qui diligunt, aeternum praemium conferatur, hoc est ipse quem diligunt?”

88 doc. Chr. 1.32.35: “haec autem merces summa est, ut ipso perfruamur et omnes, qui eo fruimur, nobis etiam inuicem in ipso perfruamur.” Cf. 1.22.21-23.22, 27.28-29.30, 33.37, 39.43.

89 Charity will continue to grow when faith and hope fade out when one “attains to the things of eternity”; doc. Chr. 1.38.42-39.43.

90 “unus Christus seipsum amans;” ev. Jo. 10.3.
existence, nor is it simply the continuation of history. Rather, it will be a transformation of creation due to the redeeming love of Christ, for “just as the spirit is refashioned for the better after the repentance which has abolished its old habits of depravity, so too we are to believe and hope that the body, after this death which we all owe to the chains of sin, is going to be changed for the better at the time of the resurrection.”

This is not a(n) escape from bodily existence, but a redemption of it. The Church on earth is on journey toward the final resurrection, whereby “neither the human spirit nor the human body will experience total extinction,” but instead the godless will rise to “punishments,” whereas the godly will rise “to eternal life,” and God will restore all things.

Augustine’s emphasis on the resurrection of the body in his mature works demonstrates the development of his theology, and his movement away from any kind of Plotinian ascent that would lead to a rejection of bodily existence. As he declares in his work *On Catechizing the Uninstructed (De catechizandis rudibus, ca. 399/400),* “At the

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91 To love one another “in Christ” or “in God” means to love all for the sake of God, and toward God as end, so as to enjoy God together; *doc. Chr.* 1.22.20-21, 26.27, 27.28, 29.30, 31.34, 33.37. Furthermore, it indicates that the love shared among the members of the body is made possible by the self-emptying love of Christ, who binds the body together “with the knot of unity and love;” *doc. Chr.* 1.16.15.

92 *doc. Chr.* 1.19.18: “iam vero sicut animi quaedam mors est, utae prioris morum que relictio, quae fit paenitendo, sic etiam corporis mors est animationis pristinae resolutio: et quomodo animus post paenitentiam, qua priores mores perditos interemit, reformatur in melius, sic etiam corpus post istam mortem, quam uinculo peccati omnes debemus, credendum et sperandum est resurrectionis tempore in melius commutari, ut non caro et sanguis regnum caelorum possideat, quod fieri non potest, sed corruptibile hoc induat incorruptionem et mortale hoc induat immortalitatem nullam que faciens molestiam, quia nullam patietur indigentiam, a beata perfecta que anima cum summa quiete vegetetur.”

93 *doc. Chr.* 1.21.19: “hoc itaque fides habet atque ita se rem habere credendum est neque animum neque corpus humanum omnimodum interitum pati, sed impios resurgere ad poenas inaestimabiles, pios autem ad uitam aeternam.” *Cf. cat. rud.* 24.45-25.46.

94 *cat. rud.* 25.46.

95 It should be noted that even in his earliest works, Augustine affirms a Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. However, Augustine does not provide a clear articulation of what this resurrection looks like, as he will in his later, mature writings.
time God wishes, he will restore all things without any delay or difficulty…thus human
beings will come to render an account of their deeds in the same bodies in which they
performed them, and in these bodies they will receive what they deserve.”96 These are the
“same bodies” of history, yet in a transfigured state, as evident in City of God 22, where
Augustine suggests that the resurrected bodies of the martyrs will bear the wounds
“which they suffered for Christ’s name,” yet “in those wounds there will be no deformity,
but only dignity.”97 Just as Christ bears the wounds of his passion and death in his
resurrected body, so too the members of Christ’s body, i.e. the Church, will bear the
marks of their suffering in a glorified way. The sufferings of each member are unique,
born from the Church’s pilgrimage in history. The Church’s journey leads to the
resurrection of the whole Christ as a transfigured, glorified body.98

This is a transformation unto glory through suffering, such that the Church shares
in the glory of Christ,99 in conformity to the paschal mystery. The members of the Church

96 cat. rud. 25.46.

97 civ. Dei 22.19: “nescio quo autem modo sic afficimur amore martyrum beatorum, ut uelimus in
illo regno in eorum corporibus uidere ulcerum cicatrices, quae pro christi nomine pertulerunt; et fortasse
uidebimus. non enim deformitas in eis, sed dignitas erit, et quaedam, quamuis in corpore, non corporis, sed
uirtutis pulchritudo fulgebit.”

98 In City of God, the resurrected body is a “spiritual body, clothed in incorruptibility and
immortality” (civ. Dei. 22.21.), for it is no longer “carnal” and subject to the struggle of the “flesh.” This
resurrected body is a mystery, yet it is a true body “subdued to the spirit,” and the philosophers such as
Porphyry deny such a resurrection (civ. Dei 22.25-28). In civ. Dei 22.29, Augustine considers
the possibility that the saints will see God “in the body,” that is, “through the eyes of the body, in the same way
as we now see the sun, moon, stars, sea and earth and all things on earth,” since “it is indeed most probably,
that we shall then see the physical bodies of the new heaven and the new earth in such a fashion as to
observe God in utter clarity and distinctness, seeing him present everywhere and governing the whole
material scheme of things by means of the bodies we shall then inhabit and the bodies we shall see
wherever we turn our eyes. It will not be as it is now, when the invisible realities of God are apprehended
and observed through the material things of his creation, and are partially apprehended by means of a
puzzling reflection in a mirror.” In the end, Augustine is not certain that the saints will see God with the
“eyes of the body,” yet even his consideration of this matter attests to the attempt to expand the imagination
in the consideration of the “new heaven and the new earth” at the resurrection.
are remade. Through the mystery of the economy of redemption, the Church is transformed into something new. A Plotinian purification does not go far enough with regard to its transformative effects, for it leads to a return to a previous purity rather than a “re-creation” through redemption.

As we have seen, by the late 390s, Augustine has reconfigured the Plotinian ascent according to the paschal mystery. Vision is subordinated to charity, and Christ the Mediator offers the purification from sin that cannot be found in philosophy and the liberal arts. Augustine’s mature ecclesiology continues to develop along with his Christology, away from his earlier, more Platonizing views.

The development of the Biblical theme of the Church as “body” (*corpus*) is grounded in an incarnational Christology. This is evident in Augustine’s exegesis of Biblical texts from the New Testament, such as the Gospel of John, 1 John, and the letters of Paul, as well as his exegesis of Old Testament Scripture, including Genesis, Exodus, and the Psalms. For Augustine, Scripture is not simply an “add-on” that illustrates certain philosophical truths. Instead, it forms the foundation and framework for his entire way of thinking. Augustine’s mature theology is definitively Biblical and sacramental, and it is rooted in an incarnational Christology. Through the mystery of the incarnation, the eternal Word assumed human nature, with a union “consummated in the Virgin’s

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99 s. 265E.5.

100 See *conf.* 1.5.6, where Augustine provides an image of the soul as a house completely destroyed that needs to be remade and rebuilt entirely. “The house of my soul is too small for you to enter: make it more spacious by your coming. It lies in ruins: rebuild it.”

101 Augustine uses terms such as *societas* and *civitas* in a similar fashion in order to indicate a communion of members; van Oort, 103; Grabowski, 8-10.

womb.\textsuperscript{103} “The Church is joined to that flesh, and Christ becomes the whole, head and
body.”\textsuperscript{104} The Church is drawn from the human nature Christ assumed,\textsuperscript{105} for the union
among head and members is made possible only by virtue of shared humanity. Yet the
head remains distinct as the eternal Word, and the source of all grace mediated to the
body.\textsuperscript{106}

Augustine develops a doctrine of the \textit{totus Christus} in order to show how the
Church is one body, and one mystery. The Church is not a “two-fold” reality, according
to a Platonic scheme. For Augustine, there is “a single Church, which is now on
pilgrimage,”\textsuperscript{107} as the one body of Christ extended in history.

The body of Christ, the Church, is like a single human being, young at
first, but now at the end of time flourishing in sleek old age, for of the
Church it is written, \textit{widespreading in vigorous old age} (Ps 91:15). Widespread the Church is, throughout all nations, and its voice is like that
of a man or woman looking back to the days of youth, and reviewing all
the time that has passed until this last age, for through the scriptures the
Church is familiar with all those eras.\textsuperscript{108}

The formation of the “whole Christ” (\textit{totus Christus}) is a mystery that transcends
history, while infusing it, after the pattern of paschal mystery of “the Lord’s coming.”\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{en. Ps.} 44.3; cf. \textit{ep. Jo.} 1.2; s. 138.9; s. 147A.2; 372.2; Dolbeau 198.43; 22.40.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{ep. Jo.} 1.2: “illi carni adiungitur ecclesia, et fit Christus totus, caput et corpus.”

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{en. Ps.} 44.3.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{ev. Jo.} 82.3; 13.8; 15.31; 21.8; \textit{ep. Jo.} 6.10; 10.3; \textit{cresc.} 2.13.16; \textit{agon. Christ.} 20.22; \textit{en. Ps.} 29[2].2; 21[2].28; 41.1; 90[2].1; s. 62.3; 341.9.

\textsuperscript{107} s. 341.11; \textit{c. Faust.} 12.31.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{en. Ps.} 36 [3] 4: “corpus autem christi, quod est ecclesia; tamquam unus quidam homo, primo
junior fuit, et ecce iam in fine saeculi est in senecta pingui; quoniam de illa dictum est: adhuc
multiplicabitur in senecta pingui. multiplicata est per omnes gentes, et ipsius uox est adtendentis quasi
unius hominis primam aetatem suam, et istam nouissimam respexit per omnia, quia omnes aetates notas
habet per scripturas.”

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{cat. rud.} 4.7-8.
The mysterious building up of the one body of Christ takes place in history, yet is not limited by it. Following Paul, Augustine declares:

You are the body of Christ and his members (1 Cor 12:27). All of us together are the members and the body of Christ—not only we who are present in this place, but all throughout the world; not only we who are alive at the present time, but—as I might put it—all who have lived or will live from Abel the just man to the end of the world, as long as human beings beget and are begotten. Every just man who passes through this life is included; all who exist now, that is, not just in this place, but in this life everywhere; all who will be born in the future. All these form the one body of Christ.¹¹⁰

All of the just, from Abel to the end of the world, “form the one body of Christ,” for “Christ is our Head, and we his body… But is this true of us alone, and not also of those who went before us? All the righteous since the world began have Christ as their Head.”¹¹¹ This is the mystery of the totus Christus whereby “all the faithful servants who lived in this world even before the Lord’s coming” are within the one body.¹¹²

Likewise, in his work On Catechizing the Uninstructed (De catechizandis rudibus, ca. 399/400), Augustine identifies Jacob as a figure of the Church,¹¹³ for just as Jacob “put a hand out of the womb, and with it he also held the foot of the brother who

¹¹⁰ s. 341.11.


¹¹² cat. rud. 3.6.

¹¹³ All of the figures and narratives of Scripture reveal something about the life of the Church, and Augustine inherits this ecclesiological exegesis of Scripture from Paul. As Paul declares, all of the things written in Scripture “were written to teach us (Rom. 15:4), and they were figures of ourselves (1 Cor. 10:6); these things happened to those people in figure, and indeed they were written for our sakes [the Church], on whom the end of the ages has fallen (1 Cor. 10:11).” cat. rud. 3.6: “quapropter omnia quae ante scripta sunt, ut nos doceremur scripta sunt, et figuiae nostrae fuerunt; et in figura contingebant in eis: scripta sunt autem propter nos, in quos finis saeculorum obuenit.”
was being born before him,” so too some of the members of Christ’s body have preceded the head “in the form of the holy patriarchs and prophets.” Yet “the head is superior not only to those other members which followed it but also to the hand which took precedence over it at the moment of birth,” for Christ “himself is nonetheless head of the body of the Church (Col. 1:18).” Christ’s paschal mystery (mysterium) has effects throughout all of history. Although certain members of the body preceded the head, all are united as one body due to the incarnation of Christ, who did not despise history, but entered it in order to redeem all things.

Augustine’s incarnational theology further reveals how he has distanced himself from a Plotinian understanding of history. In the mature works after the late 390s, Augustine develops a theology of providence in which all of the trials and sufferings that the Church must endure while on pilgrimage form part of the mysterious dispensation of God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. For the Neoplatonists, all earthly trials arise from the limits of bodily existence. One must undergo purification so as to escape from this condition. For Augustine, earthly trials are intrinsic to God’s merciful plan, and provide the opportunity for purification and conformation to Christ.

Augustine constructs this theology of providence by using figures from Scripture. He frequently takes up the Exodus narrative in order to depict the Church as a pilgrim in this world, in a process of transformation and purification while on journey (iter) to the homeland (patria). In a sermon preached on the occasion of the celebration of the

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114 *cat. rud.* 3.6.
115 *cat. rud.* 3.6.
116 *doc. Chr.* 1.4.4.
Augustine portrays the members of the Church as a traveling people, “walking in hope” toward the heavenly Jerusalem. Just as the Israelites are liberated from slavery to the Egyptians by passing through the Red Sea, so “through baptism Christians are liberated of their sins.” Yet as “those ones come out after the Red Sea and journey through the desert, so too Christians after baptism are not yet in the promised land, but live in hope.” The Church is a mystery of hope as it continues to face “trials and temptations” in this world. The members are “wandering exiles” in the desert, “longing for their native land.” Although they have been set free from the slavery of sin through baptism, the members of the Church may “return to Egypt.”

The people are led through the desert. Not all the baptized as yet enjoy the promised fatherland, but, while they hope for and await in patience what they do not see, they are as though in the desert. And in the desert they face difficult and dangerous temptations, so that in their heart they want to return to Egypt.

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117 *Sermo* 4. Hill notes that this sermon may have been preached on either the feast of Saint Agnes, or the feast of Saints Fabian and Sebastian, although no allusion to either feast is made in the text; see *WSA* III/1. Hill dates the sermon to some time before 420, but considers the possibility of a reference to Anthony of Fussala, which would place the sermon at 422 or later. On the case of Anthony of Fussala, see Jane Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine*, 154-82.

118 “ambulans in spe;” *s. 4.1.*

119 Cf. *s. 4.8,* and *4.9: “While the Jerusalem which was on earth belongs to the Old Testament, it bears the image of the Jerusalem which is in heaven and which belongs to the New Testament” : “cum enim Jerusalem quae fuit in terra pertineat ad uetus testamentum, imaginem habet ad Ierusalem quae est in caelo, et pertinet ad nouum testamentum.”

120 *s. 4.9.*

121 *s. 4.9:* “exeunt post mare rubrum et ambulant per heremum; sic et christiani post baptismum nondum sunt in terra promissionis, sed sunt in spe.”

122 These temptations are “the delights of the world…in order to deflect you from the road and turn you aside from your purpose;” *ibid.*

123 *s. 4.9.*

The Church is in the desert of trials and temptations, yet this is part of God’s mysterious plan, as revealed in Scripture. Augustine uses the figure of Jacob in order to demonstrate the dynamic of the Church’s life while on pilgrimage in the desert. As fallen human beings, all people begin “carnally” (*carnaliter*), as “slaves to temporary pleasures and satisfactions.”\textsuperscript{126} To live “carnally” means to belong to Esau, the eldest son of Isaac\textsuperscript{127} who forfeited his birthright.\textsuperscript{128} Those “born again”\textsuperscript{129} through baptism become “spiritual” (*spiritalis*),\textsuperscript{130} and undergo the transformation from Esau to Jacob.\textsuperscript{131} However, during this earthly pilgrimage, the temptation to return to sin remains, and the baptized can “forfeit their right as firstborn” by “turning back to Egypt,”\textsuperscript{132} so as to belong to Esau once again.\textsuperscript{133} This mysterious dynamic is part of the mystery of the

\textsuperscript{125} *c. Faust. 12.30:* “ducitur populus per desertum: baptizati omnes nondum perfruentes promissa patria, sed quod non uident sperando et per patientiam expectando tamquam in deserto sunt; et illic laboriosae et periculosae temptationes, ne reuertantur corde in aegyptum.”

\textsuperscript{126} *s. 4.12; cf. 4.3-4.*

\textsuperscript{127} “It is because everyone begins by living carnally (*carnaliter*) that Esau, we are told, is the elder” *s. 4.8; cf. s. 4.12:* “[T]he reason why the elder son is called Esau is that no one becomes spiritual without first having been ‘of the flesh’ or carnal (*carnaliter*). But if they persist in the *sagacity of the flesh*, they will always be Esau. If, however, they become spiritual (*spiritalis*), they will then be the younger son.”

\textsuperscript{128} *Gen. 25:29-34; s. 4.11.*

\textsuperscript{129} *s. 4.14.*

\textsuperscript{130} *s. 4.11:* “[A]ll spiritual people belong to the younger son, because first comes the carnal (*carnalis*) one and afterward the spiritual (*spiritalis*).” Being “spiritual” not only requires baptism and the giving up one’s sins, but also patiently bearing the sins of others; *s. 4.14.*

\textsuperscript{131} *s. 4.12:* “Among this Christian people it is the ones who belong to Jacob that have the birthright or right of the firstborn;” *cf. 4.8:* “If we have a blessing from the dew of heaven, we have abundance from the faithfulness of the earth: that is how Jacob was blessed. Let us belong to him and not live carnally”; 4.14: “But that blessing could not reach us unless, now that we have been cleansed of our own sins by being born again, we patiently bear the sins of others.”

\textsuperscript{132} *s. 4.12.*
Church’s life as pilgrim. Augustine seeks to integrate history, with all of its ambiguities and difficulties, into his theology. Undoubtedly, Augustine’s concerns and experiences as a pastor and bishop are reflected in his developing ecclesiology. Augustine is no longer the wise philosopher and rhetor by profession. Instead he is a busy pastor, preoccupied with the everyday troubles of his congregation. Augustine’s mature theology is more pastoral insofar as he seeks to offer insight into the mystery of the Church’s life in history, particularly through his exegesis of Scripture, which reveals the necessary growth and transformation of the one body by virtue of its earthly pilgrimage in and through history. This transformation is part of the mysterious plan for the salvation of God’s people, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments.

Augustine revisits the Exodus narrative in Against Faustus in the context of his debates with the Manicheans. Augustine is at pains to show the continuity between the Old and New Testaments since the Manicheans reject the former. This is because the Manicheans are unable to grasp how the sacramenta of Scripture contain hidden mysteria that reveal the mystery of Christ and the Church. The Exodus narrative reveals the mystery of the Church’s journey in history. Just as the people of Israel are led to freedom from the Egyptians through the desert, so the Church in every age of history undergoes the liberation from sin by participation in baptism. Yet the possibility of “returning to Egypt” remains. One must continue to grow into perfection through the purification of the desert, which is a process of learning to cling to the “wood” of Christ’s cross.  

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133 s. 4.14: “There are people after all who even after baptism are unwilling to give up their sins and want to do the same things as they used to do before…There is Esau for you, born hairy.” Just as Rebecca bore two sons, “so two are begotten in the Church’s womb, one hairy, the other smooth.”

rather than clinging to “temporary pleasures and satisfactions.”\textsuperscript{136} For Augustine, the Church does not travel this journey alone, for “Christ will not abandon them there, for the column does not withdraw.”\textsuperscript{137} The column of cloud is an image of Christ’s solidarity with the people of God. Christ is the eternal Word who descended in the incarnation in order to raise up humanity to himself.\textsuperscript{138} Augustine uses Jacob’s ladder as a figure of Christ,\textsuperscript{139} the Mediator, who is in heaven as head, and yet is present on earth in the members of his body, the Church. “For in him there was a stairway from earth to heaven… For the Son of Man is above in our head, which is the savior himself, and the Son of Man is below in his body, which is the Church.”\textsuperscript{140}

This is the mystery of the \textit{totus Christus}, a mystery of solidarity, such that Christ is present on earth in the members of his body on pilgrimage. This mystery reveals the effects of the incarnation, which extend to the Church precisely in the midst of her trials and temptations in history. By virtue of Christ’s assumption of human nature, the

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{c. Faust.} 12.30.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{s.} 4.12; cf. 4.3-4.

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{c. Faust.} 12.30.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{c. Faust.} 12.24.

\textsuperscript{139} Christ is the stairway from earth to heaven, which Jacob saw while having the stone at his head, that is, Christ. “What other stone was placed at Jacob’s head and also anointed, in order that it might express him in some sense by name, but Christ, the head of man?...There the Lord also seized the occasion to recall what Jacob saw, who was called Israel by way of a blessing. He said, ‘Truly I say to you, you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (Jn 1:51).’ For, when he had that stone at his head, Israel saw a stairway from earth to heaven by which the angels of God ascended and descended. These angels signified the evangelists who preached Christ. They ascended, of course, when they rose above every creature in order to understand his supereminent divinity, finding that he was in the beginning, God with God, through whom all things were made. But they descended in order to find him who was ‘born of a woman, born under the law, so that he might redeem those who were under the law (Gal. 4:4-5) For in him there was a stairway from earth to heaven, from flesh to spirit, because by making progress in him carnal persons become spiritual, as if by ascending.” (c. \textit{Faust.} 12.23).

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{c. Faust.} 12.26.
body may be joined to the head, even as the head has gone to heaven, and the head enters into solidarity with the members of his body on earth.

The union of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*) is a mystery made efficacious through the Church’s sacraments. Participation in the sacraments incorporates one into the body of Christ. Augustine uses the figure of Noah’s ark in order to illustrate the mediation of baptism for the building up of the one body. “The ark is finished off so that it gathers to a height of one cubit, just as the Church, gathered together in unity, raises up and completes the body of Christ.”\[141\] Baptism is necessary for membership in the Church, for “no one enters the Church except through the sacrament of the forgiveness of sins,” which “flowed from the opened side of Christ…”\[142\] The Church is built up by the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist (*quibus aedificatur ecclesia*),\[143\] and this is a mystery that continues in history, until the final completion of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*), head and members.

As the body of Christ on earth, the Church is united with the head in heaven not by an “inward” turn away from history, but precisely through its journey through history, as a sacramental community in a process of transformation and growth. The Church’s journey is intrinsic to the mystery revealed by Scripture. According to the mystery of God’s salvific plan, the Church must continue to undergo transformation through the

\[141\] *c. Faust.* 12.16: “quod arca conlecta ad unum cubitum desuper consummatur: sicut ecclesia corpus christi in unitatem conlecta sublimat et perficit.”


\[143\] *civ. Dei* 22.17: “For the man’s [Adam’s] sleep was the death of Christ, from whose side…there flowed forth water and blood, which we know to be the sacraments by which the Church is built up (*quaes sacramenta esse novimus, quibus aedificatur ecclesia.*”
trials of its earthly pilgrimage, so as to become the “spotless bride.” The Church does not rise above history in order to attain a pristine purity. Rather, the Church is purified by its pilgrimage on earth through a purification that conforms the body to the merciful love of Christ the head who descended and entered history in order to transform humanity “into himself” (*transfigurare nos in se*). God’s salvific plan is the formation of the Church as the body of Christ.

In this incarnational theology, Augustine’s mature ecclesiology does not fit into a Plotinian system, whereby the predestined are equivalent to the Soul that must return to its previous condition by an escape from history. For Augustine, predestination is a part of God’s providence, and it is not reducible to the determination of a “fixed number” of the elect. The attempt to determine a precise number of elect amounts to a kind of pride (*superbia*) that seeks to usurp God’s eternal foreknowledge (Rom. 8:29), and to

144 *c. Faust.* 12.42.

145 *en. Ps.* 30[2].3; 43.2; 60.3; 87.3; 101.1.2; Michael Cameron, “Transfiguration: Christology and the Roots of Figurative Exegesis in St. Augustine,” *Studia Patristica* 33 (1997): 40-7.


147 Rowan Williams observes that for Augustine, God’s providence determines events, not an “inner, internal principle of creation,” and so predestination is not a kind of philosophical determinism, Plotinian or otherwise. “At this point, then, the doctrine of creation in Augustine touches the doctrine of predestination. The concept of *rationes seminales* allows Augustine to affirm that, in one sense, creation is completed simultaneously, once and for all (*Gn. Litt.* 5.23.45), and yet there is a real history of interaction between creation and creation, not just the playing out of a foreordained necessity… Predestination is not strictly determinism, therefore, if that means that all events are wholly dictated by determinate causes. God’s will is not a cause among other, but the power that activates a particular set of causes at the appropriate time (*Gn. litt.* 6.14.25).” In this way, Augustine’s theology of predestination is not reducible to a Plotinian scheme, for God’s mysterious, providential will determines all things; see “Creation,” in *Aug. Through the Ages,* 252.
eliminate the mystery of God’s will. The indeterminacy is part of the mystery, and the Church’s mixed condition is intrinsic to God’s salvific plan for the building up of the one body.  

A “Mixed Body”

God’s redemptive plan is carried out precisely through the Church’s condition as a “mixed body” (corpus permixtum) of the “good” and the “wicked.” Although God does not cause or will evil, he allows for the presence of the “wicked” in the midst of the Church. God’s merciful love has the power to bring good even out of evil.  

In Against Faustus 12, Augustine uses Noah’s ark in order to illustrate the Church’s condition in history as “mixed body” (corpus permixtum). “All the kinds of animals are enclosed in the ark, like all the nations…Both clean and unclean animals are present there, just as

148 Predestination is a mystery, according to God’s salvific will. In praed. sanct. 4.10.19, Augustine distinguishes between foreknowledge and predestination. “Predestination cannot exist without foreknowledge, but foreknowledge can exist without predestination.” God foreknows the good he produces, i.e. predestination, yet God also foreknows the evil he does not produce, namely, sin and evil.

149 Augustine acknowledges that there will be a certain number of the predestined, and the purpose of history is to complete this number; civ. Dei 14.10, 23; en. Ps. 34.2; yet the actual number is a mystery, and Augustine suggests that the amount of human beings that become citizens will not only restore the number of fallen angels, but might even surpass it: “And thus that beloved Heavenly City will not be deprived of its full number of citizens; it may perhaps rejoice in a still more abundant population” (civ. Dei 22.1; cf. ench. 29).


both good and bad people are found together in the sacraments of the Church.”152 The “clean and unclean” are the good and the wicked, both of whom can be found in the visible Church that celebrates the sacraments. The Church must undergo purification during its earthly pilgrimage as a mixed body of wheat and chaff.153 However, this does not lead to a “double concept” of the Church according to a Platonic framework in which the “inner,” invisible communion of saints must be liberated from its distorted, “outer” form in history.154 While Augustine distinguishes between the “communion of sacraments” (communio sacramentorum) and the “communion of saints” (communio sanctorum),155 he does not seek to separate the members “during this time,” for this would amount to presumption. This is the error of the Donatists, who limit the Church to a society of the “holy” in North Africa.156 The Donatists seek a kind of self-achieved purity, on the basis of their own righteousness.


153 Matt. 13:24-30; cf. cat. rud. 17.26; 19.31; 25.48; 27.53; Carole Straw, “Augustine as Pastoral Theologian: The Exegesis of the Parables of the Field and Threshing Floor,” Augustinian Studies 14 (1983): 121-52; Jaroslav Pelikan, The Mystery of Continuity, 119: “Until the end of history, then, the pilgrim church would be a mixed body of good and evil, a threshing floor with both wheat and chaff, a flock in which the sacraments were often administered by wolves to wolves.”

154 Pelikan asserts, “There were not two churches, one historical and the other eternal, but one single church that was both historical and eternal,” The Mystery of Continuity, 102-3.

155 For a list of terminology, see Yves Congar, BA (1963), 98-104; Fritz Hofmann, Der Kirchenbegriff des hl. Augustinus in seinen Grundlagen und in seiner Entwicklung, 242-3.

156 conf. 10.30.41. Babcock makes the interesting observation that Tyconius got beyond such elitism through his appropriation of Paul, which influenced Augustine, although Tyconius did not go as far as Augustine in his doctrine of grace: “For Tyconius, unlike Augustine, faith remains our work (although our only work) rather than God’s gift; and it is to the extent that we have faith that God works in us. In quite a different sense, however, Tyconius does seem genuinely to have anticipated Augustine’s thinking. For Tyconius has, in Liber regularum, used Paul to cut the ground from under any human claim to have achieved or to have maintained a pure form of the Christian community in North Africa over against the deficient Christianity spread throughout the Roman world…to Tyconius and Augustine, each working under very different circumstances from the other, belongs the credit for the Latin discovery that Paul, in
For Augustine, no one can presume to be a member of the elect. The mixed condition of the Church is part of the mysterious dispensation of God’s salvific plan that does not allow for presumption or certainty with regard to salvation. This is illustrated in the case of Solomon.

For we see in the person of this Solomon a marvelous excellence and an amazing collapse. That, therefore, at different times there was in him first goodness and then evil is something that is found at a single time in the Church that is still in this world. For I think that his goodness signifies the good people in the Church and his sin the sinful people in the Church, as though on the unity of a single threshing floor. In the same way, in that one man the good are found in the grain and the evil in the chaff, just as in the unity of a single field the good are found in the wheat and the evil in the weeds.  

In the Church’s mixed condition, there is no certainty of salvation, either for oneself or for others. Yet the Church need not despair, but may live in hope, due to the loving mercy of God in the paschal mystery. This is the mercy mediated through the sacraments, by which the Church is united in hope during this time.

Furthermore, as Jaroslav Pelikan observes, *communio sanctorum* may be translated as a “communion of holy things,” that is, a communion of sacraments, and

his doctrine of grace, provides the antidote to Christian elitism, whether the elitism of the *pars Donati* or the elitism of the Platonist’s quest for God”; see “Augustine and Tyconius,” 1214.

157 c. Faust. 22.88.

158 In his *Expositions of the Psalms*, Augustine speaks of the heart as a “dark cloud,” such that one cannot see what is hidden within; *en. Ps.* 88[1].7. The heart is a mystery, and one cannot presume upon either salvation or condemnation.

159 *en. Ps.* 55.12, 20, where Augustine declares that the Church should pray for the wicked and despair of no one; cf. *bapt.* 4.22.30.

160 c. Faust. 12.20; *ep. Jo.* 1.2; *en. Ps.* 44.3.

161 c. Faust. 12.20: “non adhuc in sacramento spei, quo in hoc tempore consociatur ecclesia.”

162 Pelikan, *The Mystery of Continuity*, 120.
not necessarily the “communion of saints” in terms of a “fixed number of the elect.”\textsuperscript{163} In this way, there is a continuity between the Church’s sanctity and its “mixed condition” in history, for “personal sainthood was dependent on the historical continuity of a church that was holy by virtue of Christ and of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in it through the holiness of the sacraments.”\textsuperscript{164} As Augustine argues in his works against the Donatists, the Church’s holiness is dependent upon the love of Christ and the Holy Spirit, mediated through the sacraments. One cannot presume to be among an elite communion of charity; rather, one can only know oneself as a member of the visible Church in a process of transformation and conformation to Christ by participation in the Church’s sacramental life.

Moreover, the Church’s mixed condition provides the opportunity for the conversion of the wicked, as well as the Church’s purification, precisely in conformation to the long-suffering and patience of God.\textsuperscript{165} “Christ urges us to imitate this loving patience of God, ‘who makes his sun rise upon the good and the evil and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust’ (Mt. 5:45).”\textsuperscript{166} This is part of the mystery revealed by Scripture, whereby God may bring good out of any condition.

For God shows forbearance toward such people so as, on the one hand, to use this perverseness to train his own chosen ones in faith and good sense and thus to strengthen them and, on the other hand, because many of the number of the perverse progress beyond their present state and, out of compassion for their own souls, turn with intense passion to God so as to be pleasing to him.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{163} Pelikan, The Mystery of Continuity, 120; conf. 11.27.36.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 120-1.

\textsuperscript{165} Cf. cat. rud. 11.16; 14.22; 19.32; 25.48.

\textsuperscript{166} c. Faust. 19.28.
In the midst of the Church’s “mixed condition,” God provides the opportunity for the “sorrow and repentance that brings salvation.” Furthermore, the members of the Church must bear with the mingling of the wicked, for otherwise “by a lack of patience in tolerating sinners, the good…might be abandoned, and when they are abandoned, Christ is abandoned.” To abandon any member of the Church creates the possibility of abandoning Christ himself, for no one knows whether God might “make a just person of one who was previously wicked.” The people of God must “preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by clinging to some and tolerating others to the end.” Those who bear the wicked in love will find profit for themselves, while also mediating the merciful forbearance that leads to repentance.

The Church’s purification as a pilgrim people is distinct from the purification of Neoplatonism. In his mature works, Augustine continues to use many of the characteristic phrases of Plotinus, yet he recasts such language within a Biblical framework based on the paschal mystery. This is evident in his depiction of the Church’s purification as gold tried by fire.

My pain is near at hand, but my rest will come later; my time of trial is coming, but my purification will be as surely effected. Does gold gleam brightly in the refiner’s furnace? No, not yet. It will be bright in the

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167 *cat. rud.* 25.48: “propterea enim deus patiens est in illos, ut et suorum electorum fidem atque prudentiam per illorum peruersitatem exercendo confirmet; et quia de numero eorum multi proficiunt, et ad placendum deo miseranti animas suas magno impetu conuertuntur.”

168 *cat. rud.* 25.48.

169 *c. Faust.* 13.16.

170 *cat. rud.* 17.28; 25.48.

171 *c. Faust.* 22.82.

172 *bapt.* 4.25.33.
necklace, it will gleam when it finds its place in the jewel; but for the present it must endure the furnace, for only so will it be purged of its impurities and attain its brightness.\textsuperscript{173}

This language is reminiscent of Plotinus,\textsuperscript{174} yet Augustine uses this imagery in order to show how God uses all of the “troubles” of history in order to purify the Church. God brings good out of the troubles caused by the wicked for the Church’s benefit, and this Plotinian image is reconfigured so as to reveal God’s providence at work in history.

So we need the furnace. There is the straw, there is the gold, and there is the fire, and as the refiner blows into the furnace the straw burns and the gold is purified. The one is reduced to ashes, the other emerges freed from its dross. For me, the furnace is this world, bad people are the straw, the troubles I undergo are the fire, and God is the refiner. As the refiner wills, I act; wherever the refiner places me, I endure. I am commanded to suffer it, and he well knows how to assay me. Even if the straw is set on fire to burn me, even if it seems likely to consume me, it is the straw that is turned to ashes; I emerge freed from my impurities. Why? Because to God will my soul be subject, for my patience comes from him.\textsuperscript{175}

The “bad” help purify the good in this dynamic, such that the members of the Church are conformed to the forbearance of God. The Church’s purification occurs not by an “inner” turn away from history, but precisely through the “outer” conditions of history, according to the mystery of divine providence. Furthermore, purification is not simply a separation of a fixed body of the good from the wicked. Instead, the Church’s

\textsuperscript{173} en. Ps. 61.11.

\textsuperscript{174} Enn. 1.6.5: “Gold is degraded when it is mixed with earthly particles; if these be worked out, the gold is left and is beautiful, isolated from all that is foreign, gold with gold alone. And so the Soul…” 5.8.3: “This is the Intellectual-Principle, the veritable, abiding and not fluctuant since not taking intellectual quality from outside itself. By what image, thus, can we represent it? We have nowhere to go but to what is less. Only from itself can we take an image of it; that is, there can be no representation of it, except in the sense that we represent gold by some portion of gold—purified, either actually or mentally, if it be impure—insisting at the same time that this is not the total thing gold, but merely the particular gold of a particular parcel. In the same way we learn in this matter from the purified Intellect in ourselves or, if you like, from the gods and the glory of the Intellect in them.” See the discussion by Dominic O’Meara, \textit{Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 90-7.

\textsuperscript{175} en. Ps. 61.11.
condition in history allows for the building up of the body by the conversion of the wicked. The Church is an instrument of the conversion of the world, through incorporation into the one body of Christ. For Augustine, the Church is an agent of the transformation of the world, whereas a Plotinian rejection of bodily existence amounts to an escape from the world. The Church effects transformation, as evident in Augustine’s use of the theme of the two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem.176

In his *Expositions on the Psalms*, Augustine uses this theme in a striking manner in order to depict the mysterious dynamic of transformation whereby the wicked may become good. In *en. Ps.* 86, the city of “unutterable peace” is the heavenly Jerusalem, also referred to in the Scriptures as Zion.177 The historical city of Zion is a foreshadowing of the heavenly city, just as the city of Jerusalem on earth serves as a type of the heavenly Jerusalem.178 Babylon is a figure of the wicked city, in contradistinction to the heavenly city. “Just as there is one holy city, Jerusalem, so also there is one wicked city, Babylon; all the wicked belong to Babylon, as all the saints to Jerusalem.”179 The members of the

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177 *en. Ps.* 86.1-2. “In this psalm a city is sung about and celebrated, a city of which we are citizens by virtue of being Christians, a city from which we are absent abroad as long as we are mortal, and towards which we are traveling;” “ciuitas quaedam in isto psalmo cantata et commendata est: cuius ciues sumus, in quantum christiani sumus, et unde peregrinamur, quamdui mortales sumus, et ad quam tendimus, per cuius uiam, quae omnino quasi dumetis et sentibus interclusa non inueniabatur, rex ipsius ciuitatis se fecit uiam, ut ad ciuitatem perueniremus.”

178 *en. Ps.* 86.6.

179 *en. Ps.* 86.6.
Church become citizens of the city through baptism, yet they are “abroad” insofar as they remain on pilgrimage during this time.

In 86.3, Augustine asserts that “The approach to [the heavenly city] would scarcely be discoverable, blocked as it is by thorn bushes and briars, but the King of the city has made himself the way through, so that we may reach it.” This calls to mind De doctrina 1.17.16, in which the “thorn bushes” represent the “malice of past sins.” Christ, the King of the city, is the Way along which the Church “walks” as “pilgrims still until we arrive.” The Church undergoes the transformation and healing of the affections that enables her to travel to the homeland. Christ the head has “gone ahead of us to heaven,” and so the body must follow where the head has already gone. Christ makes it possible for the earthly city to be transformed into the heavenly city. This shows that for Augustine, the two cities are not fixed bodies that pass through history, akin to Platonic Ideas. Instead, the two cities illustrate the mysterious dynamic of transformation, whereby Babylon becomes Jerusalem. This is possible due to the merciful love of Christ in the incarnation. “Babylon gradually changes into Jerusalem, and how could it do that, unless through him who justifies the godless? (Rom. 4:5).”

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180 *en. Ps. 61.9:* “All men and women were meant to be sucked in through baptism to the city of Jerusalem, of which the Israelite people were the type.”

181 The precise relationship between the Church (ecclesia) and the city of God (civitas Dei) is a matter of debate; see van Oort’s discussion, Jerusalem and Babylon, 118-63.

182 *en. Ps. 86.3:* “et ad quam tendimus, per cuius uiam, quae omnino quasi dumetis et sentibus interclusa non inueniebatur, rex ipsius ciuitatis se fecit uiam, ut ad ciuitatem perueniremus.”

183 *en. Ps. 86.3,* 5.

184 During “the present age, these two cities are mingled together,” such that some within the visible Church are, in fact, citizens of Babylon; *en. Ps. 61.8.*
order to justify the godless, and to bring them to the heavenly patria. There is no other Way to the homeland than the one Mediator who forgives sins. The philosophers in their pride (superbia) cannot accept a Mediator who would assume human flesh, and so they lack the Way home.

For Augustine, the incarnation is the fundamental reason for the incommensurability between the Plotinian and Christians views of history. Through Christ’s assumption of the flesh, Christ did the very thing that the philosophers despise, namely, to enter into the conditions and limitations of history. For Augustine, this assumption of human nature in history makes possible the healing of the affections that leads to the homeland. The Way of the Mediator is the Way of mercy and forgiveness. This means participation in the sacramental economy of the Church by which the incarnation is made efficacious. The incarnation makes the Church more than a group of wise philosophers, for it makes possible the transformation of the Church into the one body of Christ, united in charity.

As a body that celebrates the sacraments, the Church is an agent of the transformation of the world into the heavenly city, such that “Babylon becomes Jerusalem.” In this way, the Church is a sacrament (sacramentum) of salvation, for she makes present and efficacious the transcendent mystery of God’s salvific plan in history. This plan is the formation of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus). The sacraments effect the union of the totus Christus as one body, head and members. As such, the visible Church, in her celebrations of the sacraments, is herself a sacrament of Christ, precisely as his body on earth in a process of transformation and purification. While there is no

\[185 \textit{en. Ps. 86.6: “sed delabitur de babylone in ierusalem. unde, nisi per eum qui justificat impium?”} \]
absolute identification between the head in heaven and the members on earth since the Church stands in need of continual purification from sin, nevertheless, in her sacramental life, the Church is the presence of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus) united as one body in history. Such a theology of solidarity between Christ the head and the members of his body on earth is a far cry from a Plotinian rejection of historical, bodily existence.

Conclusion

Augustine’s mature ecclesiology reflects the definitive Biblical, sacramental shift in his thought. In his early works, Augustine gives priority to wisdom and the ascent to truth that yields vision. Furthermore, he displays confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts as sources of wisdom that provide a similar kind of purification of the mind found in the Church.

By the late 390s, Augustine has developed a thoroughly incarnational theology. Augustine recasts the Plotinian journey of the Soul according to the paschal mystery. Within this framework, vision is subordinated to charity, and the Church offers the purification from sin that cannot be found in philosophy and the liberal arts. Furthermore, Augustine’s incarnational Christology provides the foundation for a rich ecclesiology of solidarity whereby the Church on earth is a “sacrament” (sacramentum) as the body of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus), a transcendent mystery made present in history. The Church is an instrument of transformation through a sacramental economy, such that “Esau becomes Jacob,” and “Babylon becomes Jerusalem.” By his mature works, Augustine has moved away from his earlier, more Platonizing views so as to develop a thoroughly Biblical, sacramental theology of the Church. The next chapter continues to

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explore the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology by tracing the theme of the Church as “spouse” or “bride.”
CHAPTER THREE

THE CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

As we have seen, Augustine’s ecclesiology undergoes a development that reflects the overall trajectory of his thought. By the time of his mature works, his ecclesiology is grounded in a Biblical theology of mystery, according to his interpretation of the Pauline μυστήριον. The terms *mysterium* and *sacramentum* express particular aspects of the one mystery. *Mysterium* most often refers to a transcendent reality that can be made present in history, while *sacramentum* indicates the revelation and presence of the mystery in history. Augustine uses both *sacramentum* and *mysterium* in order to speak about the Church as mystery, and in this way, the Church is not purely spiritual, for in a Pauline, Biblical sense the mystery is disclosed through its visible revelation in history.

Augustine develops certain key themes in order to bring together the visible and invisible aspects of the Church as a sacramental mystery. His development of the Biblical theme of “spouse” or “bride,” particularly during the Donatist controversy, has been used to support the claim that his ecclesiology fits into a philosophical scheme. For Augustine, however, the Church is not a problem whose solution may be found in a philosophical system. Rather, his ecclesiology takes shape within a Biblical and sacramental framework that unites the visible and invisible. This chapter explores how Augustine uses spousal
imagery in order to lift up the Church as a great “mystery” and “sacrament” (*magnum sacramentum*, Eph. 5:31-32).

**A Platonic Solution**

In his classic work *Early Christian Doctrines*,¹ J.N.D. Kelly points to Augustine’s use of bridal imagery in the midst of the Donatist controversy² in order to show how Augustine finds a Platonic solution for the Church. For Kelly, the concept of Church (*ecclesia*) is limited to a “fixed number of the elect”³ corresponding to a perfect, transcendent “essence” that must be liberated from its “imperfect phenomenal embodiment” in history. The Church’s holiness is dependent upon the presence of a certain number of the elect. Furthermore, since the Church is constituted by “inner, invisible” realities, participation in the visible celebration of the sacraments is incidental to, if not unnecessary for, membership in the Church.

Phillip Cary goes further than Kelly and argues that in Augustine’s thought, the sacraments are entirely “powerless” and “inefficacious,” precisely as “outward, external” things.⁴ “All spiritual efficacy is inward,” and grace is given to the “individual soul not by external means but by a kind of inward channel, descending from God to the inner unity of the church, to which the soul is joined by charity. This inner gift is not conferred

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² Kelly’s interpretation is dependent upon a narrow reading of certain passages in *De baptismo*, e.g. *bapt. 4.2, 4.5, 5.37-38*; see discussion below.

³ Ibid., 416.

but only marked outwardly by the sacred sign of baptism.” The sacraments serve as external markers of the “inward” dispensation of grace, without possessing any kind of effective mediation. The “inner unity” of the Church in charity cannot be mediated through any external means, and as a result, the sacraments do not contribute in an efficacious way to the building up of the Church as the bride and body of Christ.

The views of Kelly and Cary are based upon reductive readings that overlook crucial texts and fail to account for the development in Augustine’s thought. Augustine’s Pauline theology of mystery (mysterium, sacramentum) provides the framework for his ecclesiology, and his theology of the sacraments. This distinction is not firmly in place until the late 390s, yet Augustine never denies the efficacy of the Christian mysteries (mysteria). However, in his earliest writings, the sacred rites of Christianity effect a kind

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5 Ibid., 200; cf. 161-64, 193-220.

6 The sacraments are unnecessary because ineffectual, yet Cary acknowledges, “This is not to say the sacraments of the church may safely be despised. As a bishop Augustine is surrounded by sacred signs whose usefulness, even necessity, he must explain. Above all he must give an account of baptism, the sacrament of spiritual regeneration, the sign of the soul's passing from the death of sin to new life in Christ. Augustine will not attribute regenerating power to the water of baptism, but he does join the church in seeing it as a necessary condition of spiritual regeneration. It is like the door that leads within the walls of the church. The door has no power to open itself and let anyone in: the man outside knocks, and the people within open up and take him in among themselves, and there he is safe. Everything depends on passing through this door, but the door itself has no power to save. The action is in the knocking and in the opening up from within, which is the action of souls not bodies—for the knocking is love, and the taking in is love. In this action the grace of God is found, for without grace the action of love does not even begin, much less come to completion in salvation,” Outward Signs, 194. Cary’s point, it seems, is that grace is given by the spirit, not by the external things in the celebration of the sacraments, e.g. the water of baptism. This may be the case for Augustine, for he does not attempt to make an argument that the external things themselves are the cause of grace. Nevertheless, it does not follow that because external things are not causes of grace, they are incapable of conferring grace, precisely insofar as they mediate the mysterious work of salvation, and as sacramenta that contain and mediate mysteria. Baptism mediates the mystery of Christ’s spousal love, not by virtue of the water itself, but rather by virtue of Christ’s power working in and through the sacrament. This is the case for the medieval theologians as well, such as Aquinas, whom Cary places in opposition to Augustine. That is, the mediavels do not, any more than Augustine, place the efficacy of the sacraments solely upon external things. Nevertheless, the sacraments do, in fact, confer grace precisely as mysteries. Since Cary is unable to identify a clear causal mechanism in Augustine’s thought, Cary infers a dichotomy between “inner” and “outer” that renders the sacraments entirely “inefficacious.” This amounts to an imposition of a particular kind of philosophical dualism upon Augustine’s sacramental theology. Augustine’s theology resists reduction to such a system. Indeed, for Augustine, sacramental means mysterious, and it is precisely this mysterious character that Cary is unable or unwilling to accept.
of purification of the mind that rings of Neoplatonism. The Church is portrayed primarily as a teacher of wisdom, and Augustine displays a certain degree of confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts to effect the purification of the mind. As a result, the centrality of the Christian sacraments is mitigated to some degree. In addition, as we have seen, Augustine gives priority to the vision of Truth over the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

By the late 390s, however, Augustine subordinates vision to charity, and the Christian sacraments offer a distinctive kind of purification that cannot be found in philosophy and the liberal arts. During the Donatist controversy, Augustine does not resort to a Platonic system in order to establish the unity and holiness of the Church as the spouse of Christ. Rather, the Church is defined by Christ’s spousal love, mediated through the visible celebration of the sacraments. The Church is united in faith, hope, and charity due to the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Although some may cut themselves off from this unity, nevertheless, the Church is united as one body in history. The visible, historical aspect of the Church is intrinsic to the mystery, and cannot be separated from the transcendent, eschatological reality. Augustine’s theology of predestination is taken up into this theology of mystery, whereby the visible and invisible aspects of the Church form the same mystery. In addition, Augustine uses bridal imagery in order to move away from an individualistic notion of union with God. One cannot know oneself as a member in an elite, invisible communion. One can only know oneself as a member of a community participating in the visible celebration of the sacraments. This mediation is never obviated, although the Holy Spirit may work beyond historical limits.
Furthermore, Augustine’s incarnational Christology provides the foundation for an ecclesiology of solidarity, whereby Christ and the Church, as Bridegroom and bride, speak in “one voice” (una vox) as “two in one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). According to this mystery of solidarity, Christ suffers in his members, while the members share in the glory of the risen Christ. This is the “wonderful exchange” (admirabile commercium) between the head and body of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus). Such an ecclesiology arises from an incarnational theology that resists reduction to a “hyper-Platonizing” system. This chapter traces Augustine’s use of the image of the Church as “spouse” or “bride” in order to illustrate the development of his mature ecclesiology.

Early Works

Augustine speaks of the Church as “bride” using words such as sponsa, conjux, matrona, and uxor in his exegesis of Biblical passages including Genesis, Isaiah, and Song of Songs. In his early writings, Augustine does not use spousal imagery frequently for the Church. This is not surprising, given the philosophical character of these works.

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8 Sponsa, for instance, appears only a handful of times before Augustine’s more mature works; cf. s. Dom. mon. 2.66; c. Adim. 17; ep. Rom. inch. 15; div. qu. 59.2-4.
Augustine focuses on the union of the “mind” (*mens*) or “soul” (*anima*) with God. He does not devote much attention to developing an in-depth theology of the Church, and at this point, there does not seem to be an occasion for a focused treatment of the Church.

In works from the late 380s, such as the Cassiciacum dialogues (ca. 386/387) and *On the Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life* (*De moribus ecclesiae Catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum*, ca. 387), Augustine speaks of the Church as a teacher and source of wisdom in her divine teaching of the Scriptures, and in her sacred rites, yet one may attain the same realities through philosophy. While Augustine recognizes the Church’s authority, and upholds the purifying effects of the mysteries (*mysteria*) mediated through the sacred rites (*sacris*) of the visible Catholic Church, the centrality of the sacraments seems mitigated due to his confidence in the liberal arts and the purification of the mind through philosophy. The truths of philosophy will not contradict the mysteries of Christian faith, and the wisdom of philosophy and the liberal arts is efficacious for the purification of the mind.

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9 Augustine often uses the verb *conjungo*, the root of *conjunx*, in order to speak about union of with God; cf. *ord.* 2.8; *imm. an.* 11.

10 *quant.* 34.77; *mor.* 7.11; 10.16; 28.55-56.

11 *quant.* 7.12; *mus.* 6.1.1; *mor.* 8.15.

12 Ibid.; *b. vita* 3.18. David Alexandar observes that as a catechumen in 384, Augustine was familiar with rite of baptism and affirmed its efficacy; see *Augustine’s Early Theology of the Church: Emergence and Implications*, 386-391 (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 46. From his earliest works, Augustine recognizes the purgative effects of the sacraments. Participation in the sacramental life of the Church is an initiation into the “mysteries,” and although Augustine has a more speculative, philosophical view of the goal of the mysteries, he does not underestimate their transformative effects, as mediated through initiation into the sacred rites.

13 *ord.* 1.1.3-2.4; 1.8.22-24.

14 *c. Acad.* 3.20.43: “quod autem subtilissima ratione persequendum est - ita enim iam sum affectus, ut quid sit uerum non credendo solum sed etiam intellegendo apprehendere impatiente desiderem
Furthermore, Augustine describes the aim of such purification in Neoplatonic terms. The goal is a kind of vision through the ascent to Truth. The virtues of faith, hope, and charity are framed within this goal of “seeing.” The Christian mysteries offer access to the same wisdom found in philosophy that purifies reason so as to yield vision, although only a few reach such vision via philosophy. The Church’s sacraments make available to the many what is otherwise available only to a few. Given this confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts, one may wonder to what extent participation in the sacred rites of the Church is necessary. The mysteries of the Church may be obviated, so it seems, since philosophy and the liberal arts provide the same purification of the mind toward the goal of vision.

Augustine also speaks of the Church as a mother in these early works, but only due to her role as teacher. The Church nourishes all Christians with wisdom until they are grown through her teaching. Furthermore, the Church is a source of medicine for all the souls who are sick on account of sin. The medicine is wisdom, as offered by the Church through her sacred rites, and her interpretation of Scripture.

- apud platonicos me interim, quod sacris nostris non repugnet, reperturum esse confido.” See also mor. 8.15.

15 Augustine reconsiders the value of the liberal arts in retr. 1.3.2.

16 b. vita 2.28; sol. 1.6.13; ord. 2.19.51.


18 ord. 2.5.16.

19 mor. 30.62-64.

20 quant. 33.76; mor. 10.17.

21 mor. 30.62.

22 mor. 30.64.
In his early works, Augustine’s depiction of the Church’s life is colored by philosophy. That is, Augustine conceives of life in the Church as a kind of speculative endeavor. The aim is an ascent to Truth with the aid of wisdom. The visible Church has no necessary mediation for the purification of the mind. Instead, the Church serves primarily as a source of wisdom through its sacred rites, and its teaching of Scripture. Augustine subordinates charity to the vision of Truth, and he possesses confidence in the philosophy and the liberal arts to effect the purification of the mind.

The development of Augustine’s thought may be seen over the course of the works from the late 380s and early to mid-390s, and in his use of spousal imagery for the Church. In On Genesis Against the Manicheans (De Genesi adversus Manicheos, ca. 388/389), Augustine cites Eph. 5:31-32 for the first time, following Paul’s interpretation of Genesis 2:24 on the union of “two in one flesh” as a prophecy of the great “mystery” or “sacrament” (Eph. 5:31-32) of Christ and the Church. The Church is born from Christ’s side on the cross, a mystery prefigured by the creation of Eve from Adam’s side. Eve is a type of the Church insofar as her creation and identity follow from her spousal relation to Adam. Just as Adam was put to sleep, so Christ fell asleep “in death, in order that his spouse (conjux) the Church might be formed for him….So then the Church was formed for him as his spouse from his side, that is, from faith in his death and in baptism, because his side was pierced with a lance and poured out blood and

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23 Gn. adv. Man. 2.19. On Ephesians 5:31-32 and the Pauline understanding of mystery, see La Bonnardiére, “Magnum sacramentum,” esp. 29n84. This verse appears at least thirty-five times in Augustine’s works; Grabowski, The Church, 11-12.

24 Cf. Gn. adv. Man. 2.19; c. Faust. 12.8; ev. Jo. 9.10, 15.8; s. 218.14; civ. Dei 22.17. Augustine follows the Latin patristic tradition in this regard; cf. Hilary of Poitiers, De mysteriis 1.5; Ambrose, In Ps. 36.37; see Bertrand de Margerie, History of Exegesis, Vol. II, 71-84.

25 Gn. litt 1.1.; nupt. et. conc. 2.54; ev. Jo. 9.10.
Augustine uses spousal imagery in order to speak about the Church’s birth from Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, a typology he finds in Latin predecessors such as Hilary and Ambrose. Augustine interprets the blood and water that flowed from Christ’s side as figures of the sacraments. In this instance, he makes the explicit connection to baptism, but he does not mention the Eucharist, as he will in later works such as *Against Faustus*. Moreover, he emphasizes the Church’s birth “from faith in his death and in baptism” (*de fide passionis et baptismi*). Augustine places faith and the sacrament of baptism side by side, yet he hasn’t demonstrated how the sacrament mediates such faith.

Furthermore, at this point, Augustine maintains the priority of vision over the theological virtues, and in this work, he does not hint at any kind of reordering. Baptism is the sacrament of the Church’s birth, yet Augustine has not clearly distinguished the kind of transformation and purification provided by the Church’s sacramental life, as distinct from philosophy and the liberal arts. In addition, Augustine has not developed bridal imagery in order to illustrate the union between lover and beloved. He maintains an emphasis on the union of the mind (*mens*) with God through a purification that yields vision. In this text, the use of spousal imagery shows Augustine’s familiarity with the Latin tradition, yet he stops short of developing it in a unique manner.

26 *Gn. adv. Man.* 2.19: “dicit enim apostolus ipsum esse caput ecclesiae, et ecclesiam corpus eius. ergo et ipse soporatus est dormitione passionis, ut ei coniux ecclesia formaretur, quam dormitionem cantat per prophetam dicens: ‘ego dormiui, et somnum cepi; et exsurrexi, quoniam dominus suscepit me.’ formata est ergo ei coniux ecclesia de latere eius, id est de fide passionis et baptismi. nam percussum latus eius lancea, sanguinem et aquam profudit.” cf. 2.16-17; *en. Ps.* 56.11; s. 336.5.

In *On the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount (De sermone Domini in monte, ca. 393/5)*, Augustine speaks of the Church as “bride” (*sponsa*) on one occasion. Augustine uses it in order to speak about the Church in her eschatological glory, “without spot or wrinkle” (Eph. 5:27). The eschatological aspect of the Church is a key component of the mystery, for it indicates the Church’s final holiness. Yet as we shall see, Augustine does not limit bridal language to the eschaton, nor does he restrict the Church’s holiness to her final condition. Instead, during the Church’s earthly pilgrimage, she is the bride in a process of transformation and growth, while also being holy as the bride of Christ. The Church’s holiness is not dependent upon the presence of the fixed number of the elect, for that would make the Church’s holiness dependent upon its members. Rather, Augustine identifies Christ’s spousal love, and the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, as the sources for the Church’s holiness and unity. In this text from the early 390s, however, bridal imagery functions in order to indicate the eschatological aspect of the Church.

Similarly, in *On Eighty-Three Questions (ca. 396)*, Augustine uses bridal imagery in an eschatological sense. He provides an exegesis of the parable of the ten virgins from Matt. 25:1-13, and declares that the five wise virgins signify the fivefold restraint “in regard to the allurements of the flesh.” Christ is the bridegroom who will come at the eschaton, when “the resurrection of the dead occurs.” In this work,

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28 *s. Dom. mon.* 2.66.

29 *s. Dom. mon.* 2.66: “uidebimus enim oculis columbae, quales in sponsa christi praedicantur, quam sibi elegit deus gloriosam ecclesiam non habentem maculam neque rugam, id est mundam et simplicem.”

30 *De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus.*

31 *div. qu.* 59.2-4.
Augustine begins to reorder the priority of vision over the virtues. In question 36, vision gives way to charity, rather than vice versa.\(^{33}\) Augustine does not leave behind vision entirely, nor does he cease to emphasize Wisdom.\(^{34}\) Yet from this point forward, Augustine subordinates vision to charity, for charity is the heart of the Church. The emphasis on charity comes to fruition in the debates against the Donatists, who possess the baptism of the Church by the laying on of hands, but lack charity, and thus cut themselves off from the effects of the sacraments.

Augustine’s definitive reordering of theological virtues and vision is evident in *De doctrina Christiana*.\(^{35}\) In this important text, Augustine distinguishes between things to be “used” (*uti*) and to be “enjoyed” (*frui*). God alone is to be enjoyed (*frui*),\(^{36}\) for “enjoyment consists in clinging to something lovingly for its own sake.”\(^{37}\) All of the things of this world are to be used (*uti*) in order to bring one to enjoy God as end.\(^{38}\) Human beings, however, are not “used” in an entirely utilitarian fashion. To “use” a human being means to recognize that no human person “constitutes the life of bliss” (*in eo constituitur beata uita*).\(^{39}\) Only God is the source of blessedness. Therefore, “every

\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) *div. qu.* 36.1.

\(^{34}\) *div. qu.* 36.4.

\(^{35}\) *doc. Chr.*; as noted earlier, books 1-3.25, 27 were written just after Augustine’s ordination to the episcopacy (ca. 396), while the rest was written at the time of the *Retractationes* (ca. 426/7).

\(^{36}\) *doc. Chr.* 1.4.4, 22.20-34.38.

\(^{37}\) *doc. Chr.* 1.4.4.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) *doc. Chr.* 1.22.20.
human being, precisely as human, is to be loved on God’s account,” that is, to be loved to God as their final end, for God is the “end of all one’s joys.” Yet in doing so, Augustine declares that “the supreme reward is that we should enjoy [God] and that all of us who enjoy him should also enjoy one another in him.” Augustine has reconfigured the “final end” of union with God according to the two-fold commandment of charity, i.e. to love God and one’s neighbor (Matt. 22:37-39). The final end of this commandment is none other than the enjoyment of God as one’s final end, and the enjoyment of God with others, “for when you enjoy a human being in God, you are really enjoying God rather than the human being.” Human beings are “used,” but are also “enjoyed,” insofar as they are enjoyed “in God,” that is, inasmuch as they are loved to God as end, so that together all might enjoy God in a “fellowship of the love of God” (in societate dilectionis dei). Thus the ultimate end of the journey (iter) is the love of God and one’s neighbor, i.e. a communion of charity.

The Way (via) to this end is Christ, the Wisdom of God, who became flesh in order to heal our ills. The Divine Wisdom became the Way to the “homeland” (patria)

40 doc. Chr. 1.27.28.
41 doc. Chr. 1.33.37.
42 doc. Chr. 1.32.35: “haec autem merces summa est, ut ipso perfruamur et omnes, qui eo fruimur, nobis etiam inuicem in ipso perfruamur.” Cf. 1.22.21-23.22, 27.28-29.30, 33.37, 39.43.
43 doc. Chr. 1.33.37: “cum autem homine in deo frueris, deo potius quam homine frueris, illo enim frueris, quo efficeris beatus, et ad eum te peruenisse laetaberis, in quo spem ponis, ut uenias.” Cf. 1.22.21-23.22, 27.28, 33.37, 39.43.
44 doc. Chr. 1.29.30: “si autem contrauenientem inuenerit, odit in illo uel Hemeter odium dilecti sui et, quibus modis ualeat, instat ut auferat quid nos in societate dilectionis dei agere conuenit, quo perfrui beate uiuere est et a quo habent omnes, qui eum diligunt, et quod sunt et quod eum diligunt, de quo nihil metuimus, ne cuiquam possit cognitis displicere, et qui se uult diligi, non ut sibi aliquid, sed ut eis, qui diligunt, aeternum praemium conferatur, hoc est ipse quem diligunt?” Cf. 1.22.21-23.22, 27.28, 33.37, 39.43.
45 doc. Chr. 1.10.10-14.13.
by “deliberately making himself the pavement under our feet along which we could return home.”

This journey is not one traveled by feet, but “one traveled by the affections” (affectum), a way that was “blocked, as by a barricade of thorn bushes, by the malice of our past sins.”

Augustine alludes to the Plotinian ascent, yet he recasts it according to the paschal mystery. Christ as the one Mediator offers the purification from sin that cannot be found in the liberal arts or philosophy.

The philosophers see the goal from afar, but lack the Way home, i.e. the one Mediator who became the “pavement under our feet.” The Church, precisely as the bride of Christ, must undergo the journey home through a process of growth and transformation while in this world. Only in this way can she become the bride without stain or wrinkle. “During this age [Christ] trains and purges [the Church] with various kinds of salutary vexation and distress, so that once it has been snatched from this world, he may bind his wife (coniugem) the Church to himself for ever, having no stain or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:27).”

The Church’s journey and transformation during her earthly pilgrimage is intrinsic to the mystery revealed by Scripture. She must become the bride “without stain or wrinkle,” precisely by purification from sin, and conformation to Christ her

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47 doc. Chr. 1.17.16: “porro quoniam in uia sumus nec uia ista locorum est sed affectuum, quam intercludebant quasi saepta quaedam spinosa praeteritorum malitia peccatorum, quid liberalius et misericordius facere potuit, qui se ipsum nobis, qua rediremus, substernere uoluit, nisi ut omnia donaret peccata conuersis et grauiter fixa interdicta reditus nostri pro nobis crucifixus euelleret?”

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 doc. Chr. 1.16.15: “est enim ecclesia corpus eius, sicut apostolica doctrina commendat, quae coniux etiam eius dicitur. corpus ergo suum multis membris diversa officia gerentibus, nodo unitatis et caritatis tamquam sanitatis adstringit. exercet autem hoc tempore et purgat medicinalibus quibusdam molestiis, ut erutam de hoc saeculo in aeternum sibi copulet coniugem ecclesiam non habentem maculam aut rugam aut aliquid eiusmodi.”
Bridegroom, during her earthly pilgrimage. The Church on earth undergoes purification in its “mixed condition”, yet its members are “bound together with the knot of unity and love” during this time, and thus the Church is both one and holy as a communion defined by the spousal love of Christ.

Augustine depicts the universal Church that celebrates the sacraments as spouse and mother by invoking the beautiful woman of Song of Songs. The Church is a mother by virtue of her sacraments, which give birth to the two-fold commandment of charity in her members. She is praised as the woman (Song of Songs 4:2) whose “teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes coming up from the washing.” The “shown ewes” are the baptized, who “give birth to twins, that is to the two commandments of love,” such that “none of them is barren and lacking his holy fertility.” In her sacramental life, the Church is bride and mother, for she gives birth to charity in her members by her celebration of baptism. The two-fold commandment of charity to love God and one’s neighbor, which is the sum of what Scripture teaches, is mediated by the sacrament of regeneration, i.e. baptism.

51 doc. Chr. 1.16.15: “corpus ergo suum multis membris diuersa officia gerentibus, nodo unitatis et caritatis tamquam sanitatis adstringit.”

52 doc. Chr. 2.6.7.

53 doc. Chr. 2.6.7; see the same interpretation of this verse in s. 313B.3. The “teeth” of Babylon are the secular authorities, that is, the “teachers of unlawful rites,” whereas the members of the Church participate in the holy rite of baptism.


55 doc. Chr. 1.35.39-40.44.
De doctrina is a significant work, for it reveals the development of Augustine’s thought, whereby the goal vision is subordinated to the end of charity, and the purification of the one Mediator cannot be found in philosophy. Furthermore, Augustine demonstrates his use of bridal imagery for the Church during her earthly pilgrimage, so as to become the bride “without spot or wrinkle.” Spousal imagery may be used for the Church on pilgrimage, as well as for her eschatological condition.

In Confessions, Augustine uses bridal imagery sparingly. However, his use of this image reveals the development and reconfiguration of his thought according to an incarnational paradigm. In Conf. 4.12.19, Augustine identifies Christ as the bridegroom, “running forth from his nuptial chamber,” that is, from the womb of Mary. Augustine interprets Psalm 18:6-7 (19:5) in terms of the incarnation, whereby the eternal Word assumed humanity in the womb of the Virgin, an idea made famous by Ambrose. Augustine will continue to develop this theme in his Expositions of the Psalms and his Tractates on the Gospel of John. The Confessions demonstrate Augustine’s mature thought, which operates within a thoroughly Biblical and Christological framework. Christ is the true Mediator, who alone forgives sins. Philosophy cannot provide this purification from sin, and the philosophers “see the goal” from afar, “but not the way to it and the Way to our beatific homeland.”

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56 conf. 4.12.19: “et descendit huc ipsa uita nostra et tulit mortem nostram et occidit eam de abundantia uitae suae et tonuit clamans, ut redeamus hinc ad eum in illud secretum, unde processit ad nos in ipsum primum urginilem uterum, ubi ei nupsit humana creatura, caro mortalis, ne semper mortalis; et inde uelut sponsus procedens de thalamo suo exultauit ut gigans ad currendam uiam. “

57 Hymn 6.17-20.

58 conf. 7.20.26; “quid interesset inter praesumptionem et confessionem, inter uidentes, quo eundum sit, nec uidentes, qua, et uiam ducentem ad beatificam patriam non tantum cernendam sed et
Furthermore, Augustine has subordinated vision to charity so as to reconfigure the philosophical aspects of his thought into an incarnational theology. This is evident in book 11, in which Augustine identifies Christ as the eternal Truth, and the Bridegroom who calls out to his creatures.\(^{59}\) Christ is the Teacher, as the eternal, stable Truth. Yet he is not merely a teacher, for he also the Mediator, and the “Beginning,” that is, the Creator of all things. The eternal Word through whom all things were created calls out to his bride, the Church,\(^{60}\) and enters into relationship with humanity. This is not the Truth of the philosophers, to which one ascends by an “inward turn,” away from creation. Instead, the eternal Word enters history and assumes human nature in order to become the only Way to the \textit{patria}. He is Wisdom itself, and he reveals himself as the Bridegroom that calls humanity into a mysterious, spousal relationship of love. This is not the vision attainable through philosophy and the liberal arts. It is a spousal love offered by the one Mediator, and the one Bridegroom, who descends through the incarnation in order to become one with his bride, the Church.

In \textit{Against Faustus} (ca. 397/9), Augustine shows how the sacraments mediate the union of Christ and the Church. This work provides the occasion for a more sustained reflection on the Church as the “true spouse of Christ” (\textit{uera sponsa Christi})\(^{61}\) against the Manicheans, who reject the Old Testament and all of the practices found there. The Manicheans accuse the Catholic Church of being a “lewd young girl, forgetful of chastity,” enjoying the gifts of another man, i.e. the God of the Hebrews. Against the

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\(^{59}\) \textit{conf.} 11.8.10.

\(^{60}\) \textit{conf.} 4.15.27; 7.21.27; 13.13.14.

\(^{61}\) \textit{c. Faust.} 15.8-9.
Manicheans, Augustine develops a sophisticated sacramental theology that establishes the continuity between Jewish and Christian rituals. The Old Testament practices were *sacramenta* that prefigured the coming of Christ. Now that Christ has come, Christians no longer practice Jewish rituals. However, these *sacramenta* cannot be discarded entirely, along with the Old Testament, for they are part of the mysterious dispensation leading to the paschal mystery. All of the *sacramenta* are intrinsic to the *mysterium* of God’s saving plan. This *mysterium* is perfectly revealed and made efficacious through the *sacramenta* instituted by Christ, i.e. baptism and the Eucharist, which are “greater in power, yet fewer in number” than the Old Testament *sacramenta*.

Augustine’s understanding of the Church as bride is grounded in his exegesis of the Old Testament. He employs the typology between the Church and Eve in order to reveal how the Church is formed from Christ’s sacrificial love on the cross. The Jewish sacrifices of blood prefigured the sacrifice of Christ, from which the Church is born. Christ’s sacrifice forgives sins and leads to new life, and this mystery was prefigured in the creation of Eve from Adam’s side. The Church is born from and defined by the spousal love of Christ, offered on the cross. This love is mediated precisely through the

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64 *c. Faust.* 15.3.

65 *c. Faust.* 12.8.

66 *c. Faust.* 15.3; cf. *en. Ps.* 138.2: “Of the first marriage it was written, ‘They will be two in one flesh’ (Gn 2:24), and the apostle interprets this saying in the light of the mystery (*mysterium*), for the
sacraments that “flowed forth” from Christ’s side, i.e. baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments by which the Church is built up as the body and bride of Christ in history.

The Biblical figures of the Old Testament reveal how the mystery of Christ’s spousal love is intended for mediation through the sacramenta instituted by Christ. Just as Adam left his mother to “stick to his wife,” so Christ left “his mother, that is, the statement was made about those two original humans only because in them the marriage of Christ and the Church was prefigured. This is the how the apostle explains it... He tells us elsewhere that Adam foreshadowed Christ: ‘Adam was a type of the one who was to come’ (Rom 5:14). And, as Adam was a type of Christ, so too was the Church from the side of the Lord as he slept, for as he suffered and died on the cross and was struck by a lance, the sacraments which formed the Church flowed forth from him. By Christ’s sleeping we are to understand his passage... As Eve came from the side of the sleeping Adam, so the Church was born from the side of the suffering Christ.”

67 c. Faust. 12.39; cf. ev. Jo. 15.8: “For not only was he privileged to receive a wife while he was asleep, but besides that his wife was made for him from his rib, because from Christ asleep on the cross the Church was going to issue from his side, from the side of one sleeping, that is; because it was from his side, pierced by the lance as he hung on the cross, that the Church’s sacraments flowed out;” s. 218.14; en. Ps. 56.11. In ev. Jo. 9.10, Augustine links the water jars to the two in one flesh mystery. “So then, the first water jar also held a prophecy about Christ; but as long as these things I am saying were not being preached among the peoples, it was still water, it had not yet been changed into wine. And because the Lord has enlightened us through the apostle, and shown us what we should look for in that one sentence, They shall be two in one flesh, namely, a great mystery in Christ and the Church, we can look for Christ everywhere and drink wine from all the water jars. Adam sleeps so that Eve may be made; Christ dies so that the Church may be made. While Adam is asleep Eve is made from his side; when Christ is dead his side is pierced with a lance, so that the sacraments, from which the Church is to be formed, might pour out. Who would not see that in those deeds back then, the future was represented, since the apostle says that Adam himself was a figure of the one to come? He is, he says, a form of the one to come (Rom 5:14). Everything was mystically prefigured” (ev. Jo. 9.10).

68 On baptism as the sacrament of forgiveness of sins that “flowed from the open side of Christ;” cf. c. Faust. 12.16-17, 20; ev. Jo. 9.10; 15.8; s. 218.14.

69 Augustine asserts in c. Faust. 12.8, “A wife (conjux) is made from the side of the sleeping man; the Church is made for the dying Christ from the sacrament (sacramentum) of the blood that flowed from his side when he was dead.” “fit uiro dormienti conjux de latere: fit Christo mortienti ecclesia de sacramento sanguinis, qui de latere mortui profluxit.” In this case, the “blood that flowed from [Christ’s] side” carries clear Eucharistic overtones, as Augustine cites John 6:53 in reference to the Eucharist. “Eve, who was made from the side of her husband, is called ‘life’ and ‘the mother of the living.’ And in the gospel the Lord says, ‘If anyone does not eat my flesh and drink my blood, he will not have life in him’ (Jn 6:53).” Likewise, in c. Faust. 12.10, Augustine alludes to the “Amen” that the faithful pronounce after receiving the “blood of Christ,” i.e. the Eucharist. “For the blood of Christ has a loud voice when all the nations reply ‘Amen’ after receiving it. This is the clear voice of the blood, which the blood itself expresses from the lips of the faithful who have been redeemed by the same blood.”

70 c. Faust. 12.39; cf. en. Ps. 138.2: “He is the ruler, the bridegroom, and the redeemer of the Church, and she, to whom the apostle says, ‘You are Christ’s body, and his members’ (1 Cor. 12:27), is also his bride. The whole Christ, head and body together, constitute a perfect man. Women are included in this, for woman was formed from man and belongs to him.”
Synagogue and her old literal observance of the law, his mother ‘from the seed of David according to the flesh’ (Rom. 1:3), and stuck to his wife (uxori), the Church, so that they might be two in one flesh.”71 Christians no longer observe the rituals of the old law,72 but instead participate in the union between Christ the Bridegroom and his bride, the Church, through the Church’s sacramental economy. The sacraments are efficacious precisely as mysteries of Christ’s spousal love. In her sacramental life, the Church serves as an instrument of the union between Christ and his spouse, and in this way, the Church is herself a “sacrament” (sacramentum) that reveals and effects the mysterious union of God and humanity in history.73

By time of Against Faustus, the centrality of the sacraments is clear. The Catholic Church is the true spouse whose sacraments mediate the sacrificial love of Christ that forgives sins. The Eucharist is the “marriage supper” of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9) that anticipates the heavenly, eschatological wedding feast between Christ and his bride “richly described in the Revelation of John.”74 Augustine develops the bridal theme from his reading of Scripture, in this case, the book of Revelation, which depicts the Church as the “the wife of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:9). The Eucharist is a participation in the eschatological feast, although the final consummation will not be realized fully until the

71 Gn. adv. Man. 2.37: “quid est ergo quod diximus, reliquit patrem, nisi, reliquit apparere hominibus sicut est apud patrem? item reliquit et matrem, id est synagogae ueterem atque carnalem observationem, quae illi mater erat ex semine Dauid secundum carnem, et adhaesit uxori suae, id est ecclesiae, ut sint duo in carne una.”
72 c. Faust. 15.8.
73 Ibid.
74 c. Faust. 15.11; Augustine incorporates the parable of the virgins into this passage (Matt. 25:1-13).
end time. Nevertheless, the Church rejoices in hope during her earthly pilgrimage\textsuperscript{75} in her celebration of the sacraments, which mediate the virtues of faith, hope, and charity that “continue to shape the life of believers.”\textsuperscript{76}

Furthermore, in \textit{Against Faustus}, Augustine makes it clear that participation in the sacraments is necessary for membership in the Church. In book 12, Augustine uses the figure of Noah’s ark in order to illustrate the necessity of baptism for entrance into the Church. “An entrance is made in [the ark’s] side…no one enters the Church except through the sacrament of the forgiveness of sins, but this sacrament flowed from the opened side of Christ.”\textsuperscript{77} Baptism is the only way to enter the Church since it mediates the mystery of Christ’s spousal love offered on the cross. The body of Christ is built up through a sacramental economy, until the full completion of the ark.\textsuperscript{78}

Moreover, the Church’s unity in charity does not take place over against the sacramental economy, but rather is mediated precisely through the Church’s sacramental life. Augustine cites Romans 5:5 in order to show that the Church, as a historical body, is made into a “spiritual community” by the love of God “poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5).\textsuperscript{79} The unity of the members in charity is dependent upon the

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{c. Faust.} 15.9.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{c. Faust.} 20.23. Baptism is the “sacrament of hope” (\textit{sacramentum spei}) by which the Church is united “in the present time;” \textit{c. Faust.} 12.20: “quod post alios septem dies dimissa reuersa non est, significat finem saeculi, quando erit sanctorum requies, non adhuc in sacramento spei, quo in hoc tempore consociatur ecclesia, quamdiu bibitur, quod de christi latere manauit, sed iam in ipsa perfectione salutis aeternae, cum tradetur regnum deo et patri, ut in illa perspicua contemplatione incommutabilis ueritatis nullis mysteriis corporalibus egeamus.”

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{c. Faust.} 12.16: “quod aditus ei fit a latere: nemo quippe intrat in ecclesiam nisi per sacramentum remissionis peccatorum; hoc autem de christi latere aperto manauit.”

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{c. Faust.} 12.16: “quod arca conlecta ad unum cubitum desuper consummatur: sicut ecclesia corpus christi in unitatem conlecta sublimat et perficit.”
Holy Spirit, sent by Christ for his spouse, “for on the fiftieth day after the resurrection Christ sent the Holy Spirit to stretch out the hearts of the faithful.”

The Church can tolerate any kind of scandal among its members and maintain its unity due to the presence and work of Holy Spirit, who gathers together a “diversity of peoples,” with a “heavenly unity from above.” Augustine speaks of the charity of the Holy Spirit as the glue that binds together the Church.

The timbers of the ark are glued together with pitch on the inside and on the outside in order to signify the tolerance of love in the framework of unity, so that fraternal unity does not yield to the scandals that try the Church, whether from those who are inside or from those who are outside.

79 c. Faust. 12.14: “The ark is constructed out of four-sided beams, just as the Church is built out of the holy people who are ready for every good work...And the breadth of the ark is stretched out to fifty cubits, just as the apostle says, Our heart has been stretched out (2 Cor. 6:11). By what but by spiritual love? The love of God, ‘poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit’ (Rom. 5:5);” “quod sexies longa ad latitudinem suam et decies ad altitudinem suam humani corporis instar ostendit, quia in corpore humano christus adparuit. quod cubitis quinquagesima latitudo eius expanditur: sicut dicit apostulos: cor nostrum dilatatum est. unde nisi caritate spirituali? propter quod ipse item dicit: caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis.”

80 c. Faust. 12.14: “quinquagesimo enim die post resurrectionem suam christus sanctum spiritum misit, quo corda credentium dilatauit.” Robert Dodaro points out that the mediation of charity in Augustine’s thought is linked both to Christ and the Holy Spirit, such that there cannot be a strict separation with regard to mediation; see “Augustine on the Roles of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Mediation of the Virtues,” Augustinian Studies 41:1 (2010): 145-163. Augustine’s use of spousal imagery, whereby Christ sends the gift of the Holy Spirit to his bride, provides a way of uniting the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the mediation of the virtues.

81 The “sevenfold work” of the Holy Spirit, following Isaiah 11, includes the gifts of “wisdom and understanding, of counsel and fortitude, of knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord,” c. Faust. 12.15.

82 The lower levels of the ark are constructed in two and three chambers, just as from all the nations the Church gathers a multitude of people either in two parts because of the circumcised and the uncircumcised or in three parts because of the three sons of Noah, whose children have filled the earth. And these are called the lower levels of the ark because in this earthly life there is a diversity of peoples, but up above all are brought to unity, and this variety does not exist because Christ is all things in all, as if completing us in one cubit with heavenly unity from above;” c. Faust. 12.16: “quod inferiora arcae bicamerata et tricamerata construuntur: sicut ex omnibus gentibus uel bipertitam multitudinem congregat ecclesia propter circumcisionem et praeputium, uel tripertitam propter tres filios noe, quorum progenie repletus est orbis. et ideo arcae inferiora ista dicta sunt, quia in hac terrena uita est diversitas gentium, in summò autem omnes in unum consummamur. et non est ista uarietas: quia omnia et in omnibus christus est tamquam nos uno cubito desuper caelesti unitate consummans.”

and so that the bond of peace is not destroyed. For pitch is a very hot and strong glue that signifies the ardor of love, which tolerates all things with great strength in order to maintain a spiritual community.  

The “fraternal unity” in charity among the members of the Church is a gift poured out by the Holy Spirit and communicated through the sacraments. Yet within the mystery of freedom, it is possible for some to cut themselves off from spiritual unity while participating in the sacraments. These are the wicked, represented by the unclean animals in the ark. “All the kinds of animals are enclosed in the ark, like all the nations…Both clean and unclean animals are present there, just as both good and bad people are found together in the sacraments of the Church.”  

Although some of the members may cut themselves off from the effects of the sacraments, nevertheless, the body of Christ is built up, such that God’s plan for the salvation of his people is carried out in every age of history until her final eschatological fulfillment when the sacraments will no longer be necessary, represented by the sending of the dove from Noah’s ark.

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84 c. Faust. 12.14: “quod bitumine glutinantur arcae ligna intrinsecus et extrinsecus: ut in conpage unitatis significetur tolerantia caritatis, ne scandalis ecclesiam temptantibus siue ab eis, qui intus, siue ab eis, qui foris sunt, cedat fraterna iunctura et soluatur uinculum pacis. est enim bitumen feruentissimum et uiolentissimum gluten significans dilectionis ardorem ui magna fortitudinis ad tenendum societatem spiritalem omnia tolerantem.”


87 See c. Faust. 12.18, in which the building of the ark occurs during the sixth age, that is, the age in history of the “building” of the Church, “in the proclaimation of the gospel.” This is an age of hope, whereas the seventh day is the day of rest, “when the ark came to rest. For what is promised as a hope is revealed in its reality. Moreover, the seventh day of rest is joined with the resurrection on the eighth day. For the rest that welcomes the saints after this life, once they have received back their body, has no end, but instead it takes up into the gift of eternal life the whole person, renewed no longer in hope but in reality and in every respect with the perfect and immortal salvation of both spirit and body. Because, then, the seventh day of rest is joined to the eighth day of the resurrection, this too is a deep and profound mystery (mysterium) in the sacrament (sacramentum) of our rebirth, that is, in baptism. The rising water surpassed
The dove was sent out after another seven days and did not return. This signifies the end of the world, when the rest of the saints will no longer be found in the sacrament of hope, by which the Church is united in the present time, when we drink what flowed from Christ’s side, but will already be in the perfection of eternal salvation, when the kingdom will be handed over to him who is God and Father, so that in that clear contemplation of immutable truth we shall not need bodily sacraments.  

The sacraments will no longer be necessary at the eschaton, when the Church will enjoy the “clear contemplation of immutable truth” (in illa perspicua contemplatione incommutabilis ueritatis). Augustine does not leave the vision of truth, however, in his mature works, he recontextualizes vision within a Biblical, sacramental framework, such that the final eschatological end is the “wedding feast of the Lamb” as a communion of charity. Until this final communion, the sacramental economy is a necessary part of the Church’s life, according to the mystery of God’s salvific plan. The Church’s visible celebration of the sacraments mediate the charity that builds up the Church and unites the members as one body until the final completion of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus).

In addition, Augustine develops a sophisticated understanding of extra ecclesiam nulla salus (“no salvation outside of the Church”) in Against Faustus. Although baptism may be celebrated outside of the visible Church since its power and efficacy are dependent upon Christ rather than the minister, when celebrated apart from the

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The heights of the mountains by fifteen cubits, which means that this sacrament transcends all the wisdom of the proud” (c. Faust. 12.19).

88 c. Faust. 12.20: “quod post alios septem dies dimissa reuersa non est, significat finem saeculi, quando erit sanctorum reques, non adhuc in sacramento spei, quo in hoc tempore consociatur ecclesia, quamdiu bibitur, quod de christi latere manauit, sed iam in ipsa perfectione salutis aeternae, cum tradetur regnum deo et patri, ut in illa perspicua contemplatione incommutabilis ueritatis nullis mysteriis corporalibus egeamus.”

89 Ibid.

90 c. Faust. 12.16: “quod arca conlecta ad unum cubitum desuper consummatur: sicut ecclesia corpus christi in unitatem conlecta sublimat et perficit.”
communion of the Church, baptism does not contribute to salvation, but rather to
“perdition,” symbolized by the destruction of those outside of Noah’s ark.

The flood occurred seven days after Noah entered the ark, because we are
baptized in the hope of the rest to come, which is signified by the seventh
day. All flesh outside of the ark, which the earth sustained, was destroyed
by the flood, because although outside the communion (societatem) of the
Church the water of baptism is the same, it not only does not contribute to
salvation but instead contributes to perdition.92

The “rebaptism” of the Donatists leads to death rather than life.93 Nevertheless,
those who acknowledge the “glory of Christ in the prophets and in all the divine
Scriptures,” and “do not seek their own glory,” may be brought into communion with the
Church “at a later time” by the Holy Spirit.94 In this way, the mediation of the visible
Church is never obviated but remains essential, even if its mediatory role is not revealed
fully until the eschaton. Any communion among members is necessarily related to the
visible celebration of the sacraments of the “holy Church,” which is the temple of God
and the “glory of Christ.”95 Her glory will be revealed at the end times, yet it is already

91 See Cresc. 2.21.26, and the discussion of De baptismo below.

92 c. Faust. 12.17: “quod post septem dies, ex quo ingressus est noe in arcam, factum est diluuium:
quia spe futurae quietis, quae septimo die significata est, baptizamur. quod praeter arcam omnis caro, quam
terra sustentabat, diluuio consumpta est: quia praeter ecclesiae societatem aqua baptismi quamuis eadem sit, non solum non uael ad salutem, sed uael potius ad perniciem.”

93 c. Faust. 12.20: “The fact that the raven, which was sent out after forty days, did not return—
either drowned in the waters or attracted to some dead body floating in them—signifies that persons who
are most foul because of the impurity of their desires and are for this reason too intent upon what is outside
in this world are either rebaptized or led astray and taken captive by those whom baptism outside the
Church kills.”

94 c. Faust. 12.22.

95 c. Faust. 13.13. The visible Church is the holy temple of God, for “the Church of Christ is the
one which rises above and is seen by all. For it is the throne of glory of which the apostle says, ‘For the
temple of God, which you are, is holy (1 Cor. 3:17)...The Lord also said, foreseeing the revelation of the
glory of the Church, ‘A city established on a mountaintop cannot be hidden’ (Mt 5:14), because, indeed,
‘the throne of glory, our sanctification, has been exalted,’ so that those who provoke religious divisions
may not be listened to when they say, ‘Look, Christ is here; look, he is there (Mt 24:23).’ For they reveal
visible in the universal Church, as symbolized by the rainbow in the narrative of the flood.96 While the Holy Spirit may work outside of the bounds of the Church, this work always leads to union and communion with the visible Church. Augustine continues to think along these ecclesiological lines in his work *On Baptism*.

The ecclesiological significance of *On Baptism* is often limited to a debate over purity.97 As it is commonly rehearsed, Augustine was faced with the problem of the Donatists’ claim of possessing a “pure Church” whose ministers were free from the stain of apostasy. Augustine’s “solution” was to posit an “inner” Church of the predestined that could be identified as the true bride “without spot or wrinkle,” thereby maintaining the Church’s purity in the midst of her imperfect embodiment as a “mixed body” (*corpus permixtum*) of saints and sinners participating in the sacraments. The Church’s holiness is dependent upon her members, specifically the presence of the predestined, who alone constitute the “pure Church.” In this system, there is no room for sinners in the Church, for the “true Church” is limited to an “inner communion” of the just in an absolute sense.98 Furthermore, since membership in the Church essentially consists of

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96 *c. Faust.* 12.22: “Next, God was speaking to Noah and was commending again, as if from the beginning, the figure of the Church, for the same things had to be signified in many ways ... God placed the rainbow, which is seen in the clouds and which never shines except because of the sun, as a covenant in the sky between him and every living soul that he would not destroy them by a flood.”


participation in an inner, invisible communion, the mediation of the sacraments is mitigated, if not entirely obviated.\textsuperscript{99}

The justification for this interpretation, as it is often claimed, may be found in De baptismo 5.27.38, in which Augustine identifies the “garden enclosed” in the Song of Songs with the “the holy and just,” who alone constitute “a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, a well of living water.”\textsuperscript{100} The “true Church” is the “inner” society of the “holy” who “live according to the Spirit” and have entered “on the excellent way of charity,”\textsuperscript{101} in contradistinction to the “outer” society of the sacraments. The “holy” members form the “garden enclosed,” and on the basis of their purity, the Church may be called the bride of Christ “without spot or wrinkle.” In such a system, the “invisible” communion of the just persists irrespective of the sacraments, for many who have participated in the visible celebration of the sacraments and seem to be within “really are without,” while “many who seem to be without are in reality within.”\textsuperscript{102} As such, the sacraments are unnecessary for membership in the “invisible” Church.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{99} Phillip Cary ignores the essential role of the sacraments in the mediation of the charity “poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5). Cary effectively establishes a dichotomy between the “inner” work of the “one dove” and the “outer” visible celebration of the sacraments: “The unique dove is not anything visible like the ministers of the church (many of whom are unworthy) or the local congregation (which includes many bad Christians). It is not anything that could be called the visible or institutional church. It is all those holy and spiritual people anywhere in the world who are united inwardly by Christian charity, even if they have never seen one another,” Outward Signs, 198.

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{bapt.} 5.27.38: “et quod in canticis canticorum ecclesia sic descriptur: hortus conclusus, soror mea sponsa, fons signatus, puteus aquae uiuae, paradisus cum fructu pomorum, hoc intellegere non audeo nisi in sanctis et iustis, non in auaris et fraudatoribus et raptoribus et faeneratoribus et ebriosis et inuidis, quos tamen cum iustis baptismum habuisse commune, cum quibus communem non habebant utique caritatem, ex ipsius cypriani litteris, sicut saepe commemorauit, uberius discimus et docemus;” see Kelly, 415.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{bapt.} 5.27.38.

\textsuperscript{102} “namque in illa ineffabili praescientia dei multi qui foris uidentur intus sunt et multi qui intus uidentur foris sunt;” \textit{bapt.} 5.27.38; see also 4.3.5.
This kind of reductive approach falls short of capturing Augustine’s sophisticated theology whereby the Church’s visible celebration of the sacraments is intrinsic to the mystery of salvation.\textsuperscript{104} In \textit{On Baptism}, Augustine seeks to affirm the teaching of Cyprian, whom the Donatists claim as an authority.\textsuperscript{105} There is “one Church” and “one baptism,” just as there is “one God, and one Christ, and one hope, and one faith.”\textsuperscript{106} While it is possible for some outside of the visible Catholic Church to have the one baptism of Christ since it has been passed on through the laying of hands, they “have not the one Church,” for there are some who “should have the one baptism who had not the one hope,”\textsuperscript{107} as was the case in the time of Paul. Augustine links the unity of the Church to the “one hope” mediated precisely through baptism,\textsuperscript{108} although some who participate in the sacrament may cut themselves off from this hope.

In 3.17.22, Augustine asserts that the unity of the Church is predicated upon the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, the “one dove without fault,” sent by Christ for his spouse. The Donatists claim to hold the authority of Cyprian, yet as Augustine declares,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cary, \textit{Outward Signs}, 200.
\item Jaroslav Pelikan provides a nuanced treatment in \textit{The Mystery of Continuity}, 114-22.
\item See Pelikan, \textit{The Mystery of Continuity}, 112: “Both Augustine the Catholic bishop and his Donatist opponents had laid claim to continuity with Cyprian.” See also Robert Evans, \textit{One and Holy}, esp. 65-91.
\item \textit{bapt.} 5.26.37: “traditum est ergo nobis, sicut ipse commemorat, ab apostolis, quod sit unus deus et christus unus et una spes et fides una et una ecclesia et baptisma unum.”
\item \textit{bapt.} 5.26.37: “cum ergo ipsis apostolorum temporibus inueniamus fuisse quosdam quibus una spes non erat et unus baptismus erat, ex ipso fonte ita in nos ducitur UIColoritas, ut appareat nobis sic fieri posse, ut, cum sit una ecclesia sicet spes una et baptisma unum, habeant tamen unum baptisma qui non habent unam ecclesiam, sicet illi etiam temporibus fieri potuit, ut baptisma unum haberent qui unam spem non haberent.”
\item \textit{bapt.5.27.38}; cf. \textit{c. Faust.} 12.20.
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Cyprian sought the unity of the Church\textsuperscript{109} that comes not from the self-achieved purity of
the Church’s members, but rather from the “one dove” of the Holy Spirit, working
through the sacramental life of the Church.\textsuperscript{110} The Church is “one” only on the basis of
the mysterious workings of the “one dove.”\textsuperscript{111} As there is one Holy Spirit, so there is one
Church,\textsuperscript{112} and the union and communion of the body of Christ is made possible by the
“love of God poured in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5), the love that is
“wanting in all who are cut off from the communion of the Catholic Church.”\textsuperscript{113} Here

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\textsuperscript{109} Pelikan, The Mystery of Continuity, 120: “[The Donatists] followed Cyprian in his rigorism, but
not in his adherence to Catholicity and unity.”

\textsuperscript{110} See Pelikan, The Mystery of Continuity, 120-1.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{bapt.} 3.17.22: “Can it be said, then, that to this same dove belong all those greedy ones, whose
existence in the same Catholic Church Cyprian himself lamented?...Is it possible that, by the prayers of the
saints who are spiritual within the Church, as though by the frequent lamentations of the dove, a great
sacrament (\textit{magnum sacramentum}) is dispensed, with a secret administration of the mercy of God, so that
their sins also are loosed who are baptized, not by the dove but by the hawk, if they come to that sacrament
in the peace of Catholic unity?...But the integrity of the sacrament is everywhere recognized, though it will
not avail for the irrecoverable remission of sins outside the unity of the Church;” “numquid ergo ad eandem
columbam pertinent omnes auari, de quibus in ecclesia, tamquam per columbæ creberrimum gemitum
magnum geritur sacramentum et occulta dispensatio misericordiae dei, ut eorum etiam peccata soluantur,
qui non per columbam, sed per accipitrem baptizantur, si ad illud sacramentum cum pace catholicæ unitatis
accedunt?. sacramenti autem integritas ubique cognoscitur, sed ad peccatorum illam irreuocabilem
remissionem extra unitatem ecclesiae non ualebit nec in haeresi aut schismate constitutum sanctorum
orationes, id est illius unicae columbae gemitus, poterunt adiuuare, sicut nec intus positum possunt, si
aduersum se ipse per uitam pessimam teneat debita peccatorum, non solum si per accipitrem, sed etiam si
per ipsius columbae pium ministerium baptizetur.”

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{bapt.} 3.17.22; cf. \textit{util. cred.} 7.19.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{bapt.} 3.16.21: “‘Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which
is given unto us.’ For this is that very love which is wanting in all who are cut off from the communion of
the Catholic Church; and for lack of this, ‘though they speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though
they understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though they have the gift of prophecy, and all faith, so
that they could remove mountains, and though they bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and though they
give their bodies to be burned, it profits them nothing.’ But those are wanting in God’s love who do not
care for the unity of the Church; and consequently we are right in understanding that the Holy Spirit may be
said not to be received except in the Catholic Church;” “spiritus autem sanctus quod in sola catholicæ per
manus impositionem dari dicitur, nimirum hoc intelligi maiores nostri ululuerunt quod apostolus ait:
quoniam caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostri per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis. ipsa est enim
caritas, quam non habent qui ab ecclesiæ catholicæ communione præcisi sunt, ac per hoc, etiamsi linguæ
hominum et angelorum loquentur, sic sciant omnia sacramenta et omnem scientiam et si habeant omnem
prophetiam et omnem fidem ita ut montes transferant et distribuant omnia sua pauperibus et tradant corpus
again we see Augustine’s mature theology, in which charity (caritas) is the defining feature of the Church. In his homilies on 1 John, delivered during the Donatist controversy, Augustine identifies charity as the heart of the Church, and the strength of the city of God. This emphasis on charity is indicative of Augustine’s movement away from his earlier, more Platonizing views. Philosophy and the liberal arts cannot bring one to participate in the charity of the Holy Spirit, the charity that schismatics such as the Donatists lack. Any kind of ecclesiology that bases its purity upon the achievements of its members will lead to division and disunity. The unity of the Church depends upon the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, who binds the members in charity through a sacramental economy.

While the Holy Spirit may work mysteriously outside the visible bounds of the Catholic Church, any membership in the communion of faith, hope, and charity must be related, in some way, to the one, visible Church. Augustine takes up the image of Noah’s ark in order to speak about the necessary mediation of baptism.

How do they belong to the mystery (mysterium) of this ark?...If not by water, how in the ark? If not in the ark, how in the Church? But if in the Church, certainly in the ark; and if in the ark, certainly by water. It is therefore possible that some who have been baptized without may be considered, through the foreknowledge of God, to have been really baptized within, because within the water begins to be profitable to them unto salvation; nor can they be said to have been otherwise saved in the ark except by water. And again, some who seemed to have been baptized within may be considered, through the same foreknowledge of God, more truly to have been baptized without, since, by making a bad use of

suum ut ardeant, nihil eis prodest. non autem habet dei caritatem, qui ecclesiae non diligit unitatem, ac per hoc recte intellegitur dici non accipi nisi in catholica spiritus sanctus.”

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114 ca. 406/7.

115 ep. Jo. 6.6; cf. ev. Jo. 6.14-15; 20; 13.11-4; en. Ps. 47.13; 57.5;121.7; 129.4; 131.13; 140.2; 149.2; s. 298.2.

116 See s. 37.27; 138.6-10; 146.2; 147A.2-3; 285.6; 295.5; doc. Chr. 2.6.7; civ. Dei 15.22.
baptism, they die by water, which then happened to no one who was not outside the ark…As therefore it was not another but the same water that saved those who were placed within the ark, and destroyed those who were left without the ark, so it is not by different baptisms, but by the same, that good Catholics are saved, and bad Catholics or heretics perish.  

Baptism has effects outside of the visible Church by virtue of the “holiness of the mystery” (mysterii sanctitatem). This is the mysterious efficacy of the sacrament, such that the mediation of baptism is never obviated, even if its effects are not revealed or fully realized until “some future time.” The invisible mysteria work through visible sacramenta, yet are not bound by historical limits. Nevertheless, one cannot discard the sacramenta, for they are intrinsic to the mysteria. If any are brought into the final communion of the Church at a “future time,” it must be in relation to the one Church and her sacraments, for the sacraments mediate the saving mysterium. Baptism is necessary

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117 bapt. 5.28.39: “quapropter si apparent hominibus in unitate catholica baptizati, qui saeculo uerbis solis et non factis renuntiant, quomodo pertinent ad huius arcae mysterium, in quibus non est conscientiae bonae interrogatio?… si non per aquam, quomodo in arca? si non in arca, quomodo in ecclesia? si autem in ecclesia, utique in arca, et si in arca, utique per aquam. potest ergo fieri, ut et quidam foris baptizati per dei praescientiam uerius intus baptizati deputentur, quia illic eis incipit aqua prodesse ad salutem neque enim aliter dici possunt salui facti in arca nisi per aquam et rursus quidam, qui uidebantur intus baptizati, per eandem praescientiam dei foris baptizati uerius deputentur. male quippe utentes baptismo per aquam moriuntur, quod nulli tunc accidit nisi qui praeter arcam fuit… sicut ergo non alia sed eadem aqua et in arca positos saluos fecit et extra arcam positos interemit, sic non alio sed eodem baptismo et boni catholici salui fiunt et mali catholici uel haeretici pereunt.”

118 bapt. 4.12.19: “When baptism is given in the words of the gospel, however great be the perverseness of understanding on the part either of him through whom, or of him to whom it is given, the sacrament itself is holy in itself on account of him whose sacrament it is. And if any one, receiving it at the hands of a misguided man, yet does not receive the perversity of the minister, but only the holiness of the mystery, being closely bound to the unity of the Church in good faith and hope and charity, he receives remission of his sins—not by the words which spread as a canker, but by the sacraments of the gospel flowing from a heavenly source;” “et si quisque per hominem peruersum id accipiens non accipiat tamen ministri peruersitatem, sed solam mysterii sanctitatem, in bona fide et spe et caritate unitati conpaginatus ecclesiae remissionem accipit peccatorum non per uerba sicut cancer serpentia, sed per euangelica sacramenta de caelesti fonte manantia;” cf. bapt. 4.11.18: “Both within and without, the waywardness of man is to be corrected, but the divine sacraments and utterances are not to be attributed to men.”

119 bapt. 3.18.23: “But just as those who are tolerated with groanings within the Church, although they do not belong to the same unity of the dove, and to that ‘glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,’ yet if they are corrected, and confess that they approached to baptism most unworthily,
for salvation, and while there is a distinction between conversion and participation in the salvific *mysteria* of the sacraments, both are intrinsic to salvation.

Indeed, Augustine distinguishes between the communion of the sacraments and the bond of charity “which is the special gift of Catholic unity and peace,” yet this does not render participation in the sacraments ineffective or unnecessary for membership in the Church. Instead, Augustine continues to develop a sophisticated

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120 Interestingly, Augustine asserts that the place of baptism may be supplied by martyrdom, for the martyrs participate in the same *mysterium* mediated through the sacrament, namely, the paschal mystery; see *bapt.* 4.22.30.

121 *bapt.* 4.25.33: “By all these considerations it is proved that the sacrament of baptism is one thing, the conversion of the heart another; but that man’s salvation is made complete through the two together. Nor are we to suppose that, if one of these be wanting, it necessarily follows that the other is wanting also…But when either of these requisites is wanting intentionally, then the man is responsible for the omission.”


123 “Since, then, the sacrament is one thing, which even Simon Magus could have, and the operation of the Spirit is another thing, which is even often found in wicked men, as Saul had the gift of prophecy; and that operation of the same Spirit is a third thing, which only the good can have, as ‘the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:’ whatever, therefore, may be received by heretics and schismatics, the charity which covers the multitude of sins is the special gift of Catholic unity and peace; nor is it found in all that are within that bond, since not all that are within it are of it…outside the bond that love cannot exist, without which all the other requisites, even if they can be recognized and approved, cannot profit or release from sin;” *bapt.* 3.16.21: “cum ergo aliud sit sacramentum, quod habere etiam simon magus potuit, aliud operatio spiritus, quae in malis etiam hominibus fieri solet, sicut saul habuit propheticam, aliud operatio eiusdem spiritus, quam nisi boni habere non possunt, sicut est finis praecepti caritas de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non flecta, quodlibet haeretici et schismatici accipiant, caritas quae cooperat multitudinem peccatorum proprium donum est catholicae unitatis et pacis nec eius in omnibus, quia nec omnes sunt eius, sicut suo locouidebimus. prater ipsam tamen esse illa caritas non potest, sine qua cetera, etiamsi agnosci et adprobarti possunt, prodesse tamen et liberare non possunt.”

124 Pelikan, *The Mystery of Continuity,* 120.
doctrine of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ("no salvation outside of the Church"),\(^\text{125}\) whereby the Spirit may work beyond the visible Church,\(^\text{126}\) yet always in such a way as to correct those who have been "estranged" from her peace, e.g. heretics and schismatics, in order to bring them into the unity of the one Church. The waters of baptism may exist outside the Church, yet "the gift of the life of happiness is found alone within the Church, which has been founded on a rock, which has received the keys of binding and loosing. ‘She it is alone who holds as her privilege the whole power of her Bridegroom and Lord,’ by virtue of which power as bride.’"\(^\text{127}\)

As the one, “true spouse of Christ” (*vera sponsa Christi*),\(^\text{128}\) the Catholic Church has the power, through the laying on of hands, to administer and to dispense the sacraments.\(^\text{129}\) The source of this power is Christ’s spousal love. For those outside of the Church who have baptism, “what they posses is derived from unity is of no efficacy to their salvation, unless they shall return to that same unity,”\(^\text{130}\) that is, the unity of the

\(^{125}\) Cf. *bapt.* 4.1.1: “The comparison of the Church with paradise shows us that men may receive baptism outside of the Church, but that no one outside can either receive or retain the salvation of eternal happiness.”; “ecclesia paradiso conparata indicat nobis posse quidem baptismum eius homines etiam foris accipere, sed salutem beatae uitae non nisi intra ecclesiam repperitur, quae super petram etiam fundata est, quae ligandi et soluendi clauae accepit. haec est una quae tenet et possidet omnem sponsi sui et domini potestatem, per quam coniugalem potestatem etiam de ancillis filios parere potest, qui si non superbiant, in sortem hereditatis uocantur, si autem superbiant, extra remanebunt.”

\(^{126}\) *bapt.* 3.18.23; 4.3.5; 5.28.39; cf. *c. Faust.* 12.20; s. 260C.

\(^{127}\) *bapt.* 4.1.1: “sic ergo baptismus ecclesiae potest esse extra ecclesiam, munus autem beatae uitae non nisi intra ecclesiam repperitur, quae super petram etiam fundata est, quae ligandi et soluendi clauae accepit. haec est una quae tenet et possidet omnem sponsi sui et domini potestatem, per quam coniugalem potestatem etiam de ancillis filios parere potest, qui si non superbiant, in sortem hereditatis uocantur, si autem superbiant, extra remanebunt.”

\(^{128}\) *c. Faust.* 15.3, 8-11; s. 238.2.3.

\(^{129}\) *bapt.* 4.21.29: “[Baptism] is of no avail for salvation unless he who has baptism indeed in full perfection be incorporated into the Church, correcting also his own depravity, let us therefore correct the error of the heretics, that we may recognize what in them is not their own but Christ’s;” “quod tamen quia non proficit ad salutem, nisi ille qui habet integritatem baptismi sua quoque pruuitate correcta incorporetur ecclesiae, sic haereticorum errorem corrigamus, ut quod in eis non eorum sed christi est agnoscamus.”

\(^{130}\) *bapt.* 4.2.2.
Catholic Church. Otherwise, they “are not in the Church of which it is said, ‘My dove is but one; she is the only one of her mother’ (Song of Songs 6:9).” Membership in this dove is administered by the “washing of water,” through which Christ purifies and presents to himself a “glorious Church” as his bride. Christ works through the sacraments, which are visible signs of his spousal love. The Church is one because of Christ’s love, yet schismatics and heretics have cut themselves off from this union in charity.

For Augustine, there is no “invisible” Church united in charity that subsists apart from the one communion that celebrates the sacraments. The “true Church” (veram ecclesiam) is the visible Catholic Church, and although some who participate in the

131 bapt. 4.3.5.

132 bapt. 4.3.5: “quia nec isti ecclesiae deuoti sunt, qui uidentur esse intus et contra christum uiuunt, id est contra mandata christi faciunt, nec omnino ad illam ecclesiam pertinere iudicandi sunt, quam sic ipse mundat lauacro aquae in uerbo, ut exhibeat sibi gloriosam ecclesiam non habentem maculam aut rugam aut aliquid huiusmodi.”

133 “There is no more room for doubt now about the Church of Christ and the wife of Christ than there is about the body of Christ, displayed to the eyes of the disciples and felt by their hands. He who rose from the dead manifested both: he showed the head and he showed the members; he pointed to the bridegroom and he pointed to the bride. Either join me in believing in both, or believe in one only to your own condemnation…You need to be in communion with this Church. Why should we quarrel? This Church began from the earthly Jerusalem, so that it might come to rejoice in the heavenly city. It begins from the earthly city and ends in the heavenly city. In the heavenly Jerusalem will be the whole Church that drew the beginning of its faith from the earthly Jerusalem” (en. Ps. 147.18).

134 Augustine never speaks of the “true Church” (veram ecclesiam) as an “invisible Church” (ecclesia invisibilis); rather, when he speaks of the “true Church,” (veram ecclesiam), it is always in reference to the visible, Catholic Church; cf. s. 238.1-2; “All nations have the Church. Don’t let anybody take you in; that’s the true, that’s the Catholic Church. We can’t see Christ, we can see this Church; about him we have to believe…The apostles, on the contrary, could see him, could only believe about this Church…We too can see the Church…by holding on to what we can see, we shall finally reach him whom we cannot yet see;” “sic sacra perennisque euangelica lectio nobis demonstrat uerum Christum, et ueram ecclesiam, ne in aliquo eorum erremus, aut sancto sponso aliam pro alia supponamus, aut sanctae sponsae non suum uirum sed alium importemus. ergo ne in aliquo eorum erremus, tanquam matrimoniales eorum euangelii tabulas audiamus;” cf. c. Faust. 15.3, 8-11; s. 47.18; 71.37; 265.6; 398.14; en Ps. 149.3; ep. 44.3; 93.11, 17, 25, 50-51; 118.32; 140.43; 141.5; 173.10; 185.10-11, 46. The phrase “invisible Church” (ecclesia invisibilis) cannot be found in any of Augustine’s works. See also Pelikan, The Mystery of Continuity. 119: “Not one moment in that history, nor one local church, but the Catholic Church throughout time and space was the true Church.”
Church’s sacramental life may cut themselves off from the effects of the sacraments, it is possible to be brought into communion at a later time according to the mystery of God’s foreknowledge, following Paul in Romans 8:29. Within the mystery of God’s salvific plan, the wicked may become good, and the good may become wicked. God’s transcendent will remains inscrutable, and the mystery of redemption is not a problem to be solved by the determination of a “fixed number” of the elect. Instead, it is a gift that is accomplished through the sacramental economy of the Church.

Augustine does possess a doctrine of predestination as God’s mysterious plan for the salvation of humanity. Yet it is taken up into a sacramental theology that is not reducible to a Platonic scheme whereby the Church must escape from her embodiment in history. Augustine reconfigures the Platonic aspects of his thought into a Biblical, sacramental framework, in which the Church’s condition in history is intrinsic to God’s transcendent plan revealed in Scripture.

In On Baptism 5.26.37, Augustine speaks of predestination as a transcendent mystery (mysterium) by citing Paul in 1 Cor. 15 on the resurrection of the dead, which is none other than the mystery (mysterium) of God’s salvific plan. From the perspective of God’s mysterious, eternal foreknowledge (Rom. 8:29), some who seem to be within

135 “For according to his foreknowledge, who knows whom he has foreordained before the foundation of the world to be made like to the image of his son, many who are even openly outside, and are called heretics, are better than many good Catholics. For we see what they are today, what they will be tomorrow we know not;” bapt. 4.3.5: “secundum eius autem praescientiam, qui nouit quos praedestinauerit ante muni constitutionem conformes imaginis filii sui, multi etiam, qui aperit foris sunt et haeretici appellantur, multis et bonis catholicis meliores sunt; quid enim sint hodie uidemus, quid cras futuri sint ignoramus.”

136 See the treatment in civ. Dei 21.18-25.

137 A Platonic system has no room for history as such; see Pelikan, The Mystery of Continuity, 127.

138 bapt. 5.26.37.
“really are without,” while “many who seem to be without are in reality within.”\textsuperscript{139} The Church as mystery is both historical and eschatological. The eschatological aspect represents the fulfillment of the mystery (\textit{mysterium}) of God’s plan, from the perspective of God’s salvific will. The fullness of this transcendent mystery is known to God alone. The eschaton is not simply a matter of determining the number of the elect, for it is a glory beyond imagination (Col. 1:27). At the final completion of God’s saving plan, the “one dove” will bring all members of the Church into union with the one bride.

[W]ith God, with whom the future is already present, they already are what they will be. But we, according to what each man is at present, inquire whether they are to be counted among the members of the Church today, which is called the one dove, and the Bride of Christ without spot or wrinkle, of whom Cyprian says in the letter which I have quoted above, that ‘they did not keep in the way of the Lord, nor observe the commandments given unto them for their salvation…’ But if the dove does not acknowledge them among her members…then they seem indeed to be in the Church, but are not…And so too in the case of those whose separation from the Church is open; for neither these nor those are as yet among the members of the dove, but some of them perhaps will be at some future time.\textsuperscript{140}

The work of the Holy Spirit transcends temporal limits. Augustine uses bridal imagery in order to indicate the Church’s eschatological condition “at some future time”

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 5.27.38; see also 4.3.5.

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{bapt.} 4.3.5: “et deo quidem, aput quem sunt praesentia quae uentura sunt, etiam quod futuri sunt iam sunt, nos autem secundum id quod in prae senti est quisque hominum quaerimus, utrum in illius ecclesiae membris, quae unica columna dicta est et sponsa christi sine macula et ruga, hodie deputandi sint de quibus dicit cyprianus in epistula quam commemorauit, quod uiam domini non tenerent nec data sibi ad salutem caelestia mandata seruarent, quod non facerent domini uoluntatem patrimonio et lucro students, superbiam sectantes, aemulationi et dissensioni uacantes, simplicitatis et fidei neglegentes, saeculo uerbis solis et non factis renuntiantes, unusquisque sibi placentes et omnibus displicentes. quodsi eos in suis membris nec illa columba cognoscit et talibus, si in eadem peruersitate permanserint, dicturus est dominus: non noui uos; recedite a me qui operamini iniquitatem, uidentur in ecclesiae esse, sed non sunt, immo et contra ecclesiam faciunt. quomodo ergo baptizare baptismo ecclesiae possunt, quod nec ipsis prodest nec accipientibus, nisi intrinsecus uera conversione mutentur, ut ipsum sacramentum, quod eis accipientibus non proderat, quando saeculo uerbis, non factis renuntiabant, prodesse incipiat, cum et factis coeperint renuntiare, ita et illi quorum est aperta separatio, quia in membris illius columbae nec hi nec illi sunt hodie, sed aliqui eorum fortasse futuri sunt.”
that will include all who have been incorporated into the “glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Yet he insists that the Church must become the “glorious bride” through her pilgrimage in history. The Church (ecclesia) is not a static reality, reducible to a fixed quantity. Instead, the Church is a complex, dynamic mystery, whose historical journey is intrinsic to her formation and her growth as the bride of Christ. The Church’s condition as a “mixed body” (corpus permixtum) of the good and the wicked does not function as an absolute marker of delineation among the members. Instead, it serves the purpose of preventing the presumption and pride that leads to spiritual elitism, which is the root error of the Donatists. According to Augustine, one cannot presume with certainty to be a member of the predestined or elect on the basis of one’s spiritual achievements; this is the folly of the Donatists, who have established themselves as a communion of the elite by virtue of the purity of their ministers. They have effectively reduced the “true Church” to a sect in North Africa, thereby limiting the work of the Holy Spirit.

141 bapt. 4.3.5: “quia nec isti ecclesiae deuoti sunt, qui uidentur esse intus et contra christum uiuunt, id est contra mandata christi faciunt, nec ommino ad illam ecclesiam pertinere iudicandi sunt, quam sic ipse mandat lauacro aquae in uerbo, ut exhibeat sibi gloriosam ecclesiam non habentem maculam aut rugam aut aliquid huiusmodi.”

142 The Church becomes the spotless bride through a process of transformation, beginning with participation in the sacraments, and in continual conformation to Christ, as Augustine proclaims in his Sermons: “So present yourselves to such a head as a body worthy of him, to such a bridegroom as a worthy bride. That head can only have a correspondingly worthy body; and such a great husband as that can only marry a correspondingly worthy wife. ‘To present himself,’ it says, ‘with a glorious Church, not having stain or wrinkle, or any such thing’ (Eph 5:27). This is the bride of Christ, without stain or wrinkle. Do you wish to have no stain? Do what is written: ‘Wash yourselves, be clean, remove the wicked schemes from your hearts’ (Is 1:16). Do you wish to have no wrinkle? Stretch yourself on the cross. You see, you don’t only need to be washed, but also to be stretched, in order to be without stain or wrinkle; because by the washing sins are removed, while by the stretching a desire is created for the future life, which is what Christ was crucified for;” s. 341.13.

143 Tarsicius von Bavel asserts that the Church is a “reality in process, a reality that has to pass through several phases in order to reach its specific goal;” see “What Kind of Church Do You Want?”, 148.
Augustine does not posit an “inner” Church of the pure and holy, over against the “outer” Church, which would amount to another form of elitism. Rather, the mixed condition of the Church during her earthly pilgrimage, as revealed in Scripture, creates a dynamic in which one may never possess the certainty of salvation that leads to complacency. Nevertheless, Augustine insists that no one should despair of the salvation of another. “[W]e must not despair of the conversion of any man, whether situated within or without, so long as ‘the goodness of God leads him to repentance,’ and ‘visits their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.’ For in this way ‘he does not utterly take from them his loving-kindness’…” One may place one’s hope in the mercy and loving-kindness of God, which is none other than Christ’s spousal love for the Church, mediated through the sacraments. The Donatists have cut themselves off from the spousal love enjoyed by the “one bride,” the universal Church, and from the “one dove” of the Holy Spirit, in favor of a self-made communion, and a self-achieved purity.

For Augustine, the Church is holy by virtue of Christ’s spousal love, not because of the presence of certain members, i.e. the predestined. The whole Church continues to undergo purification, for she is on pilgrimage through this world, in a process of transformation. However, she makes present the mysterious union of the Bridegroom with his bride, Christ and the Church. Those who are “carnal, and full of fleshly

144 During this time, it is always possible for the members of the Church to become “carnal;” bapt. 5.27.38.

145 bapt. 4.22.30: “de conversione autem nullius desperandum est siue foris siue intus constituti, quamdiu patientia dei ad paenitentiam eum adducit et uisitat in urga facinora eorum et in flagellis peccata eorum. hoc modo enim misericordiam suam non dispergit ab eis, si et ipsi aliquando miserentur animae suae placentes deo;” cf. en. Ps. 55.12, 20, in which Augustine exhorts the congregation to pray for the bad, and despair of no one.
appetites” undergo a process of transformation so as to become “fit for heavenly food” by being nourished “with the milk of the holy mysteries,”¹⁴⁶ i.e. the sacraments,¹⁴⁷ thereby becoming the “spotless” bride.¹⁴⁸

As we have seen, in his mature works, Augustine has developed a sacramental theology, according to a Pauline theology of mystery (mysterium, sacramentum). From an eschatological perspective,¹⁴⁹ the Church may be called a “garden enclosed,” and the bride “without spot or wrinkle,” yet Augustine does not resort to a Platonic solution in order to deal with the Church’s holiness. Rather, he develops a sophisticated theology of the Church as sacramentum, whereby the visible Church, in her celebration of the sacraments, is the presence of a transcendent mysterium, i.e. the union of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus). As a body that visibly celebrates the sacraments, she is herself a kind of sacrament (sacramentum), for she is the visible presence of the transcendent mystery (mysterium) of the union between Christ and the Church, God and humanity. She is a sacrament of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus),¹⁵⁰ united as one body, and although

¹⁴⁶ baptism. 5.27.38: “quidam uero adhuc carnales et animales prouectus suos instanter exercent et, ut cibo spiritualium fiant idonei, sanctorum mysteriorum lacte nutriantur, ea quae in pravis moribus populari etiam iudicio manifesta sunt in dei timore deuitant et, ut minus minus que rebus terrenis et temporalibus delectentur, uigilantissime satagunt, regulam fidei diligenter inquisitam firmissime tenent et, si quid ab ea deuiant, cito auctoritate catholica corriguntur, quamuis in eius uerbis pro sensu carnali uariis adhuc phantasmatum concursibus fluctuent.”

¹⁴⁷ The sacramenta mediate the transcendent mysteria; cf. baptism. 5.27.38: “horum munera concessa diuinitus partim sunt propria, sicut in hoc tempore infatigabilis caritas et in futuro saeculo uita aeterna, partim uero cum malis peruersis que communia, sicut omnia cetera, in quibus sunt et sacrosancta mysteria.”

¹⁴⁸ This process of transformation applies to both the baptized and non-baptized, for the baptized must continue to be purified and configured to Christ, and may always “turn back to Egypt,” and become “carnal” due to sin; cf. s. 4.11-12, 14.


the mystery of the *totus Christus* will not be fully complete until the eschaton, the visible Church makes present the invisible communion of the one Christ in history.

For Augustine, the “true Church” is the visible Catholic Church, as the “true spouse of Christ” (*uera sponsa Christi*)\(^{151}\) “spread throughout the whole world”\(^{152}\) in a process of continual transformation. Augustinian’s exegesis of Song of Songs in *De baptismo* illustrates the dynamic of the Church’s growth and transformation, and thus his use of spousal language is not limited to an eschatological sense.

Augustine’s polemic against the Donatists in *De baptismo* further demonstrates the Biblical foundation of his ecclesiology. In this work, he demonstrates continuity with the Old Testament Scripture, using spousal imagery from books such as Song of Songs and Ezekiel. He compares schismatics to adulterous lovers who have gone astray.\(^{153}\) According to the mysterious dispensation of God’s providence, these adulterous lovers must face certain “barriers” and “difficulties” before returning to the “way of peace.”

But for the sake of those who, having undergone the difficulties, and straits, and barriers of the empty reasoning of those by whom they are led astray, afterwards feel the prickings of fear, and return to the way of peace, to seeking God in all sincerity—for their sake He goes on to say, ‘I

\(^{151}\) *c. Faust.* 15.3, 8-11; s. 238.2-3.

\(^{152}\) s. 238.3; “The Church is spread throughout the whole world; all nations have the Church. Don’t let anybody take you in; that’s the true, that’s the Catholic Church;” “toto terrarum orbe ecclesia diffusa est: omnes gentes habent ecclesiam. nemo uos fallat: ipsa est uera, ipsa est catholica.” Cf. *en. Ps.* 44.33: “The Church has believed, and the Church has spread throughout all nations…This is the Catholic Church: her sons have been set up as princes worldwide, her sons have been appointed in her fathers’ stead. Let those who are cut off from us recognize the truth, let them come back into unity, let them be led into the temple of the King. God has built his Church in every place, laying the firm foundations of the prophets and apostles.”

\(^{153}\) Schismatics are adulterous lovers, prefigured in *Song of Songs*: “They, therefore, who are wicked, evildoers, carnal, fleshly, devilish, think that they receive at the hands of their seducers what are the gifts of God alone, whether sacraments, or any spiritual workings about present salvation. But these men have not love towards God, but are busied about those by whose pride they are led astray, and are compared to the adulterous woman, whom the prophet introduces as saying, ‘I will go after my lovers...’ For thus arise heresies and schisms...either by corruption of her faith, or by the puffing up of her pride;” *bapt.* 3.19.27.
will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but she shall not find them; then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.\textsuperscript{154}

God’s fidelity makes it possible for some to return after having gone astray.\textsuperscript{155}

The barriers and difficulties encountered by those who live in error, e.g. schismatics, have the effect of leading them back to the one, true spouse, in whom she alone may find true blessedness. In this mysterious dispensation of God’s will, the work of conversion cannot be claimed as an accomplishment, or an achieved righteousness. Salvation is the work of God, mediated by the Church’s sacramental life, and Augustine uses spousal imagery in order to show how God’s salvific plan is carried out in and through the ambiguities of history.

The sacraments maintain their efficacy due to the spousal love of God, despite the presence of the wicked in the visible Church. The mysteries (mysteria) of the sacramenta do not cease to have efficacy, even if some cut themselves off from their effects. This is evident in Augustine’s interpretation of Ezekiel, in which Israel is a figure of the Church as the adulterous woman who has taken the “fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and made to thyself images of men, and did commit adultery with them.”\textsuperscript{156} The wicked in the Church have “turned all the sacraments, and the words of the

\textsuperscript{154}\textit{bapt. 3.19.27}: “sed propter eos, qui passi diffici
tates et angustias et interclusiones in uanis ratiocinationibus eorum, a quibus seducuntur, conpunguntur timoribus et redeunt ad uiam pacis et quaerendum sinceriter deum, ideo sequitur et dicit: propterea ecce ego saepio sudibus uiam illius et aedificabo in uia ipsius spinas et tramitem suum non inueniet.”

\textsuperscript{155}\textit{bapt. 3.19.27}.

\textsuperscript{156}Citing Ezekiel 16:17-19; \textit{bapt. 3.19.27}: “ideo que et per ezechielem eidem fornicariae dicitur: et protulisti de uasis gloriae tuae de auro meo et de argento meo, ex quibus dedi tibi, et fecisti tibi imagines masculinas et fornicata es in eis.”
sacred books, to the images of her own idols, with which her carnal mind delights to indulge. Nor yet, because those images are false, and the doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, are those sacraments and divine utterances therefore so to lose their due honor." The sacraments do not lose their “due honor,” that is, their meaning and efficacy, which depend upon the spousal love of God, not upon the righteousness of the ministers.

God’s spousal love is intended for mediation, as prefigured by the gifts given to the people of Israel that “belonged not to her, but to God.” The gifts of the law prefigured the sacramenta Christi, and had effects among the Jewish people precisely as mysteria. Christ confirmed this efficacy in his command to the lepers to offer sacrifice in accord with the Jewish religious rituals, even though he had not yet offered the sacrifice that he “wished to be celebrated in the Church for all of them,” namely, his sacrifice on the cross. Augustine recognizes the operation of the mysteria in the observance of the law in order to show the continuity with the sacraments instituted by Christ for his bride, the Church.

157 baptism. 3.19.27: “ad imagines enim phantasmatum suorum, cum quibus uoluntari delectatur, carnalis anima conuerit omnia sacramenta et uerba sanctorum librorum. nec tamen, quia illae imagines falsae sunt et doctrinae sunt daemoniorum in hypocrisi mendaciloquorum, propterea et illa sacramenta et diuina eloquia sic exhonoranda sunt, ut eorum illa esse deputentur, cum dominus dicat de auro meo et de argento meo et ueste mea uersicoloria et oleo meo et incenso et panibus meis et cetera.”

158 baptism. 3.19.27.

159 baptism. 6.44.86.

160 baptism. 3.19.27: “Although, therefore, she had her fornication, yet those things wherewith she adorned it, whether as seduced or in her turn seducing, belonged not to her, but to God. If these things were spoken in a figure of the Jewish nation, when the scribes and Pharisees were rejecting the commandment of God in order to set up their own traditions, so that they were in a manner committing adultery with a people which was abandoning their God; and yet for all that adultery at that time among the people, such as the Lord brought to light by convicting it, did not cause that the mysteries should belong to them, which were not theirs but God’s, who, in speaking to the adulteress, says that all these things were His; thus the Lord Himself also sent those whom he cleansed from leprosy to the same mysteries, that they should offer
In the end, the efficacy of the sacraments depends upon the spousal love of Christ in the paschal mystery (*mysterium*). The “true spouse” of Christ, i.e. the Catholic Church, possesses the gifts of the sacraments whose power lies in the invisible, spousal love of Christ. Schismatics such as the Donatists may have received the “mark” of ministry through the laying on of hands, however, they have cut themselves off from the mysterious spousal love mediated through the sacraments.

Moreover, Augustine does not conceive of the workings of grace solely in terms of the individual soul. Augustine diverges from predecessors like Ambrose, who focuses on the relationship between the Word of God and the individual soul in the exegesis of Scriptural texts such as Song of Songs. For Augustine, grace is mediated not only between Christ and the individual soul, but also between the members of the Church.

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162 Augustine most often refers to the whole Church as the bride. One exception may be found in *c. Faust*. 22.38, in which Augustine considers the relationship between Christ and the Church in terms of the union of the Word and the soul. Yet in this passage, Augustine places the soul’s relationship to the
This is evident in *De doctrina*, in which Augustine develops his theology of the “works of mercy” or “compassion” (*opera misericordiae*). The members of the Church mediate charity to one another “in this time” through “works of mercy” or “compassion” (*opera misericordiae*). The charity between the members of the Church leads all to enjoy God as final end, and the source of this charity is the self-emptying spousal love of Christ, for Christ “has mercy (*misericordiam*) on us because of his own goodness, while we have mercy on each other, not because of our goodness but again because of his.” The incarnation is the supreme work of mercy that makes all of the works of mercy efficacious insofar as they lead to the enjoyment God, for “he has mercy on us (*miseretur*) so that we might enjoy him, while we have mercy (*miseremur*) on each other, again so that we may all enjoy him.” The members of the Church mediate the mercy of God to one another, leading to a “fellowship of the love of God” (*in societate* Word*)

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163 *doc. Chr.* 1.29.30; 4.4; 22.20; 32.35; 34.38.

164 *doc. Chr.* 1.30.33: “ille enim nobis praebet misericordiam propter suam bonitatem, nos autem nobis inuicem propter illius.”

165 *doc. Chr.* 1.30.33: “ille nostri miseretur, ut se perfruamur, nos uero inuicem nostri miseremur, ut illo perfruamur.”

166 Cavadini, “The Sacramentality of Marriage in the Fathers,” 452: “It is interesting and significant to note that, unlike his spiritual ‘father’ Ambrose and unlike Origen before him, Augustine almost never refers to the individual soul as a ‘bride’ of Christ. Ambrose used the wedding imagery from the Song of Songs to refer as much to the relationship between the individual soul and the Word of God as to the relationship between the church and the Word, but Augustine leaves this former dimension of the allegory almost completely behind… The bond of charity does not only link the Head with the members individually, but the members with each other. Our relationship with Christ is ecclesially mediated: in the unity with each other, which is founded in and configured to the charity of Christ, we know ourselves as beloved by Christ as by a spouse. None of us alone can claim the title spouse or bride because we do not know ourselves as such apart from the charity that binds us all together. That binding charity is not something we could have created for ourselves or drawn from the innermost resources of our being with a lot of education and effort, but is the love of Christ that prompted the ‘great sacrament’ of the Incarnation, the assuming of human nature into a nuptial union of two in one flesh. We experience ourselves as loved with a spousal love in our experience of the church, of the unifying love that was Christ's ‘voluntary sleep’
dilectionis Dei) made possible by the merciful love of Christ in the incarnation. In this union “founded in and configured to the charity of Christ, we know ourselves as beloved by Christ as by a spouse.” As a community offering works of mercy and celebrating the sacraments, the Church makes present the spousal love of Christ in history. In this way, the Church is herself a “sacrament” (sacramentum) of the love and mercy of God, made visible in the Church’s communal and sacramental life.

Augustine’s uses bridal imagery in order to develop a rich ecclesiology of solidarity whereby the Church on earth already shares, to some extent, the glory of Christ in heaven. This is possible by virtue of Christ’s spousal love in the incarnation. Augustine’s incarnational Christology, while underdeveloped in earlier works, comes to fruition in significant texts such as Against Faustus, and in his works from the Donatist controversy. In Against Faustus, Augustine asserts that the union of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus) is predicated upon the self-emptying love of the Word of God, following Paul in Phil. 2:6-7, for “through his flesh he became a partaker of our nature so that we might be the body of that head.” The spousal love of Christ in the incarnation

on the cross, giving being to the church from his wounded side as Eve came forth from Adam's side.” See en. Ps. 56.11.

167 doc. Chr. 1.23.22-29.30.

168 doc. Chr. 1.10.10-17.16; 30.33.


172 c. Faust. 12.8. By this time, Augustine’s mature Christology is operative, although one can find the development of this thought in works such as c. Adim. (ca. 394) and his commentary on Galatians (ca. 394/5).
enables a union between Bridegroom and bride that can be achieved only through a shared humanity, and so Augustine interprets the “two in one flesh” union of Gen. 2:24 in terms of the union of two natures, human and divine, in the one person of Christ, the Word of God made flesh.\textsuperscript{173} This interpretation is carried further in the \textit{Tractates on the Gospel of John},\textsuperscript{174} composed during the first two decades of the 400s. Along with the homilies on 1 John,\textsuperscript{175} these works reveal the influence of a Johannine theology on Augustine’s thought, such that one may say that the Biblical revolution in Augustine’s theology is Johannine, as well as Pauline.\textsuperscript{176}

In \textit{Tractate} 9.10, Augustine interprets Genesis 2:24\textsuperscript{177} in light of Christ’s assumption of human nature.\textsuperscript{178} As in \textit{Confessions}, Augustine identifies the womb of Mary as the marriage bed, “because in that virginal womb two things were joined, a bridegroom and a bride, the bridegroom being the Word and the bride being flesh. For it is written, ‘And they shall be two in one flesh’ (Gen 2:24), and the Lord says in the gospel, ‘Therefore they are no longer two but one flesh’ (Mt 19:6).”\textsuperscript{179} In this instance, Adam is a type of Christ insofar as he stands in relation to his bride, from whose body she will be formed. In this case, the union “in one flesh” applies to Christ’s assumption of human nature, from which his spouse, the Church, will be formed and receive salvation. “Whatever in Adam stood for Christ naturally concerned all peoples, whose salvation is to be found in Christ;” ev. Jo. 9.10.

\textsuperscript{173} Adam is a type of Christ insofar as he stands in relation to his bride, from whose body she will be formed. In this case, the union “in one flesh” applies to Christ’s assumption of human nature, from which his spouse, the Church, will be formed and receive salvation. “Whatever in Adam stood for Christ naturally concerned all peoples, whose salvation is to be found in Christ;” ev. Jo. 9.10.

\textsuperscript{174} Although there is debate about the dates of composition, they were all written between 408-420.

\textsuperscript{175} ca. 406/7.

\textsuperscript{176} My thanks to Brian E. Daley, S.J., for this insight. The homilies on 1 John emphasize charity, and were delivered during the Donatist controversy. These homilies demonstrate the Biblical shift in Augustine’s overall thought, whereby vision is subordinated to charity.

\textsuperscript{177} ev. Jo. 9.10. The Genesis narrative is polyvalent in meaning, for as a Scriptural \textit{sacramentum}, it contains and reveals different aspects of the \textit{mysterium} of salvation accomplished in Christ.

\textsuperscript{178} ev. Jo. 9.10; 10.11; \textit{en. Ps.} 26.33.
the “bride” is the humanity assumed by the Word,\textsuperscript{180} to which the Church “gathered from all peoples”\textsuperscript{181} is united so as to become the one body of Christ.\textsuperscript{182} The incarnation makes possible the union of the eternal Word as Bridegroom\textsuperscript{183} to his bride, the whole Church, so as to form one body.

Let us rejoice at his marriage, and so be among those of whom the marriage is made, who are invited to the wedding: these invited guests are themselves the bride, for the Church is the bride, and Christ the Bridegroom... The Church was drawn from the human race, so that flesh united to the Word might be the Head of the Church, and all the rest of us believers might be the limbs that belong to that Head.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{179} *ep. Jo.* 1.2: “et illius sponsi thalamus fuit uterus uirginis, quia in illo utero uirginali coniuncti sunt duo, sponsus et sponsa, sponsus uerbum et sponsa caro; quia scriptum est, ‘et erunt duo in carne una’; et dominus dicit in euangelio, ‘igitur iam non duo, sed una caro’”; cf. *s.* 138.9; 372.2; Dolbeau 198.43; 22.40.

\textsuperscript{180} *ev. Jo.* 9.10; cf. *ep. Jo.* 1.2; *s.* 138.9; *s.* 147A.2: “like a bridegroom [he] has come forth from his chamber (Ps 18:4-5); he has taken to wife, you see, human flesh. His bride-chamber was the virgin’s womb, that’s where he wedded the Church, to fulfill what had previously been foretold: ‘And they shall be two in one flesh (Gen. 2:24).’”

\textsuperscript{181} *ev. Jo.* 9.10. cf. *en. Ps.* 44.12. The Church “gathered from all peoples” includes the Gentiles, represented by the woman from Samaria who comes to draw water at the well (Jn 4:7); *ev. Jo.* 15.10. The Gentiles are part of God’s plan for the redemption and salvation of his people, but “are not yet justified,” for this plan must be enacted in time and history through a process of transformation. “It is part of the symbolism of this episode that this woman, who was a type of the Church, came from a foreign people. In fact, the Church, a foreigner to the Jewish people, was going to come from the nations. So then, let us listen to ourselves in her and recognize ourselves in her, and in her give thanks to God for ourselves” (*ev. Jo.* 15.8). All of the members of the Church after the time of Christ who are not part of the chosen people are counted as Jews, including Augustine and the entire congregation hearing his sermon. In this way, the woman at the well prefigures all those who become Christians after the coming of Christ. “She, after all, was a figure, not the true reality, and because she prefigured the reality, that is what she became. For she came to believe in the one who proposed her to us as a figure” (*ev. Jo.* 15.10). Furthermore, in *ev. Jo.* 9.11, Augustine identifies the ark as the whole world, which contains all animals, representing all peoples.

\textsuperscript{182} *ep. Jo.* 1.2: “The Church is joined to that flesh, and Christ becomes the whole, head and body;” “illi carni adiungitur ecclesia, et fit Christus totus, caput et corpus.”

\textsuperscript{183} *en. Ps.* 44.7: “But look—this eternal Word so uttered, the coeternal Word of the eternal Father, will come as Bridegroom. *Fair are you beyond all humankind.*”

\textsuperscript{184} *en. Ps.* 44.3: “gaudeamus in nuptiis, et nos erimus cum iis qui fiant nuptiae qui inuitantur ad nuptias; et ipsi inuitati sponsa est... coniunctio nuptialis, uerbum et caro; huius coniunctionis thalamus, uirginis uterus. etenim caro ipsa uerbo est coniuncta; unde etiam dicitur: iam non duo, sed una caro. assumpta est ecclesia ex genere humano, ut caput esset ecclesiae ipsa caro uerbo coniuncta, et ceteri credentes membra essent illius capitis.”
Marriage is a *sacramentum* found in Scripture that prefigures the paschal mystery, culminating with the formation of the Church. On the basis of the union of the eternal Word and human nature “consummated in the Virgin’s womb,” the Church is joined to that flesh, and Christ becomes the whole, head and body.\textsuperscript{185} The formation of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*) is described in terms of the whole Church, not merely individual believers. Furthermore, Augustine brings together the incarnation and the building up of the body in order to show that the union of the whole Christ has no other source than the self-emptying, spousal love of Christ, made efficacious in the Church’s sacramental life.\textsuperscript{187} Baptism and the Eucharist\textsuperscript{188} are the sacraments by which the Church is built up (*quibus aedificatur ecclesia*)\textsuperscript{189} in history. In the Church’s sacramental life is glimpsed the mystery of the incarnation in an efficacious way. The Church’s ascent to glory occurs through her conformation to the eternal Word, who descended\textsuperscript{190} and

\textsuperscript{185} *en. Ps.* 44.3; cf. *ep. Jo.* 1.2; s. 138.9; s. 147A.2; 372.2; Dolbeau 198.43; 22.40.

\textsuperscript{186} *ep. Jo.* 1.2: “illi carnii adiungitur ecclesia, et fit Christus totus, caput et corpus.”

\textsuperscript{187} s. 45.5.

\textsuperscript{188} Those who attend the Eucharistic celebration, “if they attend well, become the bride. For the whole Church is the bride of Christ, whose origin and firstfruits are the flesh of Christ: there the bride is joined to her bridegroom in the flesh. Rightly, when he was mentioning this very flesh, did he break bread, and rightly were the eyes of his disciples opened, and they recognized him in the breaking of the bread” (*ep. Jo.* 2.2).

\textsuperscript{189} *civ. Dei* 22.17.

\textsuperscript{190} Christ is the heavenly man, “since his domicile never moved from heaven, although the Son of God also became Son of man by taking a body from earth, taking, that is, ‘the form of a servant’ (*Phil* 2:7). For it was only the one that had descended who also ascended. Because even if others ascend, whoever he may grant this to, or rather if they are lifted up to heaven by his grace, even so it is he that ascends, because they become his body, and in this way it is just one who ascends. This is a great sacrament (*magnum sacramentum*) in Christ and the Church, as the apostle explains (*Eph* 5:31);”s. 362.16; see Augustine’s treatment of Jacob’s ladder in *c. Faust.* 12.23.
entered history in order to unite humanity to himself “in the present time” through the sacramental economy.\footnote{Faust. 12.20.}

In his Expositions of the Psalms, Augustine develops an incarnational and sacramental ecclesiology whereby the union of Christ and the Church is accomplished in a mysterious way in the midst of the Church’s suffering. During “the present time,” Christ’s spousal love transfigures the Church into his body through a union that enables the head and members to speak in one voice (\textit{una vox}).\footnote{en. Ps. 37.6: “This is why Christ may declare to Saul, “Why are you persecuting me? (Acts 9:4) [Christ] most definitely had no one persecuting him in heaven. But just as on that occasion the Head was speaking on behalf of the body, so here too the Head speaks the words that properly belong to the body, and you hear them as the words of the Head too. Whenever you hear the voice of the body, do not separate it from the voice of the Head; and whenever you hear the voice of the Head, do not separate him from the body; for they are two no longer, but one flesh.” See also s. 129.4: “Christ, you see, is both head and body. The head is in heaven, the body on earth. The Lord is the head, the body is his Church. You remember the saying, of course, ‘They shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament,’ says the apostle, ‘but I mean in Christ and the Church.’ So if they are two in one flesh, they are two in one voice. Our head, the Lord Christ, spoke to the Jews the words we heard when the Gospel we being read…Let his body speak too, the Church that is, to its enemies. You know to whom it has to speak. What has it got to say? ‘I have said nothing simply of my own, so that there may be only one voice; one voice because one flesh.’ So this is what we must say to them; I’m speaking with the voice of the Church.”}

\footnote{ep. Jo. 1.2; cf. en. Ps. 30[2].4: “He calls himself bridegroom and he calls himself bride: how can he say he is both bridegroom and bride, except because they will be two in one flesh? And if two in one flesh, why not two in one voice? Let Christ speak, then, because in Christ the Church speaks, and in the Church Christ speaks, and the body speaks in the Head, and the Head in the body.”} “One person appears to be speaking, and he has made himself a bridegroom and has made himself a bride, because they aren’t two but one flesh, for ‘the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.’”\footnote{en. Ps. 30[2].3; 43.2; 60.3; 87.3; 101.1.2; Cameron, “Transfiguration: Christology and the Roots of Figurative Exegesis in St. Augustine,” 40-7.} Christ the head “transfigures us into himself” (\textit{transfigurare nos in se}),\footnote{en. Ps. 74.4: “The head is the bridegroom, the body is the bride; and they speak as one. Let us listen to this speaker, and in him speak as ourselves. Let us be his members, so that this voice may be ours as well…So Christ is preaching himself, telling the good news of himself even through his members, those
solidarity in which God’s plan for union with his people is accomplished in the Church, as prefigured in prophetic texts such as Isaiah.  

196 Isaiah also notes very well that these two are themselves one, for he speaks in the person of Christ and says, ‘He set a wreath upon me like a bridegroom, and like a bride he adorned me with an ornament’ (Is 61:10).  

197 God’s salvific plan is the formation of the totus Christus, such that the mystery of Christ’s spousal love in the incarnation is extended in the Church.  

198 She receives and becomes the mystery of God’s love as Christ’s bride and body, for “in the members of Christ, there is Christ.”  

199 The apostle Paul “confirms the fact. *We are _who already belong to him…One body is to be formed, under one head, living one life in one Spirit._” The words of the Psalms are the words of the whole Christ, whether as Head or as his body. The members of Christ’s body speak words such as “There is no peace in my bones in the face of my sins,” for “how can one who was guilty of no sin say, *There is no peace in my bones in the face of my sins*? The need to make sense of this forces us to recognize that ‘Christ’ here is the full Christ, the whole Christ; that is, Christ, Head and body. When Christ speaks, he sometimes does so in the person of the Head alone, the Savior who was born of the virgin Mary; but at other times he speaks in the person of his body, holy Church diffused throughout the world…And what about the fact that the Lord himself cried out on the cross, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mt 27:46)? What did he mean us to understand by that? Surely by reciting its first verse he was showing that the entire psalm refers to himself. But when the next line mentions the tale of my sins we cannot doubt that Christ is still speaking, so whose sins can these be, if not the sins of his body, the Church? The body of Christ is speaking as one with its Head. How can they speak with one voice? Because, says scripture, they will be two in one flesh (Gn 2:24). The apostle confirms it: *This is a great mystery, but I am referring it to Christ and the Church* (Eph 5:32)…Since he himself declared that they are two no longer, but one flesh, is there anything strange in affirming that the one same flesh, the one same tongue, the same words, belong to the one flesh of Head and body? *Cf. en. Ps. 37.6.*

196 en. Ps. 101[1].2: “And because this same poor man is Christ, he calls himself both bridegroom and bride in a prophetic text: ‘He has adorned me like a bridegroom with his wreath and decked me like a bride with her jewels (Is 61:10).’ He calls himself bridegroom and he calls himself bride. How can both be true, unless he means bridegroom in his capacity as head and bride with respect to his body? One voice only, then, because only one flesh. Let us listen; and, more than that, let us hear ourselves in these words. If we perceive ourselves to be outside them, let us do our best to be within them.”


198 In this way, the Church is a kind of continuation of the incarnation, as Goulven Madec suggests in *Le Christ de Saint Augustin*, 155.

199 s. 47.19: “The bridegroom is in heaven, the bride is on earth. He is above all the heavens, she is over the whole earth;” s. 341.12: “just as bridegroom and bride, so also head and body, because ‘the head of the woman is the man’ (1 Cor 11:3). So whether I say head or body, or whether I say bridegroom and bride, you must understand the same thing.”

177
members of his body, he states (Eph 5:30).”  

As the body of Christ on pilgrimage, the Church participates in a “wonderful exchange” (admirabile commercium) between head and members in the midst of trials and temptations. Christ the head suffers in his members, while the members participate in his heavenly glory, and are transformed by his love. This is signified by the head crying out on behalf of his body on earth. “The Head was crying out on behalf of the members, and the Head was transfiguring the members into himself.” Christ cries out in the voice of the Church, and the Church cries out in the voice of Christ. In the very act of crying out, the members of the body receive the gift of hope, and are transfigured into Christ.

Fear springs from human weakness, hope from the divine promise. Your fear is your own, your hope is God’s gift in you. In your fear you know yourself better, so that once you are set free you may glorify him who made you. Let human weakness be afraid, then, for divine mercy does not desert us in our fear.

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200 en. Ps. 30[2].4: “Christ is speaking. He is going to say certain things in this psalm that we might think inappropriate to Christ, to the excellent dignity of our Head, and especially to the Word who was God with God in the beginning. Some of the things said here may be not even seem suitable for him in the form of a servant, that form which he took from the Virgin; and yet it is Christ who is speaking, because in the members of Christ there is Christ.”

201 en. Ps. 74.4.

202 en. Ps. 30[2].3: “He who deigned to assume the form of a slave, and within that form to clothe us with himself, he who did not disdain to take us up into himself, did not disdain either to transfigure us into himself, and to speak our words, so that we in our turn might speak his. This is the wonderful exchange, the divine business deal, the transaction effected in this world by the heavenly dealer. He came to receive insults and give honors, he came to drain the cup of suffering and give salvation, he came to undergo death and give life. Facing death, then, because of what he had from us, he was afraid, not in himself but in us. When he said that his soul was sorrowful to the point of death, we all unquestionably said it with him. Without him, we are nothing, but in him we too are Christ. Why? Because the whole Christ consists of Head and body.”

203 On the “wonderful exchange” (admirabile commercium), see Babcock, The Christ of the Exchange.

204 en. Ps. 30[2].3.

205 Ibid.
The wonderful exchange is a gift of divine mercy, whereby the members of Christ’s body on earth share in the glory of the head in heaven. In this way, the Church may be united with her Bridegroom in the midst of any trial. Such a mysterious communion between Christ and the Church does not undermine the efficacy of the sacraments, but rather demonstrates precisely how the sacraments are efficacious. The sacraments dispense the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which have effects that extend beyond the visible participation in the sacred rites. That is, the effects of the sacraments are not limited by the visible, external elements through which they confer grace. Augustine develops a kind of efficacy whereby the sacramenta confer mysteria that are not bound by the spatial, temporal limits of the ritual. Rather, the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which are received in the first place through baptism, continue to “shape the lives of believers,” and have effects in the midst of the Church’s sufferings. This is a mysterious kind of efficacy in which the Church on earth is united to the head who has preceded her on the way to heaven. Christ has taken upon himself all of the sufferings and weaknesses of humanity by virtue of the incarnation, and his assumption of the Church’s sufferings continues “during this time,” although he no

\[\text{206 c. Faust. 12.20.}\]

\[\text{207 c. Faust. 20.23. Faith and hope are particular to the Church’s journey on earth, for they will pass away in heaven, while charity will remain; doc. Chr. 1.38.42-39.43.}\]

\[\text{208 en. Ps. 26[2].11: “He said that he was here below in us; therefore we are also there above in him, because even now he has raised my head above my enemies. Look how wonderful a pledge we have, assuring us that we too are in heaven for ever with our Head, in faith and hope and love, because our Head is with us on earth in divinity, in goodness, in unity, even to the consummation of this age.”}\]

\[\text{209 s. 45.5: “And what is his body? His wife, that is, the Church. For ‘they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament; I, however, mean it in Christ and in the Church’ (Eph 5:31-32). So he wished God, Christ and Church to rise again with his members, but before his members, so that the members might have something to hope for. That’s why he wished to die as head, that he might be the first to rise again as head, the first to go to heaven as head, so that the other members might have hope in their head, and wait confidently for that to be fulfilled in their regard which had been pre-enacted in the head.”}\]
longer suffers as head in heaven. Christ suffers in the members of his body on earth, and the members may participate in his glory through hope, and thus hope is a special virtue of the pilgrim Church.

Augustine illustrates the dynamic of the “wonderful exchange” between Christ and the Church in his *Expositions of the Psalms*. All of the words of the Psalms are spoken by Christ, whether by the head or the members. Christ cries out in fear along with the members of his body. This means that if it is Christ, the Word of God, speaking the words of fear in solidarity with the Church, then there is no depth of fear God has not assumed. There is no depth of fear beyond Christ, and so there is no depth of fear beyond hope. For the Church to be “transfigured” into Christ means that she participates in the glory of the head in heaven precisely in the midst of her sufferings in history. This is not a spiritual achievement, but a gift conferred by Christ to his bride, the Church, so that she might be united as one body with the head in heaven.

Christ is both head and body, and we must not think ourselves alien to Christ, since we are his members. Nor must we think of ourselves as separate from him, because they will be two in one flesh. This is a great mystery, says the apostle, *but I am referring it to Christ and the Church* (Eph 5:31-32)...The head was in heaven when he insistently asked, *Why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4). Through hope we are with him in heaven, and through charity he is with us on earth.

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210 *en. Ps.* 30[2].3; 37.16; 62.2.

211 *en. Ps.* 54.3.

212 *en. Ps.* 37.6; 74.4.

213 “So it is a frightened person who begins the psalm: *In you, O Lord, have I put my trust; let me not be shamed for ever.* He or she is both afraid and trustful, you see; and you see too that the fear is not devoid of hope. Even if there is some turmoil in this human heart, divine comfort has not left it alone” (*en. Ps.* 30[2].4).

214 *en. Ps.* 54.3: “Christus autem, ut saepe commemorauimus caritatem uestram, et caput et corpus est, nec nos a Christo alienos dicere debemus, cuius membra sumus, nec nos quasi alterum computare; quia ‘erunt duo in carne una. sacramentum hoc magnum est’, ait apostolus, ‘ego autem dico in Christo et in
The Church’s sufferings provide the occasion for her to know herself as the beloved spouse of Christ. Christ’s spousal love is a purifying, transfiguring love, without which the members are helpless.\(^{215}\) This spousal love makes the bride beautiful,\(^{216}\) and it is entirely gratuitous, for Christ suffered voluntarily in order to redeem the Church.\(^{217}\)

“The Lord suffered of his free will, but we of necessity; he out of pity, we because it is ecclesia’, quia ergo totus Christus caput et corpus est, cum audimus: ‘intellectus ipsi Dauid’, intellegamus et nos in Dauid. intellegant membra Christi, et in membris suis intellegat Christus, et membra Christi intellegant in Christo; quia caput et membra unus Christus. caput in caelo erat, et dicebat: ‘quid me persequeris?’ nos cum illo in caelo per sper, ipse nobiscum in terra per caritatem;” cf. en. Ps. 55.3.

\(^{215}\) “So out of two people one single person comes to be, the single person that is Head and body, Bridegroom and bride. The wonderful, surpassing unity of this person is celebrated also by the prophet Isaiah, for Christ speaks prophetically in him too: The Lord has arrayed me like a bridegroom adorned with his wreath, or a bride decked with her jewels (Is 61:10)...A body is a single unit, with many members, but all the members of the body, numerous as they are, constitute one body; and it is the same with Christ...All of us together with our Head are Christ, and without our Head we are helpless. Why? Because united with our Head we are the vine, but if cut off from our Head (God forbid!) we are only loppings, of no use to the vine-tenders and fit only for the bonfire. This is why Christ himself says in the gospel, I am the vine, you are the branches, and my Father is the vine-dresser; and he warns us, Without me you can do nothing (Jn 15:51). If we can achieve nothing without you, Lord, we can do everything in you. Yes, because whatever work he does through us seems to be our work. He can do plenty, or rather everything, without us, but we can do nothing without him” (en. Ps. 30[2].4).

\(^{216}\) en. Ps. 44.3: “Do you want to see who he is, who has come to his wedding? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; he was God (Jn 1:1). Let the bride be happy, then, for she has been loved by God. And when was she loved? While she was still ugly, for, as the apostle says, All have sinned, and are in need of the glory of God, and again, Christ died for the impious (Rom 3:23; 5:6). She was loved in her ugliness, that she might not remain ugly. It was not because she was ugly that she was loved; her ugliness was not the object of his love. If he had loved that, he would have preserved it, but in fact he rid her of her ugliness and formed beauty in her.” It is Christ who purifies his bride, the Church. “From your garments drift the perfumes of myrrh, spices and cassia. Your clothing diffuses sweet scents. His garments are his saints, his elect, the whole Church which he makes fit for himself, free from spot or wrinkle; for he washed away its every spot in his blood, and smoothed out every wrinkle as he stretched it on the cross. From him proceeds the sweet scent evoked by the various plants named in the psalm;” en. Ps. 44.22. This also comes from Paul. “Listen to Paul, the smallest of men, who was like that fringe of the Lord’s garment which a woman with a hemorrhage touched, and was healed; listen to him: We are the fragrance of Christ offered to God in every place, both for those who are on the way to salvation, and for those who are perishing (2 Cor. 2:15)...”en. Ps. 44.22. cf. s. 273.5.

\(^{217}\) en. Ps. 9.6. The work of transformation belongs to God, following Paul in Romans. “It is called God’s justice to ensure that humans do not imagine that they have any justice as from themselves. Paul affirms this by saying, When someone believes in him who justifies the impious, that faith is reckoned as justice to the believer (Rom 4:5). What does that mean, God who “justifies the impious”? It means he changes one who was impious into a just person” (en. Ps. 30[2].6).
our condition."218 Christ’s spousal love makes the Church, and leads her on in the midst of the trials of her earthly pilgrimage. The Church’s transformation takes place in history due to the work of Christ,219 without whom the members can do nothing.220 Through the “salutary vexation and distress” of her journey,221 the bride is transfigured into her Bridegroom so as to become one body. Head and members remain distinct,222 yet Christ is present ecclesially in the members of his body in history. As the mysterious presence of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus) in history, the Church is an instrument of transformation, and so a “sacrament” (sacramentum) of salvation.223

218 *en. Ps. 34[2].1.*

219 *en. Ps. 9.6;* the work of transformation belongs to God, following Paul in Romans. “It is called God’s justice to ensure that humans do not imagine that they have any justice as from themselves. Paul affirms this by saying, *When someone believes in him who justifies the impious, that faith is reckoned as justice to the believer* (Rom 4:5). What does that mean, God who ‘justifies the impious’? It means he changes one who was impious into a just person” (*en. Ps. 30[2].6*).

220 “A body is a single unit, with many members, but all the members of the body, numerous as they are, constitute one body; and it is the same with Christ…All of us together with our Head are Christ, and without our Head we are helpless. Why? Because united with our Head we are the vine, but if cut off from our Head (God forbid!) we are only loppings, of no use to the vine-tenders and fit only for the bonfire. This is why Christ himself says in the gospel, *I am the vine, you are the branches, and my Father is the vine-dresser;* and he warns us, *Without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:51). If we can achieve nothing without you, Lord, we can do everything in you. Yes, because whatever work he does through us seems to be our work. He can do plenty, or rather everything, without us, but we can do nothing without him” (*en. Ps. 30[2].4*).

221 *doc. Chr. 2.6.7.*

222 “Let us listen, then, to the prayer offered by the head and the body, the bridegroom and the bride. Christ and the Church together are one person, but the Word and flesh do not form one nature. The Father and the Word together are one nature; but Christ and the Church together are one person, one perfect man growing toward his fullness “until we all meet in unity of faith, in knowledge of the Son of God, to form a perfect man, and attain to the mature stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13). But until that meeting poverty is our lot here, and our business here is still hard work and groaning…” (*en. Ps. 101[1].2*).

223 Christ is present in and through his Church, as the source and cause of salvation. “Let us hear them as one single organism, but let us listen to the Head as Head, and the body as body. The persons are not separated, but in dignity they are distinct, for the Head saves and the body is saved. May the Head dispense mercy, and the body bemoan its misery. The role of the Head is to purge away sins, the body’s to confess them;” *en. Ps. 37.6*.
Conclusion

As we have seen, Augustine’s use of spousal imagery for the Church is taken up into an incarnational Christology and a sacramental theology that cannot be reduced to a Platonic system. After the shift from his earlier, more Platonizing views to a definitively Biblical framework, Augustine employs spousal imagery in order to define the visible Church as the true spouse of Christ, born from Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Christ’s sacrificial love is mediated through the sacraments of the Church, providing a purification from sin that cannot be found in philosophy or the liberal arts. Augustine’s emphasis on the Church’s invisible communion in charity, particularly in the midst of the Donatist controversy, is indicative of his reprioritization of charity over vision, and further demonstrates the Biblical, Johannine foundation of his thought.

Against the Donatists, Augustine declares that the Church is one and holy due to the spousal love of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Although the Holy Spirit may work beyond the visible bounds of the Church, the mediation of the Church’s sacraments is never obviated. For Augustine, the Church is a mystery that is both eschatological and historical, and bridal imagery is used in order to explore both of these aspects. The Church must become the bride “without spot or wrinkle” through her pilgrimage on earth. The mystery of God’s salvific plan will be realized fully only at the eschaton, nevertheless, the Church on earth is united as one body in faith, hope, and charity through her sacramental life, and in the midst of her sufferings, in anticipation of her heavenly glory. By virtue of a mystery of solidarity, Christ the head suffers in the members of his body on earth, while the members participate in his glory in heaven. In the midst of her earthly sufferings, the Church knows herself as the beloved bride of Christ, and she lives
in the hope of her eschatological end, a mystery of glory beyond imagination. As the body of Christ in transformation, the Church is the mysterious presence of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*) united as one body in history, and so a “sacrament” (*sacramentum*) of Christ, who works through his Church in order to accomplish the mystery of salvation. The next chapter explores the development of Augustine’s theology of sacrifice, which provides further insight into how the Church is a “sacrament” (*sacramentum*).
CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHURCH AS SACRIFICE

Augustine’s theology of “sacrifice” (sacrificium) offers a fruitful entry point into his ecclesiology. His understanding of sacrifice develops according to the Biblical and sacramental trajectory of his overall thought. The notion of sacrifice expands from a purely spiritual, individualistic offering to the communal, sacramental worship of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus). Along with this growth, there is a correlative development in Augustine’s Eucharistic theology that reaches its climax in City of God.1

In this work, Augustine declares that the Church is “herself a sacrifice,” and the identification of the Church as sacrifice provides fertile ground for reflection on the Church as sacrament (*sacramentum*).

Robert Markus claims that Augustine falls short of providing a theology of the Church as sacrament. While Markus rightly points out that Augustine does not articulate a “fully-blown” sacramental theory of the Church, nevertheless, Markus seems to overlook the development of Augustine’s ecclesiology, and the significant growth in Augustine’s understanding of the Church as sign and sacrament. This is a result of a thin notion of sign, which Markus applies to Augustine’s ecclesiology.²

Markus offers a sophisticated account of Augustine’s thought in *Saeculum: History and Society in The Theology of Augustine.*³ However, Markus emphasizes the eschatological dimension of Augustine’s ecclesiology at the expense of the Church’s distinct identity and presence in the world as the body of Christ and the city of God.⁴ For Markus, the Church points to the Kingdom, but is *not* the Kingdom itself, in any identifiable way.⁵ Instead, the Church is another secular, human institution. “There is no difference between ‘Church’ and ‘world’...For Augustine, the *ecclesia* must always be the Foundation of Christian Unity in North African Theology,” *Augustinian Studies* 32:1 (2001): 1-24; John C. Cavadini, “Jesus’ Death is Real: An Augustinian Spirituality of the Cross,” in *The Cross in Christian Tradition: From Paul to Bonaventure,* ed. E. Dreyer, (New York: Paulist Press, 2000): 169-191; “Trinity and Apologetics,” *Modern Theology,* forthcoming.


³ See more recently, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

⁴ Augustine identifies the Church on earth as the city of God explicitly in *civ. Dei* 8.24; 13.16; 14.13; 15.20, 22, 26; 16.2; *en. Ps.* 71.18; 98.4.

⁵ “The Church is not this Kingdom, even in its germ or chrysalis. For there is no continuous development, no growth or maturation of the Church into the Kingdom. The Kingdom is established by God’s act alone. Man can only wait in hope, with faith and repentance. The Church lives still as a pilgrim Church” (Markus, *Saeculum*, 181).
‘secular’ in the sense that it is, during its earthly career, like any other human grouping, part of the saeculum.”  

The ecclesia is an interim institution, whereas the Kingdom of God is the eschatological reality. “Like all human institutions, the Church comes under the Judgement. Only the one [eschatological] Judgement can discern in its midst what is destined to be saved and what reprobate.” This reductive understanding of the Church is summed up in Alfred Loisy’s comment, which Markus cites: “Jesus announced the Kingdom, and it was the Church that came.”

What, then, is the Church, and what purpose does it serve? According to Markus, “the Church is set in the midst of the world in order to bear witness to its Lord and to his coming Kingdom.” Markus is emphatic that “Christ’s presence in the world cannot be simply identified with the Church...The Church is not Christ’s presence in the world; it is the sign of that presence.” In Markus’s reading of Augustine, a sign “brings to mind” something else, in addition to “being what it is perceived to be.”

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6 Markus, Saeculum, 179. Augustine does speak of the Church on pilgrimage through the saeculum in City of God, but in such a way that she is the City of God on earth; civ. Dei civ. Dei. 14.13; 15.1, 20, 22, 26; 18.1, 51.

7 In this way, Markus seems to hold the opposite view of Wilhelm Kamlah, who argues that ecclesia is an eschatological term; Christentum und Geschichtlichkeit (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1951), 133-52; 158-66. Yet in effect, they hold the same dualistic approach, while using different terminology. For Kamlah, the visible Church is indeed a provisional institution, which he refers to as “congregation” (139), while ecclesia is the eschatological reality. Markus, on the other hand, uses ecclesia to refer to the temporal Church that will pass away, while the “Kingdom of God” is the eschatological reality. In the end, these positions are identical.

8 Markus, Saeculum, 179.

9 Ibid., 182.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 181-2; emphasis added.

12 Ibid., 183: “A sign, as [Augustine] defines it, is ‘something which, in addition to being what it is perceived to be, also brings something else to mind’”, doc. Chr. 2.1.1.: “signum est enim res praeter
signs\textsuperscript{13} is applied to the Church, the Church is a *provisional* sign that points to and calls to mind the Kingdom, but is *not* itself the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{14}

According to Markus, Augustine\textquotesingle s Scriptural exegesis further reveals how the Church is a \textquoteleft sign\textquoteright that does not make present what it signifies in any way. The Church is like the \textquoteleft physical city\textquoteright Jerusalem,\textsuperscript{15} which has \textquoteleft symbolic reference\textquoteright to the heavenly Jerusalem, but \textquoteleft does not on that account cease to be what it is, a city of the Jews of the Old Covenant. The identical treatment could be applied to the Church: a part of the world reconciled in Christ is distinguished within this world by its special signification; the Church is the world set apart for signifying and pointing to the coming Kingdom.\textsuperscript{16} The Church is \textquoteleft set apart\textquoteright only by what it \textquoteleft does,\textquoteright not by what it \textquoteleft is.\textquoteright The Church\textquotesingle s \textquoteleft mission\textquoteright as \textquoteleft sign\textquoteright is carried out through three kinds of activity: 1) proclaiming the Gospel; 2) sacramental worship, \textquoteright wherein the Christian community becomes an anticipatory sign of the fully human community of love whose coming we are required to await in hope\textquoteright; and

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\textsuperscript{13} Markus seems to present a reductionistic account of Augustine\textquotesingle s theory of signs insofar as he limits the meaning of *signum* and *res*. Markus asserts, \textquoteleft A word treated as sign (*signum*) is an element in meaningful communication; treated as a thing (*res*) it would be an optical pattern of marks on paper or a sound pattern, a system of vibrations or perhaps of anatomical functioning\textquoteright (*Saeculum*, 183).

\textsuperscript{14} \textquoteleft The provisional distinct existence of the Church in the world during this epoch as an empirical, sociological fact derives not from any need to embody holiness in a social structure (as for an ecclesiology of the Donatist or Cyprianic type), but from its being a sign. It is a sign because it is constituted as what it is by the mission laid upon it by the Lord: to bear witness to him and to his Kingdom. If it is to be a sign, it must be visible, that is to say it must be in some way perceptible as distinct from other things in the \textquoteleft world\textquoteright. Though part of the world and not taken out of it, it is given a special status within it as the sign of something still to come, a Kingdom whose advent is based on a coming which has already taken place once and for all\textquoteright (Markus, *Saeculum*, 183).

\textsuperscript{15} Markus cites *civ. Dei* 15.2 in order to show how Augustine uses the city of Jerusalem in order to prefigure the heavenly city, and this, in Markus\textquotesingle s estimation, is the closest approximation of Augustine\textquotesingle s use of sign theory for the Church; *Saeculum*, 184.

\textsuperscript{16} Markus, *Saeculum*, 184.
3) in its “ministry,” whereby the “Church serves the world in the redeeming love whose presence in the world it proclaims in its preaching.”

Markus does not make clear how the Church in its sacramental worship is an “anticipatory sign,” nor does he identify significant developments in Augustine’s theology of signs along ecclesiological lines. As Markus declares, “A theology of the Church elaborated in terms of its being a sign is not to be found in Augustine’s work.” Nevertheless, Markus opens the door for the possibility of an ecclesiology with a “sophisticated theory of signs and meanings,” which Augustine “did have at his disposal.” Markus concludes that an ecclesiology of the Church as sign is of “fundamental importance.”

This chapter seeks to demonstrate the development of a sacramental ecclesiology in Augustine’s thought on the basis of his theology of sacrifice. As we have seen, Augustine’s theory of signs is reconfigured according to a Pauline theology of “mystery” and “sacrament” (mysterium, sacramentum). This reconfiguration is applied to the Church, precisely as sacrifice. As a Eucharistic community, the Church “herself is

17 Ibid., 185.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 183-4: “Augustine formulated his theory of signs for the purpose of expounding the method to be employed in the study and exposition of scripture, particularly for the purpose of relating scriptural figures or ‘types’ which pointed beyond themselves as anticipations of future ‘anti-types’. The theory could be given wide applications; its bearings on sacramental theology, in particular, have been much explored. I am not aware that Augustine ever used it to expound a conception of the Church as a sign.”
20 “A theology conceived in such terms alone seems to offer the possibility of doing full justice to the duality deeply embedded in Augustinian theology: it would allow us to give full weight, on the one hand, to Augustine’s insistence on the ‘secular’ character of the Church, on its identity with the ‘world’, on the anonymity of Christian presence in the world, the uncertainty and ambivalence of human institutions to which the Church is not immune, its perpetual liability to betray the Gospel which it must proclaim and the Lord whom it must serve. On the other hand such an ecclesiology would safeguard the notion of the Church as visible, as an institution with a distinct form, with a specific task and a mission” (Ibid., 185).
offered” (*ipsa offeratur*) in her offering to God. Augustine proclaims in *City of God* that in the “visible sacrifice” (*uisibile sacrificium*) of the Eucharist, the Church offers the “invisible sacrifice” (*inuisibile sacrificium*) of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*), head and members, the “total” and “supreme sacrifice” (*totum summum que sacrificium*). The Church’s sacrifice includes the offering of the visible Church that celebrates the sacraments, and in this way, the Church is herself a “sacrament” (*sacramentum*), a sacred sign (*sacrum signum*), of the “whole Christ,” offered to God as a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice.

*Sacrifice in Early Works*

Augustine rarely mentions “sacrifice” (*sacrificium, sacrificare*)\(^{21}\) in his early works. Against the Manicheans, Augustine speaks of the sacrifices (*sacrificia*) offered to idols (1 Cor. 8:7-9) in the context of the question about abstinence from meat.\(^{22}\) The Manichaens maintain a complex cosmogony, grounded in a kind of dualism whereby the created world is a mixture of good and evil, spiritual and material.\(^{23}\) The “divine part” (*divina partis*) escapes when the foods such “grains or fruit” are broken down, and when bodily activities are conducted, including digestion and sexual intercourse.\(^{24}\) When “the soul abandons the flesh, the remaining foulness becomes very great,” and therefore “the soul

\(^{21}\) Augustine also uses terms such as *hostia* and *immolatio* in order to speak of sacrifice.

\(^{22}\) *mor.* 2.14.33; 14.35.


\(^{24}\) *mor.* 2.15.37.
of those who eat meat is defiled.”25 The Manichaens wrongfully justify this view by citing Scripture.26 Augustine works against a Manichaen dualism that sees bodily existence as the imprisonment of spirit,27 although his mature theology is not on display in such early works.

In On Genesis Against the Manichees 1.23.40,28 Augustine refers to the sacrifices of the Jews, which represent enslavement to the law.29 Augustine has not yet developed an understanding of the Jewish rites as sacramenta that prefigure the Christian mysteries, and he seems to leave behind the old law with its rituals, such as circumcision and temple sacrifice.

Furthermore, in the early dialogues, the sacrifice (sacrificium) of Christians is a kind of spiritual offering of the mind and heart. In the discussion of signs in On the Teacher (De Magistro, ca. 389), Augustine speaks of sacrifice as a spiritual reality of the “interior man” (homo interior), which is the temple of God.30 Augustine refers to 1 Cor. 3:16, “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”31

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25 mor. 2.15.37: “quocirca, cum anima etiam carnem deseruerit, nimias sordes reliquas fieri, et ideo eorum qui uescuntur carnibus, animam coinquinari.”

26 1 Cor. 8:4-13; mor. 2.14.33.


28 De Genesi adversus Manicheos, ca. 388/9.

29 Gn. adv. Man. 1.23.40: “adhuc corporali circumcisione et sacrificiis tanquam in mari gentium populus ille seruiebat legi.”

30 mag. 1.2: “qui enim loquitur, suae voluntatis signum foras dat per articulatum sonum, deus autem in ipsis rationalis animae secretis, qui homo interior uocatur, et quaerendus et deprecandus est; haec enim sua templa esse uoluit.”

31 RSV.
He interprets this verse in terms of the inmost part of the “mind” (mens), for “Christ dwells in the inner man” (Eph. 3:17). The “sacrifice of righteousness” (sacrificium iustitiae, Ps. 4:5-6) is offered in the “temple of the mind” and in the “chambers of the heart.” Temple imagery functions primarily with regard to the individual mind (in templo mentis).

In De Magistro and other works from this period, sacrificium is not connected in any clear way to the Christian mysteries (mysteria, sacramenta). Furthermore, Augustine has not indicated how precisely the offering of the mind and the heart is made. Given his confidence in the purification of the mind through philosophy and the liberal arts in these early works, one might suppose that such sources of wisdom are sufficient for the sacrifice of the mind, thereby mitigating to some extent the necessity of participation in the sacraments of the Church.

In the work On True Religion (De vera religione, ca. 390/1), Augustine only mentions sacrifice on one occasion. It appears in the context of his discussion of Plato

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32 mag. 1.2: “nescire te arbitror non ob aliud nobis praeeptum esse, ut in clausis cubiculis oremus, quo nomine significantur mentis penetralia, nisi quod deus, ut nobis quod cupidus praestet, commemorari aut doceri nostra locutione non quacerit.” Augustine speaks of the “mind” as mens, or at times as anima, which may also be translated as “soul.” This term may refer more broadly to the rational “soul” or “mind.” There is a fluidity of terminology, without hard and fast distinctions, and so the translations will reflect this fluidity.

33 mag. 1.2: “an apud apostolum non legisti: ‘nescitis quia tEMPLUM DEI estis et spiritus DEI HABITAT in uobis’ et ‘in interiore homine habitare christum’?”

34 mag. 1.2: “nec in propheta animaduertisti: ‘dicite in cordibus uestris et in cubilibus uestris conpungimini. sacrificate sacrificium iustitiae et sperate in domino’?”

35 mag. 1.2: “ubi putas sacrificium iustitiae sacrificari nisi in templo mentis et in cubilibus cordis?”

36 In De magistro 1.2, Augustine speaks of the sacrifice of “mind” and “heart” in the context of prayer, yet it still remains unclear as to how such an offering is to be made, and what the effects might be.

37 ord. 1.1.3-2.4; 1.8.22-24; 2.16.44; b. vita 3.18; c. Acad. 3.20.43.
and Socrates, those excellent philosophers who, if still alive, would recognize Christ as the power and wisdom of God. Augustine invites Platonists to become Christians, as “several have in recent times,” and to turn away from pagan sacrifices (sacrificia). Augustine has not yet provided an in-depth consideration of Christian worship as sacrifice.

In *On the Advantage of Believing* (*De utilitate credendi* ca. 391/2), Augustine begins to develop a sophisticated appreciation of the Old Testament rituals, including animal sacrifices. Augustine uses *sacrificium* in order to show how many “mysteries are contained” (*mysteria continentur*) in such rituals. The seed of the distinction between *sacramentum* and *mysterium* may be found in this work, although it is not fully developed. Augustine speaks of the *sacramenta* of the Scriptures, and the great “mysteries” (*mysteria*) of the Catholic faith, which have purifying effects. Augustine does not clearly establish the relationship between sacrifice (*sacrificia*) and mysteries (*mysteria*). Nevertheless, in this work, Augustine begins to build continuity between Christian and Jewish worship.

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38 *vera rel.* 1.3.5.

39 *vera rel.* 1.3.3-4.7.

40 *vera rel.* 1.3.5, 4.7.

41 *util. cred.* 1.3.9: “in quibus tamen legis praeceptis atque mandatis, quibus nunc christianos uti fas non est, quale uel sabbatum est uel circumcisio uel sacrificia t si quid huiusmodi est, tanta mysteria continentur, ut omnis pius intellegat nihil esse perniciosius quam quicquid ibi est accipi ad litteram, id est ad uerbum; nihil autem salubris quam spiritu reuelari.”

42 *util. cred.* 1.17.35: “et si unaquaque disciplina, quamquam uilis et facilis, ut percipi possit, doctorem aut magistrum requirit, quid temerariae superbiae plenius, quam diuinorum sacramentorum libros et ab interpretibus suis nolle cognoscere et incognitos audere damnare?”

43 *util. cred.* 1.7.14-16, 14.31.
As we have seen, in *De utilitate credendi*, Augustine emphasizes the vision of truth. The soul (*anima*) must undergo purification in order to gaze upon truth.\(^{44}\) The mysteries of the Catholic Church (*mysteria ecclesiae catholicae*)\(^ {45}\) provide purification for the uneducated masses.\(^ {46}\) The virtues of faith, hope, and charity are subordinated to vision,\(^ {47}\) for belief in Christ has to do with “instilling into the mind” the truth of what Christ said.\(^ {48}\) Christ is a teacher, and so is the Church,\(^ {49}\) for the present aim is “to become wise,” that is, “to cling to the truth.”\(^ {50}\) Moreover, Augustine has confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts as sources of wisdom that offer the purification of reason that enables one “to cling to the truth.”\(^ {51}\) Augustine’s early theology demonstrates the influence of Neoplatonism in terms of the priority given to vision over the virtues.

Augustine speaks of sacrifice four times in *On the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount* (*De sermone Domini in monte*, ca. 393/5),\(^ {52}\) in the context of two significant verses from the Old Testament. The first is Psalm 50:17 (51:17), in which the Psalmist proclaims that

\(^{44}\) *util. cred.* 1.16.34: “*homini ergo non ualenti uerum intueri, ut ad id fiat idoneus purgari que se sinat, auctoritas praesto est... uerum igitur uidere uelle, ut animum purges, cum ideo purgetur, ut uideas, peruersum certe atque praeposterum est.*”

\(^{45}\) *util. cred.* 1.14.31, 2.4, 3.9, 7.14, 16.

\(^{46}\) *util. cred.* 1.7.16, 11.25, 14.31, 15.33-18.36.

\(^{47}\) *util. cred.* 1.18.36.

\(^{48}\) *util. cred.* 1.14.31: “*deinde fateor me iam christo credidisse et in animum induxisse id esse uerum, quod ille dixerit, etiamsi nulla ratione fulciatur, hoc, haeretic, principio me ducturus es?*”

\(^{49}\) *quant.* 34.77; *mor.* 7.11; 10.16; 28.55-56; *util. cred.* 1.17.35.

\(^{50}\) *util. cred.* 1.16.34: “*sed id nunc agitur, ut sapientes esse possimus, id est inhaerere ueritati: quod profecto sordidus animus non potest.*”

\(^{51}\) *ord.* 2.5.16; *util. cred.* 1.7.16.

\(^{52}\) *s. Dom. mon.* 1.31, 1.47, 1.80, 2.28.
“the sacrifice acceptable to God” is a “broken and contrite heart.” Augustine interprets this verse in spiritual terms, such that the true sacrifice pleasing to God is a contrite, repentant heart. One must turn to the mercy (misericordia) of God, for God alone forgives sins, and rejoices over the conversion of one repentant sinner more than the ninety-nine just (Luke 15:7). The second key verse is Hosea 6:6, “I desire mercy more than sacrifice” (misericordiam uolo magis quam sacrificium). Augustine cites this passage in connection with the beatitude, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy” (beati ergo misericordes, quia ipsorum miserebitur, Matt. 5:7). As we shall see, Augustine will connect “mercy” (misericordia) and “sacrifice” (sacrificium) in a Eucharistic context in City of God; however, in this text, the connection serves primarily as a spiritual injunction to offer the sacrifice of a “contrite heart,” a purification that yields vision. As Augustine declares, “a cleansing of the heart is, as it were, a cleansing of that eye by which God is seen.” Augustine prioritizes the vision made possible by the purification of mind and heart.

In a commentary on Romans from the mid-390s, Augustine picks up an important verse from Paul, namely, the exhortation “to offer your bodies as a living

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53 RSV.

54 s. Dom. mon. 1.31: “nec tamen ideo non sanabitur paenitendo et ad illius misericordiam cum sacrificio contribulati cordis refugiendo, qui donat peccata convertis ad se, et qui plus gaudet de uno paenitente quam de nonaginta nouem iustis.”

55 s. Dom. mon. 1.80.

56 Ibid.

57 s. Dom. mon. 2.1: “cordis autem mundatio est tamquam oculi, quo uidetur deus.”

58 Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula apostoli ad Romanos, ca. 394/5.
sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1). Augustine interprets this passage in terms of the preaching of the Gospel (Rom. 15:16). He does not address how the body is itself a sacrifice, but rather focuses on the Gospel that has been preached to the Gentiles in the ministry of the faith. Sacrifice acquires a kerygmatic dimension in this text, though it is not explicitly liturgical.

In his commentary on Galatians (ca. 394/5), Augustine includes sacrificia among the sacramenta of the old law that prefigure the sacramenta of the new. Augustine further develops the continuity between Judaism and Christianity on the basis of the “mysteries” (mysteria) contained in and revealed through all of the sacramenta of the Old Testament, not simply as figures found in Scripture, but precisely as the historical rituals observed by the Jews. These rituals were given by God. They are no longer practiced by Christians since the institution of the Christian sacraments (sacramenta) perfectly fulfill the old law. Nevertheless, Augustine has confidence that the rituals of the old law had certain effects insofar as they contained and expressed the mysteria. In this work, Augustine still places an emphasis upon the “contemplation of truth”

59 ex. prop. Rm. 83: “obsecro itaque uos, fratres per misericordiam dei, ut exhibeatis corpora uestra hostiam uiuam, sanctam, deo placentem.” Augustine uses hostiam in this citation of Rom. 12:1, which he links to the “acceptable sacrifice” (acceptibile sacrificium).

60 Ibid.: “quod autem dicit: ut minister sim christi iesu in gentibus consecrans euangelium dei, ut fiat oblatio gentium acceptabilis sanctificata in spiritu sancto, hoc intelligitur, offerantur gentes deo tamquam acceptabile sacrificium, cum in christum credentes per euangelium sanctificantur, sicut et superius dicit: obsecro itaque uos, fratres per misericordiam dei, ut exhibeatis corpora uestra hostiam uiuam, sanctam, deo placentem.

61 Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas, ca. 394/5.

62 ex. Gal. 19: “ad sacramenta pertinent circumcisio carnis, sabbatum temporale, neomeniae sacrificia atque omnes huius modii innumerabiles observationes, ad mores autem: non occides, non moechaberis, non falsum testimonium dices et cetera talia.”

63 Ibid.: see also his discussion of Jesus’s command to the leper to present himself before the priest, and to offer what Moses commanded, demonstrating the efficacy of the old law; bapt. 6.44.86.
(contemplationem uevilatis), for “every sacrament, when understood, refers either to the contemplation of the truth or to good morals.” The sacrifices (sacrificia) of a contrite heart (Ps. 50:17) are the prayers and groanings that call upon the “mercy of God” (misericordiae dei). These are spiritual offerings.

In his unfinished commentary on Romans (ca. 394/5), Augustine speaks of the “sacrifice that forgives sins,” (pro peccatis relinquitur sacrificium), which is none other than the “passion of the Lord” (holocausto dominicae passionis). The sacraments of the Church, such as baptism, are efficacious for the forgiveness of sins, and for the purification that enables one to live in the knowledge of truth (scientiam ueritatis), due to Christ’s sacrifice. In this text, Augustine begins to characterize Christ’s sacrifice in a distinctive way. Christ’s sacrifice alone has the power to forgive sins, and provides a unique purification that cannot be found in philosophy or the liberal arts.

Augustine’s On Eighty-Three Questions (ca. 396), completed after his ordination to the episcopacy, contains certain significant ideas that will be carried forward from this point on. In his response to the question of the different kinds of sins, Augustine asserts

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64 ex. Gal. 19: “Omne autem sacramentum cum intelligitur, aut ad contemplationem ueritatis refertur aut ad bonos mores.” Augustine mentions the love of God and neighbor, yet this love seems to be subordinate to the contemplation of truth. “Contemplatio ueritatis in solius dei dilectione fundata est, boni mores in dilectione dei et proximi, in quibus duobus praeceptis tota lex pendet et prophetae.”

65 ex. Gal. 54.

66 Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio.

67 ep. Rm. inch. 19: “nam et illud ad hebraeos, qui diligentius pertractant, sic intelligunt, ut non de sacrificio contribulati per poenitentiam cordis accipendum sit, quod dictum est: non adhuc pro peccatis relinquitur sacrificium, sed de sacrificio de quo tunc loquebatur apostolus, id est holocausto dominicae passionis, quod eo tempore offert quisque pro peccatis suis, quo eiusdem passionis fide dedicatur et christianorum fidelium nomine baptizatus imbuitur, ut hoc significauerit apostolus non posse deinceps eum, qui peccauerit, iterum baptizando purgari.”

68 ep. Rm. inch. 19; cf. Simipl. 2.1.5; c. ep. Man. 23.
that the confession of sins and penance are necessary as part of the offering of the “sacrifice of an afflicted spirit” (Ps. 50:17). Confession of sins becomes a key component of sacrifice, and Augustine will develop this theme in *Confessions*.

Augustine continues to demonstrate the continuity between Judaism and Christianity by claiming that the visible (*uisibiliter*) sacrifices of the Jews prefigured the celebration of the new people, i.e. Christians. This is the first time Augustine speaks about sacrifice as “visible,” and this language will reappear and be reconfigured according to a sacramental framework. Furthermore, sacrifice is taken up into a liturgical context when Augustine interprets the transformation from the “old” to the “new” in terms of the rebirth of the individual from being wise to the “flesh” (*carnaliter*) to being converted to “spiritual things,” (*spiritalia*) an allusion to baptism. Augustine begins to move from the individual to the communal, for what happens to each individual will be perfected by “divine providence in the whole human race.”

For our purposes in this chapter, the most significant passage of *On Eighty-Three Questions* comes in question 61, on Augustine’s treatment of the miracle of the feeding

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69 *div. qu.* 26.1: “quibus bene tractatis probabiliter iudicari potest, qui non sint cogendi ad penitentiam luctuosam et lacrimabilem, quamuis peccata fateantur, et quibus nulla omnino salus speranda sit, nisi sacrificium obtulerint deo spiritum contribulatum per penitentiam.”

70 *div. qu.* 49.1: “quare filii israel sacrificabant uisibiliter pecorum uitimas? quia sunt etiam sacra spiritalia, quorum imagines carnalem populum celebrare oportebat, ut praefiguratio noui populi seruitute ueteris fieret.”

71 *div. qu.* 49.1: “quorum duorum populorum differentiam etiam in uno quoque nostrum licet aduertere, cum quisque ab utero matris ueterem hominem necesse est agat, donec ueniat ad iuuenilem aetatem, ubi iam non est necesse carnaliter sapere, sed potest ad spiritalia uluntate convurti et intrinsecus regenerari.”

72 *div. qu.* 49.1: “quod ergo in uno homine recte educato ordine naturae disciplina que contingit, hoc proportione in uniuerso genere humano fieri per diuinam prouidentiam peragi que pulcherrimum est.”
Augustine interprets this miracle in light of the journey of the people of Israel through the desert. Just as the people were led out of slavery through the Red Sea, so Christians are freed from the slavery of sin through the sacrament of baptism (*sacramento baptismatis*), and are nourished with manna in the desert, that is, the Word of God in the holy Scriptures. Furthermore, the “bodily sacraments” of the manna in the desert prefigure the Eucharist. Yet Augustine, in typical fashion, does not make a simple assertion of this fact. Instead, he presents a rich typological reading that weaves together several images from the Old Testament. Christ is the king who has given an “example” (*exemplum*) of struggling and overcoming sin by taking on flesh in the incarnation. As the king and head of his body, the Church, Christ leads his people through the desert into the promised land of the heavenly Jerusalem, where he is shown to be king. He is not only king, but also priest (*sacerdos*) forever, according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:20). As priest, Christ offers himself as a “holocaust for our sins” (*holocaustum pro peccatis nostris*) through the sacrifice (*sacrificium*) of his passion, which is celebrated as a “memorial throughout the

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73 *div. qu.* 61.
74 *div. qu.* 61.1-2.
75 *div. qu.* 61.2: “am et rex noster est iesus christus, qui nobis pugnandi et uincendi demonstravit exemplum, in carne mortali peccata nostra suscipiens, tentationibus inimici neque inlecebrosis neque terribilibus cedens, postremo exuens se carnem, principatus et potestates exemplans fiducialiter et triumphans eas in semet ipso.”
76 *div. qu.* 57.3: “But the Lord’s assumption of humanity was beneficial for the liberation of the Church, whose head he is.”
77 *div. qu.* 61.2: “eodem ipso duce in hierusalem caelestem tamquam in terram promissionis introduci nos posse praesuminus, et in aeternum ibi regnante ipso et custodiente seruari. ita dominus noster iesus christus rex noster ostenditur.” Augustine speaks of Christ as king of Jerusalem, and the devil as the king of Babylon in other places, such as *en. Ps.* 44.25; 61.6.
world in the Church of Christ.” This memorial (memoria) is none other than the Eucharist established by Christ, which has a certain “likeness of his sacrifice” (eius sacrificii similitudinem). Augustine directly links the sacrifice of Christ’s passion to the Church’s Eucharistic celebration. This is a central component of his mature theology of sacrifice. In this work, however, Augustine stops short of calling the Eucharist itself a sacrifice. Instead, he speaks of the Church’s celebration as a memorial in the “likeness of his sacrifice,” and elsewhere, as a “representation of his holocaust” (holocausti eius imaginem).

There is room for development in Augustine’s Eucharistic theology, and Augustine does not explain how or why the Church’s memorial is a certain “likeness of Christ’s sacrifice.” Such language may be indicative of any number of concerns given the context of this work. As a newly ordained bishop, Augustine may have a two-fold apologetic in mind, namely: 1) to distinguish Christ’s sacrifice from the Manichean rejection of the body; and 2) to distinguish the sacrifice of Christians from “bloody” pagan sacrifices. Against the Manicheans, Augustine is clear that Christ’s sacrifice is not a rejection of the “flesh,” that is, of bodily existence. Rather, it is the sacrifice that overcomes sin.

At the same time, the Eucharistic celebration does not involve the

78 div. qu. 61.2: “ipse est etiam sacerdos noster in aeternum secundum ordinem melchisedech, qui se ipsum obtulit holocaustum pro peccatis nostris, et eiusmod sacrificii similitudinem celebrandam in suae passionis memoriam commendauit, ut illud quod melchisedech obtulit deo iam per orbem terrarum in christi ecclesia uideamus offerri.”

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Through the incarnation, Christ has given humanity an example (exemplum) over how to overcome temptation, and in finally “putting off the flesh” (exuens se carnem), Christ has triumphed over the principalities and powers of the world (div. qu. 61.2). Following Paul in Rom. 7:4-5, Augustine interprets “living in the flesh” (carnalibus) as the “passions of sin” (passiones peccatorum) which were “at
shedding of blood, in the same manner as Christ’s crucifixion. Christians do not offer a “bloody” sacrifice, yet Christ’s passion has effects through the Church’s sacramental life, for as Augustine asserts in *On Genesis Against the Manichees* 2.19, the Church is born from the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. In *On Eighty-Three Questions*, Augustine may speak of the “likeness of the sacrifice” in order to avoid any confusion with a “bloody” offering on the altar.

As we shall see, Augustine will adopt stronger language, in different polemical contexts, so as to identify the Church’s Eucharistic celebration as the very sacrifice of Christ. At the time of *On Eighty-Three Questions*, however, Augustine has no need to make such a clear identification. In this work, he seems careful to distance the sacrifice of Christians from any kind of bloody offering. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Church celebrates the “memorial” of the sacrifice that forgives sins, and this is the two-fold significance of this work: 1) Christ’s sacrifice offers a purification from sin, a kind of purification that cannot be found in philosophy and the liberal arts; and 2) the locus of Christ’s sacrifice is the Eucharistic altar.

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82 For the Manicheans, “flesh” and “blood” contain no “light,” and so should not be consumed; see *mor.* 2.15.37.

83 *Gn. adv. Man.* 2.19: “dicit enim apostolus ipsum esse caput ecclesiae, et ecclesiam corpus eius. ergo et ipse soporatus est dormitione passionis, ut ei coniux ecclesia formaretur, quam dormitionem cantat per prophetam dicens: ‘ego dormui, et somnum cepi; et exsurrexi, quoniam dominus suscepit me.’ formata est ergo ei coniux ecclesia de latere eius, id est de fide passionis et baptismi. nam percussum latus eius lancea, sanguinem et aquam profudit;” cf. 2.16-17; *en. Ps.* 56.11; s. 336.5.

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In addition, while Augustine continues to speak of the purification of the mind (mens) and soul (anima), he begins to emphasize the role of charity in this purification. The Church offers the “first fruits of the spirit” (Rom. 8:23) having been “seized by the divine fire of charity.” The Church offers herself to God as a sacrifice of charity, as she “awaits the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23) in hope. In his letter to Simplicianus (ca. 396/8), Augustine adds the element of praise (sacrificium laudis) to sacrifice (Ps. 50:14-17), a theme that he will develop more fully in Confessions and City of God.

De doctrina Christiana marks a turning point in Augustine’s thought, for by this time, he has subordinated vision to charity in a definitive manner. The enjoyment of God as one’s final end consists of the love of God and one’s neighbor, and not a Plotinian vision of Truth. With regard to sacrifice, Augustine only uses this term twice, while

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84 div. qu. 38.1: “deus igitur et animus cum amantur, caritas proprie dicitur, purgatissima et consummata, si nihil aliud amatur, hanc et dilectionem dici placet.”

85 div. qu. 67.6: “et bene dixit primitias habentes spiritus, id est quorum iam spiritus tamquam sacrificium oblati sunt deo et diuino caritatis igne comprehensi sunt.”

86 div. qu. 67.6. Augustine affirms the resurrection of the body, for the Church offers the spiritual sacrifice of charity while awaiting the redemption of the body “so that the body itself, receiving the privilege of the adoption of sons to which we have been called, might show us forth in every respect as sons of God, liberated in our entirety, once all our troubles are over;” “nunc ergo, inquit, non solum omnis creatura, id est cum corpore, sed etiam nos ipsi primitias habentes spiritus, id est nos animae, qui iam primitias mentes nostras obtulimus deo, in nobis ipsis congregemscimus, id est praeter corpus, adoptionem expectantes redemptionem corporis nostri, id est ut et ipsum corpus accipiens beneficium adoptionis filiorum, ad quam uocati sumus, totos nos liberatos transactis omnibus molestiis ex omni parte dei filios esse manifestet.”

87 Ad Simplicianum; this seems to be Augustine’s first work as bishop. Although div. qu. was also composed during this period, some of it dates back to Augustine’s time at Thagaste.

88 Simpl. 1.2.19. The “sacrifice of praise” is a common motif in Augustine’s letters and preaching, and in works such as Confessiones; cf. ep. 26.5; 36.8; 58.2; 140.18; en. Ps. 39.4; 49.21-23, 29-30; 53.10; 67.38; 68[2].16; 94.6; 102.4; 106.11; 115.2; 7-8; 117.22; 118[23].4; 134.2, 11; 148.17; s. 67.8; conf. 8.1.1; 9.1.1; 10.34.53; 11.2.3; civ. 10.5.

89 As we have seen, books 1-3.25, 27 (ca. 396) were written much earlier than book 4 (ca. 426/7).
citing the works of Cyprian and Ambrose. This reveals the influence of the Latin patristic tradition on his interpretation of sacrifice. Cyprian speaks of the sacrifice of Melchizedek as a sacramentum that prefigured the sacrifice of Christ, offered in the Eucharist. In a similar fashion, Ambrose employs typology in his figural reading of Gideon’s sacrificial offering on the rock, and “the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4).

De doctrina Christiana is significant for Augustine’s treatment of the “works of mercy” (opera misericordiae), which will be crucial to his mature theology of sacrifice in City of God. In De doctrina, Augustine considers the works of mercy that are made possible by the incarnation of Christ, who became “our neighbor” (noster proximum) in order to extend to us the mercy of God (misericordia Dei). “[God] has mercy (misericordiam) on us because of his own goodness, while we have mercy (miseremur) on each other…he has mercy on us (miseretur) so that we may enjoy him, while we have mercy (miseremur) on each other, again so that we may all enjoy him, not one another.”

The works of mercy lead to the “enjoyment of God,” and help form a society united in

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90 Both instances occur in book 4 (ca. 426/7).

91 doc. Chr. 4.21.45, citing Cyprians ep. 63.2-4, to Caecilius. Augustine has already mentioned Melchizedek as prefiguring Christ in div. qu. 61.2, yet in doc. Chr. Augustine shows his hand in terms of the influence of the Latin fathers on his developing theology of sacrifice and sacramentum.

92 doc. Chr. 4.21.46, citing Ambrose’s De Spir. Sanct. 1.prol.

93 Misericordia appears 11 times throughout the work; see doc. Chr. I.30.31-33, 32.35, II.7.11, IV.16.33, 18.37, 21.47-48. Augustine proclaims, “For this reason our Lord and God himself wished to be called our neighbor, because it is himself that the Lord Jesus Christ is indicating as the one who came to the help of that man lying half dead on the road, beaten up and left there by robbers” (doc. Chr. I.29.33). Augustine uses the parable of the Good Samaritan, whereby Christ is the Good Samaritan, coming to the help of wounded humanity. Elsewhere Augustine declares, “what greater generosity and mercy (misericordius) could he show, after deliberately making himself the pavement under our feet along which we could return home, than to forgive us all our sins once we had turned back to him, and by being crucified for us to root out the ban blocking our return that had been so firmly fixed in place?” Christ is the Way to God, whose passion, death, and resurrection make possible the forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation with God.

94 doc. Chr. I.30.33.
love. The enjoyment of God is the end of true worship (*uero religio*), and Augustine will return to the theme of “mercy” (*misericordia*) in order to link Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, the ultimate work of mercy, with the works of mercy performed by Christians.

Augustine mentions sacrifice (*sacrificium, sacrificare*) twenty-one times in *Confessions*. It appears for the first time in 1.17.27, in the description of his education as a boy. Instead of offering praise to God, Augustine and his peers sought praise for themselves, which “yielded a crop of worthless fruit for the birds to carry off.”

Augustine declares “sacrifice can be offered to those birds of prey, the rebel angels, in more ways than one.” For Augustine, the “sacrifice of praise” belongs to God alone, and any attempt to usurp the glory that belongs to God amounts to a “sacrifice to the rebel angels,” that is, to the demons. This worship of false gods can be offered “in more ways than one;” for instance, in book 4, Augustine describes an encounter with a “sorcerer” who was prepared to offer “living creatures in sacrifice” in order to ensure Augustine’s victory in a dramatic poetry contest. Although Augustine rejected this offer, he declares, “I was all the while offering myself in sacrifice to [demons] through my superstition.” Augustine had not yet rejected astrology, and so was participating in

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95 God alone is to be loved in this way, and others are to be loved “in God,” that is, for the sake of God, and toward God as their final end; see I.22.20-21, 26.27, 27.28, 29.30, 31.34, 33.37.; see esp. I.30.31-33.

96 *conf.* 1.17.27.

97 *conf.* 1.17.27: “non enim uno modo sacrificatur transgressoribus angelis.”

98 *conf.* 4.2.3; 5.1.1; 9.1.1, 4.10; 10.34.53; 11.2.3; 12.24.33.

99 *conf.* 4.2.2-3.
a kind of idolatry. Futhermore, sacrifice has a personal quality, for all worship involves
the sacrifice of “oneself,” such that Augustine may proclaim “I was offering myself in
sacrifice” (*ipse sacrificabam*). This kind of sacrifice is not limited to a purely spiritual
offering of the “mind” (*mens*), but is taken into the domain of signs by the act of
confession, for Augustine speaks of the “sacrifice of my confessions,”* offered through
the words spoken by tongue* and in writing.* The entire economy of signs is intended
for the confession of God’s healing mercy (*misericordia*), and this external confession is
an intrinsic aspect of sacrificial worship.*

The link between sacrifice and the Eucharistic worship of the Church is developed
further in *Confessions*. Augustine speaks of Monica’s tears as the “sacrifice of her heart’s
blood” which she offered to God day after day, night after night.* Sacrifice carries
Eucharistic overtones,* which become explicit in 7.21.27. Augustine describes his
discovery of the writings of Paul, in which he found “every truth” that he had read in
those other books, i.e. the books of the Platonists, but “now inseparable from your gift of

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100 *conf.* 4.3.4: “sed uidelicet sacrificari pro me nollem daemonibus, quibus me illa superstitione
ipse sacrificabam.”

101 Ibid.

102 *conf.* 5.1.1: “accipe sacrificium confessionum mearn de manu linguae meae, quam formasti et
excitasti, ut confiteatur nomini tuo, et sana omnia ossa mea, et dicant: domine, quis similis tibi?”

103 *conf.* 4.3.4, 11.2.3.

104 *conf.* 12.24.33.

105 *conf.* 5.1.1; 9.1.1; 10.34.53; 11.2.3; 12.24.33.

106 *conf.* 5.7.13: “manus enim tuae, deus meus, in abdito prouidentiae tuae non deserebant animam
meam, et de sanguine cordis matris meae per lacrimas eius diebus et noctibus pro me sacrificabatur tibi, et
egisti me cum miris modis.” See also Augustine’s own tears of repentance as an acceptable sacrifice, 9.1.1.

107 See the excellent article by John C. Cavadini, “Eucharistic Exegesis in Augustine’s
From the Platonists, Augustine learned to seek “incorporeal truth” (*incorpoream ueritatem*) and to gaze upon “your invisibility” (*inuisibilia tua*), yet “where was that charity which builds on the foundation of humility that is Christ Jesus?”

The Platonists see the homeland (*patria*), but do not have the Way (*via*), i.e. Christ, for Christ alone forgives sins through his sacrificial death so that the “record of debt that stood against us was annulled.” The “cup of our ransom” (*poculum pretii nostri*), i.e., the Eucharist, mediates the salvific sacrifice of Christ that cannot be found in “those other books.”

In this work, the “sacrifice” (*sacrificium*) of a humble, contrite heart cannot be found in philosophy or the liberal arts, for this sacrifice is a gift of grace. Augustine no longer has the same confidence in the liberal arts, for despite possessing the gifts of “swift intelligence and keen wits,” Augustine declares, “I was not offering sacrifice to you.” Neither philosophy nor the liberal arts may substitute for the “sacrifice of praise” that confesses God’s healing mercies (*tuas misericordias*), which have broken the bonds

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108 *conf*. 7.21.27: “et coepi et inueni, quidquid illac uerum legeram, hac cum commendatione gratiae tuae dici, ut qui uidet non sic glorietur, quasi non acceperit non solum id quod uidet, sed etiam ut uideat - quid enim habet quod non accepit?”

109 *conf*. 7.20.26: “ubi enim erat illa aedificans caritas a fundamento humilitatis, quod est christus iesus?”

110 *conf*. 7.21.27: “et euacuatum est chirographum, quod erat contrarium nobis.”

111 *conf*. 7.21.27: “non habent illae paginae uultum pietatis huius, lacrmas confessionis, sacrificium tuum, spiritum contribulatum, cor contritum et humiliatum, populi salutem, sponsam ciuitatem, arram spiritus sancti, poculum pretii nostri.”

112 Ibid.

113 *conf*. 4.16.30: “quidquid de arte loquendi et disserendi, quidquid de dimensionibus figurarum et de musicis et de numeris sine magna difficulitate nullo hominum tradente intellexi, scis tu, domine deus meus, quia et celeritas intellegendhi et dispiciendi acumen donum tuum est. sed non inde sacrificabam tibi.”
of the captivity of sin. True sacrifice must be offered to God, who alone gives forgiveness, healing, and purification from sin.

For Augustine, the true, most perfect sacrifice offered to God is the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross, mediated precisely through the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. In 9.12.32, Augustine recounts Monica’s burial, and declares that “the sacrifice of our redemption” (sacrificium pretii nostri) “was offered for her beside the grave.” This is the Eucharistic sacrifice, the “ransom” (pretium) paid by Christ on the cross. By his death, he was both “victor and victim,” and as the one mediator, “he stood to you as priest and sacrifice, and priest because sacrifice, making us sons and daughters to you instead of servants.” Part of Christ’s unique mediation is his role as priest, offering himself as sacrifice and victim. This is the one, true sacrifice that has healing power, a healing that is not simply a cleansing of the mind, but the forgiveness of sins. “Your Only Son, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, has redeemed me with his blood…I am mindful of my ransom (pretium). I eat it, I drink it, I dispense it to others…And then do those who seek him praise the Lord.” Augustine identifies the Eucharist as the very “ransom” (pretium) paid by Christ through his sacrifice. Augustine brings together significant sacrificial and ecclesiological themes in the important work Against Faustus (ca. 397/9). This anti-Manichean text displays the definitive Pauline shift in Augustine’s thought. Following Paul in 1 Cor. 10:6, conf. 8.1.1: “deus meus, recorder in gratiarum actione tibi et confitear misericordias tuas super me…dirupisti uincula mea: sacrificem tibi sacrificium laudis.”

conf. 9.12.32: “nam neque in eis precibus, quas tibi fudimus, cum offerretur pro ea sacrificium pretii nostri iam iuxta sepulchrum posito cadauere…”

conf. 7.11.27; 10.43.70.

conf. 10.43.69: “pro nobis tibi uictor et uictima, et ideo uictor, quia uictima, pro nobis tibi sacerdos et sacrificium, et ideo sacerdos, quia sacrificium, faciens tibi nos de seruis filios de te nascendo, nobis seruiendo.”

conf. 10.43.70: “ille tuus unicus, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi, redemit me sanguine suo. non calumnientur mihi superbi, quoniam cogito pretium meum et manduco et bibo et erogo et pauper cupio saturari ex eo inter illos, qui edunt et saturantur: et laudant dominum qui requirunt eum.”

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Augustine interprets the images of Scriptures as figures “of us,” that is, of the Church. His “Christo-ecclesial” interpretation of Scripture is firmly in place. This is evident in his use of *sacrificium*, which appears ninety times. In 6.5, Augustine defends the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, which the Manicheans find deplorable. Christians no longer perform such sacrifices, nevertheless, these sacrifices contain within them “divine mysteries,” for they were “figures of us, and all such sacrifices signified in many different ways the one sacrifice, whose memory we now celebrate.”¹¹⁹ The *sacricia* are among the *sacramenta* of the old law¹²⁰ that prefigure the one true sacrifice of Christ, now celebrated at the Eucharistic altar.¹²¹

The sacrifice of Christ was prefigured not only by the animal sacrifices of the old law, but also by the sacrifice of Abel, who is a type of Christ.¹²² Just as Abel was killed by his older brother Cain, so Christ the “head of the younger people” is killed by the “older people.”¹²³ Christ’s suffering on the cross reveals the meaning of the old “sacraments” (*sacramenta*), so that some might “cross over to Christ by their confession

¹¹⁹ c. Faust. 6.5: “unde pro nobis prius respondemus sic illa iam non esse in operibus nostris, ut ea tamen in mysteriis diuinarum scripturarum ad intellegenda, quae his praenuntiata sunt, amplexamur, quia et ipsa figurae nostrae fuerunt et omnia talia multis et uariis modis unum sacrificium, cuius nunc memoriam celebramus, significauerunt.” See also 17.2; 18.6; 19.7.

¹²⁰ c. Faust. 18.6; 19.3, 5, 31; 22.2; 32.3, 7. Christ is the “truth” (*veritas*) of these figures (18.6), for Christ is the “mystery of God” (*mysterium Dei*) that the whole world lacked until his coming (12.32).

¹²¹ Interestingly, Augustine demonstrates a certain degree of confidence in the efficacy of the rituals of the old law precisely because they contain the divine *mysteria*, as evident in his interpretation of Luke 5:14, in which Jesus commands the leper whom he had cleansed to show himself to the priest, and “offer what Moses commanded.” Christ commands the leper to perform the ritual sacrifices, since Christ’s Passion had not yet taken place; nevertheless, these rituals were efficacious because they prefigured Christ’s sacrifice on the cross; see also *bapt.* 6.44.86.

¹²² c. Faust. 12.9; 22.17; *cf. en. Ps.* 8.13; 61.4; 128.2; 90[2].1; *bapt.* 1.15.24; *cat. rud.* 3.6.

¹²³ c. Faust. 12.9.
of faith and with their mouth open to drink his blood.” Participation in the new law means participation in the sacramental economy, and so a participation in the sacrifice of Christ. The Church begins with Abel, the just man, for Abel was the first to have offered the “sacrifice of blood,” which prefigured the “true sacrifice,” the “Passion of the mediator” (*passionem mediatoris*). Although Abel lived before the time of Christ and prior to the sacramental economy of the Church, nevertheless, he offered himself as a sacrifice, instead of participating in sacrilegious pagan rites that give worship “to demons and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:22).

Augustine notes in *Against Faustus* that the worship which belongs to God alone is called λατρεία in Greek, and the offering of sacrifice pertains to this worship. The “sacrifice of blood” is an ancient, prophetic practice that prefigured the true sacrifice of the “one true priest, the mediator between God and men,” whose sacrifice of blood brought about the “forgiveness of sins.”

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124 c. Faust. 12.11: “unde christo in cruce passo uelum templi conscissum est, ut per christi passionem reuelentur secreta sacramentorum fidelibus ad bibendum eius sanguinem ore aperto in confessione transeuntibus.”


126 c. Faust. 22.17. Augustine also mentions the sacrifices of Abraham (12.38) and Moses (16.10, 19.6) as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ.

127 c. Faust. 22.17: “huius itaque ueri sacrificii sicut religiosa praedicamenta hebraei celebrauerunt, ita sacrilega imitamenta pagani, quoniam quae immolant gentes, ait apostolus, daemoniis immolant, et non deo.”

128 c. Faust. 20.21.

129 c. Faust. 22.17: “hic ego de uero sacrificio latius fortasse disserens demonstrarem id non deberi nisi uni uero deo, quod ei unus uerus sacerdos obtulit, mediator dei et hominum: cuius sacrificii promissuas figuras in uictimis animalium celebrari oporteat propter commendationem futurae carnis et sanguinis, per quam unam victimam fieret remissio peccatorum de carne et sanguine contractorum, quae regnum dei non possidebunt…”
as true worship is the “future Passion” (futuram passionem) of Christ. Here we see the development of Augustine’s theology of the Eucharist as sacrifice. “Before the coming of Christ the flesh and blood of this sacrifice was promised by the likeness of victims (per uictimas similitudinum); in the Passion of Christ the promise was fulfilled in its truth (per ipsam ueritatem); after the ascension of Christ it is celebrated through the sacrament of its memory” (per sacramentum memoriae). The Eucharist is a unique sacramentum, unlike any of the other sacramenta that prefigured the “true sacrifice” (ueritatem sacrificii) of Christ. The res of the sacramentum is the “flesh and blood” of Christ. The sacrifices of the old law shared a certain “likeness” with this sacrifice through the “flesh

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130 c. Faust. 22.17: “antiqua enim res est praenuntiatiua immolatio sanguinis futuram passionem mediatoris ab initio generis humani testificans; hanc enim primus abel obtulisse in sacris litteris inuenitur.”

131 c. Faust. 20.21: “huius sacrificii caro et sanguis ante aduentum christi per uictimas similitudinum promittebatur, in passione christi per ipsam ueritatem reddebatur, post ascensum christi per sacramentum memoriae celebratur.”

132 Augustine distinguishes the Eucharist from the religion of the Manicheans. “But I do not know why Faustus thinks that we practice the same religion with respect to the bread and the cup, since for Manicheans to taste wine is not religious but sacrilegious…But our bread and cup, not just any bread and cup, is made sacramental for us by a particular consecration; it was not naturally such, as Manicheans say in their folly…Hence, what is not consecrated, though it is bread and cup, is food for refreshment, not the sacrament of religion, apart from the fact that we bless and give thanks to the Lord for every gift of his, not only spiritual but also bodily;” c. Faust. 20.13: “cur autem arbitretur faustus parem nobis esse religionem circa panem et calicem, nescio, cum manichaeis uinum gustare non religio, sed sacrilegium sit…noster autem panis et calix non quilibet - quasi propter christum in spicis et in sarmentis ligatum, sicut illi desipiunt -, sed certa consecratione mysticus fit nobis, non nascitur. proinde quod non ita fit, quamuis sit panis et calix, alimentum est refectionis, non sacramentum religionis, nisi quod benedicimus gratias que agimus domino in omni eius munere non solum spiritali, uestum etiam corporali.”

133 c. Faust. 20.21: “illa uero uni deo, ut ei offeretur similitudo promittens ueritatem sacrificii, cui erat offerenda ipsa redditia ueritas in passione corporis et sanguinis christi.” Indeed, as Augustine asserts, the sacramenta instituted by Christ were “fewer in number,” but “greater in power,” and include baptism and the “Eucharist of Christ” (eucharistia Christi; 19.16). Augustine does not elaborate on how precisely the Eucharist is “greater in power” than the preceding sacramenta in this particular text, as he will in City of God; however, there is a subtle yet significant shift in his language about the Eucharist that reveals development in his thought.
and blood” of the “victims,”\textsuperscript{134} while this very sacrifice of the passion is celebrated in the “sacrament of its memory” (\textit{per sacramentum memoriae}).\textsuperscript{135}

Augustine introduces a subtle yet significant shift in his Eucharistic language. As evident in the work \textit{On Eighty-Three Questions}, Augustine previously referred to the Eucharistic celebration as the “memorial of the passion” (\textit{memoriam passionis}) of Christ, in the “likeness of his sacrifice” (\textit{eius sacrificii similitudinem}).\textsuperscript{136} In \textit{Against Faustus}, however, Augustine no longer speaks of the Eucharistic “memorial” (\textit{memoria}) as the “likeness of his sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{137} Instead, the Eucharist is the “memorial of the sacrifice” (\textit{memoriam sacrificii}), which Christians celebrate by a “holy oblation” (\textit{sacrosancta oblatione})” and “by participation in the body and blood of Christ” (\textit{participatione corporis et sanguinis christi}).\textsuperscript{138} As the “memorial of his sacrifice,” the Eucharist is a true participation in the “body and blood of Christ.”\textsuperscript{139} The \textit{res} is Christ’s body and blood

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textit{c. Faust.} 22.21; cf. 22.17: “cuius sacrificii promissiusas figuras in uictimis animalium celebrari oportebat propter commendationem futurae carnis et sanguinis, per quam unam uictimam fieret remissio peccatorum de carne et sanguine contractorum, quae regnum dei non possidebunt…”
\item \textit{c. Faust.} 20.21: “huius sacrificii caro et sanguis ante adventum christi per uictimas similitudinem promittebatur, in passione christi per ipsam ueritatem reddebatur, post ascensum christi per sacramentum memoriae celebratur.”
\item \textit{div. qu.} 61.2: “ipse est etiam sacerdos noster in aeternum secundum ordinem melchisedech, qui se ipsum obtulit holocaustum pro peccatis nostris, et eius sacrificii similitudinem celebrandam in suae passionis memoriam commendauit, ut illud quod melchisedech obtulit deo iam per orbem terrarum in christi ecclesia uideamus offerri.”
\item \textit{c. Faust.} 20.18: “si autem deo uero uerum sacrificium rite debitur, unde etiam diuini honores recte appellantur, cetera quae dicuntur sacrificia ad similitudinem fiunt cuiusdam ueri sacrificii.”
\item \textit{c. Faust.} 20.18: “unde iam christiani peracti eiusdem sacrificii memoriam celebrant sacrosancta oblatione et participatione corporis et sanguinis christi.”
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\end{enumerate}
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offered as a sacrifice. The passion was prefigured by the *sacramenta* of the Old Testament,\(^{140}\) and is now celebrated by Christians “through the sacrament of memory.”\(^{141}\)

This development does *not* mean that in his early works, Augustine rejects a doctrine of the Eucharist as Christ’s body and blood, for as we have seen, Augustine never denies the authority of the Church and her sacred rites. Rather, the subtle shift in language demonstrates growth in the articulation of Augustine’s Eucharistic theology concurrent with his mature theology of sacrifice as *sacramentum*. This transformation of the notion of sacrifice takes place in the context of the reconfiguration of “sign” language (*signa*) according to a sacramental (*sacramentum, mysterium*) framework. In 19.16, Augustine notes that Faustus and others erroneously believe that since the “signs and sacraments have changed (*signis sacramentis que mutatis*), the realities themselves (*res ipsas*) are also different which the prophetic religion foretold as promised and which the gospel religion has announced as fulfilled.”\(^{142}\) However, as we have seen, Augustine maintains that the “realities” (*res*) of the *sacramenta* of the old religion, i.e. Judaism, are the same “mysteries” (*mysteria*) contained in the new.\(^{143}\) Although there were “other

\(^{140}\) The sacrifices of the Old Testament had a certain “likeness” to the flesh and blood of Christ, precisely in the death of the victims (*uictimae*) and the shedding of blood. With regard to the Eucharistic celebration, Augustine no longer shows a concern to guard against accusations that Christians offer a “bloody” sacrifice, as in *div. qu.* 61.2. Perhaps this pastoral concern has diminished. Now he is intent on demonstrating how the consecration of bread and wine at the Eucharistic altar is a true participation in the body and blood of Christ, for “our bread and cup, not just any bread and cup, is made sacramental for us by a particular consecration;” *c. Faust.* 20.13, “noster autem panis et calix non quilibet quasi propter christum in spicis et in sarmentis ligatum, sicut illi desipiunt -, sed certa consecratione mysticus fit nobis, non nascitur.”

\(^{141}\) *c. Faust.* 20.21.

\(^{142}\) *c. Faust.* 19.16: “interim aduersus calumniosam inperitiam fausti demonstrare suffecerit, quanto errore delirent, qui putant signis sacramentis que mutatis etiam res ipsas esse diuersas, quas ritus propheticus praemuniauit promissas, et quas ritus euangelicus adnuntiauit inpletas...”

\(^{143}\) *c. Faust.* 6.5; 12.20, 32; 16.17, 29; 19.16; 22.58, 92, 94; 30.3.
signs of the mysteries” (*aliis mysteriorum signaculis*), these *sacramenta* prefigured and foretold the “mysteries of Christ” (*mysteria Christi*), which are now proclaimed and celebrated by the Church. The *sacramenta* instituted by Christ were “fewer in number,” but “greater in power,” e.g. baptism and the “Eucharist of Christ” (*eucharistia Christi*). Augustine’s theology of sacrifice is taken up into this dynamic, such that the *res* is the “passion” of Christ. The Old Testament *sacramenta* contained this *mysterium* in a certain likeness, prefiguring the mystery to be revealed in its fullness with the coming of Christ. The *res* is the sacrifice of Christ, now celebrated at the Eucharistic altar as the “memorial” of what Christ accomplished. Augustine no longer uses the language of “likeness” for the Eucharist. He reserves such language for the Old Testament *sacramenta*. The *res* of the Eucharistic *sacramentum* is itself the “true sacrifice” of Christ’s body and blood. In this way, the Eucharist is a participation in the body and blood of Christ as a sacrifice made present and efficacious in sacramental form.

*Against Faustus* reveals other important ecclesiological developments. In 16.10, Augustine brings together two significant Pauline verses when discussing sacrifice and temple: 1) 1 Cor. 3:17, “For the temple of God that you are holy,” and 2) Rom. 12:1, “I beg you by the mercy of God (*per misericordiam Dei*) to offer your bodies as a living

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144 *c. Faust.* 30.3.

145 *c. Faust.* 19.16.

146 *c. Faust.* 20.21: “antiqua enim res est praenuntiatiua immolatio sanguinis futuram passionem mediatoris ab initio generis humani testificans; hanc enim primus abel obtulisse in sacris litteris inuenitur.”

147 *c. Faust.* 22.21: “illa uero uni deo, ut ei offeretur similitudo promittens ueritatem sacrificii, cui erat offerenda ipsa redditu ueritas in passione corporis et sanguinis christi.”

148 *c. Faust.* 20.18: “unde iam christiani peracti eiusdem sacrificii memoriam celebrant sacrosancta oblatione et participatione corporis et sanguinis christi.”
Augustine interprets Rom. 12:1 in terms of the bodies of believers against a Manichean dualism, such that sacrifice is not limited to the spiritual offering of the “temple of the mind,” although it retains this spiritual aspect. Augustine begins to use temple imagery to refer to the whole Church as the body of Christ, and not merely individual believers.

The incarnation makes possible the union of Christ and the Church as one body, and one temple. Christ has become head of this body by taking on “flesh,” and “we have become the members of that head.” Christ became a priest “by the sacrifice of his flesh,” which “wins pardon for us.” This was not a purely spiritual sacrifice, but consisted of the visible offering of Christ’s body and blood on the cross, now commemorated in the visible celebration of the Eucharist. Christ has fulfilled all of the “visible sacraments” (uisibilia sacramenta) of the old law by offering himself visibly, and this sacrifice is the res of the Eucharistic sacramentum.

For Augustine, the “true sacrifice” of Christ has its locus at the Eucharistic altar, yet its effects do not stop there, but extend outward so as to yield “works of mercy” (opera misericordiae). In 20.15, Augustine criticizes the Manichean rejection of the body, which the Manicheans describe as “the product of the evil and the prison cell of

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149 c. Faust. 16.10: “templum enim dei sanctum est, ait apostolus, quod estis uos et: obsecro itaque uos per misericordiam dei, ut exhibeatis corpora uestra hostiam uiuam, sanctam, deo placentem et cetera huiusmodi.” See also 20.15.


151 Ibid.

152 c. Faust. 19.7: “deinde, quia etiam sub gratia positis in hac mortali uita difficile est omni modo inplere, quod in lege scriptum est: non concupisces, ille per carnis suae sacrificium sacerdos effectus inpetrat nobis indulgentiam etiam hinc adinplens legem, ut, quod per nostram infirmitatem minus possimus, per illius perfectionem recuretur, cuius capitis membra effecti sumus.”

153 See c. Faust. 19.12, and the discussion leading up to it in 19.10-11.
God.” As Paul declares, “For the temple of God, which you are is holy” (1 Cor. 3:17), and Augustine continues, “lest you think that what was said pertains only to the soul (animam), listen to what he says more explicitly: Do you not know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have from God (1 Cor. 6:19)?” The Manichean rejection of the body leads to a distorted form of worship, for they have made the “mind an altar” (mentem aram), and their practices and disciplines “forbid you to offer bread to a beggar, so that you might burn on your altar with a sacrifice of cruelty.” Citing Hosea 6:6, Augustine declares that God desires “mercy rather than sacrifice” (misericordiam uolo quam sacrificium).

Augustine links sacrifice to mercy in such a way that true worship must yield works of mercy toward one’s neighbor. The danger of a purely spiritual offering is a lack of charity, a charity that necessarily yields works of mercy that may be visible, such as the offering of “bread to a beggar.” Augustine has expanded sacrifice in connection to mercy, and this expansion will reach its full development in City of God. It is significant that Augustine offers a critique of the Manicheans because of a dualistic view of soul and body that leads to a false kind of worship, which is characterized by the

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154 c. Faust. 20.15.
155 c. Faust. 20.15: “at uero apostolus, templum enim dei sanctum est, inquit, quod estis uos; et ne putes tantummodo ad animam pertinere, quod dictum est, audi expressius. nescitis, inquit, quia corpora uestra templum est in uobis spiritus sancti, quem habetis a deo?”
156 c. Faust. 20.16: “illae artes et disciplinae uetant panem porrigere mendicanti homini, ut in ara uestra cum sacrificio crudelitatis ardeatis.”
157 Ibid.
158 Augustine hints in this direction in his discussion of “true religion” (uera religione) that culminates with the Eucharistic celebration of the Church in c. Faust. 20.18. Furthermore, in 20.20, he distinguishes the “agapes” of Christians which “feed the poor” from the worship of the Manicheans, which is based on “an idea that is found in the books of certain pagan philosophers.”
failure to offers works of mercy. A religion that limits sacrifice to the “altar of the mind” results in the neglect of one’s neighbor, and the thrust of this argument is carried forward into the debate with the pagans and Neoplatonists in *City of God*.

Furthermore, in *Contra Faustum*, Augustine continues to distinguish the “true sacrifice” (*uerum sacrificium*) of Christ from the purification of philosophy and the liberal arts. Christ’s unique role as priest and victim comes from his status as the one Mediator between God and man. Christ’s self-sacrifice alone can forgive sins and offer the healing mercy of God, and this purification is mediated through the Church’s sacramental worship.

In *On Catechizing the Uninstructed* (*De catechizandis rudibus*, ca. 399/400) 20.34, Augustine continues to develop his understanding of “sign” and “sacrament” in terms of worship. Jewish rituals such as the Passover were “visible sacraments” (*multis sacramentis uisibilus*) and “signs” (*signa*) of “spiritual realities” (*rerum spiritualium*) that pertain to Christ and the Church. Furthermore, Augustine continues to expand the notion of sacrifice to include the works of mercy, such as the giving of alms.

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160 *c. Faust.* 22.17.


162 *cat. rud.* 20.34: “apertius autem christi passio in illo populo figurata est, cum iussi sunt ouem occidere et manducare, et de sanguine eius postes suos signare, et hoc celebrare omni anno, et appellare pascha domini.”

163 *cat. rud.* 20.35: “ideo multis sacramentis uisibilibus onerati sunt, quo seruili iugo premerentur, in obseruationibus ciborum et in sacrificiis animalium et in aliiis innumerabilibus: quae tamen signa erant rerum spiritualium ad dominum iesum christum et ad ecclesiam pertinentium.”

164 *cat. rud.* 14.22.
On Baptism (De baptismo, ca. 400/401) demonstrates the connection between sacrifice and charity in Augustine’s thought in the context of the Donatist controversy. In 2.10.15, Augustine declares that the “sacrifice of love” (sacrificium dilecitonis) pleasing to God ought to be offered on behalf of the Donatists, who have divided the unity of the Church and led “sacrilegious” lives.\(^{165}\) The Donatists lack charity, and they have “inflicted wrong” upon the sacraments, which are intended to unite the Church in love. By their schism, the Donatists commit sin and sacrilege in their celebration of the sacraments.\(^{166}\) Although some have been “rebaptized,” Augustine follows Cyprian’s teaching that the rebaptized may be pardoned and brought back into the “simple bond of unity and peace,” despite “committing error” in their “offering of the “sacrifice of charity” (sacrificium caritatis),\(^{167}\) i.e. baptism.\(^{168}\) The “sacrifice of charity” is pleasing to God, and it is the basis of the Church’s unity.

In book 6, Augustine links charity to the Eucharist by citing Cyprian, who speaks of the “sacrifices of the Lord” (dominica sacrificia) that “declare that Christians are

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\(^{165}\) *bapt.* 2.10.15: “isti autem simul habere ulunt et sacrilegorum uitam et innocentium famam et in sceleratis factis nullam poenam et in poenis iustis martyrum gloriam, quasi non tanto sit erga illos maior misericordia et patientia dei, quanto magis eos partibus corripiens dat locum paenitentiae et in hac uita flagella ingeminare non cessat, ut considerantes quae patiantur et quare patiantur aliquando resipiscant et, qui iam pro unite donati maximianistarum baptismum receperunt, pro pace christi orbis terrarum baptismum potius amplectantur, redendant radici, reconcilentur unitati, uideant nihil sibi remansisse quod dicant, sed tamen remansisse quod faciant, ut pro factis eorum praeteritis sacrificium dilectionis offeratur placabili deo, cuius unitatem nefario scele dirruperunt, cuius sacramentis tam diuturnas iniurias inrogarunt.”

\(^{166}\) Ibid.

\(^{167}\) *bapt.* 2.14.19: “si ergo cyprianus, quos esse sine baptismo arbitrabatur, tamen propter unitatis uinculum ad ueniam pertinere praeusemat, potens est dominus per ipsum uinculum unitatis et pacis etiam rebaptizati placari et eis, a quibus rebaptizati sunt, ex ipsa pacis compensatione mitescere et omnia quae in errore commiserant delicta donare, offerentibus sacrificium caritatis quae cooperit multitudinem peccatorum, ut non attendet quam multi eorum discessu ulnerati sint, sed quam plures eorum reditu liberati.”

\(^{168}\) Augustine also identifies baptism as the “sacrament of hope” (sacramentum spei); *c. Faust.* 12.20.
united in a firm and inseparable love (caritate) for one another.”

Cyprian uses Eucharistic imagery in order to speak about the Church’s unity. The Lord calls bread “his body,” which is composed of the union of many grains, and this indicates the union of one people, i.e. the Church. In a similar way, when Christ calls wine his blood, that wine “which is pressed out from a multitude of branches and clusters and brought together into one” signifies the mingling of many into one. Augustine will take up these Eucharistic themes and develop them in his preaching. Following Cyprian, Augustine links the sacrifice of charity to the Eucharist.

Augustine’s theology of sacrifice undergoes further development in On the Trinity (De Trinitate, 399-422/426). In book IV, Augustine says that all of the “sacred and mysterious things” (omnia quae sacrate atque mystice) of Scripture “were likenesses (similitudines) of him,” that is, of Christ. These sacramenta prefigured the coming of Christ, the “Word of God” and the “mediator between God and men.” It is precisely as the incarnate Word that Christ is the “sacrament, sacrifice, and high priest,” (hoc sacramentum, hoc sacrificium, hoc sacerdos), as God “made of a woman (Gal. 4:4).”

169 _bapt._ 7.50.98: “denique unanimitate christianos firma sibi adque inseparabili caritate conexos etiam ipsa dominica sacrificia declarant.”

170 _bapt._ 7.50.98: “nam quando dominus corpus suum panem uocat de multorum granorum adunatione congestum, populum nostrum quem portabat indicat adunatum; et quando sanguinem suum uinum appellat de botruis adque acinis plurimis expressum adque in unum coactum, gregem item nostrum significant commixtione adunatae multitudinis copulatum.”

171 Ibid.

172 See s. 227; 228B; 229; 229A; 272.

173 _Trin._ 4.2.11.

174 _Trin._ 4.2.12.

175 _Trin._ 4.2.11: “hoc sacramentum, hoc sacrificium, hic sacerdos, hic deus antequam missus ueniret factus ex femina.”
Christ is *sacramentum* as the visible presence of a transcendent mystery in history, i.e. the Word made flesh. As *sacrificium*, Christ offers himself in the flesh, so that the Church might “rise with him in spirit through faith,” and “not despair of ourselves rising in the flesh when we observed that we had been preceded by the one head.”\(^\text{176}\) The Church rises in faith with the head while on pilgrimage, and awaits the final rising of the “flesh,” that is, the resurrection of bodies. As the body of Christ, the Church will share in the resurrection of the flesh, for she will go where the head has already gone, as “head and body are the one Christ” (*quia caput et corpus unus est christus*).\(^\text{177}\) For Augustine, the final end is not a vision of truth yielded by “inward turn” away from bodily existence. Rather, the end is the redemption of bodies at the resurrection.

Furthermore, as the Mediator, the Son of God “wants his disciples to be one in him,” so that they might be “one with the Father” as the “one Christ,” and this means being bound in the fellowship of the same love (*caritatis*).\(^\text{178}\) Vision is subordinated to charity, and Christ cleanses the members of his body from sin, so that they might be one.\(^\text{179}\) This purification\(^\text{180}\) is made possible by the sacrifice of Christ as Mediator, for “by his death he offered for us the one truest possible sacrifice, and thereby purged,

\(^{176}\) *Trin.* 4.2.11: “et in resuscitatum credentes et cum illo per fidem spiritu resurgentem justificaremur in uno iusto facti unum, nec in ipsa carne nos resurrecturos desperaremus cum multa membra intueremur praecessisse nos caput unum in quo nunc per fidem mundati et tunc per speciem redintegrati et per mediatores deo reconciliati haeciamos uni, fruamur uno, permaneamus unum.”

\(^{177}\) *Trin.* 4.2.12.

\(^{178}\) *Trin.* 4.2.12: “unde mundantur per mediatores ut sint in illo unum non tantum per eandem naturam qua omnes ex hominibus mortalibus aequales angelis fiunt sed etiam per eandem in eandem beatitudinem conspirantem concordissimamvolentatem in unum spiritum quodam modo caritatis igne conflatam.”

\(^{179}\) *Trin.* 4.2.12.

\(^{180}\) *Trin.* 4.2.11.
abolished, and destroyed whatever there was of guilt, for which the principalities and
powers had a right to hold us bound to payment of the penalty.”\textsuperscript{181} Such purification
cannot be found in philosophy. Moreover, Augustine contrasts the true sacrifice of Christ
with the “sacrilegious sacred rites” (\textit{sacra sacrilega}) of “false philosophy” (\textit{falsam
philosophiam}).\textsuperscript{182} The pagan rites are promoted by certain Platonists,\textsuperscript{183} and in this way,
philosophy is not innocent. The devil “falsely presents himself” as the “mediator offering
purification” by the sacred rites, yet this leads to “addiction and ruin.”\textsuperscript{184} The only
sacrifice that can pay the debt of sins is “true sacrifice owed to the one true God,” which
can “only be correctly offered by a holy and just priest.”\textsuperscript{185} This is the sacrifice
\textit{(sacrificium)} of Christ as the “only Son of God,” “born in and from a virgin’s womb”
without sin, who offered an “immolation of mortal flesh” \textit{(immolationi caro mortalis)} in
his body, which “has been made into the flesh of our sacrifice” \textit{(caro sacrificii nostri)}\textsuperscript{186}

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\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Trin.} 4.3.17: “morte sua quippe uno uerissimo sacrificio pro nobis oblato quidquid culparum
erat unde nos principatus et potestates ad luenda supplicia iure detinebant purguit, aboleuit, extinxit, et
sua resurrectione in nouam uitam nos praedestinatos uocauit, uocatos iustificauit, iustificatos glorificauit.”
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\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Trin.} 4.3.13: “sic hominem per elat
ionis typhum potentiae quam iustitiae cupidiorem aut per
falsam philosophiam magis inflans aut per sacra sacrilega inretiens, in quibus etiam magicae fallaciae
curiosiores superiores que animas deceptas inlusas que praeceptans, subditum tenet pollicens etiam
purgationem animae per eas quas teletai appellant transfigurando se in angelum lucis per multiformem
machinationem in signis et prodigiis mendacii.” Augustine mentions the \textit{teletai}, a term for mystic rites for
intiation into the mysteries of Isis or Mithras, for example. In \textit{City of God}, he speaks of such \textit{teletai} as
“theurgic consecrations;” \textit{civ. Dei} 10.9.
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\textsuperscript{183} E.g. Porphyry; see \textit{civ. Dei} 10.9.
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\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Trin.} 4.3.18: “hic etiam diabolus adhuc suos inludit quibus se per sua sacra uelut purgandis et
potius implicandis atque mergendis falsus mediator opponit quod superbis facilime persuadet inridere
atque contemnere mortem christi a qua ipse quanto est alienior tanto ab eis creditur sanctior atque diuinior.”
See also 4.3.13-15, 17.
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\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Trin.} 4.3.19: “non intellegunt ne ipsos quidem superbissimos spiritus honoribus sacrificiorum
gaudere posuit nisi un uero deo pro quo coli ulunt erum sacrificium debetur. neque id posse rite
offerri nisi per sacerdotem sanctum et iustum nec nisi ab eis accipiatur quod offertur pro quibus offertur
atque id sine uito sit ut pro uitosis mundandis possit offerri.”
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\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Trin.} 4.3.19: “et quid tam mundum pro mundandis uitiis mortalium quam sine uilla contagione
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The sacrifice of Christians is the very same sacrifice offered by Christ in his body as “our priest.” The Church is the body of Christ (corpus Christi),\textsuperscript{187} united with its head as one body, one sacrifice. Christology and ecclesiology are united in Augustine’s theology of sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christians is the sacrifice of Christ, the true priest and Mediator.\textsuperscript{188} In De Trinitate, Augustine offers a rich treatment of Chrisian worship, in contrast to the false worship of the pagan rites countenanced by the philosophers.

Augustine’s critique of pagan worship and Neoplatonism reaches its climax in \textit{City of God}. Composed over the course of two decades, this complex, sophisticated work is a tapestry of theological themes, held together by the thread of “true religion” (\textit{uera religio}).\textsuperscript{189} Against the \textit{literati}, who advocate a return to the pagan practices and sacrificial cults of the Romans, Augustine offers a two-fold response.\textsuperscript{190} Books 1-10 form the critical component, in which Augustine refutes the claim that the pagan gods should be worshipped for temporal or eternal goods. Books 11-22 are constructive, insofar as they offer a detailed portrait of the origin, progress, and destined ends of the two cities, the city of God and the city of man. The central book, as we shall see, is book 10, in which Augustine’s reflections on sacrifice and “true religion” come to a head.\textsuperscript{191}

\footnotesize{carnalis concupiscientiae caro nata in utero et ex utero uirginali? et quid tam grate offerri et suscipi posset quam caro sacrificii nostri corpus effectum sacerdotis nostri?

\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Trin.} 4.2.12.

\textsuperscript{188} On the Eucharist as the “Lord’s body and blood,” see \textit{Trin.} 4.1.10, in which he speaks of the Eucharist as a “great sacrament” (\textit{magnum sacramentum}).

\textsuperscript{189} For instance, see \textit{civ. Dei} 2.6, 29; 4.1, 29; 5.1, 23; 6.2, 9; 7.26, 35; 8.15, 17; 10.3; 12.21, 28.

\textsuperscript{190} See the discussion by van Oort, 164-99; see also Gerard O’Daly, \textit{Augustine’s City of God: A Reader’s Guide} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

\textsuperscript{191} Sacrifice appears one hundred and sixty times in \textit{City of God}, and most frequently in book 10.}
Augustine begins this monumental work by contrasting the “most glorious city of God” (gloriosissimam civitatem Dei) and the city “of this world” (terrena cïuitate) on the basis of two citations, one from Scripture and the other from Virgil. The city of God, whose King is Christ, has revealed that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jas. 4:6). The city of God is founded upon humility, whereas the city “of this world” has claimed “God’s prerogative,” and delights to hear this verse in praise of itself: “To spare conquered, and beat down the proud.” The earthly city arrogates to itself the justice and mercy of God, who alone lifts up the lowly and resists the proud. In so doing, the earthly city seeks to take the place of God.

Augustine characterizes the earthly city according to the “lust for domination” (libido dominandi), by which the city of this world seeks to enslave nations, while being dominated itself by the lust for praise and glory. The city of God, on the other hand, confesses God’s mercy. The earthly city may be identified with a particular historical body such as the Roman Empire, but it is not limited to one historical entity, for it includes all who are defined by pride (superbia), the arrogant “self-love reaching to the point of contempt for God.” This includes the devil and the fallen angels, i.e. demons.

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192 civ. Dei 1.praef: “rex enim et conditor ciuitatis huius, de qua loqui instituimus, in scriptura populi sui sententiam divinae legis aperuit, qua dictum est: deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.”


194 civ. Dei 1.praef: “unde etiam de terrena ciuitate, quae cum dominari adpetit, etsi populi seruiant, ipsa ei dominandi libido dominatur, non est praetereundum silentio quidquid dicere suspecti huius operis ratio postulat si facultas datur.”

The city of God, on the other hand, is defined by the love of God over self, and includes the saints and angels. The cities are defined by two kinds of love, and two kinds of worship, namely, 1) the “true piety and worship of the city of God” (ciuitatem dei ueram que pietatem et dei cultum), and 2) the arrogation of glory by the earthly city that amounts to the idolatrous worship of demons.

Sacrifice (sacrificium) appears for the first time in City of God at the end of book 1. The Christian religion forbids sacrifice to Rome’s gods, and for this reason, Christianity has been blamed for the fall of the Empire. In response, Augustine contrasts the sacrifices of Jews and Christians with pagan “sacrifices to demons” (sacrificiis seruire daemonibus). Augustine argues that the system of polytheistic worship is futile, for even the growth of the Roman Empire may be attributed to God’s providence. God does not approve of the evils of the Empire, but permits its growth. Insofar as it seeks to arrogate the glory that belongs to God, the Empire remains enslaved to the lust for domination, which leads to complacency, and ultimately to self-destruction.

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196 Ibid.
197 civ. Dei 1.36.
198 Ibid. See also Augustine’s ep. 102 to Deogratias on the objection of Porphyry, i.e. that Christians reject the rites of the temple.
199 civ. Dei 2.2.
200 civ. Dei 4.2. In book 5, Augustine contrasts the providence of God with the concept of “fate” according to the Stoics (5.8f.). For Augustine, the doctrine of predestination is part of God’s providence, and cannot be equated with a Stoic notion of “fate.” The distinction between providence and fate provides the opportunity for a fruitful discussion of the doctrine of grace and predestination. The mystery of predestination cannot be reduced to fate, but must be taken up into the mystery of God’s salvific plan. God bestows the gift of freedom upon humanity (5.9-11), and his glory is further revealed insofar as he uses free creatures in order to accomplish his purposes; 5.8-21. This glory is most evident in the lives of the martyrs, who exercise their freedom in obedience to God; 5.18-21.
Christians are “set free” from the slavery of sin by the “unique sacrifice of that holy blood that was shed for us, and by the gift of the spirit which has been imparted to us.”\textsuperscript{201} This is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that forgives sins.\textsuperscript{202} In 7.32, Augustine declares that all of the sacrifices concerned with the true worship of God (\textit{λατρεία})\textsuperscript{203} were fulfilled in Christ.\textsuperscript{204} Augustine’s apologetic concern is to show that Christians do not practice polytheism, for although Christians honor the “memory” (\textit{memoria}) of martyrs, “[the martyrs] are not gods for us; their God is our God.”\textsuperscript{205} Christ’s sacrifice is the “one and only sacrifice of Christians” (\textit{unum sacrificium Christianorum}).\textsuperscript{206} Augustine makes a similar argument in Against Faustus,\textsuperscript{207} however, the polemic against polytheism in \textit{City of God} has the effect of sharpening Augustine’s theology of sacrifice, such that it becomes clear that Christ’s sacrifice constitutes the true worship of the true religion. Christ took the “form of a servant” (Phil. 2:6) in order to become the Way to true “happines” (\textit{beatitudo}).\textsuperscript{208}

\textsuperscript{201} \textit{civ. Dei.} 4.31: “si qua igitur a nobis inde testimonia proferuntur, ad eos redarguendos proferuntur, qui nolunt aduertere de quanta et quam maligna daemonum potestate nos liberet singulare sacrificium tam sancti sanguinis fusi et donum spiritus impertiti.”

\textsuperscript{202} \textit{civ. Dei} 7.31.

\textsuperscript{203} \textit{civ. Dei} 5.15; 7.32; 10.1, 3.

\textsuperscript{204} \textit{civ. Dei} 7.32.

\textsuperscript{205} \textit{civ. Dei} 8.27: “nec tamen nos eisdem martyribus templa, sacerdotia, sacra et sacrificia constituimus, quoniam non ipsi, sed deus eorum nobis est deus. honoramus sane memorias eorum tamquam sanctorum hominum dei, qui usque ad mortem corporum suorum pro ueritate certarunt, ut innotesceret uera religio falsis fictis que conuicitis; quod etiam si qui antea sentiebant, timendo reprimebant.”

\textsuperscript{206} \textit{civ. Dei} 8.27.

\textsuperscript{207} \textit{c. Faust.} 20.21.

\textsuperscript{208} \textit{civ. Dei} 9.16: “sed mediator, per quod homo, eo ipso utique ostendens ad illud non solum beatum, uerum etiam beatificum bonum non oportere quaeri alias mediatores, per quos arbitremur nobis
Augustine begins book 10 with a discussion of the “happy life” (beata uita). All human beings seek happiness, and the Platonists are the “most noble” among philosophers because they are wise enough to realize that the soul cannot attain true happiness except “by participation in the light of God.” Augustine goes further to declare that no one can attain this blessedness except by “adhering to God with the purity of chaste love” (puritate casti amoris adhaeserit). The Platonists, however, have yielded to the futile errors of the people by supposing that the many gods are to be worshipped, and have thus become “vain in their imaginations,” as Paul declares in Romans 1:21. Although the Platonists know of what true happiness consists, they err greatly in their countenance of polytheistic worship, for some go so far as to say that the “divine honors of worship and sacrifice” (duiinos honores sacrorum et sacrificiorum) should be given to demons. For Augustine, worship is intrinsically linked to happiness, for the end of true religion is to bring one to the “happy life” (beata uita).

In 10.3, Augustine considers the different Latin words for “worship,” such as cultus and pietas, which may be used in many contexts, and he seizes upon the Greek word λατρεία, which is used for the worship due to God alone. The Platonists rightly

209 *civ. Dei* 10.1: “elegimus enim platonicos omnium philosophorum merito nobilissimos, propterea quia sapere potuerunt licet inmortalem ac rationalem uel intellectualem hominis animam nisi participato lumine illus dei, a quo et ipsa et mundus factus est, beatam esse non posse.”

210 *civ. Dei* 10.1: “ita illud, quod omnes homines appetunt, id est uita beatam, quemquam isti assecuturum negant, qui non illi uni optimo, quod est incommutabilis deus, puritate casti amoris adhaeserit.”

211 *civ. Dei* 10.1: “sed quia ipsi quoque siue cedentes uanitati errori que populorum siue, ut ait apostolus, euanescentes in cogitationibus suis multos deos colendos ita putauerunt uel putari uoluerunt, ut quidam eorum etiam daemonibus duiinos honores sacrorum et sacrificiorum deferendos esse censerent.”

know that God “is the source of our bliss, is himself the end of all our desires.”

“Our good” (*bonum nostrum*) is to cling to him “by whose incorporeal embrace” the “intellectual soul” (*anima intellectualis*) is filled up and impregnated with true virtues. The aim of true worship is to bring one to cling to God as one’s final good. The word *religio* indicates this aspect of true worship, for it means “to bind,” and the end of *religion* is “to bind one to God”.

Augustine characterizes the end of “clinging to God” according to the two-fold commandment to love God and one’s neighbor as oneself (Matt. 23:37). As we have seen in *De doctrina Christiana*, this two-fold aim of charity is the *res* of all Scripture and the fruit of the sacramental life of the Church. True happiness is “to cling to God” (*adhaerere deo*) as end by loving him (*diligendum deum*). In this way, the “end” is not merely a kind of intellectual vision, but rather it is a participation in charity. True religion (*uera religio*) brings one and one’s neighbor to cling to God (*adhaerere deo*) in

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213 *civ. Dei* 10.3: “ipse enim fons nostrae beatitudinis, ipse omnis appetitionis est finis.”

214 *civ. Dei* 10.3: “bonum enim nostrum, de cuius fine inter philosophos magna contentio est, nullum est alius quam illi cohaerere, cuius uni anima intellectualis incorporeo, si dici potest, amplexu ueris impletur fecundatur que uirtutibus.”

215 *civ. Dei* 10.3; see this etymology of *religio* from *religare* in *retr.* 1.13.19. In *civ. Dei* 10.3, he suggests that *religio* may also be derived from *relegere*, “to re-choose,” although the sense of “binding” is never lost.

216 In *De Trinitate*, Augustine identifies the Holy Spirit as the charity that “binds” us to God (*et nobis haerere deo*); Trin. 6.5.7; 7.3.6; see also *en. Ps.* 62.17; s. 349.2; Joseph Lienhard, “‘The glue itself is charity’,” 375-84.

217 *doc. Chr.* 1.35.39-40.44.

218 *doc. Chr.* 2.6.7.


220 *civ. Dei* 10.3: “ut enim homo se diligere nosset, constitutus est ei finis, quo referret omnia quae ageret, ut beatus esset; non enim qui se diligit alius uult esse quam beatus. iam igitur scienti diligere se ipsum, cum mandatur de proximo diligendo sicut se ipsum, quid alius mandatur, nisi ut ei, quantum potest, commendet diligendum deum?”
love, and this is the “worship” (cultus) of God, and the “service” (seruitus) due to God alone.  

Sacrifice is an act of true worship insofar as it is intended to bring one to cling to God, and to help one’s neighbor to do the same. Augustine defines the “supreme” and “true sacrifice” (sumnum uerumque sacrificium) as the sacrifice of Christ “in the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:6). Christ is the one Mediator between God and man, who “receives the sacrifice with the Father in the form of God,” yet “in the form of a servant chose to be the sacrifice himself.” In this way, Christ is both priest and oblation, the one who offers and is himself the offering, so that “the remission of sins might be effected through the ‘mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5), through whom we are purified from our sins and reconciled to God.” Christ as Mediator provides the purification from sins, for “it is only sins that separate men from God.” Such purification cannot be found in philosophy, the liberal arts, or the theurgic

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221 civ. Dei 10.3.

222 civ. Dei 10.4: “nam, ut alia nunc taceam, quae pertinent ad religionis obsequium, quo colitur deus, sacrificium certe nullus hominum est qui audeat dicere deberi nisi deo.”

223 civ. Dei 10.5.

224 civ. Dei 10.20.

225 civ. Dei 10.20: “unde uerus ille mediator, in quantum formam serui accipiens mediator effectus est dei et hominum, homo christus iesus, cum in forma dei sacrificium cum patre sumat, cum quo et unus deus est, tamen in forma serui sacrificium maluit esse quam sumere, ne uel hac occasione quisquam existimaret cuilibet sacrificandum esse creaturae.”

226 civ. Dei 10.20: “per hoc et sacerdos est, ipse offerens, ipse et oblatio.”

227 civ. Dei 10.22: “in eius ergo nomine uincit, qui hominem adsumptit egit que sine peccato, ut in ipso sacerdote ac sacrificio fieret remissio peccatorum, id est per mediatorem dei et hominum, hominem christum iesum, per quem facta peccatorum purgatione reconciliamur deo.”

228 civ. Dei 10.22: “non enim nisi peccatis homines separatur a deo.”
rites of pagan worship.  

Rather, “in this life purification from sins is not effected by our merit, but by the mercy of God.”  

The “grace” (gratia) of God has been “bestowed on us through a mediator, so that we who are defiled by sinful flesh might be cleansed ‘by the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Rom. 8:3).”  

Christ assumed “flesh” in order “to effect the sacrifice of our purification.”  

By the grace of God through the paschal mystery, it is possible for humanity to undergo the purification necessary in order to cling to God in love.

The Platonists, such as Porphyry, are blinded to the “great mystery” (magnum sacramentum) of the incarnation due to their pride.  

These philosophers have “contempt for the flesh,” the very flesh that Christ assumed in humility in order to heal humanity.  

It is “sin which is evil, not the substance or nature of flesh,” and Christ has paid the

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229 On the purification of the soul by means of theurgy, see civ. Dei 10.9-11, 16, 18, 26-28. Augustine notes that Platonists such as Porphyry go so far as to promise some sort of purification of the soul by means of theurgy, yet Porphyry denies that such theurgic rites effect the purification of the intellectual soul that enables it to see God and apprehend true realities. In this way, Porphyry is caught between two contradictory positions.

230 civ. Dei 10.22: “non enim nisi peccatis homines separantur a deo, quorum in hac uita non fit nostra uirtute, sed diuina miseratione purgatio, per indulgentiam illius, non per nostram potentiam; quia et ipsa quantulacumque uirtus, quae dicitur nostra, illius est nobis bonitate concessa.”

231 civ. Dei 10.22: “propterea ergo nobis per mediatorem praestita est gratia, ut polluti carne peccati carnis peccati similitudine mundaremur.”


233 civ. Dei 10.24: “sed subditus porphyrius inuidis potestatibus, de quibus et erubescebat, et eas libere redarguere formidabat, noluit intelligere dominum christum esse principium, cuius incarnatione purgandum, cum quae uirtus in ipso carne contempsit, quam propter sacrificium nostrae purgationis adsuuspsit, magnum scilicet sacramentum ea superbia non intellecgens, quam sua ille humilitate deiecit uerus benignus quae mediator, in ea se estendens mortalitate mortalibus, quam maligni fallaces que mediatores non habendo se superius extulerunt miseres quae hominibus adiutorium deceptorium uelut inmortales mortalibus promiserunt.”

234 civ. Dei 10.24

235 civ. Dei 10.24: “bonus itaque uerus que mediator ostendit peccatum esse malum, non carnis substantiam uel naturam, quae cum anima hominis et suscipi sine peccato potuit et haberi, et morte deponi
price for sin through his death.\textsuperscript{236} The eternal Word entered into history so as to become the Way to God, and though it is not the flesh itself that “cleanses us,” the Word heals and purifies precisely as the eternal One “who was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14).\textsuperscript{237} Christ’s humanity is an instrument of his divinity,\textsuperscript{238} for the purification he offers is made efficacious through his assumption of human nature. The Platonists have contempt for the “flesh,” and so reject the incarnation of Christ, as well as the resurrection of the body.\textsuperscript{239} The philosophers lack the Way to God, and their endorsement of pagan rites results in addiction to sin, and ultimately to ruin.\textsuperscript{240}

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the “great mercy” (\textit{magnam misericordiam}) of God that “purifies us from our sins” and brings us to cling to God as end.\textsuperscript{241} This is the most perfect sacrifice, the true worship called \textit{λατρεία}, and the true religion. Augustine unequivocally identifies the sacrifice of Christ with the daily sacrifice of the Church, for this is the true sacrifice prefigured by many “signs” (\textit{signa}),\textsuperscript{242} e.g. the \textit{sacrificia} of “our

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\textit{et in melius resurrectione mutari; nec ipsam mortem, quamuis esset poena peccati, quam tamen pro nobis sine peccato ipse persoluit, peccando esse uitantam, sed potius, si facultas datur, pro iustitia perferendam.”}  \\
\textit{\textsuperscript{236} civ. Dei} 10.24: “ideo enim soluere potuit moriendo peccata, quia et mortuus est, et non pro peccato.”
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\textit{\textsuperscript{237} civ. Dei} 10.24: “non ergo caro per se ipsa mundat, sed per uerbum a quo suscepta est, cum uerbum caro factum est et habitauit in nobis.”
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\textit{\textsuperscript{238} civ. Dei} 10.6. See also \textit{ep.} 187, to Dardanus; \textit{ep.} 137 to Volusianus; \textit{agon.} 20.24.
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\textit{\textsuperscript{239} civ. Dei} 10.29.
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\textit{\textsuperscript{240} civ. Dei} 10.23-24; 29-32; \textit{Trin.} 4.3.18.
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\textit{\textsuperscript{241} civ. Dei} 10.22: “hac dei gratia, qua in nos ostendit magnam misericordiam suam, et in hac uita per fidem regimur, et post hanc uitam per ipsam speciem incommutabilis ueritatis ad perfectionem plenisismam perducemur.” Augustine declares that by this “grace” of God, we are “guided in this life by faith,” and are led on toward the fullness of perfection by the “vision of unchanging truth” (\textit{speciem incommutabilis ueritatis}). Yet as we have seen, Augustine reconfigures this “vision” according to the love of God that enables one to cling to him, for “God alone gives us happiness by his love for us and our love for him;” \textit{\textsuperscript{242} civ. Dei} 10.17: “uni deo tantum iubens, qui solus diligens et dilectus beatos facit.”
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ancestors,” the Jews. In one of the most explicit definitions of sacramentum in all of his works, Augustine declares that the “visible sacrifice” (uisibile sacrificium) is the “sacrament” (sacramentum), the “sacred sign” (sacrum signum), of the “invisible sacrifice” (inuisibilis sacrificii). The Eucharist, as the daily sacrifice of Christians, is the sacramentum, the “sacred sign” of an “invisible sacrifice.”

Yet what is this “invisible sacrifice”? For Augustine, the res of the sacramentum is not limited to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, although it certainly is that sacrifice, for Christ intended his sacrifice to be the “reality” (res) of the “sacrament” (sacramentum) offered in the “daily sacrifice of the Church,” i.e. the Eucharist. However, Augustine expands the res, so as to include the sacrifice of the Church precisely as the body of Christ that “learns to offer itself” through the head. The Church as Christ’s body is intrinsic to the sacrifice offered on the altar.

Augustine begins to develop this thick notion of sacrifice in 10.3, in which he declares that the λατρεία due to God ought to be given “whether through certain sacraments or in ourselves” (siue in quibusque sacramentis siue in nobis ipsis

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242 civ. Dei 10.20.: “huius ueri sacrificii multiplicia uaria que signa erant sacrificia prisca sanctorum, cum hoc unum per multa figuraretur, tamquam uerbis multis res una dicetur, ut sine fastidio multum commendaretur.”

243 civ. Dei 10.5.

244 civ. Dei 10.5: “sacrificium ergo uisibile inuisibilis sacrificii sacramentum, id est sacrum signum est.”

245 civ. Dei 10.20.

246 civ. Dei 10.20: “cuius rei sacramentum cotidianum esse uoluit ecclesiae sacrificium, quae cum ipsius capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per ipsum discit offerre.”

247 Ibid.
In this passage, Augustine brings together the invisible “sacrifice of humility and praise” on the “altar of the heart, kindled by the fire of charity” with the visible sacraments (sacramenta). Sacrifice is not a purely spiritual offering in the temple of the “mind” (mens) or in the heart, although these spiritual aspects remain. Instead, sacrifice extends to visible offerings. Temple imagery no longer functions solely in terms of the individual “mind” (mens), but as Augustine declares, “we are his temple, each of us and all of us together, since he deigns to dwell in each person, and in the union of all, for he is as great in each of us, as he is in all.”

As the temple of God, “our heart is his altar when we lift it up to him,” and the priest is “his only-begotten Son.” The liturgical overtones of this text are clear. As Augustine reiterates, the Church offers herself, for “we devote ourselves to him, and we give him ourselves.”

The Church is herself a sacrifice, and Augustine cites Romans 12:1 in order to assert that the physical bodies of the members are part of the Church’s offering, for “our body (corpus) also is a sacrifice when we discipline it by temperance, provided that we

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248 civ. Dei 10.3.: “huic nos seruutatem, quae latreia graece dicitur, siue in quibusque sacramentis siue in nobis ipsis debemus.”

249 civ. Dei 10.3: “ei sacrificamus hostiam humilitatis et laudis in ara cordis igne feruidam caritatis.”

250 As in Ps. 50:17; civ. Dei 10.5: “sacrificium deo spiritus contritus; cor contritum et humiliatum deus non spernet.”

251 civ. Dei 10.3: “huius enim templum simul omnes et singuli templa sumus, quia et omnium concordiam et singulos inhabitare dignatur; non in omnibus quam in singulis maior, quoniam nec mole distenditur nec partitione minuitur.”

252 civ. Dei 10.3: “cum ad illum sursum est, eius est altare cor nostrum; eius unigenito eum sacerdote placamus.”

253 civ. Dei 10.3: “ei dona eius in nobis nosque ipsos uouemus et reddimus”.

254 civ. Dei 10.6: “ad quod exhortans apostolus ait: obsecro itaque uos, fratres, per miserationem dei, ut exhibeatis corpora uestram hostiam uiuam, sanctam, deo placentem, rationabile obsequium uestrum.”
do this as we ought for the sake of God.”

Insofar as the body is referred to God, it forms part of the sacrificial offering of the Church. The body is an instrument of the soul (anima), which “becomes a sacrifice when it offers itself to God, so that it may be kindled by the fire of love (igne amoris accensa).”

Furthermore, the “works of mercy” (opera misericordiae) offered by the members of the Church become “true sacrifices” (uera sacrificia) insofar as they are offered to God. In his discussion of true worship and “piety” (pietas) in 10.1, Augustine notes that in popular speech, pietas is often used in connection with “works of mercy” (opera misericordiae), precisely because “God commands the performance of such acts, and bears witness that they please him as much as sacrifices, or even more than sacrifices.”

Augustine goes one step further and defines “mercy” (misericordia) as the “true sacrifice,” based on his renewed exegesis of Hosea 6:6 in light of Hebrews 13:6. “‘I desire mercy not sacrifice’ (Hos. 6:6)…What is generally called sacrifice is really a sign (signum) of the true sacrifice. Mercy (misericordia) is the true sacrifice; hence the text by

255 civ. Dei 10.6: “corpus etiam nostrum cum temperantia castigamus, si hoc, quem ad modum debemus, propter deum facimus, ut non exhibeamus membra nostra arma iniquitatis peccato, sed arma iustitiae deo, sacrificium est.”

256 civ. Dei 10.6: “si ergo corpus, quo inferiore tamquam famulo uel tamquam instrumento utitur anima, cum eius bonus et rectus usus ad deum refertur, sacrificium est: quanto magis anima ipsa cum se refert ad deum, ut igne amoris eius accensa formam concepscentiae saecularis amittat ei que tamquam incommutabili formae subdita reformetur, hinc ei placens, quod ex eius pulchritudine accepit, fit sacrificium! quod idem apostolus consequenter adiungens: et nolite, inquit, conformari huic saeculo; sed reformamini in noutitate mentis uestrae ad probandum uos quae sit uoluntas dei, quod bonum et bene placitum et perfectum.”


258 civ. Dei 10.1: “more autem uulgi hoc nomen etiam in operibus misericordiae frequentatur; quod ideo arbitror euenisse, quia haec fieri praeceipue mandat deus ea que sibi uel pro sacrificiis uel prae sacrificiis placere testatur.”
Paul I have quoted: ‘It is by such sacrifices that God is pleased’ (Heb. 13:6).” Mercy (misericordia) is the true sacrifice (uerum sacrificium) pleasing to God. For Augustine, sacrifice means mercy, and the “true sacrifice is offered in every act that is designed to unite us to God in a holy fellowship (sancta societate inhaereamus deo), every act, that is, which is directed to that final good that makes possible true happiness.”

There is only one work of “mercy” (misericordia) that makes possible union with God “in a holy fellowship,” namely, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the one Mediator. Only God can “purify us from our sins and reconcile us to him.” It is impossible for the Church to effect such purification and reconciliation “by its own power,” yet this healing has been granted by the compassion of God through the sacrifice of Christ. The effects of this one sacrifice extend to all of the “works of mercy” (opera misericordiae) that are offered “for the sake of God,” so as to transform them into “true sacrifices.” Augustine’s understanding of sacramental efficacy with regard to the Eucharist is on display in his theology of sacrifice, for the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross makes it possible for the Church’s offerings to be efficacious, insofar as they unite the one body in a “holy fellowship,” and bring one and one’s neighbor to cling to God in love.

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259 *civ. Dei* 10.5: “quoniam illud, quod ab omnibus appellatur sacrificium, signum est ueri sacrificii. porro autem misericordia uerum sacrificium est; unde dictum est, quod paulo ante commemoraui: talibus enim sacrificiis placetur deo.” Augustine cites Hebrews 13:16, which he attributes to Paul.

260 *civ. Dei* 10.6: “proinde uerum sacrificium est omne opus, quo agitur, ut sancta societate inhaereamus deo, relatum scilicet ad illum finem boni, quo ueraciter beati esse possimus.”

261 *civ. Dei* 10.22.

262 Ibid.
This becomes clear in 10.6, where Augustine declares that even the “mercy (misericordia) given to aid man, but not for the sake of God, is not sacrifice (sacrificium),” for “sacrifice is a divine thing (res), even if it is offered by man.”

Sacrifice is “divine” since God alone offers the true sacrifice that forgives sins and heals humanity. Nevertheless, the members of the Church are granted participation in this sacrifice by virtue of Christ’s offering “in the form of a servant,” which is efficacious in and through the works of mercy that the Church offers to God.

For true sacrifices are works of mercy (opera misericordiae), whether to ourselves or to our neighbors, when they are directed towards God; and works of mercy are intended to free us from misery and thus to bring us to happiness.

The works of mercy “performed among us” have the effect of bringing one “to cling to God” (inhaereamus deo), and of bringing one’s neighbor “to join us in the same end.”

The works of mercy have this effect only by virtue of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. That one sacrifice extends to and infuses all of the works of mercy offered to God, and therefore “it surely follows that the whole redeemed City—that is, the congregation and fellowship of the saints—is offered to God as a universal sacrifice through the great High Priest Who, in His Passion, offered even Himself for us in the form of a servant, so that we might be the body of so great a Head.”

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263 *civ. Dei* 10.6: “unde et ipsa misericordia, qua homini subuenitur, si non propter deum fit, non est sacrificium. etsi enim ab homine fit uel offertur, tamen sacrificium res diuina est, ita ut hoc quoque uocabulo id latini ueteres appellauerint.”

264 *civ. Dei* 10.6: “cum igitur uera sacrificia opera sint misericordiae siue in nos ipsos siue in proximos, quae referuntur ad deum.”

265 *civ. Dei* 10.5: “nec quod ab antiquis patribus alia sacrificia facta sunt in uictimis pecorum, quae nunc dei populus legit, non facit, alidu intellegendum est, nisi rebus illis eas res fuisses significatas, quae aguntur in nobis, ad hoc ut inhaereamus deo et ad eundem finem proximo consulamus.”
“in the form of a servant” includes the heavenly city, which is offered as “a universal sacrifice” (\textit{uniuersale sacrificium}). Furthermore, Christ’s offering incorporates the Church on earth, i.e. the City of God on pilgrimage,\textsuperscript{267} into his sacrifice, so as to become a living sacrifice as a body in transformation (Rom. 12:1-2),\textsuperscript{268} for as Augustine declares, “we ourselves are the whole sacrifice” (\textit{quod totum sacrificium nos ipsi sumus}).\textsuperscript{269}

Citing Romans 12:1-3, Augustine asserts that the Church on earth is incorporated into the one sacrifice as a body in conformation to Christ, offering works of mercy. Christ’s perfect work of mercy transforms the Church into a true sacrifice. The Eucharistic altar is the locus of this transformation through incorporation, for it is a \textit{sacramentum} as the “visible sacrifice” (\textit{uisibile sacrificium}) of the “invisible sacrifice” (\textit{inuisibile sacrificium}).\textsuperscript{270} For Augustine, the invisible sacrifice includes the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the perfect work of mercy, in union with and extending to all of the works of mercy of the Church, his body. This is the “true” and “supreme” sacrifice (\textit{summum uerumque sacrificium}) of Christians, who though “many are one body in...
Christ” (Rom. 12:3).\textsuperscript{271} This is the sacrifice that the Church continually celebrates in the “sacrament of the altar” (\textit{sacramento altaris}), “by which it is shown that she herself is offered” in her offering to God (\textit{quod in ea re, quam offert, ipsa offeratur}).\textsuperscript{272}

For Augustine, the “true and supreme” sacrifice of Christians is the sacrifice of the “whole Christ” (\textit{totus Christus}), head and body. The Church on earth offers herself in union with the Church in heaven as the body of Christ, in a process of conformation to the head, and this is the most perfect sacrifice offered to God, for “it is we ourselves—we, his City—who are his best, his most glorious sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{273} The \textit{res} of the \textit{sacramentum} is Christ and his body, the Church, the “total sacrifice” (\textit{totum sacrificium})\textsuperscript{274} of the \textit{totus Christus}. This is the great \textit{mysterium} celebrated in the Eucharistic sacrifice.\textsuperscript{275}

In her visible celebration of the “daily sacrifice” of the Eucharist, the Church is herself a sacrament, for she is offered in the visible sacrifice of the invisible sacrifice. As a Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church may be called the sacrament of the city of God, for she effects the union of the heavenly city with the Church on earth, so as to form one body, a “universal sacrifice” (\textit{uniuersale sacrificium}).\textsuperscript{276} Furthermore, the Church is a sacrament of the “whole Christ” (\textit{totus Christus}) united in charity, for this union in charity is

\textsuperscript{271} \textit{civ. Dei} 10.6: “hoc est sacrificium christianorum: multi unum corpus in christo.”

\textsuperscript{272} \textit{civ. Dei} 10.6: “quod etiam sacramento altaris fidelibus noto frequentat ecclesia, ubi ei demonstratur, quod in ea re, quam offert, ipsa offeratur.”


\textsuperscript{274} \textit{civ. Dei} 10.6.

\textsuperscript{275} \textit{civ. Dei} 19.23.

\textsuperscript{276} \textit{civ. Dei} 10.6; 19, 25, 31, 12.9; 19.23.
realized in her Eucharistic life. Augustine possesses a Eucharistic ecclesiology insofar as the Church is herself the sacrifice offered on the altar, in union with Christ as priest and victim.

Furthermore, the Church is a sacrament as a body of “mercy” and “compassion” (*misericordia*), for the works of mercy offered by its members are taken up into Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. As the body of Christ in a process of conformation to the mercy of the head, the Church is a sacrament of mercy.

For Augustine, the Church on earth must offer herself in humility and repentance. The penitential aspect of the Church’s sacrifice is crucial, for the Church is not united as a body by virtue of the settled perfections of its members, rather she is united by offering the “sacrifice of praise” on the “altar of the heart,”

277  for there is “only one sacrifice God desires, the heart bruised and humble in the sorrow of penitence.”

278  Augustine retains the spiritual aspect of sacrifice in order to guard against presumption and pride (*superbia*), while demonstrating that all “true sacrifices” are dependent upon the grace of God “bestowed on us through the intervention of a mediator.”

279  This grace is mediated through the Church’s sacramental life, and in a particular way through the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice which unites the whole Christ, head and members, as one sacrifice. The Eucharist as sacrament makes efficacious the healing and purification offered by Christ, for as Augustine proclaims, in the Eucharist, the Church “learns to

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277 *civ. Dei* 10.3.

278 *civ. Dei* 10.5: “non uult ergo sacrificium trucidati pecoris, et uult sacrificium contriti cordis…quorum hoc unum est: cor contritum et humiliatum dolore paenitendi.”

279 *civ. Dei* 20.22.
offer herself through [Christ].\textsuperscript{280} This means that the Church on earth is in constant need of purification, and she offers the one sacrifice of Christians as a body united in humble confession of God’s mercy.

Augustine further develops a rich Eucharistic ecclesiology in his sermons.\textsuperscript{281} The Eucharist is the \textit{sacramentum} that contains the “loftiest mystery” (\textit{mysterii altitudinem}) of the body of the Lord.\textsuperscript{282} As Augustine declares in \textit{Sermon 272}, this is a “mystery of unity” (\textit{mysterium unitatis}).\textsuperscript{283} The \textit{res} of the \textit{sacramentum} is the “mystery of the unity” of the “whole Christ” by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ’s body and blood,\textsuperscript{284} for Augustine exhorts the congregation to “receive your mystery” (\textit{mysterium uestrum accipitis}),\textsuperscript{285} i.e. the Church’s identity as the body of Christ (\textit{corpus Christi}) in a mysterious union.\textsuperscript{286} As we have seen in \textit{City of God}, the Church is united in the Eucharistic celebration of the altar so as to become one sacrifice, the sacrifice that means mercy. The Church is a sacrament of mercy, in a process of transformation and conformation to Christ.

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\textsuperscript{280} \textit{civ. Dei} 10.20. \\
\textsuperscript{281} \textit{s.} 272, 227, 228B, 229, 229A. See the excellent article by J. Patout Burns, “The Eucharist as the Foundation of Christian Unity in North African Theology,” 1-24; see also Gerald Bonner, “The Church and the Eucharist in the Theology of St. Augustine,” 448-61; “Augustine’s Understanding of the Church as a Eucharistic community,” 39-63. \\
\textsuperscript{282} See \textit{s.} 227; 229; \textit{ep.} 54.8; \textit{cons. Ev.} 3.1.3; 3.25.72. \\
\textsuperscript{283} \textit{s.} 272; \textit{ev. Jo.} 26.15. \\
\textsuperscript{284} \textit{ev. Jo.} 26.15: “Huius rei sacramentum, id est, unitatis corporis et sanguinis Christi.” \\
\textsuperscript{285} \textit{s.} 272: “si ergo uos estis corpus christi et membra, mysterium uestrum in mensa dominica positum est: mysterium uestrum accipitis. \\
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid.: “corpus ergo christi si uis intelligere, apostolum audi dicentem fidelibus, uos autem estis corpus christi, et membra.”
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In light of this theology of sacrifice, Augustine’s famous declaration “be what you can see, and receive what you are” (*estote quod uidetis, et accipite quod estis*) means that the Church receives herself as a body of mercy, so as to become a sacrifice in conformation to the mercy of God in Christ. The Eucharist mediates the merciful love of the Mediator that purifies sins, and that incorporates the members into a living body of mercy. In her celebration of the “daily sacrifice” of the Eucharist, the Church offers herself\(^{287}\) as a body of mercy.

Augustine also describes the Eucharistic mystery as a mystery of “peace” (*mysterium pacis*),\(^{288}\) for Christ willed that the Church receive the Eucharist in the “bond of peace.” Otherwise, the members do not receive the sacrament as a “benefit,” but as a testimony against themselves.\(^{289}\) The Church is one body in “unity, truth, piety, and charity” (*unitas, ueritas, pietas, charitas*).\(^{290}\) In these sermons, Augustine emphasizes the Church’s union in charity over and above the vision of truth,\(^{291}\) a union that is realized and enacted in the Church’s sacramental life.

For Augustine, the mystery of the Church’s unity is not reserved solely for the eschaton. As a sacramental sign, the Church does not simply point to the mysterious union of the whole Christ, head and body, that will occur in the future. Rather, through her visible celebration of the Eucharist, the Church effects the mystery of unity, and so

\(^{287}\) s. 272, 227, 228B, 229, 229A; *civ. Dei* 10.6; 19, 25, 31, 12.9; 19.23.

\(^{288}\) s. 272: “*nos ad se pertinere uoluit, mysterium pacis et unitatis nostrae in sua mensa consecravit.*”

\(^{289}\) s. 272: “*qui accipit mysterium unitatis, et non tenet uinculu pacis, non mysterium accipit pro se, sed testimonium contra se.*”

\(^{290}\) s. 272: “*unum corpus multi sumus: intelligite et gaudete; unitas, ueritas, pietas, charitas;*” see also *ev. Jo.* 26.13.

\(^{291}\) See s. 227, 228B, 229, 229A, 272.
she is a sacrament, a sacred sign, of the union of the whole Christ. The Church is not an ineffectual “place” or “locus” of transformation. Instead, she is an instrument of the union and transformation of the Church into the one body of Christ, as one sacrifice. The Church’s unity in history is effected sacramentally at the Eucharistic altar, and this is the very same unity achieved at the eschaton.\textsuperscript{292} The Church’s union in charity will remain for eternity, while the virtues of faith and hope that are characteristic of the Church’s journey as pilgrim will fade away,\textsuperscript{293} since the object of faith and hope will be actualized fully. The object is none other than the “whole Christ” (\textit{totus Christus}), united as one body in charity, such that Augustine declares “there will be one Christ, loving himself.”\textsuperscript{294} While this final union in charity will be perfectly fulfilled only at the eschaton, it is achieved to some degree precisely at the Eucharistic sacrifice. The Eucharist is efficacious insofar as it effects the union of the whole Christ in history, as a body of charity and mercy. In her visible celebration of the Eucharist, the Church is a sacrament of the invisible union of the “whole Christ” as one sacrifice, the sacrifice that is pleasing and acceptable to God. The visible Church is intrinsic to this sacrifice, for she learns to offer herself in conformation to the mercy and compassion of Christ while on journey toward her final destination.\textsuperscript{295}

\textsuperscript{293} \textit{doc. Chr.} 1.38.42-39.43.
\textsuperscript{294} “unus Christus seipsum amans;” \textit{ep. Jo.} 10.3.
\textsuperscript{295} \textit{ep.} 187.6.21
Conclusion

Augustine’s theology of sacrifice undergoes a transformation according to his Biblical, sacramental theology, and this development offers insight into his ecclesiology. In his early works, Augustine emphasizes the spiritual sacrifice of mind and heart, while using temple imagery in order to focus on the individual mind (mens). By the time of his mature theology in the late 390s, Augustine has expanded the notion of sacrifice. He identifies Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as the one sacrifice that forgives sins, locating its memorial at the Eucharistic altar. In *City of God*, he declares that the sacrifice of Christians is the very sacrifice of Christ on the cross, made efficacious through the Church’s sacramental worship. This notion of sacrifice is further expanded, so as to include the works of mercy (*opera misericordiae*) offered by the Church in conformation to the sacrifice of Christ. The works of mercy become “true sacrifice” insofar as they are offered for God’s sake. All true sacrifices are taken up into Christ’s perfect work of mercy on the cross and made efficacious by the one Mediator through the Eucharistic sacrifice. In this way, works of mercy have the effect of leading one and one’s neighbor to cling to God in love. This is the aim of “true religion” (*uero religio*), namely, to bring one and one’s neighbor to cling to God as final end in a fellowship of love.

Furthermore, the Church offers herself in the Eucharistic sacrifice, just as Christ offers himself to God “in the form of a servant.” In this way the “supreme” and “total” sacrifice of Christians (*totum summum que sacrificium*) offered daily on the altar is the “total sacrifice” (*totum sacrificium*) of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*), head and body, as a sacrifice of mercy. The Church learns to offer herself as a body of mercy, in a
process of conformation to its head. This is the true and most pleasing sacrifice offered to
God at the Eucharistic altar.

Augustine’s sacramental theology provides the framework for his mature
ecclesiology. In the visible celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church is herself a
sacrament, a sacred sign, of the invisible sacrifice of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*).
She is not merely the “world’s pointer to the Kingdom,” rather, she is the mysterious
presence of the “whole Christ,” head and members, on earth. The visible Church is
intrinsic to the sacrifice, and in her Eucharistic life, she is a sacrament of the invisible
sacrifice of the whole Christ, the whole city of God. As such, the visible Church is a
sacrament of the city of God, as the city on a journey of hope, awaiting the final
eschatological fulfillment of the mystery of God’s salvific plan, when there will be “one
Christ, loving himself.”

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CONCLUSION

Augustine’s ecclesiology has been subject to certain reductive, isolationist interpretations that eliminate the complexity and sophistication of his thought on the Church. In this way, Augustine’s ecclesiology is in need of renewal. This study seeks to provide ways of moving the discussion forward, beyond sterile debates, so as to uncover the richness of his Biblical thinking. This is significant because Augustine’s ecclesiology lies at the core of his overall theology, such that a renewal of Augustine’s ecclesiology represents a renewal of the whole of Augustine’s thought.

I argue that the development of Augustine’s theology of the Church demonstrates the trajectory of his thought from his earlier, more philosophical views to the establishment of a definitively Biblical, sacramental framework for his theology. This shift becomes clear after the late 390s, following Augustine’s reception of the Latin patristic tradition, and his extended study of Paul. The Biblical revolution in his thought is evident in the areas of Christology, exegesis, and grace. This study contributes to the scholarship that documents the shift in Augustine’s thought by focusing on his ecclesiology, and his understanding of the Church as a great “mystery” and “sacrament.”

I begin with a consideration of Augustine’s Pauline theology of “mystery” according to the Latin distinction between *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, both of which are used to translate the Greek *μυστήριον*. Chapter One explores the connotations of these Latin terms in the patristic tradition, as well as ancient Greek understandings of *μυστήριον*. Augustine picks up the distinction between *mysterium* and *sacramentum* from the *vetus Latina* translation of the Bible, and from predecessors such as Cyprian, Hilary,
and Ambrose. Augustine further develops the distinction based on his reading of Paul, from whom he learns to interpret Scripture through a “Christo-ecclesial” lens. The great “mystery” and “sacrament” (magnum sacramentum; Eph. 5:31-32) of all Scripture is Christ and the Church. Sacramentum means “mystery,” and so can be translated in this way, yet it acquires specific connotations in Augustine’s works, particularly after the 390s.

As Charles Couturier demonstrates, sacramentum may be classified according to a three-fold pattern: 1) sacramentum-symbole, with regard to the figures found in Scripture; 2) sacramentum-rite, with regard to religious rituals; and 3) sacramentum-mystere, the mysteries of the Christian faith. Couturier provides a helpful resource, yet he stops short of demonstrating the development of such terminology and its theological significance.

For Augustine, the sacramentum is the presence of a transcendent mysterium in history. Following Couturier’s three-fold scheme: 1) the sacramenta of Scripture are the figures and words of the Bible that contain hidden mysteria; 2) the sacramenta of religious rituals are the visible rites that contain mysteria, e.g. the Passover of the Jews, which prefigured the mysterium of Christ’s passion, now commemorated by sacramentum of the Eucharist; and 3) the sacramenta of Christianity are mysteria revealed in history, e.g. Christ as the mysterium of God, made visible in the sacramentum of his flesh. The Church is a transcendent mystery (mysterium) that is revealed visibly in history as a “sacrament” (sacramentum). Augustine uses the distinction between sacramentum and mysterium in order to bring together the visible and invisible aspects of the one mystery. For Augustine, the mystery is meant to be revealed in history through
sacramenta; this distinguishes the Christian mystery from a kind of philosophical secret. All of the sacramenta that reveal the mysterium are intrinsic to the mystery. This theology is in place by the late 390s.

Augustine’s ecclesiology comes into greater focus from this time forward, due in large part to his pastoral and polemical concerns as a bishop. The Donatist controversy centered upon the Church, and demanded more explicit consideration and articulation of the nature of ecclesia. In his early works, Augustine recognizes the Church’s authority, but he does not offer a fully developed ecclesiology. The Church is depicted primarily as a teacher of wisdom. She offers the purification of the mind through her preaching and the sacred rites. These early works demonstrate the influence of Neoplatonism, such that the goal is an ascent to God that yields vision. Augustine’s depiction of the Church’s life is colored by philosophy, and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are subordinated to a kind of vision of truth. Augustine never denies the efficacy of the Church’s sacred rites for the purification of the mind. However, the centrality of the sacraments is mitigated to some extent due to Augustine’s confidence in philosophy and the liberal arts. The truth and wisdom of philosophy will not contradict what is found in the Church, and it is not clear how, if at all, the Church provides a distinct kind of purification for its members.

Augustine’s theology undergoes transformation after his reading of Paul during the 390s. Augustine reconfigures the Plotinian ascent according to the paschal mystery. Christ as the incarnate Word is the one Mediator who is the Way to the homeland (patria). Although the philosophers can see the goal from afar, they lack the Way of the Mediator, who offers purification from sin. The Church must undergo the purification
offered by Christ, which is not reducible to a kind of interior, speculative purification of the mind. Christ the one Mediator provides the healing of the affections that enables one to make the journey to the patria. The healing mercy of God is mediated precisely through the Church’s sacraments, which have effects that transcend the limits of time and space. During her earthly pilgrimage in history, the Church undergoes transformation and purification so as to be transfigured into Christ. This is a great mystery of solidarity by which the “whole Christ” (totus Christus) is united as one body.

Augustine develops the theme of the Church as body in order to speak about the Church as a great “mystery” and “sacrament” (sacramentum). Chapter Two explores Augustine’s reconfiguration of the Plotinian ascent according to the paschal mystery. The Church’s journey (iter) to the homeland (patria) is not an escape from the body and the material world, but rather a pilgrimage through history that leads to redemption. The Church is united as the one body of Christ in a process of transformation and conformation to Christ, the head. Her condition as a “mixed body” (corpus permixtum) is part of the mystery of God’s plan for the transformation and purification of the Church. Augustine uses Biblical figures in order to illustrate the dynamic of transformation, such that “Esau becomes Jacob,” and “Babylon becomes Jerusalem.” This is a dynamic of transformation through incorporation into the body of Christ, mediated by the sacraments. The Church is built up as one body, so as to form the totus Christus, a transcendent mystery made present in history, and so a sacramentum whereby Christ is present in the members of his body, the Church.

Furthermore, for Augustine, the Church cannot be reduced to a fixed number of the predestined, as a purely eschatological reality. The Church is indeed eschatological,
and Augustine does possess a doctrine of predestination, yet this Pauline teaching is taken up into a broader theology of mystery, whereby the transcendent *mysterium* is made present in history through the *sacramentum*. The visible Church is a *sacramentum*, precisely in her celebration of the sacraments, whose mediation is never obviated. As Augustine’s thought develops, he demonstrates the necessity of the sacraments for the purification from sin that the Church alone has to offer. By the Donatist controversy Augustine has developed a thoroughly Biblical theology that subordinates philosophy and vision to the theological virtues, particularly charity. Although the Neoplatonic aspects of Augustine’s thought are never left behind entirely, they are reconfigured according to a Biblical and sacramental framework.

Within this framework, Augustine uses the image of the Church as spouse or bride in order to show that the Church’s holiness is not dependent upon the presence of certain members of the Church, but rather comes from Christ’s spousal love, and the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit unites the Church in faith, hope, and charity. This invisible union is not intended as a mark of delineation among the members of the Church, but instead demonstrates the presence of a transcendent mystery in history, made efficacious precisely through a sacramental economy. In her visible celebration of the sacraments, the Church is herself a sacrament of the union of Christ and his bride, the Church. Furthermore, although the Holy Spirit may work beyond the visible bounds of the Catholic Church in order to bring some into the unity of the Church “at some future time,” the mediation of the visible Church is never obviated, for the Church is born from Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, whose effects are mediated by the Church’s sacramental life. The Church does not consist solely of an “inner, invisible”
body whose formation as spouse occurs through the imparting of grace upon the individual soul. Rather, she is formed as a spouse for Christ as a historical body through participation in the sacraments.

As the bride of Christ, the Church undergoes a process of growth and transformation in history, and this dynamic of growth is intrinsic to the mystery revealed in Scripture. The Church is defined by Christ’s spousal love, which makes possible a mystery of solidarity such that the head and members may speak in one voice, as one body. According to this mystery of solidarity, Christ takes upon himself the sufferings of his body, for in Acts 9, Christ says to Saul, “why are you persecuting me?” Christ suffers in the members of his body, while the members are united with the head in heaven by hope. This is the “wonderful exchange” (admirabile commercium) between Christ and the Church that further reveals the mercy and compassion of God in the incarnation. The Church is a kind of continuation of the incarnation insofar as Christ is present in his body,\(^1\) in the midst of suffering, and in the celebration of the sacraments. In this way, the Church is a sacrament of Christ, as his body in a process of transformation and conformation to the head.

The “mercy” and “compassion” of God (misericordia Dei) is made efficacious in a unique way at the Eucharistic altar. Augustine develops a rich theology of sacrifice in connection with his ecclesiology. In his early works, Augustine speaks of sacrifice in terms of the spiritual offering in the “temple of the mind” (in templo mentis) and on the altar of the heart. As Augustine’s theology develops, he expands the notion of sacrifice to include the visible works of mercy (opera misericordia) offered by the Church, and the

\(^1\) Goulven Madec suggests this idea in Le Christ de Saint Augustin, 155.
perfect work of mercy offered by the one Mediator “in the form of a servant,” that is, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Christ’s passion is a unique offering that provides the purification from sin that cannot be found in philosophy and the liberal arts. Augustine begins to locate Christ’s sacrifice at the Eucharistic altar in his *On Eighty-Three Questions*. The sacrament of the Eucharist mediates the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross, prefigured by the sacrifices of the Old Testament. As Augustine’s theology continues to develop, he uses even stronger language with regard to the Eucharist, such that participation in the sacrament is participation in the body and blood of Christ.

Augustine’s mature theology of sacrifice comes to fruition in *City of God*. In this work, Augustine is concerned with “true religion” (*uero religio*). The aim of “true religion” is to bring one and one’s neighbor to cling to God as one’s final happiness. Although the Neoplatonic philosophers recognize that true happiness is to cling to God, they countenance the polytheistic worship of the Empire, whereby sacrifices are offered to demons. This false worship of idolatry cannot bring about the purification from sin, and the final end of clinging to God in charity. Christ’s sacrifice alone forgives sin, and brings one to cling to God in true happiness, and in this way, Christ’s sacrifice is the perfect act of worship. Furthermore, it is the perfect “work of mercy” (*opus misericordia*), offered by the Word incarnate, which has the effect of transforming all of the works of mercy offered by the Church into “true sacrifice” (*uerum sacrificium*). The “supreme” and “total sacrifice” of Christians, offered daily on the altar, is the “total sacrifice” (*totum sacrificium*) of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*), head and members. This includes the offering of the visible Church on earth, who learns to offer herself in the offering of the altar. In her visible celebration of the Eucharist, the Church is herself a
sacrament, a sacred sign, of the invisible sacrifice of the whole Christ. In this way, the Church is a sacrament of the whole heavenly City of God, offered as a universal sacrifice. The Church is the sacramental presence of the whole Christ in history, and in her Eucharistic celebration, she anticipates the final union of the one body in charity, when there will be “one Christ, loving himself.” Until then, the Church continues on her journey in hope, awaiting the final eschatological fulfillment of God’s salvific plan.

Further Implications

Augustine’s ecclesiology has much to offer contemporary debates surrounding ecclesiology. In particular, his mature theology serves as a resource for the development of a robust, Biblical theology of the Church as sacrament. In addition, his understanding of the Church as sacrifice contributes to the formation of a rich Eucharistic ecclesiology.

As we have seen, a “hyper-Platonizing” interpretation of Augustine’s ecclesiology fails to capture the complexity of Augustine’s developing thought. His ecclesiology does not emerge from a Neoplatonic framework, but rather recasts the framework itself, according to a Biblical, sacramental theology. Augustine develops the distinction between sacramentum and mysterium in order to unite the visible and invisible aspects of the one mystery. The mystery is meant to be revealed in history, and in this way, it is both visible and invisible, historical and transcendent. For Augustine, sacramental means mysterious, and this is the declaration of a kind of efficacy that resists reduction to a simple system. In this regard, Phillip Cary is correct in his observation that “Augustine seems deliberately to avoid” providing a simple account of the relationship between the “invisible” and “visible.” Yet due to the lack of a self-evident system, Cary effectively
reduces Augustine’s ecclesiology and sacramental theology to a philosophical theory that ultimately finds its rightful heir in DesCartes. Cary’s ideas of causation seem dependent upon a Cartesian dualism, which he reads back into Augustine.²

Cary’s view represents the eclipse of an Augustinian ecclesiology by a radical, philosophical reductionism. Yet could it be the case that Augustine, precisely in declaring a kind of mysterious efficacy, without a simple mechanism, is working within a Biblical framework in order to develop his theology of the sacraments and the Church? In this case, perhaps a more fitting heir of Augustine’s thought would be Teresa of Avila, for Teresa’s understanding of spousal identity proceeds from an awareness of one’s membership in the Church as the one spouse of Christ. As such, Teresa serves as an authentic development of an Augustinian ecclesiology, for it is harder to separate the “inner” from the “outer” in Teresa’s “interior castle.”

Furthermore, Augustine’s ecclesiology serves as a fruitful resource for theological reflection on the Church as sacrament. His polyvalent notion of sacramentum provides a patristic foundation for the understanding of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation, as put forward by the Second Vatican Council’s dogmatic constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium.³ By returning to the sources (ad fontes) one finds in Augustine a profound aggiornamento whereby the Church is an agent of the transformation of the world into the city of God. For Augustine, the Church is not a “ghetto” of believers, set apart by self-achieved virtues. Rather, she is the bride and body of Christ in a process of

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² Cary pairs Augustine with Calvin in this regard, while placing them in opposition to Luther and Aquinas, yet he does so without providing a detailed analysis of any of these thinkers; see Outward Signs, viii-ix, 201, 217, 224-6.

³ LG 7.48.
transformation and growth. In her sacramental life, the Church is an instrument of healing in a fallen world. She is the sacrament of salvation through which “Babylon becomes Jerusalem,” according to the mystery of God’s salvific plan.

Augustine rejects an “elitist” view of the Church that eliminates the necessary mediation of the sacraments. Any ecclesiology of the Church as a purely spiritual reality inevitably leads to elitism, which builds up presumption, and destroys charity. Furthermore, Augustine moves away from an individualistic notion of worship, because it undermines two-fold commandment to love God and one’s neighbor. The Manichean dualism fails to yield works of mercy. By the same token, Augustine criticizes the Platonic philosophers who countenance false worship. For Augustine, true worship means the love of God and one’s neighbor, a love that issues forth in “works of mercy” (opera misericordiae). Augustine links the works of mercy with Christ’s sacrifice, the perfect work of mercy, in order to emphasize the necessity of grace, and to guard against the error of pride and self-achieved holiness. Christ’s sacrifice as the one Mediator in the form of a servant transforms all of the works of mercy, so as to make them efficacious for bringing one and one’s neighbor to cling to God in charity. The one sacrifice of Christ is efficacious precisely through the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christians.

In the development of his mature ecclesiology, Augustine moves away from a Platonizing view that focuses on the “inward turn” away from the “outward,” precisely because this fosters a pathology of pride. For Augustine, the Church’s life must not consist of isolated individuals, engaging in the ascent to God, leading to a shared vision of truth and a communion in Ideal-form. Rather, for Augustine, the Church is a community bound in charity, offering works of mercy in conformation to the mercy of
God in Christ. One does not know oneself as a member of an elite, spiritual communion bound in faith, hope, and charity, nor as a wise philosopher embarking on the ascent that yields a vision of truth. Instead, one can only know oneself as a member of a visible body in transformation through participation in the sacramental economy, offering works of mercy made efficacious by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

By her visible celebration of the sacraments, the Church is herself a sacrament, a sacred sign, of the invisible sacrifice of the whole Christ offered as a body of mercy. The Church is a sacrament of mercy, for she makes present the transcendent mystery of the union of whole Christ, as the body configured to the mercy of God. The Church’s visible celebration of the sacraments effects the union of the whole Christ, in anticipation of the final, eschatological unity of Christ and the Church.

Furthermore, for Augustine, the Eucharist makes the Church, for it is the sacrifice of Christ mediated through the Eucharist that makes her into a living sacrifice of mercy. At the same time, the Church makes the Eucharist, for the Eucharistic sacrifice is the “total sacrifice” (totum sacrificium) that consists of the offering of the whole Church, in heaven and on earth, as the body of the “whole Christ” (totus Christus). In her sacramental life, as a body on pilgrimage through the world, the Church learns to offer herself as a sacrifice pleasing and acceptable to God.

As we have seen, Augustine’s ecclesiology follows the overall Biblical trajectory of his thought, as evident after the late 390s. Yet in the end, Augustine does not prove more “pessimistic,” as Peter Brown and others have suggested. In his biography of

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4 For a contemporary discussion of Eucharistic ecclesiology, see Henri de Lubac, Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, trans. Gemma Simmonds (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).
Augustine, Brown speaks of the “lost future,” indicating Augustine’s growing pessimism toward the end of his life. With the recognition that he could not attain the wisdom and perfection of the ideal philosopher, Augustine left behind his more Platonizing views and became hardened in his understanding of grace and predestination.

According to this narrative, Augustine became more pessimistic as a tired pastor, having witnessed the fall of Rome. In the end, Augustine’s “mature” thought amounts to a kind of cynical acquiescence to the realities of a fallen world. The Church’s only hope is the next life, i.e. the “other world” of the heavenly Jerusalem. During her journey through this world, the Church undergoes a kind of alienation. Brown has since modified this view, acknowledging that the “later decades of Augustine’s thought on grace, free will and predestination cannot be lightly dismissed as the departure of a tired old man from the views of an earlier, ‘better’ self.”

By contrast, I argue that Augustine’s developing ecclesiology reflects a deeper, more sophisticated hope. At the end of his life, Augustine places all of his hope in the spousal love of Christ for the Church, and not on any kind of human achievement. The doctrines of grace and predestination are part of the transcendent mystery of God’s salvific plan, revealed and accomplished in history according to God’s providence. God’s plan is enacted precisely through the paschal mystery, made efficacious in the sacramental life of the Church. One need not place one’s hope in a kind of individualistic, intellectual ascent to God through wisdom. Rather, one may place one’s hope in the

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6 Ibid., 490.
mercy of God offered through the sacramental economy, whereby one learns to offer oneself as a sacrifice, in a process of growth in charity and mercy.

Furthermore, union with God is not limited to an intellectual ascent that yields vision. Instead, the whole Church is united as a community offering works of mercy that are being configured to the perfect work of mercy of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The mercy of Christ is mediated through the Eucharistic sacrifice, such that in her daily celebration of the sacrifice offered at the altar, the Church on earth is already united with the heavenly city, and learns to offer herself in union with Christ. Moreover, through a mystery of solidarity, Christ the head suffers in his members in the midst of trials and temptations, while the members share in the glory of the head through hope. This is not an escape from the world, but a transformative encounter with the mercy of God that enables one to see all of creation from the perspective of divine love. The Eucharistic life engenders a renewed vision from the perspective of charity, whereby one may look upon creation and say with the One Bridegroom who created all things, “it is good” (Gen. 1:31). This seems to be a far cry from a pessimistic view that amounts to a rejection of this world. Instead, Augustine’s sacramental theology yields gratitude and praise for creation, and for history. Such gratitude reaches its highest expression in the Church’s sacramental life, whereby she offers the perfect “sacrifice of praise” to God by offering herself as a living sacrifice, in conformation to the merciful love of God in Christ. The net effect of Augustine’s mature ecclesiology is a spirituality of gratitude through sacrifice. The Church learns to offer herself in union with Christ, in the form of a servant, so as to become a sacrifice of mercy. She follows where the head has already gone, and by virtue of her hope, she already shares in the glory of the Lord. In the end, the aim is
not an unmediated ascent to vision, an enterprise that fosters pride, and leads to despair. Instead, the Church’s journey is a journey of hope, for it is a life-long process of growth and transformation, a journey of the healing of the affections by participation in a sacramental economy whereby one learns to become a sacrifice of mercy and compassion in conformation to Christ.

So this study concludes with an invitation to contemplate the great “mystery” and “sacrament” of the Church. As a sacrament, the Church in history shares in the union and communion of the “whole Christ” (*totus Christus*) in charity, yet she must continue on her journey, awaiting the final eschatological fulfillment of God’s mysterious plan, so that the words of Paul may be fulfilled: “we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory…and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (*Eph. 1:12, 22-23*).
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