Practicing Worshipful Wisdom: An Augustinian Approach to Mystagogical Formation

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PRACTICING WORSHIPFUL WISDOM: AN AUGUSTINIAN APPROACH TO MYSTAGOGICAL FORMATION

a dissertation

by

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submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Employing a Christian practice approach to pastoral theology (one that is interdisciplinary in its scope), this dissertation argues that Augustine’s mystagogical theology and catechesis provides the basis for a contemporary liturgical formation that transforms human experience into liturgical existence through the practice of worshipful wisdom.

Chapter one considers the formative nature of liturgical worship. Both liturgical theologians and catechists view liturgical prayer as a privileged source for liturgical formation. That is, the liturgy mediates an experience and lived knowledge of the Christian message through its performance, one that forms the Christian in a way of life. The first chapter concludes by acknowledging recent scholarship in liturgical studies that has been critical of this approach to formation through liturgical prayer. Fruitful participation in this prayer, one that contributes to a way of life characterized by a life infused with liturgical meaning, requires the appropriation of specific theological and spiritual dispositions that are essential to any act of Christian worship.

Yet, what are the theological and spiritual dispositions required for fruitful liturgical worship? Chapter two does not answer this question directly but rather offers a heuristic through the ritual models of Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Catherine Bell. This chapter suggests that for ritual prayer to function fruitfully, one must acquire specific dispositions, ways of knowing and practicing, necessary for any act of worship within a religion. In addition, ritual prayer presumes a specific telos, an end toward which the human person is directed and formed through ritual engagement. Finally, ritual prayer is formative when it leads to the acquisition of a certain habitus, a way of acting in which the ritual agent becomes capable of “ritualizing” in
other areas of life. While these disciplines cannot provide a Christian specificity to liturgical worship, they can suggest the foundational questions that will guide liturgical theologians and catechists as they consider the theological and spiritual dispositions necessary for Christian liturgical prayer.

Chapters three, four, and five, serve as an interruption to the more common approaches to liturgical theology and catechesis analyzed in the first chapter. In chapter three, I consider the mystagogical theology of Augustine of Hippo. For Augustine, Christian worship is intrinsic to the process of salvation in Christ, a renewal of human perception in which the signs of the created world are to be used to enjoy the reality of God. This renewal of human perception takes place through entrance into the school of Christ—the Church’s reading of the Scriptures and its sacramental celebrations. To participate fruitfully in liturgical worship, thus requires the capacity to use the signs of the Scriptures and the liturgical rites to enjoy God through deeper understanding of the texts and practice under examination. This is what I will call practicing worshipful wisdom.

In chapter four, I contemplate what the Christian becomes through this fruitful worship, particularly in the Eucharistic celebration. Through the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith, the Christian becomes a sacrifice of love offered to God. In this transformation of human identity, the renewal of the Christian made in the image and likeness of God, the Christian’s memory, understanding and will grow into a site for divine sacrifice. Thus, the interior life of divine contemplation is more perfectly expressed in one’s visible actions. The Christian, within the life of the Church, becomes a living Eucharistic sign.

Finally in chapter five, I conclude with an analysis of Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy. I argue that Augustine’s sermons are rhetorical performances, using the signs of
Scripture, to form the imaginations of Christians, their way of thinking about God, and to lead
the congregation to become what they received in the preaching event. One learns about the
liturgical act in the context of the Christian narrative, as a cultivation of memory; thinks about
the practice through a theological seeking that is oriented toward both conversion and prayer,
cultivating understanding; and then performs the practice anew through the results of these
exercises, cultivating love.

In chapter six, this Augustinian mystagogical approach is interrupted by the
contemporary context of the Catholic parish. This interruption first includes a diagnosis of the
primary malaise effecting religious practice in the United States—secularization. American
secularization consists of an attenuation of the religious imagination, a discomfort with
theological thinking, and an emphasis upon individual flourishing. Then, this chapter turns to
contemporary educational theory, including John Dewey and Etienne Wenger, as a way of
discerning how to perform this Augustinian mystagogical approach in a secular age through the
catechetical ministry of the parish. I conclude that an Augustinian mystagogical approach in the
present context requires a de-habituation from previous ways of thinking, as well as an
intelligent socialization into a mystagogical imagination within communities of practice.

Finally, in chapter seven, I set forth a plan of formation in which the whole catechetical
life of a parish becomes an initiation into the practice of worshipful wisdom through the four
fundamental tasks of catechesis and an Augustinian mystagogical approach to catechetical
pedagogy. By means of this Augustinian mystagogical formation, the Christian learns to offer
all of one’s existence as a sacrifice to God, the Eucharistic vocation of the Christian.
INTRODUCTION

A CHRISTIAN PRACTICE APPROACH AND METHOD

In 1964, Romano Guardini (1885-1968), a leader of the liturgical movement, wrote a letter to the third German liturgical congress addressing the nature of the liturgical act. For Guardini, the primary liturgical problem of his own era was not textual but ritual. Namely, how might a person engage in the non-discursive language of ritual prayer in the technological context of the modern world? In light of his concern about the Western capacity for meaningful liturgical action, Guardini expressed his desire for the meeting of German pastoral leaders to consider the next stage of the liturgical movement, liturgical formation. He writes:

The question is whether the wonderful opportunities now open to the liturgy will achieve their full realization; whether we shall be satisfied with just removing anomalies, taking new situations into account, giving better instruction on the meaning of ceremonies and liturgical vessels or whether we shall relearn a forgotten way of doing things and recapture lost attitudes.

The effect of good liturgical formation, for example, meant that one not only understood the historical rationale of the offertory procession and desired to participate in it within the Eucharistic liturgy but that the Christian learned how to engage in all human activity as an offering to God. Guardini believed that a Christian liturgical education might

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transform the very meaning of human existence. As he eloquently asks, “How can the act of walking become a religious act, a retinue for the Lord progressing through his land, so that an ‘epiphany’ may take place?”

While Guardini’s vision of liturgical education betrays a type of liturgical romanticism, his focus on liturgical and sacramental formation remains an essential, albeit incomplete, pastoral work of the Church. Beginning from Guardini’s hope for liturgical education, I ask how Christian communities might educate for a liturgical approach to human living. This question pertains to the heart of contemporary catechesis, one in which every dimension of Christian faith is to transform human existence into a spiritual offering to God.

Yet, in order to answer this question, the liturgical and catechetical theologian will need to understand the nature of the liturgical act in the first place. What are the theological foundations of Christian liturgy? Does liturgical action mediate theological knowledge, and if so, how? How does liturgical action shape a whole way of Christian living? By understanding the theological principles of liturgical worship, the means by which it communicates knowledge regarding the God of Jesus Christ, and how it might lead to a way of life, the educator may begin to offer a mystagogical catechesis that infuses each catechetical act with a formation into sacramental perception. The thesis of this exercise in pastoral theology is that when examined, Augustine’s mystagogical theology and catechesis provides the basis for a contemporary liturgical formation that

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3 Ibid., 240.
transforms human experience into liturgical existence through the practice of worshipful wisdom.

**A Practice Approach**

Yet, how might the liturgical educator begin to unfold this thesis? One fruitful means of engaging this question is the Christian practice approach to practical or pastoral theology.\(^5\) The Christian practice approach arises from the theological and pastoral work of Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra. In articulating the foundations of Christian practices, Bass writes:

> Christian practices…bear wisdom that has been and continues to be embodied in the actual life together of Christian people across many generations and cultures—wisdom about the nature of the human condition and the needs of the world and about the character of God’s response to them in Christ and, through the Holy Spirit, in the people who are now Christ’s body…Those who participate in practices are formed in particular ways of thinking about and living in the world.\(^6\)

By discerning how Christians have engaged in specific practices over the course of time, one may discover the wisdom embodied in this practice, the knowledge of God and the human person that lead to new ways of life.\(^7\) The wisdom of these practices may come to inform the pastoral life of Christian communities. Among these practices, Dykstra includes worshiping God, telling the Christian narrative through the Scriptures, interpreting these Scriptures, praying, confessing sin, listening, offering hospitality to the

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\(^7\) Ibid., 30.
stranger, and developing just social institutions reflective of the Gospel.\(^8\) Each of these practices communicate some truth about the nature of God, as well as what it means to be a human being.\(^9\) Christian practices function through an education of desire, forging a link between the cognitive and affective aspects of Christian faith.\(^10\) Through this education of desire, the carrying out of and reflection upon Christian practices foster ways of thinking and acting that are revelatory of God. As Bass and Dykstra write elsewhere, “Living within such a practice gives men and women certain capacities that enable them to read the world differently—even, we would argue, more truly.”\(^11\)

As Kathleen Cahalan has noted, literature dealing with the approach of Christian practices does not offer a comprehensive methodology, as much as implicit principles for pursuing an analysis of these practices. First, Christian practices embody certain interpretations about what it means to live as a human being in the world.\(^12\) By examining the anthropological features of a specific Christian practice, one may begin to notice the ways that this practice assists the Christian in living a meaningful life. Therefore, engagement with a discipline in the social sciences, in particular anthropology, is essential to a coherent account of Christian practices. Second, historical theology allows the practical theologian to discern how others in one’s faith tradition have both

\(^12\) Cahalan, “Three Approaches to Practical Theology, Theological Education, and the Church’s Ministry,” 77.
performed and interpreted this practice.\textsuperscript{13} This movement requires that the practical theologian presume some connection to those who have carried out the practice in the past, while recognizing the historical context of ancient practice. Third, Christian practices also require formation.\textsuperscript{14} As Dykstra writes:

\begin{quote}
Communities, especially in such culturally and socially fragmented situations as our own, cannot depend entirely on the natural activities of everyday life for initiating people into these practices and guiding them in them…education must order this participation in such a way that all the practices are engaged in meaningfully and with understanding at increasingly broader and more complex levels.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

The pastoral theologian will need to determine the best way to teach Christians “the art of practicing.” Thus, any particular instance of examining a Christian practice will include the social sciences, historical theology, and educational or catechetical theory.

\section*{Methodology}

As an approach to practical theology, the study of Christian practices offers great potential for carrying out the purpose of this work, offering a model of catechesis that culminates in a liturgical approach to human living. The Christian practice approach to practical theology necessitates that the liturgical and catechetical theologian include an examination of liturgical worship through the lens of anthropology, a theological account of the practice of worship in a specific community, and a thoughtful engagement with educational theory for teaching this practice as a way of life. Yet, what is the relationship between anthropology, historical theology, and education in this approach?

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{15} Dykstra, \textit{Growing in the Life of Faith}, 73-74.
To answer this question requires an excursus in pastoral theological method. In this section of the introductory chapter, I explore two approaches to interdisciplinary work in pastoral theology. First, I consider the theological methodology of David Tracy. Then, I offer a constructive critique of this method through the work of the Belgian contextual theologian Lieven Boeve. For this project, one that is studying the Christian practice of worship and its capacity to inform all catechetical work, Boeve’s method of interruption is preferable to Tracy’s critical correlation. The remaining pages of this methodological introduction will explain the rationale for choosing Boeve’s method in light of the culminating telos of this project.

The Theological Methodology of David Tracy

One way of proceeding is to adopt David Tracy’s mutually critical correlative method of theology. Critical-correlation, a revisionist theological method, presumes the possibility of a conversation between secular thought (including non-theological academic disciplines) and the larger Christian tradition. The sources for this conversation are Christian texts, what Tracy will later call Christian classics and human experience. The correlation between these sources occurs through a critical conversation between the questions and answers of human experience and the theological event or text. The common human experience is interpreted for its religious meaning.

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19 Ibid., 46.
by means of the disciplines of phenomenology or the social sciences. The results of this inquiry are construed as an encounter with questions of ultimate meaning in the process of living out that existence. In practical theology, a discipline that pursues theology through interpreting *praxis*, social scientific analysis becomes the privileged approach to understanding and explaining the empirical evidence of human action.

In addition to the emphasis on the limit-questions of human experience, the Christian texts are examined through both history and hermeneutics, allowing the infinite potential for meaning in the Christian classic to “happen” in *this* present moment. Of special concern for the practical theologian is determining whether this text offers the possibility of an interpretation that transforms the religious questions raised in the examination of human experience. Further, the religious answers and questions of human experience provide an important lens as one carries out the interpretation of the text. In other words, is the text true to contemporary “religious” experience, or does the experience necessitate a revision or new interpretation of the text or practice?

Finally, the theologian employs a metaphysical or transcendental mode of reflection to determine the adequacy of the correlation. The theologian asks if the correlation is internally coherent, existentially meaningful, expressing most adequately the Christian event to which it has directed its attention. In practical theology, this

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20 Ibid., 47-48.
22 Ibid., 75.
becomes a matter of ethics, judging whether or not the correlation may lead to a transformation of *praxis* among human beings. Thus, critical-correlation emphasizes a posture of conversation, anticipating the possibility of truth in each text, person, event, discourse, and symbol system.\(^{26}\) One appropriates the results of this conversation when one is prepared to argue, to defend that claim in further discourse.\(^{27}\) In practical theology, this will include living this claim within the on-going discourse of history.

By consequence, a Christian practice approach to practical theology, using David Tracy’s method of mutually critical correlation, would treat the disciplines of anthropology, theology, and education as equally apt ways of questioning and responding to the ultimate meaning of human existence. Anthropologically, the practical theologian may begin by studying the human capacity to engage in ritual, and what this capacity of ritual engagement means for the human relationship to the divine expressed in liturgical worship. Contemporary engagement in ritual in its various forms within society would serve as the specific context of this social scientific account. Then, the practical theologian would inquire into the historical development and theology of a liturgical rite. The attention of the theologian is especially directed to the means by which engagement in the rite has mediated a relationship with God, as well as whether or not the current *ordo* of the rite allows for the profound ritual engagement analyzed in the anthropological study. Finally, education would act as the “ethical” component of Tracy’s methodology. The practical theologian would employ educational philosophy to determine how to develop liturgical rituals that present more authentic and transformative religious questions, as well as how to teach a person to participate in the liturgy in a way that leads

\(^{26}\) Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 20.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., 25.
to a transformation of society. Therefore, in a mutually critical correlational approach to Christian practice, the theologian pursues an account of the practice of worship by giving equal attention to the disciplines of anthropology, liturgical theology, and educational theory. Problems with this methodological approach, in light of the formal object of study of this work, will become evident as I take up another possibility for method, the “interruption” of Lieven Boeve.

The Theological Methodology of Lieven Boeve

A second option for method is available in the work of Lieven Boeve. Boeve, a Belgian contextual theologian, has critiqued aspects of the critical-correlational method of theology in light of the contemporary context of pluralism. In light of this pluralistic context, Boeve proposes a theological method of interruption. By interruption, he means an approach to theological inquiry in which the Christian narrative remains open to other narratives for the sake of drawing the theologian back to a deeper understanding and renewed interpretation of the radical particularity of the Christian narrative. This process is called recontextualization. In order to understand how this method operates, it is necessary to provide some orientation to Boeve’s larger project.

For Boeve, a person who professes the particulars of a religious tradition does so in a world in which there is a plurality of options for belief. As Boeve writes, “Since the necessity to be Christian no longer exists on the cultural level, contemporary Christians—structurally speaking—must more than before ‘choose’ to be a Christian, whether or not

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they live out their faith…as a vocation or ‘being chosen.'” 29 The result of secularization is not the disappearance of religion from the public square but an increasing plurality of life options (religious and non-religious), all of which interact with one another. 30 The person, who chooses to live as a Christian or a Buddhist is doing more than responding to the transcendent in one’s life, as articulated by a specific symbol system. Instead, faith appropriation in a genuinely pluralistic context becomes a vocation to the particularities of this faith community, an obligation for the person of faith to choose this way of life. 31

Because of this new context of radical pluralism, Boeve is doubtful of the effectiveness of critical-correlation in the theological and pastoral life of the Church. First, Boeve contends that it is no longer tenable to see theology’s primary project as a conversation between secular human experience and Christian faith. This is because secular culture is as pluralistic and perspectival as each religious faith, operating out of its own fundamental narrative(s). 32 The secular discipline of anthropology, for example, is not necessarily a more value-free way of viewing human experience than the Christian tradition. Anthropology also operates out of its own prejudices about God and the human condition that color the work of the anthropologist just as much as the theologian. Thus, philosophy, the social sciences, and educational theory are narratives that the theologian will need to evaluate from a theological perspective, if they are to operate within a single method for the Christian theologian.

29 Ibid., 29.
30 Ibid., 27. Chapter six will treat this process of secularization in an American context.
32 Boeve, God Interrupts History, 34.
Second, even if one could bring together the diversity of human experiences, ideas, and religious faiths, postmodern philosophy has challenged the possibility of developing a univocal correlation among these conversation partners. That is, when a Christian says God, he or she means something quite distinct from the transcendent ground of Being, the unity and harmony of experience of the humanist. To correlate the narrative of the Christian and the humanist is to result in an entirely new narrative that is neither Christian nor that of the humanist. A third and related concern, the critical-correlation approach to theology has ignored the particularities of the tradition at the expense of the universal. The Christian tradition, for Boeve, does not communicate any universal human truth (at least one that is comprehensible to the non-Christian), but one particular way of living in the world that only makes sense within the grammar of that tradition. The uniqueness of this narrative is precisely what makes it an attractive way of life for those who choose it. Thus, Christian baptism is not reducible to (though will include and transform) the human desire to welcome an infant into this world through some formal ritual action.

Yet, precisely because the human person recognizes this radical pluralism, he or she cannot embrace a pre-modern naivety or a radical fundamentalism. Christianity “is located in the midst of an internally pluralized arena in which it is obliged to determine its own position in relation to the other fundamental life options surrounding it.” The person of faith lives Christianity as an open narrative, ready to engage other life options

33 Ibid., 35.
35 Boeve, God Interrupts History, 33-35.
36 Ibid., 41.
(these include religious faith secular humanism, and nihilism), as well, as the strangeness and otherness of God as expressed in the Christian narrative. This context of the open narrative leads to a hermeneutics of interruption. The Christian narrative, in the present context, can never be so secure in its own identity that the truth claims of other ways of life are entirely ignored by the Christian.

Boeve sees this interruption as part of the genius of the Christian tradition itself. In the same way that God in Jesus Christ interrupted death in the event of the resurrection, the Christian theologian is to remain open to the present ways that God continues to interrupt. This interruption is a halting of the narrative sequence, one that demands a return and recontextualization of the particularity of one’s own narrative. The theologian begins to tell the narrative in a new context. For Boeve, this is the theological method of *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding that has occurred throughout the development of theological tradition.

Thus, recontextualization is the basis for Boeve’s theological method of interruption. Theology continues to “dialogue” with the other disciplines, including the social sciences, now aware that these disciplines operate out of their own narratives distinct from the Christian one. Non-theological disciplines interrupt the Christian narrative, causing it to reflect further upon its own position and tell its own narrative in a new context. As Boeve writes:

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38 Boeve, *God Interrupts History* 44.
39 Ibid., 46-47.
40 Ibid., 44-45.
42 Ibid., 39.
Theologians have borrowed models, patterns, ideas, and terminologies from philosophy and the human sciences in order to develop, structure, support, or flesh out their own understanding of what Christian faith is about. They use thinking patterns, categories, etc. from philosophy in order to reflexively express the truth of faith….Theologians do not thereby become philosophers as such with the philosophers (or human scientists with the human scientists). On the contrary, in the best tradition of *philosophia ancilla theologiae*, they use philosophy to consider anew the specific claims of their theological tradition.\(^{43}\)

Boeve’s method demands that all theology operate in an interdisciplinary way, nonetheless remaining fundamentally theological in its orientation and judgment. Discussing the role of anthropology in ritual, Boeve writes, “While a current theological reflection on rituals and sacraments cannot deny the importance of anthropological research (or what is collectively known today as Ritual Studies), we must simultaneously (and more than ever before) pay particular attention to the Christian specificity of Christian sacramental praxis.”\(^{44}\)

Consequently, Boeve’s method of interruption is preferable to Tracy’s critical-correlational method of theology in a Christian practice approach to practical theology. The practical or pastoral theologian does not become an anthropologist or an educational theorist but uses the vocabulary, structures, and concepts of these disciplines to recontextualize the practice of and formation into worship as a liturgical and catechetical theologian. Anthropology and the social sciences are examined, not because they offer a way of understanding general human rituals *more true than the one offered by Christian sacramental theology*, but because they interrupt a narrative told by liturgical theologians and catechists regarding the role of the liturgy in forming the human person. The social


\(^{44}\) Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 106.
sciences provide new questions, a heuristic for further inquiry. Historical theology is the privileged site for asking these new questions. Yet, in this method, historical theology is never merely a critical examination of ancient texts and ideas; rather, it demands an appropriation of the liturgical theology and catechesis under examination. Historical theology, in this approach, requires a hermeneutics of generosity. Of course, such study should not lead to an adoption of ancient approaches as a balm for our current pastoral difficulties, imaging all church life as transformable through the practice of Hippo. Instead, the study of the tradition is an opening up of our sacramental and catechetical theologies to recontextualization, re-imagining the act of liturgical formation in light of this tradition. Finally, educational philosophy and theory interrupts the tendency of both liturgical and catechetical theologians to treat liturgical catechesis as concerned only with either a formation of liturgical action itself or a reflection upon previous liturgical experience. By attending to contemporary educational philosophy, the liturgical theologian and catechist are led to consider anew the means through which all catechesis is fundamentally oriented toward an education into sacramental perception, a transformation of human experience into a spiritual oblation. This sacramental orientation is precisely the wisdom embodied in the practice of worship, one that can inform the entire catechetical enterprise.

In conclusion, Boeve’s theological method of interruption is ideal for a Christian practice approach to practical theology, because it stands fully within the Christian tradition, while also remaining open to interruption by voices from other disciplines. For liturgical and catechetical theologians, this is an essential contribution to our work as pastoral theologians. We may draw freely from the disciplines of anthropology and
education, yet always aware that we do so not as anthropologists or educational theorists but as theologians committed to the pastoral life of the Church.

**Dissertation Overview**

Having outlined an approach and method for this dissertation, I conclude this introductory chapter with an overview of the rest of this study in liturgical formation. This work consists of three parts. Part I includes chapters one and two. Part II, chapters three, four, and five. And part III, chapters six and seven. Part I, chapter one begins with the state of the question regarding the formative nature of liturgical worship. Both liturgical theologians and catechists view liturgical prayer as a privileged source for liturgical formation. That is, the liturgy mediates an experience and lived knowledge of the Christian message through its performance, one that forms the Christian in a way of life. The first chapter concludes by acknowledging recent scholarship in liturgical studies that has been critical of this approach to formation through liturgical prayer. Fruitful participation in this prayer, one that contributes to a way of life characterized by a life infused with liturgical meaning, requires the appropriation of specific theological and spiritual dispositions that are essential to any act of Christian worship.

Yet, what are the theological and spiritual dispositions required for fruitful liturgical worship? Chapter two does not answer this question directly but rather offers a heuristic through the ritual models of Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Catherine Bell. This chapter suggests that for ritual prayer to function fruitfully, one must acquire specific dispositions, ways of knowing and practicing, necessary for any act of worship within a religion. In addition, ritual prayer presumes a specific *telos*, an end toward
which the human person is directed and formed through ritual engagement. Finally, ritual prayer is formative when it leads to the acquisition of a certain *habitus*, a way of acting in which the ritual agent becomes capable of “ritualizing” in other areas of life. While these disciplines cannot provide a Christian specificity to liturgical worship, they can suggest the foundational questions that will guide liturgical theologians and catechists as they consider the theological and spiritual dispositions necessary for Christian liturgical prayer.

Part II, chapters three, four, and five, serve as an interruption to the more common approaches to liturgical theology and catechesis analyzed in the first chapter. In chapter three, I consider the mystagogical theology of Augustine of Hippo. For Augustine, Christian worship is intrinsic to the process of salvation in Christ, a renewal of human perception in which the signs of the created world are to be used to enjoy the reality of God. This renewal of human perception takes place through entrance into the school of Christ—the Church’s reading of the Scriptures and its sacramental celebrations. To participate fruitfully in liturgical worship, thus requires the capacity to use the signs of the Scriptures and the liturgical rites to enjoy God through deeper understanding of the texts and practice under examination. This is what I will call practicing worshipful wisdom.

In chapter four, I contemplate what the Christian becomes through this fruitful worship, particularly in the Eucharistic celebration. Through the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith, the Christian becomes a sacrifice of love offered to God. In this transformation of human identity, the renewal of the Christian made in the image and likeness of God, the Christian’s memory, understanding and will grow into a site for divine sacrifice. Thus,
the interior life of divine contemplation is more perfectly expressed in one’s visible actions. The Christian, within the life of the Church, becomes a living Eucharistic sign.

Finally in chapter five, I conclude part II with an analysis of Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy. I argue that Augustine’s sermons are rhetorical performances, using the signs of Scripture, to form the imaginations of Christians, their way of thinking about God, and ultimately to lead the congregation to become what they received in the preaching event. One learns about the liturgical act in the context of the Christian narrative, as a cultivation of memory; thinks about the practice through a theological seeking that is oriented toward both conversion and prayer, cultivating understanding; and then performs the practice anew through the results of these exercises, cultivating love.

In part III, this Augustinian mystagogical approach is interrupted by the contemporary context of the Catholic parish. In chapter six, this interruption first includes a diagnosis of the primary malaise effecting religious practice in the United States—secularization. American secularization consists of an attenuation of the religious imagination, a discomfort with theological thinking, and an emphasis upon individual flourishing. Then, this chapter turns to contemporary educational theory, including John Dewey and Etienne Wenger, as a way of discerning how to perform this Augustinian mystagogical approach in a secular age through the catechetical ministry of the parish. I conclude that an Augustinian mystagogical approach in the present context requires a de-habituation from previous ways of thinking, as well as an intelligent socialization into a mystagogical imagination within communities of practice. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I set forth a plan of formation in which the whole catechetical life
of a parish becomes an initiation into the practice of worshipful wisdom through the four fundamental tasks of catechesis and an Augustinian mystagogical approach to catechetical pedagogy. Through this formation, the Christian learns to offer all of one’s existence as a sacrifice to God, the Eucharistic vocation of the Christian.
CHAPTER ONE

LITURGICAL PARTICIPATION AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Each Sunday, Christians throughout the world gather together for the weekly Eucharistic liturgy, remembering the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. Scripture is read, meditated upon, and interpreted. Hymns and psalms are chanted and sung. Confession of sins and of Christian faith occurs. The Father is praised for the wonderful deeds that have been accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. Bodies, water, bread, and wine are touched, poured out, broken, and blessed, consecrated through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. At the climax of the liturgy, Christians commune with the living God, consuming and being consumed by the Eucharistic presence of Christ. In the closing rites of this Eucharist, these Christians are sent out as the body of Christ to perform this Christic presence in the world. The regular practice of liturgical prayer, exemplified in the Eucharistic liturgy, is to transform every facet of human experience into a spiritual oblation offered to God, becoming the very pattern of a discipled life.¹

This compelling vision of the formative power of the liturgy has become central to both liturgical theologians and catechists in the twentieth century. Beginning with Josef Jungmann’s commitment to historical liturgical study and catechetical theory, the liturgy has occupied a distinctive place in Christian faith formation in both the liturgical and catechetical movements. In this chapter, I analyze the work of these theologians, beginning with Jungmann, in order to

¹ Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, no. 87.
demonstrate how they have perceived the liturgy as a privileged practice for forming Christians in lived Christian faith. According to both liturgical and catechetical theologians, the liturgy mediates an experience and lived knowledge of the Christian message through both its performance and reflection upon liturgical action. The liturgical act unites experience and knowledge, and thus forms the Christian in a way of life in which the Gospel may become incarnate within the concrete particularities of human existence. Liturgical prayer is understood as the Christian practice par excellence for facilitating a liturgical and sacramental way of life.

Yet, recent work by liturgical historians and theologians has begun to interrupt this narrative of liturgical formation. For these liturgical theologians, the liturgical act is formative of Christian identity only if there is a prior appropriation of theological and spiritual dispositions requisite for fruitful liturgical participation. Indeed, liturgical prayer is one aspect of this cultivation of disposition, but it exists within a complex interplay of all practices that instill a sense of Christian identity. Liturgical theologians and catechists will need to discern the precise way that catechetical formation may provide practice in these dispositions, and thus orient a person toward a liturgical way of life.

**Josef Jungmann, S.J.: Liturgical Prayer as Kerygma**

Josef Jungmann (1889-1975) occupies an inimitable role in the history of the liturgical and catechetical movements. His research in liturgical and catechetical history and theory set the foundation for both the post-conciliar liturgical reform and a renewed catechetical vision.² For

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this reason, his conception of the formative nature of liturgical prayer becomes paradigmatic for later liturgical and catechetical theologians. I begin with Jungmann’s understanding of liturgical formation in order to analyze later liturgical and catechetical theologians.

In *Die Frohbotschat und Unsere Glaubensverkündigung (The Good News Yesterday and Today)*, Jungmann develops an argument for a catechesis of kerygma. In the early Church, according to Jungmann’s account, Christian teachers preached the ideals of the Christian life as manifested in the new relationship established between God and humanity in Jesus Christ. The purpose of catechesis in this period was a proclamation of Christian faith, an invitation for each person to enter into this new life in Christ through an encounter with the Christian narrative. Whereas previous generations of Christians relied on a comprehensive Christian ecology to facilitate the traditioning of this kerygma, Jungmann argues that contemporary catechesis in a secular age can no longer presume the existence or even efficacy of this broader social life. The context of catechesis in the modern world requires that the catechist proclaim the facts of Christianity such that there is a communication of the “vital understanding of the Christian message, bringing together “the many” into a consistent, unified whole, that then there may be joyous interest and enthusiastic response in living faith.” Proclamation of the Christian message is an invitation to living faith.

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4 Ibid., 17.
5 Ibid., 33.
Yet, this proclamation is not simply a matter of laying out the essentials of salvation history as recorded in the Scriptures, an approach critiqued by later catechetical theologians. For Jungmann, catechesis, the sermon, religious art, and the liturgical act are all media oriented toward the proclamation of the Christian message. In particular, the liturgy is the communication, realization, and participation in this message of salvation. As Jungmann writes elsewhere, “At all times the purpose of the liturgy has been to bring the faithful together, so that they might stand before God as the Church, as the people of God. But the liturgy has also intended more than this: it has aimed to lead the faithful to a conscious Christian faith.”

Participation in the liturgy becomes the privileged subject in the curriculum of the school of Christian faith.

Liturgical prayer performs a kerygmatic function in Jungmann’s writings, cultivating the Christian in conscious faith in three primary ways. First, participation in the liturgy leads to a participation in the kerygma. Second, the liturgy communicates the doctrine or teaching of Christianity through the medium of liturgical prayer. Third, liturgical participation fosters a vision of the world that culminates in a sacramental approach to human existence. These kerygmatic functions of liturgical participation form each Christian into a robust Christian identity in the context of the modern world.

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Participation in Liturgical Prayer is an Experience of the Kerygma

In 1925, Josef Jungmann published his doctoral work, entitled *Die Stellung Christi im liturgischen Gebet* (The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer).\(^\text{12}\) In this classic of liturgical studies, Jungmann argues that up until the fourth century the liturgical presidential prayer did not directly address Christ but God through *(dia/per)* Christ.\(^\text{13}\) Since Christians pray through Christ in the context of the Church, their prayers “gain meaning and value only because Christ as high priest stands at her head and joins in them.”\(^\text{14}\) Christian prayer is efficacious because Christ is the mediator of Christian prayer, allowing the Church to stand in relationship with the Father in the name of Jesus through praise, adoration, and intercession.\(^\text{15}\) This new relationship, performed in liturgical prayer, echoes the proclamation of salvation in which “now there is atonement and peace, confidence…and free access to God.”\(^\text{16}\) The structure of liturgical prayer in the early Church, as Jungmann reconstructs it, is a recapitulation of the event of salvation. By praying in the name of Jesus, liturgical prayer proclaims the good news of the redemption of the human person and invites each participant to become a child of God.\(^\text{17}\) As Jungmann writes, “it is in the formal prayer of the Christian community that the structure of our relationship to God is directly expressed.”\(^\text{18}\) Christian faith finds its experiential source in liturgical prayer.

While the early liturgy proclaimed the heart of the kerygma with clarity, later historical developments cast a fog over the kerygmatic quality of Christian liturgical practice. The thrust


\(^{13}\) Ibid., 170-171.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 137.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 139.


of Jungmann’s argument follows. As a result of the theological battles with Arianism in the fourth century, liturgical prayer addresses Christ directly and in the process favors his divinity over his humanity and role as mediator. This subtle shift in the structure of liturgical prayer, while a consequence of well-intentioned theological adjustments, has a deleterious effect upon the participation of the assembly in liturgical rites. As Christ became the addressee of liturgical prayer, the Eucharistic liturgy begins to exhibit an almost neurotic concern with the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist rather than focusing upon his resurrected and glorified body as mediated within the life of the Church. The result of this turn to Christ’s Eucharistic presence as God among mortals is an inordinate emphasis on the Eucharist as a sacrificial activity of the priest alone, inducing awe at Christ’s presence among liturgical spectators. The only person capable of offering this sacrifice, once performed as a common act of the whole assembly, is the priest. In a later essay, advancing this thesis, Jungmann addresses the elevation of the priestly role and the consequent marginalization of lay participation in this sacrifice.

Letting Jungmann speak for himself:

Only the priest is permitted to enter the sanctuary to offer the sacrifice. He begins from now on to say the prayers of the Canon in a low voice and the altar becomes farther and farther removed from the people into the rear of the apse. In some measure, the idea of a holy people who are as close to God as the priest is, has become lost. The Church begins

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19 The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer, 223.
21 Jungmann, The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer, 263. This, of course, is not to dismiss the sacrificial quality of the Eucharistic rites. As Henri de Lubac notes, “if we do not wish to misinterpret ancient Christian tradition, the Eucharist has to be seen as a whole. It has to be seen indivisibly as a sacrifice and sacrament, sacramental sacrifice or sacrament of sacrifice: the sacrifice of his body, the sacrament of the faithful. The external sacrifice and ritual is also the sacrament of the ‘true’ sacrifice, of that interior and spiritual sacrifice by which the holy society of all those who belong to God is brought into being...” (Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages, trans. Gemma Simmonds, CJ, with Richard Price and Christopher Stephens [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006], 67).
to be represented chiefly by the clergy. The corporate character of public worship, so meaningful for early Christianity, begins to crumble at its foundations.22

With the lack of lay participation and an accent upon a Eucharistic theology shaped by an overly clerical notion of sacrifice, a host of pastoral liturgical problems occur, including a shift away from the Easter motif in Christian proclamation toward an emphasis on the Passion of Christ; the prohibition of the vernacular in the liturgy; a departure from the historical narrative of salvation within liturgical prayer and preaching; and a tendency to privilege devotion to the saints or the Sacred Heart of Jesus over the liturgy itself.23 Before the arrival of the modern era, the deficiencies of the liturgy were counteracted through a Christian culture that proclaimed this kerygma, consciously or not.24 Yet, the situation of contemporary Christianity in a secular world requires a return to full liturgical participation in order to foster conscious faith.

Thus, liturgical reform is a pivotal aspect of the pastoral care of the Church in the modern world.25 Through the reform of the liturgy, the kerygma is once again proclaimed with clarity so that all Christians might realize their own participation in the sacrifice of Christ.26 Fundamentally, the reforms called for by the second Vatican Council were intended not as a historical antiquarianism, as Jungmann is often charged by his critics, but as a return to a structure of liturgical prayer that Jungmann believed communicated the kerygma of Christian faith.27 While Jungmann’s account of liturgical development is often too simplistic for

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22 Jungmann, “The Defeat of Teutonic Arianism,” 60.
23 Ibid., 2-9.
27 For a summary of these critiques, see John F. Baldovin, S.J., Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2008), 36-64.
contemporary liturgical historians, he nonetheless established an important precedent that serious study and reform of the liturgy was always connected to both the theological and pastoral concerns of the Church. 28

Participation in Liturgical Prayer Teaches the Kerygma

For Jungmann, participation in the sacrifice of praise to God through Christ within the Church is the primary function of the Christian liturgy. Yet, liturgical prayer is not simply an announcement of the event of salvation, but an aesthetic and persuasive entrée into the hinge beliefs of Christian faith. In *Handing on the Faith*, Jungmann addresses this pedagogical consequence of liturgical participation:

In the liturgy (as generally in prayer) we approach the truths and the facts of religion with the proper dispositions. In the liturgy we do not philosophize about God, but we do adore him. In the liturgy we do not attempt to analyse [sic] faith, hope and charity, but we practise [sic] them. In the liturgy we avail ourselves of the Sacraments with holy reverence, and we live as children of the Church. Although liturgy is not primarily concerned with educating us…it, nevertheless, tends to communicate to us those dispositions which are required by the whole of reality which gravitates around God and in this way forms Christian character so profoundly. 29

The shortened patristic maxim, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, is not only an instance of the liturgy conveying what the Church believes but of liturgical prayer increasing the possibility of faith in the deeds and words of salvation history in the first place. 30 Jungmann’s student, Johannes Hofinger, S.J., commenting upon the content of liturgical prayer, writes “The truths of our faith

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30 Ibid., 98.
find an impressive, concrete, and even dramatic expression in the house of God with its liturgical objects and actions.”\textsuperscript{31} In the liturgy, theological propositions and doctrines return to their roots in sacraments and feasts. This is particularly true, for Jungmann, in the Church’s liturgical year.

The liturgical year is crucial to the function of liturgy in teaching Christian faith in a persuasive and aesthetic manner. As Jungmann states, “Of all the areas of Christian formation, the Church Year is the one in which the main themes of the Christian message are most clearly engraved on the souls of the people and in which they are most easily stirred to new life.”\textsuperscript{32} At Christmas and Epiphany, the Church proclaims the event of the Incarnation, enabling a catechetical reflection through the medium of the sermon upon the divine-human exchange accomplished in the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{33} At Easter, a similar liturgical-catechetical moment is available to the Church, since the pastor may preach upon the doctrine of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ, as well as the role of the Church in living out this new life of grace.\textsuperscript{34} Such preaching transpires in the very celebration of these events. Communicating the fundamental events of Christian salvation in the celebrations of the liturgical year, it now becomes possible for the catechist to teach a more comprehensive understanding of Christian faith through systematic catechesis. The Christian is open to investigating a truth that he or she has savored in the act of celebrating. Formal catechetical instruction “will aim at clarifying the meaningful relationships of the events of salvation and of the Church’s institutions with the hope that, as instruction progresses, this objective order may find a subjective reflection in the mind of the

\textsuperscript{32} Jungmann, \textit{The Good News Yesterday and Today}, 83.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 84-85.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 88-92.
Liturgical participation provides the faith content, communicated in a persuasive and aesthetically influential way, for later catechetical work.

Participation in Liturgical Prayer Leads to a Sacramental Vision

Liturgical participation also forms the person toward a mode of living in the world informed by a sacramental, and thus priestly, vision of human existence. Jungmann shared this interest in connecting liturgy and life with other figures in the liturgical movement, including Lambert Beauduin and Romano Guardini in the European context and Virgil Michel in the American. As Jungmann writes:

If the Church comes to life in the participants in the actively celebrated liturgy, then a new relationship to the surrounding world comes into being; a new relationship to the material world itself, to the world of trades and professions. For it is real men of flesh and blood who are caught up in the process of the liturgy. It is their voices, their goings and comings which have become part of the sacred action. It is the bread from the work-a-day world which is carried to the altar. It is the work of the trademan’s hands which appears in the sacred furnishings and decorations, in the building which encloses everything. It is the every-day world which is drawn into the sacred action, joined with the sacrifice which Christ presents with His Church assembled here.

Full liturgical participation leads the Christian to the point of offering his or her life as a sacrifice of praise to God. When Christians fully participate in this liturgy, they “will come to see that worship—divine service—must be nothing but the distillation of a way of life in which men serve God, that divine service, in the sense of worship, and the service of God must merge into one another.” The art of Christian living, one’s vocation in the world, and the apostolic mission of all Christians find their source in this new vision of the Christian life proclaimed and

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35 Ibid., 103.
37 Jungmann, “The Liturgy, a school of faith,” 344.
38 Ibid.
taught through liturgical prayer. By becoming an active participant in the Christian liturgy, all Christians begin to live a sacramental and priestly existence; they become themselves a bodily kerygma within the world.

Thus, the liturgy acts as an integrative force within the Christian life for Jungmann. Liturgical participation fosters meaning in the Christian life by providing an experience of the kerygma through the structure of liturgical prayer. Simultaneously, the liturgy displays the rich tapestry of Christian teaching through the medium of prayer, one that enables the Christian to know, to understand, and to love the central doctrines of Christianity. Finally, liturgical participation forms the Christian’s identity so powerfully that Christian worship and living become inseparable actions.

Formation through Liturgical Participation in Contemporary Liturgical and Catechetical Theology

As foundational to both the liturgical and catechetical movements, Jungmann’s account of liturgical formation has become enshrined in the work of later liturgical and catechetical theologians. In liturgical theology, liturgical prayer is treated as essential to Christian formation in the assumption that liturgy is prima theologia, in the discipline’s use of Prosper of Aquitaine’s maxim, ut legem credenda lex statuat supplicandi, and in the claim that orthodoxy, now defined as “right worship,” culminates in a liturgical spirituality and sacramental approach to ethics. In liturgical catechesis, the formation function of liturgy is evident in the emphasis upon liturgy’s role as offering a living experience of Christian faith, as providing the “matter” of Christian

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catechesis through a familiarity with the signs of faith, and promoting a sacramental life through its very performance.

Liturgical Theology in the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century, following Jungmann, has been a boom era for works dedicated to theological aspects of liturgy. A selection of these works particularly important within the American context include, although are not limited to, the writings of Alexander Schmemann, Aidan Kavanagh, Geoffrey Wainwright, Kevin Irwin, David Fagerberg, Don Saliers, Gordon Lathrop, E. Byron Anderson, and Jill Crainshaw. While methodologically distinct in their approach to the art of liturgical theology, one can isolate the following three assumptions in each of these theologians. First, they argue that liturgical prayer or leitourgia is theologia prima. Second, each liturgical theologian employs the adage of Prosper of Aquitaine, ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi, as a way of speaking about the relationship between liturgy and theology. Finally, the liturgy is a practice capable of forming the Christian in a doxological and thus sacramental approach to spirituality and ethics.

42 For an overview of method in liturgical theology, see Fagerberg, Theologia Prima, 39-72; Irwin, Context and Text, 44-81.
Liturgy as First-Order Theology

In Jungmann’s work, the liturgy is first formative, because it provides an experience of the Christian kerygma through the structure of liturgical prayer. In contemporary liturgical theology, theologians speak of this formative function of the liturgy by means of a methodological assumption. Namely, liturgy is *theologia prima* or first-order theology. As Alexander Schmemann summarizes this principle:

> Liturgical tradition is not an ‘authority’ or a *locus theologicus*; it is the ontological condition of theology, of the proper understanding of *kerygma*, of the Word of God, because it is in the Church, of which the *leitourgia* is the expression and the life, that the sources of theology are functioning as precisely ‘sources.’”

In order to better understand this claim, it is necessary to explicate what is meant by *leitourgia* and *theologia*.

The work of the liturgical theologian David Fagerberg, influenced by Alexander Schmemann and Aidan Kavanagh, is particularly helpful in discerning what the terms *leitourgia* and *theologia* mean within the methodological contours of liturgical theology. Importantly, *leitourgia*, for Fagerberg, is not equivalent to the word “liturgy.” A community may anoint with oil, sing a hymn, and perform various actions in stylized robes, without being a community disposed to *leitourgia*. Rather, *leitourgia* is an expression of the very identity of what it means to be Church. For Fagerberg, a church becomes “‘liturgical’ when the community brings itself and creation as a sacrifice to God in order to be healed by being joined to Christ’s self-offering to the Father in a memorial prayer of thanksgiving through which matter is consecrated and lives

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44 Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, 110.
45 Ibid., 117.
are transfigured in the Holy Spirit.”

This foundational encounter with God, and its effect upon the Christian community, is the essential meaning of Christian *leitourgia*. As Fagerberg’s own mentor in liturgical theology, Kavanagh writes, “A liturgy of Christians is thus nothing less than the way a redeemed world is, so to speak, done.”

In addition, since not all Christian liturgical practice is truly “*leitourgia,*” in the sense employed by Fagerberg, it also follows that there are aspects of Christian life that are *leitourgia* but do not take place within the liturgical celebration proper. In the case of Fagerberg, his own turn toward liturgical asceticism in his later writings is consistent with this definition of *leitourgia*.

He writes regarding liturgical asceticism, “If liturgy means sharing the life of Christ (being washed in his resurrection, eating his body), and if *askesis* means discipline (in the sense of forming), then liturgical asceticism is the discipline required to become an icon of Christ and make his image visible in our faces.” Properly articulated, liturgical asceticism is the human preparation and response to the divine liturgical action, taking place in the act of creation and redemption. *Leitourgia* is the assumption of a fundamental posture within the world, the reclamation of the vocation of the human person as a liturgical being, a priest made for divine praise.

Here, Fagerberg is following in the footsteps of both Kavanagh and Schmemann, who speak of *leitourgia* as encompassing all the practices, catechetical formation, and regulations of the Church that assist in relearning this posture. For Kavanagh, this is the Church’s rite. He comments:

Rite involves creeds and prayers and worship, but it is not any one of these things, nor all of these things together, and it orchestrates more than these things. Rite can be called a

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46 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 122.
50 Ibid., 25.
whole style of Christian living found in the myriad particularities of worship, of laws called ‘canonical,’ of ascetical and monastic structures, of evangelical and catechetical endeavors, and in particular ways of doing secondary theological reflection.51

In the case of Schmemann, it is manifested in the use of the word *leitourgia* to refer to the ministries and offices of the Church in the world.52 Christian *leitourgia* may begin in the ritual prayer of the community but the encounter with God in this liturgical prayer draws the Christian toward a new relationship with the world, manifested in structures and rites characterized by a peculiar logic or discourse of its own, *theologia*.

Generally, what do liturgical theologians mean by *theologia*? As Fagerberg writes, “If theology is the search for words appropriate to God, as Schmemann put it, then the liturgist who wants to speak about God, of God, and even to God, is under the discipline of theology, too.”53 For liturgical theologians, *theologia* is not simply a formal academic discourse oriented toward pursuing a rational account of the teachings of Christianity. Instead, it is the “adjustment made by those who encounter God’s holy presence in word and sacrament.”54 There is an epistemological shift in this move from theology as an academic discourse to *theologia* as the community’s continued experience of God acting within its midst and the subsequent adjustment to this divine-human encounter.55 Kevin Irwin writes, “In essence, liturgy is an *act of theology*, an act whereby the believing Church addresses God, enters into a dialogue with God, makes statements about its belief in God and symbolizes this belief through a variety of means.

51 Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 100.
54 Ibid., 68.
including creation, words, manufactured objects, ritual gestures and actions.”

Theologia, the result of a community well practiced in leitourgia, is an experience and adjustment to the divine encounter made possible through liturgical prayer. The Church is theological, because it is first and foremost liturgical.

Thus, for liturgical theologians, liturgical prayer is formative because it is within the space of leitourgia that Christians encounter God and begin to live meaningfully in this light of encounter. Leitourgia communicates Christian faith through its performance, an experience of theologia, overflowing into the concrete life of the Church. Christian service may become worshipful; catechetical formation becomes worshipful; even, a meeting of a finance committee may become worshipful, if informed by the theologia communicated through the liturgical act.

Ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi

So that the law of prayer establishes the law of belief. This maxim, employed by Jungmann, was the basis of my earlier analysis of the second kerygmatic function of the liturgy. Namely, the liturgy teaches the Christian kerygma according to the pedagogy of liturgical prayer. This same maxim, originally employed by Prosper of Aquitaine, is foundational to the discipline of contemporary liturgical theology. For liturgical theology, one of the effects of liturgy (leitourgia) and the encounter with God overflowing into the life of the Church (theologia) is the opening up of the Christian to beliefs and understandings regarding God and the world through the human transformation made possible by fruitful liturgical performance. As, Aidan Kavanagh writes:

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56 Irwin, Context and Text, 44.
57 Ibid., 4-6.
The law of belief does not constitute the law of worship. Thus the creeds and the reasoning which produced them are not the forces which produced baptism. Baptism gives rise to the trinitarian creeds. So too the eucharist produced, but was not produced by, a scriptural text, the eucharistic prayer, or all the various scholarly theories concerning the eucharistic real presence. Influenced by, yes. Constituted or produced by, no. Creeds, theories, texts, and prayer all emerged from that dialectical process of change and adjustment to change triggered by the assembly’s regular baptismal and eucharistic encounters with the living God in its own faithful life, a life embracing saints and sinners alike.58

Liturgical theology, as Fagerberg characterizes it, is precisely “the product of the assembly’s ritualized grammar wherein the liturgists do not concoct their own ideas but celebrate what has been revealed.”59 Similar claims are made by Schmemann, who states that “the liturgy of the Paschal Triduum—Holy Friday, Great and Holy Saturday and Sunday—reveals more about the “doctrines” of Creation, Fall, Redemption, Death and Resurrection than all other loci theologici together.”60 The performance of liturgical prayer is a gradual formation into the theological truths indispensable to vibrant Christian faith.61

Yet, how does the liturgy communicate these various facets of the kerygma? One approach, as suggested by the Lutheran liturgical theologian Gordon Lathrop (influenced by Schmemann), focuses upon the ordo as the source of this theological performance. According to Lathrop, the liturgical ordo provides the orientation whereby the Christian experiences the lex

58 Kavanagh, On Liturgical Theology, 92-93.
59 Fagerberg, Theologia Prima, 128.
60 Schmemann, “Liturgy and Theology,” 63.
61 Yves Congar writes, “Thus, if tradition in its dogmatic foundations is an interpretation of Scripture continuing that of Christ and the apostles, the liturgy is truly the holy ark containing sacred tradition at its most intense. It communicates the spirit of Christ as the radiant center of the whole history of salvation. without ever separating him from the Church and the saints, which are his field of influence. And it does so, not so much by learned instruction as by realizing the mystery of Christ concretely, here and now, by celebrating and almost acting it, returning to it ceaseless to illumine it, like the sun, which shines on a beautiful landscape successively from different viewpoints and with a varying intensity of light: ‘We need to assimilate things slowly, rather than their explanations’” (The Meaning of Tradition, trans. A.N. Woodrow [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004], 142-43).
credendi, coming to know it and understand it, in the act of celebration.\textsuperscript{62} What does Lathrop mean by the ordo of worship? He writes:

To inquire into the structure of the ordo is to inquire about the way meaning occurs in Christian worship. The thesis operative here is this: Meaning occurs through structure, by one thing set next to another. The scheduling of the ordo, the setting of one liturgical thing next to another in the shape of the liturgy, evokes and replicates the deep structure of biblical language, the use of the old to say the new by means of juxtaposition.\textsuperscript{63}

In Lathrop’s account of liturgical theology, the Christian ordo consists of a juxtaposition of “things,” including Sunday/week, Word/table, praise/beseeching, teaching/bath, and old/new.\textsuperscript{64} In this juxtaposition, embodied in the liturgical act, the Christian community begins to celebrate and learn what it means to believe as a Christian. He writes, “The very paradoxical pairs that have been so necessary to Christians in order to speak faithfully of God—human and divine, letter and spirit, now and not yet, hidden and revealed, immanent and transcendent—correspond, in conceptual language, to the ways the liturgy presents the faith.”\textsuperscript{65} The Christian, who participates in the juxtaposed ordo of liturgical rites, learns essential theological assertions through prayer itself, including the otherness of God, the graciousness of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit to enliven the community.\textsuperscript{66} The liturgy is an experienced theology, communicated through enacted symbols.\textsuperscript{67}

And thus, a consequence of this second methodological principle of liturgical theology is the contention that liturgical experience facilitates theological understanding for the Christian in the complex situations of the modern world.\textsuperscript{68} A liturgical celebration that is truly leitourgia, to

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\textsuperscript{62} Lathrop, \textit{Holy Things}, 33.  \\
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 33-83.  \\
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 80.  \\
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 120.  \\
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 102.  \\
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 217.
\end{flushleft}
use the terminology of Fagerberg, provides a vibrant education in ecclesiology, Christology, soteriology, a doctrine of sin, a doctrine of creation, all Christian teachings that are “facets on a single diamond, chapters in a real and unfolding story put into song by tradition and sung by the Church in anaphora and incense, speech and symbol, kerygma and icon.”

Leitourgia forms the Christian toward proper belief about God and the world through the performative signification of liturgical prayer.

**Liturgical Prayer as Formation into Orthodoxy**

For Jungmann, conscious participation liturgy leads to a sacramental vision of the world, one in which all human activity becomes part of a divine liturgy of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. In liturgical theology, liturgical prayer continues to function as forming the Christian in a way of life. This is most often expressed through a redefining of orthodoxy as “right worship.”

The reorientation of the term orthodoxy begins in Aidan Kavanagh’s *On Liturgical Theology*. According to Kavanagh, orthodoxy is not primarily a measure of proper belief, what he calls *orthopistis*. Instead, it is a form of right worship that includes all aspects of living in the world in light of the Christian mystery. He writes, “Orthodoxy has deep in its innards the old Sanskrit distillation of prehistoric human wisdom, *tat tvam asi*, be what you are, just so. No more, no less. It knows that liturgical movement begins when the alarm clock goes off every morning and that God’s mercy and justice never sleep.”

Orthodoxy as right worship presumes a link between liturgical action and human living that no longer relegates liturgical action to an

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69 Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, 141.
70 Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 82.
71 Ibid., 159.
aesthetic or therapeutic exercise. Liturgy is an encounter with the living God that has consequences for how the Christian dwells in the world. Commenting on Kavanagh’s definition of orthodoxy, Saliers writes, “Orthodoxy is learning in the long, hard, joyous way to ascribe unto God the doxa due God’s name.”

In his own contribution to the field of liturgical theology, Irwin captures Kavanagh’s insight in his methodological clarification of the discipline’s adage: lex orandi, lex credendi, and now, lex vivendi. For Irwin, lex vivendi is meant to communicate “what has traditionally been implied as the ethical consequence of liturgical participation and as a way of giving this aspect of liturgy its proper place lest the liturgy become divorced from real life and the actual needs and concerns of persons here and now.” This divorce, for Irwin, is foreign to the very nature of liturgical prayer. He writes, “To experience God through the liturgy presumes the discoverability of the divine in human life and how the human is always the locus for us of discovering the divine…liturgy is essential for Christian spirituality because it is the privileged locus for articulating how all of life is sacramental.”

Full and conscious participation in liturgy opens the Christian’s eyes to the liturgical and sacramental quality of the totality of human existence, all the while building up Christian hope in the eschatological transformation of creation. The liturgy, as a symbolic language that communicates the union between the divine and the human and its consequences of a sacramental universe, fosters within the Christian the

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72 Ibid., 173.
73 Saliers, Worship as Theology, 41.
74 Irwin, Context and Text, 331.
75 Ibid., 329.
76 Ibid., 333-35.
desire to serve both God and humanity through an ethical life that is itself an extension of a sacramental spirituality.\textsuperscript{77}

Perhaps, no recent liturgical theologian has connected liturgy, spirituality, and ethics more eloquently than Don Saliers. For Saliers, liturgy is that particular Christian practice in which “the vulnerability of human pathos is met by the ethos of God’s vulnerability in word and sacrament.”\textsuperscript{78} Christian liturgy forms the affections of the human person so that each Christian may begin to live an authentic Christian existence within the world. For example, praise in Christian liturgy is not naïve optimism in a world still groaning from sin but rather a formation into virtuous affections. As Saliers notes, “one does not thank God for evil and suffering. Rather, in the midst of suffering and perplexity one thanks and praises God for the gift of life and endurance. The thanking is itself an act of hope and resistance to what is evil—including the evil intentions and destructive desires that inhabit the human heart.”\textsuperscript{79} The practice of engaging in liturgical prayer is one that offers the hopes and joys, the pains and limitations of human life to God in a spirit of worship.\textsuperscript{80} And in this sacrifice offered to God, whereby human beings come to see the truth about their own self, the world, and God, worship culminates in moral formation and vice versa.\textsuperscript{81} For Saliers, worship is the divinely instituted workshop in which Christians engage in the construction of a robust and meaningful Christian identity through the formation of the affections.

In summary, contemporary works in liturgical theology remain essentially concerned with liturgical prayer’s formative potential. First, these theologians treat \textit{leitourgia} as the first

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 339.
\textsuperscript{78} Saliers, \textit{Worship as Theology}, 22.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 189.
source of *theologia*, understood as an experience of God working in the midst of the Church through the structure of liturgical prayer. The liturgy mediates an experience of God, one that overflows into the life of the Church, infusing each person with a privileged theological knowledge. Second, liturgical theology relies upon Prosper of Aquitaine’s maxim in its methodological stance that liturgical prayer opens up the Christian to belief through the experience of *leitourgia*. Liturgy forms the Christian in proper belief by communicating the essentials of Christian faith through the media of liturgical objects, music, time, and gesture. Liturgy is a performative theology. Finally, liturgical theology emphasizes that liturgy bestows upon the Christian a sacramental vision of the universe, one that is best exercised in the liturgical offering of one’s thoughts, affections, understanding, desire, and actions for the life of the world. One’s very identity becomes *leitourgia* through the performance of liturgical prayer.

Liturgical Catechesis in the Twentieth Century

Liturgical theology, as a discipline, is not alone in its claims about the formative potential of liturgical action. In catechesis, liturgy has been recognized as an essential aspect of the catechetical curriculum within the Church. A selection of catechetical theologians and pastoral liturgists in the last fifty years, who have addressed the catechetical features of Christian liturgy, include Mary C. Bryce, O.S.B., Gilbert Ostdiek, John H. Westerhoff III, Catherine Dooley, Thomas Groome, Mark Searle, Anscar Chupungco, O.S.B., Domenico Sartore, C.S.J, and more recently Anne-Marie Mongoven, O.P., Louis-Marie Chauvet, and Debra Dean Murphy.

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Whereas most catechetical theologians are careful to treat liturgical action within a broader ecology of Christian formation, these theologians tend to distinguish between the formation occurring in other forms of catechesis and liturgical prayer. For many catechetical theologians, liturgical action is especially important for forming Christian identity, allowing for an appropriation of Christian teaching through experience.

Before exploring how catechetical theology treats the formative nature of liturgical prayer, it is prudent to define what is meant by liturgical catechesis. The General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) provides a description of the domain of liturgical catechesis. According to this work, liturgical catechesis or education, as the document calls it, is one of the four fundamental tasks of catechetical formation, in addition to promoting knowledge of the faith, moral formation, and teaching the Christian to pray. Surveying the purview of liturgical catechesis, the GDC states:

The Church ardently desires that all the Christian faithful be brought to that full, conscious and active participation which is required by the very nature of the liturgy and the dignity of the baptismal priesthood. For this reason, catechesis, along with promoting a knowledge of the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments, must also educate the disciples of Jesus Christ “for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with


84 General Directory for Catechesis, no. 85.
confidence, for community spirit, for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds…” as all of this is necessary for a true liturgical life.85

Thus, liturgical catechesis includes an education for liturgical participation, in addition to reflection upon the liturgy, in order to facilitate a liturgical spirituality, what the document calls “a true liturgical life.”

The GDC also employs an additional term related to liturgical catechesis, mystagogy. Mystagogical catechesis, modeled on patristic catechesis from the fourth and fifth centuries, aims to “help the newly baptized to interiorize these sacraments and incorporate themselves into the community.”86 Yet, mystagogy is not limited to those recently initiated into the Church. Instead, mystagogical catechesis directs all Christians to a deeper understanding of salvation history, allowing the events of the past to become celebrated and experienced in the today of the liturgy.87 Mystagogical catechesis ensures that the Christian savor the truths of Christianity over a lifetime of assimilation into the sacred mysteries of Christ’s death and resurrection.88 Fundamentally, mystagogical catechesis is an education into a way of knowing and loving God within the world through an initiation “into the mystery of Christ…by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the “sacraments” to the “mysteries.”89

Thus, liturgical catechesis for catechetical theologians is only one aspect of a more comprehensive approach to a mystagogical formation intrinsic to all catechetical ministry. Still, for many catechetical theologians, the liturgy serves as the pedagogical practice that leads the Christian to this mystagogical capacity, the ability to move from the sign to the reality. This

85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., no. 89.
87 Ibid., no. 108.
88 Ibid., no. 129.
becomes evident in many of these thinkers through their treatment of three formative facets of liturgical celebration in their own catechetical theology. First, the liturgy provides an experience of faith within the Church. Second, liturgical practice teaches the faith through signs, a pedagogy that results in a transformation of human experience. Finally, liturgical prayer, specifically the Eucharist, facilitates a new way of seeing and living within the world.

**The Liturgy Provides an Experience of Faith within the Church**

In an essay, entitled “The Interrelationship of Liturgy and Catechesis,” Mary Charles Bryce, O.S.B. discusses the mutual tasks of liturgy and catechesis. For Bryce, the ministries of liturgy and catechesis “both begin in faith, however minutely seminal a particular beginning may be.”90 Yet, the manner of faith formation in liturgy and catechesis are distinct. She writes:

> It may be an oversimplification, but it does provide a starting point, to observe that catechesis seeks to nurture faith by a deliberate concentration on the faith-life and the Word, the kerygma—which is the kernel of all catechesis. The liturgy nurtures the believing community’s faith by celebrating the mystery. Every liturgical act is a profession of faith. Every genuine catechetical endeavor is an inquiry into faith and/or the communication of shared faith meanings.91

According to Bryce, liturgy and catechesis are both sources for constructing a lived faith.

Nonetheless, catechesis reflects upon the mystery of Christian faith through inquiry and analysis. The liturgy, on the other hand, is an experience of celebration and profession of this faith within the life of the Church. Because of this, Bryce surmises that historically when liturgical participation has declined, so too has the quality of catechesis, since catechetical ministry requires a meaningful faith experience, provided by liturgical prayer, to reflect upon.92

Expanding upon this insight, Catherine Dooley remarks, “Liturgical rites and celebrations of the

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91 Ibid., 18-19.
92 Ibid., 19.
word within the context of the liturgical year are primary formative experiences because the Church gathered in worship shapes the identity and faith of the catechumens and the baptized in the very act of celebration. “The neglect of the liturgical aspect of Christianity within catechesis leads to a decrease in a vital and living faith, and thus a malformed Christian identity.”

Still, why is the liturgy such a privileged source of Christian experience? According to Domenico Sartore, C.S.J.:

> The significance of the liturgical celebration for catechesis...depends first of all on the sacramental condition of the Church, on the fact that it builds itself in the most existential manner wherever the community celebrates the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church's life. This theological principle has an anthropological foundation in that every human experience, individual or communitarian, gains its full stature through the way of symbolic experience, which confers full form to inner sentiments and dispositions, involves a person with all his or her faculties, and achieves the most complete communion.

The liturgy is formative of Christian faith, because it provides a symbolic experience of God that catechetical language may unfold. Chupungco writes, “The liturgy, whose rites are an experiential evocation of faith, interprets and proclaims the faith the Church received from the apostles.” Through the two-fold symbolism of gesture and word, liturgical and sacramental prayer enables the assembly to express its ancient faith in God, who is encountered through ritual action. Liturgy offers a vibrant experience of Christian faith that catechesis may reflect upon, describe, and deepen.

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94 Neville and Westerhoff, Learning through Liturgy, 96.
95 Sartore, “Catechesis and Liturgy,” 105.
96 Chupungco, Liturgical Inculturation, 137.
97 Mongoven, The Prophetic Spirit of Catechesis, 263.
98 Bryce, “The Interrelationship of Liturgy and Catechesis,” 29. Thomas Groome, while not denying the formative quality of liturgical prayer, is attentive to how the signs of liturgical-sacramental prayer may hinder a fruitful appropriation. He writes, “liturgy can be powerfully
Thus, the liturgy is formative because it brings the Christian community face-to-face with the living God through the experience of gesture and language. One begins to participate in a living and vital faith that liturgical prayer is uniquely structured to educate for. Such Christian faith “is an existential act of commitment and acceptance of Jesus as Lord. In liturgy we express that faith commitment, and as we confess it our faith is renewed.”\textsuperscript{99} The liturgy, in this way, is an enacted kerygma, and catechesis has a duty to deepen this kerygmatic experience through further study and reflection upon these symbols. Liturgy is the foundation for future Christian reflection, uniquely structured to form Christian identity through its use of symbolic language and gesture.

\textit{The Liturgy Teaches Through Signs}

In addition to providing an experience of Christian faith within the community of the Church, the liturgy also teaches Christians through its use of signs. Generally, by signs, liturgical catechists mean a non-verbal or symbolic form of communication that refers to the divine, such as the gathering of the assembly or the sharing in Eucharistic bread and wine.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{100} Dooley, “Liturgical Catechesis: Mystagogy, Marriage or Misnomer?,” 394.
Signs are words and actions that contain a deeper theological meaning, the \textit{mysterium} at the core of the \textit{sacramentum}. This pedagogy of signs forms the Christian by offering a liturgically founded theological knowledge mediated through the practice of worship. This theological knowledge of the liturgy is often contrasted with the type of knowing that doctrinal or biblical catechesis fosters.\footnote{Mongoven, \textit{The Prophetic Spirit of Catechesis}, 257.} As Mongoven writes “If the axiom \textit{the law of prayer is the law of belief} is true, then the doctrine the catechumens need will be prayed through as they listen to and reflect on the Scriptures, and celebrate their liturgical rituals.”\footnote{Ibid., 268.} For Mongoven, Christian doctrine and a sufficient biblical imagination are communicated in the very act of prayer. The liturgy mediates this theological knowledge through its pedagogy of signification.\footnote{Chauvet, “La <<mystagogie>> aujourd’hui,” 43-44.}

Sartore, an Italian pastoral theologian, has addressed this pedagogy of signs in addition to its function in connecting liturgy and catechesis. According to Sartore, the liturgy serves as a wellspring of catechesis insofar as it communicates “the complex of signs that constitute the liturgy as an inexhaustible fountain of symbolic elements that explain individual aspects of the mystery of Christ and the Church.”\footnote{Sartore, “Pastoral Liturgy,” 79.} The liturgical proclamation of the signs of Christian faith affords the catechist with a psychological foundation for appropriating Christian faith in a human life.\footnote{Ibid.} In this way, liturgical prayer is that Christian practice, particularly suited for uniting theological theory and spiritual wisdom. In the European context out of which he is writing, Sartore believes that familiarity with liturgical prayer may lead to an increase in Christian knowledge and identity among young people as they turn toward a celebration of the liturgical
signs, “its content, and its fundamental laws.” The celebration of the liturgy will socialize the Christian in a pedagogically astute way to the biblical roots, the sacramental character, and the ecclesiology implicit in the spiritual practice of liturgical prayer. Christian teaching becomes a lived profession of faith through the pedagogy of signification.

Importantly, Sartore does not claim that this socialization occurs necessarily through the very act of liturgical prayer. In an essay on the relationship between liturgy and catechesis, Sartore provides examples of how socialization into the signs of the liturgy functions within the intentional catechetical ministry of the Church. In order for the liturgy to become a living source of theological knowledge, catechesis must take as its object the experience of the signs found within liturgical rites and prayer. He writes:

The sign of the cross in its various forms introduces us into the two main mysteries of faith; the use of holy water becomes a remembrance of baptism; the gathered assembly and the very building that welcomes it guides us into the mystery of the Church; the gestures of reverence, prayer, forgiveness, and communion speak to our Christian existence; the Amen and the Alleluia, as St. Augustine comments on them, suggest a whole program of living for Christians gathered in the name of the Lord, and so on.

By teaching the primary doctrines and spiritualities of Christianity through the lens of the liturgy, the catechist can reclaim the ancient performance of mystagogical catechesis, a reflection upon the Christian mysteries that forms the Christian in a specific way of perceiving and acting within the world. A familiarity with the content expressed in the liturgy, culminates in the development within the Christian of the ability to see how the visible world becomes “bearers of full supernatural meaning.” This capacity to discern God acting within the visible world, as

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106 Ibid., 84.
107 Ibid.
109 Ibid., 107.
110 Ibid.
111 Sartore, “Pastoral Liturgy,” 75-76.
taught through liturgical signification enables the Christian to conceive of the universe as a sacrament of divine presence. This insight of Sartore, underdeveloped in mystagogical formation, is Augustine’s approach to mystagogy. Yet, this Augustinian mystagogical formation is not simply socialization into the essential signs of faith but a gradual appropriation made possible through a formation of the Christian’s memory, understanding, and will. A mystagogical catechesis that takes full advantage of the divine pedagogy of signification will be examined in the latter chapters of this study.

**Liturgy Teaches a Sacramental Vision of the World**

Attention to the pedagogy of signification in liturgical prayer leads quite naturally to the final formative function of the liturgy: the creation of a sacramental vision of the world. As Mongoven writes, “We worship with the people, with the “things” of creation—bread, wine, oil, and water—and with song and dance and every good human impulse. Everything is sacramental. All created reality symbolizes God. All creation is sacramental. We are sacramental.”

The liturgy, among a number of catechetical theologians, is the privileged way of educating for this sacramental imagination.

Yet, how does liturgical catechesis contribute to this development of a sacramental worldview? One liturgical catechist, Gilbert Ostdiek, places this sacramental transformation of human experience facilitated through liturgical signs as central to his catechetical theory and ministry. As Ostdiek writes:

> The actions of the liturgy, whether speech or gesture, are symbolic actions. That is, the words we hear and the actions we perform embody in sensory form that inner, marvelous exchange between God and ourselves. Or to use a familiar traditional term, liturgical

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action is by its very nature sacramental in the deepest sense of that word. It is an outward sign which expresses and conveys a hidden, graced reality.\textsuperscript{113}

The liturgical pedagogy of signs contributes to a sacramental vision of the universe by creating a world of divine meaning in which the Christian might dwell. The liturgy performs this pedagogical function through a transformation of human experience.\textsuperscript{114} Whereas liturgical theologians focus primarily on the theological meaning communicated through liturgical performance, liturgical catechists are chiefly concerned with reflection upon liturgical action as it relates to human life.\textsuperscript{115} In offering pastoral advice regarding the planning of “formative” liturgy, Ostdiek writes, “shape and prepare the rites to be as authentic and full as possible, and let the people find in them the facet of meaning that helps them retell their life story.”\textsuperscript{116} The liturgy provides the space in which all human experience becomes informed by liturgical symbols in the act of interpretation. Reflection upon the relationship between these symbols and human experience enables an appropriation of these symbols into a sacramental way of life.

How does such a formation occur? In Ostdiek’s \textit{Catechesis for Liturgy}, he provides a parish plan for the development of liturgies that stimulate this encounter between human experience and liturgical rite. For example, in a chapter on the use of liturgical objects, Ostdiek reflects how the objects of lighted candles, lectionaries, bread, incense, and water operate within liturgical pedagogy.\textsuperscript{117} These objects are signs that communicate a deeper, theological meaning when used in a liturgical action. Ostdiek writes, “We break the blessed bread to share it with one another. But the action is more than a horizontal sharing of food and life between members of

\textsuperscript{113} Ostdiek, \textit{Catechesis for Liturgy}, 12.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{115} Ostdiek, “Liturgy as Catechesis for Life,” 77-78.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{117} Ostdiek, \textit{Catechesis for Liturgy}, 140-41.
the assembly. We take the bread and say yes to the Body of Christ.”118 In their use within a liturgical assembly, objects become conveyors of theological meaning and thus form the person in a sacramental view of the world. Yet, such meaning only occurs in the process of reflecting upon these symbols within a community of prayer and inquiry. Through reflection upon that intersection of liturgy and human existence, each of these liturgical signs and objects foster a principle of sacramentality, the belief that “the things of our world are not meant to be impenetrable barriers between God and us.”119 The liturgy proclaims God’s abiding presence within the world, transforming in the process the relationship of Christians with all matter. A meaningful universe, one overflowing with God’s presence, is constructed through liturgical action and catechetical reflection.

Thus, liturgical catechesis, as articulated by contemporary catechetical theologians, presumes that the liturgy forms Christians through a visible participation in Christian faith, a socialization or initiation of the Christian into the signs that liturgy communicates (and hence a way of knowing), and the formation of a sacramental vision of the universe through realizing these signs in human experience. While more carefully attending to the role of catechesis in the celebration of liturgical rites, catechetical theologians separate the formation provided by liturgical action from the Church’s entire catechetical ministry. An Augustinian approach to mystagogical formation, as I will demonstrate, may occur in each of the functions of catechesis not only through reflection upon liturgical action.

118 Ibid., 141.
119 Ibid., 142.
Reconsidering Liturgical Formation

As has become evident in the preceding pages of this chapter, liturgical theologians and catechists since Josef Jungmann have understood the liturgy as formative, capable of serving as the unifying media for facilitating Christian meaning and identity. According to these thinkers, liturgical prayer has the potential to foster an experience of Christian faith that changes the way the community thinks about God in light of this encounter; to communicate the basic knowledge of Christianity in an aesthetic and persuasive way that leads to further experience of God’s presence in the Christian life; and, to assist in the development of a sacramental and doxological vision of the universe that results in the transformation of the human person and the world through the practice of worship and reflection. Indeed, a liturgy that performs each of these formative functions, and the catechesis accompanying the rites, would likely result in a conscious Christian faith that becomes an integral aspect of a person’s identity.

While liturgical theologians and catechists perceive liturgical participation as a privileged arena for the development of theological experience, knowledge, and ultimately meaning and identity, recent critiques by liturgical scholars have challenged this claim. These liturgical scholars, while raising a number of concerns regarding liturgical theology as a discipline within liturgical studies offer one particular critique that is relevant to this study in liturgical formation. Namely, they argue that the privileging of liturgy over theology results in a neglect of the

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theological and spiritual formation common to both liturgical prayer and Christian living. Simply, on its own, liturgical prayer cannot provide an adequate experience of Christian faith, communicate theological knowledge, or foster a sacramental vision of the universe. Too much is being asked of liturgical prayer in the formation of a robust Christian identity. A prior and posterior catechetical formation is essential, one that fosters the necessary dispositions for formative liturgical prayer.\(^{121}\)

What is the basis of this critique, in particular, of liturgical theology? Paul Bradshaw’s essay, “Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology,” provides an answer to this question.

Bradshaw writes:

> When liturgical theologians today therefore speak of “the liturgy” in an absolute sense, they are usually not referring to the precise texts and rubrics of particular liturgies but rather to an underlying continuity of liturgical practice which they claim to discern behind all the variations and mutations in outward appearance that Christian worship has displayed.\(^{122}\)

To speak of “the” liturgy, or leitourgia, as capable of providing a common experience of participation in the kerygma neglects the fact that there is not a single and unified liturgical structure or theology discernable in the complex history of Christian worship.\(^{123}\) Instead, the history of liturgy is one of a plurality of liturgical structures, developed in the context of an array

\(^{121}\) This claim is not unique to these liturgical theologians but is also essential to the formation of dispositions for liturgical worship in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The assembly should *prepare* itself to encounter its Lord and to become “a people well-disposed.” The preparation of hearts is the joint work of the Holy Spirit and the assembly, especially of its ministers. The grace of the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father’s will. These dispositions are the preconditions both for the reception of other graces conferred in the celebration itself and the fruits of new life which the celebration is intended to produce afterward” (no., 1098).

\(^{122}\) Bradshaw, “Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology,” 182.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 185.
of theological commitments.\textsuperscript{124} This pluralism of liturgical rites and theologies is further complicated by the role that theological inquiry has played in the shaping of the liturgy throughout history, as well as the fact that participants in liturgical rites tend to emerge with their own meanings from engaging in the same liturgical action.\textsuperscript{125} In other words, \textit{lex orandi}, the official prayer of the Church, does not necessarily establish \textit{lex credendi}, what the Church believes. This is true historically and in the contemporary ecclesial practice of worship.\textsuperscript{126}

For this reason, Bradshaw believes that it is improper, strictly speaking, to refer to the liturgy as \textit{theologia prima}. Liturgical action is always interpreted through a previously formed lens, shaped by doctrine, the development of liturgical rites in the context of a specific culture and ecclesial body, as well as an implicit theological perspective on the part of the worshipper. As he writes:

What ordinary worshippers experience…will be strongly conditioned by both these factors—the beliefs/doctrines they bring to the liturgical act, and the beliefs/doctrines already implicit in the form of the act itself. This is not to say that the Living God cannot speak to believer through their participation in the Church’s worship, but only that such an encounter is mediated through the lenses of a vision of God already formulated by others and by the worshippers themselves.\textsuperscript{127}

Liturgical prayer, if it is to be performed meaningfully, requires a previous theological formation—what Aune calls a catechetical theology, “the categories and structures with which worshipers make sense of a liturgical event.”\textsuperscript{128} Liturgical experience is not prior to theological knowledge but always includes an already appropriated theological hermeneutic. What and how

\textsuperscript{126} De Clerck, “‘Lex orandi, lex credendi’: The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage,” 199-200.
\textsuperscript{127} Bradshaw, “Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology,” 192.
\textsuperscript{128} Aune, “Part II—A Different Starting Place,” 155.
the Christian believes (or does not believe as the case may be) has some effect upon his or her capacity to engage in fruitful liturgical prayer.

This broader desire for a theological foundation for liturgical prayer forms the basis of Paul Marshall’s proposal for a renewed understanding of *lex orandi* as “the necessary circle of personal and corporate prayer as the basis of church life, as they fulfill and check each other.”

Like Bradshaw, Marshall is wary of the methodological assumption in liturgical theology that liturgy communicates a specific theological meaning or experience to the “receiver” participant. He too argues that a fundamental “catechetical theology” is required to engage in any liturgical rite. Yet, beyond sharing these concerns, Marshall also prescribes a solution. He suggests that the privileging of liturgy as the theological medium *par excellence* diminishes the “theological” aspects of all formation including catechesis, preaching, and other aspects of Christian living dedicated to discipleship. Marshall’s own understanding of theology is that moment “when the word, however and wherever received, struggles to take flesh in our lives.”

All genuine Christian activity is potentially “theological” work because it is fundamentally concerned with the enfleshment of the word. Therefore, the insight of the liturgical theologian is correct, since theology has to involve more than an intellectual grasping of doctrine. Yet, locating this union of knowledge and love uniquely within “leitourgia” is a problem for Marshall.

Thus, Marshall is wary of the distinction between primary and secondary theology employed by liturgical theologians. All facets of Christian living (including academic theology),

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130 Ibid., 135.
131 Ibid., 136.
132 Ibid., 137.
133 Ibid., 144.
“consciously undertaken in the presence of God and welcoming the Spirit,” are sources of primary theology.\textsuperscript{134} He writes, “the first test of any liturgy, sermon, or theological lecture is whether it was conceived in and executed as prayer, that is, done in the presence of God and seeking to be at God’s disposal.”\textsuperscript{135} For this reason, liturgical theology’s concerns has to involve not only the ritual of the liturgy itself but a broader liturgical circle, including “Bible classes, home study, prayer groups, moments of contemplation, listening to Christian broadcasting, discussions, not to mention the primary task of following Christ in the world.”\textsuperscript{136} In this liturgical circle, liturgical prayer, especially the Eucharistic liturgy, becomes that arena in which the community responds “in offering the \textit{sacrificium laudis} that is paradigm for their discipled lives—and offer for the common good some of what their ongoing theologizing has brought.”\textsuperscript{137} Without this broader liturgical circle concerned with Christian formation as a whole (to which liturgical theologians such as Fagerberg have begun to attend through liturgical asceticism)\textsuperscript{138} the words and actions of the liturgy may remain both meaningless and fruitless for the participant, offering very little in terms of spiritual formation.\textsuperscript{139} Yet, if such a person learns to offer his or her entire life as a spiritual oblation, a place for the divine word to become flesh, then the fruitfulness of liturgical prayer will also increase for that person.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 146.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 150.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} In the second edition of his work, \textit{Theologia Prima}, Fagerberg includes a century (an ascetical literary genre consisting of one hundred paragraphs) of consequences, touching upon the wider implications of his work for liturgical theology. In one of these centuries, he writes, “Liturgical asceticism is memory repair. \textit{Anthropos} was created to remember God (\textit{mnesis}), but has forgotten (\textit{amnesia}), so men and women must be re-capacitated if they are to make \textit{anamnesis} at the eucharistic table” (221). This re-capitation for liturgical prayer in contemporary writings of Fagerberg points toward a broader concern with catechetical formation through the ascetic tradition.
Bradshaw and Marshall’s critique of privileging liturgical prayer over other forms of spiritual formation is a necessary corrective to liturgical theology and implicitly catechesis. Primarily, they remind both liturgical theologians and catechists that liturgical prayer, while potentially bearing fruit in a believer’s life, requires the development of certain dispositions, ways of knowing and perceiving within the worshipper.\footnote{Bradshaw, “Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology,” 94.} For example, to participate fully, consciously, and actively in the liturgical action of Lauds within the ritual of the Roman Catholic church, entails a basic knowledge of the structure and components of this prayer; an appropriation of a theology capable of supporting the Christian in the daily performance of Lauds; the acquisition of a contemplative spirit, allowing the Christian to mediate upon the psalms and discern how God’s voice is speaking through these ancient hymns; and, the ability to reflect theologically upon the meaning of this action of prayer throughout the course of the day. The person, who has acquired these various dispositions, a \textit{habitus} capable of fruitfully celebrating lauds with spiritual understanding, will enter fully into the performance of morning prayer and find it fruitful as a practice.

The disposition to participate in liturgical prayer in a way that is both meaningful and transformative of one’s identity, as a member of the body of Christ, necessitates a catechetical program that forms the Christian in this liturgical way of life. Methodological claims that interpret the liturgy as the privileged source for \textit{theologia prima} risk ignoring the prior theological and catechetical reflection that disposes one for deeper liturgical participation. Such theological and catechetical reflection can itself become a vibrant encounter or experience of God, whereby “knowledge or wisdom is never a merely noetic factor but involves a new way of living, a practical (or to use the old term) ‘habitual’ kind of knowledge that is acquired through
one’s manner of life and sensed perhaps more intuitively than propositionally."\(^{141}\) Catechesis for liturgical action, a formation into certain theological and spiritual dispositions, can be as revelatory and transformative of human action as liturgical prayer itself.

Yet, Bradshaw and Marshall’s critiques of methodology in liturgical theology should not result in a rejection of the foundational work performed in liturgical theology and catechesis over the last century. The formative vision offered by liturgical theologians and catechists is certainly an excellent description of a “liturgical life.” The Christian, who lives out of a liturgical identity, will participate in the life of the Triune God through the corporate prayer of the Church. In addition, this Christian will develop an intimate acquaintance with the theological doctrines presumed in liturgical prayer, a participatory knowing in which knowledge and love find perfect union. Finally, liturgical theologians and catechists are correct that a genuine liturgical identity involves a transformation of all human action, resulting in a sacramental existence. Describing the effect of this appropriation of certain liturgical dispositions and thus the creation of liturgical identity, Fagerberg writes:

Liturgy is not one cult among others to be inserted into the deck of religious practices in the human hand; it is the manifestation of a new creation and a new race. Church is the noun form of the verb liturgy, like Christian is the noun form of the verbs faith, hope, and charity. The job description of a liturgist is someone who strives for the life of Christ, and who, to the measure he or she attains it, is witness to the world of its final destiny.\(^{142}\)

But, to become such a liturgist, will require the cultivation of those liturgical dispositions by each person. And this cultivation of liturgical dispositions, including a theological vision of the world and a concomitant way of life pursued in light of this vision, is the work of mystagogical formation.


\(^{142}\) Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, 17.
Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I set forth a vision of the formative power of liturgical prayer, one that culminated in the transformation of human life into a liturgical oblation. The fulfillment of such a vision, founded in the work of liturgical theologians and catechists in the past century, is not possible through liturgical performance alone. Instead, in order to form Christians so that the language and practice of the liturgy infuses the Christian life so thoroughly that the Christian begins to live liturgically, it is necessary to develop a catechetical approach that educates for a liturgical way of life through the acquisition of liturgical capacities or dispositions. Yet, in order to discern this catechetical approach, one must become familiar with how ritual functions in the first place, as well as the natural dispositions required for ritual action. Only then is it possible to shape a catechetical program that fosters the necessary dispositions for liturgical prayer. This examination of the ritual functionality of Christian liturgy, as a means of providing a heuristic for discerning these dispositions within the theology of Augustine, is the focus of the following chapter.
CHAPTER TWO
THE DISPOSITIONS OF RITUAL FORMATION

In the introduction of this dissertation, I asked the following question: how do Christian communities educate for a liturgical approach to human living? The first chapter noted that both liturgical theologians and catechists have understood the liturgy as the privileged site of a formation for a liturgical life. This formation involved an intimate participation in the life of the Triune God through liturgical experience; a lived theological knowledge of God through liturgical performance; and a sacramental or doxological approach to human existence. However, chapter one also concluded that liturgical participation is simply one facet of forming Christians who engage in a liturgical way of living. In reality, this liturgical way of life requires a cultivation and appropriation of liturgical dispositions by each Christian so that each action he or she engages in might become a place where the Word takes flesh.

Yet, what are these dispositions? In this second chapter, I examine the practice of Christian worship through the discipline of anthropology to determine what is required from the human person in order to engage in ritual action. This examination is part and parcel of the Christian practice approach to pastoral theology performed in this dissertation. Anthropology, in this instance, interrupts the narrative prevalent in the work of liturgical theology and catechesis regarding how liturgy forms a person’s identity. Yet, anthropology too requires a theological interruption, since anthropologists study as the material object of their discipline “ritual” in
general, rather than the specifics of the Christian sacramental economy.¹ For this reason, the purpose of this chapter is primarily heuristic, providing questions for further theological inquiry in chapters three, four, and five. The chapter proceeds through attending to three ritual theorists, including Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Catherine Bell to discern how ritual action is formative of a person’s identity. I conclude from this analysis that ritual action, and the knowledge resulting from it, influences a person’s identity insofar as the person becomes capable of employing dispositions in the practice of ritualization. And this capacity to ritualize is precisely what enables a way of making meaning within the world through ritual action.

**Ritual Formation and Dispositions**

As Nathan Mitchell notes in his primer on liturgy and the social sciences, anthropology has generally understood ritual action as essential for the transmission and personal appropriation of a community’s values and identity.² Mitchell traces this trend in anthropology beginning from what he calls the classical consensus to present directions in anthropology that critique this consensus.³ This section of the chapter owes much to Mitchell’s account of ritual in anthropology, yet moves beyond it in an important way. Whereas Mitchell unfolds each anthropologist’s interpretation of ritual as the production of meaning and the formation of cultural identity, I attend to the specific human capacities that enable fruitful ritual action, formative of identity. To do this, I turn to three representative ritual theorists, who interpret the

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³ Ibid., 24-25.
function of ritual in distinct ways. First, I investigate Clifford Geertz’s model of ritual as symbol. Second, I consider Victor Turner’s model of ritual as performance. Third, I explore Catherine Bell’s model of ritual as practice. From these three models, I develop a heuristic that will guide the theological investigations of the third through fifth chapters.

Clifford Geertz: Formation through Ritual Symbols

In his classic article, “Religion as a Cultural System,” Geertz presents his theory of ritual functionality in the context of an anthropological definition of religion. Religion, according to Geertz, is:

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of facticity that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.4

By a symbol, Geertz means some observable object, act, or relation that operates as a carrier of cultural meaning.5 Each religion is a system of these meanings that serve as a model of and for cultural thought and behavior.6 In fact, for Geertz as an anthropological observer, there is really no distinction between a religion and a culture, since both are systems of symbols that come to be interpreted by the anthropologist using the same method.7

Of course, these systems of symbols are not merely cognitive carriers of meaning. They elicit moods and motivations for persons that make cultural meaning possible in the first place. Religious symbols shape the world “by inducing in the worshipper a certain distinctive set of dispositions (tendencies, capacities, propensities, skills, habits, liabilities, pronenesses [sic])

5 Ibid., 91.
6 Ibid., 94.
which lend a chronic character to the flow of his activity and the quality of his experience.”

By participating in the religious system, the worshipper appropriates these dispositions through an interaction with the symbols of that religion or culture and begins to “behave” in light of this appropriation. Religion, and hence culture, is a social text to which each person is capable of both performing and understanding if they attend to the symbols of that culture.

Yet, why is it necessary to create this meaningful world through the use of symbols? Geertz writes, “For those able to embrace them…religious symbols provide a cosmic guarantee not only for their ability to comprehend the world, but also…to give a precision to their feeling, a definition to their emotions which enables them, morosely or joyfully, grimly or cavalierly, to endure it.”

The human person needs religious symbols because they make it possible to both create, as well as inhabit, a meaningful universe in which there is an order to the inexplicable aspects of human life. Religion moves the human person beyond the vision offered by a commonsense, scientific, and aesthetic perspective of existence. Because of this, religion has to do with the “really real,” the union of metaphysics and a way of life. But, the mere existence of these religious symbols does not necessarily lead to their appropriation by any person within a community.

Here, Geertz suggests that ritual is the cultural practice that leads to this appropriation. He writes, “In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turns out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic

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8 Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural Symbol,” 95.
10 Geertz, 104.
11 Ibid., 108.
12 Ibid., 112.
13 Ibid.
transformation in one’s sense of reality.…” Ritual involves the symbols of a religion in performative motion, an enactment that forms each person toward a new way of perceiving the world. Having appropriated the metaphysical beliefs “carried” in the religious symbols through the performance of the ritual, the person now views the commonsense world with religious eyes. Religious ritual is that unique cultural performance in which the religious symbol system transmits meaning to persons at the very same time that it enables cultural appropriation.

Therefore, Geertz presumes that human beings have the capacity for ritual engagement insofar as they are human and thus concerned with questions of transcendent meaning. Further, by carrying out this ritual action, each person comes to appropriate the meaning of that religious system. There are two problems with Geertz’ conception of the function of religious ritual, one related to his notion of symbols as carriers of meaning and the other touching upon the role of ritual in cultural appropriation. First, cultural meaning does not reside in any symbol or system of symbols, religious or otherwise. Rather, meaning is always achieved through the interaction of the cognitive structures of a particular person and a cultural and social world. As the cognitive anthropologist Bradd Shore writes:

*Cultural meaning construction* is a specific kind of assimilation, requiring two distinct cognitive processes. First, a conventional form of a cognitive model is derived from instituted models present in the social environment. Second, a novel experience is organized for an individual in relation to the conventional cognitive model, providing a significant degree of sharing in the way individuals within a community experience the world. Cultural cognition is a special kind of meaning-seeking activity closely related to more general processes of meaning construction.

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 114.
16 Ibid., 122.
18 Shore, *Culture in Mind*, 319.
19 Ibid.
Shore’s claim requires elaboration, touching upon some of the concerns in the field of cognitive anthropology. Included among these concerns are the means by which cultural meaning is transmitted from generation to generation, as well as how a specific culture shapes interpersonal thoughts, feelings, and motivations.\textsuperscript{20} One theory that has become prominent among cognitive anthropologists is that of cultural models. By cultural models, anthropologists mean culturally formed cognitive schemas that “are learned, internalized patterns of thought-feeling that mediate both the interpretation of on-going experience and the reconstruction of memories.”\textsuperscript{21} In essence, they are the lenses gradually acquired through dwelling within a culture that allow a person to make sense of new experiences and interpret his or her life as a meaningful narrative within a community.

According to Shore, there are two major types of cultural models, including mental and instituted models.\textsuperscript{22} Mental models are both personal and conventional. Personal mental models are individual ways of making meaning in the world that “are idiosyncratic in that they are not shared in their details by others in my community.”\textsuperscript{23} Prominent among these personal models are mnemonic devices and mental maps. When I think of the city of Boston, forming a mental map of the landscape, I have specific points of reference that are unique to my experience of this city. For the most part, these models are private, and though inevitably shaped by a culture, are peculiar to the person who employs this model. Conventional personal models, on the other hand, are social ways of thinking, acting, behaving, and desiring “that constrain attention and

\textsuperscript{20} Strauss and Quinn, \textit{A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning} 8.
\textsuperscript{22} Shore, \textit{Culture in Mind}, 46-52.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 47.
guide what is perceived as salient...."24 They are the shared lenses of a culture. The ability of a classroom of teenagers to agree in their description of the perfect male and female body, without prior discussion, is evidence of the ubiquity of these conventional models.

Related to mental models are instituted models. Shore writes, “Instituted models are social institutions—conventional, patterned public forms such as greetings, calendars, cockfights, discourse genres, houses, public spaces, chants, conventional body postures, and even deliberately orchestrated aromas.”25 These public cultural models are the material of a culture, creations that serve as the prime source for developing new mental models, as well as expressing previously appropriated models. Instituted models are found in museums, concert halls, educational curricula, formal and informal etiquette, as well as ritual itself. When a cultural model is no longer congruent with conventional mental models, then this instituted model becomes antiquated or a crisis of meaning ensues.26 Out of this crisis, new instituted models will inevitably come into existence. In some sense, this process of developing new instituted models is part of the natural development of any culture. One style of architecture gives way to another; educational curricula are changed to reflect the conventional models of the society in which they are developed; new forms of narrative arise that alter the genre of the novel. Inevitably, each of these cultural developments (or regressions, depending upon one’s perspective) is a source of conflict within a society. Yet, it is also the very opportunity for learning.

A cultural model, therefore, may consist of narrative structures, verbal formulas, tropes and metaphors, images of interpersonal space, conceptions of time and social relationships, intellectual and theoretical theories of the world, and scripted ways of behaving. All of these

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 51.
26 Ibid.
models may exist in instituted ways through the material of any culture, as well as within the mind of each person through a multiplicity of personal models that enable a person to make meaning. And further, each person is always making sense of these cultural models in light of new experiences. Cultural models do not communicate meaning directly but will elicit memories, thoughts, desires, and motivations that are part of a larger repertoire of previously appropriated cultural models, both personal and conventional. The production of meaning is “an active construction by an intentional, sentient, and creative mind…between the conventional forms of cultural life and their inner representations in consciousness.” Simply, human beings are trying to make sense of the outside material of a culture, including ritual, through what is inside, the mind. Meaning occurs through this interaction.

What does this have to do with ritual action? Simply, ritual, a kind of cultural performance, does not communicate meaning directly. Rather, it elicits memories, thoughts, desires, and motivations that have already been formed by a wider universe of learned cultural models shaped by human experience. A person, whether familiar with the cultural models required for any ritual performance, will interpret this performance through already appropriated cultural models. In fact, the efficacy and fruitfulness of ritual engagement within the official rite of the “religion” requires that one is at least familiar with the cultural models of which any particular ritual presumes. Cultural meaning, achieved through ritual action, is a result of a process of perceiving, thinking, analogizing, and appropriating the cultural models implicit

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27 Ibid., 56-67.
29 Shore, 372.
30 For a description of how this capacity for meaning making occurs developmentally, see Robert Kegan, In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
within a ritual action into a broader outlook upon life. Ritual, and its use of symbol (no matter how powerful these symbols may be), communicates meaning and forms identity indirectly.\textsuperscript{31}

Few ritual activities within Catholicism are more exemplary of this complicated process of cultural formation than the rite of infant baptism. This rite is an instituted model, expressing certain theological and cultural claims of Catholicism regarding this sacrament and life as a Christian.\textsuperscript{32} The preferred place and time of baptism is within the Easter Vigil or Sunday Eucharistic liturgy so as to bring out the Paschal quality of the sacrament.\textsuperscript{33} The theological imagery surrounding infant baptism within the rite is becoming a child of God, being enlightened, as well as washing away the effects of original sin.\textsuperscript{34} The responsibility for the developing faith of the infant is placed in the hands of the parents and godparents, and to some extent the gathered assembly.\textsuperscript{35} Yet, as any pastoral minister is aware, the cultural meaning communicated through the instituted model of the rite of baptism is not necessarily the same act

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\item \textsuperscript{32} Yet, even within this rite itself, there are several theological models operative that complicate any act of meaning making through the sacrament. See, Mark Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” \textit{Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation}, ed. Maxwell Johnson (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 365-410.
\item \textsuperscript{33} “Rite of Baptism for Children,” in \textit{The Rites of the Catholic Church}, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), no. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{34} The prayers of exorcism before baptism for children state, “Almighty and ever-living God, you sent your only Son into the world to cast out the power of Satan, spirit of evil, to rescue man from the kingdom of darkness, and bring him into the splendor of your kingdom of light. We pray for these children: set them free from original sin, make them temples of your glory, and send your Holy Spirit to dwell within them. We ask this through Christ our Lord” (no. 49). Also, “Almighty God, you sent your only Son to rescue us from the slavery of sin, and to give us freedom only your sons and daughters enjoy. We now pray for these children who will have to face the world with its temptations, and fight the devil in all his cunning. Your Son died and rose again to save us. By his victory over sin and death, cleanse these children from the stain of original sin. Strengthen them with the grace of Christ, and watch over them at every step in life’s journey. We ask this through Christ our Lord” (no. 49). Together these prayers make clear God’s adoption of the human person through baptism, the enlightenment that takes place through this adoption, as well as the effects of sin that the sacrament washes away.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., no. 56.
\end{itemize}
of meaning created by its participants. The presider of the sacrament may choose one series of prayers within the rite over another, emphasizing a baptismal theology that appeals to the presider’s mental model of the sacrament. The couple baptizing their child may miss this subtle theological performance by the priest or deacon, instead conceiving of baptism as a formal acknowledgement of new life, a rite of passage performed by the Church but ultimately about family and tradition. One pair of grandparents may express gratitude that their grandchild has been rescued from the flames of hell, while the other may see some sadness upon this occasion, since their once Jewish daughter has promised to raise her child within the Church. The assembly will have a similar range of meanings, from a sense of Paschal joy at seeing new members entering into the body of Christ, to boredom and annoyance that yet another interruption to their hearing of Mass has occurred. If the ministers within the Church desire a fruitful reception of the sacrament on the part of the infant, one that involves both understanding of the official theology of the rite by the parents and godparents, as well as a way of life that has become baptismal within the family and the assembly, they will need to be cognizant of the official theology of the rite; the presumed dispositions necessary for fruitful reception and participation within the sacrament by the various parties; and, the already acquired cognitive and motivating dispositions that act as lens through which the official meaning of the sacrament rite must pass.

Second, religious ritual is ultimately not the privileged practice for mediating the appropriation of any particular “beliefs.” Talal Asad, an anthropologist influenced by Michel Foucault’s technologies of the self, writes:

Mustn’t the ability and the will to adopt a religious standpoint be present prior to the ritual performance? That is why precisely a simple stimulus-response model of how ritual works will not do. And if that is the case, then ritual in the sense of a sacred performance cannot be the place where religious faith is attained, but the manner in
which it is (literally) played out. If we are to understand how this happens, we must
examine not only the sacred performance itself but also the entire range of available
disciplinary practices, within which dispositions are formed and sustained and through
which the possibilities of attaining the truth are marked out.36

What are the assumptions undergirding Asad’s claim? Asad is wary of any approach to
ritual that conceives of it as a cultural performance of meaningful symbols requiring decoding by
the anthropologist.37 This interpretation of ritual is in fact inherently modern, transforming ritual
action into textual analysis.38 To counteract this fallacy of modern anthropology, Asad suggests:

Ritual is therefore directed at the apt performance of what is prescribed, something that
depends on intellectual and practical disciplines but does not itself require decoding. In
other words, apt performance involves not symbols to be interpreted but abilities to be
acquired according to rules that are sanctioned by those in authority: it presupposes no
obscure meanings, but rather the formation of physical and linguistic skills.39

Asad unfolds this claim through an analysis of discipline and humility in Christian monasticism.
By participating in certain disciplinary practices, including liturgical prayer, the monks “aimed to
construct and reorganize distinctive emotions—desire (cupiditas/caritas), humility (humilitas),
remorse (contritio)—on which the central Christian virtue of obedience to God depended.”40

Ritual prayer, the material object of analysis for most modern anthropologists, is simply one
means among many that this monastic self is created and formed.41 These practices are
formative of a person’s identity if they lead to the physical and linguistic capacities necessary for
someone who is “such” a person, in this case a medieval monk who desires in this way, who is
humble in this way, who feels this type of remorse. It is this particularity that becomes important
in judging the efficacy of ritual prayer; if the ritual leads to such dispositions that culminate in a

36 Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and
37 Ibid., 131, 77.
38 Ibid., 57-58.
39 Ibid., 62.
40 Ibid., 134.
41 Mitchell, 71-72.
specific identity then it is fruitful. Yet, this formation is shared among a variety of monastic practices, including memorization of the psalms, the study of the liberal arts, and theology itself.\textsuperscript{42}

Then, in contradiction to Geertz, ritual performance is not ultimately about the appropriation of metaphysical “beliefs,” even if an important aspect of ritual performance may in fact be the shaping of belief and desire. Instead, the ritual agent engages in ritual action committed to beliefs, many metaphysical (the nature of God and the means of divine-human communication); the telos to which it is directed (the formation of a monastic self or a baptized Christian, with concomitant responsibilities); and the capacities and dispositions required to become the type of person toward which the ritual forms (the ability to praise God or to practice fasting). In the process, these beliefs and desires are gradually shaped and reformed according to the script of the ritual carried out. Religious ritual is a script for carrying out this project of “becoming” the end toward which the ritual is directed through a union of memory, thought, and desire.

Hence, Geertz’s model of ritual as symbol presumes too much regarding ritual’s unique function as a communicator of symbolic meaning and its privileged role in serving as a media for the appropriation of the beliefs of a culture. Yet, through analyzing its deficiencies, it is possible to come to a greater understanding of what makes Christian ritual formative, capable of shaping an identity. In order for ritual to function formatively, leading to a deepening of Christian faith, it requires an eventual appropriation of the dispositions that undergird the ritual performance. It

\textsuperscript{42} For a description of this monastic formation, see Jean LeClercq, O.S.B., \textit{The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982).
is not that Christian ritual is devoid of meaningful signs that communicate saving knowledge. A celebration of the Eucharist featuring incense, postures of adoration among the community, and hymns praising the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood testifies to the high Eucharistic theology held by those engaging in the sacrament. But, this is not the purpose of liturgical action—to bear witness to a Eucharistic theology. Rather, it is to transform the community of Christians to become Eucharistic, a process that will undoubtedly involve the complex interaction of the signs of that liturgy with human memory, understanding, and desire. Liturgical

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43 I note here an important departure from Mitchell’s own evaluation of ritual, particularly as laid out in his Meeting Mystery: Liturgy, Worship, Sacraments (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006). For Mitchell, the telos of Christian liturgy is a meeting between God and the human person, not the production of meaning. He writes, “Meaning, after all, is filtered, processed through human intelligence and reason that shape and massage our messages even as we transmit them. But real meetings are not “planned events” filtered first through reason; they are eruptions, raw and unscripted. The sheer suddenness of meeting exposes us (as it exposed Jesus on the cross) to the peril of a radical Otherness” (62). Mitchell fails to recognize in his distinction that every meeting between persons is always filtered through a previously appropriated meaning. Even Mitchell’s description of ritual as eruption and radical Otherness requires a familiarity with postmodern and post-structuralist philosophy and literary theory. Thus, by arguing that ritual is not about the communication of meaning, I am not saying that it is meaningless. Instead, within Christianity, liturgical prayer is the practice through which a person pursues the teleological goal of union with Christ through the celebration of the Paschal mystery. To engage fruitfully in it will require some desire for Christological union, as well as some recognition of the importance of the Paschal Mystery. See, Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1067-1068.

44 Sacrosanctum Concilium states, “At the last supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his body and blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the church, a memorial of his death and resurrection, a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, “a paschal banquet in which Christ is received, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.” The church, therefore, spares no effort in trying to ensure that, when present at this mystery of faith, Christian believers should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, having a good grasp of it through the rites and prayers, they should take part in the sacred action, actively, fully aware, and devoutly. They should be formed by God’s word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to offer themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other, so that final God may be all in all.” In Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, trans. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), nos. 47-48.
prayer, within the Eucharistic context, is a script that develops the physical and linguistic skills for remembering, understanding, and desiring as a Eucharistic being. And this requires the acquisition of a certain way of engaging in worship itself that needs to be taught through theological and spiritual formation, as much as within the official contours of ritual prayer. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy makes this point quite clearly: “But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace lest they receive it in vain (see 2 Cor 6:1).” Here, an Augustinian mystagogical catechesis, examined in chapters three through five, has an important role to play in the formation of the requisite dispositions for liturgical prayer.

Victor Turner: Formation through Ritual Performance

Though Geertz describes ritual action as a cultural performance, the later work of Victor Turner, is better characterized according to ritual performance. Turner refers to ritual performances as “…loops in a linear progression, when the social flow bends back on itself, in a way does violence to its development, meanders, inverts, perhaps lies to itself, and puts everything so to speak into the subjunctive mood as well as the reflexive voice.” To understand Turner’s approach to ritual performance requires a grasp of his cultural theory of social drama.

Society, for Turner, is fundamentally characterized by structural conflict. In his fieldwork in African villages, Turner noticed that “something like “drama” was constantly
emerging, even erupting, from the otherwise fairly even surfaces of social life.\textsuperscript{48} Traditional objects of anthropological inquiry, such as kinship ties, social class, and political order, were not static meanings contained within symbols but an active construction of meaning constantly being negotiating through various forms of personal, cultural, and social communication.\textsuperscript{49} If the anthropologist became attentive to these social dramas, then he or she would detect their activation, and thus come to know something about the culture under examination as it was in the process of movement.\textsuperscript{50} Turner writes:

“social drama,” as I have called an objectively isolable sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic type, may provide materials for many stories, depending upon the social-structural, political, psychological, philosophical, and sometimes, theological perspectives of the narrators.\textsuperscript{51}

Yet, these traces of the social drama in literature, art, music, and performance are possible only because all social dramas are already structured, exhibiting “a regular course of events which can be grouped in successive phases of public action.”\textsuperscript{52} There is both a structural and performative quality to human action that makes it meaningful.

The structure of a social drama for Turner consists of four parts.\textsuperscript{53} First, a breach of a social and cultural norm takes place. The breaching agent may break this norm intentionally, such as a declaration of war by Congress, or by happenstance, through committing a crime that fractures a community. Second, a crisis occurs within the society affected by the breach. This crisis is exacerbated by the taking of sides, which only leads to the widening of that initial breach. The anthropologist, at this stage, may begin to see the shifting social and cultural norms

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{51} Turner, \textit{The Anthropology of Performance}, 33.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{53} Turner, \textit{From Ritual to Theatre}, 70-71.
that are the source for the drama in the first place. While the norms may change, the structure between norms stays the same. Third, a society responds to the breach through “redressive or remedial procedures.” These procedures “may range from personal advice and informal arbitration, to formal juridical and legal machinery, and to resolve certain kinds of crisis, to the performance of public ritual.” Finally, a social drama concludes with a “reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between the contending parties.” Peace is restored until the next breach of norms.

How does ritual performance act as a redressive or remedial maneuver for the effective conclusion of a social drama? Ritual, for Turner, is a liminal, reflexive, and subjunctive performance. By liminal, Turner means “any condition outside or on the peripheries of everyday life.” Because of the liminal quality of ritual action, ritual has a tendency to erase, at least temporarily, the social distinctions that are essential to the functioning of that society. Through this entrance into a liminal space, the moment of crisis subsides momentarily. Yet to allow for this liminality, ritual needs to be intentionally designed as consisting of actions and words that are precisely outside of the norm of quotidian affairs. Trials, liturgical rites, and initiation ceremonies are examples of these liminal spaces.

In addition, ritual is a reflexive activity. Defining reflexivity, Turner writes:

Performatve reflexivity is a condition in which a sociocultural group, or its most perceptive members acting representatively, turn, bend or reflect back upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components which make up their public “selves.”

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54 Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, 34.
55 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 70.
56 Ibid., 71.
Elsewhere, Turner refers to this reflexivity of cultural performance as a hall of mirrors, inverting and distorting cultural norms in such a way that it leads the cultural performer to an increased self-knowledge of these norms.\(^{60}\) Ritual action and its reflexive quality as a form of play “is more profoundly revealing of a culture than how they work, giving access to their ‘heart values.’”\(^{61}\) For example, in the context of an American criminal trial, one can see certain core values of a society, not simply stated but “in performance.” The blindness of justice. The shared sense of responsibility within a society for its members. The presumed innocence of the accused, until proven guilty. These norms are not normally stated explicitly but instead are worked out through the performances of lawyers, judges, defendants, witnesses, and the media.

Finally, ritual functions within the subjunctive mood, presenting not an ordered world but the world of desire, of possibility, a universe “as if.”\(^{62}\) For Turner, the capacity of the human person to engage in the subjunctive mood is precisely what enables ritual action to function both liminally and reflexively. The expert practitioner of ritual enters immediately into the flow, “an interior state which can be described as the merging of action and awareness, the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement, a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic, with no apparent need for conscious intervention on our part.”\(^{63}\) And the loss of the subjunctive capacity within the human person, the ability to enter into this flow, is what makes ritual performance difficult in modernity, according to Turner.\(^{64}\) Turner’s critique of the reforms of the Roman Mass following the second Vatican Council, no matter how

\(^{60}\) Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 105-106.
\(^{62}\) Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 83.
\(^{63}\) Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, 55.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., 170.
misplaced, is founded in this desire for Christians to experience the world in a subjunctive manner. He writes:

Participation in dramatic mysteries and contemplation of powerful dominant symbols undoubtedly plays a role in moving participants out of their mundane selves and allowing them to act, think, and feel “reflexively,” that is, by placing their current lives in vital relation to a supremely noble paradigm, the blemished against the unblemished, the selfish against the sacrificial.

The mysterious nature of pre-Conciliar liturgical prayer is what enabled the Church to maintain a subjunctive capacity, to enter fully into flow, and to imagine a world imbued with divine presence, even in the midst of a growing secularism.

Therefore, the presumed capacities of the human person, required by Turner’s notion of ritual, include the ability to perform a specific activity as outside the realm of the quotidian; recognition of the cultural norms that ritual reflects back upon; and a certain competence in abiding within the imaginative possibilities and flow of the subjunctive mood. Turner’s model of ritual is in fact quite helpful in discerning some general dispositions required to engage in a sacramental activity within Catholicism. As the ritual agent traces the sign of the cross on his or her forehead, lips, and heart before the reading of the Gospel, this agent is performing an action that is unlike other forms of bodily engagement in its very intentionality. The agent is not swatting away a fly or scratching an itch but marking the body with the cross. In addition, the agent will need to know why he or she performs this action. By tracing the sign of the cross on the head, the lips, and the heart, the agent is, at least according to the official interpretation of the action, proclaiming that he or she will keep the Gospel in the mind, on the lips, and in the heart. Finally, the ritual agent enters the subjunctive mode, the place where through listening to the words of the Gospel, he or she might begin to live according to those words. A specific attitude

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65 Baldovin, Reforming the Liturgy, 90-92.
67 Ibid., 524.
or posture is assumed through this ritual action. In this way, Turner’s theory of ritual efficacy is linked to the prior appropriation of certain dispositions, as well as developing physical and linguistic capacities for ritual performance. And one’s identity as a future ritual agent is shaped by these capacities.

Nonetheless, these aptitudes are not specific to ritual performance, a problem with the approach of most ritual theorists. As Catherine Bell makes clear, performative theories of ritual “fail to account for the way in which most cultures see important distinctions between ritual and other types of activities.” One may rightly wonder, in Turner’s work, if the “content” and “structure” of the ritual action matters as much as its ability to enter one more deeply into ritual flow. Simply, Turner does not note the end toward which ritual performance is directed: the creation of a specific type of person. Ultimately, Turner remains entrenched in figuring out how ritual functions in general, instead of focusing on the means by which ritual acts within the particulars of a specific culture. This cultural specificity is pursued in the last model of ritual as a practice.

Catherine Bell: Ritual as Practice

Both Geertz and Turner pursue a theory of ritual as a human action exhibiting characteristics cross-culturally. In Catherine Bell’s Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, the author rejects a universal definition of ritual action. These definitions, while helpful for the anthropologist, are often incomprehensible to the culture under examination. Too frequently, this anthropological project “becomes a reflection of the theorist’s method and the motor of a

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68 Bell, Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions, 76.
discourse in which the concerns of the theorist take center stage.”\textsuperscript{70} As noted in this chapter, Geertz’s and Turner’s own theological and philosophical vision of religion becomes the prominent lens by which the ritual act is analyzed. Avoiding this grand narrative of ritual, Bell recommends, “rather than impose categories of what is or is not ritual, it may be more useful to look at how human activities establish and manipulate their own differentiation and purposes—in the very doing of the act within the context of other ways of acting.”\textsuperscript{71} For Bell, ritual is not the performance of a system of symbols or the resolution of a social drama but a culturally specific practice, one that she calls ritualization.\textsuperscript{72}

Bell develops her theory of ritualization out of the anthropological work of Pierre Bourdieu.\textsuperscript{73} She notes the value of Bourdieu’s work in his complicated, and often obscure, explanation of the term \textit{habitus}. According to Bourdieu, a \textit{habitus} is “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a \textit{matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions} and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks…”\textsuperscript{74} The appropriation of this \textit{habitus} leads to the disposition by a culture or social body to act in specific ways. By analyzing the socially informed body, “with its tastes and distastes, its compulsions and repulsions, with, in a world, \textit{all its senses}…”\textsuperscript{75} one comes to know the various dispositions that make up a specific culture, and hence some understanding regarding the reason of its actions.\textsuperscript{76} For Bell, an essential aspect of this cultural

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 54.  
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 74.  
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 88.  
\textsuperscript{74} Bourdieu, \textit{Outline of a Theory of Practice}, 83.  
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 124.  
\textsuperscript{76} For a critique of Bourdieu’s understanding of \textit{habitus}, see Michel de Certeau, \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life}, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 50-60.
disposition is a sense of ritual. She writes, “It is through a socially acquired sense of ritual that members of a society know how to improvise a birthday celebration, stage an elaborate wedding, or rush through a minimally adequate funeral.”

Only by attending to the social body and its sense of ritual is it possible to comprehend how and why a society engages in ritual practice.

What does Bell mean by practice? She locates four general features of human practice; namely, practice is situational, strategic, effective through misrecognition, and motivated by redemptive hegemony. By situational, Bell means that all practices can only be understood within the social body through which they are carried out. Context and setting are essential in interpreting any cultural practice, because every practice forms and is formed by that culture to which it belongs. Practice is strategic insofar as it operates, not according to an intellectual logic, but “according to a ceaseless play of situationally effective schemes, tactics, and strategies.”

The baseball player, who wears the same “lucky” unwashed socks during a hitting streak, is engaging in strategic practice. Hitting a baseball is a matter of attention, correct timing in one’s swing, knowledge of the park in which one is playing the game, and studying the tendencies of the opposing pitchers. The grammar of the game does not involve wearing dirty socks. Yet, baseball players have a remarkable number of sacrosanct practices that they employ during hitting streaks, no-hitters and perfect games, and the playoffs that seem to have some effect upon how the game is played. In other words, baseball players employ specific practices not because they are always the most reasonable but because they are effective within the society in which they belong. The practitioner will rarely understand how or why this practice began to be performed in the first place but will nonetheless engage in it.

77 Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, 80.
78 Bell, Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions, 81.
79 Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, 81.
80 Ibid., 82.
The effectiveness of the strategic nature of practices is a result of the “misrecognition” of the function and ends of a specific practice. By performing this practice in this way, something happens, which may or may not be evident to the observer of the practice. Misrecognition is at play in the description of the prominent ritual of the marriage proposal within the American context. Descriptively, the marriage proposal consists of one person, giving a diamond ring to another and asking the recipient of the ring to enter into the state of marriage. From the standpoint of the outside observer, one may rightly ask is it necessary to the ritual action for the gift to be a diamond ring and not something else like tickets to the circus or a set of Tiffany crystal? Yet, to the couple “becoming engaged,” they would never think about this action as the bestowing of a gift or the speaking of words. Instead, they would describe it as the beginning of their married lives together, the precise moment in which their relationship became something else. Even if, the proposal is really nothing more than one person getting on his or her knee, saying some words, hearing a response, and then putting a ring on the finger of what has now become one’s betrothed. Nothing has changed, yet because of the action and words spoken within this culture, everything has changed for this couple. Meaning occurs through the misrecognition of this specific gift (the ring), this specific action (the proposal) as filled with a precise socially inherited meaning (engagement), creating a new status in the relationship.

Finally, in discussing the last feature of practice, Bell writes:

a redemptive hegemony is...a strategic and practical orientation for acting, a framework possible only insofar as it is embedded in the act itself. As such, of course, the redemptive hegemony of practice does not reflect reality more or less effectively; it creates it more or less effectively. To analyze practice in terms of its vision of redemptive hegemony is, therefore, to formulate the unexpressed assumptions that constitute the actor’s strategic understanding of the place, purpose, and trajectory of the act.  

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81 Ibid., 82.
82 Ibid., 85.
The ritual act of engagement in an American context involves a host of unarticulated assumptions that the practice of proposing does not simply reflect but creates. Marriage is an important, albeit non-essential, rite of passage for a person. Ideally, married love is eternal, characterized by romance, and is a free act by an individual who has fallen in love with another person. A diamond ring is that material object that best expresses the desire and commitment for married love. These assumptions, practiced within the ritual of proposal, create a vision of the world through which meaning occurs. The meaning is not a systematic one but instead “is a lived system of meanings, a more or less unified moral order, which is confirmed and nuanced in experience to construct a person’s sense of reality and identity.” For the most part, people are unaware of these implicit assumptions and meanings in human action.

Yet, what separates ritual from other forms of practice? Bell proposes a culturally specific theory of ritualization, “a way of acting that distinguishes itself from other ways of acting in the very way it does what it does; moreover it makes this distinction for specific purposes.” Ritualization is fundamentally a bodily way of making contrasts and distinctions within a culture. It is a practice that draws attention to the significance of this activity, and for this reason may not immediately appear as outside the realm of daily life. Bell writes:

If ritual is interpreted in terms of practice, it becomes clear that formality, fixity, and repetition are not intrinsic qualities of ritual so much as they are frequent, but not universal strategy for producing ritualized acts…For example, the formal activities of gathering for a Catholic mass distinguish this ‘meal’ from daily eating activities, but the informality of a mass celebrated in a private home with a folk guitar and kitchen utensils is meant to set up another contrast (the spontaneous authentic celebration versus the formal inauthentic mass) which the informal service expects to dominate. It is only necessary that the cultural context include some consensus concerning the opposition and relative values of personal sincerity and intimate participation vis-à-vis routinized and impersonal participation.

83 Ibid., 83.
84 Bell, Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions, 81.
85 Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, 90.
86 Ibid., 92.
According to Bell, “The purpose of ritualization is to ritualize persons, who deploy schemes of ritualization in order to dominate (shift or nuance) other, nonritualized situations to render them more coherent with the values of the ritualizing schemes and capable of molding perceptions.”

A mastery of ritualization includes an internalization of these cultural schemes of distinction and contrast to such an extent that a person may ritualize in whatever context he or she finds oneself. One begins to kneel, not only within the Eucharistic rite of the Catholic liturgy, but in all prayer contexts as a way of entering into the presence of God. Bell comments, “In effect, the real principles of ritual practice are nothing other than the flexible sets of schemes and strategies acquired and deployed by an agent who has embodied them.” Ritual action is formative, for Bell, if it leads to an internalization of these sets of schemes and strategies embodied in ritual action. And this internalization results in a person, who has mastered a culture’s sense of ritual, capable of transforming a world into an arena for ritualization.

The consequences of Bell’s argument for the analysis of ritual action are important. First, one can only determine the nature and effectiveness of any ritual action within the confines of the particular culture under examination. In other words, Christian liturgical prayer is always more than a species of the genus “ritual.” Rather, it involves unique ways of acting that are effective because of certain assumptions about the nature of reality undergirding the actions. Therefore, the dispositions necessary for Christian liturgical prayer are found only within an examination of these specific practices, cultures, and theological beliefs.

Second, ritual mastery requires not only a familiarity with the schemes and strategies of a culture but an appropriation of these schemes by each person. In fact, it is crucial that the ritual

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87 Ibid., 108.
88 Ibid., 107.
89 Ibid., 100.
90 Bell, Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions, 82.
agent appropriate the dispositions and structures of a particular culture to become a master of that ritual action. The internalization of these strategies and schemes means that ritual action is not simply something performed upon a person but the creation of a ritual agent who become capable of ritualizing. Developing the disposition necessary to practice ritualization culminates in the creation of “a ritualized agent who has acquired an instinctive knowledge of schemes that can be used to order his or her experience so as to render it more or less coherent with these ritual values concerning the sacred.”91 Ritualization is a kind of wisdom, a way of living, in which the human person is empowered to transform the mundane into the sacred.

Third, Bell’s analysis of ritualization provides a schema for understanding what Guardini means when he speaks of the need to recall a forgotten way of doing things and what the General Directory for Catechesis calls a liturgical way of life. The Christian, who has appropriated the cultural dispositions of a liturgical rite are capable of “creating” a universe imbued with doxology. Reading Scripture becomes an occasion not simply to listen to words or gain information but to encounter God through the living word. Studying Christian doctrine is never merely a cognitive exercise, but one in which the very practice of studying is an instance of conversion toward and praise of God for the wonders worked in creation, in redemption, and the promise of a beatific life. Christian living, as the formation of virtues and the transformation of unjust social structures, becomes an extension of liturgical praise whereby loving God truly involves learning to love one’s neighbor rightly, a novel way of perceiving God in the neighbor. Therefore, a liturgical way of life consists of practices that enable the Christian to transform each action into an occasion of divine worship, a spiritual oblation offered to God.

91 Ibid.
Conclusion

To sum up, an examination of these three anthropological models of religious ritual reveals a necessity for a person to cultivate certain dispositions to engage in meaningful ritual action, one transformative of a whole way of life. One must be familiar with, and gradually come to internalize the dispositions implicit within the liturgical rites of a specific community in order to acquire the *habitus* necessary for the practice of ritualization. These dispositions may include various ideas and practices that are essential for genuine liturgical engagement within that tradition, including ascetic practices, faith in Jesus Christ, a notion of human nature as fallen yet graced, a familiarity with prominent Scriptural images and a habit of interpreting these writings, a sense of leisure and playfulness, a certain aesthetic, etc. The appropriation of these dispositions is what allows a person to practice “ritualizing” in all aspects of life within a specific culture. And, there is a wisdom and intelligence in this practice of ritualization. By eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ, the Christian participates in Christ’s death and resurrection, becoming mystically united to the body of Christ. In this action, eating is not simply physical nourishment but assimilation into the Triune God. In order for Eucharistic eating to bear fruit in the believer’s life, he or she must believe in the *res et sacramentum* at the heart of this *sacramentum* and desire to become the type of person, who is mystically united with Christ through Eucharistic eating. Eating in such an instance becomes believing, and acts of faith in one’s whole life, are perceived as part of the Eucharistic pedagogy of the Church.

Nonetheless, while anthropology can provide an orientation for the Christian theologian to analyze the worship practices of Christians, it is not specific enough to guide this theologian toward a program of formation for Christian liturgical prayer. Anthropology reminds the Christian theologian that certain dispositions are necessary for fruitful liturgical prayer and that
human beings are not immediately capable of engaging in the ritual action of a particular community. Liturgical prayer requires a theological and spiritual formation so that each Christian may acquire the proper dispositions necessary to participate most fruitfully in liturgical prayer. It also allows the Christian theologian to see liturgical prayer as initiating the Christian into a whole way of living, an acquired wisdom of transforming the mundane into the sacred, the material into the sacramental, to move from the sign to the reality. Only through the appropriation of these dispositions does one begin to live a true liturgical life, capable of transforming human experience into a spiritual oblation.

I would like to suggest that these insights from anthropology draw the Christian theologian into a closer examination of a liturgical theology that takes account of the necessary dispositions required for liturgical prayer, as well as the type of person created through liturgical action. Liturgical theology, in this sense, becomes the analysis of the dispositions that enable fruitful liturgical prayer, the type of person created through worship, as well as the means through which the appropriation of these dispositions transforms the way that one lives within the world as a creature made for worship. Only then may the catechetical theologian begin to develop a plan for catechetical formation that assists the Christian in appropriating these dispositions. I now turn to an account of these dispositions, the type of person created through worship, and a method of appropriation in the mystagogical theology and catechesis of Augustine of Hippo.
CHAPTER THREE

AUGUSTINE’S MYSTAGOGICAL THEOLOGY: USING THE SIGNS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

In chapter two, I proposed that one can only determine the formative quality of ritual action by attending to the particular culture under examination. This is because the rituals of any culture presume certain ways of abiding within the world constitutive of that ritual action. While anthropological theory may guide the analysis of the theologian, functioning as a heuristic for further inquiry, it cannot replace the difficult, though salutary, discipline of theological study. Hence, it is up to the liturgical and catechetical theologian to contemplate more deeply the theological foundations of liturgy to discern the dispositions requisite for fruitful liturgical prayer; how the Christian is shaped through the practice of this fruitful worship; and the means through which the appropriation of these dispositions culminates in a liturgical identity, a person capable of offering spiritual oblations.

In the second part of this study in liturgical formation, I pursue one such entrée into the theological foundations of liturgical prayer. The source for this account is the mystagogical theology and practice of Augustine of Hippo. Fundamentally, for Augustine, mystagogy is not simply an education into the signs of liturgy but rather a formation into a way of remembering, understanding, and loving God through signs, constitutive of Christian worship. Therefore, Augustine’s mystagogical theology and catechesis serves as an excellent source for developing a catechetical approach that enables the human person to offer all of one’s existence as a spiritual oblation to God, both in and outside a liturgical context. Simply, Augustine provides the
catechetical theology that may come to infuse the art of liturgical formation. This liturgical and catechetical theology will be examined in three stages, corresponding to the anthropological interruptions of chapter two. Chapter three presents the foundations of Augustine’s mystagogical theology, emphasizing the importance of the pedagogy of divine signification in the salvation of the human person. The fundamental disposition necessary for fruitful liturgical prayer is the capacity to use the signs of both the Scriptures and liturgical-sacramental prayer to enjoy God. Chapter four considers what the human person becomes through fruitfully worshiping God—the restored *imago Dei*, remembering, understanding, and loving God. Chapter five reads Augustine’s sermons as mystagogical exercises, characterized by a pedagogy of remembering, understanding, and loving God.

The present chapter proceeds in the following manner. In the first part, I offer an account of liturgical prayer in Hippo insofar as it is possible to recreate the shape of baptism, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year in this small North African village. In the second, I present the basis of Augustine’s mystagogical theology, the relationship between sign and understanding. Finally, I draw out the theological foundations of Augustine’s conception of liturgical worship in light of his theology of divine signification through a reading of *De vera religione*, *De doctrina christiana*, and Letters 54 and 55 to Januarius.

In *De vera religione*, the uniqueness of Christianity in the ancient world is its union of wisdom and worship. In their worship of false images, human beings fell away from God, yet in the act of divine worship made possible through Christ, the salvation of each person occurs. Christian worship, for Augustine, is fundamentally a salvific renewal of human perception such that one begins to know and love God as the creator and re-creator of the world. The Christian, through the gift of Christ, perceives the true nature of the world as a sign intended by God to be
used for worshipping. And human beings are capacitated for this sacramental worship by an ecclesial program of refashioning and renewal through the Scriptures and the liturgical rites of the Church.

In *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine takes up this theme of worshipping God by means of the created signs of the world as intrinsic to the sacramental logic of Christian teaching. Through the beautiful signs of the created order, human beings were created for divine contemplation, meant to use the visible world to enjoy the Triune God. Yet, something has gone awry in the human capacity to read these signs. Augustine provides a Christological account of the healing of the human person, who is taught to refer signs to their proper referent. Part of this reformation of the human capacity to participate in divine signification is learning to worship the referent of the sign, rather than the sign itself, through the mystagogical formation into knowledge and love afforded by the Scriptures. Letters 54 and 55, addressed to Januarius, show how this same mystagogical formation is possible through contemplating God by means of the beautiful and truthful signs of the Christian sacramental economy. At the conclusion of this chapter, I answer the first question posed by the anthropological interruption of chapter two: the necessary disposition for fruitful liturgical prayer is to know how to use the signs to worship the referent, the Triune God.

**Liturgal Prayer in Hippo**

In early 387, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) returned to Milan from his pre-baptismal retreat at Cassiciacum.¹ On the night of April 24, 387, during the vigil of Easter, Augustine was plunged into the baptismal font at Milan, alongside his son, Adeodatus and his close friend,

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Alypius. The culmination of an intellectual and affective transformation, mediated through the sacrament, was remarkable for Augustine. As he writes in his *Confessions*:

During the days that followed I could not get enough of the wonderful sweetness that filled me as I meditated upon your deep design for the salvation of the human race. How copiously I wept at your hymns and canticles, how intensely was I moved by the lovely harmonies of your singing Church! Those voices flooding my ears, and the truth was distilled into my heart until it overflowed in loving devotion; my tears ran down, and I was the better for them.

Once moved to grief by the tragedy of Dido, Augustine now cries the sweet tears of conversion and praise, elicited through the performance of the liturgical rites of his own baptism and the mystagogical catechesis provided by Ambrose during the octave of Easter. From the time of his ordination as a priest in 391 and bishop in 395 until his death in 430, Augustine would become responsible for these liturgical rites and the ensuing mystagogical catechesis in the diocese of Hippo Regius.

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2 Ibid., 114-15.
4 Augustine, *conf*. 1.13.20
5 Ambrose’s mystagogical catecheses are recorded in *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis*. An essential aspect of these sermons is the movement toward what Craig Satterlee describes as seeing with the eyes of faith (*Ambrose of Milan’s Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 342). So, Ambrose in *De sacramentis*, commenting upon the baptistery, writes, “You came into the baptistery, you saw the water, you saw the bishop, you saw the levite: ‘Is that all?’ I saw, indeed it is all. There truly is all, where there is all innocence, all devotion, all grace, all sanctification. You saw all you could see with the eyes of the body, all that is open to human sight” (*Ambrose, De sacramentis*, in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.*, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. Edward Yarnold, S.J. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 104.
6 A number of biographical accounts exist that describe Augustine’s ordination to the priesthood and episcopacy. Serge Lancel’s stands out for its use of Augustine’s own writings to contextualize this period of time, particularly his own trembling before the difficult work of learning to preach about complicated matters in simple terms (*St. Augustine*, 150-85). Peter Brown’s *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) provides a similar account to Lancel historically but inserts his own conclusions regarding Augustine’s psychological state produced by the events of his ordination. Brown writes, “Augustine indeed, had decided that he would never reach the fulfillment that he first thought
Yet, what were the liturgical rites that Augustine would have been responsible for in Hippo? Some care must be taken in answering this question. Unlike Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan, there is no evidence that Augustine composed a mystagogical treatise unfolding the meaning of the liturgical-sacramental rites. Further, as Paul Bradshaw has argued mystagogical homilies on baptism and Eucharist do not necessarily provide a comprehensive description of the celebrated rites but may emphasize only what the homilist thought was expressly important for the neophytes. Nonetheless, it is possible to achieve a general outline of some of the liturgical rites that Augustine performed as priest and bishop in Hippo, particularly relative to initiation, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year through Augustine’s sermons and letters. These rites will also provide the general structure of my exploration of Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy in chapter five.

was promised to him by a Christian Platonism: he would never impose a victory of mind over body in himself, he would never achieve the wrap contemplation of the ideal philosopher. It is the most drastic change that a man may have to accept: it involved nothing less than the surrender of the bright future he thought he had gained at Cassiciacum (140). Of course, this account presumes that Augustine’s primary concern before his ordination was becoming a Christian Platonist, a claim that is made difficult by later scholarship that sees Augustine’s Platonism as less integral to his understanding of Christianity, serving more of a pedagogical purpose rather than a theological one. A representation of this scholarship, is found in Paul Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 82-87. Finally, F. van der Meer’s *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961) offers the reader the fullest account of Augustine’s ministry as priest and bishop in the diocese of Hippo. Part I of the Book (3-274) is particularly important for developing an image of the audience and pastoral duties that shaped Augustine’s ministry as priest and bishop.


No work offers a better account of the rites of initiation in Hippo during Augustine’s episcopacy than William Harmless’ *Augustine and the Catechumenate*. From Harmless’ careful translation and reading of Augustine’s sermons, liturgical and catechetical scholars are now conscious of the major stages of initiation in Hippo, as well as important rhetorical features of the catechetical program pursued by Augustine. The first stage for each catechumen was that signing with the sacrament of salt that marked one’s formal entrance into the process of initiation. Before receiving this sacrament of salt, the catechumen listened to the narrative of salvation, beginning from Genesis and concluding with the present day situation of the Church, told in such a way “to convince the mind and to arouse the emotions.” This first signing with salt, presumably to be proceeded by others, was then followed by an introductory mystagogy, one in which Augustine made clear “that, while the things that we can see indeed stand as symbols of divine realities, the realities themselves which we cannot see are to be honored in those we can see.” Augustine connects the celebration of the rite, the visible, with the capacity for the person to refer that rite to its referent, the divine realities.

Henceforth, the catechumen would attend Augustine’s sermons as the substantive part of their formal instruction. Harmless, while aware of the difficulty of isolating the curriculum for such sessions, locates one sequence of sermons (including *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 119-33, 95 and *Tractatus in evangelium Ioannis* 1-12) that took place between December and the beginning

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10 This rite is partially described in Augustine’s *De catechizandis rudibus*. Augustine writes, “When you have finished saying all of this, the newcomer is to be asked whether he believes what has been said and whether he desires to abide by it in practice. If he answers in the affirmative, he should without doubt be marked with the sign of the cross in the usual way and treated according to the custom of the Church” (*cat. rud.* 2.26.50 [CCL 46: 173.1-4; *Instructing Beginners in Faith*, trans. Raymond Canning [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006], 163].
11 Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 125.
of Lent, a notable time of catechesis for those preparing to enter their names for baptism.\textsuperscript{13}

Augustine’s approach to baptismal formation, according to Harmless, was to alternate between an education of the affections, in his \textit{Enarrationes in Psalmos}, and an intellectual formation in the Tractates that “wove Christology with ecclesiology, pneumatology with spirituality, doctrine with moral admonition.”\textsuperscript{14} Those convinced by these sermons, entering their names for baptism before Lent, would then participate in several pre-baptismal rites including the renunciation of Satan at the scrutinies during a Saturday vigil,\textsuperscript{15} the \textit{traddito} and \textit{redditio} of the Creed,\textsuperscript{16} as well

\textsuperscript{13} Harmless, \textit{Augustine and the Catechumenate}, 158-59. Harmless relies upon A.M. LaBonnardière’s \textit{Recherches de chronologie augustinienne} (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1965), 19-62 for the dating of these sermons.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 236. Though I agree that Augustine did provide an education of the catechumens that included a formation of the affections and the intellect, I am less convinced that this formation was divided between the Gospel of John and the Psalms. Simply, Augustine’s sermons are always concerned with both the affections and the intellect. In homily 18(2).1 on the psalms, for example, Augustine preaches, “We have just been imploring the Lord to cleanse us from our secret sins and to preserve his servants from the sins of others. We ought to try to find out what this means, because we want to use human reason as we sing, not merely to sing like parrots. Blackbirds and parrots and crows and magpies and other species are sometimes taught by people to give voice to their words they do not understand; but God has willed to grant human beings the ability to sing with understanding…my very dear friends, we ought to know and perceive with clear hearts what we have sung together with harmonious voices” (CCL 38: 105.1-16; St. Augustine, \textit{Expositions of the Psalms}, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B., The Works of Saint Augustine, A Translation for the 21st Century, III/15 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 204. Here, reason is as important as the affections for understanding the psalm.

\textsuperscript{15} The scrutinies in Hippo were exorcistic rites that occurred during the Saturday evening Vigil. In Hippo, these rites included a renunciation of the devil and standing upon sackcloth, most likely goat skin as a symbol of the temptations that the \textit{competentes} underwent during Lent. Augustine speaks to the \textit{competentes} during this rite, “So amid all these gangs of people vexing and troubling you, put on sackcloth, and humble your soul with fasting. Humility is rewarded with what pride has been denied. And you indeed, while you were being scrutinized, and that persuader of flight and desertion was being properly rebuked by the terrifying omnipotence of the Trinity, were not actually clothed in sackcloth, but yet your feet were symbolically standing on it” (Augustine, s. 216.10-11 [PL 38: 1082; \textit{Sermons}, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., The Works of Saint Augustine [New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1993], 172]) The historical context of these scrutinies may be found in, Harmless, \textit{Augustine and the Catechumenate}, 260-74.

\textsuperscript{16} According to Harmless, the handing over (\textit{traddito}) of the creed took place two weeks before Easter with the returning of the Creed (\textit{redditio}) coming a week later (Harmless, \textit{Augustine and
as the handing over of the Lord’s Prayer. The catechesis accompanying these rites encouraged the *competentes*, through a truth-filled rhetoric, to take up the particularities of the Christian life as an essential aspect of conversion to Christ. The rite of water baptism was conducted during the Easter Vigil. Because of the scarcity of information surrounding the content and structure of baptism in Augustine, it is difficult to surmise the exact shape and order of the rite. At some

*the Catechumenate*, 274). Augustine provides a commentary upon the handing over of the Creed in sermons 212-14 and a homily on the returning of the Creed in sermon 215. 

17 Again, the handing over of the Lord’s Prayer took place one week before the Easter Vigil, most likely the day of the returning of the Creed (Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 286). Sermons 56-59 address this rite.

18 Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 296.

19 Evidence of Easter as a baptismal season in Augustine is ubiquitous. In the sermons on Easter Sunday, Augustine often speaks to those recently baptized as the *infantes*, those who have been reborn to new life of water and of Spirit (s. 228; 228 B; 229A.1). Yet, Easter was not the only season for baptism in Augustine. In a sermon on the beginning of Lent, Augustine remarks, “The sacrament of baptism, therefore, is beyond all doubt to be distinguished from Easter. Baptism, you see, can be received on any day; Easter may lawfully be kept only on one particular day. Baptism is given so that life may be imparted anew; Easter is celebrated to keep the memory of our religion fresh in our minds. But the fact that far and away the greater number of those seeking baptism converge on this day only means that the greater joy of the feast attracted them, not that a richer grace of salvation is to be had then” (Augustine, s. 210 [PL 38: 1048; Hill, 118-19]).

20 F. van der Meer provides one possible account of what took place at the Easter Vigil in Hippo, including the procession to the baptistery, a profession of faith, lowering into the waters of a baptismal pool, anointing with oil and the laying on of hands (what van der Meer calls confirmation), and the gathering around the Eucharistic altar. van der Meer creates this account through collecting various texts from Augustine’s sermons and letters that seem to refer to these possible moments. For example, van der Meer tries to divide the anointing with oil into three stages: the anointing of the head with oil, the laying on of hands, and the sealing, “which perhaps was merely another aspect of the anointing with oil” (*St. Augustine the Bishop*, 369). He determines this by referencing the homilies on the Gospel of John, the Third Council of Carthage, sermons 249-251, the homilies on the psalms, and Augustine’s letters. Yet, these texts are not necessarily “baptismal.” Augustine’s homily on psalm 21(2).2 does not, for example, address sealing with oil in baptism but the anointing of Christ by the women bearing ointment in Mt 26:7, Mk 14:3, and Jn 12:3. Thus, while van der Meer’s account of Augustine’s baptismal practice is fruitful for the imagination, it is not necessarily an exact one, and hence one must be careful in relying too much upon it for determining the precise shape of rites in Hippo. Still, van der Meer does provide evidence for the type of rituals that would have been conducted during the baptism, even if the order and structure of those rituals are not precisely correct.
point during the baptism, psalm 41 was most likely proclaimed. In addition, Augustine would have likely employed several elements of baptism common to the West, including the water bath, an anointing with oil, the imposition of hands, and the Eucharist. Following this formal initiation, a week of mystagogical catechesis took place. These catechetical sermons dealt with the appropriation of the theologies of baptism and Eucharist.

Even more so than baptism, the content and structure of the Eucharistic liturgy in Hippo is difficult to surmise, partially based upon Augustine’s commitment to keeping the details of the rite secret from those who were not yet initiated. Yet, in addition to Augustine’s practice of the *disciplina arcana*, there is a further impediment that any liturgical writings that might have existed in North Africa were destroyed during the Arab conquest of the region in the seventh and

21 Augustine makes reference to this in a homily on this baptismal psalm: “As a deer longs for springs of water, so does my soul long for you, O God. We could well hear the voice of our catechumens here too, for they are hurrying toward the holy, grace-giving bath. This is why we customarily sing the psalm to arouse in them a longing for the fountain of forgiveness for their sins, like the longing of a deer for the springs of water” (Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.1 (CCL 38: 460.18-23; *Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Maria Boulding, The Works of Saint Augustine, III/16 [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000], 239). This sermon will be further analyzed in chapter 5.
23 Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 336.
24 The *disciplina arcana* developed as a way of keeping the mysteries of baptism and Eucharist secret from the uninitiated. According to Yarnold, this discipline of secrecy came about, at least partially, through the influence of mystery religions as a way of highlighting the fear and mystery of the Christian sacraments during a period of rapid conversion to Christianity following the edict of Constantine (*The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 55-66). To some extent, this same argument is captured by Alan Krieder, who contends that Christianity developed a more public catechesis because of the need to deal with the larger number of converts entering into the Church (*The Change of Conversion and Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 33-70. Harmless, more than both Yarnold and Krieder, interprets Augustine’s use of the *disciplina arcana* as a pedagogical point, “its ability to prick the curiosity of the catechumens” (Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 171). Hence, Augustine’s use of the *disciplina arcana* is not so much to attract attention to the rites but to raise desire for the reception of the rites. This will make sense, as one considers Augustine’s conception of the will and desire as essential to his theology of worship, developed in chapters 3 and 4 of this work.
eight centuries. Thus, although it would be remarkable for liturgical scholars to unearth a Eucharistic prayer either written or inspired by Augustine, it is highly unlikely. Still, just as in baptism, one may discern a general outline to the Eucharistic liturgy in Hippo based upon Augustine’s sermons. The Liturgy of Word consisted of a reading from the apostle, the psalms, and the gospel. This lectionary of readings was not fixed but instead was chosen by Augustine as the bishop, although certain readings had gradually become attached to various feasts in each area. In addition to the Liturgy of the Word, Augustine testifies to the structure and content of a post-initiation Eucharistic liturgy, one that consisted of a dialogical preface, the holy prayers, presumably the Eucharistic prayer; the Amen of the assembly following the Eucharistic prayer; the Lord’s prayer; the sign of peace; and finally Eucharistic eating and drinking.

Theologically, although it is difficult to know the precise content of Augustine’s Eucharistic prayer (of which he most likely improvised, employing a series of theological tropes prominent in his work), one may safely assume that Augustine’s Eucharistic prayer made use of the Eucharistic theology prominent in North Africa, one emphasizing unity, sacrifice, martyrdom, and a sacramental realism. This sacramental realism is important to the Eucharistic practice of Hippo, since Augustine depicts postures of adoration directed toward the sacrament in

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26 van der Meer does provide an account of a potential Sunday Easter in Hippo, once again piecing it together through various texts throughout Augustine’s *corpus* (*Augustine the Bishop*, 388-402). For a critique of this approach, see note 21. Still, van der Meer does recognize the impossibility of locating an Augustinian Eucharistic prayer (400).
27 Augustine, s. 165.1 (PL 38: 1219; *Sermons*, trans. Hill, III/5, 201).
29 Augustine mentions each of these parts of the Eucharist in his mystagogical sermon, 229.3.
Enarrationes in Psalmos 98.9. The fervor of Eucharistic devotion in Hippo is further substantiated by the likelihood of daily Eucharistic celebrations. Liturgical historians are aware of this both from the testimonies of Augustine and the broader North African context, where an evening agape meal has come to be replaced by a daily, morning Eucharistic liturgy (once a general service of morning prayer) by the time of Cyprian of Carthage (208-58).

Yet, baptism and Eucharist were not the only instances in which the Christian community would have gathered in Hippo for public prayer. Pertaining to the practice of daily prayer, liturgical historians are cognizant that Augustine adopts the Ordo Monasteri for his own monastic community in Hippo, a rule that included a prescription for matins (morning prayer), terce, sext, none (midday prayer), and lucenarium (a mixed office of both evening and night prayer). In addition, the church at Hippo also celebrated other times of public, non-Eucharistic prayer outside of the monastery, either a cathedral or more likely a hybrid urban monastic office. In his Confessions, Augustine comments during his sickness in Rome, Monica, residing

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31 Augustine writes, “He walked here below in that flesh, and even gave us that same flesh to eat for our salvation. But since no one eats it without first worshiping it, we can plainly see how the Lord’s footstool is rightly worshiped. Not only do we commit no sin in worshiping it; we should sin if we did not…When you bow down to the earth somewhere, and prostrate yourself before it, you must not look at the earth, but at the Holy One whom you are worshipping, whose footstool is the earth” (en. Ps. 98.9 [CCL 39: 1385.21-26; Expositions of the Psalms, trans. Boulding, III/18, 474-75]). Nathan Mitchell surmises that the reference of bowing toward the sacrament is evidence of postures of Eucharistic devotion present in Hippo, a claim he also makes through analyzing the mystagogical catecheses of Cyril of Jerusalem (Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1982), 44-49.
32 Augustine, ep. 54.3.4
35 The cathedral office, according to Taft, were “offices of praise and intercession, not a Liturgy of the Word,” (32) and included the use of liturgical symbols, such as light and incense, chant, and a variety of ministries. The monastic office, on the other hand, included a continuous reading of the psalms, as well as an office of readings (60-61), all carried out with minimal
in North Africa, unfailingly went to church in the morning and evening, the times of matins and vespers in both the cathedral and urban monastic office. \(^{36}\) Further, in his *Enarrationes in Psalmodia* Augustine chides those who believe that offering hymns of praise to God in the morning and evening, without changing one’s life, is sufficient to pleasing God. \(^{37}\) Most convincingly, Augustine testifies to the daily celebration of vespers in the city of Hippo in letter 29, written to Alypius. He writes,

After I did that, I saw that all were with singleness of heart beginning to have a good will and had rejected their bad habit, and I urged them to be present in the afternoon for the readings and the psalms...In the afternoon, a larger crowd was present than in the morning, and up to the hour at which we came out with the bishop, readings alternated with psalms. After we came out, two psalms were read. Then, though I was reluctant, since I now wanted so perilous a day to be over with, old Valerius forced me under an order to say something to them. I gave a short sermon in which I thanked God...And after I had said what the Lord was so good as to suggest along those lines for the time, vespers, which are daily celebrated [*acta sunt uespertina, quae cotidie solent*] were completed, and as we left with the bishop, the brothers sang a hymn, with no small crowd of both men and women remaining and singing until the darkness fell. \(^{38}\)

Finally, one may also recognize, from Augustine’s sermons, the feasts included in the liturgical calendar of Hippo. \(^{39}\) On the 25th of December, Christians in Hippo celebrated the symbolism. The urban monastic office, developed in the East, was a hybrid of the cathedral and monastic offices for both morning and evening prayer and included psalms of praise and thanksgiving (90). Yet, these are scholarly distinctions and not precisely ones that would have been used by Augustine. Instead, he would have shaped morning and evening prayer, as he saw fit for his community.

\(^{36}\) Augustine, *conf.* 5.9.17.

\(^{37}\) Augustine preaches, “Offer to God a sacrifice of praise, thereby imposing a kind of tax. So on hearing this he began to reflect in his own mind and to say, “I will get up each morning and go to church, and I will sing one hymn in the morning and another in the evening, and a third or fourth at home. In this way I will offer a daily sacrifice of praise as a victim to God.” Now you are certainly doing well if you do that; but take care not to be over confident because you are doing it, because while your tongue is blessing God, your life may be cursing him” (Augustine, *en. Ps.* 49.23 (CCL 38: 593.2-9; Boulding, 402).


\(^{39}\) The readings for these feasts are laid out in G.G. Wills, *St. Augustine’s Lectionary*, 22-57. The theological themes outlined in these sermons will be dealt with more explicitly in chapter 5.
birthday of the Lord (*natalis domini*).\(^{40}\) On the 6\(^{th}\) of January, Epiphany was acknowledged as a feast dedicated to the manifestation of the Lord to the Gentiles.\(^{41}\) Lent took place forty days before the celebration of the Passion of the Lord and served as a time for impressing upon the mind the benefits for the body and the soul of prayer and fasting.\(^{42}\) On Good Friday, the passion of the Lord was read from Matthew 26 and 27, although Augustine objected to this custom, preferring a wider reading of Christ’s Passion among the four possible Gospel texts.\(^{43}\) The following day, the Church of Hippo gathered in the basilica of the village for the Easter Vigil, which included readings from the Scriptures, prayers, and a sermon during the middle of the night.\(^{44}\) Following the vigil and rites of baptism described above, the Easter season continued for fifty days from the octave of Easter up to Pentecost.\(^{45}\) Forty days after Easter, the Ascension of the Lord was celebrated and ten days later the coming of the Spirit was remembered in the solemnity of Pentecost.\(^{46}\) In addition to this developed sanctoral cycle, the Church of Hippo was constantly remembering the lives of the saints and martyrs in the Eucharistic liturgy.\(^{47}\)

While this historical survey is helpful in imagining the rites that Augustine performed as priest and bishop in Hippo, the more pertinent question from the standpoint of this work is how did Augustine teach Christians to perform these rites in a fruitful way, one in which participants might experience the intellectual and affective transformation that Augustine describes from his

\(^{40}\) Augustine, s. 184-196.

\(^{41}\) Augustine, s. 201.1. The entire cycle of Epiphany sermons include: s. 199-205.

\(^{42}\) Augustine, s. 210.1. Sermons given at the beginning of Lent are: s. 206-210.

\(^{43}\) Augustine, s. 218.1, 232.1; Also, G.G. Wills, *St. Augustine’s Lectionary*, 64.

\(^{44}\) Augustine, s. 219-223K.

\(^{45}\) Augustine, s. 252.12.

\(^{46}\) Augustine, s. 263A.1; 267.1.

\(^{47}\) Among the feasts that G.G. Wills includes, from a reading of the sermons, include St. Agnes Day on January 21; St. Vincent on January 22; the Nativity of John the Baptist on June 24; St. Guddenis on June 27; Saints Peter and Paul on June 29; The Scillitan Martyrs on July 17; August 1 as Maccabees’ Day; and other feasts of martyrs such as St. Laurence and the Volitan martyrs (*St. Augustine’s Lectionary*, 70-74).
own baptism? To ask this question is to enter into the heart of Augustine’s mystagogical theology and catechesis, the means through which he moved Christians from the sign to savoring the reality, a process that involved attending to, understanding, and living the liturgical rites.

**Augustine’s Mystagogical Method: Signs and Understanding**

Augustine’s mystagogical method is difficult to ascertain. As previously acknowledged, since there is no indication that Augustine delivered a comprehensive series of mystagogical catecheses, explicit evidence is minimal. Because of the complexity, F. van der Meer, a generally astute commentator of Augustine’s pastoral theory and practice, conjectures that Augustine’s explanation of the sacraments was less a matter of theory and more of intuition and poetic expression. He writes:

> Then, particularly when dealing with the symbolic side both of the genuine sacraments and of those other things which he included under the term, he delighted in those harmonies of number, word, and idea which he was so often preoccupied and which so frequently seem strange to us. If we desire a correct picture, we must remember this, and we must also keep in mind the fact that his most lively imagination seizes on illustrations as it goes along, combines allegories and cheerfully employs the first analogy (invariably a brilliant one) that comes to hand to prove a point. Further, we must call to mind that everything that he says or writes springs from the intuition of the moment rather than any firm theological theory.  

Nonetheless, despite van der Meer’s claim, Augustine’s mystagogical method has attracted greater attention in recent years. Characteristics of this method include a focus upon sign and understanding, participation and transformation, and finally the use of rhetoric to educate his audience. In this chapter, I deal with the first of these characteristics (sign and understanding),

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48 F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 316.
leaving the second (participation and transformation) for chapter four, and the third (rhetoric) for chapter five. I separate these facets of Augustine’s mystagogical method for the sake of clarity of inquiry, not because they are disparate from one another.

Augustine’s mystagogical catechesis may be broadly characterized by the theme of sign and understanding. The one, who is to receive the sacrament of salt, is to move toward an understanding of what this action represents. In baptism, the visible waters of the sacrament, coupled with the words from Psalm 42, become an expression of that longing for the fullness of the divine illumination. In the Eucharist, what is seen upon the altar, bread and wine, is not what is truly significant regarding this sacrament; instead, only through understanding the meaning of the sacrament can the Christian receive its fruit of ecclesial unity. The praise expressed by the psalms, the sounds proclaimed by tongue and voice, must be understood as referring to a whole life of praise reflective of an upright conscience. Christians celebrate feasts in order to remind themselves of the visible events, and then to use that event to contemplate God. By attending to the sign, and then moving toward an understanding of that

50 Augustine addresses this theme of water and illumination in the baptismal mystagogy of sermon on Psalm 41, examined in footnote 20 and in chapter 5.  
51 In speaking about the Eucharist, Augustine declares, “You have all just now been born again of water and the Spirit, and can see that food and drink upon this table of the Lord’s in a new light, and receive it with fresh love and piety. So I am obliged by the duty I have of giving you a sermon, and by the anxious care with which I have given you birth, that Christ may be formed in you, to remind you of infants of what of the meaning is of such a great and divine sacrament, such a splendid and noble medicine, such a pure and simple sacrifice, which is not offered now just in the one earthly city of Jerusalem, nor in that tabernacle which was constructed by Moses, nor in the temple built by Solomon (s. 228b (PL 38: 1103; Hill, 261)).  
52 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.2.  
53 Augustine writes, “Unless, you see, thought committed to memory what is said about things taking place in time, it wouldn’t find any residue after the time had passed. That’s why the thought of man, contemplating the actual reality, confesses to the Lord; while the residue of thought which is in the memory, knowing about past times, does not cease to celebrate solemn anniversaries, in case thought should be condemned as grateful” (s. 220 (PL 38: 1089; Hill, 200).
sign, the Christian comes to participate in a meaningful way in the practices of liturgical prayer.

Liturgical prayer needs to be understood in order to bear fruit in the life of the believer.

But why does liturgy require understanding? In his study of the mystagogical method of Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom, Enrico Mazza concludes the following:

In the homilies, I have been considering, the discussion of sacramental realism starts with the observation that what is seen in the sacrament differs from what is believed about it (aliud videtur, aliud intelligitur). In order to move from appearances, which are the object of the senses, to true reality, which is the object of faith, some account must be given of the relationship between these two levels. The doctrine of sacramentality is intended to do precisely that; it is an answer to the question of the connection between two levels of being that correspond to two levels of knowledge, namely, seeing and believing.54

According to Mazza, the distinction between these two levels of reality, the visible sign and the invisible reality, comes about through the non-systematic use of Platonic philosophical thought (although he does not specify where in Plato such thought emerges).55 Through this Platonic couple (seeing/understanding), the Fathers of the Church were able to explain how the carrying out of a visible rite allowed one to participate in the historical, biblical events of salvation.56 This external and internal participation in the rite occurred through an application of the Scriptures “to the mystery being celebrated.”57 The Scriptures act as a meaningful word by which a liturgical action “makes sense.” Hence, indispensable to mystagogical method in the patristic tradition is the movement from the sign to an understanding of the referent of that sign

55 Ibid., 169. He does conclude that Cyril of Jerusalem developed his entire technical vocabulary of the sacraments from Plato’s Phaedo. While potentially true, he does not in fact prove this through any close textual analysis Cyril’s mystagogical catecheses and the relevant passages from the Phaedo 100C-E; 74D; 75B (169; 215, n. 1).
56 Ibid., 171.
57 Ibid., 9.
by means of the mind of the Scriptures—for only in this way does one enter fully into the salvific realities signified by the sign. Theology, performed upon the rite, is necessary because only then does one experience the fullness of the rite’s signifying power.

Yet, what about Augustine in particular? While Mazza does not address Augustine’s mystagogical method in his book length study of patristic mystagogy, he does treat Augustine more extensively in a later article, “Saint Augustin et la Mystagogie.” The occasion for this article was Suzanne Poque’s study of Augustine’s paschal sermons, a project that for the first time allowed liturgical scholars to explore Augustine’s mystagogy through a chronological cycle of sermons. In the first part of the article, he provides a general outline of these sermons, concluding that “the attention of Saint Augustine was fixed on the Word of God and the Christian life…the interest of Saint Augustine on the rites is secondary.” Augustine is not simply explaining what happening during the liturgy but how the liturgical rites reveal something about both God and the Christian life.

Mazza further explores Augustine’s concern with the theological meaning of the rites by examining Augustine’s Eucharistic theology vis-à-vis Platonic philosophical theory. He writes:

In his ascent up from the event and in his descent toward the rite, the method of mystagogy is based on the dialectical method, from a Platonist origin. The changes that we find in the Augustinian mystagogical method are to be understood through the change that Augustine introduced in the dialectical method.

61 Ibid., 213-14: Dans sa << remontée >> à événement et dans sa << descente >> vers le rite, la method de la mystagogie est calquée method dialectique, d’origine platonicienne. Les
By a Platonic dialectic, Mazza means the method of questioning and seeking whereby a person ascends toward the One. Again, Mazza does not analyze any particular Platonic source to come this conclusion but instead draws upon secondary sources that address Augustine’s notion of participation through sign/understanding. Using these sources, Mazza states that Augustine transformed this dialectic through Christology. The way that the Christian returns to the One is uniquely through Christ, such that the ascent is not simply about mounting up from the inferior to the superior but also the divine descent from the superior to the inferior. Mazza submits, “Therefore, the Eucharistic celebration, like a movement from man toward God, inscribes itself in the movement of being toward the One; consequently, the definition of the Eucharist as sacrament of unity needs to be taken in a strong sense, that is to say it is capable of rendering the ontological nature of the Eucharist.” Participation in the Eucharist, as the sacrament in which Christ is made present through the signs of bread and wine, draws humanity back toward God. The Scriptural text (1 Cor. 11:16-17) that Augustine uses to interpret the Eucharistic event is not meant to explain what happened in the rites but to draw out why such a rite is efficacious: the Eucharist, which is the body of Christ, is a sacrament that draws the Christian toward the unity that defines this ecclesial body. The Scripture reveals the mystery constitutive of the sacrament.

62 Ibid., 214.  
63 Ibid.  
64 Ibid.  
65 Ibid., 215: La célébration eucharistique, donc, comme mouvement de l’homme vers Dieu, s’inscrit dans le mouvement de l’être vers l’Un; par conséquent, la définition de l’eucharistie comme sacrament de l’unité doit être au sens fort, c’est-à-dire capable de rendre la nature <<ontologique>> du sacrement.  
66 Ibid., 217.
From this examination of Augustine’s Eucharistic theology, Mazza draws two general conclusions about Augustine’s mystagogical method, once again referring to Platonic thought. First, Augustine’s use of the Platonic couple “sensible” (sensible) and “understandable” (intelligible) is paired with the Pauline carnal/spiritual.\(^{67}\) In this, the intellectual and ethical are linked to one another. For Mazza, the source of this union is Augustine’s reformed Neoplatonism. Mazza writes:

The access to the liturgy is expressed through the verb “to understand,” but it unnecessary to perceive this as a uniquely intellectual knowledge, because faith, in Augustine, always demands an act of the will. It is a new notion of participation, different from the notion of participation in classical Platonism.\(^{68}\)

This notion of participation (dealt with more attentively in the next chapter), seeking understanding through both the intellect and will, is arrived at by Augustine through his reading of Plotinus\(^ {69}\); though, the texts that Augustine might have read are not mentioned. Hence, a proper understanding of the sign is necessary if one is to enter into the reality of that sacrament, an understanding that unites knowledge and the will.

Second, Augustine’s mystagogical method of attending to the sign is influenced by his biblical exegesis. That is, Augustine chooses a scriptural text that explains not the letter of the liturgical action but the larger sense of that action.\(^ {70}\) As Mazza deduces, “Allegory, in Augustine, is a figure where “from one thing another is to be understood”, while in the sacrament “one thing is seen, another is understood”: here, he speaks about two different levels of being.
and, yet, it is impossible to treat the liturgy only as a symbol.”  

The signs of the liturgy really matter, because just as in Augustine’s exegetical method, the literal level of Scripture is essential to understanding its sense. Therefore, Augustinian mystagogy is fundamentally about eliciting conversion through an intelligible explanation of the visible rite that nurtures a desire for unity with God, and hence neighbor. The Christian is led in Augustine from the visible sight of the rite toward a believing of its referent through the lens of Scripture.

Much of Mazza’s account of Augustine’s mystagogical method is commendable. His focus upon Augustine’s adjustment of Neoplatonic dialectic illuminates the relationship in Augustine among “seeing” the sign, understanding the referent of the sign, and the moral conversion essential in this movement from sign to reality. When one understands the words of praise performed in the psalms, then one is to reform one’s life into an arena for that praise. This also explains why Augustine was less concerned with the particular details of the rite and more interested in teaching an understanding and meaning of that rite, one that might support a conversion toward authentic, Christian living.

Yet, there are deficiencies in Mazza’s analytic description, one arising out of his assumptions regarding the nature of Augustine’s Platonism; the second, through his inattention to Augustine’s exegetical approach. First, Mazza rightly points out the importance of Christ in Augustine’s conception of the ascent toward the One. Augustine testifies to this need for Christ (using Eucharistic imagery) in his own brief ascent to God in his *Confessions*:

> 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 between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, who is also God, supreme over all things and blessed forever. Not yet had I embraced

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71 Ibid., 225: *Allégorie, chez Augustin, est une figure où <<ex alio aliud intelligitur>>, tandis que dans le sacrement <<aliud uidetur, aliud intelligitur>>: ici on parle de deux niveaux différents de l’être, et, pourtant, il est impossible de traiter la liturgie seulement comme symbole.

72 Ibid., 225-26.
him, though he called out, proclaiming, *I am the Way and Truth and the Life*, 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.  

Nonetheless, what Mazza does not address is whether Augustine’s emphasis upon Christ means that liturgical worship (including the Eucharist) is something quite different than an ascent toward the One. He describes what he sees as a Platonic doctrine, and then assumes that Augustine applied this doctrine with Christological emphasis to the liturgical life of the Christian. Yet, one may rightly wonder if Augustine’s understanding of Christ may have altered the notion of the Platonic ascent in the first place. Is liturgy (Eucharistic or otherwise) the Christian version of this ascent toward the One? Is an understanding of the rite and the moral conversion drawn from this mystagogical reflection simply a reformed appropriation of a Neoplatonic method? To answer these questions will require greater attention to the place of worship in Augustine’s Christology as a whole, something that Mazza cannot provide due to the limited scope of his analysis of the Paschal Sermons.

Second, Mazza also proposes that Augustine’s exegetical practice influences his mystagogical catechesis. Yet, how so? He mentions Augustine’s exegesis of Genesis, including the difference between his commentary on Genesis against the Manicheans and his literal commentary, also on Genesis, composed at a later date. But he does not offer a theological account of what precisely Augustine is doing in his exegesis. The centrality of Scripture in Augustine’s mystagogical method requires a closer examination of the theological and spiritual foundations of his method of Scriptural exegesis. Such an examination, I put forward, will further elucidate the relationship between signs and understanding in Augustine’s mystagogical

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theology. I now turn to an analysis of *De vera religione, De doctrina christiana*, and letters 54 and 55 to Januarius in order to grasp both the theological foundations of Augustine’s conception of sign/understanding in worship, as well as his approach to Scriptural exegesis.

**Sign and Understanding in De vera religione, De doctrina christiana, and Letters 54 and 55**

In the third and most substantial part of this chapter, I explore the following in order to better articulate the relationship between the signs of liturgical prayer and the place of understanding in Augustine’s mystagogical thought:

a) The role that Christology, soteriology, and divine worship played in reconfiguring Augustine’s understanding of the ascent toward God through contemplation of signs.

b) The theory of signs/things, and the place of sacramental worship in this scheme, one that underlies Augustine’s conception of both Scriptural exegesis and liturgical prayer.

This exploration takes place in the following way. First, I situate *De vera religione* within the ascent motif, maintaining that Augustine’s polemic against the false worship of the philosophers is fundamentally a theological one, infusing the argumentation of the rest of the work. The union of wisdom and worship is salvific such that the theme of ascent through an intellectual and moral purgation is translated into the vocabulary of divine worship. The worshipful “ascent” of this work culminates not in a spurning of the created world but rather a renewed capacity to envision the world as a divine gift. At the conclusion of the work, Augustine does not ascend to the Triune God but rather worships this God, who is the creator and re-creator of human desire.

Second, I turn to an analysis of Augustine’s mature articulation of the relationship between signs/understanding, as laid out in *De doctrina christiana*. The need to understand sacred signs, a process that Augustine unfolds Christologically through the contrasting terms *uti*
and *frui*, provides the very foundation of Augustine’s exegetical practice. Every interpretation of divine signs within the Church, the proper “use” of signs, necessarily commits one to the worship of the referent of this sign. Finally, I demonstrate how Augustine employs the theory of *De doctrina* in letters 54 and 55 to Januarius, where the signs of the liturgy and sacraments, when referred to their referent, move the Christian toward a proper use of this prayer—as a site for divine enjoyment. This enjoyment takes place through the act of interpretation in which a theological understanding of the rites becomes a further expression of divine worship. Thus, Augustine’s mystagogical theology is less the result of a reformed Neoplatonism, and more about the way that interpreting divine signs, through the exercise of the Scriptures and the liturgy, provides an enjoyment of God.

*De vera religione*: The Union of Wisdom and Worship

In 390, while living a monastic lifestyle in Thagaste, Augustine composed *De vera religione*. The addressee of this work, Romanianus, was a Manichean and former patron of Augustine with certain intellectualist Platonist leanings to whom Augustine was attempting to persuade of the wisdom of Catholicism. What is remarkable about this early work by the future bishop of Hippo is his argument that orthodox Christianity’s genius is the union of divine worship and philosophical wisdom. This claim is essential to understanding the nature of this

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76 Lancel, *St. Augustine*, 136.
77 Pierre Hadot has done much to deepen contemporary understandings of the nature of ancient philosophy as a search for wisdom through a way of life. In describing the philosopher, Hadot writes, “By the time of the Platonic dialogues Socrates was called *atopos*, that is, “unclassifiable.” What makes him *atopos* is precisely the fact that he is a “philo-sopher” in the etymological sense of the word; that is, he is in love with wisdom. For wisdom, says Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*, is not a human state, it is a state of perfection of being and knowledge that can only be divine. It is the love of this wisdom, which is foreign to the world, that makes the
work, one that unites knowing and loving in the act of worship. In the process, worship of God, a necessary consequence of Augustine’s early Christology and soteriology (the true wisdom of Christianity), begins to replace the ascent to the One that occupied philosophy.

F. van Fleteren, O.S.A. has attentively analyzed the theme of ascent in Augustine’s *De vera religione*. According to van Fleteren, “the main theme of the *De vera religione* is the ascent of man by means of the true religion to God.” This ascent takes place by moving from the materiality of bodies to the invisible reality of God with each aspect of the created order serving as a stepping-stone for the ascent. In order to engage in this ascent to God, one in which the telos is a permanent vision of God, one must undergo an intellectual and moral purgation. In *De vera religione*, this intellectual and moral purgation takes place through moving the mind away from thinking about God in a bodily way through the authority of the Scriptures and reason; the moral purgation likewise occurs by way of a healing of the three parts of the soul—the desiring, the spirited, and the reasoning part.

The emphasis upon the theme of ascent is part of Augustine’s reliance upon Neoplatonic sources as van Fleteren claims. He presents the Neoplatonic nature of the Augustinian ascent philosopher a stranger in it” (*Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995], 57). Therefore, to use Hadot’s own terminology, part of the strangeness of the philosophical wisdom of the Christian is the divine worship that the Christian performs.

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79 van Fleteren, “Augustine’s *De vera religione*,” 476-77.

80 Ibid., 483.

81 F. van Fleteren, “Background and Commentary on Augustine’s *De vera religione,*” 67-72.

82 Ibid., 68-70.

83 van Fleteren, Augustine’s *De vera religione,*” 497.
in an earlier essay, one in which he compares Augustine’s attempted ascent in *Confessions* 7.10.16-21.27 (after having read the books of the Platonists) to the themes of his early dialogues at Cassiciacum.  

van Fleteren does not provide the direct source of Augustine’s Neoplatonism, though he does suggest that *Enneads* I.6.6 or V.1.10 may have been at least the proximate cause of Augustine’s own concern regarding the ascent of the soul toward God. Based upon his comparison between the *Confessions* and the Cassiciacum dialogues, he draws the conclusion that an early Augustinian theory of the ascent presumes divine initiative in leading the human person from the visible world to a contemplation of God; relates divine knowledge with self-knowledge; includes a recognition of the mind’s participation in eternal Truth through the act of judgment; is by degree—beginning from corporeal reality, moving to sensation, then toward an intellectual purgation that unfolds through a study of the liberal arts; a contemplation of the human capacity to know true things through a focus upon the nature of the human soul; and finally a vision of God.  

Most importantly, this process of philosophical ascent is integral to the manner in which Augustine describes the progression of Christian salvation.

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84 van Fleteren, Augustine’s Ascent of the Soul in Book VII of the Confessions,” 29
85 Ibid., 31; The problem with determining the precise source of Augustine’s Platonism is ultimately unresolvable. This is because Augustine’s use of Platonism was most likely mediated through an already Christianized Platonism. As Gioia writes, “The identification of the ‘books of the Platonists’ translated into Latin by Marius Victorinus that he comes across before his conversion has proved notoriously controversial. Were they books by Plotinus, Plato *redivius*, or the Philosophy of Oracles by Porphyry, ‘the real “mediator” or “conveyor” of Neoplatonic philosophy from Plotinus to Augustine,’ not named in the *Confessions* simply because he was ‘too imbued with elements of anti-Christian polemics’? Whoever the authors of these books might be, the ‘Platonism’ they conveyed reached Augustine through people like Manlius Theodorus, ‘the Christian equivalent of Symmachus, a fervent discipline of Plotinus, to whom Augustine attributed the edifying remarks on God and the nature of the soul he benefited from’; through Simplicianus, former disciple of Marius Victorinus, and even through the bishop Ambrose” (Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate*, 51.
86 Ibid., 66-69.
87 Ibid., 71.
Therefore, *De vera religione* is, in continuing with van Fleteren’s analysis, a salvific ascent to the Triune God that includes both authority and reason. Authority and reason, as the medicine of this ascent, leads one on toward salvation. Accordingly, van Fleteren writes:

Authority constitutes a necessary foundation for ascent to God. Mankind should follow authority which leads to unity, to adoration of the one God. This authority has been given to mankind through history to lead it to salvation, and to lead some few men eventually to an understanding of the divine by reason and to a vision of the Triune God in this life.

Christianity provides the proper way to the goal, the contemplation and vision of God that Platonism desired but was unable to pursue on its own. At the conclusion of the work, after first considering the problem of evil against the Manicheans (11.21-23.44), second presenting the authority of Christ that one must follow (24.45-28.51), and finally ascending through reason purified by a healing of the soul’s desire, pride, and curiosity (29-51.106), the soul comes to a vision of the Triune God (55.107-13). This optimism about the soul’s capacity to obtain this vision is short lived for Augustine. By the time of *De trinitate*, he will speak about the enigmatic quality of this vision for those not yet in the presence of God.

That *De vera religione* resounds with themes of the ascent is unquestionable. In order to progress in the Christian life, it is necessary to use knowledge of the senses in order to move to

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88 Augustine writes, “Wherefore, the medicine of the soul, which was applied gradually and handsomely by divine providence and his inexpressible beneficence, is also the greatest beauty. It was assigned between authority and reason. Authority entreats faith and prepares humanity for reason. Reason leads through intellect and thought, although the most inward reason never deserts authority” (*uera rel. 24.45* (CCL 32: 215.1-6); Augustine, *True Religion*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. in *On Christian Belief*, The Works of St. Augustine, I/8 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 59): *Quamobrem ipsa quoque animae medicina, quae diuina prouidentia et ineffabili beneficentia geritur gradatim distincteque pulcherrima est. Tribuitur enim in auctoritatem atque rationem. Auctoritas fidel flagitat et rationi praeparat hominem. Ratio ad intellectum cognitomque per ductit, quamquam neque auctoritatem ratio pentitus deserit.*

89 van Fleteren, “Background and Commentary on Augustine’s *De vera religione*,” 65.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., 48.

92 Ibid., 72.
the non-bodily and non-sensible. The soul of the idolater is described as being inundated with images that make it “restless and full of trouble” (inquietus et aerumnosus) as the soul grasps onto these images, rather than moving beyond them to the contemplation of its creator. And in the closing of the work, Augustine’s examination of that which should be worshipped begins with the visible creation, moves to the living soul of the world, then the rational soul, the angels, and finally to the source of true worship, the one God. Yet, does Augustine in fact equate human salvation with this ascent? As van Fleteren himself acknowledges, “Though Augustine understands Christ’s salvation almost exclusively in terms of exemplary causality in his early works, salvation comes only through the incarnation. True religion is nothing other than the incarnate God leading us to true worship of himself. True worship is not of the unknowable One, but of the triune God…” I would like to suggest, through turning to a reading of the text, that Augustine has begun to describe his understanding of the ascent through the union of divine worship and wisdom, itself an extension of his Christology and soteriology. In the process, the theme of ascent is marginalized by that of receiving the divine gift made available through signs.

In the prologue to De vera religione, Augustine writes, “Every way to a good and blessed life is situated in true religion, in which one God is worshipped and is known as the principle of all substances by the most purified piety.” The problem with philosophy, according to Augustine, is that philosophers held a variety of doctrines and teachings about the happy life that

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94 Augustine, uera rel. 35.65-36.67 (CCL 32: 229.1-231.37; Hill, 73-74).
95 Augustine, uera rel. 55.107 (CCL 32: 256.1-260.149; Hill, 100-104).
96 van Fleteren, “Background and Commentary on Augustine’s De vera religione,” 72.
97 Augustine, uera rel. 1.1 (CCL 32: 187.1-3; 29): cum omnis uitae bonae ac beatae uia in uera religione sit constituta, qua unus deus colitur et purgatissima pietate cognoscitur principium naturarum omnium.
were different from one another, yet participated in the same rites of worship. Socrates and Plato, the most able of the philosophers, criticized the worship of idols in their own philosophizing yet “Socrates himself venerated the images (simulacra) with the people.” Instead of venerating the true God, the implication of Socrates and Plato’s philosophizing, the Platonists continued in their worship of created, temporal bound images.

After setting up this problem, Augustine then turns the attention of Romanianus to the consistent doctrine and worship of Christianity. Because of the nature of Augustine’s apologetic discourse, he situates Christian teaching in terms echoing the Neoplatonic ascent, one in which the “soul is made well in order to look upon the unchangeable form of things and the similar beauty likewise always the same.” The process of being made well includes turning away from false images toward the contemplation of the true God, facilitated through Jesus Christ, who from the time of his birth was illuminated with the power and wisdom of God (dei uirtus atque sapientia). From the teaching of this single person, men and women have been persuaded toward the worship of the one true God in such a way that the entire human race is responding with almost one voice, “We have lifted up the heart [sursum cor] to the Lord.” That is, almost the whole world is participating in Eucharistic worship, the sursum cor acting as a veiled reference to this sacrament.

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98 Augustine, uera rel. 1.1 (CCL 32: 187.13-17; Hill, 29).
99 Augustine, uera rel. 2.2 (CCL 32: 188.17; Hill, 30): et ipse socrates cum populo simulacra uenerabatur.
100 Augustine, uera rel. 3.3 (CCL 32: 189.13-14; Hill, 30): sanandum esse animum ad intuendum incommutabilem rerum formam et modo semper se habentem atque undique sui simile pulchritudinem.
101 Augustine, uera rel. (CCL 32: 189.35; Hill, 31).
102 Augustine, uera rel. 3.5 (CCL 32: 192.94-97; Hill, 33): priuatas in tantum aperte suadetur et appetitur a terrenis auersio et in unum deum uerum que conueriso, ut cotidie per uniuersum orbem humanum genus una paene uoce respondeat: “sursum cor habere se ad dominum.”
As van Fleteren notes, Augustine is engaging in a polemic against philosophy by emphasizing the harmonious nature of the Church’s doctrine and life of worship. Unlike the philosophical schools, Christians teach a unified faith of which belief is requisite for participation in the sacraments of that religion. Yet, Augustine makes a further claim, a result of his polemic. He writes, “And hence it is believed and taught, because it is the principle of human salvation, that there is not one thing “philosophy,” that is the study of wisdom, and another “religion.” The teachings of Christianity are inseparable from the act of worshiping within that community such that those whose beliefs cannot be approved by the Catholic Church are not admitted to the sacraments.

Yet, why is Augustine so concerned with the union of philosophy, the search for wisdom, and religion? Here, one needs to acknowledge the Christological and soteriological edifice, though not fully mature in this early work of Augustine that provides the foundations for his account of human salvation. Augustine works out this early Christology and soteriology through the false religions of both the Manicheans and the Platonists. The Manicheans, a sect within Christianity to which Augustine was a “hearer” during his time as a student and rhetor in Carthage and Rome, taught a dualism between body and spirit, good and evil, that led them to conclude that the true God did not create the world. Instead, the world was created by some alternative principle of darkness or evil, rivaling the power of the beneficent God. Therefore, the created world (the one visible to the sight of the eye) is the province of evil, not the location

103 van Fleteren, “Augustine’s De vera religione,” 480.
104 Augustine, uera rel. 5.8 (CCL 32: 193.12-16; Hill, 35): sic enim creditor et docetur, quod est humanae salutis caput, non aliam esse philosophiam, id est sapientiae stadium, et aliam religionem, cum hi, quorum doctrinam non approbamus, nec sacramenta nobis cum communicant.
105 For a summary of these teachings, see Brown, Augustine of Hippo, 35-49.
106 Augustine, uera rel. 9.16-17 (CCL 32: 198.1-199.31; Hill, 39-40).
for human salvation. These Manicheans want the true God to be the author of only that which they see as delightful in creation; essentially, that which is non-bodily and invisible.\textsuperscript{107}

The mistake for the Manicheans, according to Augustine, is that they misdiagnose the source of the human malaise. Evil is not a creation of God but a consequence of the sins of human beings, inordinately delighting in the created world. This is a sin that the Manicheans enjoy just as much as the rest of humanity, despite their devaluation of the created order, since they do not worship the mystery of the uncreated God revealed through the Scriptures but their own created ideas about this deity. Augustine writes, “Wherefore, it should be clear and certain to you that no error should have been in religion if the soul did not worship the soul or the body or its own images as God.”\textsuperscript{108} Instead, when the human person made as their object of worship something created like the body, he or she moved away from the source of life that is the true God and “delighting in the enjoyment of the body, life neglects God, it is inclined toward nothingness and that is vileness.”\textsuperscript{109} The consequence of neglecting God and worshiping the created order is death, a gradual falling away from the fullness of life in God, participating less in being (\textit{quantum minus essentiae participant}).\textsuperscript{110} Death is not a divine punishment but a consequence of God’s justice, a dissolving from the plenitude of God’s love. This was a free choice of human beings, a rejection of the signifying capacity of the created order.\textsuperscript{111}

Therefore, the only way for human beings to conquer death is to turn away from this prideful worship of the created order and to turn toward the eternal and beautiful Truth of the one

\textsuperscript{107} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 9.16 (CCL 32: 198.6-8; Hill, 39).
\textsuperscript{108} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 10.18 (CCL 32: 199.1-3; Hill, 40): \textit{Quamobrem sit tibi manifestum atque perceptum nullum errorem in religione esse potuisse, si anima pro deo suo non coleret animam aut corpus aut phantasmata sua}
\textsuperscript{109} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 11.22 (CCL 32: 201.33-35; Hill, 43): \textit{Quaproper uita, quae fructu corporis delectate neglegit deum, inclinatur ad nihilium, et ista est nequitia.}
\textsuperscript{110} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} (CCL 32: 201.27-28; Hill, 43).
\textsuperscript{111} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 14.27-28 (CCL 32:
God. Here, as Augustine moves toward a description of salvation, the relationship between the ascent to God and Christian salvation is revised through his Christology. Augustine reminds his reader at the beginning of this apology against the Manicheans, “nothing among human things is for attaining, as if by a mediated step, to divine things through which human life might climb up from earthly things toward a likeness of God.” Yet, God, in inexpressible mercy (ineffabilis misericordia) comes to human beings in the form of a mutable creature made subject to eternal laws to remind (ad commemorationem) them of the origin and of the perfect nature of that soul. The one true God does not wait for these creatures to return toward a proper relationship but “God cures souls through all methods, as suited to various times, which is arranged by his wonderful Wisdom.” Christianity is a religion of historical deeds, unfolding within the created world. It is, as he comments earlier, concerned with the work of divine providence throughout time, which refashions and repairs the human race for eternal life (in aeternam uitam reformandi atque reparandi). If this truth is believed, then the Christian embraces a way of life devoted (conciliatus) and suited (idoneam) to the purging of the mind according to the divine precepts so that spiritual realities might be perceived (perciendis). Yet, this spiritual reality is nothing else but the Triune God, who is known (as far as possible in this life) through a gift of knowledge that allows the human person to perceive the world as having its source of beauty.
(speciem suam habere) from the Triune God.\textsuperscript{117} Christian salvation is inscribed within a renewal of human perception, a capacity to acknowledge the source of the created order in God.

The incarnation of Wisdom, the Son of God, who is consubstantial and coeternal with the Father (unicus filius consubstantialis patri et coaeternus) in the person of Jesus Christ is that most apt salutary act \textit{within time} carried out by the eternal, Triune God for this refashioning.\textsuperscript{118} Through the bodily act of the Incarnation, God “demonstrated to the carnal and those not having the strength to contemplate the truth with the mind and those having given themselves to the bodily senses, what a lofty place human nature should have among creatures.”\textsuperscript{119} The whole of Jesus Christ’s earthly life was dedicated to teaching human beings how to live in such a way (\textit{disciplina morum}) that they might love what was worthy of such love and spurn that which was not, to live according to the pattern of Wisdom of the one true God.\textsuperscript{120} This teaching is performed “partly through the clearest means and partly through similitude in words, in deeds, in sacraments, accommodated for all instruction and exercising of the soul.”\textsuperscript{121} It is simple enough to lead all those who desire it toward further wisdom, and in the process to impart inner delight to the Christian by the sweetness of seeking and finding unknown Truth.\textsuperscript{122} The signs of truth (\textit{signiculum veritatis}), which woo the human person toward God, are found both in the Scriptures and in the sacraments since God’s salvific medicine works through a union of action and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} (CCL 32: 196.30-31; Hill, 38).
\item \textsuperscript{118} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 16.30 (CCL 32: 205.5-7; Hill, 47).
\item \textsuperscript{119} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} (CCL 32: 205.8-10; Hill, 48): \textit{Ita enim demonstravit carnalibus et non ualentibus intueri mente veritatem corporeisque sensibus deditis, quam excelsum locum inter creaturas habeat humana natura.}
\item \textsuperscript{120} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 16.31-32 (CCL 32: 206.17-207.53; Hill, 48-49).
\item \textsuperscript{121} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 17.33 (CCL 32: 207.1-4; Hill, 49): \textit{partim apertissimus partim similitudinibus in dictis, in factis, in sacramentis ad omnem animae instructionem exercitationemque accomodatus.}
\item \textsuperscript{122} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} (CCL 32: 207.7-8; Hill, 49): \textit{nec studiose quaeretur nec suauiter inueniretur veritas neque.}
\end{itemize}
cognition. Worship and the pursuing of wisdom in the Scriptures are both part of the salvation of the human person, one that allows each person to perceive the entire created universe as participating in the beauty of divine life.

Then, for Augustine, worship is both the means through which the human fell away from God, as well as the posture assumed through which the person returns to participation in that one true God. Human beings worshipped the created order, such that the various things within this order have “divided the fallen human being through the carnal senses and multiplied their affections by a variety of mutable things.” Jesus Christ, coming as one of these temporal, created things, was able to teach the eternal Wisdom of God through the created universe and in the process to heal these choppy affections. The enfleshment of the Word was so effective because his identity, God made flesh, was co-extensive with what he taught. And through this remarkable union of God and humanity, Christ bestowed to human beings a new way of looking at the created universe as the very gift of God from the God who “is both begrudging of no natural thing that is able to be good from God alone” and further gave all things the possibility of participating in God’s goodness in the first place. Because of this, Augustine concludes:

It is agreed upon wherefore for us to worship and to understand the very Gift of God with the Father and the Son equally immutable, one God, a Trinity of one substance, from whom we are, through whom we are, in whom we are, from whom we departed, to whom we became dissimilar by departing, by whom we are not permitted to perish, the source we are running back toward, the form that we are following, the grace by which we are being reconciled, the one, by whose creating we are authored, and his image, through which we are formed toward his unity, and his peace, by which we adhere to his unity, the God who said, “Let there be,” and the Word, through which all was made, what was made substantially and naturally, and the gift of His kindness by whom it pleased and

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123 Augustine, uera rel. (CCL 32: 207.9-10; Hill, 49): *satis cum cognition actio conueniret.*
124 Augustine, uera rel. 21.41 (CCL 32.212.8-213.11; Hill, 55): *Temporalium enim specierum multiformitas ab unitate dei hominem lapsum per carnales sensus diuverberauit et mutabili varietate multiplicauit eius affectum.*
125 Augustine, uera rel. 54.113 (CCL 32: 260.131-33; Hill, 104): *qui et nulli naturae, quae ab ipso bona esse posset, inuidit.*
was made acceptable through his authority so that whatsoever was made by his word through him might not perish, one God, by whose creating we live, through whose reforming we live wisely, by whose loving and enjoying we live happily, one God, from whom all things, through whom all things, in whom all things. To him glory for all ages, Amen.126

Here, the language used by Augustine is not an ascent to the One but rather a process of being reformed and remade by the Triune God, who is the Creator, the refashioner, and beatific destiny of humanity. To know this God is to love divine life, and therefore to enter into a program of divine transformation. Worship is the delightful consequence of grasping the truth about God and accordingly the created world, which finds its significance in God alone.

Hence, Christian salvation is not an ascent toward God but a reformation and renewal of the human person through an ecclesial program of wisdom and worship, one that alters the relationship of the human person with the created world.127 This program is evident, albeit subtly, in Augustine’s description of the ascent in the latter part of De vera religione. Irrefutably, features of the ascent remain an essential aspect of the Christian life, but it is the Christian worshiping God through created signs, not through purgation of the mind via reason and ethics. Reason has its place in the Christian life but at the service of faith and worship. The life of reason is not a baseless curiosity (curiositas) but a “ladder to immortal things” (gradus ad

126 Augustine, uera rel. (CCL 32: 260.134-49; Hill, 104): quare ipsum donum dei cum patre et filio aeque incommutabile colere et tenere nos conuenit: unius substantiae trinitatem unum deum, a quo sumus, per quem sumus, in quo sumus, a quo discissimus, cui dissimiles facti sumus, a quo perire non permissi sumus, principium, ad quod recurrimus, et formam, quam sequimur, et gratiam, qua reconciliamur; unum, quo auctore conditi sumus, et similitudinem eius, per quam ad unitatem formamur, et pacem, qua unitati adhaeremus, deum, qui dixit: fiat, et uerbum, per quod factum est omne, quod substantialiter et naturaliter factum est, et donum benignitatis eius, quo placuit et conciliatum est auctori suo, ut non interiret, quidquid ab eo per uerbum factum est, unum deum, quo creatore uiuimus, per quem reformati sapienter uiuimus, quem diligentes et quo fruentes beate uiuimus, unum deum, ex quo omnia, per quem omnia, in quo omnia. ipsi gloria in saecula saeculorum. amen.

That is reasoning, which is never performed outside of the authority of trustworthy signs, enables the human person to move beyond the sensible to the intelligible. So, the visible ages of the old person provide the basis of Augustine’s account of the spiritual ages of the new person. The visible is taken up and transfigured in Christ. In light of this mediating quality of the created order through human reason, Augustine quotes Romans 1:20, “For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are perceived by understanding, by what is made, and also his eternal virtue and his divinity.” And he claims also that “this is a return from temporal things to the eternal things and the reformation from the life of the old person into the new person.” The created order reassumes its status as sign.

And, as his examination of the vices prove, each of these “ascents” fails if one does not devote oneself to that ecclesial refashioning of wisdom and worship necessary for a renewal of perception. Curiosity may look like knowledge, but it is only truly knowledge if it aims at

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128 Augustine, uera rel. 24.52 (CCL 32: 221.11-12; Hill, 65).
129 Augustine, uera rel. 24.45.
130 This is precisely the function of reason in Augustine suggested by Carol Harrison: “The emphasis on leaving behind the created, temporal, mutable realm, on turning within oneself, on ascending to God through reason, on avoiding the snares of the senses and the body and seeking higher, spiritual reality, is pervasive in the early works and has often led to them being described as overly rationalistic and negative in their attitude to creation and the body...We must bear in mind the motivation for such teaching: it is not so much an exaltation of, or exercise of reason for its own sake, nor is it an attempt to denounce creation; it is, rather part of an attempt to raise fallen humanity to the transcendent God. The motivation is, in fact, religious and mystical: it is expressed as much in faith, hope, and love, and the exercise of virtue, as it is in reason, and is strikingly positive about the created realm as witnessing to a good Creator and as being the first step in leading humanity to him” (Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], 40).
131 Augustine, uera rel. 26.48-49.
132 Augustine, uera rel. 52.101 (CCL 32: 252.8-10; Hill, 97): Inuisibilia enim dei a creatura mundi per ea, quae facta sunt, intellect conspiciuntur et sempiterna per ea, quae facta sunt, intellect conspiciuntur et sempiterna eius virtute et diuitias.
133 Augustine, uera rel. 52.101 (CCL 32: 10-12; Hill, 97): Haec est a temporalibus ad aeterna regressio et ex uita ueteris hominis in nouum hominem reformatio.
eternal things that always remain the same.\textsuperscript{134} Pride may remind one of power but such things can only be obtained when the soul “submits to God and has its eyes turned toward his kingdom with total charity.”\textsuperscript{135} Self-indulgence of the body is possible, when one enters a place where there is no more need, an impossible situation in the present, temporal bound condition of humanity.\textsuperscript{136} This turning of the eyes from carnal want toward eternal desire is accomplished by feasting upon a consideration and study of the visible signs of the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{137} And, it is here that Augustine departs most radically from the theme of the ascent through reason and ethics. As Augustine remarks in his re-telling of the parables of the talents, “the one who makes good use of, if you will, of the five senses of the body for believing and preaching the works of God and nourishing the love of God assuredly by action and cognition for the pacification of one’s nature and knowing God, enters into the joy of the Lord.”\textsuperscript{138} This person is capable of contemplating God, not because he or she has an advanced education in philosophical method or the liberal arts but because the Christian “praises God the artificer of all these sensible things and prevails upon God by faith, and expects by hope, and seeks by love.”\textsuperscript{139}

Therefore, in \textit{De vera religione}, Augustine connects what is known about God through Christian teaching and the practice of worship. This worship is conceived, not as a philosophical ascent toward God, but instead a refashioning of the human person through the trustworthy signs of faith. The language of ascent is employed, particularly as Augustine discusses the role of

\textsuperscript{134} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 52.101
\textsuperscript{135} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 52.101 (CCL 32: 16-19; Hill, 97).
\textsuperscript{136} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 52.101
\textsuperscript{137} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 51.100.
\textsuperscript{138} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 54.106 (CCL 32: 33-36; Hill, 99-100): \textit{Qui uero bene utitur uel ipsis quinque sensibus corporis ad credenda et praedicanda opera dei et nutriendam caritatem ipsius vel actione et cognitione ad pacificandam naturam suam et cognoscendum deum, intrat in gaudium domini sui.}
\textsuperscript{139} Augustine, \textit{uera rel.} 54.106 (CCL 32: 255-44-48; Hill 100): \textit{qui horum omnium sensibilium deum artificem laudat et eum persuadet fide et exspectat spe et quaerit specierum.}
reason; but this use of reason to ascend to God is subordinated to the signs of Scripture such that it is the Christian, who is capable of knowing God through faith, hope, and love; not the philosopher who enters into divine enjoyment. Further, creation is not disregarded in this refashioning but constantly referred to the source of its goodness, the Triune God. This indeed is the pedagogical value of Christ, who being the God-person, uses the created world properly in order to orient human beings toward their proper end, the worship of the Triune God. The Christian Scriptures and sacraments function as delightful, authoritative signs that direct the human person toward God. Worship is knit into the process of salvation.

Of course, this is not to say that De vera religione is a complete and mature articulation of Augustine’s consideration of signs, understanding, and divine worship. While an ecclesial program of worship and wisdom is beginning to replace the ascent to the eternal, it has not yet fully done so. Love of neighbor is a sign of divine love but not a sign in which the particularity of this love has much import. The neighbor is to be loved not as:

carnal brothers or sons or husbands or wives or any other person known or neighboring or citizen. For this love is also temporal. For we would not have had necessary relationships such as these, which are caused by being born and by dying, if our nature, holding onto the precepts and image of God, had not been banished in that corruption.140

Though creation is not to be spurned by the human person undergoing salvation in Augustine, aspects of human existence seem to be treated less as mediating signs of God’s love and more as that which must be endured so that the eternal might be reached. Nonetheless, as Augustine matured as a theologian and pastor, his Christology and soteriology would become more sophisticated, attentive to the role of Christ’s humanity in mediating the divine-human

140 Augustine, uera rel. 46.86 (CCL 32: 244.31-245.37; Hill, 89): ut diliguntur carnales fratres uel filii uel coniuges uel quique cognate aut affines aut ciues. Nam et ista dilectio temporalis nascendo et moriendo contingent, si natura nostra in praecptis et in imagine dei manens in istam corruptionem non relegaretur.
encounter. For example, at this early stage, Augustine is less focused upon the importance of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as a significant sign of divine love through his very humanity. And this gradual appreciation of the marvelous exchange of humanity and divinity in the sacrifice of Christ would come to inform his more mature approach to the relationship between signs and understanding.

_De doctrina christiana: Using the Sign to Worship the Reality_

The importance of _De vera religione_, relative to Augustine’s mystagogical theology, is its early incorporation of divine worship into an account of human salvation, culminating in contemplation of the Triune God. In this way, worship is not an ascent as much as a refashioning of the human person through learning to perceive the divine source of all existence, the true wisdom of Christian faith and practice. Augustine’s appreciation for signification, and hence for the full potential of signs in the Christian life, is not maturely articulated until _De doctrina christiana_. Here, Augustine’s theory of _uti_ and _frui_, as well as _signum_ and _res_, represents a new attentiveness to the mediating quality of the sign. And, it is because of this Christological theory of signification that Augustine’s theology of scriptural exegesis includes the very act of worship. Scriptural exegesis is mystagogy.

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141 For a summary of the shifts in emphasis in Augustine’s Christology, see Brian E. Daley, S.J., “A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in Saint Augustine’s Christology,” _Word and Spirit_ 9 (1987): 100-117. One of these important shifts was the movement from Christ’s humanity as the rhetorical word of God, drawing humanity back to God to an acknowledgment by Augustine that Christ’s humanity, in all of its humble particularity, is the very way of coming back to God (107-108).


Following his ordination to the priesthood in 391, Augustine asked his bishop Valerius for an opportunity to study and meditate upon the Scriptures. In Letter 21, Augustine writes, “For I would dare to say to know myself and to hold in full faith, what pertains to our salvation. But how am I minister this same faith for the salvation of others not seeking what is useful for myself but what is useful for the many so that they might be saved?” Augustine’s period of prayer and study of the Scriptures was not his first acquaintance with Christian teaching but instead a shift from seeking the truth within Scripture for the benefit of one’s own salvation to discerning how this process of seeking divine truth might benefit the salvation of others. The fruit of Augustine’s self-imposed pastoral sabbatical is De doctrina christiana.

De doctrina is a treatise of four books, the first three written between 396 and 397 and the last between 426 and 427. For many years, the work was treated as an articulation of a curriculum of Christian culture and teaching, one in which the liberal arts, including philosophy, entered into the service of the interpretation of Scripture. Yet, the rhetorical turn in Augustinian studies has resulted in a greater awareness of the work as a Christian appropriation of the rhetorical genre of tractio-tractatio, what is to be discovered and what is to be handed on. Books 1-3 deal with the content and process of discovery, while Book 4 addresses how to unfold what is discovered in the Scriptures to enrich the understanding of the congregation.

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144 Lancel, St. Augustine, 151-52.
145 Augustine, ep. 21 (CSEL 34.1: 52.3-6): auderem enim dicere scire me et plene fide retinere, quid pertineat ad salute nostrum. sed hoc ipsum quo modo ministrem ad salute aliorum non quae renis, quod mihi utile est, sed quod multis, ut salui fiat.
148 Ibid., 116.
Central to understanding *De doctrina* is the prologue to the work. In the prologue, Augustine addresses Christians, who contend that there is no need for human teaching relative to the Scriptures. These Christians believe that they have received a special divine gift (*divino munere*) regarding the truths hidden within Scripture, an inner illumination not mediated through human teaching. Yet, Augustine rejects this spiritualizing of the giftedness of the Scriptures, instead offering the following theological rationale for Christian teaching:

All this could certainly have been done through an angel, but the human condition would be really forlorn if God appeared unwilling to minister his word to human beings through human agency. It has been said, ‘For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are’; how could that be true if God did not make divine utterances from his human temple but broadcast direct from heaven or through angels the learning that he wished to be passed on to mankind? Moreover, there would be no way for love, which ties people together in the bonds of unity, to make souls overflow and as it were intermingle with each other, if human beings learned nothing from other humans.

There is a remarkable difference between the way that Augustine discussed the mediating love of neighbor in *De vera religione* and this passage. God’s plan for salvation is integral to the very act of human teaching, to that gift of love shared between the teacher and student both seeking truth. The goal of this teaching is not simply to possess truth, something that God could have accomplished through an internal enlightenment of each person. Rather, it is to foster love through an ecclesial community of divine inquiry. And the aim of the teacher’s own love is not to create human beings dependent upon that teacher for knowledge but rather to cultivate a way of knowing and understanding among students so that the student can “arrive at the hidden meaning for himself or at least avoid falling into incongruous misconceptions.”


150 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* prol. 6 (CCL 32: 4.91-101; Green, 7).

151 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* prol. 6 (CCL 32: 6.143-46; Green, 11).
of interpretation. The Scriptural signs move the reader if that person has the proper understanding and attitude regarding those signs learned within this community of loving interpretation.

What is this way of searching for hidden meaning within the Church, and how is one formed to “read” this meaning properly? In Book 1, Augustine proposes two pairs of contrasting terms that are essential to becoming a truthful interpreter of divine communication: thing/sign (res/signum) and enjoy/use (frui/uti). Signs (signa), for Augustine, are characterized by their function as signifiers, while things (rei) consist of objects that do not signify but exist unto themselves. While every sign is a thing, not every “thing” is a sign, intentionally referring to some meaning beyond itself. After clarifying this distinction, Augustine introduces the other pair of contrasting terms, uti and frui. As he writes, “There are some things which are to be enjoyed [fruendum est], and some whose function is both to enjoy and to use [fruuntur et utuntur].” Enjoyment, for Augustine, is to love something for its own sake, while to use it “is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love—if indeed it is something that ought to be loved.” Here, Augustine introduces the metaphor of pilgrims on a journey toward their homeland, who if fascinated by the journey, would improperly use each thing they encounter along their travel as a source of enjoyment. Such a person would never reach home. Augustine concludes then that:

Hence in this life of mortality, being pilgrims away from the Lord, if we wish to return to our homeland where we can be happy, this world is to be used not enjoyed so that the

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153 Augustine, doctr. chr. 1.2.2 (CCL 32: 7.1-8.20; Green, 8-9).
154 Augustine, doctr. chr. 1.2.2 (CCL 32: 7.13-14; Green, 8-9).
155 Augustine, doctr. chr. 1.2.2 (CCL 32: 8.1-2; Green, 9).
156 Augustine, doctr. chr. 1.4.4. (CCL 32: 8.1-3; Green, 9).
157 Augustine, doctr. chr. 1.4.4 (CCL 32: 8.4-18; Green, 9).
invisible attributes of God, by which things are made, might be perceived with understanding (Rom. 1:20), that is, so that we might receive eternal and spiritual things from corporal things.  

Therefore, Augustine unites the knowledge of things and signs with enjoyment and use. The identity and actions of the person “reading” the signs is as important as the sign and its referent. Augustine was one of the first to connect these three aspects of interpretation: sign, signifier, and the person performing the act of signification.  

Robert Markus comments, “A thing is a sign, for Augustine, precisely in so far as it stands for something to somebody. This three-term relation is essential to any situation in order that one element in it should function as a sign.”  

The created world functions as a sign of spiritual things when it is used properly, as a way of enjoying God. The creature has to assume the identity of pilgrim in order to properly interpret these signs. Yet, this is not simply a matter of the union of intellect and ethics, as Mazza argues in his account of Augustine’s mystagogical method. Instead, the Christological foundation of frui and uti is the key to Augustine’s treatment of the relationship between the sign and the reality, and hence the mystagogical theory underlying both his Scriptural and liturgical sermons.  

To enjoy something (frui) is ultimately to find meaning in the thing itself, while to use it (uti) is to treat it as a sign, “a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides

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158 Augustine, _doctr. chr._ 1.4.4 (CCL 32: 8.14-18; Green, 10): sic in huius mortalitalis beati esse possimus, utendum est hoc mundo, non fruendum, ut invisibilia dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellect conspiciantur, hoc est, ut de corporalibus temporalibusque rebus aeterna et spiritualia capiamus.

159 Robert Markus, “Augustine on Signs,” in _Signs and Meanings_, 87.

160 Ibid., 87-88.

161 David Helmut Baer notes the Christological foundation of Augustine’s own employment of the terms uti and frui. Christ is made useful to the human person by becoming the instrument of human salvation and thus leads human beings to enjoy God. The “use” of the neighbor, in fact, is nothing else but loving that neighbor as a way toward salvation. See, “The Fruit of Charity: Using the Neighbor in _De doctrina christiana_,” _Journal of Religious Ethics_ 24 (1996): 53-56.
the impression that it presents to the senses.”\textsuperscript{162} Here, one should note the important distinction between what is seen and what is understood. The only thing suitable for the human person to “enjoy” is the Triune God, the thing or reality (\textit{res}) that is not speakable in a worthy way (\textit{nihil dignae dici possit}) through the limited signifying capacity of human language.\textsuperscript{163} Yet, God in a wonderful gift to the human person “has sanctioned the homage of the human voice, and chosen that we should derive pleasure from our words in praise of him.”\textsuperscript{164} Though human understanding cannot grasp God, it can delight in the name. Yet, because of the false images, ideas, and affections that each person has toward this God and world, human society is incapable of moving from the sign of the words to the reality through its own efforts.\textsuperscript{165} Human beings were made to praise God, to delight and rejoice in the name of God, yet something has gone awry requiring healing. Though created as creatures of praise and adoration, men and women have become doxologically blind and mute, incapable of knowing and enjoying God with ease. Divine signs no longer refer naturally to their reality, or move the affections of human beings in the proper way. Human beings have become poor readers of signs, and thus are in need of a community to form them in this divine way of reading.\textsuperscript{166}

Like \textit{De vera religione}, \textit{De doctrina} introduces Christ as the mediator of a salutary pedagogy, this time of \textit{signum} and \textit{res}, \textit{uti} and \textit{frui}. Humanity had come to enjoy the world.\textsuperscript{167} Because of this, men and women could not perceive the wisdom of God in the created world, so

\textsuperscript{162} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 2.1.1 (CCL 32: 32.5-7; Green, 30).
\textsuperscript{163} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 1.5.5-1.6.6 (CCL 32: 9.1-10.17; Green, 10-11).
\textsuperscript{164} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 1.6.6 (CCL 32: 10.11-12; Green, 11).
\textsuperscript{165} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 1.7.7-1.9.9 (CCL 32: 10.1-12.12; Green, 12).
\textsuperscript{166} My analogy of reading the world is influenced by that of Brian Stocks, who writes, “Augustine is the first to present a consistent analysis of the manner in which we organize the intentional structure of thought through this activity: he suggests that through reading a ‘language game’ can become a ‘form of life’” (\textit{Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation} [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996], 111.
\textsuperscript{167} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 1.12.12 (CCL 32: 13.10-13; Green, 13-14).
the Word became flesh, an exemplum of the wisdom of God. The word exemplum, used by Augustine to describe the incarnation, is a term taken from the rhetorical tradition meaning both deeds that are for imitation, as well as the events of history that serve a demonstrative function. This rhetorical term is now employed Christologically. In the incarnation, the wisdom of God became a persuasive and salutary word through the marriage of humanity and divinity in the person and works of Jesus Christ. Augustine writes:

When we speak, the word which we hold in our mind becomes a sound in order that what we have in our mind may pass through ears of flesh into the listener’s mind; this is called speech. Our thought, however, is not converted into the same sound, but remains intact in its own home, suffering no diminution from its change as it takes on the form of a word in order to make its way into ears. In the same way the word of God became flesh in order to live in us but was unchanged.

Jesus Christ is the true “word” from the Father, who teaches human beings to once again treat the world as “significant.” As Augustine states, “We made bad use [male usi sumus] of immortality, and so we died; Christ made good use of mortality, and so we live.” This medicine is administered within the Church, the very body of Christ, in which Christ’s salvific teachings of use and enjoyment do not produce murmuring but delight in God.

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168 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1.11.11. (CCL 32: 12.1-4; Green, 13)
169 Basil Studer, “‘Sacramentum et exemplum’ chez saint Augustin,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975): 114-17. Exemplum in Augustine, according to Studer, receives its demonstrative function from Quintilian’s *Institutes* 5.11.6 (115). Quintilian writes, “For the most potent among these types of speech, what we suitably call example, are deeds of things (that is more properly the usefulness of deeds) to persuade someone of that which you aim at by calling it to mind” [*Potentissimum autem est inter ea quae sunt huius generis quod proprie vocamus exemplum, id est rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id quod intenderis commeratio*]. The “historical” use of exemplum takes place in *Institutes* 12.4.1-2. Here, Quintilian argues that the orator should maintain a supply of examples, both old and new, to draw upon as both lessons and legal precedent.
170 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1.12.13 (CCL 32: 13.2-8; Green, 13).
173 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1.15.14 (CCL 32: 15.15-16; Green, 15).
teacher of use and enjoyment, descended toward humanity so that each person might properly
perceive God not through an intellectual formation but a transformation of the will that enables it
to perceive the proper reality of the sign.\textsuperscript{174} It is Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and the
forgiveness of sins that took place through his death that fundamentally altered the human will so
that it could acknowledge God’s forgiveness and be converted toward divine life.\textsuperscript{175}

Therefore, because of Christ’s signification (especially on the cross), human beings can
no longer read the world in the same way. The proper use of this created world opens each
person to the potential of divine signification in all of his or her relationships through love.\textsuperscript{176}

Augustine writes:

\begin{quote}
any other object of love that enters the mind should be swept towards the same goal as
that to which the whole flood of our love is directed. So a person who loves his neighbor
properly should, in concert with him, aim to love God with all his heart, all his soul, and
all his mind. In this way, loving him as he would himself, he relates his love of himself
and his neighbor entirely to the love of God, which allows not the slightest trickle to flow
away from it and thereby diminish it.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

All hints of temporal subjugation to the eternal are removed from Augustine’s thought. Rather,
it is the temporal, which allows the human person to worship God, to use the sign as a sacrament

\textsuperscript{174} David Dawson, “Signs, Allegory, and the Motions of the Soul,” in \textit{De doctrina christiana: A
Classic of Western Culture}, 125. Dawson argues that Augustine’s whole theory of Scriptural
allegory, is based the primacy he gives to human will. He writes, “The speech of another impels
us to respond first of all to the speaker’s inner disposition. And it does seem to be the case that
before we reflect on the content of another’s remark, we generally respond to its tone, reacting to
what we sense as its reflection of the speaker’s own inner state or attitude toward us” (125).

\textsuperscript{175} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 1.17.16 (CCL 32: 15.1-7; Green, 15).

\textsuperscript{176} Williams writes, “The Word’s taking of flesh is not a dissolving of history as eternal truth
takes over some portion of the world: it is not, saying Augustine, that God comes to a place
where he was not before. Rather the incarnational marks the essential quality of the world itself
as ‘sign’ or trace of its maker. It instructs us once and for that that we have our identity within
the shifting, mobile realm of representation, non-finality, growing and learning, because it
reveals what the spiritual eye ought to perceive generally—that the whole creation is uttered and
‘meant’ by God, and therefore has no meaning in itself. Only when, by the grace of Christ, we
know that we live entirely in a world of signs are we set free for the restlessness that is our
destiny as rational creatures” (Williams, “Language, Reality and Desire,” 141).

\textsuperscript{177} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 1.22.21 (CCL 32: 18.36-42; Green, 17).
to savor the reality of God. Augustine’s definition of love, and love’s distortion in cupidity, reflects this newfound regard for divine mediation through temporal things. He writes, “I call love the movement of the soul toward enjoying God for himself and also the neighbor according to God; cupidity is a motion of the soul for enjoying itself and its neighbor and whatever else pleases it in a bodily way not according to God.” Knowledge of the sign’s referent, God, means that one must use this sign (including the neighbor) to love God. As John Cavadini writes, “Our enjoyment of God is not the result of philosophy or inward ascents but an enjoyment whose content and substance are continual acts of charity performed toward whatever neighbor chance or circumstance sends us.” Contemplating the meaning of the sign elicits loving worship of the referent.

This is especially evident as Augustine moves from a discussion of the things in Book 1 to the signs of Scripture in Books 2 and 3. Augustine treats the Scriptures fundamentally as a series of divine signs written to cure the human will of its debility through interpreting “the thoughts and wishes of those by whom it was written down and, through them, the will of God, which we believe these men followed as they spoke.” By perceiving the truth of these signs, the Christian comes to conform oneself to the will of God. The Scriptures perform this curative function through metaphoric language, imagery that delights the soul in order to teach it. Unlocking the meaning of this imagery through interpretation is precisely what feeds the soul, providing simple passages “to sate hunger” and more obscure ones “to remove haughtiness.” Yet, to read the Scriptures in an intelligent manner, it is necessary to have knowledge of the

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179 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 3.10.16 (CCL 32: 87.32-35; Green, 76).
181 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 2.6.7 (CCL 32: 35.5-8; Green, 32).
182 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 2.6.7 (CCL 32: 35.15-18; Green, 33).
183 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 2.6.8 (CCL 32: 36.38-40; Green, 33).
grammar of the Scriptural signs, using the natural sciences, liberal arts, and philosophy as tools for this endeavor.\textsuperscript{184} Such knowledge through interpretation should not become an end unto itself but always referred to the love of Christ signified by the cross:

In the sign of the cross, all human action is transcribed: to work well in Christ and to persevere and to cling to him, to hope for heaven, and not to profane the sacraments. Having been made pure through this action we shall be strong enough to know the love of Christ surpassing knowledge (Eph. 3:18), the one who is equal to the Father, through whom all things were made, so that we might be filled with all the plenitude of God.\textsuperscript{185}

But, the more complex and salutary work is not simply reading the signs of Scripture as a grammarian might but interpreting the ambiguous and metaphoric signs of the Scriptures.

In fact, the major concern of Book III of \textit{De doctrina} is the proper interpretation of metaphor signs, and it is here that Augustine ties together the signification of the Scriptures and worship. Augustine argues that it is essential not to treat metaphoric or figurative signs in a literal way.\textsuperscript{186} If an interpreter remains attached to the literal sign, that reader fails to perceive the pedagogy of signification constitutive of the Christian narrative. In light of Christ, the Sabbath always means more than one of the seven days of the weekly cycle, and sacrifice is never equivalent to agricultural rituals.\textsuperscript{187} For, “it is a miserable servitude of the soul, to take signs for things; and to not be able to raise the eye of the mind to drink in the eternal light.”\textsuperscript{188}

Though Augustine performs an anti-Jewish polemic of Scriptural reading here, his concern is not

\textsuperscript{184} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 2.42.63 (CCL 32: 76.8-12; Green, 67).
\textsuperscript{185} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 2.41.62 (CCL 32: 76.25-30; Green, 66): \textit{Quo signo cruces, omnis actio christianas descriptur, bene operari in Christo et ei perseveranter inhaerere, sperare caelestia, sacramenta non profanare. Per hanc actionem purgati ualebimus cognitionem etiam supereminentem scientiae caritatem Christi, qua aequalis est patri, per quem facta sunt Omnia, ut impleamur in omnum plenitudinem dei.}
\textsuperscript{186} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 3.5.9 (CCL 32: 82.1-5; Green, 72).
\textsuperscript{187} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 3.5.9 (CCL 32: 83.9-16; Green, 72).
\textsuperscript{188} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 3.5.9 (CCL 32: 83.16-19; Green, 72): \textit{Ea demum est miserabilis animi seruitus, signa pro rebus accipere; et supra creaturam corpoream, oculum mentis ad hauriendum aeternum lumen leuare non posse.}
with actual Jewish exegetical practice, of which he was by no means an expert.\textsuperscript{189} Instead, Augustine’s focus is what that person worships through the use of the sign. He writes:

For he is a slave to the sign, who sacrifices \textit{[operator]} or worships \textit{[ueneratur]} some sign-thing, while remaining ignorant of what is signified. Truly, he who either sacrifices or worships a divinely instituted useful sign, of which he understands its power and significance, does not worship this sign, which is visible and passes away, but that reality of more use, to which all other things are to be referred.\textsuperscript{190}

This discussion of worship and signification in the context of Scriptural exegesis is no accident in Augustine. The example Augustine uses to explain metaphoric signs are the sacraments of the Church. The Christian, who interprets the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist properly, perceives the referent of the sign and worships that referent freely.\textsuperscript{191} This worshipful approach to perceiving the meaning of the sign is indispensable to Augustine’s exegesis of the Scriptures. Anything in the Scriptures that is not in concord with the command to love God and neighbor should be interpreted as metaphoric so that even the most grotesque Scriptural tropes become sacramental in the process.\textsuperscript{192} So Jeremiah’s statement, “Behold, today I have established you over nations and kingdoms so that you might tear down and destroy and disperse and scatter,” cannot be literal but figurative, since God would not demand that human being tear down one another.\textsuperscript{193} The Scripture must be used to enjoy God and the neighbor through God by means of loving interpretation, a form of inquiry that never ceases to unite knowledge and love in a type of

\textsuperscript{189} Williams, “Language, Reality, and Desire,” 147.
\textsuperscript{190} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 3.9.13 (CCL 85.1-6; Green, 74-75): \textit{Sub signo enim seruit, qui operator aut venerator aliquam rem significantem, nesciens, quid significet: qui uero aut operator aut ueneratur utile signum diuinitus institutum, cuius uim significationemque intelligit, non hoc ueneratur, quod uidetur et transit, sed illud potius, quo talia cuncta referenda sunt.}
\textsuperscript{191} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 3.9.13 (CCL 86.17-20; Green, 75).
\textsuperscript{192} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 3.10.14 (CCL 32: 86.8-12; Green, 75).
\textsuperscript{193} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 3.11.17-12.18 (CCL 32: 88.20-4; Green, 77).
spiritual exercise mirroring the kenosis of the incarnation. Of course, one first needs to be able to read the literal sense of those Scriptures, to become familiar with the expressions of that Scriptural text, and to pray for understanding.

It is now possible to evaluate the theological and spiritual foundations of Scriptural exegesis in Augustine. Scripture, as an authoritative divine sign, is meant to be used so as to enjoy God. And the proper use of Scripture is a loving interpretation of the text, one that culminates in the worship of the sign’s referent. Seeking wisdom in the Scriptures through the act of interpretation is necessary because by comprehending the Scriptures as the love of God and neighbor, even when exceedingly difficult, the Christian is reformed so that they might worship God. This Christological interpretation, of using the sign to worship the reality referred to by the sign, is also at work in Augustine’s treatment of the Christian sacraments.

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194 David Dawson writes, “The hermeneutical correlate of this divine kenosis is an allegorical sensibility that consistently “abases” literal meanings (in this case, the disordered motions of the proud reader’s soul), so that they might be moved to “give up” their self-sufficiency and turn toward, and become reinterpreted by, divine grace in scriptural form. As a result, the reader’s self-aggrandizing superbia is neutralized; the formerly disordered motions of her soul become ordered; she now rejoices, desires, sorrows, and fears appropriately” (“Sign, Allegory, and the Motions of the Soul,” 135). In order words, the reader of the Scriptures learns how to use the world properly (through the exercise of the Scriptures) to enjoy God.

195 Augustine, _doctr. chr._ 3.37.56 (CCL 32: 115.33-116.45; Green, 99-100).

196 Paul Kolbet writes regarding the function of Scripture in _De doctrina:_ “The skills one develops to read scripture properly are the very ones needed to act morally. Love is the hermeneutical criterion in both overlapping spheres. This overlap between the hermeneutical and the moral drives Augustine’s reformulated psychagogy. Habits of reading and habits of acting imply one another as misinterpretation indicates moral failures, and moral failures cause misreadings. The reader and moral agent continually strives to cultivate the ability to reason from any particular signum and refer it to its proper res within the order established by God” (_Augustine and the Cure of Souls_, 150-51).
Letters 54 and 55 to Januarius: Using the Sacraments to Enjoy God

Three years following the completion of the first three books of *De doctrina*, Augustine replied to a letter answering the questions of the layman Januarius regarding the liturgical practices of Christianity. Letters 54 and 55, composed in the year 400, are Augustine’s theory of cultic life in response to Januarius. While these letters have been analyzed as Augustine’s most sustained portrayal of his liturgical and sacramental theory, commentators have neglected to perform an examination of these letters in light of the theory of divine signification in *De doctrina christiana*. Further, these letters are often construed as historical sources for Augustine’s liturgical practice, not as an essential contribution to this mystagogical theology.

Letter 54 begins with a discussion of the nature of Christian worship. The sacraments of Christianity are few in number, easy to observe, yet rich in signification. Among these sacraments, Augustine counts baptism in the name of the Trinity, the communion of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, and whatever religious practices that have scriptural foundations, which do not impose an onerous burden upon the people. In addition, Augustine reckons as 

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198 van der Meer devotes a chapter to unfolding Augustine’s liturgical theory in these letters and does refer to *De doctrina christiana*, as a means of expounding upon Augustine’s sacramental theory. That is sacraments within the New Testament are few in number (*Augustine the Bishop*, 280); there are spoken sacraments, distinct from the visible rites of Christian faith (281); and the sacramental nature of the Scriptures (300). At no point though does van der Meer analyze letters 54 and 55 to Januarius using the theme of “use” and “enjoyment,” terms that are essential to much of the argumentation of these letters.
199 Harmless, the most careful commentator of Augustine’s mystagogical approach, references these letters to draw a distinction between Augustine’s understanding of liturgical rites and catechesis. The rites may be simple and consist of a few signs but the catechesis may use an array of imagery (*Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 300-01). His use of these letters does not go beyond this, touching upon the place of these letters in Augustine’s mystagogical theology.
200 Augustine, *ep.* 54.1.1 (CSEL 34.2: 159.7-9; Teske, 210).
201 Augustine, *ep.* 54.1.1 (CSEL 34.2: 159.7-9; Teske, 210). (CSEL 34.2: 159.10-14; Teske, 210).
sacraments those most salvific (saluberrima) annual observances, though not in Scripture, that are part of the Church’s tradition, including the commemoration of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, his ascension into heaven, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and any other observance recognized by the universal Church.  

Yet, outside of these universal liturgical practices, Augustine also recognizes the existence of cultic practices that vary from area to area: “for some, they fast on the Sabbath, others do not, still others communicate daily in the body and blood of the Lord, while others receive on certain days.” The Eucharistic sacrifice is itself offered less and more frequently, depending upon one’s geographic location. The Christian is not to be bothered by this liturgical diversity. Instead, he or she is to accept that if “it is shown to be neither against faith nor against good morals,” it should be treated indifferently and should be kept among the society to which one belongs at the time. The problem for Augustine is when the diversity of liturgical practices becomes a point of contention among a Christian community. Someone within a local church may argue that daily reception of the Eucharist is inappropriate, because one should never receive so remarkable a sacrament in a state of spiritual disarray. Others in that very same community may offer a counterargument that “if the sins are not of a kind, so that whoever is judged excommunicated, such a person ought not to separate himself from the daily

202 Augustine, *ep. 54.1.1* (CSEL 34.2: 159.15-160.3; Teske, 210).
203 Augustine, *ep. 54.2.2* (CSEL 34.2: 160.5-7; Teske, 210): *quod alii ieiunant sabbato, alii non, alii cotidie accipiunt, alii certis diebus accipiunt*.
204 Augustine, *ep. 54.2.2* (CSEL 34.2: 160.7-8; Teske, 210).
205 Augustine, *ep. 54.2.2* (CSEL 34.2: 160.13-15; Teske, 210-11): *quod enim neque contra fidel neque contra bonos mores esse convincitur, indifferentem habendum et pro eorum, inter quos uiiatur, societate seruandum est*.
206 Augustine, *ep. 54.3.4* (CSEL 34.2: 162.4-8; Teske, 211).
Both of these arguments for Augustine are correct, albeit misplaced. The Christians, whether they receive daily or not, both desire to honor the body and blood of Jesus Christ in an appropriate way.\textsuperscript{208} Fruitful reception of the sacrament takes various forms for different people. As Augustine writes, “in the first people, the same manna tasted in the mouth according to each particular will, and in the very same way that sacrament, by which the world is made subject, tastes differently in the heart of the Christian.”\textsuperscript{209} The taste of the Eucharist, its fruitfulness in the life of the Christian is related to the will of that Christian, what it is that he or she desires to receive in that sacrament. Central to proper worship of the Eucharist is an act of interpretation whereby the sacrament’s medicinal quality is related to the disordered will of the person consuming the sacrament. The sacraments are a divine and eloquent speech that requires an act of reading in a way not unlike the Scriptures.

In Letter 55, Augustine takes up a markedly different tone regarding his response to Januarius. He is not simply answering Januarius’ questions but setting forth a fuller theory of the interpretation of sacramental prayer in the Christian life, teaching Januarius how to “read” the sacraments for himself. Januarius had asked in the previously received letter why Christians do not celebrate the passion of the Lord on the same day each year, as is the custom on Christmas. Further, he wondered if this distinction is because of the relationship between the Sabbath and the moon, and if so, what the nature of this relationship is.\textsuperscript{210} Augustine responds by noting an important theological contrast between Christmas and Easter, as commemorated within the

\textsuperscript{207} Augustine, \emph{ep.} 54.3.4 (CSEL 34.2: 162.15-17; Teske, 211): \textit{ceterum si tanta non sunt ut excommunicandus quisque homo iudicetur, non se debere a cotidiana medicina dominici corporis seperare.}

\textsuperscript{208} Augustine, \emph{ep.} 54.3.4 (CSEL 34.2: 163.1-3; Teske, 212).

\textsuperscript{209} Augustine, \emph{ep.} 54.3.4 (CSEL 34.2: 163.10-12; Teske, 212): \textit{quod in primo populo unicuique manna secundum propriam voluntatem in ore sapiebat, sic uniuscuiusque in corde christiani sacramentum illud, quo subiugatus est mundum.}

\textsuperscript{210} Augustine, \emph{ep.} 55.1.2 (CSEL 34.2: 170.3-7; Teske, 216).
Church. He states, “It is important that you know this first: the birthday of the Lord is not to be celebrated as a sacrament, but is no more than a day to be recalled in the memory that he was born.” This day is for festivity, not for signification (signari). A feast is a sacrament, a day for signification, when “the commemoration of the deed is carried out in such a way that it is understood to signify a reality that is to be received in a holy way.” The Pasch fits the definition of a sacrament for Augustine because on Easter, Christ’s death and resurrection is both recalled to memory (in memoriam reuocemus) and presented through the signification of the sacraments (ad sacramentorum significationem). What takes place in this feast is not simply a moment of recalling the Paschal Mystery but the opportunity to move, through faith, from mortal life to immortal life, to savor with Christ the delights of divine rest communicated through the sacramental signs of the Easter event. Yet, to properly celebrate the sacrament of Easter requires that the Christian see that this “renewal of our life is like a passage from death to life, which is done first through faith, so that we might rejoice in hope and be patient in tribulation, while even now our exterior person is being corrupted, but the interior person is being renewed day by day.” Through an understanding of the sacrament, by faith and hope, the Christian enters deeper into the renewal made effective by the sacramental sign.

211 Care should be taken in using this letter as Augustine’s mature view of the feast of Christmas. Hubertus R. Drobner (“Christmas in Hippo: Mystical Celebration and Catechesis,” Augustinian Studies 35 (2004): 55-72) argues that Augustine’s sermons on Christmas demonstrate a sacramental view of the feast, “that is in the sense that beyond the remembrance (memoria) of the historical events they celebrate a hidden, deeper meaning” (71).

212 Augustine, ep. 55.1.2 (CSEL 34.2: 170.7-9; Teske, 216): hic primum oportet noueris diem natalis domini non in sacramento celebrari, sed tantum in memoriam reuocari, quod natus sit.

213 Augustine, ep. 55.1.2 (CSEL 34.2: 170.11-13; Teske, 216): sacramentum est autem in aliqua celebratione, cum rei gestae commemoratio.

214 Augustine, ep. 55.2.3-3.4 (CSEL 34.2: 171.15-174.9; Teske, 217-18).

215 Augustine, ep. 55.3.5 (CSEL 34.2: 174.10-14; Teske, 218): haec igitur innuatio uitae nostrae est quidam transitus de morte ad uitam, qui fit primo per fidel, ut in spe gaudeamus et
It is within this context of the sacrament of Easter that Augustine presents his fullest theory of sacramental prayer within the Christian life, doing so in a way not dissimilar to his elaboration of use and enjoyment in *De doctrina*. Christians “take up, with the most religious devotion, things having likenesses to signify reality in a sacred way.” Augustine writes:

If there should be some likeness of a figure not only from the heavens and from the stars but even from a lower creature fashioned for the dispensation of the sacraments, there is a certain eloquence of a salutary teaching accommodated to moving the affections of disciples from visible things to invisible things, from corporeal things to spiritual things, from temporal things to eternal things.

Augustine then describes how this movement of the affections takes place by attending to the signs of Easter. He is, in some sense, reading the feast of Easter with Januarius. The Passover of Easter, including Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, distinct from other feasts, includes the Jewish Sabbath. This is a meaningful sign for Augustine, precisely because of its relationship to other Scriptural signs. It is a sign intended by God, a gift within the created order. But the visible sign must be used so that Christians might move toward that eternal reality. Christians desire rest, and Easter is that sacrament, which is meant to be used in order to pass over into eternal rest. Augustine turns to the book of Genesis as a way of understanding the relation between this temporal Sabbath of the seventh day and the eternal Sabbath of the eighth:

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*in tribulatione patienets simus, dum adhuc exterior homo noster corrupiitur, sed interior renouatur de die in diem.*

217 Augustine, *ep.* 55.7.13 (CSEL 34.2: 183.12-14; Teske, 223): *sed ad rem sacrate significandum similitudines habitas religiosissima deuotine suscipimus.*

218 Augustine, *ep.* 55.7.13 (CSEL 34.2: 184.16-185.3; Teske, 223): *si quae autem figurae simultudinem non tantum de caelo et sideribus sed etiam de creatura inferior ducuntur ad dispensationem sacramentorum, eloquentia quaedam est doctrinae salutaris mouendo affectui discendentium accomodata a visibilis ad invisibilia, a corporalibus ad spiritualia, a temporalibus ad aeterna.*

219 Augustine, *ep.* 55.9.16 (CSEL 34.2: 186.1-3; Teske, 223).

220 Augustine, *ep.* 55.9.17 (CSEL 34.2: 187.13-21; Teske, 224).
“You will find the seventh day is without evening, which signifies the evening without end.”

Augustine transitions from this Scriptural reference to a discussion of the soul, “for souls love rest, whether pious or wicked; but they do not know how to attain for the most part what they love.” The Scriptures, through setting forth the commandment of the Sabbath, provide a way for the soul to delight in that temporal rest with God through moving the soul toward love. In fact, this commandment exists not so that the Christian might rest in the present but so that all good works might be referred to that eternal rest.

Yet, why not simply present this teaching in a plain way, rather than inscribed within the sacraments of Easter? Augustine writes:

For to this purpose, all these things, which entered into by a figure, pertain to the nourishing and fanning of the fire of love in a certain way that carried upward or inward toward rest as if by a weight. For they move and kindle love more, then if they were presented “nude” without any likenesses of the sacraments. It is difficult to discern the cause of this thing. But nevertheless, it renders itself so that something made known through allegorical signification stirs up more, delights more, is more distinguished than if it is said in the clearest way in the proper words.

According to Augustine, the sacramental and liturgical life is so delightful for the Christian, because these sacraments, “adorned in likenesses of these things” (illis similitudinibus figurantur) set in motion (feratur) the human soul, moving it upward toward the contemplation of spiritual

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221 Augustine, ep. 55.9.17 (CSEL 34.2: 188.10-11; Teske, 224): inuenies septimum sine uespere, qua requiem sine fine significant.
222 Augustine, ep. 55.10.18 (CSEL 34.2: 189.4-5; Teske, 224): amant enim requiem siue piae animae siue iniquae; sed qua perueniant ad id, quod amant, plurimum nesciunt.
223 Augustine, ep. 55.10.18 (CSEL 34.2: 189.20-22; Teske, 225).
224 Augustine, ep. 55.11.20 (CSEL 34.2: 191.14-19; Teske, 226).
225 Augustine, ep. 55.11.21 (CSEL 34.2: 191.20-192.8; Teske, 226): ad ipsum autem ignem amoris nutriendum et flatandum quodam modo, quo tanquam pondere sursum uel introrsum referamur ad requiem, omnia ista pertinent, quae figure nobis insinuantur; plus enim mouent et accendunt amorem, quam si nuda sine ullis sacramentorum similitudinibus ponentur. cuius rei causam difficile est dicere; sed tamen ita se habet, ut aliquid per allegoricam significationem intimatus plus moueat, plus delecet et plus honoretur, quam si uerbis propriis apertissime diceretur.
things (*referatur ad spiritualia*), and in the process inflaming it with love.\textsuperscript{226} Liturgical and sacramental signs are to be understood, because in the process of interpreting the signs, the Christian delights in God, and the soul moves upward toward rest with God. A whole way of life is communicated through a proper understanding of liturgical signs, which though lacking the authority of scriptural signs, functions in precisely the same mystagogical manner. Just as an interpretation of the Scriptures leads to divine worship, once again there is a contemplative enjoyment that one undergoes through interpreting liturgical and sacramental practice. The knowledge that one gains through this understanding of liturgical and sacramental life is to “be used not unlike an instrument through which the structure of love rises up.”\textsuperscript{227} Understanding what the sacraments refer to is a temporal act of faith, hope, and love, extending the liturgical and sacramental worship into mystagogy.

**Conclusion**

Therefore, moving from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the reality, is necessary for Augustine because it provides an opportunity to unite once again wisdom and worship. Liturgical and sacramental prayer, like Christ, is a form of divine eloquence whereby the visible creation, including words and deeds, are employed to raise the mind to the salutary desire for God. This prayer heals the soul by performing a pedagogy whereby signs are used to praise the only reality worthy of such doxological attention, the Triune God. Because it uses beautiful things and rouses the Christian to seek meaning in sacred actions and words, liturgical and sacramental prayer moves the Christian closer to life with God, not by demanding that they

\textsuperscript{226} Augustine, *ep.* 55.11.21 (CSEL 34.2: 192.10-13; Teske, 226).

\textsuperscript{227} Augustine, *ep.* 55.21.38 (CSEL 213.3-5; Teske, 236): *sic itaque adhibeatur scientia tamquam machina quaedam, per quam structura caritatis adsurgat.*
spurn creation but by the transfiguring pattern of sacramental perception. As one engages in the process of knowing God through the beautiful and effective signs of liturgical prayer, one is led to worship this God. Further, the worship of God lifts the Christian up to search for understanding of the Triune God referred to in words of praise and sacramental deeds. The whole process is one that contributes to the salvation of the human person whereby all of created reality is properly referred to its divine origin and that origin is worshiped as the true source of life. Mystagogy is a form of spiritual understanding that becomes an extension of the worship of God. It is the spiritual practice performed upon the Scriptural text and sacramental actions that culminates in a life of worshipful wisdom.

It is possible to suggest a response to the anthropological interruption of chapter two: what is the necessary disposition for fruitful liturgical prayer in Augustinian? Simply, a person must be taught to use the signs of liturgical prayer to worship the reality of that prayer, God. According to De doctrina, three aspects are involved in moving from the sign to the reality through use, and thus enjoying God. First, there is the sign that needs to be read and attended to by the Christian. In letters 54 and 55 to Januarius, this sign is that of the Sabbath in the Easter celebration. Second, there is the interpretation of the sign that culminates in an understanding of the referent, God. In letters 54 and 55, this interpretation occurs through an inquiry that moves between the sign, the Scriptures that explain the referent of the sign, as well as anything that might assist one in the interpretative act, including philosophy. Finally, there is the reader of the sign, who is being renewed in his or her capacity to enjoy the referent of the signs. So, consideration of the place of the Sabbath sign in the sacrament of Easter allows the Christian to delight in a moment of rest with God, and hence become transformed as a worshiper of God.
Thus, the necessary disposition for Christian liturgical prayer is a way of knowing God that is concurrently a way of worshiping God, and vice versa. Mystagogy, for Augustine, is the root of all theological reflection, whether performed in liturgical prayer, scriptural exegesis, or in the signs of the created order. And such a way of knowledge that is thoroughly mystagogical, a form of worshipful wisdom, produces fruits in the life of the Christian. This renewal of the Christian through that participation and transformation within the sacramental signs afforded by mystagogical understanding is the object of inquiry of chapter four.
CHAPTER FOUR
EUCHARISTIC PARTICIPATION AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

The reader finished his proclamation of Matthew 20:1-16, the parable of the workers in
the vineyard. Augustine, seated in his chair at the front of the congregation, begins to speak
about the fittingness that this parable has been read aloud during the season of the grape-
harvesting.\(^1\) This corporeal gathering of grapes (\textit{uindemiae corporalis}) brings to mind the
“spiritual grape harvest, where God rejoices for the fruit of his vineyard.”\(^2\) Augustine, picking
up on the verb \textit{colo}, signifying both worship and cultivating a field, tells the congregation “for
we cultivate God, and God cultivates us. But we do not cultivate God in such a way that we
make him better by worshipping him. For we cultivate God by adoring (\textit{adorando}), not by
plowing (\textit{arando}).\(^3\) God is like a farmer in the fields. By cultivating and restoring, God makes
the Church more fruitful so that “we might worship him” (\textit{ut eum colamus}). God’s cultivation of
“his very own happens in us, for he does not cease to pluck out bad seeds from our hearts by his
word, to open our heart as if by the plowing of his words, to plant the seeds of his precepts, to

\(^1\) Augustine, s. 87.1 (PL 38: 530; Augustine, \textit{Sermons}, trans. Hill, III/3 [Brooklyn: New City
\(^2\) Augustine, s. 87.1 (PL 38: 530; Hill, 407): \textit{spiritualis uindemia, ubi deus gaudet ad fructum
uineae suae}.
\(^3\) Augustine, s. 87.1 (PL 38: 530; Hill, 407): \textit{colimus enim deum, et colit nos deus. Sed non sic
deam colimus, ut nos eum meliorem colendo faciamus. Colimus enim eum adorando, non
arando}. 

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When Christians accept God’s cultivation of faith in their hearts so that they might worship God well, they produce fruits God will rejoice in. Through the practice of faithful worship, God tends to the interior life of the human person.

In this chapter, I move from an analysis of Augustine’s approach to signs and understanding to what the human person becomes through this cultivating worship of God in the Eucharist; the restored imago Dei, remembering, understanding, and loving God. Once again, the impetus for this inquiry is the anthropological interruption of the second chapter: how the Christian is shaped through the practice of fruitful worship, now more fully understood as a union of wisdom and worship whereby the Christian uses the sign to enjoy the reality.

To proceed, I first discuss the second theme of Augustine’s mystagogical theory, the relationship between participation and transformation. Then, I turn to a particular account of this transformation of the human person through the sacrificial pedagogy of the Eucharist in De civitate dei, book X. Finally, I complete the chapter through a significant engagement with the means through which this Eucharistic pedagogy comes to inform Augustine’s description of the pedagogy of faith: the renewal of the imago Dei in De trinitate. I conclude from this analysis that the human person is transformed little by little into the image of God through the Eucharistic pedagogy of the Church, remembering, understanding, and loving God through the signs of faith. Eucharistic worship, and the concomitant pedagogy implied by this worship, is God’s cultivation of Christians, and the very foundation of all acts of mystagogical catechesis.

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Augustine, s. 87.1 (PL 38: 531; Hill, 407): cultura ipsius est in nos, quod non cessat uerbo suo extirpare semina mala de cordibus nostris, aperire cor nostrum tanquam aratro sermonis, plantare semina praeeptorum, exspectare fructum pietatis.
Participation and Transformation

In the previous chapter, I isolated a central theme of Augustine’s mystagogical theory; namely, the relationship between signs and understanding. A second, related feature of Augustine’s mystagogical method, is his emphasis on participating in some liturgical action, and in the process becoming transformed through the interaction with the signs of the performance. The newly baptized are not simply to wear the white baptismal garments but to become the light of that garment. Christians, receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist, are to become what they see (estote quod uidetis, et accipiter quod estis), what in fact, they already are, the body of Christ. The longing for the eternal Jerusalem in the psalms leads the Christian to be built into the eternal city of Jerusalem; the offering of a sacrifice of praise through spiritually understood words transforms the Christian into the altar where that praise takes place; through singing

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5 Augustine speaks, “O Lord, hear us. Make us, because you have made us. Make us good, because you have made us enlightened people. These here dressed in white, these enlightened ones, are hearing your word through me, because being enlightened by your grace they are standing in your presence, This is the day which the Lord has made (Ps 118:24). But let this be their striving, this their prayer, that when the days of the feast are over, they do not become darkness, after having become the light of God’s marvels and favors” (s. 120.3 [PL 38: 677; Sermons, trans. Hill, III/4 [Brooklyn: New City Press, 1992], 223]).

6 “The one body which we, being many, are. Remember that bread is not made from one grain, but from many. When you were being exorcised, it’s as though you were being ground. When you were being baptized, it is as though you were being mixed into dough. When you received the fire of the Holy Spirit, it’s as though you were being baked. Be what you can see, and receive what you are” (Augustine, s. 272 [PL 38: 1247-48; Hill, 301]).

7 Augustine preaches, “Look at the lofty, spacious basilica all round you. It was raised by physical work and because, it was a matter of bodily labor, the builders laid the foundations underneath. We, on the contrary, are being built spiritually, and so our foundation is established in heaven. Let us run to the place where we are being built, for of that Jerusalem the psalm says, Our feet were standing in the forecourts of Jerusalem” (Augustine, en. Ps. 121.4 [CCL 40: 1804.26-32; Boulding, 16]).

8 “I had been fearful that you might demand something beyond my means, something I used to have on my farm, until a thief made off with it. But what do you demand of me? Offer to God a sacrifice of praise. I only need to return to myself to find the victim I must immolate. Let me return to myself, and find within myself this offering of praise; let my soul be your altar” (Augustine, en. Ps. 49.21 [CCL 38: 590.4-591.9; Boulding, 399).
psalms to God the soul of the Christian becomes an orchestra of praise.⁹ Remembering the events of Christmas increases the desire of the Christian to fully participate in that divine-human exchange of the incarnation.¹⁰ Finally, the festival of a dedication of a Church allows the Christian to recognize one’s status as a temple for divine praise.¹¹

Yet, how does a renewed participation in a liturgical action, carried out through Augustine’s mystagogical rhetoric, lead to the transformation of the Christian? One recent account of Augustine’s mystagogical method may assist in answering this question. David Meconi, S.J. argues that Augustine’s mystagogical method:

is accordingly striving to lead the faithful into a deeper charity by inviting his congregation not merely to gaze upon the images found in scripture or to watch the liturgy from a passive distance but actually to become such. This spiritual pedagogy asserts that true praise occurs only when Christian images and symbols are drawn into the human person as he or she is simultaneously drawn into the divine.¹²

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⁹ “You are his powerful ones, you are the vast extent of his greatness, because of the great deeds he has wrought in you. You are the trumpet, the psaltery, the lyre, the drum, the choir, the strings, the organ, and the cymbals that sound so splendid because they are attuned to each other” (Augustine, en. Ps. 150.8 [CCL 40: 2196.20-27; Boulding, 515).

¹⁰ “The one who holds the world in being was lying in a manger; he was simultaneously speechless infant and Word. The heavens cannot contain him, a woman carried him in her bosom. She was ruling our ruler, carrying the one in whom we are, suckling our bread. O manifest infirmity and wondrous humility in which was thus concealed total divinity! Omnipotence was ruling the mother on whom infancy was depending; was nourishing on truth the mother whose breasts it was sucking. May he bring his gifts to perfection in us, since he did not shrink from making his own our tiny beginnings; and may he make us into children of God, since for our sake he was willing to be made a child of man” (Augustine, s. 184.3 [PL 38: 997]; Hill, 19).

¹¹ “What we are all gathered here to celebrate is the dedication of a house of prayer. So while this is the house of our prayers, we ourselves are the house of God. If we ourselves are God’s house, we are being built up in this age, in order to be dedicated at the end of the age…It’s by believing, you see, that beams and stones, as it were, are being hewn out of the forests and the mountains; but when they are catechized, baptized, formed, it’s as though they are being chipped, chiseled, straightened out, planed by the hands of carpenters and masons” (Augustine, s. 336.1 [PL 38: 1241-42; Sermons, trans. Edmund Hill [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994], 266).

According to Meconi, the conviction that Christians are to become what they receive in worship is driven by three aspects of Augustine’s epistemological theory. The first is that creation is an icon of the creator. Meconi suggests that the background of Augustine’s belief regarding the iconic quality of creation is Plotinus’ *Enneads* III.2.3: “…all things participate in being, others in light, others more fully in sense-perception, others in reason, and others in the fullness of life.” Due to the influence of Plotinus, Augustine comes to see the created world as capable of participating in God, although the disordered soul cannot know this through its own effort.

This relationship between the signs of the created world and the soul comes to inform Meconi’s second aspect of Augustinian mystagogical thought: the potential of the soul to become a living sign. Once again, Meconi turns to Plotinus’ *Enneads* IV.8.4:

> Now when a soul…does not look towards the intelligible, it has become a part and is isolated and weak and fuses and looks toward a part and in its separation from the whole it embarks on one single thing and flies from everything else…applying itself to and caring for things outside and is present and sinks deep into the individual part.

Meconi provides here a general theory of Augustinian worship. When the human person, made in the image of God, turns away from the love of God to an inordinate love for creation, this person is deformed into that lower good (a point Augustine made in *De vera religione*).

Because human beings cannot escape this inordinate love for creation through their own powers, they need the Holy Spirit, which gives the faithful “the requisite power to live through visible creatures and to rise above them so as to be united to the divine.” Through the gift of the Spirit, the human person enters into the Triune life of God and in the process becomes divine.

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15 Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.8.4; Armstrong, 4, 408-409.
17 Ibid.
rather than creaturely.\textsuperscript{18} As each person is capacitated to perceive the divine reality communicated through the symbol, they are stirred toward a deeper sharing in the fullness of divine life.\textsuperscript{19}

Meconi, then, turns to the final aspect of Augustine’s mystagogical thought related to participation and transformation, becoming what one is through love. He returns to the pattern of first citing a Plotinian doctrine to explain Augustine’s mystagogical theory:

Plotinus taught that in order for the individual soul to be active in the material order, the soul must find a level of unity with the material order and achieves this by translating the disparate physical passions (e.g., lust, hunger, pain,…) into intelligible noeta [Meconi cites \textit{Enneads} I.1.7]. Plotinus realized that through those bodily organs which are naturally united with visible objects, the soul comes into unity and a common affection with the external world as well. In so doing, a connection between knowing and becoming necessarily arises: we become those things with which we have an intellectual sympathy.\textsuperscript{20}

Identity and epistemology are connected to one another, a theme that Meconi traces briefly in Augustine’s earliest writings on the soul.\textsuperscript{21} But, Augustine is more concerned with the process of becoming and loving, what Meconi calls Augustine’s theory of sympathetic diligence.\textsuperscript{22} As the beautiful things of God are placed before the eyes of the congregation, becoming signs that point to God through the exegesis of the preacher, the community desires to become what it receives through these signs. Meconi writes, “Light, the Sabbath, sacrifice, gold, and oil are efficacious only insofar as they find a home in the hearts of the faithful.”\textsuperscript{23}

It is only now that Meconi introduces the most remarkable aspect of his own thesis—this process of becoming what one receives through signs and symbols that draw the person toward

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] Ibid., 66-67.
\item[19] Ibid., 67.
\item[20] Ibid., 68.
\item[21] Ibid., 69.
\item[22] Ibid., 63.
\item[23] Ibid., 70-71.
\end{footnotes}
love is nothing else than the Augustinian source of deification. Human creatures become
divine by worshiping God. He concludes:

Drawn largely from the Neoplatonic tradition, where sympathy explains the identification
between knower and known, Augustine understood how created signs can transform.
Revered images are singled out and explained, and then the faithful are exhorted to be
identified with these things of God. In this way, Augustine engages the range of human
senses and draws on the attraction all people feel toward beauty in order to show his
congregations how they must be toward God. It is a spiritual pedagogy aimed at the
sanctification of...God’s people: Augustine invites us to see ourselves as living from
within the Christian story and not simply from without. For what is at stake here is
nothing other than the transformation of one’s internal narrative.

Meconi’s article is valuable for understanding Augustine’s mystagogical sermons because it
offers a uniquely Augustinian approach to mystagogy from the perspective of Augustine’s theory
of signification, as explicated in the previous chapter. Further, he contributes to a theology of
Augustinian divinization or theosis whereby the Christian becomes what they receive through a
spiritual beholding of the sacramental sign by the gift of divine love and the words of the
preacher. Finally, Meconi expands the range of Augustine’s mystagogical sermons from those
dealing with baptism and Eucharist alone to all of Augustine’s preaching in which he fosters a
participation in the sign that leads to transformation, becoming what one receives in the preached
word. As he comments, “Religious symbols, as found in both scripture and in liturgy, are
oriented toward and thus have value only as they are taken up and assimilated within the internal


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24 Ibid., 72.
25 Ibid., 73.
26 Ibid., 73-74.
27 Whether Augustine adopts a theology of theosis or divinization will be dealt with fully in
closing section of this chapter. For now, I simply provide a definition of this term for the sake of
the reader. Theosis, divinization, or deification “refers to the transformation of believers into the
likeness of God. Of course, Christian monotheism goes against any literal ‘god-making’ of
believers. Rather, the NT speaks of a transformation of mind, a metamorphosis of character, a
redefinition of selfhood, and an imitation of God” (Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov,
“Introduction,” in Theōsis: Deification in Christian Theology, ed. idem [Eugene: Pickwick
Publications, 2006], 1).
lives of God’s people.” Mystagogy is an essential form of faith appropriation and is vital to all of Augustine’s catechetical efforts.

Still, like Mazza in the previous chapter, Meconi discerns the source of Augustine’s mystagogical theory, in particular his “doctrine” of sympathetic diligence in Plotinus. A correlation between Plotinus’ writings and Augustine’s is problematic for a number of reasons. First, as mentioned in the last chapter, Augustine may or may not have read Plotinus’ *Enneads*. A second and related difficulty of Meconi’s argument is his very correlative method, quoting a text from Plotinus and then locating it within Augustine’s mystagogical theory and practice in the sermons. Such an assumption presumes that Augustine used pagan philosophy uncritically in his explication of Christian teaching, an assumption unwarranted based upon scholarly retrievals of the theological nature of Augustine’s *De trinitate*, to give but one example of a text examined in this chapter. For this reason, he does not provide an analysis of Augustine’s theology of the

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30 John Cavadini in his article, “The Structure and Intention of De Trinitate,” situates Augustine’s Neoplatonic rhetoric within the structure of a failed ascent of the soul, “a critique of its claim to raise the inductee to the contemplation of God, a critique which, more generally, becomes a declaration of the futility of any attempt to come to any saving knowledge of God apart from Christ (*Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 106). While disagreeing with the failed nature of this ascent, Lewis Ayres also sees Augustine as engaging in a primarily “theological engagement between Christology, anthropology, and non-Christian traditions of exercitatio…aspects of the exercitatio which he sees as essential to faith and which has the character of that faith” (“The Christological Context of Augustine’s De Trinitate XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII-XV,” *Augustinian Studies* 29 (1998): 138). Khaled Anatolios, also hesitant to fully adopt Cavadini’s analysis based on Cavadini’s failure to provide a structure for the rest of the work (“Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis: Rereading Augustine’s De Trinitate,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 240) focuses upon the rhetorical nature of the work, in particular the use of the trope of antitheses in Book I of De trinitate, as the very medium by which claims regarding theological epistemology are made. Each of these arguments, while perhaps distinct in their claims about De trinitate, see Augustine as “using” rhetoric and philosophy for some theological purpose, “even when the substance of his thought is moving in a quite other direction” (Rowan Williams, “Sapientia and the Trinity,” in *Collectanea*)
*imago Dei* within the context of his discussion of deification, essential to other accounts of Augustinian divinization.³¹ Third, Meconi seems to equate the efficaciousness of symbols with their appropriation, a potential problem when dealing with the efficacious quality of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist in Augustine. In fact, one may wonder if Meconi’s account can actually explain Augustine’s mystagogical catecheses on the Eucharist, where the congregation is exhorted to become what they have received, what they already are. As I hope to make clear, Augustine’s mystagogical theory of participation and transformation is far more dependent upon his Eucharistic theology, and hence ecclesiology, than any Plotinian doctrine of sympathetic diligence.

**The Divine Pedagogy of the Eucharist in *De civitate dei*, Book X**

On August 14, 410, Alaric and the Goths penetrated the walls of Rome, capturing the once eternal city. By September, the effects of this capture began to disturb the residents of Hippo as refugees from Rome poured into the villages of North Africa. Naturally, Christians throughout the Empire underwent a crisis of faith. The remaining pagans blamed this disaster on Rome’s conversion away from the ancient gods of family and Empire to the foreign deity of Christianity.³² Augustine in response to these concerns of pagans and Christians alike composed the lengthy apology *De civitate dei* between 413-425.³³ The purpose of this work was to defend, through a stunning cultural critique against Rome, Christian faith and in the process “to proclaim

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³¹ For an early connection between image of God and divinization, see Radner, *The Idea of Reform*, 196.
³² Lancel, *St. Augustine*, 391-94.
the City of God and true godliness and the worship of God, in which alone is truly promised eternal blessedness.”\textsuperscript{34} At the very center of this Augustinian apologetic (Book X), Augustine provides his most sustained discussion of Eucharistic sacrifice within his corpus of writings. This account of the Eucharist, written around 417, occurs in the context of a broader polemic against Roman theology, including its mythic, civic, and philosophical elements.

In particular, the theme of sacrifice in Book X of \textit{De civitate dei} has been well attended to in connecting Eucharistic theology and ecclesiology.\textsuperscript{35} Yet, despite this attention to sacrifice in book X, none have looked at the role that Eucharistic sacrifice played in Augustine’s mystagogical theology.\textsuperscript{36} Through a close reading of \textit{De civitate} X, I contend that Augustine is in fact laying out a Eucharistic pedagogy through his explication of sacrifice.\textsuperscript{37} This pedagogy of

\textsuperscript{34} Augustine, \textit{De civ. Dei} I.36 (CCSL 47.1: 34.25-27; Dyson, 50).
\textsuperscript{35} J.-M.-R. Tillard has drawn out the relationship between Eucharistic sacrifice in Augustine and ecclesial identity in the body of Christ (\textit{Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion}, trans. Madeleine Beaumont [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001], 44-51); Yves Congar has focused upon a similar theme as a way of expounding upon the notion of active participation by the assembly in the Eucharist (“The Ecclesia or Christian Community as a Whole Celebrates the Liturgy,” in \textit{At the Heart of Christian Worship: Liturgical Essays of Yves Congar}, trans. and ed. Paul Philibert [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2010], 20-22); Gerald Bonner has situtated Augustine’s doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice within the ecclesiological concerns of the Latin tradition of Eucharistic theology, as well as employed it to explain Augustine’s distinction between the earthly and heavenly cities (“The Doctrine of Sacrifice: Augustine and the Latin Patristic Tradition,” in \textit{Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology}, ed. S.W. Sykes [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 101-17; Luigi Gioia has used book X of \textit{De civitate dei} to shed light on the soteriology of sacrifice in \textit{De trinitate}, one in which Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is effective because of the hypostatic union (\textit{The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate}, 90-97); Finally, Robert Daly, S.J. compares Augustine’s understanding of sacrifice to Origen’s concluding that Augustine’s approach to Eucharistic sacrifice is both more ecclesial and integral to the practice of sacrifice within all Christian life (\textit{Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice} [New York: Continuum, 2009], 93-97).
\textsuperscript{36} William Harmless, who spends the most time with Augustine’s mystagogical sermons, does not mention the theme of sacrifice when discussing Augustine’s Eucharistic catechesis (\textit{Augustine and the Catechumenate}, 316-24).
\textsuperscript{37} Stephen D. Benin argues that sacrifice is a central aspect of divine pedagogy in Augustine. But, he approaches it from a limited perspective, contending that the sacrifices of the Hebrews
Eucharistic sacrifice, how God cultivates the human person through Eucharistic worship, is the source of Augustine’s mystagogical emphasis on participation and transformation. Further, this theological pedagogy of Eucharistic sacrifice also makes room for an Augustinian theory of divinization, albeit a limited one.

Yet, what is the basis for speaking of a sacrificial pedagogy of the Eucharist? In his *De catechizandis rudibus*, composed around 403, Augustine sets forth the indispensable pedagogy of Christian faith through an account of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. He writes, “For what greater cause did the Lord come if not that God might show his love in us, commending it strongly: for even when we were still enemies, Christ died for us.”

Christ did this because “the fullness of law is love” (*plenitude legis caritas est*) and through this remarkable love “we might love one another” (*ut et nos iuicem diligamus*) even to the point of “dying for our brothers” (*nos pro fratribus animam ponamus*).

This act of Christ’s self-gift on the cross was a formation into a way of love whereby God’s gift of love attracts the dull heart and further stirs up the passionate one. As Augustine notes, “For there is no greater invitation toward love than to come before one loving; and exceedingly hard is the heart, which is not willing to expend love, is unwilling to return it.”

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Augustine, *cat. rud.* 1.4.7 (CCL 46.1-4; Canning, 67): *quae autem maior causa est adventus domini, nisi ut ostenderet deus dilectionem suam in nobis, commendans eam uelhementer: quia cum adhuc inimici essemus, christus pro nobis mortuos est.*

Augustine, *cat. rud.* 1.4.7 (CCL 46.5-10; Canning, 67).

Augustine, *cat. rud.* 1.4.7 (CCL 46.127.10-13; Canning, 67-68): *nulla est enim maior ad amorem inuitatio quam praeuenire amando; et nimis durus est animus, quia dilectionem si nolebat impendere, nolit rependere.*
receiver of this gift, an exchange of love then bestowed to the neighbor in a return-gift. The teacher mediates this sacrificial pedagogy through telling the events of the Scriptures within the context of this surprising narrative of love embodied in Christ’s sacrifice. Thus, Christ’s sacrificial pedagogy is fundamentally one of love elicited through participation in the mystery of the divine self-gift upon the cross.

The occasion of Augustine’s unfolding of the doctrine of sacrifice in De civitate dei X is an objection to the practices of sacrifice performed by some Neoplatonists, who offer worship (sacra faciamus) to what they call good demons or more familiarly for Christians, angels. Augustine situates this false sacrifice within a theme already explored in De vera religione, the gap between philosophical teaching and worship. Worship of God, the Greek theosebeia and the Latin religio and servitus, “we say to be owed to God alone, who is the true God, and who makes His worshippers gods.” Relative to philosophical teaching, the Platonists seem to agree with Christians that “the soul of human beings, though immortal and rational or intellectual is not able to be blessed except by participating in the light of that God, from whom both it and the

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41 To speak of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as pedagogical is not to deny the objectively soteriological quality of Christ’s sacrifice. As Gioia writes, “Love (dilectio) is therefore the defining feature of sacrifice, it explains how the sacrifice saves us, i.e. by operating our reconciliation with the Father. In fact, Christ is Mediator not only, nor primordially, because of the hypostatic union, i.e. because of the ontological union between human and divine nature realized in the Son’s incarnation. On the contrary, Christ’s role of mediation, as we have seen above, consists in the fact that the union of will between the Son and the Father ‘becomes’—thanks to both the descendent movement of the Incarnation and the ascending movement of the sacrifice—the union of will of Christ with the Father and, in Christ, of the whole redempta ciuitas, the Church, i.e. the community of believers and partakers of the Eucharist which become the Body of Christ” (The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate, 91).

42 Augustine, cat. rud. 1.4.8.

43 Augustine, ciu. 10.1 (CCL 47A: 272.29-35; Dyson 391).

44 For a comparison between the themes of these two treatises, see Goulven Madec, “Le De ciuitate dei comme De uera religione,” in Petites Études Augustiniennes (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 1994), 189-213.

45 Augustine, ciu. 10.1 (CCL 47: 273.95-96; Dyson, 393): hanc ei tantum Deo deberi dicimus, qui uerus est Deus facitque suos cultores deos.
world were made.”

Though both Christianity and Platonism appreciate the need for participation in divine life to reach the happy life, they conceive of such worshipful participation differently. Porphyry, the object of Augustine’s polemic in Book X, dismisses the need to offer sacrifices to an invisible God, yet finds it necessary to render visible sacrifices to demons as a means of purifying the soul. An intellectual incoherence, even a non-rational pride, is represented by Porphyry’s unsophisticated theology of worship.

Arguing for the acceptability of visible sacrifices in Christian practice, Augustine takes up the pedagogical, and hence transformative, function of sacrifice already seen in De catechizandis rudibus, this time in a Eucharistic context. All persons owe laれia to God, “either in certain sacraments or in our own persons,” because both collectively and individually, human beings are temples of God through which God dwells. This description of worship, one that is performed by the person or the community, depends upon an understanding of the city as a political and religious entity, and thus has both ecclesiological and Eucharistic implications.

What does this laれia consist of? Augustine writes:

Our heart is his altar when it is lifted up to him [sursum est]; we plead to him by his Only-begotten priest; we offer bleeding victims to him, when we strive for his truth even to shedding blood [ad sanguinem]; we burn the sweetest incense to him when we are aflame with holy and pious love in his sight; we consecrate and we return his gifts in us and our own person; by solemn feasts and dedicated days, we render sacred and proclaim the memory [dicamus sacramusque memoriam] of his benefits, lest, by the passing of

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46 Augustine, ciu. 10.1 (CCL 47A: 271.15-18; Dyson, 390): licet immortalem ac rationale uel intellectualem hominis animam nisi participato lumine illius Dei, a quo et ipsa et mundus factus est, beatam esse non posse.
49 Augustine, ciu. 10.3 (CCL 47A: 275.9-14; Dyson, 394).
time ingrate forgetfulness might creep upon us; we sacrifice to him a victim of humility and of praise on the altar of our heart kindled by the fire of love.\textsuperscript{51}

This passage is filled with sacrificial imagery, beginning with that Eucharistic refrain already seen in \textit{De vera religione, sursum cor}. The shedding of blood out of love, an allusion to martyrdom, is also a Eucharistic motif.\textsuperscript{52} Finally, the act of remembering Christ’s deeds is an indispensable part of the Eucharistic dynamic of the Christian life.\textsuperscript{53} Participation in a visible rite of Eucharistic worship elicits love and desire from the Christian so powerful that it cleanses that person “from all the stain of sins and of evil desires and we are consecrated to his name.”\textsuperscript{54}

The Christian becomes a sacrifice through participating fruitfully in Eucharistic sacrifice. This sacrificial identification is offered by God to the human person, not because God has need of human sacrifice, but because it is “of use” (\textit{prodesse}) to the human person in the formation of charity.\textsuperscript{55} Sacrifice, as Augustine defines it, is “visibly a sacrament, that is a sacred sign, of an invisible sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{56} The Eucharistic sign is to be used to offer an interior sacrifice to God in order to effect divine union and hence enjoyment.\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Augustine, \textit{ciu.} 10.3 (CCL 47A: 275.14-23; Dyson 394-95): \textit{Cum ad illum sursum est, eius est altare cor nostrum; eius Vnigenito eum sacerdote placamus; ei cruentas uictimas caedimus, quando usque ad sanguinem pro eius ueritate certamus; eum suauissimo adolemus incenso, cum in eius conspectu pio sanctoque amore flagramus; ei dona eius in nobis nosque ipsos uouemus et reddimus; ei beneficiorum eius sollemnitatibus festis et diebus statutis dictamus sacramusque memoriam, ne uolumine temporum ingrata subrepat obliuio; ei sacrificamus hostiam humilitatis et laudis in ara cordis igne feruidam caritatis.}
\item See, Mazza, \textit{The Celebration of the Eucharist}, 134-37. Bonner implies that Augustine is first setting forth a definition of sacrifice, and only later applying it to the Eucharist (Bonner, “The Church and the Eucharist in the Theology of St. Augustine,” 454-55). Instead, it is the pedagogy of the Eucharist that provides Augustine’s description of sacrifice in the first place.
\item Augustine, \textit{ciu.} 10.3 (47A: 275.25-26; Dyson, 395): \textit{ab omni peccatorum et cupiditatum malarum labe mundamur et eius nomine consecravmur.}
\item Augustine, \textit{ciu.} 10.5 (47A: 276.7-10; Dyson, 396-97).
\item Augustine, \textit{ciu.} 10.3 (47A: 277.15-16; Dyson, 397).
\item Augustine, \textit{ciu.} 10.3 (47A: 275.30-31; Dyson, 395).
\end{enumerate}
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Participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice is transformative because of how Christ functions Eucharistically in the Christian life.\textsuperscript{58} The Christological context of Augustine’s account of sacrifice is evident to anyone familiar with the antithesis of *uti/frui* explored in the previous chapter. True sacrifices are “works of mercy either performed on ourselves or our neighbors that are referred (*referuntur*) to God.”\textsuperscript{59} The body itself becomes a divine sacrifice when “it is used rightly to refer to God.”\textsuperscript{60} Through this process of referring all to God, “we are reformed in the renewing of our mind for recognizing what should be the will of God, what is good and well, pleasing and perfect, that is, the whole sacrifice we ourselves are.”\textsuperscript{61} Eucharistic sacrifice, as a significant and efficacious sign, reforms the will of the Christian. This is because Christ “is the great High priest, who even offered himself in his Passion for us in the form of a servant, so that we might be the body of so great a Head.”\textsuperscript{62} In the Eucharist, Jesus Christ is the one who is offered and the one who performs the offering through the mediation of the Church,

\textsuperscript{58} Here, J.-M.-R. Tillard makes an essential contribution: “Augustine refuses to separate the sacramental body, which is the eucharistic table (body in *mysterio, mystical* body, in the primary sense of this locution whose meaning will evolve), and the ecclesial body of Christ (head and members). The Eucharistic bread is the body of Christ. Since Christians are members of the body of Christ through baptism, they are truly this bread. *They receive what they are* . . . By carrying the body and blood of Christ in *mysterio*, the sacrament carries the *objective* grace of communion, that is, of unity. It is the gift, not of a Christ isolated from the church, but of the head joined to the body. And this body of Christ is *inseparably* made up of the personal body of the risen Christ and the members, that is, Christians bonded by the Spirit into a living communion” (*Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, 43-44).

\textsuperscript{59} Augustine, *ciu*. 10.6 (47A: 279.28-30; Dyson, 400): *Cum igitur uera sacrificial opera sint misericordiae siue in nos ipsos siue in proximos, quae referuntur ad Deum*.

\textsuperscript{60} Augustine, *ciu*. 10.6 (47A: 278.19-20; Dyson, 399).

\textsuperscript{61} Augustine, *ciu*. 10.6 (47A: 279.43-44; Dyson, 400): *sed reformemur in novitate mentis nostrae: ad probandum quae sit ulultas Dei, quod bonum et bene placitum et perfectum, quod totum sacrificium nos ipsi sumus*.

\textsuperscript{62} Augustine, *ciu*. 10.6 (47A: 279.35-37; Dyson, 400): *universale sacrificium offeratur Deo per sacerdotem magnum, qui etiam se ipsum obtulit in passione pro nobis, ut tanti capitii corpus essemus, secundum forma serui*.
the body of Christ. The Christian, through offering that sacrifice of the Eucharist in the Church, is transformed into what is offered, beginning to perform merciful actions as an offering to God, and thus that person becomes a living sign of Christ’s self-giving love offered upon the cross. Angels desire Christians on pilgrimage within the earthly city to offer sacrifice to God out of this same self-giving love, because they also belong to the body of Christ in the heavenly city. The city of God is a Eucharist community, a sacrament of peace and mercy.

Consequently, the visible sacrifices that Christians offer are signs of invisible things “just as spoken words are signs of things.” The language of sacrifice is tied up with the discourse of signum/res and util/frui. Augustine continues, “Therefore, just as we direct significant sounds for praying and praising God, we offer to God in our heart those things which are significant.”

Likewise, in performing sacrifice, Christians offer to God through significant visible sacrifices their very self, their total identity becoming ecclesially transformed. This is what the Eucharist effects as the most significant of these sacrificial signs, because it makes present the very sacrifice performed by Christ:

Hence that true mediator, the person Jesus Christ, in taking the form of a servant became a mediator of God and humanity, while in the form of God he received sacrifice with the Father, with whom he is one God. However in the form of a servant, he chose to be a sacrifice rather than to receive it lest even in this occasion someone might estimate sacrifice to be for creatures. Therefore he is the sacrifice himself offering, and the oblation itself.

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63 Augustine, *ciu.* 10.6 (47A: 279.37-39; Dyson, 400).
64 Augustine, *ciu.* 10.6 (47A: 279.53-55; Dyson, 400).
65 Augustine, *ciu.* 10.7 (47A: 279.6-280.17; Dyson, 401).
66 Augustine, *ciu.* 10.19 (CCL 47A: 293.1-5; Dyson, 420-21).
67 Augustine, *ciu.* 10.19 (CCL 47A: 293.5-7; Dyson, 421): *Quocirca sicut orantes atque laudantes ad eum dirigimus significantes uoces, cui res ipsas in corde quas significamus offerimus.*
68 Augustine, *ciu.* 10.19 (CCL 47A: 293.7-10; Dyson, 421).
69 Augustine, *ciu.* 10.20 (CCL 47A: 294.1-7; Dyson, 422).
The Eucharist is “a daily sacrament of this reality” (*sacramentum cotidianum*), one in which the Church as the body of Christ learns through its Head to offer herself through that sacrifice (*se ipsam per ipsum discit offerre*). This is the divine pedagogy of the Eucharist.

Within this dynamic of Eucharistic sacrifice, one can now see the major themes of Augustine’s mystagogy as outlined by Meconi. Participation in the sign leads to becoming what one receives, the body of Christ. Though, the rationale for this is not Plotinian but Christological, ecclesiological, and hence pneumatological, as I will show in my analysis of *De trinitate*. Indeed, within the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church, one cannot separate sacrifice and love. But, the source of this love is nothing less than the incarnation of Christ, “by which we are saved, so that we might be able to come to that which we believe or we might understand some small part.”

Therefore, if deification has a place in Augustine, it is within this salvific, incarnational, redemptive, and fundamentally eschatological pedagogy of Eucharistic sacrifice within the Church. In Book XXII of *De civitate dei*, Augustine undertakes a description of the life of the heavenly city of God in language reminiscent of the pedagogy of Eucharistic sacrifice outlined above. He writes, “God will be the end of all our desires, he who will be seen without end, loved without weariness, praised without fatigue. This work, this desire, this motion, will be truly...

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70 Augustine, *ciu*. 10.20 (CCL 47A: 294.7-9; Dyson, 422).
72 Augustine, *ciu*. 10.29 (CCL 47A: 304.7-8; Dyson, 435): *qua salvamur, ut ad illa, quae credimus uel ex quantulacunque parte intellegimus, uenire possimus, non uultis agnoscere*.
73 The Eucharistic quality of deification in Augustine is first raised by Gerald Bonner, “Augustine’s Conception of Deification,” *Theological Studies* 37 (1986), 369-86. According to Bonner, deification “can be called a sacramental process, in that the Christian grows in grace by being nourished by the eucharist, which he receives as part of the worship of the Church” (383). He notes that Augustine does not describe the Eucharist as medicine of immorality as Gregory of Nyssa does in his *Catechetical Oration*, instead focusing more on the ecclesial transformation through worship (384).
common to all, like eternal life itself.”  At this time, the entire identity of the Church will have become that Eucharistic sacrifice of praise. For “nothing will be more delightful in that city than the song in glory of the grace of Christ, by whose blood we are made free.” Here, the sacrifice of Christ elicits an eternal song of praise proper to the eighth day, the Sabbath of creation. This transformation is an essential aspect of what one might call an Augustinian understanding of deification, a return to the original state of creation in which “we would be made as gods by participation in God, not by desertion.” This total participation in the divine life, reserved for the eternal Sabbath, is a perfect union of knowledge and love: “there we shall be at leisure and will see, we shall see and will love and we shall love and will praise.” The eternal city of God is coterminous with divine knowledge and worship, such that one can only speak of deification in the present as a process of divine transformation mediated through the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

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75 Augustine, *Ciuitatis Christianae*, 22.30 (47B: 864.97-99; Dyson, 1181): *Quo cantico in gloriam gratiae Christi, cuius sanguine liberati sumus, nihil erit profecto illi iucundius ciuitati.*

76 Augustine, *Ciuitatis Christianae*, 22.30 (47B: 865.105-106; Dyson, 1181).

77 Augustine, *Ciuitatis Christianae*, 22.30 (47B: 865.110-11; Dyson, 1181): *quo faciente dii essemus eius participation, non desertione.*


79 For this reason, I agree with Bonner on the following point: “for by taking upon Himself man’s sin, and by participating in man’s penal suffering, which did not pertain to sinless manhood, God joined humanity to his nature in a degree—if we may employ a theological hyperbole—which went beyond the hypostatic union. Thus it comes about that the crucified God becomes peculiarly the object of Christian devotion, and the Risen Christ the pledge of man’s deification, of the ‘In-Godding’ of man, to borrow a phrase of Dr. Pusey” (“Augustine’s Conception of Deification, 374-75”). That is, Augustine’s doctrine of deification comes from that beautiful union of God and person in the incarnation and the cross. Yet, because this union now is not complete within the Church, “deification” can be understood in a specifically Augustinian sense—that the human person is becoming like God through that gradual transformation of the memory, understanding, and will within the Church. See below.
Thus, through fruitful Eucharistic worship, Christians are to become themselves divine Eucharistic sacrifices to God. All Christian existence, in light of the Eucharistic sacrifice, is to be understood as an encounter with a series of signs eliciting acts of a love that bring about true union with God and neighbor.\(^{80}\) This is the Eucharistic pedagogy of sacrifice essential to Augustine’s mystagogical method, whereby signs are understood, then received through the renewal of what one loves, a reconfiguration of desire that culminates in the Christian’s taste of Sabbath rest. The source of this pedagogy is nothing less than Christ’s own sacrifice performed in the Eucharistic rites of the Church. The Christian, through the Eucharist, is gradually taught to perceive the world Eucharistically, and thus become Eucharistic.

Yet, how does this formation come about within the human person? Indeed, as recently suggested by Cavadini, a person has been “sufficiently formed in the Eucharistic remembering of God’s mercy [when]…he or she can begin to see themselves as made in the Trinitarian likeness,” that is in the image of likeness of God.\(^{81}\) Hence through fruitful worship, the ability to use the sign to enjoy the reality now conceived according to the pedagogy of Eucharistic sacrifice, the Christian is to resemble ever more the image and likeness of God. This is not simply the pedagogy of the Eucharist but the pedagogy of faith implied by the Eucharistic sacrifice. This

\(^{80}\) Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*, 96. Even more explicitly, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger writes, “The liturgy does indeed have a bearing on everyday life, on me in my personal existence. Its aim, as St. Paul says in the text already referred to, is that “our bodies” (that is, our bodily existence on earth) become “a living sacrifice”, united to the Sacrifice of Christ (cf. Rom 12:1). That is the only explanation of the urgency of the petitions for acceptance that characterized every Christian liturgy. A theology that is blind to the connections we have been considering can only regard this as a contradiction or a lapse into pre-Christian ways, for, so it will be said, Christ’s Sacrifice was accepted long ago. True, but in the form of representation it has not come to an end. The *semel* (“once for all”) wants to attain its *semper* (“always”). The Sacrifice is only complete when the world has become the place of love, as St. Augustine saw in his *City of God*. Only then, as we said at the beginning, is worship perfected and what happened on Golgotha completed” (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000], 58).

\(^{81}\) Cavadini, “Eucharistic Exegesis in Augustine’s *Confessions*,” 106.
The Pedagogy of the Eucharist and the Imago Dei in De Trinitate

De trinitate is one of Augustine’s more sophisticated works, composed and redacted over an extended period from 399 to as late as 426. The complex nature of this text should not be surprising to the reader, if that person is attentive to Augustine’s purpose for writing the work as set forth in Book I:

So it is difficult to contemplate and to know fully the substance of God, a substance that makes mutable things without making itself mutable in anyway, and a substance that creates temporal things without moving itself into time. Hence, a cleansing of the mind is necessary that the unutterable thing can be seen in an utterable way; not yet possessed fully, we are nourished by faith, and through a certain way we are led on journeys toward that grasping of the suitable thing and we are formed as suitable things. Hence, the apostle says that all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (Col. 2:3).

In some sense, then, De trinitate is fundamentally a mystagogical work, intended to form the reader in a specific way of knowing the invisible Triune God through faith, and in the process transforming what it means to be created by God in the first place. This transformation is

82 La Bonnardiére, Recherches de Chronologie Augustinienne, 165-77.
83 Augustine, trin. 1.1.3 (CCL 50: 30.69-77; Hill, 66): Proinde substantiam dei sine ulla sui communicatione mutabilia facientem, et sine ullo suo temporali motu temporalia creantem, intueri et plene nosse difficile est. Et ideo est necessaria purgation mentis nostrae qua illud ineffabile ineffabiliter uideri possit; qua nondum praediti fide nutrimur, et per quaedam tolerabiliora ut ad illud capiendum apti et habiles efficiamur itinera ducimur. Vnde apostolus in Christo quidem dicit esse omnes theasauros sapientiae et scientiae absconditos.
84 The pedagogical quality to this work is set forth in John Cavadini, “The Quest for Truth in Augustine’s De Trinitate,” Theological Studies 58 (1997): 429-40. He writes, “From this perspective, the De Trinitate is not a study of a dogma comparable to medieval or modern treatises “De Deo trino”—in fact nothing seems less comparable to the spirit of the work, undogmatic, open-ended and experimental as it constantly proclaims itself to be. Rather, it is self-consciously an example of a new kind of “teaching” or doctrine in which “seeing truth” is coincident with understanding the scriptural text, and all the arts and philosophy are drawn into
conceived within the anthropological and epistemological language of the image of God, “for this is the fullness of joy of which there is nothing greater, to enjoy the Triune God to whose image we are made.”85 Human beings, through Trinitarian faith, move toward the fullness of the divine image; remembering, understanding, and loving God.

Recently, Augustinian scholars have noted the importance of Augustine’s theology of faith in its epistemological and anthropological dimensions represented by the imago Dei, in De trinitate as a whole.86 Generally, this scholarship has been critical of contemporary, systematic approaches that treat Augustine’s De trinitate as focused not upon the historical economy of salvation but on the individual soul.87 In fact, what makes Augustine’s anthropology and that enterprise. They can be used by, but do not define this doctrina, and in fact are often qualified in the process” (432-33).

85 Augustine, trin. 1.8.18 (CCL 50: 52.130-32; Hill, 77): Hoc est enim plenum gaudium nostrum quo amplius non est, frui trinitate deo ad cuius imaginem facti sumus.

86 Lewis Ayres, in particular, has analyzed the image of God within Augustine as related to what the human person knows about God and what that person becomes through this act of knowing, a process that is integral to salvation in Christ. He sets forth this claim, in light of the Trinitarian analogies of Books VIII-XV in “The Discipline of Self-Knowledge in Augustine’s De trinitate Book X,” in The Passionate Intellect: Essays on the Transformation of Classical Traditions, ed. Lewis Ayres (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 263-71. A fuller account of the way that human beings become transformed into the divine image by knowing the Triune God through unity, one that departs from the language of analogy to created likenesses (similitudo), may be found in Lewis Ayres, “‘Remember That You Are Catholic (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,” Journal of Early Christian Studies 8.1 (2000), esp. 62-64, 81. Perhaps, the most explicit connection between the image of God and theological anthropology/epistemology is evident in Gioia’s The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate. He writes, “In a nutshell, the theme of the image of God allows Augustine to place the too narrow and potentially misleading epistemological question into a proper theological framework, that is a framework where the unique character of the ‘object’ known and of the ontological dependence of the knowing subject on this ‘object’ are fully taken into account, together with the actual condition of the knowing subject, which is not a condition of neutrality, or integrity, or objectivity, or of self-possession, but, to use just a couple of Augustine’s favourite analogies, is a condition of infirmitas and of deep self-alienation” (297).

87 A prime example of this approach is found in the work of Catherine LaCugna, God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 81-109. LaCugna argues that Augustine, while meritoriously using anthropology and psychology as an entrée into salvation history, focuses too much on the individual soul, such that “the soul knows itself apart
epistemology theological in the first place is its Christological, and hence Trinitarian foundation, in the economy of salvation.\textsuperscript{88} As Khaled Anatolios has noted, Augustine’s search within \textit{De trinitate} for an image and likeness of the Triune God within humanity is “enabled by the presuppositions of pro-Nicene trinitarian theology.”\textsuperscript{89}

Augustine presents this theology quite clearly in the first book of \textit{De trinitate}:

All Catholic commentators who wrote before me on the Old and New Testaments, those I have been able to read regarding the Trinity, which is God, intended to this according to the Scriptures: that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance make known a divine unity; and hence there are not three gods but one God, although the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore the Son is not who the Father is; and the Son was begotten by the Father, and hence the Father is not who the Son is; and the Holy Spirit is neither Father nor the Son, but wholly the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, even though coequal to the Father and the Son and belonging to the unity of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{90}

According to Michel René Barnes, this basic summation of Catholic Trinitarian teaching is characteristic of a key facet of pro-Nicene Trinitarian thought in Augustine from his earliest from its social relations, and the soul knows God apart from God’s economy of redemption. To some degree Augustine’s theo-psychology fails to come to terms with the fact that the relationality of the triune God is not self-contained but is poured out in the historical economy of creation, redemption, consummation” (103). For a critique of LaCugna’s methodological shortcomings, see Michel Barnes, “Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology,” \textit{Theological Studies} 56 (1995): 237-50.

\textsuperscript{88} According to Ayres, it is the Incarnation of Christ, as the God-person, that provides many of the themes that are featured prominently throughout \textit{De trinitate}, including “the problem of overcoming an obsession with material imagery and with the fleshy form of Christ; the importance of finding a faith that will appropriately enables us to grow in love of something that will actually be realised; the importance of finding appropriate assistance in making this journey; the importance of grasping the fundamental differences between the material and the immaterial” (“The Christological Context of Augustine’s \textit{De trinitate} XIII,” 135).

\textsuperscript{89} Khaled Anatolios, “Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis,” 250.

\textsuperscript{90} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 1.4.7 (CCL 50: 34.1-35.11; Hill, 69): \textit{Omnes quos legere potui qui ante me scriperunt de trinitate quae deus est, diuinorum librorum ueterum et nouorum catholici tractatores, hoc intenderunt secundum scripturas docere, quod pater et filius et spiritus sanctus unius substantiae inseparabili aequalitate diuinam insinuent unitatem, ideoque non sint tres dii sed unus deus—quamuis pater filium genuerit, et ideo filius non sit qui pater est; filiusque a patre sit genus, et ideo pater non sit qui filius est; spiritusque sanctus nec pater sit nec filius, sed tantum patris et filii spiritus, patri et filio etiam ipse coaequalis et ad trinitatis pertinens unitatem.
Augustine presents this problem according to the narrative of the Scriptures. The Trinity was not born of the Virgin Mary, but the Son was; the Father and the Son did not descend upon Jesus at his baptism but the Spirit in the form of a dove did; it was the Father’s voice that addressed Jesus at his baptism, not the voice of the Spirit or the internal monologue of the Son. Yet, despite the visible and audible actions that present each person of the Trinity as acting alone in the Scriptures, Nicene theology claims that the activity of any one person of the Trinity is an inseparable act from the rest of the Trinity. Therefore, it is important to recognize that Augustine’s *De trinitate*, while an exceptionally creative work, emerges out of a broader tradition of Scriptural exegesis and Catholic theological inquiry. Even if Augustine does not presume the faith of the reader, he himself is operating out of the assumptions of Christian faith.

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92 Augustine, *trin.* 1.4.7 (CCL 50: 35.11-36.24; Hill, 69-70).
94 Here, I must note an important point of disagreement between Gioia and my own reading of the text. He writes, “*Love comes first* to the point that such talk makes sense only once it has become a *reality* already. Augustine’s *De Trinitate* is not destined for people who need to be converted, to be persuaded to love God. His reader has to be someone who already knows, already sees, already loves out of God’s live, i.e. *propter deum*, ‘because of God,’ in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. ‘I will help you to see that you see it’, that is ‘I will help you to become aware of the fact that you actually already see God’” (*The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate*, 300). Indeed, at one level, Gioia’s claim is true. The reader, who loves God, may savor Augustine’s explication of the Triune God more fully than the unbeliever. But, as a rhetorical work, the unconverted reader may also benefit from the act of reading. In fact, the disagreement over the failed nature of the ascent in the latter part of *De trinitate* between Cavadini and Ayres (see footnote 31) is explainable by Ayre’s failure to acknowledge the polyvalent hermeneutic possible within the reading of the text. The Neo-Platonist, as Cavadini suggests, may read *De trinitate* as a critique of his own failed philosophical-religious system. On the other hand, the converted Christian will notice other facets of the text that the Neo-Platonist cannot.
One important aspect of Catholic teaching on faith is its connection to the Eucharist. Nonetheless, a vital feature of *De trinitate* unnoticed by commentators is the relationship between the pedagogy of faith operative within the work and the Eucharistic pedagogy in *De civitate dei* Book X as explored in the second section of this chapter. Of course, this neglect is not astonishing. In *De trinitate*, there are only two clear references to the Eucharist. In Book III, while elaborating upon the purpose of divine communication through created signs, Augustine writes:

We do not call Paul’s tongue or his parchment and ink or the significant sounds being produced by his tongue or the written signs of his parchment letters the body and blood of Christ, but only that which is received from the fruits of the earth and consecrated by mystical prayers we undertake ritually for the spiritual salvation in memory of the suffering of the Lord for us. For when it is given visible form (*ad illam uisibilem speciem*), it is not sanctified through human hands for such a great sacrament should only be worked invisibly by the Spirit of God.

In the second reference, also in book III, Augustine describes how the newly baptized’s knowledge of the sacrament would be limited, such that if they were told that the Eucharist was the body and blood of Christ, they might imagine that the only form that Christ took was bread, even in his temporal sacrifice on the cross. But, the paucity of explicit Eucharistic references

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95 The relationship between faith and the Eucharist is brought out by Louis-Marie Chauvet in his discussion of John 6, the bread of life discourse in his *Symbol and Sacrament*: “Even if verses 51-58 focuses on the mystery of the Eucharist (and there is no need to imagine a later interpolation here, as Bultmann does), it is still true that the discourse on the bread of life is not a discourse on the Eucharist as such, but rather a *catechesis on faith* in Jesus as the Word of God who has undergone death for the life of the world. But this catechesis is expressed in *Eucharistic language*, characterized as it is from start to finish by the theme of *eating*” (225).

96 Augustine, *trin.* 3.4.10 (CCL 50: 136.37-45; Hill, 133): *nec linguam quippe eius nec membranas et atramentum nec significantes sonos lingua editos nec signa litterarum conscripta pelliculis corpus Christi et sanguinem dicimus, sed illud tantum quod ex fructibus terrae acceptum et prece mystica consecratum rite sumimus ad salute spiritalem in memoriam pro nobis dominicae passionis, quod cum per manus hominum ad illam uisibilem speciem perducatur non sanctificatur ut sit tam magnum sacramentum nisi operante inuisibiliter spirtu dei.*

97 Augustine, *trin.* 3.9.21 (CCL 50: 149.78-81; Hill, 139).
does not denote a lack of Eucharistic allusions within the rest of work. Instead, the salvific pedagogy of faith (particularly employed in Books IV and XIII) presumes a Eucharistic pedagogy, one that becomes evident when attending to the relationship between faith and Eucharist in Augustine’s *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 24-27.\(^9\) In particular, in reading these sermons, I focus upon the Trinitarian and anthropological implications of faith as implying a pedagogy that is fundamentally Eucharistic in structure. Following this brief excursus into these sermons, I return to *De trinitate* to expound more fully this Eucharistic pedagogy of faith.

**Faith and Eucharist in Tractates 24-27**

The salvific pedagogy of faith is featured prominently in these series of sermons (written around 414),\(^9\) ones that provide a commentary on the miracle of the loaves and fishes, as well as the bread of life discourse of John 6. Christ’s multiplication of the loaves is a miracle, divine works visibly performed, that “remind the human mind to understand God from visible things.”\(^10\) Miracles spur the person toward a new way of thinking, one characterized by a kind of knowledge of invisible things. The communicative nature of miracles within the Gospel is based upon Christ’s status as the divine word: “For because Christ is himself the Word of God,

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even the deed of the Word, is for us a word.”

Christ’s deeds within the Gospel fill the person
with wonder, because there is an inner meaning to the action that is even more delightful than the
event itself. Augustine compares this process of seeking inner meaning to that of reading:
“Therefore because we have seen it, because we have praised it, let us read and understand it.”

Yet, there is a pivotal difference between those who saw the miracle in the flesh and those who
hear about it through the Scriptures, becoming readers of the Word. Augustine, addressing his
congregation, states:

This deed is both miraculous, for it is a powerful deed, and useful, for it is spiritual.
Those who saw it at that time were amazed; we are not amazed now when we hear about it.
For it was done so that they might see it, it is written so that we might hear about it.
What their eyes had the power to do, faith does in us. Indeed, we perceive by the
intellect, what we are not able to with the eyes, and we are preferred to those who saw,
for it is said about us: **Blessed are those who do not see and believe** (Jn 20:29).

Faith is the proper way of seeing for the Christian, a claim essential to the pedagogy of faith
performed in *De trinitate.*

Beginning in sermon 25, Augustine explicitly connects faith knowledge with that of the
pedagogy of the Eucharist through Christ’s humility. Again in this sermon, Augustine
contrasts Christ’s visibility and invisibility. The assembly listening to the sermon is compared to

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101 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 24.2 (CCL 36: 244.3-4): *Nam quia ipse Christus Verbum Dei est, etiam factum Verbi, uerbum nobis est.*
102 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 24.2 (CCL 36.244.7-8; Hill, 424).
disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:21), who are right to hope for the kingdom but unable to recognize the presence of that kingdom in Christ, who walks in their midst.\(^\text{107}\) As Augustine states, speaking as Christ in the Gospel of John, “You desire that I might show the kingdom right now; first let me gather what I will exhibit; you love the high place and you will acquire the high place; but you will follow me through humility.”\(^\text{108}\) The path to sight through faith is humility, a way of life that Augustine describes in Eucharistic overtones through an explication of what Christ means by the bread of life:

> Therefore, they said to him: What shall we do that we might work the works of God? For he had said to them: Work not for the food that perishes, but that which remains to life eternal. What shall we do, they enquired? “What must be observed to fulfill this instruction?” Jesus responded, and said to them: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he sent (Jn 6:27-29). Therefore, this is to eat the food which does not perish, but which persists into life eternal. Why are you prepping teeth and stomach? Believe, and you have eaten.”\(^\text{109}\)

To believe in Christ as sent from the Father is to eat the bread intended for eternal life. When the Christian believes in Christ in this way, they will not be cast out because (speaking to Christ):

> “did you descend from heaven, not to do your will, but the will of him who sent you?”\(^\text{110}\) Belief in Christ incorporates the Christian into a life of humility within this body of Christ, “Let us come to him, let us enter into him, let us be incorporated to him, so that we might not do our will, but the will of God; and he will not cast us through the doors, for we are his own members,

\(^{107}\) Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 25.3 (CCL 36: 249.7-12).

\(^{108}\) Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 25.3 (CCL 36: 249.22-25): Vultis ut iam exhibeam regnum; prius colligam quod exhibeam; altitudinem amatis, et altitudinem adipiscemini; sed per humilitatem me.


\(^{110}\) Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 25.15 (CCL 36: 256.4-6): Ideo ergo eum qui ueniet ad te, non eicies foras, quia descendistic de caelo, non facere voluntatem tuam, sed voluntatem eius qui te misit?
for he willed to be our head teaching humility.”¹¹¹ This entrance to a humble life through belief within the Church, described Eucharistically as the body of Christ, is one part of “that double resurrection,” (geminam illam resurrectionem),¹¹² not that of life eternal but “a kind of resurrection” (quaedam resurrectionis)¹¹³ in which “persons pass through from a kind of death to a certain kind of life: from the death of infidelity, to the life of faith; from the death of falsehood to the life of truth; from the death of iniquity, to the life of justice. This therefore is also a kind of resurrection from the dead.”¹¹⁴ Faith is Eucharistic because it is a divine gift incorporating the Christian into the capacity to do the will of God. The sight of faith and a renewed human will are intimately connected to one another.

The reason for this connection between sight and will is the Triune nature of this Eucharistic faith, as well as its anthropological implication in every act of faith knowing. The Eucharist is an entrance into the life of the Trinity because of the very relationship between the Father and the Son sacramentally presented within the Eucharistic identity of the Church. As Augustine notes, “the Father draws those who on that account believe in the Son, for they think him to have God as his Father. For God the Father begot his own very Son as equal; so that the one who ponders and experiences in his own faith and ruminates on the one he believes to be equal to the Father, the Father draws him to the Son.”¹¹⁵ This is not simply an intellectual

¹¹¹ Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 25.18 (CCL 36: 258.2-6): Veniamus ad eum intremus ad eum, incorporemur ei, ut nec nos faciamus voluntatem nostram, sed voluntatem Dei; et non nos eiciet foras, quia membra eius sumus, quia caput nostrum esse uoluit docendo humilitatem.
¹¹² Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 25.19 (CCL 36: 259.11).
¹¹³ Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 19.18 (CCL 36: 192.15).
¹¹⁴ Augustine, Io. eu. tr. (CCL 36: 192.15-19): et transeunt homines a morte quadam ad quandam uitam: a morte infidelitatis, ad uitam fidei; a morte falsitatis ad uitam ueritatis; a morte iniquitatis, ad uitam iustitiae. Est ergo et ista quaedam resurrectionio mortuorum.
¹¹⁵ Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 26.5 (CCL 36: 262.6-10): Trahit Pater ad Filium eos qui propter credunt in Filium, quia eum cogitant Patrem habere Deum; Deus enim Pater aequalem sibi
distinction but essential to the Eucharistic pedagogy already described above. To eat and drink
the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist is to abide in Christ (intimately, even to the point of
assimilation) and hence to perform an act of faith regarding the true identity of Christ as
incarnate Son of the Father.\textsuperscript{116} This act of faith in the reality of the sacrament facilitates an
entrance of the Christian into a particular relationship with the Father:

For the Son, who is born equal, is not made better by his participation in the Father; like
we are made better by participating in the Son through the unity of his body and his
blood, which that eating and drinking signifies. Therefore we live because of him, eating
him; that is, receiving him as eternal life, that which we did not have from ourselves; for
he himself lives according to the Father, sent from him, for emptied his very own self,
being made obedient even to his death on the cross.\textsuperscript{117}

By participating in the Eucharistic eating of the sacrament, the Christian partakes in Christ’s own
humility, sharing in his kenotic love. This, in fact, is the essence of the Church as the body of
Christ. It is an entrance into the humble, Eucharistic community of the Spirit, altering the very
will of the person: “The sacrament of this reality, that is, of the unity of Christ’s body and blood,
is prepared on the Lord’s table, and received from the Lord’s table…”\textsuperscript{118} The unity of this body,
given through Eucharistic eating, is nothing else but the gift of charity, the Holy Spirit itself.\textsuperscript{119}
The conclusion of Tractate 27 is, for this reason, a reference to the martyrdom of St. Laurence
whereby the great saint offered himself up in supreme charity without the physical effects of

\textsuperscript{116} Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr}. 26.18 (CCL 36: 268.1-11; Hill, 464).
\textsuperscript{117} Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr}. 26.19 (CCL 36: 269.5-12; Hill, 464-65): \textit{Non enim Filius
participatione Patris fit melior, qui est natus aequalis; sicut participatione Filii per unitatem
corporis eius et sanguinis, quod illa manducatio potatioque significant, nos efficimur meliores.
Vivimus ergo nos propter ipsum manducantes eum; id est, ipsum accipientes aeternam uitam,quam non habebamus ex nobis; uiuit autem ipse propter Patrem, missus ab eo, quia semtipsum
exinanuit, factus obediens usque ad mortem cruces.}
\textsuperscript{118} Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr}. 26.15 (CCL 36: 267.33-36; Hill, 463): \textit{Huius rei sacramentum, id est,
unitatis corporis et sanguinis Christi…in dominica mensa praeparatur, et de mensa dominica
sumitur.}
\textsuperscript{119} Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr}. 27.6 (CCL 36: 272.9-12; Hill, 470).
pain, “because he had eaten well and drank well, as if that food fattened him and that chalice inebriated him…”

To enter into the Eucharistic life of the Church, to truly eat and drink Christ’s very gift, is to participate in the sacrificial life of the Triune God. The Eucharist is paradigmatic for Christian salvation, uniting Christian faith and transformation of the will.

Equally pertinent to the Trinitarian nature of Eucharistic faith is its anthropological implications; namely, to believe in Christ as sent from the Father, receiving the virtus (power) of the sacrament, is to eat not simply outwardly but also inwardly. Yet, why does Augustine contrast inward and outward eating? In tractate 26, Augustine once more begins the sermon with a distinction between visibility and invisibility relative to the act of faith. Christ’s dialogical partners in the bread of life discourse of John 6 react to his claim of being the bread of life with doubt, incapable of discerning through faith the true meaning of his words. Augustine preaches:

They were a long way from the bread of heaven, for they did not know how to hunger for him. The jaws of their hearts were languid, with their ears being open they were deaf, they were seeing and yet they remained as one blind. Indeed, the bread of the inner person requires hunger, hence it is said in another place: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.

120 Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 27.12 (CCL 36: 276.11-13; Hill, 476): quia bene manducauerat et bene biberat, tamquam illa esca saginatus et illo calice ebrius.

121 In his recent work, Sacrifice Unveiled, Daly is thus correct to highlight the Trinitarian nature of Eucharistic sacrifice. He writes, “The central reality of Christian sacrifice is that it is a profoundly interpersonal Trinitarian event. It is an event that begins, as I now never tire of repeating, with the self-offering, self-giving, self-communicating gift of God, the Father in the sending of the Son. It continues in a second ‘moment’ with the totally free self-giving, self-communicating ‘response’ of the Son, in his humanity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the Father and for us” (228-29).


123 Augustine, Io. eu. tr. 26.1 (CCL 36: 259.6-11; Hill, 449): Isti a pane de caelo longe erant, nec eum esurire nouerant. Fauces cordis languidas habebant, auribus apertos surdi erant, uidebant et caeca stabant. Panis quipped iste interioris hominis quaerit esuriem; unde alio loco dicit: Beati qui esurient et sitiunt iustitiam, quoniam ipsi saturabuntur.
The reason for this gap between physical sensation and interior belief was a lack of inner hunger, and hence justice, for “the one who hungers for this bread, hungers for justice.”\textsuperscript{124} Such justice is not of one’s own measure but rather that which is truly gift, “the bread which descends from heaven.”\textsuperscript{125} In other words, Christ himself is the gift of justice. True justice, then, is the gift of God in the person of Jesus, the very charity of divine life shared among human beings:

diffused in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which is a gift for us (Rom 5:5). Therefore, the Lord going to give the Holy Spirit, said he was himself the bread which descended from heaven, urging us that we might believe in him. For to believe in him, this is to eat the living bread. The one who believes, eats; such a person is invisibly reborn. Within he is an infant, within he is new; where he is renewed by devotion, there he is satisfied.\textsuperscript{126}

For, Augustine, fruitful reception of the Eucharist in the act of faith renews the interior life of the human person, allowing them to recognize genuine justice, the will of God. The one who eats the Eucharist in faith, reading the reality of the sacrament, undergoes a spiritual renewal that those who simply consume the bread alone do not experience: “For the morsel offered by Lord was not to Judas a poison. And yet he accepted it, and when he did, the enemy entered into him; for he did not take something bad, but the bad one took something good in a bad way. See therefore, brothers, eat the heavenly bread spiritually, approach the altar innocently.”\textsuperscript{127} The impetus for this renewal is found in the humble reality of the Eucharistic species. The interior

\begin{footnotes}
\item Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr.} 26.1 (CCL 36: 259.12; Hill, 449): \textit{Ac per hoc qui esurit hunc panem, esuriat iustitiam.}
\item Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr.} 26.1 (CCL 36: 260.25; Hill, 449): \textit{id est panis qui de caelo descendit.}
\item Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr.} 26.1 (CCL 36: 260: 29-35; Hill, 450): \textit{Caritas, inquit, Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis. Daturus ergo Dominus Spiritum sanctum, dixit se panem qui de caelo descendit, hortans ut credamus in eum. Credere enim in eum, hoc est manducare panem uiuum. Qui credit, manducat; inuisibiliter saginatur, quia inuisibiliter renascitur. Infans intus est, nouus intus est; ubi nouellatur, ibi satiatur.}
\item Augustine, \textit{Io. eu. tr.} 26.11 (CCL 36: 22-27): \textit{Non enim bucella Dominica unenum fuit Iudae. Et tamen accepit, et cum accepit, in eum inimicus intrauit; non quia malum accepit, sed quia bonum male malus accepit. Videte ergo, fratres, panem caelestem spiritaliter manducate, innocentiam ad altare apportate.}
\end{footnotes}
place of the heart in which the change takes place, as Suzanne Poque writes, “expresses an interiority which combines the two levels of intellect and affect, that is of being in its existential reality.”

Therefore, the Eucharist received with spiritual understanding through the act of faith becomes transformative of the very nature of what it means to be human, both body and soul now totally dedicated to knowing and loving God. Augustine writes:

Hence this saying: The flesh is not useful whatsoever, is like that saying “Knowledge inflates.” Ought we to hate knowledge? Let such thoughts be absent. And what does it mean, knowledge inflates? Only without charity. Therefore it is added, charity truly builds up. Add therefore charity to knowledge, and knowledge will be useful; not on its own, but through charity. So likewise, the flesh is not useful whatsoever, but only regarding the flesh; let the spirit be added to flesh, in the way charity is added to knowledge, and it is supremely useful.

In this passage, Augustine compares the edifying function of charity in matters of knowledge to the vivifying power of the spirit in the body. Spiritual understanding of the sacrament, a union of knowledge and love through faith, effects a change in the person that vivifies the body through life in the Spirit of Christ. A person becomes whole through the act of faith, elicited through the pedagogy of the Eucharist. The Eucharist, for Augustine, is thus not simply a pedagogy of divine grace but implies a pedagogical approach transformative of what it means to be a human being, what *De trinitate* will speak of as being made in the image and likeness of God. When seeking truth and desiring God are united, the human person becomes capable of offering that truly divine sacrifice. They begin, in some sense, to live Eucharistically. Augustine

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addresses this union of truth and desire, knowledge and love through his explication of the *imago Dei* in *De trinitate*.

The Eucharistic Pedagogy of Faith and the Imago Dei in *De Trinitate*

*The Eucharistic Nature of Faith in De trinitate IV and XIII*

Before turning to Augustine’s theological anthropology of the *imago Dei* in *De trinitate*, it is necessary to show how this anthropology of Augustine is situated within the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith presented thus far. Importantly, a consequence of the theological renaissance for reading *De trinitate* is more careful attention to Books IV and XIII, both of which feature lengthy passages on faith and redemption through Christ. Thus, I first show how two of the major antitheses\(^{130}\) employed by Augustine in books IV and XIII, *sacramentum/exemplum* and *scientia/sapientia* presume the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith outlined above.

\(^{130}\) This methodological strategy of focusing upon the antitheses of the text, as an entrée into Augustine’s theological approach, is adopted by Khaled Anatolios in his recent contributions to *De trinitate* scholarship. According to Anatolios, because of the highly rhetorical quality of early Christian literature, it is necessary to attend to the textual strategies employed by the author (“Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis,” 232-33). One such literary strategy, used in literary structuralism, is that of oppositional pairs whereby the interpreter discerns those structural oppositions “that are structurally constitutive and demonstrably integral to the texts’ attempts to produce an effect of meaning” (234). Augustine’s frequent use of antithesis in his writing is akin to this structural opposition such that “the correct construal of these antitheses is indispensable to a discernment of the structural patterns through which Augustine communicates his theological vision” (235). In fact, *De trinitate* consists of a number of these oppositions, including faith/sight, as well as knowledge/contemplation, use/enjoyment, and signs/things (Khaled Anatolios, “Divine Semiotics and the Way to the Triune God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,” in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson*, ed. Andrew B. McGowan, Brian E. Daley, S.J., and Timothy J. Gaden [Boston: Brill, 2009], 165). While Anatolios considers how Augustine employs these antitheses to surmise the structure of *De trinitate* as a whole, I focus upon these antitheses to discern how the pedagogy of Eucharistic faith functions within these key structural elements of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology.
Like Tractates 24-27 of the Gospel of John, *De trinitate* is concerned with visibility and invisibility. Book IV of the work, according to Augustine, treats faith in Christ to show “why and how Christ was sent in the fullness of time from the Father, because those who said that the one who did the sending and the one who was sent can’t have equal natures.” Most likely, Latin Homoians (a strand of Arianism) were the cause of Augustine’s polemic in this instance. Importantly, Latin Homoians in the fourth century argued that the Son’s appearance in the theophanies of the Old Testament, as well as in the Incarnation, were evidence that the Son is not the true God since God is by nature invisible. That is, it is the essence of the Son to appear, while it is the essence of the Father to remain invisible to human sight.

Already in book I, Augustine is responding to such arguments through his use of Philippians 2:6. Christ Jesus was both *forma dei* and *forma servi*, the form of God and the form of a servant. As Augustine writes:

> Hence, in the form of God he made humanity; in the form of a servant he was made human. For if the Father had made humanity wholly without the Son, it would not be written: Let us make man to our image and likeness. Therefore, in the form of God, he received the form of a servant, each as God and human; but each is God according to God taking on, and each is human according to humanity taken up. For neither of these were converted or changed into the other in that reception; neither divinity certainly changed into a creature that it ceased to be divinity, nor creature into divinity such that it ceased to be a creature.

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131 Augustine, *trin.* 13.20.25 (CCL 50A: 418.21-24; Hill, 364): *cur et quomodo Christus in plenitudine temporis a patre sit missus proper eos qui dicunt eum qui misit et eum qui missus est aequales natura esse non posse*;


133 Ibid., 336-37.

134 For the use of this Scriptural verse in Trinitarian argument in Victorinus and Hilary, see Barnes, “Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine’s *De Trinitate I*,” 52-55.

135 Augustine, *trin.* 1.7.14 (CCL 50: 45.19-28; Hill, 74).

136 Augustine, *trin.* 1.7.14 (CCL 50: 46.40-50; Hill, 74-75): *Proinde in forma dei fecit hominem; in forma serui factus est homo. Nam si pater tantum sine filio fecisset hominem, non scriptum esset: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram. Ergo quia forma dei accept formam serui, utrumque deus et utrumque homo; sed utrumque deus propter accipientem
This Trinitarian and Christological hermeneutic of Augustine, drawn from Philippians, is a response to the Homoians. Insofar as Jesus Christ became visible in the Incarnation, he was doing so in the *forma servi*. But that part of him in the *forma dei* remained invisible, available only to Christians who see Christ through faith. For, “indeed contemplation is the reward (*merces*) of faith, a reward by which hearts are cleansed through faith…For it is proof, from that very sentence, that hearts are cleansed for that contemplation: Blessed are the clean-hearted ones for they shall see God.” Jesus Christ was the God-person made visible in his flesh, yet who remained invisible in his life with the Father, the unbegotten one. In the Old Testament, Christ’s manifestation of himself through created signs was not the visible appearance of the Son but the use of “outward sights” (*exterioribus uisis*) to convert human hearts away from temporal manifestations “toward the eternal hiddenness” (*ad occultam aeternitatem*) of God. This relationship between the visible and invisible, and the conversion elicited through it, is in fact the pedagogy of the Father’s sending of the Son into the world, and the mutual sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son. The Homoians, ultimately, misunderstand the entire

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*deum, utrumque autem homo proper acceptum hominem. Neque enim illa susceptione alterum eorum in alterum conuersum atque mutatum est; nec diuinitas quippe in creaturam mutata est ut desisteret esse diuinitas, nec creatura in diuinitatem ut desisteret esse creatura.*


139 Augustine, *trin.* 2.5.10 (CCL 50: 93.128-31; Hill, 104).

140 Augustine, *trin.* 3.pro.3 (CCL 50: 129.61-64; Hill, 129).
Trinitarian grammar and the pedagogy of faith through which the event of salvation takes place. They want direct knowledge, instead of the mediation characteristic of faith.

The relationship between the visibility and invisibility of the Trinity, as well as the role of faith, is the very place in which Augustine takes up his unfolding of the Incarnation, and its salvific effects, at the beginning of the fourth book. He does so through presenting a fact that has frustrated students of Christian theology throughout history: the immutability and eternal nature of God vis-à-vis the mutable and temporal quality of human thought. To respond to the gap between God and creature, “divinity sent us sights harmonious to our pilgrim state by which we were admonished that what we are seeking is not here but we must depend upon that by which

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141 The concept of grammar is employed by Ayres: “By ‘grammar,’ I refer to the matrix of principles and rules for theological discourse that Augustine inherited and developed. Thus, in asking about the ‘grammar’ that Augustine developed, I am seeking an answer to the question ‘of what Augustine thought were the most fundamental rules for speech about God, if we are to speak appropriately and run as little risk of speaking unworthily as possible.’ These rules or principles provided the basis for both the reading of Scripture and for articulating more detailed presentations of the doctrine (in part through the use of likenesses or ‘analogies’), and in part they must be reconstructed by seeing how they are used in those situations. Using the term ‘grammar’ in this context is particularly warranted because of Augustine’s insistence that God is ultimately incomprehensible: the task for Christians attempting to set out appropriate terms in which to talk of God is not best described as one of learning how to describe God’s nature, but as one of learning how to articulate appropriate rules for human talk of God” (“The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless [New York: Routledge, 2000], 52). I agree with Ayres that Augustine is searching for a Trinitarian grammar by which to speak of God, but I disagree that grammar is disconnected from some “knowledge” of God (in this case, through faith). That is, Augustine is not simply setting forth a series of rules about how human beings may talk about God; but through explicating these rules, the human community comes to know something about the God whom Christians worship out of a divine gift of love. As Cavadini writes, “Our minds are liberated by this faith because in faith the awareness of the absolute distance separating God and ourselves—an awareness which we necessarily come to on our ascent to contemplation—becomes a coincident awareness of the love of God which crossed that distance. And the greater and more painfully aware we are of the distance, the more we become aware of the love of God” (“The Structure and Intention of *De Trinitate*, 109).

our very being overflows (redeundum) hence if it did not we would not seek even this.”\textsuperscript{143} To gain the attention of humankind in this education toward a divine way of seeking, required because of the darkness of the human mind “distorted by the cupidty and infidelity of the blind,”\textsuperscript{144} God performed the sacrificial pedagogy of the cross—the ultimate act of loving persuasion.\textsuperscript{145} The death on the cross of Christ was part of an Incarnational, and hence Trinitarian healing of the human person’s knowing and loving. God “binding us therefore to the similitude of his own humanity took away the dissimilitude of our inequity, and being made a participant of our mortality made us participants in his own divinity.”\textsuperscript{146} The salvation of the human person (that is the ability of the human person to participate in “the life that is the light of all humanity [Jn 1:4]”)\textsuperscript{147} takes place through this process of similitude and dissimilitude, what Augustine describes as a kind of musical harmony produced through Christ’s interaction with humanity.\textsuperscript{148}

How does this harmony take place within the person? Here, the reader encounters the first antithesis that I will consider in De trinitate, sacramentum/exemplum. Humanity, through sin, had suffered a double death of the body and the soul, recalling the anthropology presented in Augustine’s tractates.\textsuperscript{149} As Augustine writes, “For the death of the soul is impiety and the death

\textsuperscript{143} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 4.1.2 (CCL 50: 160.5-8; Hill, 153): \textit{missa sunt nobis diuinitus uisa congrua peregrinationi nostrae quibus admoneremur non hic esse quod quaerimus sed illuc ab ista esse redeundum unde nisi penderemus hic ea non quaereremus.}

\textsuperscript{144} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 4.2.4 (CCL 50: 163.67-69; Hill, 154): \textit{Tenebrae autem sunt stulta mentes hominum praua cupiditate atque infidelitate caecatae.}

\textsuperscript{145} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 4.1.2 (CCL 50: 161.24-162.38; Hill, 154).

\textsuperscript{146} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 4.2.4 (CCL 50: 164.24; Hill, 155): \textit{Adiungens ergo nobis similitudinem humanitatis suae abstulit dissimilitudinem iniquitatis nostrae, et factus particeps mortalitatis nostrae fecit particeps diuinitatis suae.}

\textsuperscript{147} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 4.2.4 (CCL 50: 163.3-4; Hill, 155): \textit{uitae quae lux est hominum.}

\textsuperscript{148} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 4.2.4 (CCL 50: 164.22-24; Hill, 155).

\textsuperscript{149} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 4.3.5 (CCL 50: 165.5-7; Hill, 156).
of the body is corruptibility by which the soul also departs from the body.”¹⁵⁰ This is not a dualistic anthropology but a fact about the disharmony and disunity of the person and community as narrated within the Scriptures.¹⁵¹ The Word made flesh matched the double disharmony of the human person, death of the body and the soul (one visible, the other invisible), with a single harmonic note through his sacrifice on the cross: “Therefore, the one death of our savior was healing for our two deaths, and his one resurrection presented two resurrections for us when in either condition, that is both in death and in resurrection, his body served both as a sacrament of our interior person and an example for our exterior person, by a kind of medicinal harmony.”¹⁵²

The language of *sacramentum* and *exemplum*, as applied to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and resurrection of the body, pertains to the salvific pedagogy of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology, and it is suffused with the Eucharistic overtones of faith explored in the previous section. Christ is a sacrament of the interior person insofar as he offers to humanity the possibility of an interior crucifixion and resurrection through the instrument of his body, understood as “the tears of repentance” (*ponitentiae dolores*) and “a certain salutary restraining of one’s desires”

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¹⁵⁰ Augustine, *trin.* 4.3.5 (CCL 50: 165.10-11): *Mors autem animae impietas est et mors corporis corruptibilitas per quam fit et animae a corpore abscessus.*

¹⁵¹ Tarsicius J. von Bavel, O.S.A., “The Anthropology of Augustine,” *Milltown Studies* 19/20 (1987): “…one cannot maintain that Augustine taught a Neoplatonic dualism. But there is a certain duality in his anthropology, which proceeds from the hierarchical superiority of the human soul in relation to the body. But ‘duality’ is not a good work to use; we have rather to think of ‘several levels.’ This has the negative aspect that one can easily underestimate the value of the lower levels (such as the enjoyment of the body). On the other hand, it has the positive characteristic of being able to portray the human being in a dynamic manner. Man’s being is not a stagnant fact. It is a scale of contiguous events where each is connected with the other, one level preparing and influencing the other” (30).

¹⁵² Augustine, *trin.* 4.3.6 (CCL 50: 169.107-12; Hill, 157): *Vna ergo mors nostril salvatoris duabus mortibus nostris saluti fuit, et una eius resurrection duas nobis resurrectiones praestitit cum corpus eius in utraque re, id est et in morte et in resurrectione, et in sacramento interioris hominis nostris et exemplo exterioris medicinali quadam conuenientia ministratum est.*
This interior repentance manifests itself bodily, the visible joining itself with the invisible, through tears and a whole new way of using the body within the world, the body becoming a site for divine sacrifice. Here, Augustine employs a metaphor from Paul: “the interior person is being made new in the recognition of God according to the image of him who created him (Col 3:10), when the apostle also says in another place: Even if our exterior person is corrupted, our interior is being renovated from day to day (2 Cor. 4:16).”

The interior person in Augustine is the intelligent soul or mind that sets human beings apart from animals, capable of consciousness and judgment, the union of knowledge and love that Augustine unfolds in his Tractates on John.

Christ, on the other hand, is an exemplum for the exterior hominis, what human beings share with animals (mortality), through assuaging human fear of bodily death in his just suffering on the cross and his bodily resurrection. For both of the terms, sacramentum/exemplum, what is essential is that the human person accepts the true identity of the crucified and risen one and why he was sent into the world, a claim of faith that results in a renewed self-awareness of one’s status as a creature: “For by nature we are not God; we are by nature human; because of sin, we are not just. Therefore God was made a just human that he might intercede as God for sinful

153 Augustine, *trin.* 4.3.6 (CCL 50: 167.64-65; Hill, 156).
154 Augustine, *trin.* 11.1.1 (CCL 50: 333.6-9; Hill, 303): *quae interior hominem renouari in dei agnitionem declarat secundum imaginem eius qui creavit eum cum et alio loco dicat: Et si exterior homo noster corrumpitur, sed interior renouatur de die in diem.*
156 Augustine, *trin.* 4.3.6 (CCL 50: 168.89-92; Hill, 156).
157 Cavadini writes: “Someone who is self-aware is aware not of “a self” but of a struggle, a brokenness, a gift, a process of healing, a resistance to healing, an emptiness, a reference that impels one not to concentrate on oneself, in the end, but on that to which one’s self-awareness propels one, to God. Someone who is properly self-aware is aware of a transformation, a re-configuring, a re-creation of an identity from nothing, of a becoming better, and not of a stable entity that endures as a private inner space or object” (‘The Darkest Enigma,” 123).
humanity.” The Eucharistic overtones of intercession, of justice and humility, are obvious to those readers, who would have participated frequently in the sacrament.

Consequently, faith is salvific and therefore Eucharistic, because one cannot separate the physical and spiritual aspects of human salvation from one another, a Christological claim par excellence:

Hence, he is himself the Son of God, the Word of God, and likewise the mediator of God and humanity as the Son of man, equal to the Father through a unity of divinity and our partner through the taking up of humanity, soliciting the Father for us because he was human, while not remaining silent as God for he was one with the Father.¹⁵⁹

The unity between the Father and the Son, foundational to Trinitarian theology, is expressed ecclesially in the present, since Christ is absent from the senses following his ascension into heaven.¹⁶⁰ The Church, with the glorified Christ as its head, is the body of Christ. Because of this, when Christ asks the Father “that they might be one as we are also one” (Jn 17:22), he is expressing his desire that the “equality of substance” (aequalitate substantiae) and the univocal will of the Father and Son might come to transform human beings into a “society of love” (dilectionis societatem) reflective of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹⁶¹ As seen in De civitate dei, Book X, this is a Eucharistic claim par excellence. As Augustine notes much later in the work, “and this Holy Spirit, according to the Holy Scriptures, is not of the Father alone nor of the Son alone but of them both, and hence it suggests to us the

¹⁵⁸ Augustine, trin. 4.2.4 (CCL 50: 164.10-12; Hill, 155): Deus enim natura non sumus. Deus itaque factus homo iustus intercessit deo pro homine peccatore.
¹⁵⁹ Augustine, trin. 4.8.12 (CCL 50: 176.1-5; Hill, 161): Sic ipse filius dei, uerbum dei et idem ipse mediator dei et hominum filius hominum filius hominis, aequalis patri per diuinitatis unitatem et particeps noster per humanitatis susceptionem, patrem interpellans pro nobis per id quod homo erat tamen tacens quod deus cum patre unum erat.
¹⁶⁰ The divine pedagogy of the ascension of Christ is mentioned quite early in De trinitate. Christ ascended to the Father so that his disciples might not only believe that he was the physical creature in front of them but that he was also equal to the Father (trin. 1.8.18).
¹⁶¹ Augustine, trin. 4.9.12 (CCL 50: 177.15-178.19; Hill, 161).
common love by which the Father and the Son love one another." 162 The body of Christ, so intimately wedded to Christ as mediator, enters into the life of the Father and the Son and becomes a community of love through the Spirit. This is part of the work of redemption, and it is sacramentally performed in the Eucharist. The visible sacrifice of Christ on the cross, is therefore, a “sacrament” of the sacrificial life of the Triune God. 163 The reader familiar with the Eucharistic practice of the Church would see that Augustine’s pedagogy of faith, the salvation affected by the Word’s taking up of humanity, is also performed in the Eucharistic action.

And this pedagogy of Eucharistic faith affects all acts of human knowing. In the sacrament of Christ’s resurrection and ascension, human beings begin to notice that “all the things that appeared sacredly and mystically to our fathers through angelic miracles…were similitudes of him so that all creatures might in some way speak the future one, in whom all needing restoration were saved from death.” 164 God’s pedagogy of faith is one of participation in the very life of God. Even the Father’s sending of his Son into the world finds an analogue within the structures of human knowing:

But when the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, he was sent into this world (Jn. 16:28), made of woman in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). For because in the wisdom of God the world is not able to know God through wisdom, since the light shines in the dark places and the darkness does not comprehend it (Jn. 1:5), it was pleased to God to save

162 Augustine, trin. 15.17.27 (CCL 50A: 501.2-5; Hill, 418): *Qui spiritus sanctus secundum scripturas sanctas nec patris est solius nec filli solius sed amborum, et ideo communem qua inuicem se diligent pater et filius nobis insinuat caritatem.*

163 Gioia writes, “Provisionally, we can render this point as follows; just as the Father and the Son are united through love-Holy Spirit, so Christians are reconciled—become ‘one’—with the Father through the love of Christ’s sacrifice (let us remember that love is the essence of sacrifice) and become one with each other through the same love poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us at Christ’s resurrection” (*The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate*, 126).

164 Augustine, trin. 4.7.11 (CCL 50: 175.2-7; Hill, 160): *Omnia quae sacrate atque mystice patribus nostris per angelica miracula apparuuerunt siue quae per ipsos facta sunt similitudines huius fuerunt ut omni creatura factis quodam modo loqueretur unum futurum in quo esset salus uniuersorum a morte reparandorum.*
believers through the folly of preaching (1 Cor. 1:21) such that the Word might become flesh and might dwell in us. For when the Word is perceived by the mind during the time of someone’s progress, he is said in some way to be sent but not in this world; for he does not appear sensibly, that is he is made present to the bodily sensibly senses. For us too accordingly because we grasp some eternal thing, in some far as we are able, we are not in this world, and even the spirits of all the just, which in this flesh, taste divine things in some way are not in this world.165

Augustine’s unfolding of a Trinitarian theology in book IV through the signs of faith is fundamentally about how human beings can once again learn to know God as the means of salvation, the word becoming flesh in human body, and then the human person becoming a partaker of God through the Word. The Scriptural quotations in this passage address the sending of the Son of God into the world by the Father so that the Word of God might become flesh among the Church in the act of faith itself, resulting in the grasping of eternal things and a just way of life. The person becomes transformed through faith, a kind of Eucharistic transformation of human identity. Such a person is both corporeal and non-corporeal, abiding within a visible and invisible world through the orientation provided by faith.166

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165 Augustine, *trin.* 4.20.28 (CCL 50: 198.78-199.91; Hill, 173-74): *Sed cum in carne manifestus est filius dei, in hunc mundum missus est in plenitudine temporis factus ex femina. Quia enim in sapientia dei non poterat mundus cognoscere per sapientiam deum quoniam lux lucet in tenebris et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt, placuit deo per stultitiam praedictionis saluos facere credentes ut uerbum caro fieret et habitaret in nobis. Cum autem ex tempore cuiusque proiectus in mente percipitur, mitti quidem dicitur sed non in hunc mundum; neque enim sensibiliter apparat, id est corporeis sensibus praesto est. Quia et nos secundum quod mente aliquid aeternum quantum possimus capimus, non in hoc mundo sumus, et omnium iustorum spiritus etiam adhuc in hac carne uiuenterium in quantum diuina sapient non sunt in hoc mundo.*

166 This point is made by Anatolios in addressing the nature of faith in book XII-XIV of *De trinitate*: “In one sense, faith is the clinging to realities that cannot be seen: “faith is needed by which to believe what cannot be seen.” And yet as we have noted, the complexity of the framework of faith and sight is such that faith is not simply the realm of the invisible, but rather the orientation to invisible realities through adherence to visible signs that refer to these invisible realities” (“Divine Semiotics and the Way to the Triune God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate,*” 185-86).
Yet how? The visible and invisible quality of human life is partially explainable through the second antithesis of Book XIII, scientia/sapientia. In Book XII, Augustine makes a distinction between the two terms. Scientia has to do with “a thinking of the time-bound things of reason” (temporalium rerum cogniti rationalis). Sapientia pertains to the “thinking of the eternal realities of understanding” (aeternam rerum cognitio intellectualis). Augustine further describes the difference between the two in the following way:

it is clear, nevertheless, when we live according to God, our mind being intent on the invisible things of God ought to be formed progressively from his own eternity, truth, and charity; truthfully, some of our rational attention, this is part of our mind, has to be directed to the use of mutable and of bodily things without which this life is not lived, not so that it might be conformed to this age (Rom. 12:2) by establishing such goods as a final end and distorting the appetite of happiness in them, but so that we might do whatever we do reasonably in the use of these temporal things by the contemplation of these-to-be-arrived at eternal things, passing through the former, adhering to the latter.

Scientia, then, is the foundation of all virtues, for the virtuous life is a matter of right living and knowledge of temporal things includes the right use of the created world. Sapientia is a contemplation that precludes action, and for this reason, is a properly eternal state, a matter of divine worship. But, as books XIII-XV demonstrate, the gap between these two forms of knowing, between action and contemplation, is bridged through faith in Christ as lived within the Eucharistic community of the Church.

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167 Augustine, trin. 12.15.25 (CCL 50: 379.43-44; Hill, 336).
168 Augustine, trin. 12.15.25 (CCL 50: 378.2-3; Hill, 336).
169 Augustine, trin. 12.13.21 (CCL 50: 374.26-35; Hill, 333): apparet tamen cum secundum deum uiuimus, mentem nostram in invisibilia eius intentam ex eius aeternitate, ueritate, caritate, proficienter debere formari, quiddam uero rationalis intentionis nostrae, hoc est eiusdem mentis, in usum mutabilium corporaliumque rerum sine quo haec uita non agitur dirigendum, non ut conformentur huic saeculo finem constituendo in bonis talibus et in era detorquendo beatitudinis appetitum, sed ut quidquid in usu temporalium rationabiliter facimus aeternorum adipiscendorum contemplatione faciamus per ista trasuentes, illis inhaerentes.
At the beginning of Book XIII, Augustine turns to John 1:1-14 to further distinguish between these two forms of knowing. John 1:1-5, which addresses the identity of Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh, is a matter for contemplation through the intellectual mind.\textsuperscript{171} It is \textit{sapientia}, the wisdom of unseen things. Human beings cannot know the truth of these claims on their own but need the illumination of faith, because by turning away from this light in the fall, they became less capable of this wisdom.\textsuperscript{172} Human beings need signs to focus their contemplation upon God. The Scriptures state, “A man was sent by God whose name was John; this man came in witness that he might bear witness regarding the light so that all might believe through him.”\textsuperscript{173} This claim of Scripture is not \textit{sapientia} but \textit{scientia}, since any person that wants to understand the meaning of the text uses sense experience, images (\textit{phantasia}) already collected and deposited in the mind to comprehend what it means to be a man, to have a name, and to be sent by God. This is part of reading the signs of the Scriptures. Although, to “believe” such a claim is true requires \textit{fides} not \textit{scientia}\.\textsuperscript{174} So, three distinct ways of “knowing” are represented in this initial passage in John: the knowledge of eternal, invisible things (\textit{sapientia}), the knowledge of temporal, visible things (\textit{scientia}), and the knowledge of faith (\textit{fides}).

Augustine addresses the epistemological status of this act of faith throughout Book XIII.\textsuperscript{175} Human beings can search within themselves and determine whether this faith in things

\begin{footnotes}
\item[173] Augustine, \textit{trin.} 13.1.2 (CCL 50A: 382.42-45; Hill, 343): \textit{Fuit homo missus a deo cui nomen erat Iohannes; hic uenit in testimonium ut testimonium perhiberet de lumine ut omnes crederent per illum.}
\item[175] The question, whether faith is in fact an act of true knowing, has been raised by Michel Barnes in “The Visible and the Visible Trinity.” He writes, “Earlier I suggest that the problem of the epistemological status of faith—what is the kind of knowledge that is gained through it?—arises out of Augustine’s firm denial of any simple, direct knowledge of God through the Son. If the divinity of the Son is invisible, if God is not seen directly in the Son—both assertions which
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unseen is present. They can have very certain knowledge of the presence of this faith “for faith in absent things is present, and faith in things which are outside is inside, and faith sees things which are not seen, and meanwhile faith occurs in the hearts of persons in time; and if from faithfulness they become unfaithful, it perishes from them.”\textsuperscript{176} The “visible” words of the Scriptures sound in the ears of the believer, and when their “invisible” eternal meaning is searched for by that believer (their reference to God), they can in some sense see the faith that dwells deeply in the heart.\textsuperscript{177}

In addition, as already seen, faith also involves the will. This is the purpose of what seems like a rather lengthy digression in book XIII on the nature of human happiness. Human beings, while incapable of determining the desires of an individual person, may come to some knowledge regarding the universal desires of all persons.\textsuperscript{178} In fact, philosophy as a whole has often discussed this univocal human want, determining that all persons desire happiness as the measure of the good life.\textsuperscript{179} True happiness consists of a virtuous life; having everything that a human person might want, while also desiring nothing wrongly (\textit{nihil uult male}).\textsuperscript{180} Yet, how does one know what is worthy of want and what is not? Augustine proposes the following: “Hence, faith by which we believe in God is particularly necessary in this mortal life full of errors and tribulations. For, the greatest good, by which one becomes happy, is not able to be

\textsuperscript{176} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 13.1.3 (CCL 50A: 383.76-82): \textit{quia et rerum absentium praesens est fides, et rerum quae foris sunt intus est fides, et rerum quae non uidentur videtur fides, et ipsa tamen temporaliter fit in cordibus hominum; et si ex fidelibus infideles fiunt, perit ab eis.}

\textsuperscript{177} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 13.2.5 (CCL 50A: 386.9-10; Hill, 345).

\textsuperscript{178} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 13.3.6 (CCL 50A: 387.1-5; Hill, 346).

\textsuperscript{179} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 13.4.7 (CCL 50A: 390.23-35; Hill, 348).

\textsuperscript{180} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 13.5.8 (CCL 50A: 393.37-38; Hill, 349).
found unless it comes into the human person by God and it joins to the human person by God. That is, the happy life is not a matter of achievement but instead is a divine gift. Indeed, philosophers have often managed the best that they can, attempting to construct their own version of the happy life, and to live these doctrines in a superlative manner. But, of course, the philosopher forgets the vicissitudes of time, the fact that the human person (even if they achieve some wisp of happiness in this life through seeking truth and love) will lose this state of happiness in death. The best of the philosophers have attempted to separate the death of the body from the eternal life of the soul but despite the extraordinary attempts (and with some success) to use human reason in this philosophical endeavor, they have failed. Such a failure is due to their incapacity to abide within the gift of faith.

This failure of both knowledge and will is rectified through the gift of faith, which once again unites knowledge of the happy life with the capacity to perform the virtues faithfully.

Returning to his initial exegesis of John, Augustine writes:

For if the Son of God by nature was made the son of man by mercy for those sons of men (for this is the meaning of the Word became flesh and dwelled among human beings), how much more credible it is that the sons of men by nature might become sons of God by grace and to abide in God in whom alone and from whom alone they can be happy participating, in fact, in his immortality, for was it not to persuade us that the son of God participating in our mortality effected this.

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184 Augustine, *trin.* 13.9.12 (CCL 50A: 399.27-31; Hill, 353): quanto est credibilius natura filios hominis gratia dei fieri dei filios et habitare in deo in quo solo de quo solo esse possint beati participes immortalitatis eius effecti, propter quod persuadendum dei filius particeps nostrae mortalitatis effectus est?
Jesus Christ performs an efficacious and persuasion pedagogy in his sacrifice of assuming flesh, a kenotic act that finds its end in the cross. Still, many philosophers perceive in this life of Christ not that wondrous promise of divine life and transformation but a God, who is far too involved in the impurities of the created universe. For this reason, Augustine presents a most suitable account of why the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, was born among creatures, died upon the cross, and was raised from the dead in order to allow the human person to participate in the eternal happiness of God. In many ways, Augustine’s description is congruent with the Christological account in Book IV. Yet, more important for the sake of the discussion regarding the pedagogy of faith and the antithesis of sapientia/scientia, is how this sacrifice of Christ affects human knowledge and will, something that Augustine addresses in the last sections of this book.

185 Augustine, *De trinitate* XIII.16.20; Hill, 359. This claim of Augustine, regarding the redemption or purchasing of humanity’s sins through their blood, needs to be situated within a richer world of biblical metaphor. Augustine is not arguing that Christ’s death was a payment to a God who demanded justice for that sin. Rather, as Gary Anderson has argued, one must locate Augustine’s language within the history of sin, one that includes language of debt and payment. He writes, “the devil who held a bond of indebtedness against all of humanity sought to find grounds for exacting its price, death. Although no sin worthy of death could be found in Christ, the devil put him to death anyway. The result of this overreaching was the blotting out of the bond the devil once possessed. The victory that Christ achieved during his Passion and Resurrection was a one-time historical event, but its benefits were made perpetually available through the sacrifice of the Mass” (*Sin: A History* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009], 131-32). Though Anderson pursues his account of Augustine through the *Confessions*, he nonetheless reminds the reader that each time that Augustine mentions sacrifice, he does so within this Eucharistic framework.
Augustine does so through returning to a critique of the philosopher’s approach to both wisdom and knowledge. Indeed, as Augustine recognizes, the particulars of salvation history, as accounted by Augustine through the signs of faith, are not a matter of *sapientia* but *scientia*.188 However, through belief in the person of Christ, they can become a kind of union between *sapientia* and *scientia*:

For in the things becoming visible through time that greatest gift is that humanity was bound together to God in the unity of a person; among these true eternal things, the highest truth is rightly given by the Word of God. That truly he himself is the unbegotten one from the Father, full of grace and truth, it is a deed that is in itself temporally in the “effects” of his deeds for we are cleansed through the same faith [in these deeds] so that we might contemplate him in eternal things unwaveringly.189

The pagan philosophers undertook a similar project of perceiving eternal truths through the sensible world, and through it, they “were able to discern the invisible things of God, understood through the things that were made” (Rom 1:20).190 But, because they did not receive this truth from God, one transformative of their will, they worshipped the idols of the created world.

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189 Augustine, *trin.* 13.19.24 (CCL 50A: 416.32-38; Hill, 363): *In rebus enim per tempus ortis illa summa gratia est quod homo in unitatem personae coniunctus est deo; in rebus uero aeternis summa ueritas recte tribuitur dei uerbo. Quo uero idem ipse est unigenitus a patre plenus gratiae et ueritatis, id actum est ut idem ipse sit in rebus pro nobis temporaliter gestis cui per eandem fidem mundamur ut eum stabiliter contemplemur in rebus aeternis.* My translation differs significantly from Hill’s in this passage. While a difficult passage (with the rhetorical play that Augustine employs in a dense sentence), Hill’s translation treats the sentence as a claim about the identity of Christ alone. In fact, it is instead a claim about how Christ’s true identity as human and divine co-joined (including his eternal relation with the Father) become present in his own deeds through the cleansing pedagogy of faith. Such a pedagogy prepares Christians to contemplate eternal things. Therefore, the true focus of Augustine in this sentence is the transformation of human knowing of eternal things through the knowledge of temporal things (in Christ).
Visible things were treated as a source of divinity, *scientia* confused for *sapientia* obtained through the human intellect.\textsuperscript{191}

Faith in Christ is a contradiction to this quest for achieving wisdom through human effort. Rather, it is received as gift of salvation, the very sacrificial pedagogy of Christ recorded in the Scriptures. As Augustine writes:

> Therefore our knowledge is Christ, so too our wisdom is Christ. He plants faith in us from the things of time; he presents truth itself from eternal things. Through him we proceed to him, we stretch out through knowledge toward wisdom; and yet we do not withdraw from one and the same Christ in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).\textsuperscript{192}

Through faith in Christ, knowledge of temporal things allows the person to progress toward wisdom. And this “knowledge” of divine things obtained through faith transforms what it means to be human in the first place. Faith knowledge, of course, is never simply a matter of committing to the memory certain signs. Such knowledge is achievable by anyone who memorizes the sounds of the words, who then through a certain desire of the will, thinks about these words in the process of recalling them.\textsuperscript{193} This is the knowledge of the outer human being, not the inner.\textsuperscript{194} But, this initial encounter with the signs of faith may become “a trinity of the

\textsuperscript{191} Cavadini treats Augustine’s critique of philosophical education precisely on this point. Philosophy, even when it achieves some divine contemplation, does so through the elite education of the few. As Cavadini notes, “One may be able, with the aid of the liberal arts, to ascend to philosophy and learn to contemplate God’s image, but it is an image distorted by pride as one’s attention is riveted, finally on only one thing—the power, or at least the prestige, of being oneself “wise” (“The Quest for Truth in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, 438).

\textsuperscript{192} Augustine, *trin.* 13.19.24 (CCL 50A: 416.50-417.55): *Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra idem Christus est. Ipse nobis fidem de rebus temporalibus inserit; ipse de sempiternis exhibit veritatem. Per ipsum pergimus ad ipsum, tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam; ab uno tamen eodemque Christo non recedimus in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi.*

\textsuperscript{193} Augustine, *trin.* 13.20.26 (CCL 50A: 418.33-41; Hill, 365).

\textsuperscript{194} Augustine, *trin.* 13.20.26 (CCL 50A: 418.41-419.46; Hill, 365).
inner human being” (interioris hominis trinitatem) if what is held in the memory and understood through the mind is loved, for “the just person lives by faith, that faith which works through love” (Rom. 1:17; Gal 5:6).

Consequently, the signs of faith when assimilated into the mind are taken up into the very way that a person knows and loves. By attending to the signs of faith through memory, understanding, and will, the Christian becomes what is received. The content of faith becomes a part of them in such a way that what was previously only a matter of scientia opens up into a taste of wisdom. As Augustine will write at the beginning of book XIV, in his summary of his arguments in Book XIII:

…Even regarding eternal realities, I showed it to be necessary to have temporal faith, even believing temporally in the heart, for acquiring these eternal things. Also I argued that faith regarding these temporal things that the eternal one did for us and suffered in the person he assumed and even brought to eternity, is useful for the same obtaining of these eternal things, and those very virtues, by which in this temporal mortality is lived well (prudently, bravely, temperately, and justly) are not true virtues, unless they are referred to that same temporal faith which nevertheless leads to eternal things.

Therefore, like the Eucharist, the divine gift of faith—incorporated into the human person’s very way of knowing and loving—transforms temporal signs into sacramenta of eternal realities. Temporal reality is not destroyed but transfigured through attending to the signs of faith, culminating in an existence that has become a sacrifice to God. In this way, one becomes ever more like the imago Dei according to which one was made.

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195 Augustine, trin. 13.20.26 (CCL 50A: 418.57-58; Hill, 365).
196 Augustine, trin. 13.20.26 (CCL 50A: 419.65; Hill, 365): iustus ex fide uiuit, quae fides per dilectionem operator.
197 Augustine, trin. 14.1.3 (CCL 50A: 424.71-80; Hill, 371-72): de rebus aeternis fidem temporalem quidem et temporaliter in credentium cordibus habitare, necessariam tamen proper adipiscenda ipsa aeterna esse monstrau. Fidem quoque de temporalibus rebus quas pro nobis aeternus fecit et passue est in homine quem temporaliter gessit atque ad aeterna peruexit ad eandem aeternorum aetationem prodesse disserui, uiertutesque ipsas quibus in hac temporali mortalitate prudenter, fortiter, temperanter et iuste uiuitur, nisi ad eandem licet temporalem fidem quae tamen ad aeterna perducit referantus, ueras non esse virtutes.
**Book XIV: Becoming the Imago Dei through Worshipful Wisdom**

Thus far, I have primarily been considering the pedagogy of Eucharistic faith as a participation in the life of the Triune God through the sights of faith fundamentally transforms how human beings know and love. Yet, for Augustine, this transformation is not reserved solely to isolated acts of knowing and loving God. Instead, participation in God through Eucharistic faith provides a transformation of human identity itself, a reformation of the *imago Dei* within the human person. In the final part of this chapter, I explore what Augustine means by the *imago Dei* within the human person, and how it is reformed and renewed through the Eucharistic faith outlined above. Through this, I conclude that Augustinian deification is strictly speaking the renewal of human memory, understanding, and will according to the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith. This final section of the chapter will also allow me to answer the question that impelled the progress of this chapter in the first place: how is the human person transformed through the practice of fruitful worship?

What does Augustine mean by *imago Dei*? Beginning in Book VIII, *De trinitate* shifts to an “interior way” (*interiore mode*) of searching for the Triune God.\(^{198}\) This searching, carried out initially in Books VIII-XII, “explores the mind’s inner self-relatedness and the connections between this self-relatedness and its relations to both God and the world.”\(^{199}\) The interior searching in the latter part of *De trinitate* is performed for several reasons, including as a polemic against the philosophical exercises of ascent performed by Neoplatonists and a salvific turn toward a way of knowing through faith.\(^{200}\) As Anatolios remarks regarding this search, “On

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\(^{198}\) Augustine, *trin.* 8.pro.1 (CCL 50: 269.29; Hill, 271).


\(^{200}\) The polemic against Neoplatonic philosophical exercise, as well as the rhetorical turn to faith, has been suggested by Cavadini: “to continue the purely introspective Neoplatonic ascent is to continue a process which has not only failed but which *cannot but fail*, for the more we persist in
the basis of the reflections of Books 5-7, what is looked for is a *signa* that can reflect, however dimly, the inseparability and perfect mutuality of the *circumecessio* of the Triune God. On the basis of the biblical doctrine that the human person is *imago dei*, Augustine is going to look for

contemplating a disfigured image as though it were not disfigured, as though it were, so to speak, an accurate image of God, the more we persist in furthering the disfigurement...For what is necessary now is not so much an uninterrupted consideration of the image but a “renewal” of the image. And this consists not in the static regard of an essentially unchanging intellect or in the eschatological cleansing of that image from extrinsically accrued bodily taint at death, but in the genuine “growth” of that image itself in, as Augustine puts it, a “gradual,” “day by day” “progress,” one which is accomplished “holding fast to the faith of the Mediator” (“The Structure and Intention of *De Trinitate*, 108). In his disagreement with Cavadini over the failed nature of this ascent, Ayres uses Cavadini’s argument as a straw man in making a claim that Cavadini himself would for the most part agree with: “Contra Cavadini, it is not that Augustine presents us with an attempt that must fail, rather he presents us with aspects of the *exercitatio* which he sees as essential to faith and which has the character of that faith. Just as faith is not yet sight, so all our training is essential for our development as Christians and yet will not result simply in the achievement of what we seek but rather in our coming to grips with how far the triune God—more present to us than any material things—is beyond our comprehension” (“The Christological Context of Augustine’s *De trinitate* XIII, 138). Ayre’s fundamental disagreement with Cavadini is that he believes Augustine has not given up the emphasis on philosophical exercises of ascent in his early dialogues as much as transformed it through his more mature Christology and theology of the Christian life (139). Yet, such a transformation is profound enough (as I showed in the previous chapter) that it is no longer a philosophical exercise that one performs but a theological one, infused with charity: “There is no question of a philosophical escape from temporal things into the eternal. As long as we live, we never leave the realm of sign and signification, of eloquence and the word, to arrive at an inner world apart from them” (Cavadini, “The Sweetness of the Word,” 171). By a failed ascent, thus, Cavadini means any attempt to leave behind the temporal for the eternal through philosophical (or for that matter theological) exercise. And for this reason, the latter part of *De trinitate*, when read by the Neoplatonist philosopher, is a failed ascent. Anatolios’ own argument regarding the structure of *De trinitate* is not so much a disagreement with Cavadini (as, he suggests in “Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis,” 250, n. 52) but builds upon Cavadini’s reading by attending to the theological epistemology of the work. That is, “the affirmative moment in Augustine’s presentation of the “likeness” between the triadic structure of human consciousness and the divine Trinity does claim a certain correlation between the two, and this is presented in some sense as a demonstration of the validity of pro-Nicene theology. But the direction of the movement in the construction of this correlation is from divine revelation to its echo in human consciousness, not vice versa” (251). It is the very “sights” of faith, that which has occurred in time, which allows Augustine to carry out this exploration (251).
this *signa* in human consciousness." While a full exploration of Augustine’s search for an image of the Triune God within the human consciousness is outside the scope of this chapter, Book XIV of *De trinitate* does provide an account of this image, which helps to explain how the pedagogy of Eucharistic worship transforms the very identity of a person through a renewal of one’s memory, understanding, and will.

Book XIV of *De trinitate* takes up Book XIII’s discussion of *hominis sapientia*, the wisdom of the human person in the context of an explication of the *imago Dei*. Augustine writes, “Therefore God is the highest wisdom; however, the worship (*cultus*) of God is the wisdom of the human person (*sapientia est hominis*) about which we are now speaking.”

“Wisdom,” according to the philosophers, “is knowledge of human and divine realities” (*Sapientia est rerum humanarum diuinarumque scientia*). Faith, since it is a matter of temporal knowledge, cannot be wisdom strictly speaking, a point that Augustine made at the conclusion of Book XIII. For this reason:

> certainly as long as the just live from faith, he will indeed strive and stretch out through the same temporal faith toward eternal truth; yet in his retention, contemplation, and love of this temporal faith in his own person, even if he lives it much so according to the interior man, it is not yet such a trinity that it should be called now the image of God lest it seems that the image is fixed in temporal things, wherein it should only be fixed in eternal things.

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201 Anatolios, “Divine Semiotics and the Way to the Triune God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,” 182.
205 Augustine, *trin.* 14.2.4 (CCL 50A: 425.3-9; Hill, 372): *profecto quamdiu iustus ex fide uiuit, quamuis secundum interiorem hominem uiuat, licet per eandem temporalem fidem ad uieritatem nitatur et tendat aeternam, tamen in eiusdem fidei temporalis retention, contemplation, dilectione nondum talis est trinitas ut dei uideatur quae constituenda est in aeternis.*
Augustine’s treatment of faith as a temporal form of knowledge is important; indeed, as the human being “looks” at his or her own consciousness and sees the faith that is present, this sight (even if it is carried out within the interior human being) is still temporal because in eternal life faith will be no more. A person will have memory of this faith, recalling what it is that was believed, but will no longer need faith because of the “sight” of the Triune God that one enjoys. The image of God within the human person, cannot be located in this trinity of faith, because this image (by which the person was made according to the creator) has to be eternal, not temporal: “Therefore it is right to say that the image of God is not in the retention, contemplation, and loving of faith, which will not always be, but in that which it will always be found.” Namely, “in the soul of the human person, that is in the rational or intellectual part” (in anima hominis, id est rationali siue intellectuali). The soul is the proper place to search for this image, because as Augustine makes clear, the soul is immortal.

In this first part of book XIV, Augustine sets forth the key points in his investigation of the imago Dei. Fundamentally, the imago Dei to which the human person was created is the ability of the person “to use reason and the intellect for understanding and contemplating God.” Yet, what Augustine means by reason and intellect, relative to this act of divine contemplation, requires some attention. Happily, Augustine summarizes the trajectory of

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207 Augustine, trin. 14.3.4 (CCL 50A: 426.5-8; Hill, 372): Non igitur in fidei retentione, contemplatione, dilectione, quae non erit semper, sed in eo quod semper erit inuenienda est quam dici oporteat imaginem dei.
208 Augustine, trin. 14.3.6 (CCL 50A: 428.62-63; Hill, 374).
209 Augustine, trin. 14.4.6 (CCL 50A: 428.1-5; Hill, 374).
210 Augustine, trin. 14.4.6 (CCL 50A: 428.9-10; Hill, 374): uti ratione atque intellectu ad intellegendum et conspiciendum deum.
211 Augustine’s employment of reason and intellect, as interior to the human person, does not denote individualism, a critique already noted above in footnote eighty-eight. Instead, as
book X as a means of explaining the need for reason and intellect in divine contemplation in Book XIV itself. In book X, Augustine had first addressed how the mind knows itself through thought for “nothing is in the sight of the mind unless it is from what is being thought about such that not even the mind which is being thought whenever it is thinking about something else is able to be in its own sight unless it is thinking about itself.” When the mind performs this act of interior reflection, it is “called back to itself by an incorporeal turning around” (incorporea conversione reuocetur).²¹³

Yet, how does the mind perform this recalling of itself? Here, Augustine reintroduces the triad of memoria, intellegentia, and uoluntas first presented in Book X. According to Ayres, the source of this triad is the rhetorical tradition represented by Cicero in his De inventione II.53.160, “the practice by which orators chose the appropriate style and content for a speech.”²¹⁴ Augustine himself acknowledges this Ciceronian source in De trinitate XIV.11.14: “For certain writers when treating the virtues in which even Tully [Cicero] divided prudence into this these three, memory, understanding, and foresight.”²¹⁵ Yet, Augustine does not remain beholden to Cicero in this division of prudence or wisdom, instead using uoluntas (the will), since no human being can actually foretell the future, as this is a divine characteristic not a creaturely one.²¹⁶

Williams notes, “The introspective method of De trin. is designed to ‘demythologize’ the solitary human ego by establishing the life of the mind firmly in relation to God—and, what is more, to God understood as self-gift, as movement into otherness and distance in self-imparting love” (“Sapientia and the Trinity,” 331).

²¹² Augustine, trin. 14.6.8 (CCL 50A: 430.3-431.5; Hill, 375): nihil in conspectu mentis est nisi unde cogitator ut nec ipsa mens qua cogitator quidquid cogitator aliter possit esse in conspectu suo nisi se ipsam cogitando.
²¹³ Augustine, trin. 14.6.8 (CCL 50A: 431.31; Hill, 376).
²¹⁴ Ayres, “‘It’s not for eatin’—it’s for lookin’ through’,” 57.
²¹⁵ Augustine, trin. 14.11.14 (CCL 50A: 441.3-6; Hill, 382): Nam quidam cum de uirtutibus agerent in quibus est etiam Tullius in tria ista prudentiam diuiserunt, memoriam, intellegentiam, prouidentiam.
²¹⁶ Ayres, “‘It’s not for eatin’—it’s for lookin’ through’,” 57.
Nonetheless, the remarkable aspect of this introduction of rhetorical terms is not related to Augustine’s appropriation of Cicero but how the use of these terms reveals his true understanding of how human reason and intellect are the “location” of the *imago Dei*. What does Augustine mean by memory? Describing how the mind begins to turn to itself, he writes, “It is like an expert of many disciplines, who knows what things are contained in his memory, and it is not at that time in the sight of his mind unless he thinks about it; the rest are stored away in a sort of hidden place, which is called the memory.” Augustine’s approach to memory as a place of storage of images has been well-documented in scholarship on the theme. His most extensive treatment of memory is found in his *Confessions*, Book X. Quoting the passage in full:

My God, the memory is a great power, I do not know what an astonishing thing it is, what profound and infinite multiplicities it has; and this is the mind and I am, myself, am it. What therefore am I, my God? What is my nature? A various, many-faceted, and extremely immense life. Behold in the fields and caverns and the uncountable hollows of my memory, innumerable full of innumerable kinds of things, either through images, just as of all bodies, or through its own presence, such as all practical skills, or through I do not know what other notions or awareness, such as the affections of the mind that even when the mind does not experience it, the memory holds onto it (yet whatever is in the memory is in the mind)—through all these things I run, I fly about to these things, even entering into them, as much as I am able, and without any end. Wholly remarkable is the memory, wholly powerful is the life in the person living mortally.

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217 Augustine, *trin.*. 14.6.8 (CCL 50A: 432.34-37; Hill, 376): *Sicut multarum disciplinarum peritus ea quae nouit eius memoria continentur, nec est inde aliquid in conspectu mentis eius nisi unde cogitate; cetera in arcana quadam notitia sunt recondite quae memoria nuncupatur.*

218 For the classical treatment of the theme, particularly in Augustine’s *Confessions*, see, Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966), 46-49; A more comprehensive description of memory in all of Augustine’s works is provided by Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 80-111; Finally, though not focusing entirely upon the memorial arts in Augustine alone, Mary Carruther’s two volumes on memory and thought in the medieval period include extensive comments on Augustine in the context of rhetorical pedagogy (The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture, 2nd ed. [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008]; The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images 400-1200 [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998], esp. 31-34).

The memory, for Augustine is an active human capacity, formed by engagement with “things” in the world, practical arts that human beings gain in the course of living (including liberal education), and the movement of affections. 220 Mary Carruthers writes, “Because crafting memories also involved crafting the images in which those memories were carried and conducted, the artifice of memory was also, necessarily, an art of making various sorts of pictures: pictures in the mind, to be sure, but with close, symbiotic relationships to actual images and actual words that someone had seen or read or heard…” 221 Thus, when a person turns to their memory to “see” his or her mind, this is an “imaginative” action par excellence. One is forming an image of one’s very identity, and the various experiences that one has had in this temporal life will affect the description of one’s identity. 222

220 The memory’s connection to human experience has been noted in particular by Coleman: “Once the physically perceived object is removed from view there remains in the memory a similitude towards which the will can turn the soul’s regard in order to be informed of what is exterior. There is, then, a trinity in the awareness of the exterior world by means of sense organs and sense images; this trinity, is made up of the memory, the interior vision and the will which unites the memory image with the interior vision” (Ancient and Medieval Memories, 101-102).
221 Carruthers, The Craft of Thought, 10.
222 Here, it is important to emphasize that this search for identity is not equivalent to the modern search for the self, ubiquitous in philosophical literature. As Cavadini writes, “But the imagery of self-awareness in Augustine is not limited to the imagery of stable space or stable substance (and these are, after all, only images) invoked in such a description of “the self” in Augustine, not even in the Confessions, and certainly not in the sermons and in other Augustinian literature. In fact, the closer one examines the imagery which Augustine uses to express the content of self-awareness, the more one becomes convinced that he does not use it to describe a stable reality called “the self” that becomes more and more clearly visible the purer one’s interior vision becomes, but rather something that defies reification. The content of self-awareness, for those truly self-aware, is much more disturbing and mysterious, more exciting and hopeful, more treacherous and full of risk. Someone who is self-aware is aware not of “a self” but of a
For this reason, *memoria* is never separable from *intellegentia* and *uoluntas*. Following his description of *memoria* in *De trinitate*, Augustine writes:

This reminds us that there are certain conceptions of various things in the recesses of the mind, and at that time when they are thought about they proceed out in a certain way into the middle and are set before the sight of the mind more openly; and then the mind finds that it remembers, understands, and loves itself, even when it was not thinking about the mind, when it was thinking about something else.\(^{223}\)

In fact, the purpose of literature is to draw forth memories from the mind that will become a source for understanding and loving.\(^{224}\) And, the speaking of a word (even an interior word not yet uttered by the mouth), necessary for any act of knowledge, cannot take place without the desire (*uoluntas*) to think (*cogitare*) about some “thing” in the memory (*memoria*), and hence to come to understanding (*intellegentia*).\(^{225}\) This production of an interior word through memory, understanding, and will is essential to understanding Augustine’s explication of the *imago Dei*.\(^{226}\)

As he remarks in book IX:

> Therefore in that eternal truth from which temporal things are made we perceive with the vision of the mind the form according to which we are and according to which we perform something with right reason either in us or in our bodies. And thenceforth we have before us a true perceptual form of things something like a word and we produce it by a saying something within.\(^{227}\)

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\(^{223}\) Augustine, *trin.* 14.7.9 (CCL 50A: 433.19-434.26; Hill, 377): *Hinc admonemur esse nobis in abdito mentis quarundam rerum notitias, et tunc quodam modo procedere in medium etque in conspectu mentis uelut apertius constituiri quando cogitantur; tunc enim se ipsa mens et meninisse et intellegere et amare inuenit etiam unde non cogitabat quando aliunde cogitabat.*

\(^{224}\) Augustine, *trin.* 14.7.9 (CCL 50A: 434.29-33; Hill, 377).

\(^{225}\) Augustine, *trin.* 14.7.10 (CCL 50A: 434.43-435.52; Hill, 378).

\(^{226}\) See, Ayres, “‘It’s not for eatin’—it’s for lookin’ through’,” 43-46.

\(^{227}\) Augustine, *trin.* 9.7.12 (CCL 50: 303.1-304.6; Hill, 277): *In illa igitur aeterna veritate ex qua temporalia facta sunt omnia forma secundum quam sumus et secundum quam uel in nobis uel in corporibus uera et recta ratione aliqun operamur uisu mentis aspicimus, atque inde*
This interior word, a kind of pre-cultural language,\textsuperscript{228} is then communicated through an external word produced through temporal human speech, for “no one willingly does something that is not first said in his heart.”\textsuperscript{229} As a result, when Augustine speaks about reason and intellect as necessary for contemplating God, he is in fact addressing this complex process of forming an image or an interior word through the memory, understanding, and will. This is not, as one would have it, an exercise that is individualistic or overly-rationale but related to the very type of communication that human beings engage in as a part of a society. The forming of interior words effects outward speech and action, which then contributes to the production of new interior words.

And it is this astonishing process of remembering, understanding, and loving, when directed toward the mind itself, which is the foundation of the \textit{imago Dei} to which humanity was formed. After all, though “defiled and deformed” (\textit{obsoletam atque deformem}), the image of God within the human person “is capable of God and is able to participate in God” (\textit{eius capax est eiusque esse particeps potest}).\textsuperscript{230} This capacity of the human being to remember, to understand, and to love (to produce an interior word or image) was not received through gazing upon any temporal reality but is instead a given capacity of the interior person.\textsuperscript{231} Faith, though apart of this interior person’s image-making capacity (“for faith is not what is believed, but that by which one believes, the former is believed, the latter is perceived” \textit{[Fides enim non est quod...}}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{conceptam rerum ueracem notitiam tamquam uerbum apud nos habemus et dicendo intus gignimus.}
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\textsuperscript{228} Cavadini suggests that this pre-cultural word, that which all human beings have in common as being made in the \textit{imago dei}, necessarily requires a movement toward a word inscribed in signification. See, “The Quest for Truth in Augustine’s \textit{De Trinitate}, 433-36.

\textsuperscript{229} Augustine, \textit{trin.} 9.9.12 (CCL 50: 304.13-14; Hill, 278): \textit{Nemo enim aliquid uolens facit quod non in corde suo prius dixerit.}


creditor, sed qua creditor, et illud creditor, illa conspicitur]) cannot be the source of this imago Dei to which one was made, because in that eternal sight of God, faith will itself become something to remember.\textsuperscript{232} In the same way, the living out of the virtues, which presently leaves traces upon the memory, will only be remembered as having been lived in the past.\textsuperscript{233}

But, as Augustine does so often in De trinitate his argumentation eventually leads to a sublimation of the point that he just made. In fact, for Augustine, remembering, understanding, and loving of one’s mind, one’s identity and narrative, is not the imago Dei. Rather:

Therefore, this trinity of the mind is not on that account the image of God because the mind remembers itself, understands itself, and loves itself, but because it can remember, understand, and love the one by whom it was made. For when it does this it becomes wise. For if the mind does not do this, even when it remembers itself and understands itself and loves itself, it is foolish. Therefore let it remember God to whose image it was made and understand and love this God. That is, I might say more briefly, let the mind worship the God not made, by whom the mind was made capable of God and is able to participate in God.\textsuperscript{234}

This worship of God, the remembering, understanding, and loving of God, is the imago Dei to which the human person was made and thus becomes wise. Augustine’s theological anthropology is such that the identity of the human person is a worshiper of God. It is not enough to produce an interior word but to refer every word, every deed that a person engages in to love of God and neighbor.\textsuperscript{235} In any act of worship, the human mind participates in God and “when it so happily unites in that nature, it will see unchangeably in all that it will see. Then just as divine Scripture promises, desire will be sated with good things, with immutable good things,

\textsuperscript{233} Augustine, trin. 14.9.12 (CCL 50A: 439.33-50; Hill, 381).
\textsuperscript{234} Augustine, trin. 14.12.15 (CCL 50A: 442.1-443.9; Hill, 383): Haec igitur trinitas mentis non propterea dei est imago quia sui meminit mens et intellegit ac diligint se, sed quia potest etiam meminisse et intelligere et amare a quo facta est. Quod cum facit sapiens ipsa fit. Si autem nt facit, etiam cum sui meminit seque intelligit ac diligit, stulta est. Meminerit itaque dei sui ad cuius imaginem facta est eunque intelligat atque diligat. Quod ut breuius dicam, colat deum non factum cuius ab eo capax facta est et cuius esse particeps potest.
Worship of the Triune God transforms human identity such that the knowledge and love of the human person becomes conterminous with divine knowledge and love. All human action becomes characterized by a worshipful wisdom through the reformation of the *imago Dei.*

And this worship transformative of human identity is only possible through entering into the temporal signs of Christian worship itself, the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith presented above: “Those who on being reminded truly are turned toward the Lord (*conuertuntur ad dominum*) from that deformity which had conformed them through worldly lusts to this age and are reformed by him listening to the apostle saying: “Do not be conformed to this age but be reformed by the renewal of your minds…” (Rm. 12:2).”

The Eucharistic context of this statement is not immediately obvious to the reader. Yet, at the conclusion of each of his sermons during Eucharistic liturgies, Augustine said something analogous to the following:

Turning to the Lord God (*conuersi ad dominum deum*), Father almighty, with a pure heart, let us give true and great thanks, as much as our little person is able; praying to his singular gentleness with our whole soul so that he deems our prayers worthy to hear in his loving kindness; also by his power let him expel the enemy from our thoughts and

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239 This is equally the case for commentators upon *De trinitate.* In his essay commentary upon books XIV and XV of *De trinitate,* Rowan Williams, while addressing the reformation of the image of God within the human person as the reception of a divine gift of redemption, at no point mentions the Eucharist (“*Sapientia and the Trinity,*” 320-21). Gioia suggests that Book XIV refers to the doctrine of sacrifice unfolded in books IV and XIII but does so through Augustine’s use of *dilectio,* not through any Eucharistic reference itself (*The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate,* 230).
actions, increase faith in us, govern our mind, grant to us spiritual thoughts, and lead us to
his beatitude: through Jesus Christ his Son.\textsuperscript{240}

This prayer, asking God to prepare the Christian for the Eucharist itself, begins each time in
Augustine’s sermons with the exhortation to turn to the Lord.\textsuperscript{241} The use of this phrase by
Augustine thus recalls Eucharistic practice. Further, Augustine quotes Rom. 12:2, a text that
follows the appeal to make of one’s body a living sacrifice to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). The latter
text is essential to Augustine’s unfolding of Eucharistic sacrifice in De civitate dei X, as shown
in the second part of this chapter. Thus, reading the remainder of book XIV in light of this
Eucharistic context is further revealing of Augustine’s theological anthropology of the \textit{imago
Dei}.

Simply, through the exercise of Eucharistic faith, the Christian’s memory, understanding,
and will becomes ever more attuned to the Triune God’s own knowledge and love, transforming
the Christian into a divine sacrifice. For as I showed in the second part of this chapter, Christian
sacrifice is related to the transformation of exterior words or deeds through interior acts of love,
the heart itself becoming a place of sacrifice. The Christian produces through the act of fruitful
Eucharistic worship, images and words that are more suitable for contemplating God.\textsuperscript{242} And
this production of images ultimately affects the identity of the person. Of course, this renewal of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{240} Augustine, s. 272 (PL 38: 1248; Hill, 301): \textit{conversi ad dominum deum patrem omnipotentem, puro corde ei, quantum potest paruitas nostra, maximas atque ueras gratias agamus; precantes toto animo singularem mansuetudinem eius, ut preces nostras in beneplacito suo exaudire dignetur; inimicum quoque a nostris actibus et cogitationibus sua uirtute expellat, nobis multiplicet fidel, mentem gubernet, spirituales cogitationes concedat, et ad beatitudinem suam perducat; per iesum christum filium eius.}
\item \textsuperscript{241} F. van der Meer, \textit{Augustine the Bishop}, 397.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Anatolios writes, “seeing the triadic structure of human consciousness opens up a way of referring oneself to the Triune God. Augustine’s claim is not that the vision of the triadic structure of human consciousness encapsulates or objectively reproduces the vision of the Triune God, but rather that the former vision, when informed and enabled by a life of faith in Christ, stimulates and orients the gaze that seeks the Triune God” (“Divine Semiotics and the Way to the Triune God in Augustine’s \textit{De Trinitate},” 192).
\end{itemize}
the *imago Dei* “does not happen in a moment of conversion as the renewal in baptism by the remission of sins does happen in a moment.”

Instead, just as a patient gradually comes to recover from an illness, the *imago Dei* “is being renewed however in the recognition of God (Col 3:10) that is in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:24)…” Such a Christian comes to see God more truly and to love God more justly “making progress from day to day transferring love from temporal things to eternal things, from visible to intelligible, from carnal to spiritual, and even devoting oneself to curbing and diminishing desire for those things and binding one’s very person to the other by charity.”

It is the signs of faith (especially the Eucharist) that facilitate this progress, although the fullness of this transformation (where one will “see” God in a bodily way) is a matter of hope, since “we see now through a mirror in an enigma, but then it will be face to face (1 Cor. 13:12).”

For this reason, Augustine concludes *De trinitate* not with an exhortation but with a prayer: “Let me remember you, let me understand you; let me love you. Increase in me these things until you reform me to wholeness.”

And hence, Augustine’s source for deification, for the total transformation of the person body and soul, is located in this divine transformation of memory, understanding, and will effected through the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith, as Augustine makes clear in his account of

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245 Augustine, *trin.* 14.17.23 (CCL 50A: 455.21-24; Hill, 389): *de die in diem proficiendo renouatur transfert amorem a temporalibus ad aeterna, a visibilibus ad intellegibilis, a carnalibus ad spiritalia, atque ab ipsis cupiditatem frenare atque minuere illisque se caritate alligare diligenter insistit.*

246 Augustine, *trin.* 14.17.23 (CCL 50A: 455.33-34; Hill, 390): *Videmus nunc per speculum in aeagnmate, tunc autem facie ad faciern.*

the Holy Spirit in Book XV. In the middle of this book, Augustine turns again to the production of that interior word in human consciousness, for it is that word ("which is neither uttered in sound nor thought in the likeness of sound which necessarily is of some language, but which proceeds all all those signs which are signified by it and is begotten from the knowledge which remains in the mind when this same knowledge is said inside just as it is"), 248 which is the image that "approaches in as much as it is able...that likeness of the begotten image in which God the Son is preached as substantially like the Father in all things." 249 But importantly, Augustine calls this interior word a likeness or image of God, not the sight of the Triune God itself. 250 Simply, as much as this image is like the Triune God, it is not this God, since this whole process of forming an interior word requires a body for temporal creatures. That is, while the production of this interior word involves knowing through perception, the senses of one’s own body, and the testimony of others, the inner life of God requires no bodily interaction, no mediation from others. 251 God does not require an education, for “what is the knowledge of God is itself wisdom and what is his wisdom is his essence or substance for in the marvelous simplicity of his

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248 Augustine, trin. 15.11.20 (CCL 50A: 488.42-46; Hill, 410): *quod neque prolatium est in sono neque cogitatium in similitudine soni quod alicuius linguae esse necesse sit, sed quod omnia quibus significatur signa praecedit et gignitur de scientia quae manet in animo qunado eadem scientia intus dicitur sicuti est.*

249 Augustine, trin. 15.11.20 (CCL 50A: 488.53-56; Hill, 410): *Sic accedit quantum potest ista similitudine imagnis factae ad illam similitudinem imagines natae qua Deus filius patri per omnia substantialiter similis praedicatur.*

250 Anatolios writes, “The mind’s triadic interrelation of memory, understanding, and will is such a “sight.” It is not to be equated with the eschatological sight of the triune God; it is rather a “sight” of faith. As such, it simply belongs within the series of “similitudines” given in the scriptural mediation fo knowledge of God” (“Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis,” 252).

251 Augustine, trin. 15.12.22 (CCL 50A: 493.87-92; Hill, 413-14).
nature is not one thing to be wise, another to be, but to be wise is the same as to be…” Thus, human production of an interior word through memory, understanding, and willing is ultimately unlike the uncreated nature of God. As Rowan William notes, “Our sapientia does not terminate in a vision of ourselves as timeless spirit but in the recognition of our created distance from God: only so do we become wise, because only so is God’s creative wisdom made the object of our self-knowing.” Even in the beatific vision, when human beings will gaze upon God face-to-face, they will still do so as creatures that were formed toward this capacity by the gift of God.

Importantly, the Holy Spirit is that gift of God whereby the human being shares in some way in this divine wisdom in the present, gradually becoming divine in the process. In the same way that the Son is uniquely called the wisdom of God, since he is the forma dei and the forma serui, the Holy Spirit is the charity or gift of God that dwells within the human heart, making it an acceptable place for divine worship. As Augustine writes, “Therefore the love which is from God and is God is properly the Holy Spirit through which the love of God is diffused in our hearts by which the whole trinity dwells in us.” This diffusing of the Spirit is accomplished by incorporation into the body of Christ, the Church. In fact, though Augustine does not deal extensively with the Holy Spirit until Book XV, he gave intimations of this in Book I, a book

\[252\] Augustine, *trin.* 15.13.22 (CCL 50A: 495.39-42; Hill, 414): *Quae autem scientia dei est ipsa et sapientia, et quae sapientia ipsa essential siue substantia quia in illius naturae simplicitate mirabili non est aliud sapere, aliud esse, sed quod est sapere hoc est et esse sicut.*

\[253\] Williams, “Sapientia and the Trinity,” 326.


\[255\] Augustine, *trin.* 15.18.32 (CCL 50A: 508.26-29; Hill, 420): *Dilectio igitur quae ex deo est et deus est proprie spiritus sanctus est per quem diffunditur in cordibus nostris dei caritas per quam nos tota inhabited trinitas.*

that was redacted following his completion of Book XV. In Book I, regarding the Holy Spirit, Augustine, speaking against those who deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit, writes:

Do you not know that your bodies are a temple in you of the Holy Spirit, whom you have from God (1 Cor. 6:19)? For is anything more insane and sacrilegious than to dare to say that the members of Christ are a temple of a lesser creature, according to these, than Christ himself? For in another place, the apostle writes, Your bodies are the members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15). But if what are members of Christ is also the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not a creature, since it is necessary that we owe service to him whom we offer our body to as a temple, that service by which God alone is to be served, which in Greek is called latria. Hence consequently, he says, “Glorify therefore God in your body.”

The sacrificial imagery that Augustine employs here should not be surprising by now. The Holy Spirit, which enables participation in the body of Christ, is also that which transforms that body so that it might offer latria that is increasingly possible of imaging God’s wisdom. The Christian, through fruitful worship—that which reforms the memory, understanding, and will—becomes nothing less than a worshipper of God.

Therefore, an Augustinian approach to deification is a gradual transformation of the memory, the understanding, and the will of the Christian, through the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith, so that it is able to form truer words of love. Such a process is carried out within the signifying ministry of the Church, the body of Christ. Memory, understanding, and will are not faculties of the mind but the priestly capacity of the human person to become themselves a sacrifice to God, bodies transformed into a site for divine charity. The truth of the inner word is

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258 Augustine, *trin.* 1.6.13 (CCL 50: 44.134-44; Hill, 73): *Nescitis quia corpora uestra templum in uobis est spiritus sancti quem habetis a deo? Quid autem insanius magisque sacrilegum est quam ut quisquam dicere audeat membra Christi templum esse creaturae minoris secundum ipsos quam Christus est? Alio enim loco dicit: Corpora uestra membra sunt Christi. Si autem quae membra sunt Christi templum est spiritus sancti, non est creatura spiritus sanctus, quia cui corpus nostrum templum exhibemus necesse est ut huic eam seruitutem debeamus qua non nisi deo seruiendum est, quae graece apellatur latria. Vnde consequenter dicit: Glorificate ergo deum in corpore uestro.*
reformed through the sights of faith, and the renewal effected by signs produces outward actions conforming the person to one’s truest identity as *imago Dei*. They have become what was received, a temple for divine worship.

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter, I set forth the concern that guided its progress; namely, what does the Christian become through fruitful worship? To answer this question, I first presented a second facet of Augustine’s mystagogical thought, the relationship between participating in a divine sign and becoming transformed in the process. While building off of Meconi’s attention to this feature of Augustine’s mystagogical thought, including his thesis that Augustine’s mystagogy is the source for an Augustinian approach to deification (what he called sympathetic diligence), I suggested that in order to better account for participation and transformation in his mystagogical theory, one needed to attend to both his Eucharistic theology and his theory of the *imago Dei*.

I began my consideration of Augustine’s Eucharistic theology through a close reading of *De civitate dei*, book X. I concluded that through participation in fruitful Eucharistic sacrifice, Christians are to become themselves divine sacrifices to God within the body of Christ, the Church. That is, Augustine’s Eucharistic theology is ultimately connected to a broader pedagogy of sacrifice, which Augustine addresses in *De catechizandis rudibus*. This “becoming a sacrifice” within the Eucharist includes a sacramental and ecclesial transformation of how the Christian perceives the world, and thus acts within it. The source for this transformation is nothing less than the sacrifice of Christ on the cross presented sacramentally in the Eucharist.
The Eucharistic signs transfigure human nature, allowing it to become what it received in the sacrament.

Yet, the depth of this transformation was not obvious from a reading of *De civitate dei X* alone. In *De trinitate*, Augustine performs a pedagogy of faith intended to exercise the reader in a specific way of knowing this Triune God (through faith), and through this exercise, transforming what it means to be human in the first place. Upon first glance, *De trinitate* is not a work that treats the transformation of the Christian through Eucharistic worship. But, such an assumption ignores the subtle Eucharistic context of the work as a whole. To make this context more explicit, I first turned to Augustine’s *Tractates on the Gospel of John 24-27* in order to show how the pedagogy of faith is ultimately a Eucharistic pedagogy. That is, the Eucharist is a sacrament of faith *par excellence* whereby by believing in the invisible reality signified by the visible sacrament, the Christian enters into the sacrificial life of the Triune God. When received with spiritual understanding in this way, the Eucharist becomes transformative of what it means to be human, both body and soul now totally dedicated to knowing and loving God. Faith is Eucharistically structured and vice versa.

This Eucharistic pedagogy of faith is operative in both books IV and XIII of *De trinitate*. In book IV, Augustine highlights the intrinsic connection between the physical and spiritual aspects of salvation in his use of the antithesis *sacramentum/exemplum*. The Christian is incorporated into the inner life of the Triune God that is made manifest in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The sending of the Son into the world is the dwelling of God within the signs of the created world, even to the point that to know and to love this as a *sacramentum* is to receive the Word in one’s mind. The Christian becomes transformed through this act of faith knowing, a kind of Eucharistic transformation in which human identity is harmoniously knit to the inner life
of God. In book XIII, Augustine more carefully attends to how this “binding” takes place within the mind through the second antithesis, sapientia/scientia. While the content of faith is a matter of scientia, the act of faith itself enables the Christian, in some sense, to taste divine wisdom, sapientia. Faith, for Augustine, is in fact transformative of the very process of knowing for the Christian—it is a supreme inner illumination (distinct from knowledge, but not yet wisdom). Temporal realities are transformed into sacramenta of eternal realities, all knowledge and virtue being referred to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ. Through faith, and its effect upon human knowing, the Christian becomes Eucharistic—a visible sign of an invisible sacrifice.

This turn to how the human person knows through faith led to the second consideration brought forth by Meconi, the imago Dei to which the human person was created. Through a reading of book XIV, I concluded that the imago Dei to which the person is created is nothing less than the capacity for forming interior images or words through the memory, the understanding, and the will. Yet, this image is insufficient alone, precisely because it is only reformed by God through the act of worship itself. This worship, as I showed, is conceived Eucharistically. The mind unites to the divine nature through “seeing” God, and the will is transformed so that it will desire God alone. This reformation, because of the temporal status of human beings, means that Christians are beholden to that work of referring all signs to God, transforming the created order into sacramental signs. This capacity for signification, in fact, is part of a divine gift whereby all of creation, through the continual transformation provided by the priestly capacity of the imago Dei, becomes an opportunity for divine worship. As the memory, the understanding, and will of the Christian are transformed through participation in the sights of
faith, signs that elicit worship, the Christian does not become divine but simply more capable of imaging God.

Thus, through fruitful worship, the Christian becomes what they were originally created as, the *imago Dei*. To be made according to the image and likeness of God is to enter deeply into the Triune life of God such that one’s very body becomes a sacrifice, a visible image of the interior life of God manifested in Christ. One becomes a Eucharistic sign. The sights of faith that the Christian becomes through mystagogical catechesis, the white baptismal garment, the temple, and particularly the Eucharist is, of course, a matter of appropriation. But, it is one carried out through a formation of a Christian’s memory, understanding, and will through the true and beautiful sights of faith in order that the Christian might learn to “speak” exterior words and deeds reflective of the *sapientia* of the interior word. The heart of such a Christian becomes an altar to God because through this Eucharistic education, they become a bodily sacrifice for the world. It is to an examination of this pedagogy, as performed in Augustine’s sermons, that I now turn in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

AUGUSTINE’S SERMONS AS MYSTAGOGICAL EXERCISES

Thus far, I have considered Augustine’s mystagogical theory primarily from its theological underpinnings. Reviewing these foundations briefly, I argued in chapter three that the constitutive aspect of Augustine’s mystagogical theology was the capacity of the Christian to use the signs of both the Scriptures as well as the sacramental life of the Church to enjoy the reality of God. I further noted that this was the fundamental disposition necessary for fruitful liturgical prayer in Christianity. In chapter four, I continued the account of Augustine’s mystagogical theology by focusing on what the human person becomes through the act of fruitful worship. I concluded that through sacramental worship, in particular the Eucharist, one becomes the image of God, such that one’s very body is transformed into a site of divine sacrifice. In this way, the interior life of divine contemplation becomes expressed in one’s visible actions, a gradual process of salvation that occurs through the cultivation of the Christian’s memory, understanding, and will.

Yet, as anyone who is practiced in the art of education knows, it is one thing to listen to a lecture on educational philosophy and another to watch the teacher perform his or her craft. In the case of Augustine, this means paying close attention to how this underlying mystagogical theology, examined in the previous two chapters, is implemented within the pedagogy of his sermons. Therefore, in this concluding chapter on Augustine, I turn to a consideration of the mystagogical pedagogy of Augustine’s sermons themselves: the means through which he
teaches Christians to remember, to understand, and to love God through the signs of worship. This final topic of inquiry, inspired by the anthropological interruption of chapter two (how Christians learn to appropriate the necessary dispositions for worship), begins first with an account of what precisely Augustine is doing in his sermons. I argue that Augustine’s sermons are rhetorical performances, using the signs of Scripture, to form the imaginations of Christians, their way of thinking about God, and ultimately to lead the congregation to become what they received in the preaching event. Then, returning to the historical account of liturgical prayer in chapter three, I analyze how Augustine performs his mystagogical pedagogy relative to baptism, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year.

The Pedagogy of Rhetoric

In chapters three and four, I presented two features of Augustine’s mystagogical theory: the relationship between signs and understanding (chapter three) and participation and transformation (chapter four). The last feature to be highlighted in this account of Augustine’s mystagogical approach is that of rhetoric. Indeed, the rhetorical nature of Augustine’s sermons, and its relationship to both his theology and pedagogy, has been acknowledged for some time. Christine Mohrmann, discerning a distinctive style to Augustine’s sermons, acknowledged that “Augustinian preaching reveals a character clearly theological and speculative. He gives in his sermons the fullness of his theological knowledge and of his spiritual experiences.”

Simultaneously, Augustine’s preaching is also directed toward the simplest Christian, using figural speech to catch the attention of his audience. Expanding upon Mohrmann’s observations, Harmless translates and analyzes the rhetorical techniques that Augustine used.

2 Ibid., 89.
throughout his initiation sermons, especially “metaphors, paradoxes, antitheses, puns, tongue-twisters, knotty problems, soliloquies.” All of these rhetorical tools functioned theologically, and for that reason, one cannot separate Augustine’s liturgical and sacramental theology from his catechesis on the sacraments. Yet, why does Augustine employ these verbal tools and images as he does? In order to grasp the subtleties of Augustine’s rhetorical method in his mystagogical approach, it is prudent to explore the ways that rhetoric was used in the ancient world. Ancient rhetoric includes an understanding of speech as persuasion, as philosophical therapy, and a performative literary criticism.

Rhetoric as Persuasion

Henri Marrou’s account of rhetoric in the ancient world, in particular, highlights its persuasive qualities. According to Marrou, rhetoric developed out of the education of the Sophists, one that emphasized both dialectics as a way “to learn to win any kind of argument” and eloquence as the means to persuasively communicate to others for the benefit of the city. Rhetorical theory and pedagogy, in its nascent forms, included an analysis of how to engage in the art of eloquent speech in public addresses (often for the purpose of entertainment), in addition to participating in democratic government, as well as the law court. Rhetoric became, because of this connection to both government and law, the highest form of education in Greece, “the crown and completion of any liberal education worthy of the name.”

3 Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 223.
4 Ibid., 338.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 196. For a more thorough account of this rhetorical education, see Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 123-26. Also, Marrou, *Education in Antiquity*, 194-205.
Of course, there were also problems with this system of education, relative to its ability to teach students to seek truth. As Paul Kolbet has noted in his description of rhetoric in the Greek sophist Gorgias, “In contests of words, the speech that “pleases and persuades a large crowd” is not so much the “one spoken truthfully,” but rather the one “written artfully.” By focusing to such a large extent on technique, the student ignored what it meant to seek truth in the first place. This system, though Greek in origin, came to be adopted by Roman schools in the first century B.C.E. Marrou writes:

The *rhetor Latinus*, like the Greek *sophistes*, aimed at teaching his pupil how to master the art of oratory as handed down traditionally in the complex system of rules, methods and customs that had gradually been perfected in Greek schools…It was all laid down in advance: one learned the rules, and then practiced how to use them.

This Roman rhetorical education was the model for Augustine’s formation in the art of persuasive speech. Yet, Augustine was highly suspicious of classical rhetoric’s place in Christian preaching itself. After all, rhetorical pedagogy would often sacrifice the truthful

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8 This conflict between rhetoric and the seeking of truth is often exaggerated in literature on ancient pedagogy. Marrou, for example, notes “For we must not forget that the philosophers not only fought amongst themselves, they had to line up against their rivals, the rhetors. It would be quite wrong to imagine that Hellenistic culture and its advanced education were shared out peacefully between two parallel forms…On the contrary, they were two hostile cultures, and they frequently disputed each other’s right to existence (210). For a more complex account of the relationship between the philosopher and the rhetor in Plato, for example, see Marina McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). For McCoy, Plato’s hostility toward the rhetorician is not strictly speaking cultural, since both philosophers and rhetoricians share the same “culture” and “techniques.” Rather, it is a matter of ethics, the virtue of the soul (5).

9 Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 27. Of course, this is not to imply that everyone was happy with this approach to rhetoric. Marrou writes, “Cicero, probably under the influence of the Stoic philosopher Philo of Larissa, had tried hard to wean the youth of his day from this naïve, utilitarian idea of rhetoric and to enlarge their conception of the ideal orator, harking back to Isocrates’ original ideal in all its noble simplicity” (*A History of Education in Antiquity*, 285).


11 Ibid., 285.


13 Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 175.
quality of speech at the expense of its eloquence, a concern that he discovered quite early in his education at Carthage.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{conf.} 3.4.7 (CCL 27: 251-52; Boulding, 79-80). For a parallel account involving Ambrose’s preaching on the Scriptures, see \textit{conf.} 5.13.23-14.24 (CCL 27: 70.1-71.21; Boulding, 130-33).} Christianity, precisely because of its conviction that signs indeed do refer to some reality, was unwilling to cultivate a rhetoric that separates truth from ornament.\footnote{Averil Cameron, \textit{Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 66-67.} Persuasive speech must be true speech; otherwise it does violence to the listener. Therefore, a wholesale adoption of classical forms of rhetoric was inimical to Christian teaching.

For this reason, at the beginning of book IV of \textit{De doctrina christiana}, Augustine develops a form of rhetorical pedagogy appropriate to the ministry of Christian teaching, what Cavadini notes is less a theory of rhetoric than “a theory of conversion.”\footnote{Cavadini, “The Sweetness of the Word,” 165.} Augustine writes, “For since both true and false things are made sweet (\textit{suadeantur}) through rhetorical art, who would dare to say that truth ought to remain unarmed against falsehood in its defense.”\footnote{Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 4.2.3 (CCL 32: 117.1-3; Green, 101): \textit{Nam cum per artem rhetoricam et vera suadeantur et falsa, quis auderat dicere, aduersum menadicium in defensoribis suis inermem debere consistere ueritatem.}} Indeed, for Augustine, this is no innovation since the Scriptures employ rhetorical tropes in communicating divine wisdom.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 4.6.10} The teacher, who interprets Scripture, must attend to these rhetorical tropes emulating them as the most artful and hence salvific way of teaching Christianity. Further, the internal rhetoric of the Scriptures is joined to the rhetoric of human speech in an act analogous to the Incarnation:

\begin{quote}
But in that eloquence it is not the things which Christian writers have in common with pagan orators or poets that give me inexpressible delight; what astonishes me and overwhelms me is that they used our eloquence side by side with a rather different
eloquence or their own in such a way that it is neither totally lacking nor unduly prominent in their writings.\textsuperscript{19}

Even when speaking the wisdom of the Scriptures in the plainest manner, there is an eloquent style to the discourse of the preacher, precisely because he is unfolding the truthful narrative of divine salvation.\textsuperscript{20} The preacher or teacher’s art of speech must be dedicated to a persuasive recitation of this narrative. Their speech, in this way, mediating insight into the Word of God, an opening of the text that becomes revelatory in the speaking event: “this is precisely eloquence in teaching, that which should be learned, not so it might become pleasing, what was horrifying, or that it might be done, what was previously repulsive, but so that what was hidden might become visible.”\textsuperscript{21} The Scriptures become sacramental through the persuasive rhetoric of the preacher’s words.

Though reluctant to spend much time on the classical rules of rhetoric, Augustine does prescribe a style for the rhetorician drawn from Cicero: “For some eloquent man said, and it is true, that the eloquent ought to speak ‘so that he might teach, so that he might delight, so that he might move.’ Then, he added: ‘To instruct is a necessity, to delight of sweetness, and to move of conquest.’”\textsuperscript{22} To instruct, for Augustine, is a matter of speaking in such a way that one’s audience understands what one is saying. For this reason, it is important to employ a restrained style of speech in small matters (\textit{submitte}).\textsuperscript{23} To delight also has to do with understanding, yet

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\textsuperscript{19} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 4.6.10 (CCL 32: 122.27-32; Green, 106).
\textsuperscript{20} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 4.7.21 (CCL 32: 131.242-44; Green, 114).
\textsuperscript{21} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 4.11.26 (CCL 32: 134.1-3; Green, 117): \textit{Prosus haec est in docendo eloquentia, qua fit dicendo, non ut libeat, quod horrebat, aut ut fiat, quod pigebat, sed ut appareat, quod latebat}.
\textsuperscript{22} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 4.12.27 (CCL 32: 135.1-4): \textit{Dixit enim quidam eloquens, et uerum dixit, ita dicere debere eloquentem, ut doceat, ut delecet, ut flectat. Deinde addidit: Docere necessitates est, delectare suauitatis, flectere, uictoriae}.
\textsuperscript{23} Augustine, \textit{doctr. chr.} 4.17.34 (CCL 32: 141.1-14; Green, 123).
\end{flushleft}
its intermediate style (modica temperate) is used to praise or blame a specific way of life. It is speech that is ornamented, and its purpose is to assist the listener in giving his or her assent to the truths that are spoken. Finally, to move is a matter of persuading someone to act in a specific way, often when they may be unwilling to do so. The teacher in this instance employs the grand style of rhetoric (granditer dicere). In each case, the purpose of the art of eloquence is not to elicit delight in the speaker’s use of words but to persuade an audience of the truth of what is spoken, and thus to act upon it.

Yet, to simply focus upon styles of persuasive speech in Augustine’s sermons ignores a key facet of Augustine’s approach to Christian teaching as a whole. Namely, the desire that the student learn to read the text without the aid of the teacher. Augustine writes at the conclusion

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24 Augustine, doctr. chr. 4.19.38 (CCL 32: 144.1-22; Green, 125).
25 Augustine, doctr. chr. 4.24.54 (CCL 32: 160.1-37; Green, 139-40).
26 Augustine, doctr. chr. 4.24.54.
27 Augustine, doctr. chr. 4.24.55 (CCL 32: 160.9-161.17; Green, 140).
28 Harmless, because he focuses upon homilies for Christian initiation, tends to ignore the broader purpose of Augustine’s sermons in teaching Christians to properly “read” the Scriptures without the aid of the teacher. In summarizing Augustine’s use of persuasion, he writes, “Certainly teaching—bringing people to understand the Christian message—remained a vital concern. He took great pains to introduce people to the best theology he knew and to do so using the best methods at his disposal. Moreover, he took special care for those who walked a little slower and would not move on until he had heard their shouts of understanding. Delighting, too, had its place. At one level, he knew that he had to entertain, if only that his hearers might be retained as hearers. But at a deeper level, he recognized that delighting meant forming hearts. Thus he made his first concern to read his hearers’ hearts and to let them read his. He also sought to sweep them up to that they would taste the full spectrum of religious emotions: awe, fear, joy, sorrow, zeal, yearning. Still, motivating remained his ultimate measure. It meant, of course, setting out the Christian wisdom and way of life. It also meant moving people that they would do what they knew should be done. Thus, for Augustine, the measure of catechesis was persuasion. And persuasion meant informing minds, forming hearts, and transforming lives. It meant, in a word, conversion” (Augustine and the Catechumenate, 354). No one better articulates Augustine’s approach to preaching for beginners than Harmless. But, to develop a fuller account of Augustine’s mystagogical method, it is necessary to consider his preaching to both the mature and the infantes. To see all of Augustine’s preaching as a literary education, which is also a worshipful event.
The teacher who expounds what he understands in the scriptures expounds it to his listeners, like the reader of a text articulating the letters which he recognizes; whereas the teacher who teaches how to understand scripture is like the teacher of the alphabet, one who teaches how to read. So the person who knows how to read, on finding a book, does not require another reader to explain what is written in it; 29

This is by no means an easy task but it is ultimately the goal of the teacher according to Augustine, a fact that he emphasizes as early as his treatise, De magistro. 30 Augustine desires to foster certain habits in the Christian, ways of engaging with the text, that a simple account of rhetoric as persuasive speech is not able to communicate. Therefore, it is necessary to attend to Augustine’s rhetoric not only in its use of suasive speech but as a form of philosophical therapy, one that shapes specific habits or skills of reading through the exercises performed by the rhetorician.

Rhetoric as Therapy

The use of medicinal or therapeutic language in treatises on Christian education is by no means unique to Augustine. Around 189, Clement of Alexandria (in addressing Christ as the educator of humanity) wrote in his Paidagogos:

The Educator strengthens souls with the persuasion implied in these examples, and then He gives the nourishing, mild medicine, so to speak, of His loving counsels to the sick man that he may come to a full knowledge of the truth. Health and knowledge are not the same...Just as our body needs a physician when it is sick, so too, when we are weak, our soul needs the Educator to cure its ills. Only then does it need the Teacher to guide it and develop its capacity to know, once it is made pure and capable of retaining the revelation of the Word. 31

29 Augustine, doctr. chr. prol. 9 (CCL 32: 5.132-6.144; Green, 7).
30 Augustine, mag. 24.45.
The art of persuasion, of divine rhetoric, comes to be healing for the Christian. Likewise, Gregory of Nyssa in his *Catechetical Oration* (circa 383) provides a principle for teaching Christianity using medicinal terminology, “For we must adapt our method of therapy to the form of the disease. You will not heal the polytheism of the Greek in the same way as the Jew’s disbelief about the only-begotten God.”\(^{32}\) Christian teaching, for both Clement and Gregory, is a means of healing, a form of therapy directed to the intellect and will.

Augustine himself appropriates this medicinal terminology in his *De catechizandis rudibus*. In his account of how the hearer of the Scriptures may not understand the narrative immediately or be capable of believing in it because of the quality of his or her life, Augustine writes, “Now if this has come to our notice, and the person shows himself to be curable, we should see that he is restored to health without any delay by providing him with a wealth of authoritative statements and rational arguments. If, on the other hand, his feeling of affront is unexpressed and hidden, God’s medicine can bring him relief.”\(^{33}\) The Christian teacher is capable of offering this medicine insofar as he recognizes the student’s concerns in approaching the teacher, his attentiveness to the student’s reaction during the initial proclamation, and through continuing his own process of being healed to speak more truly, and thus delightfully, the narrative of the Scriptures.\(^ {34}\)

Augustine is not only interested in therapeutic metaphors regarding Scriptural texts for the instruction of beginners. Rather, the language of healing also occurs in the context of

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\(^{33}\) Augustine, *De cat. rud.* 1.11.16 (CCL 46: 140.34-37; Canning, 95).

\(^{34}\) Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 154-55.
sermons on seeking divine knowledge. In *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 102.6, Augustine addresses the difficulty of striving for divine contemplation in a mutable world:

> Even when we try to think about God, as it is proper for human beings to do, how many things get in the way, interrupting us on the pretext of some need of our corruptible nature? How many things call us away? How many divert us from our noble purpose? How many cares distract us? What a crowd of fantasies! What a rabble of suggestions! All this goes on in the human heart, as though it were swarming with the maggots of our corruption. We have described the gravity of the disease, so let us praise our physician. Will he not heal you, he who made you the kind of creature who would not have fallen ill if you had consented to observe the rule of health he gave you? Did he not draw it up for your benefit, indicating to you what you might touch and what you must not touch, if you were to keep your salutary condition?\(^{35}\)

The sermon links the capacity for human beings to think about God with the Christian’s form of life. Of course, particular to the discourse of the sermon is that Augustine continually turns his congregation toward an examination of their thoughts, desires, and actions as an essential part of the medicinal exegesis of the Scriptures. In *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 93.2, he exhorts his congregation, “Our psalm offers a remedy *[curat]* for such silent human thoughts and even for those that burst out into words and deeds, provided only these people consent to be cured *[currentur]*. Let them pay attention *[currentur]*, then, find healing.”\(^{36}\)

> Why is there persistent emphasis upon healing in Christian teaching both in Augustine and other patristic authors? Partially, of course, are the Scriptural images of healing and salvation so prominent in the New Testament itself.\(^{37}\) Yet, in addition to this emphasis upon salvation as healing, one cannot ignore the importance of therapeutic metaphors in philosophical

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While ancient philosophy does indeed pertain to reason, it does so in such a way that the soul of the person studying is transformed. As Martha Nussbaum has written regarding this medicinal quality to philosophy in ancient Rome, “it must find ways to delve into the pupil’s inner world, using gripping examples, techniques of narrative, appeals to memory and imagination—all in the service of bring the pupil’s whole life into the investigative process.”

Paul Kolbet, in particular, has analyzed the sermons of Augustine as medicinal and therapeutic exercises, linking together the art of rhetoric and philosophy in what he calls psychagogy. Defining this term, he writes:

A working definition would be that psychagogy refers to those philosophically articulated traditions of therapy—common in Hellenistic literature—pertaining to how a mature person leads the less mature to perceive and internalize wisdom for themselves. These traditions, moreover, stress that for therapeutic speech to be effective, it must be based on knowledge and persuade by adapting itself in specific ways both to the psychic state of the recipient and to the particular occasion. Thus, as a contemporary investigative category, psychagogy is a distinct use of rhetoric for philosophic or religious ends.

Psychagogy was thus concerned with how human beings are both persuaded to the truth of a specific account of wisdom, as well as how the teacher encourages the student to appropriate this wisdom into a form of life. It was an education into a way of thinking, desiring, and acting, in which through the mediation of speech, the student participates in a “critical assessment of prior convictions that as often as not led to their abandonment. This purification was then followed by positive, constructive exercises that fostered skills of accurate perception and evaluation to enable students to perceive wisdom on their own…”

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41 Ibid., 40.
Kolbet argues in *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* that Augustine as an inheritor of this tradition of philosophical rhetoric transforms Christian ministry and preaching through a robust psychagogical theory performed upon the Scriptures and sacraments. Indeed, Augustine knew “that persuasion was exceedingly difficult because successful persuasion requires an active change in the life of the hearer rather than passive assent. Much of the challenge of preaching, then, becomes employing a form that inculcates the content of the homily, that is, a form that educates the mind and trains the soul.” Simply speaking truth (even if such truths drawn from Scripture have a kind of eloquence unto themselves) is inadequate because it does “not cultivate the necessary *habitus* involved in reforming the self.” Rather, the images and tropes found within the Scriptures call forth to be interpreted in such a way that the participant “identify and overcome the obstacles preventing them from understanding and applying its truth to their lives.” Augustine’s sermons are a matter of identity formation through a process of critical investigation of both signs and one’s own internal narrative.

The pedagogical techniques that Augustine employs in this regard are not necessarily distinct from the rhetorical tropes highlighted by both Mohrmann and Harmless. The text would be analyzed in both simple and complex ways through diatribe and conversation, while also linking words together by association. These techniques are not unique to Christianity but also were present within philosophical pedagogy. Ancient philosophy, as Pierre Hadot has argued quite influentially, was never simply a matter of communicating philosophical doctrine to its

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42 Ibid., 183-84.
43 Ibid., 184.
44 Ibid.
adherents. Rather among ancient philosophers, “the philosophical life will be an effort to live and think according to the norm of wisdom, it will be a movement, a progress, though a never-ending one, toward this transcendent state.” Hadot emphasized that each school of philosophers embraced a system corresponding to a form of life, and would perform spiritual exercises within the “classroom” intended to transform the philosopher’s way of perceiving the world. Among those prominent exercises in the Stoic school included attention, understood as an awareness of sense experience, meditation as a reconfiguring of one’s own narrative, listening, reading, self-mastery, and indifference to indifferent things.

Meditation, in light of what was said in the last chapter regarding memory, understanding, and will in Augustine’s De trinitate, is worthy of greater attention. Meditation is an exercise of reason that includes “the memorization and assimilation of the fundamental dogmas and rules of life in the school.” According to Hadot, this practice is conceived as “an attempt to control inner discourse, in an effort to render it coherent.” To perform this practice of recomposing one’s narrative, it was necessary to memorize specific text and maxims, “so that, when the time comes, they can help us accept such events, which are, after all, part of the course of nature.” In order to nourish the practice of meditation and memorization, one had to carry out specific intellectual exercises including the reading of philosophical texts, listening to the educator unfold the meaning of the text, and engage in research and investigation through dialogue with the educator. All of this was a part of memorization. In addition, the practice of

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46 Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life, 59.
47 Ibid., 83-84.
48 Ibid., 85.
49 Ibid., 59.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 86.
dialogue “is an itinerary of thought, whose route is traced by the constantly maintained accord between questioner and respondent.”\textsuperscript{53} That is, as the student and educator search for the truth through dialectic, the essential questions, definitions, and concepts arise for student and teacher alike.\textsuperscript{54} As Hadot states, “The point is not to find the answer to a problem before anyone else, but to practice, as effectively as possible, the application of a method.”\textsuperscript{55} Finally, as Hadot notes, practical exercises included advice about ways of living the teaching mediated upon. Consequently, the rationale for these exercises is ultimately a transformation of the human person through the healing of practicing wisdom: “To the same extent that the philosophical life is equivalent to the practice of spiritual exercises, it is also a tearing away from every day life. It is a conversion, a total transformation of one’s vision, life-style, and behavior.”\textsuperscript{56}

Thus, Augustine’s sermons are not simply a matter of persuasion in the sense outlined by both Mohrmann and Harmless. Rather, the act of preaching for Augustine involves a gradual formation into a way of thought through the exercises or practices intended to transform the person into their truest identity. In the previous chapter, I argued that this identity is nothing less than the image of God within the human person. And, the human person’s remembering, understanding, and loving of God (as a meditative act of worship whereby the interior and exterior words are aligned) is itself an exercise. This insight, as I will explore in the last section of this chapter, ultimately informs the reading of Augustine’s mystagogical sermons. Augustine reads texts with his community as a way of gathering images by meditating upon the signs, an act of meditation that also requires a healing of desire. Augustine then uses these images through the method of dialectic in order to move from the signs to the reality. And finally,

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 91.  
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 92.  
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 93.  
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 103.
through practices interspersed throughout the sermons, Augustine provides a formation into the way of love, a transformation of one’s life instigated by the exercises in memory and understanding. Yet, before turning to an analysis of the sermons as spiritual exercises of memory, understanding, and will, it is necessary to focus upon the last aspect of Augustine’s rhetorical approach; its peculiar form of literary theory, figural interpretation or allegory.

Rhetoric and Literary Theory

In chapter three, I examined Augustine’s theology of the Scriptures in the context of an analysis of signs and understanding. Yet, in this last section of part one of chapter five, the focus is not simply on how Scripture functioned in Augustine’s mystagogical theology. Rather, here I am concerned with how he engaged in the public reading and interpretation of the Scriptures for the benefit of his congregation. This pedagogical emphasis requires that I turn briefly to both the literary and performative aspects of Scripture in Augustine.

A rhetorical formation in the ancient world, among both philosophers and rhetors, was at its root an education in literary interpretation. Before beginning rhetorical studies, the future student of rhetoric would first acquire a facility in grammar, the foundations of any literary education. In Augustine’s *Confessions*, he attends to his own grammatical formation in some detail whereby he acquired the capacity to read Latin literature, Greek literature (to some extent),

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57 Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, 170. Rhetoric and philosophy both presumed specific styles of literary interpretation. According to Frances Young, philosophy preferred a style of literary interpretation that “was affected by the search for symbolic meanings” (*Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002], 170). On the other hand, rhetoric “sought to derive moral principles, useful instruction and ethical models from their study of literature” (170). This distinction, while potentially valid, does not take into account psychagogical rhetoric, which is both philosophical and rhetorical in its concerns.
as well as to memorize the classical texts of the Latin literary canon. Of course, as Augustine makes clear, he is ultimately critical of this form of education not because he is against learning how to read and write, but rather the pedagogy of the grammarian involved a thoughtless approach to textual analysis, one that never asked whether such narratives presented a virtuous form of life. Such an approach to literature, Augustine would only gain through philosophical exegesis.

Still, Augustine’s education in grammar proved to be important for his method of reading the Scriptures. The curriculum of this grammatical education, according to Marrou, involved the following components. First, one would become acquainted with Latin grammar, focusing particularly upon the faults of speech that one might make in declining and conjugating words. Second, the student would then undertake a reading of the classics in classroom exercises that were primarily a grammatical commentary, rarely entering into content itself. Summarizing the result of this education, Marrou writes, “A really educated man was not merely a man of letters but a scholar too, a man of learning. But the ‘learning’ was essentially this kind of erudition that could be gained as a sort of radical by-product from the great classics.” Finally, one acquired a style from the reading of the classics themselves. To be able to read the texts, as well as to emulate the style of the classics, was to become a literate person in the ancient world.

Particularly important relative to a proper interpretation of classical texts as a part of a grammatical education was allegory. Allegory, as a method, began as a means of distinguishing between truth and falsehood in poetic texts, and thus was initially the province of

61 Ibid., 281.
62 Ibid., 282.
the philosophers. The text itself, if one was attentive to it, should signal to the reader that some deeper meaning is present although hidden through the signs of the text. Addressing allegory in literary interpretation in the ancient world, Northrop Frye writes:

…the metaphorical element in “indecent” or morally paradoxical stories about the gods, found in Homer and elsewhere, had to be deconstructed and assimilated to other linguistic procedures. This was normally done through allegory, which is a special form of analogy, a technique of paralleling metaphorical with conceptual language in which the latter has a primary authority. Allegory smooths out the discrepancies in a metaphorical structure by making it conform to a conceptual standard.

As noted in chapter three, this conceptual standard for Augustine was applied to the Scriptures, such that even the most grotesque of signs could be referred to the love of God and neighbor. In particular, the Scriptural text, since it was related to the salvation of the human person, required a formation in allegorical or figural reading if the truth of the text was to be discerned. Augustine’s appropriation of Tyconius’ rules for interpretation in book III of De doctrina christiana provides an interpretative lens in which figural reading of the Scriptures might be performed. Among these rules, Augustine notes the way that Scripture may at one time be speaking of the Church as the body of Christ, at other times the head of the Church, Christ himself; how the Church is addressed as a corpus permixtum, the means through which all

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64 Kolbet, Augustine and the Cure of Souls, 56-61.
65 Young, Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture, 177.
67 Michael Cameron, “Figures of Speech and Knowledge of God in Augustine’s Early Biblical Interpretation,” Augustinian Studies 38 (2007): “…lacking the skill to read figuratively made Christian readers vulnerable to bad teaching and obtuse to the benefits of wrestling with Scripture’s figures. Augustine therefore constantly challenged opponents and believers alike [to] recognize the divine rhetorical strategy” (83).
69 Augustine, doctr. chr. 3.31.44; Green, 90.
70 Augustine, doctr. chr. 3.32.45; Green, 90.
human action in Scripture is carried out within the framework of grace; the way that particular names and places in the Scriptures (species) may tell the community something about the whole (genus); the significance of numbers in the Scriptures; the use of recapitulation to draw the attention of the reader to a chronological gap; and, finally a parallel rule to the first whereby the devil’s head or body may be addressed according to the text.

The strangeness of these rules is indeed noticeable for the contemporary reader of the Scriptures, schooled primarily in historical-critical methods of interpretation. Yet, care should be taken by such an interpreter in judging the value of allegorical or figural reading in Augustine’s sermons. For the most part, commentators on Augustine’s work typically treat this form of Scriptural commentary as nothing else than a far-fetched solving of one massive reader-created puzzle. Yet, the ancient reader of Scripture held certain assumptions about the text that the contemporary reader will need to understand if he or she is to contemplate Augustine’s treatment of the Scriptures within his sermons. In particular, the ancient reader of the Scriptures presumed that God was involved in the deeds of history; that the Scriptures offered a unified narrative, such that there was no Old or New Testament, but only the text taken as a single

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71 Augustine, doctr. chr. 3.33.46; Green, 91.
72 Augustine, doctr. chr. 3.34.47; Green, 92.
73 Augustine, doctr. chr. 3.35.50; Green, 95.
74 Augustine, doctr. chr. 3.36.52; Green, 96.
75 Augustine, doctr. chr. 3.37.55; Green, 98.
76 John J. O’Keefe and R.R. Reno write, “…allegories require significantly more interpretative investment capital. The reader must outline the reality for which the text is a map, explaining the coding system of the text so that the message can be read. For this reason, an allegorical interpretation often seems a reading laid over the text rather than a reading in the text. The interpreter presupposes that the allegorical meaning is not evident in the literal sense, and therefore, the reader must strain to see it” (Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005], 90).
77 For a defense of this method in Scriptural interpretation in contemporary theology, see Jason Byassee, Praise Seeking Understanding (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 9-53.
78 van der Meer, Augustine the Bishop, 447; Brown, Augustine of Hippo, 250.
narrative about Christ; that the rule of faith, embodied in the Creed, served as a regulatory lens in the interpretative act; and, that Scriptural texts were revelatory in their proclamation and interpretation. As Brian Daley, S.J. writes, “The narrative of God’s work of salvation—the real content of the Bible—was a single, universally significant story, an unfinished story; the Biblical scholar’s task, as well as the preacher’s was to illuminate the cohesion and continuing relevance of all of its details.”\textsuperscript{79} The purpose of figural readings of Scripture was to connect the divine economy of salvation with the lives of the reader, a transformation of text into vision.\textsuperscript{80} An allegorical reading of the Scriptures was a pedagogy inviting the student to appropriate the wisdom of the text into a way of life.

Lastly, before I turn to the sermons themselves, it should be remembered that the proclamation of the Scriptures and its interpretation within the sermon take place within the liturgical rites of the Church. The performer, in fact, of the Scriptures and the sermon is not the community or Augustine but rather the \textit{totus Christus}, the whole Christ.\textsuperscript{82} As Augustine states in \textit{Enarrationes in Psalms} 40.6, “Could he, then, make these words of the psalm his own? No, not as from himself; but as from his members he could, for the voice of his members is his voice, just as the voice of our Head is our voice.”\textsuperscript{83} However, one should not isolate this Christological ecclesiology to the psalms alone. In a sermon addressing the appearance of Jesus to his disciples on the road to Emmaus in Lk. 24:36-47, Augustine asks the following question: “We too are in a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 202.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} O’Keefe and Reno, \textit{Sanctified Vision}, 88.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} For a summary of the ecclesial Christology of Augustine’s psalms, see in particular, Byassee, \textit{Praise Seeking Understanding}, 54-96. This ecclesiology is explored more fully in Michael McCarthy, S.J., “An Ecclesiology of Groaning: Augustine, the Psalms, and the Making of Church,” \textit{Theological Studies} 66 (2005): 23-48.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 40.6 (CCL 38: 454.33-35; Boulding, 232).
\end{itemize}

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similar position; we can see something which they couldn’t; and we can’t see something which they could. What can we see which they couldn’t.”{84} While the earliest disciples could see the risen Christ and thus believe, the post-apostolic Christian can affix his or her eyes upon the Church itself, for the Church is a sign eliciting belief: “Their faith has been fulfilled, and so has ours; theirs fulfilled from seeing the head, ours from seeing the body.”{85} Consequently, because of the very identity of the Church as the body of Christ, every reading of the Scripture, each sermon is a performance of Christ’s body. Michael Cameron writes:

_Totus Christus_ is a training ground for Christian _exercitatio_ within the comprehensive unity of love, in which the listeners dwell within, not the words of the Bible, but the speaking Ego of the Bible, who is Christ. They learn his words as their own words, words they understand with a warm intimacy of truth, as if it were with Christ’s own understanding. {86}

Thus, Augustine’s rhetoric is not only a matter of employing specific styles to persuade the reader. Rather, it is the heart of his mystagogical pedagogy, where through teaching the signs of the Scriptures and the sacraments through the spiritual exercise of meditation, the student tastes what one studies. One’s memory, understanding, and will are enriched through the pedagogical exercises carried out within the body of Christ. One’s identity becomes ecclesial.

**Augustine’s Mystagogical Preaching**

In the last section of this chapter, I examine Augustine’s mystagogical preaching to better understand how he engages in psychagogical exercises forming the imaginations (memory), the capacity to form thoughts about God (understanding), and the desire (will) of Christians regarding baptism, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year. I focus upon four aspects of

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85 Augustine, s. 116.6 (PL 38: 660; Hill, 206).
86 Cameron, _Totus Christus_ and the Psychagogy of Augustine’s Sermons,” 67.
these sermons, drawn from the analysis of Augustine’s rhetoric above. First, what is the malaise that Augustine is attempting to cure through the words of the sermon? Second, what images and narratives does Augustine perform in order to assist his congregation in remembering the text or practice under examination? Third, how do these images and narratives structure the exercises of understanding carried out within the sermon? Fourth, what practices does Augustine suggest for the reader to perform in order to incarnate the wisdom of the liturgical-sacramental rite into a way of life? From this fourfold approach, I hope to better understand Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy relative to baptism, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year.

Practicing Baptismal Desire

As mentioned in chapter three, no entire sermon recounts Augustine’s post-baptismal mystagogy. Yet, one may not conclude from this fact that Augustine’s sermons are devoid of baptismal themes. One common feature of ancient baptisteries was the image of a deer drinking from a stream, a motif taken from Psalm 41(42). Often, this image featured a deer with a snake in its mouth, “because it was a tradition of ancient science that deer could eat snakes, and that to do so made them thirsty.”

Augustine points toward this baptismal motif in Enarrationes in Psalmo 41. He writes:

As a deer longs for springs of waters, so does my soul long for you, O God. We could well hear the voice of our catechumens here too, for they are hurrying toward the holy, grace-giving bath. This is why we customarily sing the psalm to arouse in them a longing for the fountain of forgiveness of their sins, like the longing of a deer for the springs of water...All the same, brothers and sisters, I cannot believe that a longing of such intensity is satisfied in believers even at baptism. If the candidates know where their pilgrimage is tending, and what that land is to which they must cross over, their longing will be kindled to even greater intensity.

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87 Daniélou, The Bible and the Liturgy, 36.
Thus, I would like to suggest that the purpose of Augustine’s sermon on this psalm is to move the listener from a baptismal longing for the forgiveness of sins, to a more mature form of longing: the desire for the reality that baptism is a sign of, eternal life in the presence of God. Augustine makes this clear in his exegesis of filii Core, the children of Korah, the title of the psalm. According to Augustine, Core means Calvary, and thus to be a child of Calvary is to be a Christian, “carrying on their face what his enemies set up on the place of Calvary.” This song is sung to bring understanding to these children of Korah, those who bear the sign of the cross on their foreheads. It is an exercise in moving toward a mature sense of baptism, and hence a sacramental understanding of the life of the Christian. Thus, the malaise that Augustine is attempting to cure through the exercises of the sermon is a tendency to focus exclusively on baptism as the forgiveness of sins, forgetting the longing for the divine life that should accompany this baptism. Augustine’s sermon is ultimately a transformation of desire into a sacramental mode of perception through engagement with the signs of the psalm.

Augustine enacts this mature baptismal pedagogy through a series of images that provide a shape for the post-baptismal knowledge of God. The source for this imagery has already been mentioned: *As a deer longs for springs of water, so does my soul long for you, O God.* The first image that Augustine attends to from this verse is that of fontes aquarum, the fountains of water. His reading of this phrase is carried out through a reference to another text, that of psalm

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89 Augustine, *en. Ps. 41.2* (CCL 38: 460.11-16; Boulding, 240): *portantes in fronte quod inimici in Caluariae loco fixerunt.*

90 Augustine, *en. Ps. 41.1* (CCL 38: 460.7-9; Boulding, 239): *Quemadmodum desiderat ceruus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.*
35:10: *With you is the fountain of life...In your light we will see light.*\(^91\) In explaining this connection between a fountain and light in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 35.15, Augustine states:

In our world a fountain is one thing, and light another; not so there...Here below we sometimes find light in one place, and a fountain somewhere else; for fountains may gush even in darkness, while you may suffer from the sun in the desert and find no fountain. Here below the two may be separated; but there you will never flag, because there will be the fountain for you, and you will never walk in darkness, for there is light.\(^92\)

By making a similar point for his listener in 41.2, Augustine is educating the Christian in the grammar of the Scriptures for the purpose of enriching their understanding of baptism. The baptismal spring is not simply about water, the quenching of thirst, but an inner illumination. This point is a difficult one, and Augustine employs a rhetoric of delight to explain it to his reader: “Run to the fountain, desire the fountain of water. For God is the fountain of life and the never dried-up spring; and in his light, light is never obscured.”\(^93\) The baptismal life is structured according to this image of seeking ever-running water, and infinite light. Being satisfied with the baptismal washing alone is inadequate, since one must seek that water which is not visible, that light which is divine.

Yet, how is the Christian to enter into this search? Here, Augustine takes up the second image from the psalm, the deer itself. Augustine considers three features of this image from observation of the deer within the world. First, the deer moves with speed. He asks his congregation, “Why like a deer? Because there must be no tardiness about your running. Run energetically, long untiringly for the fountain. I say this because the deer stands for fleetness of foot.”\(^94\) Second, “A hart kills snakes, and after slaughtering the snake he burns with a more

\(^{91}\) Augustine, *en. Ps*. 41.2 (CCL 38: 461.30-31; Boulding, 241): *Quoniam apud te est fons vitae...in lumine tuo uidebimus lumen.*

\(^{92}\) Augustine, *en. Ps*. 35.15 (CCL 38: 333.5-334.20; Boulding, 86).

\(^{93}\) Augustine, *en. Ps*. 41.2 (CCL 38: 461.43-45; Boulding, 241).

intense thirst than before; so after dealing with the snakes he runs to the well-springs even more urgently.” Yet, to understand this “mystery,” the Christian must know that snakes represent the vices of the Christian. For the Christian to consume his or her vices, as a deer kills a snake, is in fact the first step of the search for understanding of God. But, the Christian cannot simply be satisfied with the cessation of vice. Rather, like the deer, “long for what will delight you; long for the fountains of water; God has whatever will refresh you, and he will fill the one coming to him, the one to be sated after killing snakes, like a speedy deer.” Finally, Augustine recalls for his listener that deer will often stand together in a line, bearing each other’s burdens by resting their heads on one another: “They go on like this, carrying the heavy weight for each other; so they make good progress, and do not let each other down. Was it not deer like these that the apostle had in mind? Bear one another’s burdens, he says, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).” Augustine is communicating to his students within the sermon that this search for God, this running like a deer, is only possible through the common life of the Church.

Following his explication of the fountain and deer imagery, Augustine turns to the knotty problem of unquenched desire presented by the psalm itself: “When shall I come and appear before the face of God?”; “my tears have been bread to me by day and night, as every day I hear the taunt, Where is your God?” This dialogical element of the psalm is given voice in particular through the questioning of the pagan, who unlike the Christian, can point “toward

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95 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.3 (CCL 38: 461.1-4; Boulding, 241).
96 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.3 (CCL 38: 461.11-15; Boulding, 241).
97 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.3 (CCL 38: 462.24-27; Boulding, 242).
99 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.5 (CCL 38: 463.16-17; Boulding, 242-43): *Quando veniam et apparebo ante fáciem Dei.*
100 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.6 (CCL 38: 463.2-4; Boulding, 243): *fuerunt mihi lacrimae meae panis die ac nocte, cum dicitur mihi per singulosis dies: Vbi est Deus tuus?*
some stone and say: Behold, there is my God.”

But, the Christian who is attentive to the questioner may see in this taunt an invitation to true understanding, as Augustine does, “I sought even my God himself, so that if I might be able, not only to believe, but also to see something of God.”

The mockery of the pagan, through the performance of the psalm in the sermon, becomes a renewal of perceiving “the invisible realities of God” through an understanding of “that which is made (Rm. 1:20)”

Mockery itself can become sacramental, a sign provoking understanding. What follows within the sermon is thus an exercise in understanding, one that takes up both the imagery of the fountain and the deer in this quest for perceiving God through the created order. Augustine is offering a model of post-baptismal seeking by meditating upon the marvels of the created order as a deer longing for the fountain of life. And further, he is teaching his students that while God is not in creation, contemplating the created order allows the human person to know God.

He turns first to his own astonishment and wonder (stupeo, miro) at the beauties of creation, including “the magnitude of the sea’s circumference,” (magnitudinem circumfusae maris), “the beauty of the stars” (pulchritudinem siderum), “the splendor of the sun” (splendorem solis).

Any creature who encountered such beauty within the universe would of course enter into wonder, praising the marvelousness of such forms. Yet, as Augustine notes, “But not yet is my thirst slaked, for though I admire them and sing their praises, it is for him who made them that I thirst.”

The listener attentive to Augustine’s rhetoric would have noticed this

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101 Augustine, en. Ps. 41.6 (CCL 38: 463.31-32; Boulding, 244): ad aliquem lapidem, et dicit: Ecce est Deus meus.
102 Augustine, en. Ps. 41.7 (CCL 38: 464.3-5; Boulding, 244): quae siui etiam ego ipse Deum meum, ut si possem, non tantum crederem, sed alicuiet uidem.
103 Augustine, en. Ps. 41.7 (CCL 38: 464.8-9; Boulding, 244).
104 Augustine, en. Ps. 41.7 (CCL 38: 464.13-17; Boulding, 244).
105 Augustine, en. Ps. 41.7 (CCL 38: 464.19-20; Boulding, 244).
initial connection between the thirst of the deer and the search for the invisible God underway.

The ultimately unmet desire that the Christian encounters in his or her survey of creation, the thirst of being a creature, is in fact part of the divine pedagogy. This leads the person to question the origin of such capacity for seeking in the first place:

So I return to myself, and examine who I am, I who can ask such questions. I find that I have a body and a soul: the one I must rule and by the other be ruled: the body serves and the soul commands. I observe that my soul is a better thing than my body, and that the investigator of these mysteries is not my body but my soul; and yet I recognize that when I surveyed all these things, I surveyed them through my body. I was praising the earth, but I knew it only through my eyes; I praised the sea, but my eyes have revealed it to me; I praised the sky, the stars, the sun and the moon, but only through my eyes had I come to know them. The eyes are bodily organs, they are windows of the mind; it is the inner person that looks out through them, and if the mind is preoccupied with some other thought, the eyes are open to no purpose. My God, who made these things I see with my eyes, is not to be sought with my eyes.\textsuperscript{106}

The language of light is operative in this description of the mind’s search for knowledge through the body. The exercise of searching for invisible realities through visible things continues as the mind turns to survey not only the visible world but also that which is internally invisible, like justice.\textsuperscript{107} In the dialectic operating within the exercise, this justice is not the sight of God, since the mind in its act of knowing “declines, makes progress; knows and is ignorant; remembers, forgets; it wants something at one time, and then at another it does not want this. Such mutability does not befall God.”\textsuperscript{108} Rather, God must be that which is not mutable, “above” the soul. Still, the claim of Christians is not that of the philosophers. The exercise that the Christian performs in searching for this God is encapsulated in the verse of the psalm, “I meditated on

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\textsuperscript{106} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 41.7 (CCL 38: 464.20-32; Boulding, 244-45).
\textsuperscript{107} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 41.7 (CCL 38: 465.42-44; Boulding, 245).
\textsuperscript{108} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 41.7 (CCL 38: 465.64-66; Boulding, 245): \textit{deficit, proficit; novit, ignorant; meminit, obliuiscitur; modo illud uult, modo non uult. Ista mutabilitas non cadit in Deum.}
\end{flushright}
these things, and I poured out above me my soul.”\textsuperscript{109} As Augustine writes in commenting on this verse, “For there is the home of my God, above my soul; there, God dwells, takes care of me, creates me, governs me, considers me, excites me, calls out to me, directs me, leads me, there he brings me.”\textsuperscript{110} The language here is not accidental to the exercise that Augustine is performing. From that mutable place, God carries out actions within time, caring for the human person. The exercise provides a contrast between the immutable nature of God, and God’s plan of salvation.

Thus, it is not surprising that the pedagogy of the psalm addresses the mutable home of God upon earth, the Church: “\textit{For I will enter into the place of the marvelous tent, even to the home of God.}”\textsuperscript{111} Augustine, employing allegory, sees in the language of tent a reference to the Church, the place of God’s dwelling on earth. Through the very signifying capacity of the Church, God communicates something about divine life to those who are members of the body of Christ. Augustine admires the means through which the soul is transformed within the Church, “obeying God, organizing its activities, restraining its wayward desires, banishing ignorance, stretching out to endure all that is harsh and testing, and exercising justice and kindness toward other people.”\textsuperscript{112} Of course, as Augustine highlights these virtues of the Church, he is inviting his congregation to better signify this way of life.

Still, this Church is not God’s house, only a sign of the eschatological divine life. Even more significant for the listener of Augustine’s sermons is the means through which the liturgy itself does signify this eternal life with God:

\textsuperscript{109} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps. 41.8} (CCL 38: 465.5-6; Boulding, 246): \textit{haec meditatus sum, et effudi super me animam meam}.

\textsuperscript{110} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps. 41.8} (CCL 38: 466.19-22; Boulding, 246): \textit{Ibi enim domus Dei mei, super animam meam; ibi habitat, inde me prospicit, inde me creauit, inde me gubernat, inde mihi consulit, inde me excitat, inde me vocat, inde me dirigit, inde me ducit, inde me perducit}.

\textsuperscript{111} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps. 41.9} (CCL 38: 466.8-9); Boulding, 246): \textit{Quoniam ingrediari in locum tabernaculi admirabilis, usque ad domum Dei}.

\textsuperscript{112} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps. 41.9} (CCL 38: 466.18-21; Boulding, 246).
...it was while he marveled at the members of that company in the tent that he was led to God’s house. He was drawn toward a kind of sweetness, an inward secret pleasure that cannot be described, as though some musical instrument were sounding delightfully from God’s house. As he still walked about in the tent he could hear this inner music; he was drawn to its sweet tones, following its melodies and distancing himself from the din of flesh and blood, until he found his way even to the house of God.¹¹³

The ecclesial and sacramental life of the Christian structures the very form of desire to such an extent that “by walking in that tent and considering the miracles of God in the redemption of the faithful, the sound of that festivity delights the ear, and drags the deer toward the springs of water.”¹¹⁴ Baptismal life, which is lived within the Church, signifies true rest with God.

Augustine’s reflection on a simple trope from the baptismal liturgy through the exegesis of Psalm 41(42) opens up into an anagogical account of baptism whereby all of creaturely reality, taken up within the Church, signifies the potential for participating in divine life.

Nonetheless, the Christian does not yet fully abide within this divine life. Tasting for a moment the splendor of eternal life, the Christian is drawn again into the mutable, the temporal, the painful quality of human existence, which the psalmist captures in a plaintive cry: *O my soul, why are you sorrowful, and why do you disquiet me?*¹¹⁵ How should the Christian deal with this inevitable tension between the salutary desire for divine life and the mortality defining of human existence?

In effect, Augustine is performing a correlative exercise to the search for God within the beauty of creation and the Church. The same inquiry is now performed in light of creation’s groaning,¹¹⁶ for even in the midst of pain, the Christian may come to knowledge of God through

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¹¹⁵ Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.10 (CCL 38: 468.20-21; Boulding, 248).
¹¹⁶ Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.11 (CCL 38: 468.7-9; Boulding, 248).
a kindling of divine desire. Augustine introduces a phrase from the psalms that will allow this transfiguration of moments of pain: “You are the salvation of my countenance, my God.”117 To make this statement with sincerity of heart is to practice humility before God, to acknowledge the incapacity of the human person to understand the depth of God’s salvific action within the world. Such a phrase is by no means exclusive only to the world but also within the Church in which the members of the body succumb to temptation: “You watch them crumble under temptation, even those bones in which you thought there would be some strength, and so the weak members lose heart when they see the strong succumb. How dangerous this is, my brothers and sisters!”118 Augustine offers advice to the Christian so that he or she may be prepared to deal with the pain of being a creature: “Attend when you are well; listen when you are well; learn, while you are tranquil, collect the teaching of wisdom and the Word of God as food. For when he is in tribulation, that one ought to make use of what he heard when careless.”119 And these internal tribulations, these disappointments within the mutable world, may be transfigured by the Christian in a Eucharistic way, according to the sacrifice of the psalms themselves:

*My prayer to the God of my life is within me.* This is what I do, I a thirsty deer, longing for the springs of water, remembering the sweetness of the sound that has led me through the tent, even to God’s house. As long as my corruptible body weighs heavily on my soul *my prayer to the God of my life is within me.* To offer supplication to God I have no need to seek exotic gifts from overseas; for God to hear me I have no need to sail afar and bring back incense and aromatic spices, or to bring a calf or ram from the flock…Here within me I have the victim I must offer, here, within the incense I must burn, here within

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117 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.11 (CCL 38: 469.21-22; Boulding, 249).
119 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 41.16 (CCL 38: 472.3-5; Boulding, 253): *Adtendite cum uobis bene est; audite cum uobis bene est; discite, cum tranquilli estis, sapientiae disciplinam, et uerbum Dei ut cibum colligate.* *Quando enim quisque in tribulatione est, prodesse illi debet quod secures audiuit.*
me is the sacrifice with which I may propitiate my God: a sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit (Ps 50:19(51:17)).

The desire to be spared of this pain, to hear God’s voice in this moment of absence, becomes the sacrifice of Christians, uniting them ever more deeply to their head, Christ himself.

Thus, Augustine performs a baptismal pedagogy of desire, whereby both the beauty of creation and its pain bring the Christian ever closer to tasting eternal life. The deer thirsting for the fountain of life is the very image of post-baptismal desire, a point that Augustine does not simply communicate but performs through his search for God in the visible creation, those moments of grandeur, of self-knowledge, and of lament. The Christian well-practiced in this baptismal transfiguration of desire comes to remember God through all signs; he or she becomes the deer thirsting for life. In this way, one participates however much one can in a mutable world, in divine life through the appropriation of this image. One begins to live baptismally.

Practicing Eucharistic Humility

An examination of Augustine’s well-recognized mystagogical sermons on the Eucharist would be one place to explore the pedagogical approach that he takes in his Eucharistic psychagogy. Yet, as I showed in chapter four when I analyzed Augustine’s Tractates on the

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120 Augustine, en. Ps. 41.17 (CCL 38: 472.2-13; Boulding, 254).
121 Augustine, en. Ps. 41.17 (CCL 38: 473.18-20; Boulding, 254).
122 These sermons, in addition to being almost too brief for this project, have also been extensively treated in secondary literature already, particularly in Harmless, Augustine and the Catechumenate, 316-24. As Harmless writes regarding these sermons, “He [Augustine] knew that over the previous twenty-four hours the neophytes had experienced much and that their memory had no doubt been taxed. They had passed through a long fast, an all-night vigil, a whole array of rites: the solemn redditio, the immersions and anointing, and the two Eucharists. And they had heard at least four sermons: two directed to the whole assembly (sermons during the vigil and Easter morning Liturgy of the Word) and two directed especially to them (the catecheses on baptism and on the Eucharist). It should not be surprising that Augustine kept his
Gospel of John, these post-initiation Eucharistic sermons are not the only source for his Eucharistic pedagogy. In fact, the brevity of the sermons on the Eucharist following initiation make it difficult to perceive the art of Augustine’s psychagogic pedagogy, those places in the sermons in which he is performing meditative exercises for the benefit of his congregation’s maturing faith. For this reason, I have chosen to carry out a pedagogical reading of two of Augustine’s longer Eucharistic sermons, Enarrationes in Psalmos 33(1-2). These sermons offer an education in Eucharistic perception by practicing a Eucharistic theology of humility in light of the psalms.

Outside of the Tractates on the Gospel of John and his Eucharistic mystagogy to the infantes on Easter Sunday, psalm 33(34) is one of Augustine’s most explicit Eucharistic sermons. Like the baptismal motif of a deer thirsting for water alongside running streams in psalm 41(42), the Eucharistic themes of the psalm should not be surprising, since psalm 33(34) is part of the Eucharistic practice in North Africa.123 Listening to Augustine within the second of these sermons, “For Christ teaches humility, when he commends his own body and blood; for what we have been telling you, Your Holinesses, is acted out and celebrated in this psalm text, where the body and blood of Christ is commended, where the humility of Christ is commended, that humility which he regarded fit to assume.”124 Through participating in Augustine’s sermon, the listener practices the humility of the Eucharist, one that alters the way that the Christian offers sacrifice to God. Indeed, the malaise that Augustine is attempting to cure through the

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123 van der Meer, Augustine the Bishop, 402.
124 Augustine, en. Ps. 33(2).7 (CCL 38: 287.32-36; Boulding, 29): Docet autem Christus humilitatem, cum commendat corpus et sanguinem suum; quod diximus Sanctitati uestrae in hoc psalmi textus agi et celebrari, ubi commendatur corpus et sanguis Christi, ubi commendatur humilitas Christi, quam pro nobis suscipere dignatus est.
sermon pertains to the problem of humility in the Christian life, and the cure is nothing less than the Eucharist read through the discourse of the psalm. At the conclusion of the two sermons, the Christian has a new understanding of what takes place in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and how to practice it within the Christian life.

In the first of the two sermons, Augustine offers to his congregation the foundational images and texts that will guide his reading of the signs of Eucharistic practice. These images are significant, a fact that Augustine reminds the assembly at the beginning of the first sermon, and thus require the common inquiry of the whole community: “I am now knocking with the intention of my heart for the Lord God so that he might deem to reveal this mystery to us; and knock with me, beloved by listening with intention, and by praying for us with humility. For it must be acknowledged that it is a deep and great mystery.”

The community participates in the sermon through both listening and prayer, seeking the mystery hidden in the signs of the Scriptures.

The depth of this mystery is concealed in the title of the psalm, “A psalm of David, when he altered his behavior in the presence of Abimelech, and forsook him, and went away.” This title, as Augustine presents to the assembly, is drawn from 1 Samuel 21. When fleeing from Saul, David took up refuge with Achis, King of Gath. Achis’ servants eventually recognized David as the one who killed Goliath, and thus “David was afraid of him as well, and altered his behavior in front of them all, affecting madness. He drummed on the doors into the city and was carried in his own hands, and fell down outside on the threshold, as saliva dribbled down his

126 Augustine, en. Ps. 33(1).2 (CCL 38: 274.1-3; Boulding, 13).
Yet, there is a key distinction between the title of the psalm and this passage from 1 Samuel 21. While the title of the psalm speaks of Abimelech, 1 Samuel 21 addresses the king as Achis. For Augustine, this difference, most likely caused by a scribal error, elicits a deeper search for the mystery hidden within the Scriptures.

Augustine responds to this mystery by teaching a way of reading the Scriptures, necessary for further exegesis of the psalm, and as the second sermon will teach, the entirety of the Christian life. Quoting Paul, Augustine notes, “For all these things were happening to them in figures; for they are written by reason of us in whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor. 10:11). Through attending to the names and images of the Scriptures in light of the Christian narrative, the reader may come to a greater understanding of what took place in Christ. No feature of the Scriptures is meaningless to the Christian exegete. Using Jerome’s translation of Hebrew names, Augustine states that Abimelech means “the kingdom of my Father” (Patris mei regnum) and Achis, “how is it’ (Quomodo est). David, on the other hand, means “strong of hand” (Manu fortis) and thus is a figure (figura) of Christ. From this inquiry into the meaning of the names, together with David’s actions in 1 Samuel 21, Augustine begins to suggest a narrative that might make sense of these names, one diagnosing the human condition in light of Christ:

So when I say, “Christ,” my brothers and sisters, I am drawing attention most especially to his humility. It was by humility that he opened a way for us. We had wandered far away from God by pride, and could not find our way back except through humility; yet we had no model of humility to hold before us and imitate. The whole mortal race of humans had swollen with pride. Even if someone of humble spirit did emerge, such as

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Augustine, *en. Ps. 33(1).2* [CCL 38: 274.40-275.43; Boulding, 14].


the prophets and patriarchs, humankind disdained to imitate humble humans. To overcome their unwillingness to do so, God himself became humble, so that any any rate human pride would not disdain to follow in the footsteps of God.\textsuperscript{132}

This humility, as Augustine now unfolds it, is assimilated in particular through the sacrifice of the Eucharist. In fact, the title of the psalm is a figure of Christ’s Eucharistic gift, one in which the names of the two kings were changed to demonstrate the sacramental mystery presented. This section is important, because as Augustine discloses for his congregation a Eucharistic theology, he is offering the images, what needs to be known regarding the Eucharist, so that that they will be able to participate in the exercises of humility in the next day’s sermon. He does so first by focusing upon the historical narrative of sacrifice performed by Melchizedek in Psalm 109(110):4. While Aaron’s sacrifice consisted of the slaughter of animals, Melchizedek “offered bread and wine” (\textit{Protulit panem et uinum}).\textsuperscript{133} This is no accident of history, for Melchizedek (existing before Aaron) is a figure, a sign of that sacrifice that would be offered by Christ in the Last Supper.\textsuperscript{134}

Christ, a figure of David, therefore “altered his behavior” by willing “to be our salvation in his own body and blood.”\textsuperscript{135} The bread of angels, the Word of God that was in the beginning with God, became flesh. Augustine describes this divine action through an image that strikes the heart of his Eucharistic theology, a mother feeding her child. Building upon ancient theories of breast milk, Augustine states, “What the mother eats, this infant eats; but since the infant, who feeds upon bread, is less capable of it, the mother incarnates it, and through the humility of the

\textsuperscript{132} Augustine, en. Ps. 33(1).4 (CCL 38: 276.16-27; Boulding, 16).
\textsuperscript{133} Augustine, en. Ps. 33(1).5 (CCL 38: 277.19; Boulding, 17).
\textsuperscript{134} Augustine, en. Ps. 33(1).5 (CCL 38: 25-26; Boulding, 17).
\textsuperscript{135} Augustine, en. Ps. 33(1).6 (CCL 38: 277.5; Boulding, 17).
breast and the taste of milk, she feeds the infant from the same bread.”  

Augustine draws upon the sign of a mother feeding her child to explain the Eucharistic implications of the incarnation, how Christ as the Word of God altered his presence in the midst of humanity.

How then does the Wisdom of God feed us with that supernal bread? The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). Think of the humility of it: humans have eaten the bread of angels, as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven; mortals ate the bread of angels (Ps 77(78):24-25). The eternal Word on whom the angels feed, the Word who is equal to the Father, this Word human beings have eaten.

In the incarnation, the Word of God became flesh, like a mother feeding her child, and in Jesus Christ’s self-gift on the cross, he became a humble sacrifice for the world, as bread to be consumed. Human eyes alone do not testify to this reality, for only inward eyes can see. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, Christ hands himself over, “in his own hands” (in manibus suis). It is the gift of Christ’s own body and blood, his very presence, the Word of God consumed by angels that Christians ingest in eating this bread and wine: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat? (Jn 6:53). They thought the Lord was a madman, that he did not know what he was saying…But he knew very well what he was saying by this alteration in his behavior; by making use of apparent madness and insanity he was proclaiming his sacraments.”

Further, this act of handing oneself over in one’s own hands becomes a reflection upon the Eucharistic shape of humility in the Christian life: “This is the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, itself much commended to human beings. He exhorts us to this same humility, that is we might imitate his

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140 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 33(1).10 (CCL 38: 280.1; Boulding, 21).

humility, brothers and sisters, so that we might live.”\textsuperscript{142} Augustine is teaching, within this passage, the proper way to consume this bread—in humility—and what to become through one’s consumption—humble. The Eucharist is medicine for pride.

Of course, the nature of this humility is one that Augustine considers. Such humility is not powerless. Rather, it is akin to the “saliva that ran down David’s beard.”\textsuperscript{143} Salvia, according to Augustine, “is like infant speech, for saliva runs down from infants. Are these words not just like infant speech: Eat my flesh, drink my blood? But this infant speech conceals power of its own. For power is understood in the beard.”\textsuperscript{144} A series of images seemingly inappropriate to divine power, including the speech of infants and drooling, are attached to the Eucharistic words of Christ. For these words contain a certain power, one that Augustine’s actual exegesis of the psalm will both explore and thus practice.

In the second of these sermons, after a recapitulation of 33(1), he present exercises in what one might call a Eucharistic humility, focusing on blessing (33(2).3-5), unity (33(2).6-7), self-examination (33(2).8-11), and trusting in the Lord (33(2).13-26). Through engaging in these exercises, Augustine is teaching his congregation to appropriate spiritual dispositions necessary for Eucharistic participation. He is also educating them in a specific sacramental disposition, one in which humble signs, seemingly devoid of divine meaning, are transformed into opportunities for sacrifice to God.

\textsuperscript{142} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 33(1).10 (CCL 38: 281.8-11; Boulding, 21): \textit{Ipsa est humilitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi, ipsa multum commendatur hominibus. Ad ipsam nos horatur, fratres, ut uiuamus, id est humilitatem eius imitemur.}

\textsuperscript{143} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 33(1).11 (CCL 38: 281.5-6; Boulding, 22).

The first of these exercises is that of blessing and is provoked by the first verse of the psalm, “I will bless the Lord, at all times; his praise shall be in my mouth always.” After stating this verse, Augustine introduces a claim that is operative throughout the psalm; namely, Christ is speaking through the text of the psalm itself: “Christ speaks, and so too should the Christian speak this; for each Christian is in the body of Christ; and since Christ is human, the Christian might become an angel, who says, “I will bless the Lord.” Thus, through making this claim of the psalm one’s own, appropriating into one’s very self, the Christian becomes like an angel, feasting upon the wisdom of God on high.

Yet, what does it mean to bless the Lord at all times? Augustine’s description of this act of blessing is a response to a potential misconception of his congregation. Blessing is not conditional upon the quality of human existence, such that the human person is only required to bless God “when you have a plethora of grain, oil, wine, gold, silver, slaves, livestock; while your mortal body remains healthy, uninjured and free from disease; while everything that is born on your estate is growing well, and nothing is snatched away by untimely death; while every kind of happiness floods your home, and you have all you want in profusion.” This attitude, as Augustine presents it, presumes a kind of hubris on the part of the person, who believes that he or she can fully comprehend the complexities of human existence. The Eucharist is a practice that teaches an alternative way of blessing God, for “our Lord taught this same humility in his body and his blood; for when he handed over his body and blood, he handed over his own

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146 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 33(2).3 (CCL 38: 283.2-4; Boulding, 25): *Dicit Christus, dicat et christianus; quia et christianus in corpore Christi est; et propterea Christus homo, ut posset esse christianus angelus.*
147 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 33(2).3 (CCL 38: 283.5-11; Boulding, 25).
This is the madness of David, from the previous sermon, the saliva that dribbled down David’s beard. Quoting 1 Cor. 1:25, Augustine notes that, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than mortals, and the weakness of God is stronger than mortals.” The Christian attitude of blessing is instead to be of complete self-gift, the very nature of humility for Augustine. Job, as the model of this disposition of blessing the Lord at all times, “blessed the Lord not only when all things were abundant…” For Job recognizes the wondrous mystery of God contained in even the most humble of signs, “The Lord gave, the Lord takes away; as it is pleasing to the Lord, such is it done; let the name of the Lord be blessed.” Augustine is not teaching that God causes this evil, but rather that though humanity cannot control the vicissitudes of existence, a person can assume a posture of divine blessing even in the midst of such misery.

Augustine exercises this disposition of humble blessing through a common image in his sermons, that of the donkey and its rider, Christ. The psalm states, “In the Lord my soul shall be praised, and let the gentle ones hear it and be praised.” This text presents a problem for Augustine to consider with his congregation, since it seemingly states that the human soul itself should be praised. But, to praise the human person is to contradict humility, since humility is “to be unwilling to be praised in oneself” (Nolle in se laudari). Is the psalm, thus, encouraging pride? Augustine unties this knotty problem for his congregation by comparing them to the donkey that carried Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He speaks, “And carry your Lord; do

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152 Augustine, *en. Ps. 33(2).5* (CCL 38: 284.5-6; Boulding, 26): *In Domino laudabitur anima mea; audiant mansueti et laetentur.*

153 Augustine, *en. Ps. 33(2).5* (CCL 38: 284.2-3; Boulding, 26).
not wish to be praised in yourself, but be praised for that one which is seated on you, and then say: *In the Lord my shall shall be praised, and let the gentle ones hear it and be praised.*"\(^{154}\)

Thus, through this image, Augustine further enriches what it means for the Christian to be humble. Indeed, the Christian is called to gentleness, to praise God as the source of all goodness. But, in this gentleness, there is a dignity to the human person, since the very source of this praise is as close as the donkey is to the rider, Christ himself. The humility of the Christian is such that all of one’s praise, all of one’s blessing, is directed toward God. The problem presented by the text enables Augustine to present a richer conception of blessing as a life conjoined to Christ.

The second of these exercises is focused upon the unity of the Church as an act of love. The exercise is elicited by the call of the psalm to "*Magnify the Lord with me.*"\(^{155}\) Again, Augustine asks, “Who is that one who exhorts us that we might magnify the Lord with him?”\(^{156}\) The answer to this question presumes a certain understanding of the Church as the body of Christ, a community bound together by a common love for God: “My brothers and sisters, every one of us who is in the body of Christ should bend his or her efforts to encourage others to magnify the Lord with us. For whoever this member of Christ is, he or she loves the Lord. Loves him—but how? In such a way that we are not jealous of our fellow-lovers.”\(^{157}\) Unlike carnal lovers (*amat carnaliter*), those who love the Wisdom of God need not be jealous of one’s fellow lovers. Instead, to truthfully magnify the Lord requires that we “seize all to the love of

\(^{154}\) Augustine, *en. Ps.* 33(2).5 (CCL 38: 285.31-33; Boulding, 27): *et porta Dominum tuum; noli in te uelle laudari, sed laudetur ille qui super te sedet, et dices: In Domino laudabitur anima mea, audiant mansueti et laetentur.*


\(^{156}\) Augustine, *en. Ps.* 33(2).6 (CCL 38: 285.1-2; Boulding, 27): *Quis est iste qui exhortatur ut magnificemus cum illo Dominum?*

Life within the body of Christ is a community that in its unity of love magnifies the Lord.

Augustine problematizes this teaching of the psalm through a reference to the Donatists. Donatism grew out of the persecution of the early fourth century in Africa in which some Christians, under pressure from imperial edict, handed over the Scriptures and liturgical objects to the Roman governors. Many of those who refused to obey this edict were martyred. Following the persecution, those who did not succumb to the temptation of the persecution (the confessors) were suspicious of the traditores, the ones who handed over the liturgical objects to avoid martyrdom. By 308/309, the Donatists, named for the bishop of Carthage in 307 (Donatus of Casae Nigrae), had become a separate sect from the Catholic church with its own hierarchy and church buildings. Summarizing their teaching, van der Meer writes,

They held that the true Church could only consist of the pure—the Catharism typical of so many heretics, which in this case makes the term ‘heretic’ particularly applicable—and for this reason they held that the validity of the sacraments depended on the purity of the ministrant. Naturally, only they themselves were pure and they avoid as unclean the hierarchy which their founders had condemned and looked up them as being hand in glove with the traditores…For this reason, they also baptized afresh all those who had undergone baptism by the existing hierarchy, and consecrated an unspotted hierarchy of their own.

Though condemned by the Catholic Church in 317, Donatists remained prevalent in North Africa up to the time of Augustine’s ordination as priest in 391. In fact, upon Augustine’s elevation to the episcopacy, the diocese was primarily Donatist, and he would spend much of his life as

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159 Lancel, *St. Augustine*, 164-65.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid., 166.
162 Ibid., 167.
163 van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 80.
bishop combatting and eventually defeating this heresy through a rhetorically sweet catechesis.\textsuperscript{165}

Augustine uses Eucharistic practice, along with the exhortation of the psalm to “\textit{exalt his name together}” to inoculate his congregation against Donatism, as well as giving them a strategy for bringing the Donatists back to the unity of love. In this regard, he does not simply tell Christians to avoid the Donatists. Instead, he explains what seizing the Donatists toward love would involve: “seize those you are able to, by exhorting, by carrying them, by questioning them, by arguing with them, by giving reason, with gentleness and with leniency: seize them toward love; so that if they magnify the Lord, they should magnify the Lord in unity.”\textsuperscript{166} As Augustine is exercising his congregation, he is educating them in a Eucharistic way of relating to the Donatists. Just as Christ’s body was not broken upon the cross, so too Christians cannot tear apart Christ’s body “through pride” (\textit{Per superbiam}).\textsuperscript{167} For, Christ, within the signs of the Eucharist, “teaches humility, when he hands over his body and his blood.”\textsuperscript{168} All Christians are to take up this humble gift of self, not perceiving oneself as better than others as the Donatists do, as well as also remembering that unity with the Donatists should be the desire for all Christians. The words of the psalm, the “voice of the Church” (\textit{uox est ecclesiae}) is crying out for Eucharistic unity.\textsuperscript{169} An implicit aspect of Augustine’s teaching is that when Donatists come back to the Church, the response should not be one of distrust but rather delight that the body of

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 170-71; van der Meer, \textit{Augustine the Bishop}, 102-28.

\textsuperscript{166} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 33(2).7 (CCL 38: 286.5-9; Boulding, 28): \textit{Ergo rapite quos potestis, hortando, portando, rogando, disputando, rationem reddendo, cum mansuetudine, cum lenitate: rapite ad amorem; ut si magnificent Dominum, in unum magnificent.}

\textsuperscript{167} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 33(2).7 (CCL 38: 287.32; Boulding, 29).

\textsuperscript{168} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 33(2).7 (CCL 38: 287.32-33; Boulding, 29): \textit{Docet autem Christus humilitatem, cum commendat corpus et sanguinem suum.}

\textsuperscript{169} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 33(2).7 (CCL 38: 287.30-31; Boulding, 29).
Christ is closer to the unity intended by its head, ever more capable of magnifying the Lord.  

And that the unity of the Church—achieved through emulating the humility of Christ remembered in the Eucharist—is the responsibility of all Christians.

The third Eucharistic exercise that Augustine performs is that of self-examination in prayer. The psalm states, “I sought the Lord, and he heard me.” This claim of the psalmist is the beginning of a meditation by Augustine on the interior quality of prayer in the Christian life, and its exterior expression through words. The Scriptural verse that provides the lens through which the meditation unfolds is Mt. 6:6, “Go into your private room, shut your door, and pray in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will give you your reward.”

Augustine first considers the private home as the interior place of the human heart. For, as Augustine remarks, an adulterous husband is hesitant to come home out of fear of “disharmony” (perturbationibus). So too the Christian is disinclined “to return to your own heart” (ad redire ad cor tuum), if the heart is unclean. Augustine thus exhorts his congregation:

Take away sordid desires, take away the stain of avarice, take away the disgrace of superstition, take away sacrilege and bad thoughts; pertaining to hatred, I do not mean against a friend, but even against an enemy—take that all away. Enter into your heart then, and you will rejoice there. When you begin to rejoice, the cleanliness of your heart will delight you, and it will offer prayer.

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170 van der Meer writes regarding Augustine’s approach to Donatism: “He was, perhaps, a poor policeman and a great theologian. What he has chiefly taught posterity as a pastor of souls is to see those who hold heretical beliefs as strayed sheep rather than as the carriers of loathsome infection, the strayed sheep for which, as a bishop of the true Church, he bore as much responsibility as he did for the herd that was guarded secure in the fold, the herd that knew its home fully well and was comfortable in that heritage” (Augustine the Bishop, 128).

171 Augustine, en. Ps. 33(2).8 (CCL 38: 287.1; Boulding, 29): Inquisiui Dominum, et exaudiuit me.

172 Augustine, en. Ps. 33(2).8 (CCL 38: 287.6-8; Boulding, 29).

The interior life of the Christian, manifested through external deeds condemned by Augustine (such as adultery), is related to the quality of the prayer that is offered. For, true prayer is seeking an internal union with God, a dialogue that Augustine enacts within the sermon, assuming the very voice of God in the process: “Have me, enjoy me, embrace me. You are not yet able to do so entirely, so lay hold of me by faith, and you will inhere to me…”<sup>174</sup> To enter intimately into prayer, the Christian will need to examine the quality of one’s interior life so that the voice of God might be heard more clearly, without disharmony.

This interior delight and harmony, as Augustine teaches, is the very meaning of eating and drinking Christ’s body and blood. As the psalmist proclaims, “<i>Draw near to him and receive his light.</i>”<sup>175</sup> The Christian, through Eucharistic communion, eats and drinks the one Crucified and is illuminated in the process.<sup>176</sup> The interior life of the Christian consumes divinity, and one’s very existence becomes a prayer of divine love, if one draws near the crucified one. One encounters this God, becomes capable of receiving the light, “by following him in faith, by gazing upon him with the heart, by running with love.”<sup>177</sup> The two feet of the Christian, love of God and neighbor, are the specific external practices that allow the Christian to draw near to God “magnificently and divinely” (<i>magnifice et divine</i>).<sup>178</sup> By eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Christ, an act of interior faith that is manifested in a life of outward love, the Christian draws near to God. Fruitful Eucharistic eating, performed interiorly, enables a truer

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<sup>174</sup> Augustine, <i>en. Ps. 33(2).8</i> (CCL 38: 288.16-18; Boulding, 30): <i>meipsum habe, me fruere, me amplectere; nondum potes totus, ex fide continge me, and inhaerebis mihi.</i>

<sup>175</sup> Augustine, <i>en. Ps. 33(2).10</i> (CCL 38: 288.3-4; Boulding, 31).

<sup>176</sup> Augustine, <i>en. Ps. 33(2).10</i> (CCL 38: 289.13-14; Boulding, 31): <i>nos manducando crucifixum et bibendo illuminamur.</i>

<sup>177</sup> Augustine, <i>en. Ps. 33(2).10</i> (CCL 38: 289.18-19; Boulding, 31): <i>Fide sectando, corde inhiando, caritate currendo.</i>

<sup>178</sup> Augustine, <i>en. Ps. 33(2).10</i> (CCL 38: 289.19-23; Boulding, 31).
life of prayer and hence a more perfect gift of one’s self in humble charity. One’s heart becomes an acceptable place to offer sacrifice.

The last exercise, taking place over the remainder of the psalm, consists of a practice of Eucharistic trust in God, one in which the disappointments of human existence are conceived according to Christ’s gift of self in the Eucharistic bread. The exercise begins with the ninth verse of the psalm: “Taste and see how sweet the Lord is.” This verse of the psalm, the most explicitly Eucharistic thus far, leads Augustine to recall a text from John 6:54, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have not have life in you?” Of course, what does this eating of divine sweetness involve? The remainder of the psalm is a reflection upon what real Eucharistic eating encompasses in a world not yet full redeemed, one in which the divine life bestowed to the human person is hidden. For though Christians are told that “happy the man who hopes in him”, they dwell in a world in which those who “fear the Lord” often lack basic needs, while those who ignore the teaching of the Scriptures are rich:

*The rich have been in need and have gone hungry, but those who seek the Lord will not be deprived of any good thing.* If you take this literally, it will look like a fallacy, for you see around you plenty of rich, unjust people who die amid their riches. They were not reduced to poverty in their lifetime. You watch them growing old and reaching the last days of their lives amid vast wealth; you see a funeral conducted for them with great pomp and no expense spared.

The problem with such analysis for Augustine is that it fails to perceive the world Eucharistically, instead accepting visible riches as a sign of divine approval and poverty as a source of unjust neglect on the part of God. For this reason, Augustine seeks to teach his

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congregation a new way of viewing the problem of unjust wealth, according to the eyes of
eucharistic faith. That is, for the Christian, the invisible quality to a good life is the true source
of riches, of an authentic human life, “Was that other man we speaking about rich because he
had a bed made of ivory, and you poor when the bedroom of your heart is full of such precious
jewels of virtue—jewels of justice, truth, charity, faith, patience, and endurance?” Notice that
Augustine does not dismiss the unjust nature of this wealth. Rather, he is applying a eucharistic
hermeneutic to what constitutes a rich life in the first place. For the truly rich are those who have
consumed “the living bread which has descended from heaven (Jn. 6:41); and; Blessed are those
who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be sated (Mt. 5:6).”

This teaching is transformative for the Christian attentive to it, for both poor and rich
alike are called to cultivate a richer interior life through assimilating the humility of Christ in the
Eucharist. This is the divine teaching that Augustine performs in the rest of this sermon under
the aegis of verse twelve of the psalm, “Come, children, hear me, I will teach you the fear of the
Lord,” as he exhorts the assembly “let us listen together, hear him through us; for that humble
one, that drumming one, that affection one, wishes to teach us.” The fear of the Lord is
nothing less than enduring both good and evil without complaint in imitation of Christ’s own
humility, as well as restraining the tongue from evil words. Yet, such fear has a more
positive quality as well, for “It is not enough to refrain from stripping someone, you must clothe

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186 Augustine, *en. Ps. 33(2).16* (CCL 38: 292.1-293.7): *Venite, filii, audite me, timorem Domini docebo vos...Audiamus illum simul, audite illum per nos; docere enim uult ille humilis, ille tympanizans, ille afectans, docere nos uult.*
the naked. If you have not despoiled anyone, you have turned away from evil, but you will only have done good when you have welcomed the traveler in your home.”

And this Eucharistic charity, imaged in the humble Christ, is the freedom of the Christian. Toward the close of the psalm, Augustine provides a number of examples in which an unanswered prayer (33(2).20), the suffering of the righteous (33(2).21-24), and the material flourishing of the sinners (33(2).25-26) is not what it seems. Of course, those attuned to the pedagogy of Eucharistic faith in which the Word made flesh comes in humble bread and wine are already capable of dealing with this problem. In one of the final sections of the psalm, he responds to the psalmist’s claim that “The Lord guards all their bones: not one will be broken.” Considering the skeletal structure of bones, he argues to his assembly that the use of bones is not literal but allegorical, meant to call to mind the way that “faith in the heart of the Christian makes it firm.” Of course, this passage is also a prophecy of Jesus Christ, who on the cross, had no bone broken, “because as he hung on the cross he expired before the soldiers arrived; they found his body already lifeless, so they had no wish to break his legs; thus the scripture was fulfilled.” This promise is not simply directed to Christ but to all Christians, who trust in the Lord, able to offer themselves in humble charity for the world.

In conclusion, Augustine’s mystagogy on the Eucharist in this psalm commences with the gathering of Eucharistic images around its title, signs that draw attention to the humble nature of a sacrament in which one feasts upon the bread of angels. The process culminates in a series of exercises that educate the Christian in living Eucharistically. The Christian is taught to bless the

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189 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 33(2).19 (CCL 38: 294.6-10; Boulding, 38).
Lord at all times, not in a naïve way ignoring the problems of human life, but transforming them through the wisdom of Eucharistic humility. Likewise, the Christian learns to look upon the Donatists not pridefully but as fellow Christians, relating to them in the way that Christ relates to each of us, seeking our good through the sweetness of persuasion. In this teaching, the Christians hands him or herself over as Christ did. Further, Augustine’s Eucharistic formation in the psalm continues to the examination of self that takes place in Eucharistic communion. As one becomes more pure, capable of offering true sacrifice, seeking to love God and neighbor in all of one’s actions, then the Christian is able to draw closer to Christ. And finally, Augustine’s the sermon concludes with exercises drawing the Christian toward a new way of perceiving wealth. A truly wealthy person is a Christian, who has a rich interior life, having assimilated the virtues necessary for a life of faith and thus capable of seeking God and offering love even in moments of disappointment and of injustice. Thus, the humble reception of the marvelous sacrament of the Eucharist, which Augustine unfolds in the first part of the sermon through an education of the Christian’s memory and understanding becomes in the second part a pedagogy in Eucharistic humility—one that would presumably transform future celebrations of the sacrament for Church in Hippo.

Practicing the Sacrifice of Vespers and a Hymnody of Praise

In chapter three, I noted that while one cannot know the exact shape of morning and evening prayer in Hippo, it is possible to surmise the following: vespers was celebrated on a daily basis, and that the singing of psalms and hymns were an essential part of any daily liturgical prayer that took place. In this section, I approach Augustine’s mystagogy on this prayer through a reading of sermon 342 and Enarrationes in Psalmos 144-150. While sermon
342 directly addresses the evening sacrifice of praise of vespers, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144-150 provides a sustained pedagogy on hymnody in the Christian life.

**Sermon 342: Practicing Christ’s Evening Sacrifice**

The simplicity of this sermon obscures Augustine’s subtle liturgical pedagogy, one that uses the signs of light and darkness so essential to the celebration of vespers, to taste the mystery of redemption.194 Through examining the signs of the evening sacrifice of vespers, in light of the exegesis of Jn. 1:1-14, the Christian is moved to engage in evening prayer with a renewed understanding of what he or she is doing in this prayer. Namely, one is participating in the very sacrifice of the incarnation, the shining of the divine gift of light into the darkness of human incomprehension, eliciting hope in the process. Augustine is teaching the Christian the proper dispositions for participating in the evening prayer of Christ, ones in which all the signs of creation, including the Christian’s own self, refer to that marvelous redemption accomplished through Christ. The natural signs of light and darkness, of morning and evening, signify the death and resurrection of Christ and the hope of the morning that knows no sunset. The daily practice of evening prayer becomes a medicine for hope.

At the commencement of the sermon, Augustine presents the essential sign of this prayer through psalm 141:2, “*May my prayer rise straight up like incense in your presence; the lifting up of my hands an evening sacrifice.*”195 According to Augustine, “In the prayer, we perceive

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194 See, Robert Taft, S.J., *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 355-56. My analysis of this sermon, unlike the remainder in this chapter, avoids a specific account of what sickness Augustine is attempting to cure in this sermon. Because, the sermon does not address the congregation, it is too difficult to determine it with any degree of clarity.

the man, in the extension of of the hands, we acknowledge the cross.”196 Such a statement points toward the Christological nature of this text, for “every Christian knows that this verse is customarily understood of Christ the head, for as the day drew on toward evening the Lord laid down his life on the cross in order to take it up again.”197 Though Augustine does not mention it in this sermon, in Enarrationes in Psalmos 140.5, he explains the precise meaning of this sacrifice for the Christian life:

The evening sacrifice [sacrificium uespertinum] is the Lord’s passion, the Lord’s cross, the offering of the saving victim [oblatione uictimae salutaris] in a holocaust acceptable to God. Through his resurrection his evening sacrifice was transformed into a morning oblation [munus matitinum]. Because of him, every prayer purely directed from the heart of a believer rises like incense, as from a holy altar. Nothing is more delightful than this fragrance of the Lord. May all who believe send forth the same fragrance.198

Thus, through a consideration of the sacrifice of Christ in sermon 342, his becoming flesh and dwelling among human beings, Augustine is moving the Christian to offer their own true sacrifice to God, performed each time they enter into the sacrificium uespertinum of the Church at the close of the day.

The initial series of Scriptural images from Jn. 1:1-5, in addition to the signs of light and darkness, provide an entrée into the identity of the sacrificial victim, “God appears so that as human he might be a mediator, and God remains hidden, so that as a human being he might die.”199 The two verbs, comparet/latet, one of appearance and one of hiddenness, structure Augustine’s reflection upon the motif of light and darkness, of Christ’s divinity and humanity, in

196 Augustine, s. 342.1 (PL 39: 1501; Hill, 34): In oratione adventimus hominem, in extensione manuum agnoscimus crucem
197 Augustine, en. Ps. 140.5 (CCL 40: 2028.3-6; Boulding, 305).
198 Augustine, en. Ps. 140.5 (CCL 40: 2028.13-18; Boulding, 305).
199 Augustine, s. 342.1 (PL 39: 1501; Hill, 34): Deus comparet, ut homo deprecetur; et Deus latet, ut homo moriatur.
Jn. 1:3-5. The attentive reader will notice that Augustine is using the liturgical signs of light and darkness within vespers to teach his listeners the salvific nature of Christ, and in the process enriching their own understanding of what takes place in the evening sacrifice. Creation, though its testimony is visible to human eyes, was carried out by the invisible Word. For “he did not create us with blood, but he redeemed us with blood. For he created us in the beginning which was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From that one, we are created.” On the other hand, redemption was a process performed within the visible world, in time, capable of being seen with human eyes. Quoting John 1:5, light “shines into the darkness, and the darkness does not understand it.”

Using these images of light and darkness, evoked through the evening light of vespers and the Johannine text, Augustine begins to unfold what it means to be illuminated or in darkness. For darkness is nothing less than remaining an unbeliever, while light is a matter of comprehension. Still, human beings cannot gaze directly upon the light, because they remain in the darkness of sin:

So, because the light does not understand the darkness, a human testimony was necessary for human beings. For they were not able to see God, perhaps they were able to tolerate a

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200 Suzanne Poque examines the imagery of light in Augustine’s sermons, arguing that such imagery emerges from three primary sources: Hellenistic mythology and philosophy, his appropriation of certain Manichean images (though separate from the doctrine of Manichaeism), and the Scriptures themselves. Further, the image of light also expresses both life and truth, in addition to serving as an analogy of the intra-Trinitarian relationships. Augustine’s pastoral use of such images is primarily attached to sermons pertaining how one knows God, as well as the nature of apostolic preaching. Yet, Poque does not acknowledge the liturgical role of light, seeing Augustine’s use less related to his mystagogy and more pertaining to his search for theological knowledge. See, Le Langage Symbolique dans la Prédication d’Augustin d’Hippone, 347-75.


202 Augustine, s. 342.2 (PL 39: 1502; Hill, 35): Lucet in tenebris, et tenebrae eam non comprehendunter.
lamp. Therefore, because they were less capable of seeing the day, they could
nevertheless tolerate a lamp however; a man was sent from God, whose name was John.
This man came so that he might bear witness regarding the light (Jn 1:6-7).  

Yet, John was not a lamp because of any peculiar quality intrinsic to him alone. Rather, he
received this divine illumination, his capacity to become a lamp, from a confession of faith in his
encounter with Jesus, “We all receive, he says, from his own fullness.” By becoming humble,
accepting his or her status as a lamp and not as source of light, the Christian receives
enlightenment. Augustine notes, “For he was the true light, that illuminates every human being
coming into the world; that is every animal that is capable of illumination, all persons having
mind and reason, who are able to be partakers in the Word.” Through receiving the divine gift
of light, a gift bestowed as Christians remember their created nature, they become lamps.

This consideration upon of John as a lamp reflecting the true light of Christ through his
humble confession is the invisible reality that takes place among Christians in the evening
sacrifice of the Church. One receives illumination as a gift in partaking in the evening sacrifice,
not as something earned or pursued through human effort. Augustine’s exegesis of Jn. 1:11 is
consistent with his mystagogy into the illuminating light of the evening sacrifice. For, he notes,
“He came into his own, and his own did not receive him.” Christ’s own people, as Augustine
reminds his congregation, are the Jews—“called out from Egypt, liberated in a powerful hand,

203 Augustine, s. 342.2 (PL 39: 1502; Hill, 35): *Quia ergo tenebrae lumen non
comprehenderunt, opus erat hominibus humano testimonio. Diem videre non poterant, lucernam
forte poterant tolerare. Quia ergo ad videndum diem minus idonei erant, lucernam tamen utcumque tolerabant; Fuit homo missus a Deo, cui nomen erat Joannes. Hic venit, ut testimonium perhiberet de lumine.*

204 Augustine, s. 342.2 (PL 39: 1502, Hill, 35): *Nos, inquit, omnes de plenitudine ejus accepinus.*

205 Augustine, s. 342.2 (PL 39: 1502; Hill, 35): *Erat enim lumen verum, quod illuminat omnem
hominem venientem in hunc mundum: id est omne animal, quod est illuminationis capax, hoc est
omnem hominem habentem mentem atque rationem, qua possit esse particeps Verbi.*


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traversing through the Red Sea, escaping through dry land, free from following enemies, fed on manna, rescued from servitude, led to the kingdom, bought by all benefits.” They had received all gifts from God, been part of the olive tree cultivated through God’s actions in

history. Yet, they could not recognize the Word made flesh in Christ, because of pride.

The possibility of becoming a prideful creature is not reserved for earthly Israel alone. Rather, it is the sin of all those who forget the gratuitousness of salvation. Augustine addresses his congregation, “Are you boasting of your freedom. All who commit sin is a slave to sin (Jn 8:33-39). Therefore, how much safer for a man to be a slave to another man, than of perverse

Augustine, s. 342.4 (PL 39: 1503; Hill, 36): vocati ex Aegypto, liberati in manu potenti, per Rubrum mare trajecti, per siccum evadentes, hostibus insequentibus carentes, manna pasti, de servitute eruti, ad regnum perducti, tot beneficiis empti.

Augustine, s. 342.4 (PL 39: 1503; Hill, 36). Care should be taken here in perceiving Augustine’s argument as anti-Semitic. At the conclusion of her inquiry into Augustine’s relationship with Judaism relative to both Scriptural exegesis and his political role as bishop, Paula Fredriksen writes, “Augustine’s “Jew” expressed the continuing positive theological significance of Judaism as an incarnate, historical community; and that community in principle stretched continuously from the pages of the Bible (with all its mystical heights and depths) to the synagogues of the late Roman Empire. Thanks again in no small way to Latin Manichaeism and in particular to its gifted spokesmen, Faustus, Augustine was able to conceive and to construct a catholic theology that drove Neoplatonism’s metaphysics back into history, and history—human time—back into biblical interpretation. But with the closing of the canon, Augustine taught, the clarity of divine intention and action in history had dimmed. Postbiblical history that begun with Rome’s destruction of the Second Temple; it would end only with the Second Coming of Christ. During the indefinite meanwhile, Augustine insisted, fleshly Israel—the “exiles” of 70 C.E.; his Jewish contemporaries; Jews thereafter—would remain history’s Pole star, a continuing quotidian revelation of God’s will shining in the darkness of secular time” (Augustine and the Jews [New York: Doubleday, 2008], 365). Thus, Augustine argues for both the historical importance of contemporary Judaism, as well as its essential place in Christian theology as a whole. When Augustine does offer a “critique” of a Jewish way of thinking, it is primarily understood as a fleshly or literal treatment of the sacramenta of the ancient Jewish Scriptures (260). While this terminology may have been valid for Augustine, it is not acceptable to a contemporary biblical exegete.

Augustine, s. 342.4 (PL 39: 1503; Hill, 36).
One’s status as a son and daughter of God is not a matter of prideful boasting in one’s freedom, but in receiving the divine light of God as gift: “the Word became flesh, and dwelled among us” (Jn 1:13-14).

This mystery of God’s gift of redemption is what is performed through the signs of the evening sacrifice of the Church. Augustine speaks, “Behold, whence this “dwelling” is the sacrifice of evening. Let us adhere to him; let the one who was offered for us be offered with us. For thus the old life is slain with the evening sacrifice, and the new one rises with the dawn.”

The brevity of the sermon, as well as its sudden ending, inadequately conveys the depth of its pedagogy. The darkness of the evening becomes a sign of an invisible reality, the gift of salvation offered to the human person in Christ Jesus. Such a transformation of the natural signs of light and darkness occurs through both the Scriptural text of Jn 1:1-14, as well as the celebration of the vesper rites. And the Christian assumes a posture of hope that the night too will become day, a point that Augustine makes in Enarrationes in Psalms 73.19, while similarly contrasting the darkness of night and the splendor of day:

“This is why we beg you, Lord, to descend in your gracious mercy. Remain with the Father, from whom you descend, but come down to us, so that not only may the day speak the message to the day, but might may also impart knowledge to night, for the day is yours, and the night is yours. You were in the world, and though the world was made by you, the world did not know you; yet in your gracious mercy descend to us. Let the night too receives its consolation; yes, let it receive the consolation of which scripture says, The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). The day is yours and the night is yours.”

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212 Augustine, s. 342.5 (PL 39: 1504; Hill, 37): Ecce unde factum est sacrificium vespertinum. Inhaeareamus illi: nobiscum offeratur, qui pro nobis oblatus est. Sic enim vespertino sacrificio vita vetus interficitur, et diliculo nova oritur.

213 Augustine, en. Ps. 73.19 (CCL 39: 1017.35-18.43; Boulding, 30).
Thus, by reflecting upon the evening sacrifice through the memory of the Scriptures, and understanding its referent, the Christian perceives the setting of the sun not simply as the disappearance of the light but as a sign of hope that the light may shine in the darkness. The cosmos itself participates in this evening prayer, becoming part of the divine gift of mercy in Christ. Further, in each evening sacrifice, the Christian, if they receive the light of this mystery, becomes a lamp that testifies to this true light. Such a transformation should not result in pride but in greater hope that the sacramental signs of this prayer may one day pass away into a savoring of the eternal realities signified by these signs. For then, the illumination of the day, that is the resurrection of Christ, will defeat the night—the mortality of the human condition in a mutable world.\textsuperscript{214} Evening prayer, when celebrated with proper understanding, is a medicine of hope.

\textit{Psalms 144-150: Practicing a Hymn of Praise.}

In his \textit{De civitate dei}, book V, Augustine completes his critique of those within the Roman Empire who believe that the gods should be worshipped for what they can give in the present life.\textsuperscript{215} In the middle of this book, he diagnoses both the Roman Empire’s source of grandeur and its downfall, its love of praise. For Rome was capable of accomplishing much, “restraining from the love of money and many other vices” (\textit{pecuniae cupiditatem et multa alia uitia conprimentes}), all for the “love of praise” (\textit{amorem laudis})—itself a lesser vice.\textsuperscript{216} The praise that the Romans sought “was the judgment of human beings thinking well of other human beings.”

\textsuperscript{214} Augustine, \textit{En. ps.} 47.1 (CCL 38: XXX; Boulding, 335): “Everything that was written, even about God’s first creation, can be interpreted as a sign of things to come \textit{[ad significationem futuorum]}. So you can say that God created light when Christ rose from the dead, for then light was truly divided from darkness, when immortality was marked off from mortality.”

\textsuperscript{215} Augustine, \textit{ciu.} 6.1 (CCL 47: 166.76-80; Dyson, 240).

\textsuperscript{216} Augustine, \textit{ciu.} 5.13 (CCL 47: 146.3-10; Dyson, 212-13).
beings.” Further, such love of praise, the acquisition of glory, structured their very worship of the gods. True virtue, then, is not the denial of one vice in order that one may seek glory but rather the referring of all praise to God, the overcoming of vice itself. Addressing the praiseworthiness of the virtuous person, Augustine writes:

As for those who praise him, he does not make light of their love even though he makes light of their praise; neither does he wish them to be mistaken in their praise, lest he should forfeit their love. Therefore, he earnestly entreats them to direct their praise to Him from Whom a man receives what he has that is justly praised.

Praise directed toward God is an exercise for properly pursuing virtue.

Augustine performs this pedagogy of virtuous praise throughout his *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. These sermons were delivered primarily in the context of the sung psalmody of both morning and evening prayer. The sung nature of this prayer is a prime concern of Augustine in his sermons on psalms 144(145)-150. Hymnody, in non-Christian, Roman religious

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217 Augustine, *ciu.* 5.12 (CCL 47: 145.107-08; Dyson, 210): *iudicium hominum bene de hominibus opinantium*.
218 Augustine’s account of the names of the gods in book IV of *De civitate dei* is, in some sense, the diagnosis of a false theology of praise. By worshipping specific gods, offering them praise, the person ingratiates themselves to this divine being, receiving what one asks for (ciu. 4.11). Diespater is the god of new birth, “who leads out the young toward the day” (*qui partum perducat ad diem*). Camena, on the other hand, is the goddess who teaches one to sing (*canere*). This way of worship is ultimately both unreasonable and without virtue because it establishes an order to the gods not based upon their cultivation of human virtue but what human beings want from the gods. In ciu 7.3, he writes, “What shall I say of Virtue? What of Felicity? Of these I have already said much in the fourth book. Although our adversaries held these to be divine, they did not wish to assign them a place among the select gods; yet they did assign such a place to Mars and Orcus: the one a god who causes death, and the other who receives the dead (CCL 38: 188.63-66; Dyson, 271).
219 Augustine, *ciu.* 5.19 (CCL 38: 155.27-31; Dyson, 224).
220 See Michael Fiedrowicz, “General Introduction,” in *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/15, 16-17. Interestingly, though providing an interpretation of Augustine’s biblical exegesis in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Byassee acknowledges the liturgical context of Augustine’s sermons only twice. Both of these liturgical references are limited to a defense of allegory in Scriptural interpretation (*Praise Seeking Understanding*, 46-49).
221 These particular psalms belong to a category known as hymn psalms. According to Sigmund Mowinckel, “the core of the hymn of praise is the consciousness of the poet and congregation
practice was an essential part of the communal sacrifice, one in which through the singing of the hymn, the person entered into a covenant with the gods.\textsuperscript{222} The purpose of the hymn was to ward off evil, for the Roman gods were capable of both good and malevolence, and required a persuasive hymn offering in order to bestow the former rather than the latter.\textsuperscript{223} Hence, in these sermons, Augustine is offering medicine against this way of practicing hymnody, one in which the Christian offers praise to God only that he or she may receive some material good in return. Instead, the Christian’s practice of hymnody becomes a formation into true virtue, God’s cultivation of the human person through a taste of the gratuity of eternal life.

Throughout these sermons, Augustine seeks to cultivate the memory of Christians in hymnic praise, fundamentally teaching a new way of practicing such singing. Singing a hymn for Augustine is a theological act, requiring both a disposition of worship and a deeper understanding of the text one has sung. In 148.17, he describes what constitutes this hymnody. He addresses:

\begin{quote} that they are standing face to face with the Lord himself, meeting the almighty, holy and merciful God in his own place, and worshipping him with praise and adoration. He is in their midst, and they are his chosen people, who owe him everything. Therefore they now meet him, with awe and trembling because he is the Holy One, but also with a sure trust, love, jubilation and overflowing enthusiasm, while remembering all the great and glorious things that he has done. From the encounter with the Holy One, from the reverence and trust, the gratitude, joy and enthusiasm, the song of praise thus rises to the Lord of Hosts, to express what the congregation is seeing and feeling, and to increase his glory in the world” \textit{(The Psalms in Israel’s Worship}, trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004], 82).\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{222} Hymns, according to James B. Rives, are sung texts that are focused more on praise of the deity than on the act of petitioning. Though the singing of a hymn of praise was also carried out in the act of offering whereby “the worshipper promised a gift to the god if the god granted his or her petition” \textit{(Religion in the Roman Empire} [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007], 24). Such hymnody was also carried out during public religious processions and dramatic performances, the prime example being Horace’s \textit{Carmen saeculare} (Jörge Rüpke, \textit{Religion of the Romans}, trans. Richard Gordon [Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007], 119-21).

A hymn to all his holy ones. You know what a hymn is? It is a song in praise to God. If you praise God, and do not sing, you do not sing a hymn; if you sing, and you do not praise God, you do not sing a hymn; if you praise something that does not pertain to the praise of God, even while singing praise, you do not sing a hymn. Therefore a hymn has these three things, it is a song yes, and it is also praise, and it is to God. For praise to God in song is called a hymn.  

In his sermon on psalm 148.2, Augustine accounts for how this hymnic worship transforms human existence through an exegesis of the Easter song of Alleluia. When Christians say Alleluia, they perform an act of praise at the very same time that they bid others to join their doxological choral song. But, true praise, as Augustine attends to it, is never simply the speaking of words, however true such signs might be, but allowing these words to infuse one’s whole existence: “But praise him out of your whole being [de totis uobis]; that is, to praise God not only with the tongue and with your voice, but also with your conscience, your life, your deeds.” Praise that is de totis uobis is only feasible when one begins to entertain good thoughts that beget equally virtuous actions, a kind of harmony between inner and outer word. Thus, Augustine exhorts, “when you praise God, praise wholly; let the voice sing, let the life sing, let the deeds sing.” Elsewhere, Augustine describes this transformation of the human existence as a kind of hymning of each part of the human person, the body, the mind, and the spirit becoming an orchestra of praise.

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224 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.17 (CCL 40: 2176.1-2177.7; Boulding, 490).
225 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.2 (CCL 40: 2166.3-5; Boulding, 477).
226 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.2 (CCL 40: 2166.4-7; Boulding, 477): Sed laudate de totis uobis; id est, ut non sola lingua et uox uestra laudet Deum, sed et conscientia uestra, uita uestra, facta uestra.
228 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.2 (CCL 40: 2166.29-30; Boulding, 478): cum laudatis Deum, toti laudate; cantet uox, cantet uita, cantent facta.
229 Augustine, en. Ps. 150.8 (CCL 40: 2196.9-17; Boulding, 514-15): “There is another point that I do not think we should pass over in silence. Musicians tell us—and indeed it is obvious if we think about it—that there are three kinds of sounds: those made respectively by the voice, by the passage of air, and by percussion. Sound is produced by the voice alone when someone sings
Yet, how does Augustine perform this pedagogy? This transformation of the human person into a site of praise, a divine choral ensemble, is understood both corporally and personally. For, as already noted, in every act of divine praise within the psalms, it is not simply an individual who sings but the Church, the whole Christ, his members and his head. The transformative quality of this song is established by Augustine in *Enarrationes in Psalms* 149.1, where he explains to his congregation the difference between the old and new songs. He speaks, “For the old human being, an old song: for the new human being, a new song.” The quality of this new song is not the words that are sung, but rather the identity of the singer as made new in Christ: “Humankind has become old through sin, made new through grace. Therefore all who are in Christ are made new, so that they may begin to stretch out toward eternal life, they sing a new song. And this song is about peace, this song is about love.”

The song of the Church is peaceful to such an extent that the members of the body of Christ, the saints of God, are best perceived as harmonious instruments performing one glorious hymn to God, informed by the peaceful pedagogy of this song. For, “what is the melody of this new charity? Peace, the bond of holy society, spiritual union, a building made up of living stones. And where is it unaccompanied, using only the mouth and the windpipe. It is produced by blowing and the passage of air when a person plays the flute or some similar instrument. And it is produced by percussion in the playing of the lyre and other instruments of the same type. Our psalm has not left out any kind of sound, for it has indicated the voice by speaking of choral song, the breath or air in its mention of the trumpet, and the percussion of the lyre. It seems as though the psalmist intended to suggest the mind, the spirit, and the body, though by analogy only, not in the proper sense of the words.”


found? Not in a single place only but throughout the whole world.” To practice hymnody necessarily involves assimilating the peaceful song of the body of Christ into a way of life.

Thus, there are two ways that the Church, and thus each member of the body, becomes a hymn in Augustine’s sermons on praise. First, the Church receives a foretaste of eternal life within the hymnic pedagogy of the body of Christ. In describing the Easter pedagogy of praise, Augustine notes:

The Church has even instituted for us a celebration of two times, before Easter, and after Easter. That time which is before Easter signifies the tribulation in which we now pass; yet that time we are in now following Easter, signifies the beatitude in which we will be afterwards. Therefore, before Easter, we celebrate this time and what we pass through presently; after Easter we celebrate what we signify not yet possessing. This singing of a hymn of praise is more than the Church pretending, for a period of time, that it is experiencing the delights of eternal life. Rather, through the Church’s very singing, it is performing its truest identity. Whenever the Church “is conquered and sighs, and utters its prayers to God,” something essential about the nature of ecclesial life is revealed. Though not addressing praise, in Enarrationes in Psalmos 100.3, Augustine notes that a singing of a psalm of mercy and judgment, one that expresses the fullness of the human condition within the body of Christ is in fact a deeper union with Christ himself: “Then you are singing in him, and rejoicing in him, just as he labors in you, and thirsts in you, and hungers in you, and endure tribulations in you. He is still dying in you, as you have already risen in him.” A similar transformation of human desire occurs through the practice of hymnic praise. For in this hymnody, the members

Augustine, en. Ps. 149.2 (CCL 40: 2178.4-7; Boulding, 492).
Augustine, en. Ps. 139.2 (CCL 40: 2012.2-3; Boulding, 283): quoniam conqueritur et gemit, et precem Deo fundit, inter malos constitutum corpus Christi.
Augustine, en. Ps. 100.3 (CCL 39: 1408.35-37; Boulding, 1408).
of the body of Christ perform a song that signifies their deepest hopes, joining in the angelic praise of the angels. In 148.5, exegeting the first verse of the psalm, Augustine states:

First, the psalm speaks about the heavens, then the earth: for the God who is praised made heaven and earth. The heavens are tranquil, they are peace; there is always joy, no death, no illness, no strife; the blessed always praise God; still we are currently below, but when we think how God will be praised there, our heart is there, and we listen not without cause: Lift up your heart. Let us raise up the heart, lest it putrefy on earth; for it is pleasing to us what the angels do there.237

Singing hymns of praise within the body of Christ is a gradual formation into heavenly praise, a form of singing that renews the identity of the Church. For truly, the Christian who sings such praise within the angelic choirs becomes capable of properly praising God through the created order. That is, hymnody teaches a way of sacramentally perceiving the universe. When the psalms speak of the universe as praising God, the Christian attentive to the significance of the created order may use these signs to praise God not simply through the practice of singing a hymn but by noticing the hymnic quality of creation.238 As Augustine notes, “for these creatures do not praise God through their own voice or their own heart; but when they are considered by intelligent beings, God is praised through them; and when God is praised through them, in some way they too praise God.”239 One begins to sing a song within the heart, tasting the delights of eternal life, through the hymnic formation of the psalms by contemplating the wonders of the

237 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.5 (CCL 40: 2169.2-9; Boulding, 480): Primo de caelis dicit, postea de terra: laudatur enim Deus qui fecit caelum et terram. Caelestia tranquilla sunt, pacata sunt; ibi semper gaudium, nulla mors, nulla aegritudo, nulla molestia; semper laudant Deum beati; nos autem adhuc iusum sumus, sed cum cogitamus quomodo ibi laudetur Deus, cor ibi habeamus, et non sine cause audiamus: Sursum corda. Leuemus cor sursum, ne putrescat in terra; quoniam placet nobis quod ibi agunt angeli.

238 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.3 (CCL 40: 2167; Boulding, 478-79).

239 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.3(CCL 40: 2167.10-13; Boulding, 478): ipsa quidem per se uoce sua et corde suo non laudant Deum; sed cum ab intellegentibus considerantur, per ipsa laudatur Deus; et cum per ipsa laudatur Deus, quodam modo et ipsa laudant Deum.
created order as a constitutive aspect of the divine grammar. The practice of praise is a heavenly exercise of beatific vision, a performance of the song proper to the heavenly Jerusalem.240

Still, Augustine does acknowledge that the life of praise is not presently coterminous with either human or non-human existence. Thus, the Christian becomes a song of praise not only through the foretaste of eternal life but by acknowledging his or her status as pilgrim. In a poignant passage in Enarrationes in Psalms 148.8, he describes what keeps the human person from this eternal praise as a time-bound creature:

This is the occupation of those blessed ones, to praise God. They do not plow, or plant seeds, or grind them, or cook: for these works are of necessity and in that place there is no necessity. They do not steal, or plunder, or commit adultery: for these are works of iniquity, and in that place there is no iniquity. They do not break bread for the hungry, or clothe the naked, they do not receive the pilgrim, they do not visit the prisoner, they do not harmonize disputes, they do not bury the dead: for these are works of mercy and in that place there is no misery that needs mercy. O blessed ones! Do you think we shall be like them? Let us long for this and groan for it out of this desire.241

Here, Augustine is doing two things. First, by focusing upon the distinction between temporal and eternal praise, he is forming the Christian in the understanding and desire proper to the eternal destiny of the human person. This is an exercise that Augustine repeats throughout the Enarrationes in Psalms, though one performed quite explicitly, in 147.15. He first reads verse 14, “He who has established peace on your borders” (Qui posuit fines tuos pacem).242 Augustine, having spoken this verse, notices that his congregation reacted with delight, potentially believing that this passage was a promise of earthly peace. Yet, transforming their

240 Augustine, en. Ps. 147.7.
241 Augustine, en. Ps. 148.8 (CCL 40: 2170.9-19; Boulding, 481): Beati quorum hoc est negotium, laudare Deum. Non arant, non seminant, non molunt, non coquunt: opera enim sunt ista necessitates; ibi necessitas non est. Non furantur, non depraedantur, non adulterantur: opera enim sunt ista iniquitatis; ibi iniquitas non est. Non fragunt panem esurienti, non uestum, non concordant litigiosum, non sepeliunt mortuum: opera enim sunt ista misericordiae; ibi nulla miseria est in qua fiat misericordia. O beati! Putamus, erimus et nos sic? Eia, suspiremus, de suspirio gemamus.
242 Augustine, en. Ps. 147.15 (CCL 40: 2149.1-2; Boulding, 456).
initial reaction, Augustine provides a kind of pedagogical account for why they might have reacted with such joy upon his reading of the verse: “How intensely beautiful must that peace be, if your understanding of it pierced you to the heart! What am I to say now about peace and in praise of peace? Your delight in it has run ahead of any words of mine; I cannot fulfill your expectations, I am unequal to the task, I am too weak.” Here, Augustine is not merely ingratiating himself to his audience. Rather, he is confessing the humility necessary for performing true praise in the Christian life. Such humility is a matter of the inevitable gap between external words and the interior delight that such words occasion, a sign of the greatness of God’s being. But, the purpose of speaking such words is not to complete one’s praise of God but rather to increase the human capacity for understanding God in the first place, “since when you praise God, though you do not explicate his essence [explicas quod uis], your capacity for thinking is stretched out; this stretching out makes space for him whom you praise.” Thus, perfect praise of divine peace is not possible in the present life, though by loving peace through praise, pursuing an understanding of it, the Christian begins to participate in this peace, transforming the nature of human relationship in the process: “Pursue this peace, long for this peace of which even the name so swiftly arouses your love and wins your hearts. Love peace in your homes, love it in your business; love peace with your wives, your children, your slaves. Love peace with your friends, and love peace with your enemies.” This gap between sign and reality, between perfect praise of God and the problems of human existence (including the

243 Augustine, en. Ps. 147.15 (CCL 40: 2149.11-14; Boulding, 456).
244 Augustine, en. Ps. 145.4 (CCL 40: 2108.52-54; Boulding, 403): Cum enim laudas Deum, et non explicas quod uis, extenditur in interiora cogitatio tua; ipsa extension capaciorem te facit eius quem laudas.
245 Augustine, en. Ps. 147.15 (CCL 40: 2150.20-24; Boulding, 456).
problem of a drought\textsuperscript{246}) becomes an opportunity to seek deeper understanding of God and in the process becoming transformed through the seeking. In the Church’s contemplation of heavenly realities through the signs of the psalms, the Church becomes more capable of perceiving such delight in the present.

Second, by drawing attention to this gap between the eternal nature of praise and temporal needs of the present, Augustine is also reminding his congregation that the work that human beings are called to do within this world is to practice ever more virtuous acts of praise. To practice true praise requires an examination of the “hymnody” of both the interior and exterior life of the Christian. Throughout his hymn sermons, Augustine will often ask questions of his congregation that reveal each person’s inner intentions in praising God in the first place. In sermon 144.3, he asks, “It is nothing to admire if you bless your God on your joyful day. What if some other sad days dawned upon you? For do things happen to human beings, as for instance an abundance of human scandals, a multiplication of temptations?\textsuperscript{247} Since such limitations are part of the human condition, to offer praise only in times of relative peace and stability, would make it impossible for Christians to say, “I will bless you throughout the day (Ps. 144:2).”\textsuperscript{248}

Augustine also accounts for those occasions in which the Christian praises God through an exterior song but fails to sing an interior song congruent with the signs one performs. As

\textsuperscript{246} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 148.10 (CCL 40: 2173.42-46; Boulding, 485): “‘But then,” someone objects, “why does he send rain for a fish but sometimes sends no rain for me?’” Perhaps this is so that you may realize that you are in the desert, trudging along on life’s pilgrimage, and so that this present life may grow bitter for you and the future life arouse your desire. Or perhaps so that you may be chastised and rebuked and corrected.”

\textsuperscript{247} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 144.3 (CCL 40: 2089. 8-11; Boulding, 380): \textit{Nec mirum est si laeto die tuo benedicis Deum tuum. Quid, si forte illuxerit aliquis tristis dies, sicut se habent humanae res, sicut est abundantia scandalorum, sicut est multiplication tentationum?}

\textsuperscript{248} Augustine, \textit{en. Ps.} 144.4 (CCL 40: 2090.11-12; Boulding, 382): \textit{Per singulos die benedictam te}. 

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Augustine notes in 147.5, songs operate both internally and externally, since “we sing not only when we pour forth a song with voice and lips; there is also an interior song, since there are also interior ears. We sing with the voice so that we might stir up ourselves; we sing with the heart so that we might be pleasing to God.” A sign that the Christian is singing only the tune and words of the song but not yet its interior melody with the heart is the failure to love. Indeed, throughout his expositions of the psalms, Augustine continually demands his congregation consider the consequences of singing a hymn of praise, what they ought to become if such words are true, if they truly delight in the melody of the psalmic hymn. As he invites the assembly to consider in 146.2:

What about you? Do you too want to sing and play psalms? Then not only must your voice sing God’s praises but your actions must keep in tune with your voice. After you have been singing with your voice you will have to be quiet for a while, but sing with your life in such a way that you never fall silent. Suppose you are engaged in business and you are contemplating some dishonest deal: you have allowed your praise of God to be silenced and, worse still, you have not only smothered your praise but have committed blasphemy; for since God is praised by your good works you are praising him simply by performing them, whereas your evil deeds are a blasphemy, and so you blaspheme as you commit them.

The nature of such sin, as Augustine describes it, is a matter of producing discordant notes with one’s body. The one who sings a true hymn during dinner, consumes his or her food temperately and thus “your food and your drink praises God.” Further, if one engages in sexual relations with one’s spouse as a member of the body of Christ, “you praise God doing this, and at no point

249 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 147.5 (CCL 40: 2142.3-6; Boulding, 447): *Non enim tantum cantamus, quando uoce et labiis sonamus canticum; est et canticum intus, quia sunt et aures cuiusdam intus. Voce cantamus, ut nos excitemus; corde cantamus, ut illi placeamus.*

250 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 146.2 (CCL 40: 2122.6-14; Boulding, 421).

shall your praise be silent.”

Praise is also performed through deeds of mercy, the life offered to one’s neighbor, in addition to avoiding the frivolous spectacles of pagan festivals. Such praise is not worthless, according to Augustine, even if it is an incomplete praise vis-à-vis the one that the Christian will enjoy in eternal life. He exhorts his community, “Let us exercise ourselves in that most perfect praise by praising in good deeds.” Through the practice of self-examination, determining the praise-worthiness of one’s actions in light of the words of the psalm and then reforming one’s life, one becomes a hymn of praise. The ethical life of the Christian is a matter of divine worship.

Yet, what may one do upon discovering a disharmony between the words and deeds of praise? The Christian, upon ascertaining his or her smallness in praise may then offer a confession to God, one that both acknowledges the limitations of human desire—the interior praise of the heart, particularly through sin; as well as offering a sacrifice of praise to God that such limitations are not the telos of human existence. This confession of sinfulness is not antithetical to praise. Nor for that matter is it hopelessness of one’s status as sinner. Rather, it a praise that commits one to a new way of life, a singing of a new hymn, the sacrifice of praise that

252 Augustine, en. Ps. 146.2 (CCL 40: 2123: 32-33; Boulding, 422): haec agens laudas Deum, nec omnino silebit laudatio tua.
253 Augustine, en. Ps. 147.6-7.
254 Augustine, en. Ps. 146.2 (CCL 40: 2123.44-46; Boulding, 422): Ad illam perfectissimam laudem exerceamus nos laudatione ista in bonis operibus.
255 Augustine, through his Enarrationes in Psalmos, plays with this dual meaning of confession as both of sins and of praise. He notes in 144.13 that when Christ confesses to the Father, he is making not a confession of sins but of praise (CCL 40: 2097-2098; Boulding, 390-92). Yet, this does not mean that the confession of praise, among sinful human beings, makes obsolete a confession of sins. Rather, “Let your first song to the Lord be one of confession. This must be your point of departure if you want to attain to clear understanding of truth. If you wish to be led from the way of faith to the possession of God in vision, begin from confession. Accuse yourself first. Accuse yourself and praise God. Call upon him whom you do not yet know, that he may come and make himself known to you” (Augustine, en. Ps. 146.14 [CCL 40: 14-19; Boulding, 433]).
is nothing less than an interior awareness of God’s graciousness. For Augustine, stretching his congregation’s desire to perform this sacrifice of praise, speaks:

Offer to God a sacrifice of praise. O sacrifice performed without payment, a free gift! I did not buy what I must offer, but you gave it; for I did not have the means for this gift. Offer to God a sacrifice of praise. And this offering of a sacrifice of praise includes giving thanks to that one from whom you have whatever good things you have, and to him by whose mercy whatever bad you have from yourself is forgiven you. Offer to God a sacrifice of praise, and render to the Most High your prayers. The Lord delights in this odor. Render to the Most High your prayers.\textsuperscript{256}

The human person, through the assuming a posture of praise, becomes the hymn that is sung, the sacrifice that is offered to God.

Thus, to sing a hymn of praise to God is nothing less than entering into the graciousness of God’s very life, becoming reformed in the process. The pedagogy of such hymnody, for Augustine, involves the memory, including specific images of praise in the psalms that educate the imagination by providing a foretaste of eternal life. Participating in the praise offered by these images stretches the desire of the Christian, enabling them to seek the gift of eternal life more intently. Further, such a pedagogy includes a need to understand the song that is sung, and in the process, to examine the quality of one’s own singing de totis uobis. Finally, the delight of the song, the united voices of the choir, the description of human action itself as a form of song, is a formation into love. That is, there is a palpable enjoyment and fellowship enjoyed by the listeners of Augustine’s sermons on praise, one that becomes a sign of a heavenly city, a peace to be offered in the present. Through this hymnic mystagogy, Augustine moves the Christian to

become what they have received, an offering of praise rendered unto God. The worship of God through “hymnody”, as Augustine teaches it, is a formation into true virtue.

Practicing Nativity

Augustine’s mystagogy of the liturgical year, to some extent, has already been analyzed in my earlier reading of his letters to Januarius. Yet, in sermon 220, Augustine provides a more explicit account of the pedagogy of the liturgical year, relative to his own preaching. The commemoration of yearly rites is intended as a formation of the memory of the Christian, and through the sermon, Augustine seeks understanding of the primary images of the feast, inviting the Christian to assimilate both the images and the result of this inquiry into their own life. The Christian, in some sense, becomes a sign of the mystery that is received.

Augustine summarizes this pedagogy in a short sermon on the Easter Vigil. For Christians are well aware that the event of Christ’s death and resurrection is a unique historical event, not repeatable in time. In this way, although Augustine does not explicitly say so, sermons on the liturgical year are to serve as a medicine meant to heal the person from a form of thinking in which the celebration of an annual rite is the commemoration of a mythic event outside of time, a stance characteristic of Roman mystery cults.²⁵⁷ Still, the solemnity of the resurrection is not the event of the Resurrection itself, although such a historical occurrence did take place. Rather, “although the truth indicates what was once done in reality, the solemnity

²⁵⁷ Though outside the scope of this chapter, an account of these mysteries cults may be found in Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, trans. Brian McNeil (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 81-152. He writes, “Despite its superficial narrative structure, the myth is not relating historical events, but is making known eternal and immutable Being. It is only language that develops in a chronological sequence what the understanding recognises as a timeless unity. The fact that the myth is in principle not bound to any unique historical event makes it easier to conceive of a continual recapitulation of the sequence of events, thereby giving the initiand the possibility of entering into this cyclical sequence” (89).
renews it in pious hearts by celebrating it pretty frequently. Truth reveals what was done just as it was done; yet the solemnity, not by doing but by celebrating, does not permit us to forget past events.”

How for Augustine does the celebration of this event affect the memory of the Christian? He teaches: “Unless thought about what is said regarding the reality of deeds is deposited in the memory, no one would find it after the passing of time. Hence, the thinking of those finding truth in the Lord confesses; while the remnants of thought, knowing of these times, does not cease to celebrate solemnities lest thought should be judged ingrateful.”

Christian solemnities are a formation into a specific way of remembering, whereby sacramental signs call to mind thoughts already deposited in the memory as a way of expressing thanks for the realities signified by these signs. The Easter Vigil, “the famous solemnity of this night,” is a celebration of the Church “whereby keeping vigil, we in some way perform the resurrection of the Lord through the relics of thoughts, while likewise by thinking of the true deed, we confess it.”

The rites of the liturgical year recall the deeds of Christ, and the sermon upon these deeds leads the Christian to a confession of its truth. Christians are exercised in saving memory through the celebration of the liturgical year.

This pedagogy is operative throughout Augustine’s sermons on the liturgical year. Nonetheless, for brevity’s sake, I attend now only to those sermons on Christmas. Augustine’s Christmas sermons each begin with a series of images that assists the Christian in recalling the

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258 Augustine, s. 220 (PL 38: 1089; Hill, 200): Quod enim semel factum in rebus veritas indicat, hoc saepius celebrandum in cordibus piis solemnitas renovat. Veritas quae facta sunt, sicut facta sunt aperit: solemnitas autem non ea faciendo, sed celebrando, nec praeterita praeterire permittit.

259 Augustine, s. 220 (PL 38: 1089; Hill, 200): Nisi enim quod de rebus temporaliter gestis dicitur cogitatio memoriae commendaret, nullas post tempus reliquias inveniret. Ideo cogitatio hominis intuens veritatem Domino confitetur: reliquiae vero cogitationis quae sunt in memoria, notis temporibus non cessant celebrare solemnia, ne ingrata cogitatio judicetur.

260 Augustine, s. 220 (PL 38: 1089; Hill, 201): ubi vigilando tanquam resurrectionem Domini per cogitationis reliquias operemur, quam semel factam cogitando verius confitemur.
mystery of the Incarnation. Primarily, the purpose of such images is to evoke the reality signified by the celebration of Christmas at the same time that one plants these images into the memory of the Christian through the rhetoric of the sermon. Christmas is “the birthday of the Lord and of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Truth who sprung up from the earth, and the Day from Day born in our day.”  

Indeed, Christmas celebrates what took place in a stable at Bethlehem, but always through the sight of faith in order that the Christian may believe “the one who filled the world, did not find a place in the inn; the one who was placed in a manger might become our food.”  

In sermon 191, in a barrage of paradoxical images, Augustine captures the wonder of God’s becoming flesh:

The maker of humanity was made human: so that the one ruling the stars might nurse upon the breast; that bread might become hungry, that the fountain might become thirsty, that light might sleep, the Way might be fatigued by the journey; that truth might be accused by false witnesses, the judge of the living and of the dead might be judged by mortal judges, justice condemned by the unjust judges, discipline might be scourged by whips, the grape be crowned with thorns, the foundation suspended upon a limb; that power might be infirmed, health be wounded, that life might die.  

Each of the images that Augustine uses to teach Christmas to his congregation are tied to the divine power of God becoming flesh, sharing entirely in the human condition. The very signs of creation, the shortness of the day in the Western hemisphere, is no accident but related to this divine pedagogy, for “he who bent down, and raised us up, chose the least day, but the one where

\[261\] Augustine, s. 184.1 (PL 38: 997; Hill, 17): *Natalis Domini et Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi, quo Veritas de terra orta est, et dies ex die in nostrum natus est diem.*  

\[262\] Augustine, s. 189.4 (PL 38: 1006; Hill, 36): *Ille qui mundum implet, in diversorio locum non invenit In praesepio positus cibus noster est factus*  

\[263\] Augustine, s. 191.1 (PL 38: 1010; Hill, 42): *Homo factus, hominis factor: ut sugeret ubera, regens sidera; ut esuriret panis, ut sitiret fons, dormiret lux, ab itinere via fatigaretur, falsis testibus veritas accusaretur, judex vivorum et mortuorum a judice mortali judicaretur, ab injustis justitia damnaretur, flagellis disciplina caederetur, spinis botrus coronaretur, in ligno fundamentum suspenderetur, virtus infirmaretur, salus vulneraretur, vita moreretur.*
light increases.”

This play of light and darkness, already considered in sermon 342, expresses the fundamental reality regarding the celebration of Christmas, “since even the day of his nativity, has the mystery of his light.”

Through celebrating Christmas, the Christian is invited to receive the invisible reality of light signified by the signs, becoming more like the light in the process, “Let us know well the day, and let us be the day.”

For this reason, the images of the feast of Christmas lead the Christian to consider the nature of this invisible God, to seek understanding of it through the signs of Christmas. For the celebration of Christ’s earthly birth, in all of its particularity, calls to mind his eternal birth in God. In sermon 195.1, he begins, “The son of God, also the son of man, our Lord Jesus Christ born from the Father without mother, created every day; born from his mother without father, he consecrated this day; invisible in his divine nativity, visible in his human, likewise marvelous.”

The miraculous nature of Christ’s birth is meant to serve as a formation into the even more incredible claims of Catholic theology regarding the Trinity, and hence the nature of Christ. They are signs of this reality, for:

when he took up human limbs, after all, he does not desert his divine works; nor ceasing to reach mightily from end to end, and to dispose all things sweetly (Wis. 8:1); when he was clothed with the infirmity of flesh, he was received, not enclosed, in the virgin’s womb; for the food of wisdom was not ripped away from the Angels, while we might tastes ourselves how sweet the Lord is.

Augustine, s. 192.3 (PL 38: 1013; Hill, 48): qui ergo inclinatus est, et nos erexit, minimum elegit diem, sed unde lux crescit.

Augustine, s. 190.1 (PL 38: 1007; Hill, 38): Nam et dies nativitatis ejus, habet mysterium lucis ejus.

Augustine, s. 190.1 (PL 38: 1007; Hill, 38): Agnoscamus diem, et simus dies.

Augustine, s. 195 (PL 38: 1017; Hill, 57): Filius Dei idemque filius hominis Dominus noster Jesus Christus, sine matre de Patre natus, creavit omnem diem; sine patre de matre natus, consecravit hunc diem; divina nativitate invisibili, humana visibili, utraque mirabilis.

Augustine, s. 187.1 (PL 38: 1001; Hill, 27): Neque enim quando membra humana suscepit, opera divina deseruit: nec attingere a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponere omnia suaviter destitit; quando infirmitate carnis indutus, virginali utero receptus est, non inclusus; ut nec Angelis subtraheretur sapientiae cibus, et nos gustaremus quam suavis est Dominus.
One can believe this is possible, precisely because of the stunning nature of the Incarnation in the first place. In sermon 187, Augustine chews upon this mystery with his congregation. Indeed, the first analogy that he chooses in describing this mystery is the process whereby human beings assimilate the Word of God entirely in the sermon by listening. Addressing the capacity of human memory in the act of listening, “And if the whole thing might be kept whole in the memory, like all have come to heard the whole thing, so each one of you might go away with the whole.”

The sermon, when spoken, is both a physical reality (words that pass through the air) and an invisible one whereby human beings assimilate the truth in the act of learning. The audible sermon is no more but it echoes within the heart of each Christian. A second analogy, employed by Augustine, is the relationship between thought and word: “for the word that we carry in the heart becomes a voice when we offer it with the mouth; yet, the word is not changed into the voice, but remains whole in that place in which it proceeded. So that the interior word remains what is understood, and what is heard sounds outside.” While distinct from Christ’s incarnation due to the temporality of both human speech in thought and in word, this analogy employed by Augustine, situates the doctrine of Christ’s humanity and divinity within the pedagogy of the incarnation. As he preaches, “And when the Word assumed flesh within time so that he might come forth into our time bound life, he did not lose eternity in the flesh, but even on the flesh bestowed immorality.”

Augustine, s. 187.2 (PL 38: 1001; Hill, 28): *Et si totus memoria teneri valuisset, sicut ad totum audiendum omnes venistis, ita cum toto singuli rediretis.*

Augustine, s. 187.3 (PL 38: 1002; Hill, 28): *Sicut verbum quod corde gestamus, fit vox cum id ore proferimus, non tamen illud in hanc commutatur, sed illo integro ista in qua procedat assumitur, ut et intus maneat quod intelligatur. et foris sonet quod audiatur*

Augustine, s. 187.4 (PL 38: 1002; Hill, 29): *Et cum carнем assumpsit ex tempore, ut ad temporalem vitam nostram procederet, non in carne amisit aeternitatem, sed etiam carni praestitit immortalitatem.*
of this identity. God was wholly present in human flesh, not simply in part. The events of the Incarnation are then the visible manifestation of God’s eternal and loving plan for the human person. Though human speech, in both its interior and exterior form, cannot speak words of praise adequate to describing the divine nature, the wonder of the incarnation provides a form of human speech that seeks an ever-truer language of praise. The mystery seeks understanding through analogy, and however imperfect this analogical seeking is, the Christian’s discourse of praise comes to be renewed through the search for understanding.

Finally, this seeking of a language of praise in the feast of Christmas is assimilated into the life of the Christian. That is, one becomes what one receives through chewing upon the signs of the feast. While addressing the virgins on Christmas Day, Augustine exhorts the entire congregation at the conclusion of the sermon: “What we wonder at in the flesh of Mary, do in the innermost places of your soul. Those who believe with the heart unto justice, conceive Christ. Those who confess with the mouth unto salvation (Rm. 10:10), bear Christ. Thus, be exuberantly fruitful in your minds, and let your virginity be preserved.” Reflecting upon Mary’s virginity, the Word becoming flesh, the Christian too can participate in the event of the Incarnation through faith. For, “the virgin was impregnated by the incarnation of Christ: let our breasts be impregnated with faith in Christ. The virgin gave birth to the Savior: let our soul give

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272 Augustine, s. 188.2 (PL 38: 1004; Hill, 32): “What praises, then, should we be singing to God’s love, what thanks should we be expressing! I mean he loved us so much that for our sake he came to be in time, though all times were made through him; and he was prepared to be in time, though all times were made through him; and he was prepared to be younger in age than many of his servants in the world, though he is older in eternity than all the world. He loved us so much that he became man though he had made man; that he was created, carried in arms he had fashioned, sucked breasts which he himself filled; that he lay squalling in a manger wordless in infancy, though he is the Word without whom human eloquence would be at a loss for words.”

273 Augustine, s. 191.4 (PL 38: 1011; Hill, 44): *Quod miramini in carne Mariæ, agite in penetralibus animæ. Qui corde credit ad justitiam, concipit Christum: qui ore confitetur ad salutem, parit Christum. Sic in mentibus vestris et fecunditas exuberet, et virginitas perseveret.*
birth to salvation, let us give birth and praise. Let us not be sterile: for our soul should be fruitful to God.”  

Mary’s fruitfulness upon receiving the divine Word becomes a sign of the very nature of the Church. The Christian can also become pregnant in faith through the celebration of the feast.

Further, this becoming what is received through the solemnity of Christmas also takes place as one contemplates the nature of angelic praise in the heavens. The angel’s cry to the shepherds, “Glory to God in the high places, and on earth peace to persons of good will,” signals the attention of the Christian to the remarkable nature of this birth.  

By taking upon themselves this phrase, the Christians joins one’s voice with the angelic choirs, “let us say as well, quoting them, with pure heart and with devoted voice, “Glory to God in the high places, and on earth peace to persons of good will.” Of course, as one would suspect by now, it is not enough merely to speak such a phrase. Rather, an exercise of seeking understanding of the heavenly praises (“let us meditate with faith and with hope and with charity”) of the angels, allows the Christian to become angelic: “For in as much as we believe and we hope and we desire, we too shall glory in the highest place with God, when with a risen, spiritual body we shall be snatched up into the clouds to meet Christ: if while we are on earth, we seek peace with good will.”

An exegesis of the text, a result yielding the angelic vocation of human beings, comes with a


275 Augustine, s. 193.1 (PL 38: 1013; Hill, 50): *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terrâ pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*

276 Augustine, s. 193.1 (PL 38: 1014; Hill, 50): *qui non pecorum pastoribus eum natum nuntiamus, sed ejus Natalitiam cum ejus ovibus celebramus: dicamus, inquam, et nos fidelì corde, devota voce, Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terrâ pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*

277 Augustine, s. 193.1 (PL 38: 1014; Hill, 50): *fide et spe et charitate meditemur*

278 Augustine, s. 193.1 (PL 38: 1014; Hill, 50): *Sicut enim credimus et speramus et desideramus, erimus et nos gloria in excelsis Deo, cum resurgente corpore spirituali rapti fuerimus in nubibus obviam Christo: si modo cum in terra sumus, pacem cum bona voluntate sectemur.*

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concomitant need to seek peace out of a good will. Such a will is not the result merely of human striving but of grace, God’s very gift; “therefore let good will persist against evil desires, and persist to implore help from the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Christian, seeking to live a life of faith, of hope, and charity, is not to seek this out of one’s own resources. The Christian does not earn the highest places, does not seize one’s angelic vocation. Rather, the transformation of the human will, and the angelic transformation that comes along with it, is a gift from God. It is love begetting love, an unmerited gift that renews what it means to be human in the first place.

The Incarnation, and its remembrance at Christmas, is thus a rhetorical sign eliciting a salutary humility to the one attentive to its grammar:

O manifest infirmity, and marvelous humility, in which was hidden total divinity! The infant was subject to his Mother, while his power was ruling; and he sucked upon her breasts, even as she was munching upon his truth. May he perfect in us these gifts, the one who did not abhor to share our beginnings; and may he make us into sons of God, the one who was willing to become a son of man.

The celebration of Christmas reveals the depths of God’s love, and the gratitude it provokes moves the Christian to be “a people of good will, sweetly joined to his bonds of unity.”

Augustine’s sermons on Christmas employ the images from this feast to contemplate the realities of Christian faith. The wonderful events of the mystery of the Incarnation are recalled through the Scriptures, while also being unfolded through Augustine’s paradoxical rhetoric.

Further, the awe stirred through the remembering of the divine condescension in both the

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279 Augustine, s. 193.2 (PL 38: 1014; Hill, 51): *Persistat igitur bona voluntas adversus concupiscentias malas, et persistens imploret auxilium gratiae Dei, per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.*

280 Augustine, s. 185.3 (PL 38: 998-99; Hill, 22).

281 Augustine, s. 184.3 (PL 38: 997; Hill, 19): *O manifesta infirmitas, et mira humilitas, in qua sic latuit tota divinitas Matrem cui subjacebat infantia, regebat potentia; et cujus ubera sugebat, eam veritate pascebat. Perficiat in nobis sua munera, qui sumere non abhorruit etiam nostra primordia: et ipse faciat nos Dei filios, qui propter nos fieri voluit hominis filius.*

282 Augustine, s. 185.3 (PL 38: 999; Hill, 22): *homines bonae voluntatis, suaviter connexi vinculis unitatis.*
Scriptures and in Augustine’s sermonic discourse becomes an occasion to seek understanding of Christ’s very nature, the Word made flesh. Theology is performed as an exercise of prayer. Finally, the chewing upon the signs of Christmas, and the *cogitationes* engaged in by Augustine and his congregation, culminates in becoming pregnant with faith, becoming peaceful in one’s will as the angels.

This same pedagogy is operative in all of Augustine’s sermons on the Christian feasts. At the beginning of Lent, the memory of Christ’s humble passion,\(^ {283}\) inspires practices of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer,\(^ {284}\) external signs that when understood\(^ {285}\) culminate in a transformation of the will.\(^ {286}\) Likewise, keeping vigil on the evening before Easter Sunday, read through the lens of the Scriptures, allows the Christian to contemplate the eternal wakefulness that will take place in the resurrection of the dead,\(^ {287}\) a taking up of the watchful heart necessary for greeting Christ at Easter,\(^ {288}\) a performance that takes place in the darkest hours to signify that in fact the night is no more.\(^ {289}\) So too, Augustine’s sermons on feast of the martyrs (whereby remembering the deeds of these holy men and women, and investigating their faith) elicit the desire of the Christian to imitate this same witness.\(^ {290}\) The sermons for a dedication of a church similarly begin with a reading of the outward signs, the construction of an earthly edifice viewed through the lens of the Scriptures, and ends with a series of exercises in which the Christian is also built up into a heavenly temple, a dwelling place for God in which the practice of worship within the

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\(^ {283}\) Augustine, s. 205.1 (PL 1039-40; Hill, 103).
\(^ {284}\) Augustine, s. 207 (PL 1042-44; Hill, 109).
\(^ {286}\) Augustine, s. 210.12 (PL 38: 1053-54; Hill, 124-25).
\(^ {287}\) Augustine, s. 223D.1-2 (PLS 2: 717-18; Hill, 224-25).
\(^ {288}\) Augustine, s. 223C (PLS 2:552-54; Hill, 222-23).
\(^ {289}\) Augustine, s. 221.3-4 (PL 38: 1090; Hill, 203-05).
\(^ {290}\) Augustine, s. 311 (PL 38: 1414-20; Hill, 71-80).
temple spills out its doors into that spiritual worship of love of neighbor. The whole liturgical year, and the sermons devoted to it, consists of exercises in remembering, understanding, in loving in such a way that one becomes what is received in the contemplation itself.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored Augustine’s sermons on baptism, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical year as rhetorical performances employing the signs of the Scriptures within the body of Christ as a persuasive form of therapy. These sermons formed the mystagogical imaginations of Christians, allowing them to use this newly formed imagination to seek understanding of both God and the human condition, and to practice the result of this imaginative inquiry in deeds of love. To become what they received in the preaching event itself.

Such a pedagogy, as I showed, included a learning of a sacramental way of perceiving the universe. A consideration of the signs of baptism, of water and of light connected to the deer, becomes a formation into post-baptismal desire, exercised through the search for God in both the marvels of creation and the limitations of human existence. The result of this formation is the Christian becoming the deer thirsting for life, seeking God in all signs of both creation and of human poverty. Augustine’s treatment of the Eucharist as a sacrament of divine humility is a medicine for pride. His pedagogy, informed by the humble images of a mother feeding her child, saliva running down the beard, humble signs that conceal great power, leads to specific practices in the Christian life including blessing, unity, self-examination in prayer, and Eucharistic trust in God. These Eucharistic exercises seek further understanding of God, and then attempt to practice these insights within the particularities of a human life. One is learning

Augustine, s. 337 (PL 38: 1478-79; Hill, 271-75).
to become like the Eucharist gift of Christ, handing oneself over in one’s own hands. All signs become an opportunity to give of oneself to God and neighbor.

By reflecting upon the evening sacrifice of the Church, Augustine exercises the understanding of the congregation relative to the signs of light and darkness of both Scripture and the cosmos, reconfiguring them as a medicine for hope. To practice this evening prayer, with true understanding, is to remember this sacrifice, and to desire to become this evening sacrifice in the world. Similarly, Augustine explores how singing a hymn of praise to God, an essential part of both morning and evening prayer, allows one to enter into the graciousness of the divine life. The Christian’s imagination is enriched with images of eternal life, the proper locale for perfect praise. Yet, the gap between the praise of this life and that of the future leads the Christian to a process of self-examination, whereby he or she strives to more fully understand the praise that one sings and to assimilate it into a way of life. This process culminates in becoming what one has received: The very body of the Christian is a hymn of praise offered to God. Finally, in his sermons on the liturgical year, as examined in the feast of Christmas, Augustine presents the essential signs for reading the feast. Simultaneously, his language elicits a desire for celebration of the feast in question. Engaging in understanding, out of this prayerful desire, the signs of the feast move the Christian to seek the reality of God that they re-present. And this act of seeking understanding through the signs of the feast culminates in becoming what one receives in the feast, a pregnant Mary, an angelic host, a newly constructed temple of God.

This survey of Augustine’s mystagogical method, now allows me to present an answer to the third anthropological interruption of chapter two: how the appropriation of the dispositions necessary for fruitful worship culminate in a liturgical identity, a person capable of offering spiritual oblations. This formation, as showed in chapter four, is nothing less, than the Christian
becoming the image of God, the memory, understanding, and will gradually capacitated to refer all signs to their reality. Such a process included an examination of the inner word, gradually reformed through the sights of faith, and then producing a truer outward word, of imaging God’s wisdom.

An Augustinian approach to mystagogical formation includes a formation of the imagination of the Christian, their very memory filled with meaningful signs and practices of the liturgical life of the Church, further enriched through the lens of the Scriptures. It also involves using these signs and practices to think about God, a process that necessarily encompasses the healing of our own internal narrative, the speaking of a truer inner word. Finally, an Augustinian mystagogical formation is a re-education of human desire, seeking to perform exterior deeds of love of God and neighbor through the interior renewal that has occurred. One learns about the liturgical act in the context of the Christian narrative, as a cultivation of memory; thinks about the practice through a theological seeking that is oriented toward both conversion and prayer, cultivating understanding; and then performs the practice anew through the results of these exercises, cultivating love. This is the practice of worshipful wisdom, and it results in a total transformation of the person into one capable of true worship.

Thus, Augustine’s mystagogical theology and catechesis provides the basis for a contemporary liturgical formation in which human experience is transformed into liturgical existence through an education into a sacramental way of perceiving the universe. Yet, how might the Church teach these dispositions today, re-forming the imaginations, the understanding, and the desires of Christians, teaching them to move from the signs of faith to the reality perceived, and then back again? What malaises do Christians suffer from today pertaining to the liturgical life of the Church, and what therapeutic, pedagogical exercises might parishes perform
to heal these diseases? These questions lead me to the final part of this work: an examination of how to perform this Augustinian approach to mystagogy in the present.
CHAPTER SIX
PRACTICING WORSHIPFUL WISDOM IN A SECULAR AGE

In the previous chapter, I presented an interpretation of Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy as a salutary formation of the Christian’s memory, understanding, and will through the signs of both Scripture and the liturgical rites. The exercises as performed within the sermons on baptism, Eucharist, daily prayer, and the liturgical prayer allow the Christian to savor the reality presented by the signs, to use the signs to re-configure one’s own narrative regarding God and human existence, and to strive to become like the signs that one meditates upon. Further, each of these exercises within Augustine’s therapeutic pedagogy enables the student in the school of Christ to participate more fully in the life of God through the signs of the created order, developing a mystagogical imagination necessary for Christian sacramental perception. This practice of worshipful wisdom in the sermons, profoundly catechetical and liturgical, capacitated the Christian to transform each facet of human existence into an occasion of divine worship, a spiritual oblation offered to God; the proper vocation of a creature made in God’s image.

Still, despite the importance of Augustine’s mystagogical theology and catechesis in my argument thus far, one should not conclude from my extensive treatment of the doctor of grace that the onus of mystagogical formation lies in the sermon alone. A servile imitation of Augustine, focusing solely upon an imitation of his rhetoric in preaching, may not be effective to the contemporary audience that one is addressing, capable of responding to the conditions of belief defining of modern life. In the final part of this exercise in pastoral theology, I examine
the present context of liturgical catechesis in the United States, as well as learning theory, in order to develop an Augustinian approach to mystagogy that may inform the whole catechetical life of the parish\(^1\), its way of remembering, understanding, and loving God through signs. Through this process, I am continuing the approach to pastoral theology that has informed this project, one in which the Christian educator considers how to teach practices in such a way that they becomes a way of life for the Christian. In this case, sociological and educational theory interrupts, inviting the catechetical theologian to adapt Augustine’s approach to mystagogical preaching to the catechetical life of the parish.

In this penultimate chapter, I first address the primary obstacle that the catechist must attend to in educating for a mystagogical approach to human living within the United States; namely, secularization. The root causes of American secularization, as I present it, includes an attenuation of the religious imagination, an impoverishment of theological thinking, and an exclusive emphasis upon individual flourishing. Second, turning to the contemporary educational theory of John Dewey, I argue that Dewey’s account of the reformation of habits and dispositions through a reconstruction of experience may shed light on the task of the liturgical catechist hoping to cultivate a mystagogical imagination in a secular age. Finally, I suggest that one way of teaching this mystagogical imagination within a parish is through incorporating elements of Etienne Wenger’s communities of practice into the catechetical approach of the parish.

The Malaise of American Secularization

A cursory overview of the catechetical documents of the Church in recent years leads the reader to the following conclusion: namely, in the present context, secularization is the primary obstacle to a fruitful appropriation of Christianity in the West. Yet, what do these documents mean by secularization? In the General Directory for Catechesis, secularization is treated as a manifestation of atheism, “which consists in an excessively autonomous view of man and of the world “according to which it is entirely self-explanatory without any reference to God.” More recently, in the Lineamenta in preparation for the 2012 Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, secularization is perceived more broadly. No longer understood as:

a direct, outright denial of God, religion or Christianity…the secularizing movement has taken a more subtle tone in cultural forms which invade people's everyday lives and foster a mentality in which God is completely or partially left out of life and human consciousness. In this way, secularism has entered the Christian life and ecclesial communities and has become not simply an external threat for believers but something to be faced each day in life in the various manifestations of the so-called culture of relativism.

This less explicit form of secularization manifests itself through both a culture of individualism and consumerism, ideologies that the National Directory for Catechesis notes “tends to trivialize,

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2 Ronald Rolheiser commenting upon the secular dilemma in catechesis, “It is no secret that we, as Christians in the secular world, are having trouble passing the faith on to our own children. Our churches are graying and emptying, and many of our own children are no longer walking the path of faith, at least not public and ecclesial faith, with us. The most difficult mission field in the world today is Western culture, secularity—the board rooms, living rooms, bedrooms, and entertainment rooms within which we and our families live, work, and play (Secularity and the Gospel: Being Missionaries to Our Children [New York: Crossroad, 2006]), 16.

3 Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, no. 22.

4 Synod of Bishops, Lineamenta, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 6

marginalize, or privatize the practice of religious faith.”⁵ Accordingly, secularization is treated as the marginalization of religion from the rest of human life, including both human reason and the public sphere, caused by certain features of modern thought and life.⁶

Yet, one problem with this expansive depiction of secularity is that the precise nature of the problem is passed over at the expense of a diagnosis that equates consumerism, individualism, and atheism with secularization. Indeed, both consumerism⁷ and individualism⁸

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⁷ Vincent J. Miller, describing the relationship between secularization and consumerism, suggests though religion may become commodified through secularization (understood as a deregulation of religious authority) such commodification need not result in a loss of religious tradition. According to Miller, a consumer culture is not a worldview or ethos but “a set of interpretative habits and dispositions supported by a variety of practices and infrastructures for engaging elements of any culture” (*Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* [New York: Continuum, 2008], 194). This commodification of culture “trains believers to abstract religious doctrines, symbols, and practices from the traditional and communal contexts that give them meaning and connect them to a form of life” (195). The way of inoculating against this commodification is through a formation into Christian tradition, “reembedding” doctrines, symbols, and practices within their historical tradition and the ongoing life of a community” (194). Secularization, as a deregulation of authority, thus makes possible a more thorough appropriation of a tradition, and thus potentially a robust form of Christian life capable of acting against secularization.
⁸ Individualism is treated as the source of secularization, one that will ultimately fail, in Emile Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Swain (New York: The Fress Press, 1965). He writes, “We are now able to appreciate the value of the radical individualism which would make religion something purely individual: it misunderstands the fundamental conditions of the religious life. If up to the present it has remained in the stage of theoretical aspirations which have never been realized, it is because it is unrealizable. A philosophy may well be elaborated in the silence of the interior imagination, but not so a faith. For before all else, a faith is warmth, life, enthusiasm, the exaltation of the whole mental life, the raising of the individual above himself” (472-73). This thesis of individualism would come to inform later accounts of secularization, exemplified by Steve Bruce, who recently wrote, “At the societal level, the long-term result is a shift to evermore liberal and tolerant forms of religion and eventually to benign indifference. When all faiths are in some sense equally valid, parents lack an incentive to indoctrinate their children, and the environment proves stony ground for such
may be symptoms of secularity, but they are not necessarily the defining feature of secularity.

Nor should one conclude that modern “ideologies” are a direct cause of secularization.⁹ Even further, some insights made possible by modern thought and social structures, such as the freedom of the individual, could lead to a more robust Christian identity rather than a weakened one, and thus serve as an inoculation against radical secularity.¹⁰ Of course, in making this claim, I am not suggesting that secularization is a sociological myth.¹¹ Rather, like Charles Taylor, I recognize that the best way of defining the process is neither political (the disappearance of religious influence upon the state) nor psychological (the disappearance of religion from human consciousness) but “a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.”¹² Secularity, then as Taylor notes, “is

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⁹ This point, though obscured by the length of the text, is essential to Charles Taylor’s A Secular Age (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009). Rather than deal with the social theory of secularization, he treats, the “social imaginary,” understood as the images and stories that ordinary people tell that make possible common practices and a sense of legitimation (171-72). Thus, secularization is not a result of theoretical ideas arising out of modernity, such as individualization and bureaucracy but a way of perception.
¹² Charles Taylor, A Secular Age, 3.
a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place.”\textsuperscript{13} And thus reducing it to a series of influential ideas, or unavoidable historical processes of modernity, cannot explain the \textit{truly} complex nature of secularization for religious belief in all contexts. The United States, despite high religious attendance vis-à-vis Europe, may be deeply influenced by secularity—a claim that is demonstrable only by attending to the specific religious narrative operative within an American context.

Thus, as Christian Smith has noted, a sociological analysis of the process of secularization requires “identifying and becoming highly familiar with the inherent and interactive operations and tendencies of all of the important causal mechanisms existing in modern social structures and practices that influence the strength and character of religion.”\textsuperscript{14} Ideas, apart from specific practices, do not lead to any social phenomenon since human beings are actors within the world, capable of choosing one way of life over another.\textsuperscript{15} “Secularization”, in the United States for example, was not an inescapable result of modernization, but instead a series of historical events in which specific intellectual activists

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Smith cautions against this sociological fallacy of reductionism, implicitly presumed by a strong social constructionism: “Human beings…are free, ensouled creatures of a particular kind, with the kind of nature about which we must get over our mental and emotional difficulties admitting if we hope possibly to understand ourselves. Yet humans are also material, embodied animals, nurtured and sustained in a physical world governed by causal powers and laws and their natural effects that we cannot simply deconstruct away. When it comes to the human, therefore, reductionist moves toward either the physical or the mental, the material or the ideal, the corporeal or the spiritual are unacceptable and self-defeating. Humans are embodied souls who can only be understood and explained in light of that complex reality (\textit{What is a Person?} 22).
successively argued for a marginalization of religion from public life.\textsuperscript{16} Likewise, those analyzing secularization theory have come to see that the processes of modernization do not function univocally across cultures, and thus no narrative of secularization looks exactly like others.\textsuperscript{17} To diagnose and offer a treatment for secularization requires first an analysis of the nature of secularization within a specific context (the operative causal mechanisms), as well as determining how structures and practices within a culture, such as the United States, influence religious practice and understanding today. An account of secularization is best performed not through focusing upon –isms (consumerism, individualism, techno-centricism, relativism, pluralism etc.) but the particularities of religious practice and understanding in a specific time and place.

Still, it is outside the scope of this project (and the capacity of the author) to attend sociologically to the entirety of American religious practice.\textsuperscript{18} Rather, I can only point to certain


features of secularization in American religious life that are obstacles to the fruitful performance of liturgical prayer within the sacrament life of Catholicism—those conditions of belief that make it difficult to take up the way of sacramental perception (presented in chapters three through five) necessary for offering one’s very life as a spiritual oblation, the vocation of one made in the image of God.

One way of describing these conditions of belief is through attending to the results of Christian Smith’s analysis of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). This survey, first conducted from July of 2002 to March of 2003, is in its third wave with its most recent interviews occurring in 2007 and 2008. The results of this longitudinal study, thus far covering the religious lives of American youth from ages fifteen to twenty-three, have been published in two studies, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005) and *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (2009). The interviewees, chosen in the first stage, “were sampled to capture a broad range of difference among U.S. teens in religion, age, race, sex, socioeconomic status, rural-suburban residence, region of the country, and language spoken (English or Spanish).”19 The third stage continued to represent the diversity of both American religion and culture, and thus, this study serves as an accurate lens of assessing American religiosity among youth cross-culturally.20

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Nonetheless, one may challenge the wisdom of narrating American religious belief and practice through both adolescents and emerging adults.\textsuperscript{21} As Smith himself concludes in comparing the results of the NSYR’s third wave to the General Social Survey’s data on religion collected between 1990 and 2006,\textsuperscript{22} “one can be confident that whatever the remaining chapters reveal about the religious and spiritual lives of contemporary emerging adults, these persons are not typical religiously of all adults of all age groups in the United States.”\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand, young people, whether adolescents or emerging adults, do not learn religious beliefs or practices in a social vacuum. One of the more remarkable findings of the NSYR is the influence of parental and adult religious belief and practice upon adolescent and emerging adult religiosity. For example, among adolescents about three of every four say they have similar beliefs to their parents\textsuperscript{24} and few explore religious traditions distinct from whatever was practiced within the home.\textsuperscript{25} In fact, the strongest indicator of adolescent religiosity is parent religiosity.\textsuperscript{26} Even for emerging adults, those with the highest church attendance and who have assimilated their beliefs into a way of life, consisting of spiritual practice and service to the world, are children of parents who themselves exhibit high levels of religiosity.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, adolescent and emerging adult religious belief, while distinct because of the life stage and historical period in which it is

\textsuperscript{21} Emerging adults are, according to Smith and Snell, a stage of development between adolescence and adulthood, marked by “intense identity exploration, instability, a focus on self, feeling in limbo or in transition or in between, and a sense of possibilities, opportunities, and unparalleled hope” (Souls in Transition, 6).

\textsuperscript{22} For the results of the General Social Survey, now up to 2010, see http://www.norc.org/GSS+Website/ (accessed June 7, 2011).

\textsuperscript{23} Smith and Snell, Souls in Transition, 102.

\textsuperscript{24} Smith and Denton, Soul Searching, 34.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 36-37.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 111.

\textsuperscript{27} Smith and Snell, Souls in Transition, 226.
nurtured, is not incommensurate with assessments of adult faith. Finally, one should note that although adolescents and emerging adults are in different life stages than older adults, they do not necessarily reside in distinct social and cultural realities from one another. As Smith describes in his work, What is a Person?, “…institutional facts of social reality come into being, take on real ontological existence, and thus come to possess casual capacities to make events happen in the world.” Therefore, religious belief of adolescents and emerging adults are dependent upon definite historical and social facts that while “experienced” differently by younger generations are part of the world of adult religion nonetheless. As Smith addresses in both of his studies on religion among adolescents and emerging adults:

studying the lives of young people in social context is a great way to enrich adults’ perspective on their own adult society and lives. By examining the world of contemporary emerging adults…we hold up a mirror that reflects back to adults a telling picture of the larger adult world—their own world—into which emerging adults are moving. Hence, Smith’s analysis of adolescent and emerging adult religious life allow the liturgical and catechetical theologian a window into the nature of American secularization, one that will influence pedagogy practiced within the parish.

28 Sarah Caffrey Bachand rightly calls attention to the missing dimension of development within Smith’s work on adolescence (“Living God or Cosmic Therapist?: Implications of the National Survey of Youth and Religion for Christian Religious Education,” Religious Education 105 (2010): 140-56). Indeed, the inarticulate nature of adolescence belief does require that one attend to the developmental capacity of adolescents in speaking of God in the complex way that Christian tradition requires. Nonetheless, one should be careful in concluding (as Bachand does) that the role of the religious educator is not the correction of misunderstood conceptions of God through greater attention to telling the Christian narrative but “to cultivate a way of making-meaning that is capable of bringing fullness of life to self and others, person and society, here and hereafter” (153). Still, correcting misconceptions through an encounter with the “peculiar” particularities of Christian tradition may in fact be essential to adequate development in the first place. See, Kendra Creasy Dean, Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61-84.
29 Smith, What is a Person, 184.
30 Smith and Snell, Souls in Transition, 4.
What can be said from Smith’s analysis regarding American secularization? Importantly, secularization in the United States is not a matter of the disappearance of religion from human consciousness. Strikingly, both *Soul Searching* and *Souls in Transition* present young people with highly conventional religious beliefs. Adolescents who call themselves non-religious are few, roughly only sixteen percent of those surveyed. Further, among the non-religious, only sixteen percent are either atheist or agnostic. By the time these teens reach emerging adulthood, the non-religious population has increased but by no means substantially so. Twenty-four percent of emerging adults call themselves non-religious. And again, of these twenty-four percent, only seventeen percent do not believe in God. As Smith and Snell write comparing the results of waves one/two and wave three of the data:

The majority of emerging adults also still are theists, believe that God rather than purely natural forces created the world, and identity with a more traditional view of the nature of God, Jesus Christ, divine judgment, angels, evil spirits, miracles, and life after death. Furthermore, most emerging adults seem positive about organized or mainstream religion in the United States. Most have respect for, are positive about, and are not personally turned off by it. The vast majority also have positive feelings about the religious tradition in which they were personally raised.

Of course, one should not determine from this data that religion is an essential part of the lives of emerging adults, or that when adolescents and emerging adults use religious terms they do so in a “traditional” way. Drawing conclusions from the language employed in interviews conducted in wave three, Smith and Snell conclude that most emerging adults are indifferent toward religion, perceiving its purpose primarily as a school of morals appropriate to teaching children

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32 Ibid., 86.
34 Ibid., 119.
35 Ibid., 141.
but unnecessary for a vibrant adult life.\textsuperscript{36} One of the interviewees, John, although himself a frequent user of cocaine and marijuana, a rare attender of Catholic Mass, and at least desiring to be seen as sexually promiscuous (claiming to have slept with over thirty women) has no problem articulating his hopes for his religious self in thirty years: “Dragging my kids to church, sending them to CCD.”\textsuperscript{37}

More so, the particularities of religious belief seem to matter little to either adolescents or emerging adults.\textsuperscript{38} Again, in the most recent wave of data and interviews, emerging adults confess that the vital aspect of any religion is belief in God and general morality.\textsuperscript{39} Surprisingly, this indifference to the content of religious belief does not mean that either adolescents or emerging adults are syncretists, combining various religious traditions and practices into their own personal faith or “Sheilaism.”\textsuperscript{40} Nor for that matter are they “spiritual seekers”\textsuperscript{41} or

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 145-51.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 206.
\textsuperscript{38} Smith and Denton writes, “The majority of U.S. teens would badly fail a hypothetical short-answer or essay test of the basic beliefs of their religion. Higher proportions of conservative Protestant teenagers than other Christian teens proved able to summarize elementary beliefs of their tradition, though often in highly formulaic terms. And teenagers affiliated with minority religious traditions—Mormon, Buddhist, Jewish, and other—who do not have the luxury of taking their religion for granted, also seem somewhat better able to explain the basic outlook and beliefs of their traditions. Otherwise, most teenagers held religious beliefs that, judged by their own religion’s standards, were often trivial, misguided, distorted, and sometimes outright doctrinally erroneous. The point here is not that U.S. teenagers are dumb or deplorable. They are not. The point is simply that understanding and embracing the right religious faith and belief according to their religions does not appear to be a priority in the lives of most U.S. adolescents—and perhaps many of their parents. Faith is usually just there, around somewhere, and most teens do believe something religious or other. But religion simply doesn’t seem consequential enough to most teenagers to pay close attention to and get right. Rather, most teens seem content to live with a low-visibility religion that operates somewhere in the mental background of their lives” (\textit{Soul Searching}, 137).
\textsuperscript{39} Smith and Snell, \textit{Souls in Transition}, 146.
\textsuperscript{40} Robert Bellah et al., \textit{Habits of the Heart}, 221.
\textsuperscript{41} Spiritual seeking is characterized by a concern to establish a personal basis for religious belief, cultivating a mystical sense of God’s presence within the world, a distrust of institutional religion, and affirm the infinite potential of human development. See, Robert C. Fuller, \textit{Spiritual...
“believers without belonging.” Only five to seven percent of adolescents include practices from other religious traditions in their own spirituality, with a slight increase among emerging adults, demonstrative of a decrease in importance of the dominant religion as the young adult differentiates from parents. Even when emerging adults use religious language drawn from other traditions, such as the frequent evocation of *karma* in discussing the foundations of morality, they do so without serious study or practice of that tradition.

Additionally, adolescents and emerging adults often consent to the religious beliefs and practices of the tradition (however diminished they may be) but do not allow these beliefs or practices to influence daily life. In fact, such beliefs and practices are often limited to the personal and subjective, since the cultural world of adolescents and emerging adults is defined by a kind of epistemological relativity, one in which “claims are not staked, rational arguments are not developed, differences are not engaged, nature (as in the natural world, the reality beyond what humans make up) is not referenced, and universals are not recognized.”

Smith and Snell write:

Most emerging adults have religious beliefs. They believe in God. They probably believe in an afterlife. They may even believe in Jesus. But those religious ideas are for the most part abstract agreements that have been mentally checked off and filed away.

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44 Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 47-48: “Talking about karma does not mean these emerging adults have any real interest in or knowledge about Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism or believe in reincarnation. Nor was it merely a hip shorthand for describing societal social control or divine judgment. Many did not even seem aware of those possible connections. Rather, karma appears to have become a shared, pop culture way of explaining the fair operations of good and bad in the world—among emerging adults, at least. Karma functions as a reminder for emerging adults that they can’t get away with bad stuff” (48).

45 Ibid., 51.
They are not what emerging adults organize their lives around. They do not particularly drive the majority’s priorities, commitments, values, or goals. They have much more to do with jobs, friends, fun, and financial security. Yes, basic religious beliefs indirectly help people to be good. But that comes out of deeply socialized instincts and feelings, not anything you have to really consciously think about or actively commit to. In this way, most emerging adults maintain various religious beliefs that actually do not seem to matter much.\(^{46}\)

Thus, emerging adults are at root religiously indifferent (it’s there, we like it well enough, and that’s okay), prone to follow personal feelings about religious teaching, and hesitant to perceive religion as a social or institutional phenomenon.\(^{47}\) Based upon this assessment of the religious or spiritual capital of both adolescents and emerging adults, one comes to an important conclusion regarding American secularization.\(^{48}\) Simply, American secularization is not a marginalization of religion in general from human life. Rather, it is, as Christian Smith has concluded elsewhere, a kind of internal secularization whereby the particularities of religious faith, its doctrines and practices, are subordinated in a way both like and unlike American civil religion (religiously

\(^{46}\)Ibid., 154.

\(^{47}\)Ibid., 286-87. One should also be aware that emerging adults are not particularly committed to any social institution or project as a whole, avoiding volunteering and financial giving. Smith and Snell comment, “They are so focused on themselves, especially on learning to stand on their own two feet, that they seem incapable of thinking more broadly about community involvement, good citizenship, or even the most modest levels of charitable giving” (71). This may be a feature of emerging adult development, one that will disappear as these adults grow older, gain access to more money, and become involved in the lives of their children.

\(^{48}\)Laurence R. Iannaccone writes, “Religious capital is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of most religious activity. Religious capital—familiarity with a religion’s doctrines, rituals, traditions, and members—enhances the satisfaction one receives from participation in that religion and so increases the likelihood and probable level of one’s religious participation. Conversely, religious participation is the single most important means of augmenting one’s stock of religious capital. Religious activities yield a stock of specialized skills that enhance the satisfaction received from subsequent religious activities. In this last respect, religion is like many other household activities that involve learning by doing” (“Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach,” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 29 (1990): 299-300. For a critique of this definition of religious and spiritual capital as too static and inattentive to power structures, see Bradford Verter, “Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu,” Sociological Theory 21 (2003): 150-74.
universal but politically apathetic).\textsuperscript{49} This process of secularization results in a parasitic religious perspective that he calls Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD).

What does Smith mean by this term, and how would this religious “parasite” present an obstacle to an Augustinian approach to mystical formation? First, MTD confesses an existence of God that has created the world and watches over human existence. This God desires human beings to be good to one another, the foundation of all morality. Further, the ultimate meaning of life is happiness and personal well-being. God only becomes involved in this life when there is problem to be solved. And, those who are good eventually end up in heaven.\textsuperscript{50}

While the substance of this “creed” (as learned from parents) was first laid out among Smith and Denton’s research into adolescent religious life, the third wave of data has confirmed that this common religious outlook remains prevalent among emerging adults, although under a process

\textsuperscript{49} Christian Smith, “Is Moralistic Therapeutic Deism the New Religion of American Youth?: Implications for the Challenge of Religious Socialization and Reproduction,” in \textit{Passing on the Faith: Transforming Traditions for the Next Generation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims}, ed. James Heft, S.M. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 55-74. By American civil religion, Smith relies upon the work of Robert Bellah: “What we have, then, from the earliest years of the republic is a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity. This religion—there seems no other word for it—while not antithetical to and indeed sharing much in common with Christianity, was neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian. At a time when the society was overwhelmingly Christian, it seems unlikely that this lack of Christian reference was meant to spare the feelings of the tiny non-Christian minority. Rather, the civil religion expressed what those who set the precedents felt was appropriate under the circumstances. It reflected their private as well as public views. Nor was the civil religion simply "religion in general." While generality was undoubtedly seen as a virtue by some, as in the quotation from Franklin above, the civil religion was specific enough when it came to the topic of America. Precisely because of this specificity, the civil religion was saved from empty formalism and served as a genuine vehicle of national religious self-understanding (Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” in \textit{Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 175-76.

\textsuperscript{50} Smith and Denton, \textit{Soul Searching}, 162-63.
of constant refinement through developing adult experience and the growing capacity to articulate religious faith, or lack thereof. The purpose of this faith is the fostering of:

subjective well-being in its believers and to lubricate interpersonal relationships in the local public sphere. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism exists, with God’s aid, to help people succeed in life, to make them feel good, and to help them get along with others—who otherwise are different—in school, at work, on the team, and in other routine areas of life.

In some sense, MTD is evidence of the success of the liberal Protestant project in the United States in which religious leaders in the early twentieth century capitulated to certain features of modern thought, including individualism or freedom, pluralism and tolerance, democracy, and at least among intellectuals, the elevation of scientific inquiry to religious status. Thus, the religious ethos that Americans inhabit, based upon the discourse of the emerging adults interviewed by Smith and Snell, is defined by “individual autonomy, unbounded tolerance, freedom from authorities, the affirmation of pluralism, the centrality of human self-consciousness, the practical value of moral religion, epistemological skepticism, and an instinctive aversion to anything ‘dogmatic’ or committed to particulars…” But, unlike liberal Protestantism, religious language is no longer characterized by hope in historical progress and commitment to the political aspects of the kingdom of God. Instead, perhaps due to the influence and success of American evangelicalism, religious language and understanding has developed “into a popular mentality about religion that presumes that the sum total purpose and

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52 Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 169.
55 Ibid., 289.
value of religion per se are simply the practical benefits it affords believers. Religious faith becomes good if and because it makes people do better, if it helps them live more moral lives.”

Thus, the present obstacle, at least to those seeking to teach within specific faith traditions, of undertaking an Augustinian mystagogical formation is three-fold. First, American secularization is an attenuation of the religious imagination. The particularity of the signs of any religious faith ultimately does not matter; for the purpose of all religion is simply belief in God and a moral life. The narratives and practices of religion are marginal to this metanarrative. Therefore, to introduce Christians into an approach to liturgical worship whereby one becomes more fully the image of God through meditating upon and appropriating the signs of worship into a way of life requires socialization into the signs in the first place. One must become adept in the images and practices of Christian tradition, including liturgical rites, the spiritual life, and the narratives and doctrines essential to the sacramental life of the Church. A Catholic moralistic therapeutic deist would have a difficult time practicing the mystagogy performed by Augustine.

Second, since these signs matter little in the first place, one should not be surprised to perceive a carelessness of theological thinking operative within most religious discourse.

Indeed, part of this hesitancy toward seeking understanding in religion is an instrumental

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56 Ibid., 292.
57 Ibid., 146.
58 Though discussing a quite different approach to “faith” than the one operative within Catholicism, Sharon Parks notes the transformative possibilities of images: “The young adults has a unique capacity to receive images that can form the dreams and fire the passions of a generation to heal and transform a world. It is the vocation of a culture—including every institution that shapes the formation of young adult faith—to inform and nurture the young adult imagination. By intention or default, the environments in which young adults dwell come communities of imagination, mentoring environments with the power to shape or misshape the promise of young adult faith” (Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000], 126.)
approach to education in the first place. That is, in college, for example “what matters is getting the credits, earning the diploma, and becoming certified as a college-educated person so that one can get a better job, earn more money, and become a good salary earners and supporter of a (materially) comfortable and secure life.” Questions of meaning are peripheral in such an education. Further, since the particularities of each religion is considered a matter of social construction, disconnected from any claims regarding the way the world really is, then what is the point of asking questions in the first place? Discussion regarding religion seems to generate so little conflict among emerging adults, for example, precisely because the particularities of religious belief are unrelated to a true vision of the world, of oneself, or God. Finally, an underlying assumption of MTD is a privileging of scientific knowing over the “knowledge” one gains through faith. Smith and Snell write, “Science, experiments, research, and people’s own personal observations provide solid evidence, most emerging adults think, that certain things in reality are proven, are positive and reliable. Everyone should believe those things. But religion is not like that. It requires what some emerging adults call ‘blind faith.’” This privileging of scientific knowledge does not result in a diminution of religious belief for

59 Smith and Snell, Souls in Transition, 54.
62 Smith and Snell writes, “Different religions claim to be unique and do in fact emphasize distinctive ideas and rituals. But ultimately, most emerging adults say, all religions actually share the same core principles, at least those that are important…At heart, in this way all religions are essentially the same, the majority of emerging adults claim, because all religions share the same basic beliefs and values. Therefore, anybody who follows any particular religion is ultimately just like any other religious person following any other religion. People can choose different faiths for themselves, but underneath the different faiths are about the same things. They only differ in their outward appearances and emphases” (Souls in Transition, 145).
63 Ibid., 158.
most, precisely because such belief functions to build up subjective well-being, not to make claims regarding reality. Hence, an operative set of doctrines and dogma does guide religious belief today, primarily influenced by “individual experience,” that which is tangible and visible, over any particular set of traditions. Of course, this becomes a problem for those seeking to inculcate a mystagogical imagination in a community, one that relies upon an epistemology that perceives more in the world of signs than what is visible to the eye. To become capable of perceiving a world sacramentally (and thus truly), the “student” of Christianity will need to permit one’s internal narrative or experience—the inner word—to be reformed by the sights of faith, and thus to become a more true outer word. This is a process, which involves reading, understanding, self-examination, and seeking the reality of God through tradition-specific visible signs, and in the process, becoming capable of using the signs to enjoy the reality of God. One must become, as Paul Griffiths argues, a “religious reader.”

Finally, American secularization leads ultimately to an exclusive emphasis upon individual flourishing detrimental to the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith integral to Augustine’s mystagogy. Indeed, I need to be careful here in this claim, since I do not want to argue that an Augustinian mystagogical formation requires self-abnegation to the point of violence or passivity

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64 Ibid., 52-53.

65 Paul Griffiths, commenting upon this education into religious reading, writes, “According to views like this, externalist views, knowledge is understood as available only to those who have troubled to learn the skills necessary for access to it, and many, perhaps most, such skills can be learned only within the bounds of tradition-based practices. These practices might be of many kinds: an obvious candidate would be exposure to the proper way of reading or hearing the right works. And this, naturally, is where the religious reading comes in, for it is likely to be the case that religious readers will see their modes of reading as at least a necessary condition for the development of proper understanding. If tradition-specific reading skills are not practiced, then must knowledge (and probably all the most important knowledge), they will say, remains unavailable. This is a typical pattern of epistemological reasoning implied by religious reading” (Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999]), 74.
in the face of injustice. Still, the way that religion functions in the lives of both adolescents and emerging adults operates out of an understanding of flourishing, which is too narrow. As Smith and Denton write:

> What legitimates the religion of most youth today is not that it is the life-transformative, transcendent truth, but that it instrumentally provides mental, psychological, emotional, and social benefits that teens find useful and valuable. This is not an unambiguously bad (or good) fact. Most people would hope and expect that religious faith would indeed help youth to behave well, avoid trouble, solve problems, feel supported, and be happy. No American religious tradition actively promotes poor behavior, negative attitudes, and unhappiness. But all major American religious traditions have historically been about more than helping individuals make advantageous choices and maintain good feelings.66

The religious lives of emerging adults show a similar correlation between religious practice and individual flourishing. Among those interviewed, few see any problem with consumerism, or demonstrate a commitment to serving one’s neighbor.67 The religious beliefs that they hold function as cognitive place-holders, failing to culminate in transformation of one’s fundamental identity. Indeed, this is highly problematic for a mystagogical formation necessary for fruitful liturgical prayer. For one’s body to become a sacrifice, an offering to God, will require some renunciation of individual flourishing on the part of the Christian. To become the image of God necessitates that the Christian “die” to understandings of what it means to become human (as consumer/producer, for example) apart from the gift of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Only then will the Christian perceive opportunities for participating in Christ’s sacrifice in acts of Eucharistic love elicited by all created signs.

Therefore, a diagnosis of American secularization is fundamentally a matter of an impoverished religious imagination, an inattention to theological thinking, and an exclusive focus upon individual flourishing. To respond to this malaise will require a proper treatment, a

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religious socialization into Catholic particularity through the whole life of the parish. Yet, how might a parish teach the signs of faith in a way that they enrich the imagination of Christian? What type of education will form the Christian in a more sacramental way of theological thinking? In what way might a parish formation program provide opportunities for the reformation of a Christian’s identity so that the narratives and practices of salvation become a way of life? To answer these questions, I now turn to the educational philosophy of John Dewey and Etienne Wenger’s communities of practice.

**John Dewey and Education as Dehabituation**

On one level, John Dewey (1859-1952), an American philosopher, educator, and public intellectual is a curious choice for developing an Augustinian mystagogical pedagogy within the catechetical life of a Catholic parish. Raised in a Congregational church in Burlington, VT, Dewey’s childhood religion was a mix of Evangelical piety with a liberal New England Calvinism, inspired by the Social Gospel movement. Entering the University of Vermont in 1875, Dewey became interested in a neo-Hegelian synthesis of Christianity and philosophy, one that sublimated the doctrine of Christian teaching to a philosophical universalization of its

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68 Bernard Marthaler, “Socialization as a Model for Catechesis,” in *Foundations of Religious Education*, ed. Padraic O’Hare (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 64-92. In particular, Marthaler writes, “It is not enough for catechists to interpret human experience in the context of a vague kind of theistic humanism that too often is passed off as “incarnational faith.” Catechesis must rather present the kind of sacramental view of the universe that Langdon Gilkey and others identity as distinctively Catholic: all reality—even sin and failure—is seen as the sign and instrument of salvation. The catechist has no arcane set of special truths not otherwise available, but he/she is the heir to a symbol/system that has the power to disclose ultimate meaning and transform the lives of individuals and communities” (76-77).

symbols.  Though initially active in a congregation in Ann Arbor as a young professor at the University of Michigan (even offering courses in religious education), Dewey later ceased to engage in any formal religious practice once he moved to the University of Chicago and later Columbia University. In fact, as Steven Rockefeller persuasively argues, Dewey’s practice of religion in any particular church became unnecessary through a new-found emphasis upon experimental science, a democratic spirituality, and an interpretation of religious faith as subject to an emerging evolutionary process, such that Christianity should be entirely reconstructed according to the ideals of modern thought. Toward the end of his career, he would write once more on religion in *A Common Faith* (1934), emphasizing its natural foundations:

In the degree in which we cease to depend upon belief in the supernatural, selection is enlightened and the choice made in behalf of ideals whose inherent relations to conditions and consequences are understood. Were the naturalistic foundations and bearings of religion grasped, the religious element in life would emerge from the throes of the crisis in religion. Religion would then be found to have its natural place in every aspect of human experience that is concerned with estimate of possibilities, with emotion stir by possibilities as yet unrealized, and with all action in behalf of their realization. All that is significant in human experience falls within this frame.

As a member of the school of pragmatism, Dewey would have rejected much of Augustine’s mystagogical theology and practice as dualistic: the inner/outer word, sign/thing, use/enjoy,

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70 Rockefeller writes, “Under the influence of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and his early experience with philosophy in the 1880s, Dewey gradually came to the realization, then, that most fundamental to a vital religious life are personal experiences of unification whether they be predominantly moral, aesthetic, and mystical, or intellectual in nature…in the light of his own intellectual, moral, and mystical experience, he did not doubt the existence or importance of the religious dimension of experience, but given his faith in intelligence he was not willing to let traditional theological ideas control his own philosophical inquiries and eventual interpretation of religious experience” (*John Dewey*, 75).

71 Ibid., 136-45.


As a philosopher, one deeply committed to an empirical method for ascertaining knowledge of the world against any “spiritual” metaphysics, he would have been discomforted by Augustine’s belief that the visible, created order is a sign of an invisible, eternal reality. And, as one dedicated to the humanizing possibilities of democratic inquiry, the historical evolution of religious traditions into a universal, common faith, he would have disagreed with Augustine’s presumption that the only way one becomes fully human (the image and likeness of God), capable of offering true sacrifices of love, is through the Eucharistic pedagogy of the Church.

Yet, Dewey’s approach to “experiential” or “empirical” education is not entirely devoid of insight for the catechetical theologian desiring to teach or perhaps more aptly initiate into an

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74 “The objection to dualism is not just that it is a dualism, but that it forces upon us antithetical, non-convertible principles of formulation and interpretation. If there is complete split in nature and experience then of course no ingenuity can explain it away; it must be accepted…But philosophical dualism is but a formulated recognition of an impasse in life; an impotence in interaction, inability to make effective transition, limitation of power to regulate and thereby to understand…Only when obstacles are treated as challenges to remaking of personal desire and thought, so that the latter integrate with the movement of nature and by participation direct its consequences, are opposition and duality rightly understood” (John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* in *Later Works* 1, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 186.

75 He writes, “We must conceive the world in terms which make it possible for devotion, piety, love, beauty, and mystery to be as real as anything else. But whether the loved and devotional objects have all the qualities which the lover and the devout worshipper attribute to them is a matter to be settled by evidence, and evidence is always extrinsic” (*Experience and Nature*, LW 1:377). For an analysis of Dewey’s naturalistic metaphysics in *Experience and Nature*, see Rockefeller, *John Dewey*, 380-89. Also, John Dewey, “The Philosophy of Whitehead,” in *The Later Works* 14, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, 123-40.

76 “Now appeal for supernatural intervention of intelligence in improvement of social matters is also the expression of a deep-seated laissez-faireism; it is the acknowledgment of the desperate situation into which we are driven by the idea of the irrelevance and futility of human intervention in social events and interests. Those contemporary theologians who are interested in social change and who at the same time depreciate human intelligence and effort in behalf of the supernatural [Reinhold Niebuhr], are riding two horses that are going in opposite directions. The old-fashioned ideas of doing something to make the will of God prevail in the world, and of assuming the responsibility of doing the job ourselves, have more to be said for them, logically and practically” (*A Common Faith*, LW 9:52).
Augustinian practice of worshipful wisdom in a secular age. His commitment to education as a necessary consequence to philosophy arose because of an abiding hope that learning to think in a specific way might have an effect upon the social order. In addition, rather than construct an artificial dualism between a practical and a theoretical life, the educator “should regard practice as the only means (other than accident) by which whatever is judged to be honorable, admirable, approvable can be kept in concrete experienceable existence.” Simply, the quality of one’s habits of thinking affects the intelligence of the practices or actions that one performs, and these intelligent actions bring about a change in the quality of future experience. Education enables a better practice of life through a “critical acquisition of habits of conduct, controlled by the ideal values that nurture human growth.” Thus, as the catechetical theologian considers how one set of habits (a way of perceiving, knowing, understanding, etc.) brought about by American secularization may be reformed by another (the transformation of human experience through an education into a sacramental way of perceiving the universe, constitutive of being made in the image of God), Dewey’s theory of experiential education may be of some assistance. For the catechetical theologian, who seeks to form Christians in these mystagogical habits, shares with Dewey the desire that an education into a way of knowing is perfected through thoughtful and loving action.

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78 Rockefeller, John Dewey, 233-36.
80 John Dewey, Experience and Nature, LW 1:126: “‘Though,’ reason, intelligence, whatever word we choose to use, is existentially an adjective (or better an adverb), not a noun. It is disposition of activity, a quality of that conduct which foresees consequences of existing events, and which uses what is foreseen as a plan and method of administering affairs.”
What does Dewey mean by both habits and dispositions? To ask this question is to approach the fundamentals of his theory of learning. Indeed, every human being is born with certain capacities, naturally functioning organic structures, and physical “impulses,” such as the ability to breathe or to digest food. Yet, even the most basic human action, a child learning how to properly nurse from the breast of his or her mother, is a transaction between that child and the environment (the guiding hand of the mother, shaped by both biological instinct and the development of specific habits). By environment, Dewey means “those conditions that promote or hinder, stimulate or inhibit the characteristic activities of a living being. Water is the environment of a fish because it is necessary to the fish’s activities—to its life.” Indeed, left to this interaction between the natural structures and environment of the family (the artifacts of the home, the social communications between members of the family, books read around the hearth), the child would receive an “informal” education into what constitutes a meaningful life, affecting how one acted, one’s identity as a member of this family, one’s “habits.”

According to Dewey, “the essence of habit is an acquired predisposition to way or modes of response…Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts. It means will.” If a child is hungry, and a parent always gives this child a cookie to sate this hunger, then the child will gradually connect hunger with eating a cookie, developing what the doctor will later call a “bad habit.” Likewise, a driver in the city of Boston, who generally expects

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84 Ibid., 65-66.
someone to pass through a light, even when red, develops a habit to move his or her foot to the brake at a moment’s notice so as not to experience daily accidents. Dispositions are a collection of habits, “a potential energy needing only opportunity to become kinetic and overt.” The child has a disposition for eating cookies for snacks, and afternoon hunger may (though not necessarily) lead to an activation of the habit. The driver is disposed to brake suddenly when making a left turn at an intersection, and a change of the environment through the introduction of a hazardous driver will call forth action, unless the driver is occupied by something else in the environment (talking on a cellphone). Yet, habits are not only physical responses to external stimuli. Dewey writes, “Modes of thought, of observation and reflection, enter as forms of skill and of desire into the habits that make a man an engineer, an architect, a physician, or a merchant.”

The theologian as much as the cookie-eater has habits, ways of reading a text, of writing an essay, of lecturing, which make that person the theologian he or she is. Habits and dispositions are tendencies to be a certain type of person. A person’s very identity, their “self,” emerges through an intelligent (or potentially non-reflective) formation of habits and dispositions. One’s “mind”, a tendency to act in specific ways based upon one’s interests, is a result of the habits that one has developed through interaction with a social environment.

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87 Ibid., 34.
89 Dewey writes, “Now every such choice sustains a double relation to the self. It reveals the existing self and it forms the future self. That which is chosen is that which is found congenial to the desires and habits of the self as it already exists. Deliberation has an important function in this process, because each different possibility as it is presented to the imagination appeals to a different element in the constitution of the self, thus giving all sides of character a chance to play their part in the final choice. The resulting choice also shapes the self, making it in some degree, a new self….Consequently, it is proper to say that in choosing this object rather than that, one is in reality choosing what kind of person or self one is going to be” (Ethics in LW 7, ed. Jo Ann Boydston [Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989], 286-87).
90 Dewey writes, “‘mind denotes every mode and variety of interest in, and concern for, things: practical, intellectual, and emotional. It never denotes anything self-contained, isolated from the
Thus, a person’s habits strictly speaking may never be understood apart from social life. The customs of a society, a kind of public collection of habits of one’s tribe, shapes “the desires, beliefs, purposes of those who are affected by them.”\textsuperscript{91} Formal education within any society is dedicated to a process of social control whereby these customs or public habits are communicated from one generation to another through the environment and regulated by cultural norms, directing the student to develop a certain way of thinking, acting, understanding, feeling, or desiring necessary for abiding within that society. In \textit{Democracy and Education}, Dewey writes:

Society not only continues to exist \textit{by} transmission, \textit{by} communication, but it may fairly be said to exist \textit{in} transmission, \textit{in} communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge—a common understanding….Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks…The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions—like ways of responding to expectations and requirements.\textsuperscript{92}

A parent, who surrounds his or her child with pennants from the Boston Red Sox, takes the child to Fenway Park on opening day each year, and refers to the Yankees as the “Evil Empire” will

\textsuperscript{91} Dewey, \textit{Democracy and Education}, 46.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 7
most likely form the child’s desires, beliefs, and purpose in the disposition of being a Red Sox fan (watching the games on NESN, going frequently to Fenway Park, booing at people with Yankee hats). Part of the attraction to being a Red Sox fan is its shared nature, not only with one’s father or mother, but the city of Boston where the child resides.

This education into the customs of a society is obviously not always positive. In a civilization dedicated to warfare, one in which the environment rewards impulses of aggression and treats with shame the refusal to fight, a child will develop bellicose habits—indeed, problematic if this child is one day in an environment that is peaceable (or wants to be so) rather than pugnacious. 93 Further, habits can also be blinding, grooves that limit future creative action. Dewey writes, “Habit is an ability, an art formed through past experience. But whether an ability is limited to repetition of past acts adopted to past conditions or is available for new emergencies depends wholly upon what kind of habit exists.” 94 The Red Sox fan may one day discover that by devoting hours watching NESN each evening, spending a fortune on going to the ballpark, and developing enemies throughout the Bronx, his or her habits of mind limited additional opportunities to go the symphony, to take vacations to exotic locales, or to find a fast friend, who happens to have an affinity for the Bronx bombers.

Yet, how might such a discovery occur? For Dewey, the process of reconstructing habits is that of communication. In *Experience and Nature*, he writes “When communication occurs, all natural events are subject to reconsideration and revision; they are re-adapted to meet the requirements of conversation, whether it be public discourse or that preliminary discourse called thinking. Events turn into objects, things with a meaning.” 95 And this communication

93 Ibid., 17-18.
95 Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, LW 1:132
“increases the number and variety of habits” in such a way that the rest of one’s habits become less hardened, more responsive to new situations. The Red Sox fan, who one day becomes friends with the Yankees fan (even discussing the respective merits and faults of each other’s teams in a civilized manner) may come to develop a new habit of being a fan without hating opposing fans. The habit of fanaticism is unhabituated through this communication. Further, the two fans may agree that cheering for one’s team, without hatred for the opposing fan, seems to be a more appropriate attitude for someone who shares their particular beliefs (one being Christian, the other Jewish). When the Yankees travel to Boston to take on the Sox, that fan may begin to strike up a conversation with those opposing fans dressed in pinstripes. The fanaticism previously defining of the Red Sox fan is replaced by those habits necessary for being a true fan, including an appreciation for the sport well-played. The opposing fan is no longer an object of disdain but a member of the human community. Such discoveries are essential to education within a democracy for Dewey. A democracy is not merely a form of government but “a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience,” one that requires “a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind, which secure social changes without introducing disorder.” Dogmatism is a problem in Dewey’s conception of education because it creates habits of mind that limit the possibilities of communication, and thus the shared meaning necessary for democratic life. If

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96 Ibid., 214.
98 Ibid., 105.
99 One of more Dewey’s more trenchant critiques of religious dogmatism occurs in the context of an account of human morality connected to present existence in Human Nature and Conduct. He writes, “To be grasped and held this consciousness needs, like every form of consciousness, objects, symbols. In the past, men have sought many symbols which no longer serve, especially since men have been idolaters worshipping symbols as things. Yet within these symbols which have so often claimed to be realities and which have imposed themselves as dogmas and
one held a “dogma” that all Yankee fans are inherently evil, then this would indeed limit the possibilities for future community.

And this transformation of events into things with a meaning, a process that affects our own desires, beliefs, understanding, our habits (and thus our “self”), is what Dewey means by education: “that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.”

Dewey’s emphasis upon experience in education requires some attention. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey writes, “Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that inner action of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication.” Indeed, at one level for Dewey, experience is whatever happens to a creature in a specific environment. He writes in *Experience and Education*:

> An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or event, the subject talked about being also a part of the situation; or the toys with which he is playing; the book he is reading…or the materials of an experiment he is performing.

Intolerances, there has rarely been absent some trace of a vital and enduring reality, that of a community of life in which continuities of existence are consummated” (MW 14:226). Yet, such religious dogmas—as Dewey narrates it—ultimately fail because they limit the possibility of human community, deforming a sense of wholeness into “fixed and defined beliefs expressed in required acts and ceremonies” (Ibid.). Of course, what Dewey fails to note, is that religion is not simply a sense of wholeness. Rather, his own unexamined claims regarding the universalization of religion into general human experience, as well as his assumption that scientific empirical method is the only true source of “knowing,” is itself a dogmatism, perhaps detrimental to the very type of democratic community he wishes to make possible. See, Steven W. Webb, *Taking Religion to School: Christian Theology and Secular Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2000).

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Yet, this is not the complete meaning of experience for Dewey. For through reconstructing or reorganizing experience, the human person grows, matures, and becomes more capable of reason or experimental intelligence.\(^\text{103}\) The purpose of education relative to experience is to begin to perceive the causes of one’s interaction with an environment, to form better ways of responding to the environment as a whole, and thus to have more intelligent experiences.\(^\text{104}\) Education is teaching a way of thinking or inquiry, informed by the experiential method whereby both the teacher and the learner begin with a specific activity of interest. This activity then presents a problem or question to be further analyzed through the information and instruments of observation available to both student and teacher. Hypotheses or solutions arise, which are then tested, and then applied.\(^\text{105}\) The educator, through influencing the environment of the student (asking questions, presenting new problems, setting up an experiment, discussing aspects of a text) in light of an awareness of the native habits or dispositions that each student possesses (curiosity, interest in specific problems or subject matters) assists the student in developing richer possibilities of both present and future experience.\(^\text{106}\) Experience becomes more meaningful, more complete, through reflective education. And by beginning with experience


\(^{105}\) Ibid., 170.

\(^{106}\) Dewey writes, “A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worth while” (*Experience and Education*, LW 13:22). For an application of Dewey’s empirical approach to reflection in teacher preparation, see Ana M. Martínez Alemán, “Waiting for Gabriel: Philosophical Literacy and Teacher Education,” *The Teacher Educator* 39 (Summer 2003): 39-42.
itself, the student comes to develop habits or dispositions for making present and future action more intelligent.\textsuperscript{107}

This last feature is essential to the proper appropriation of Dewey’s educational philosophy by the liturgical and catechetical theologian, and thus deserves more attention. Dewey sets forth his approach to reflective education, according to the empirical method, in his \textit{How We Think}. Thinking, for Dewey, is what makes experience intelligent and thus educative.\textsuperscript{108} A human being needs to learn to think just as much as he or she needs to learn to play the piano, since it is one human possibility among others.\textsuperscript{109} Still, each person is born with certain native capacities for thinking. For example, curiosity, a disposition that begins with the organic energy of the infant, is cultivated through social interaction, and then flowers “into interest in \textit{problems} provoked by the observation of things and the accumulation of material.”\textsuperscript{110} Likewise, a person begins with a biological capacity for suggestion; that is, ideas, images, thoughts pass before the mind’s eye without any direct control.\textsuperscript{111} Finally, a certain capacity for depth, understanding the difference between “the significant and the meaningless,” allows for more profound thinking to occur.\textsuperscript{112}

What does a well formed thought look like for Dewey? First, a difficulty occurs, leading to a sense of wonderment, a curious situation, a feeling of incompleteness.\textsuperscript{113} Second, one begins to define the nature of the problem: “The essence of critical thinking is suspended

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{108} Ibid., 148-49.
\bibitem{111} Dewey, \textit{How We Think}, MW 6:207-209.
\bibitem{112} Ibid., 210-11.
\bibitem{113} Ibid., 237.
\end{thebibliography}
judgment; and the essence of this suspense is inquiry to determine the nature of the problem before proceeding to attempts at its solution.”\textsuperscript{114} One considers the problem, reflects upon it, examines it further, and imagines other possibilities. Then, a suggestion arises, “the situation in which the perplexity occurs calls up something not present to the senses.”\textsuperscript{115} The deep thinker considers multiple possibilities, allowing an array of hypotheses to develop. Fourth, one begins to reason through the suggestion, “developing the bearings—or, as they are more technically termed, the \textit{implications}—of any idea with respect to any problem…”\textsuperscript{116} Finally, a hypothesis must be tested, put into action, to determine if it is true.\textsuperscript{117} There is a rhythm to this process of thinking, for “our progress in genuine knowledge always consists in part in the discovery of something not understood in what had previously been taken for granted as plain, obvious, matter-of-course, and in part in the use of meanings that are directly grasped without question, as instrument for getting hold of obscure, doubtful, and perplexing meanings.”\textsuperscript{118} Fundamentally, learning to think is developing a capacity to make meaning from connections.

How does one learn to think in this manner? First, education must be perceived as a kind of experimentation, beginning with action. Particularly in older children (and presumably in adults, although Dewey does not comment on adult education with any frequency in his writings), this requires playfulness. As Dewey writes, “When things become signs, when they gain a representative capacity as standing for other things, play is transformed from merely physical exuberance into an activity involving a mental factor.”\textsuperscript{119} Such serious play may become itself work, “\textit{interest in the adequate embodiment of a meaning} (a suggestion, purpose, 

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 238-39.  
\item \textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 239.  
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid.  
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 240.  
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 274.  
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 307. 
\end{footnotes}
aim) in objective form through the use of appropriate materials and appliances.”

The school educates in this training of playful and consequential thought through common action or practice that becomes meaningful in its shared performance. Dewey argues:

intelligent consecutive work in gardening, cooking, or weaving, or in elementary wood and iron, may be planned which will inevitably result in students not only amassing information of practical and scientific importance in botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, and other sciences, but (what is more significant) in their becoming versed in methods of experimental inquiry and proof.

In other words, one learns the signs of what one is studying through the social practice in which these signs are most communicative or meaningful for the student.

Second, one also learns to think through the use of language. The enlargement of one’s vocabulary is not merely an instance of becoming capable of higher orders of speech. Rather, “to grasp…a word in its meaning is to exercise intelligence, to perform an act of intelligent meanings or concepts readily available in future intellectual enterprises.” To learn the sense of a word, a phrase, a definition is to grow in understanding of that sign, of the natural world to which it refers, and to enrich future acts of knowing and acting where that word, phrase, or definition may come into play. By learning the meaning of words, phrases, technical terms, literary tropes, one enters into a broader world of thought, capable of taking part in the narrative of a society. One’s whole way of thinking is enriched, since new suggestions may occur that previously would not have been possible without learning the meaning of the sign, becoming socialized into its use.

Thus, engaging in experience without developing an adequate

\[\text{\par}^{120}\text{Ibid., 308.}\]
\[\text{\par}^{121}\text{Ibid., 312-13.}\]
\[\text{\par}^{122}\text{Ibid., 322.}\]
\[\text{\par}^{123}\text{Here, it is helpful to attend to Dewey’s emphasis upon socialization and individualization. Richard Rorty summarizing Dewey writes, ‘Dewey’s great contribution to the theory of education was to help us get rid of the idea that education is a matter of either inducing or educing truth. Primary and secondary education will always be a matter of familiarizing the}\]

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vocabulary to describe what is taking place, the problems that one encounters, the suggestions that come to mind, is to engage in incomplete and thus miseducative thinking.

Third, observation (and hence experimentation) alone does not educate thought. Rather, observation relies upon “plot interest”: “We hang on the lips of the story-teller because of the element of mental surprise. Alternatives are suggested, but are left ambiguous, so that our whole being questions: What befell next?”

Indeed, the educator needs to provide genuine problems to solve, which are not impossibly complex (a series of random events, occurring one after the other) but a series of patterned experiences. And these experiences become patterned through instruction itself. Importantly, Dewey’s experimental approach to education does not eliminate the need for instruction. Instead, the teacher provides information when it is needed to solve the problem, teaches it in such a way that it does not close off the process of thinking, and presents it so that it is “relevant to a question that is vital in the student’s own experience.”

The instructor becomes an intellectual guide or translator. For example, the Christian educator does not allow students to discern their own careers or vocation, without providing a narrative (a plot-

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young with what their elders take to be true, whether it is true or not...Socialization has to come before individualization, and education for freedom cannot begin before some constraints have been imposed. But, for quite different reasons, non-vocational higher education is also not a matter of inculcating or educing truth. It is, instead, a matter of inciting doubt and stimulating imagination, thereby challenging the prevailing consensus…” (“Education as Socialization and as Individualization,” in *Philosophy and Social Hope* [New York: Penguin Books, 2000], 118). Thus, learning the key words and meanings of a society is essential to Dewey, according to Rorty, even if Dewey thought the best way to learn these was through experience. Still, Dewey and Rorty’s sense of individualization as involving doubt and imagination is incomplete to the Christian educator, since the purpose of Christian formation is not “individualization” but becoming the image of God by contemplating the signs of faith to taste the divine reality, and thus recomposing one’s own narrative of God in the process. Thus, theological education, particularly in a parish may challenge the prevailing consensus of what a practice means to a person who carries it out but will do so out of loving contemplation of the signs. For these “signs,” “words,” “doctrines,” reveal the depths of what it means to be human.

125 Ibid., 335-37.
pattern) of what life means in the first place. This narrative of Christian vocation is introduced to elucidate the confusion the student may be undergoing, may include practices of prayer through which this narrative is assimilated, is open enough to allow for future reconstruction as a person grows in faith (God’s exterior calling becoming transformed into the subtle calling of love necessary for daily, married life), and is concerned with a depth question of all human experience: who am I to become?

What is the relationship, then, between Dewey’s understanding of habits and dispositions and his empirical, experiential, and reflective approach to education? Fundamentally, the quality of one’s habits or dispositions (typical ways that one thinks, desires, acts—a person’s identity) is what allows for “meaningful” experience. If one is habituated to perceive art as nothing else but décor than one’s experience at a museum is limited to questions of like or dislike (would this painting look good in my living room, possibly allowing me to advance in artistic status among my fellow nouveau riche)? The artistic sign is reduced to capital. Questions do not occur, observation is cut short, hypotheses do not develop, and the painting becomes art for art’s sake.

On the other hand, if one is to experience the work of art aesthetically, “the perceiver as well as the artist has to perceive, meet, and overcome problems; otherwise, appreciation is

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128 Bernard Lonergan refers to this process of “habituation” as “bias.” Individual bias is the egoist, who incompletely develops intelligence, refusing to ask questions, ceasing the process of reflection through desires and fears. Group bias consists of a bias within a developing social order, such that the social structures fail to contribute to new insights, directing “human imagination and emotion, sentiment and confidence, familiarity, and loyalty” to its own common sense ends. General bias is the refusal to place the art of inquiry at the center of one’s life at the expense of becoming a specialist in common sense alone. See, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 244-69.
transient and overweighed with sentiment...he must remake his past experiences so that they can enter integrally into a new pattern.”¹²⁹ To see the artwork in this way necessitates a series of habits or dispositions that allow the artist or perceiver to experience the artwork as meaningful, to develop habits of taste, standards of what constitutes excellent action.¹³⁰ These habits are only developed by becoming practiced in perceiving the artwork itself, a process that includes knowledge the painter, as well as the style of the artwork. As Philip Jackson writes:

The true appreciator of an art object, for Dewey, is not the causal listener or viewer. Rather, he is someone who has spent time with a work, has found it engaging, stimulating, puzzling, perhaps even troubling, and as a result of his sustained exploration of it, has undergone a significant change of some kind. His encounter with the object or performance forces him to modify his former habits, his old way of looking at things. The new and the old become integrated. They form a new pattern, a new way of perceiving.¹³¹

An aesthetic education would form specific habits or dispositions whereby the viewer of the work of art attends to the particularities of the artwork, dwelling with the artwork, all the while observing, asking questions, gaining greater access into what the art portrays, understanding the tropes/color schemes/musical scales employed; and finally using these particularities to recreate one’s own prior experience of the world.¹³² New habits develop by seeing an aesthetic experience to its very end, allowing it to communicate meaning through reforming prior ways of remembering, understanding, and acting. For this reason, the habit of constructing a new experience through reflective or experimental thought is the fundamental disposition for all education.

¹³⁰ Dewey writes, “The formation of habits is a purely mechanical thing unless habits are also taste—habitual modes of preference and esteem, an effective sense of excellence” (*Democracy and Education*, MW 9:226).
Thus, Dewey’s approach to educating habits and dispositions is valuable to the liturgical and catechetical theologian, teaching an Augustinian approach to mystagogy in a secular age, because it relies upon a dehabituation of experience through reflective thought. The educator begins with a practice, a particular “experience” that the student and educator must likewise see to its end. Through attending to the experience and noticing problematic aspects, the experience becomes meaningful. No longer a flow of sensations, it is a matter of human conversation, of meaning. The teacher and student then become engaged in a common endeavor, making meaning out of the experience, reconstructing past experience through engagement with the practice. Such engagement relies as much upon the teacher’s introduction of key terms, of traditional ways of practicing, of new and enticing problems solvable through the practice, as it does upon the undergoing of the experience itself. Then, this reconstruction of experience is tested through application within the world. One’s own narrative is reformed; one learns new habits, capable of responding to present conditions. Dewey’s approach to education shares with Augustine’s mystagogy an emphasis upon attending to signs, seeking understanding of what the signs mean, and allowing this process to transform the quality of one’s existence, one’s internal narrative, and thus one’s future practice. Dewey’s reconstruction of experience is akin to Augustine’s therapeutic pedagogy where one learns a way of remembering, understanding, and loving through specific practices that continually transform the identity of the person.

In light of the present context of the attenuation of the religious imagination, the impoverishment of theological thinking, and an exclusive emphasis upon individual flourishing, Dewey’s educational method is particularly apt for a parish seeking to cultivate a mystagogical imagination. The entire life of the parish (its sacramental formation programs, social justice and Christian service, the parish choir, etc.) must become an environment in which the signs of
Christian faith are made present and practiced. Christian formation becomes an experiment in practicing the signs (memory), understanding their referent (understanding), and allowing the signs to become assimilated into a way of life or habitual tastes (will), influencing future practice. And these revelatory signs become meaningful through contemplative inquiry within the conversation of a parish community, the teacher and student seeking an understanding that reforms their own narrative of what constitutes authentic human existence. One’s Christian identity then comes to include the results of this formation into particularity. A Christian is someone capable of making the sign of the cross, considering what an action means (marking the cross upon the body, a dedication of one’s whole self to Christ’s way of gift), examining whether one loves God and neighbor in such a way that this signing of oneself with the cross is an authentic action, and commits oneself to a way of love defined by the gift of the cross. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The parish becomes the school of faith in which one learns to practice worshipful wisdom.

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133 This contemplative pedagogy, one characterized by a practice of dwelling, is influenced by Christopher Dustin and Jo Ann Ziegler’s Practicing Mortality: Art, Philosophy, and Contemplative Seeing. They write, “Contemplative seeing is like ‘studying’ the stars: how they differ and yet remain the same in summer and on cold winter nights, or how they looked when you were four years old and wished upon them, or how, in later life, the heavens appear so much more vast and infinite though one still discerns an undeniable ordering of the cosmos…These instances have to do with a very specific way of seeing—the stars across the seasons and throughout your life…a way that we believe leads to a unique kind of knowing. This is a theoretical knowing in the original sense, and yet it is also essentially practical in that the visible particulars have been dwelt upon day in and day out…a dwelling that is practiced and participatory and, as a result, rich with mystery and fulfillment” (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14.

Of course, not every feature of Dewey’s educational philosophy is equally applicable to the Christian seeking to develop an Augustinian approach to mystagogy within the life of the parish. The aim of mystagogical formation is not more profound experience per se but a cultivation of the Christian’s memory, understanding, and will so that each Christian might “use” the signs of liturgical-sacramental prayer to “enjoy” God. Such cultivation will involve experience. Though, its aim is not growth in the quality of present and future experience, but becoming more truly the image and likeness of God.135 And this ecclesial reformation of human identity includes the performance of privileged practices, traditions, and doctrines as the definitive measure of what constitutes human flourishing.136 By communicating the meaning of these very specific teachings and practices within the life of a vibrant community of practice, one comes to more rich Christian identity, capable of mystagogical knowing and loving even in a secular age.137

**Etienne Wenger and Communities of Practice**

John Dewey’s educational philosophical provides certain features that might characterize an Augustinian mystagogical pedagogy, including the need to begin with a specific experience or

137 Ellen Charry writes, “…the literary turn may free theology from exclusive dependence on a narrow rationalism that excludes knowledge gained from inference, experience, prayer, and worship. In the case of literature’s interaction with the individual reader, this happens in isolation. But in the case of theology, the process occurs in community—the community of the received texts of the tradition as well as of the living reading community. The community’s articulated wisdom structures internalization of models within the context of a tradition…But the reading community also provides a context for the sociality lately reclaimed as essential to moral development…Communal practices such as prayer, liturgy, sacraments, works of charity, and study all strengthen Christian identity. That is one reason why Christian communities have been fussy about ordering these communal tasks” (*By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 27).
practice, which is then examined in order to reconstruct present experience, shaping an emerging identity in the process. This approach to learning through forming habits of reflective thinking may serve as a therapeutic pedagogy for a secular age in which the religious imagination is attenuated, theological thinking is infrequently performed, and individual flourishing is elevated at the expense of a Eucharistic pedagogy of self-gift. A person learns to perceive the particularity of the signs, to think with these signs, and to allow the result of this inquiry to transform future practice through contemplative inquiry. Nonetheless, Dewey’s primary concern was with education in a democracy and not the formation into Christian identity provided by the Catholic parish. In a Catholic parish, contemplative inquiry is essential to developing a mystagogical imagination but such a formation is to occur through the fundamental tasks of catechesis, including promoting knowledge of the faith, liturgical education, moral formation, teaching prayer, education for community life, and developing a missionary initiative.

Catechesis is not only a matter of teaching a way of thinking but fundamentally promoting communion with Jesus Christ, which:

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\text{by its own dynamic, leads the disciple to unite himself with everything with which Jesus Christ himself was profoundly united: with God his Father, who sent him into the world,}
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138 The *General Directory for Catechesis* emphasizes the importance of the parish in faith formation: “The parish is, without doubt, the important *locus* in which the Christian community is formed and expressed. This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God. In the parish, all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church. The parish is also the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows. It constitutes, therefore, a very adequate community space for the realization of the ministry of the word at once as teaching, education and life experience” (no. 257). A parish becomes a formative community space when it focuses upon the education of adults, engages in the work of evangelization to the alienated or religiously indifferent through pre-sacramental catechesis, consists of a hopefully nucleus of mature and committed Christians, and becomes a font of adolescent and childhood catechesis through the formation of adults (no. 258). See also, John Paul II, *Catechesi tradendae*, no. 67.

139 *General Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 85-87. The last chapter will examine in more detail how a parish may practice worshipful wisdom in the fundamental tasks of catechesis, including promoting knowledge of the faith, liturgical education, moral formation, and teaching to pray.

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Thus, one may ask, how might a parish develop a catechetical plan involving the practice of Augustinian worshipful wisdom, including an education into contemplative inquiry, through the catechetical environment of a parish?

One fruitful way of answering this question is through an exploration of Etienne Wenger’s communities of practice, especially related to identity formation. Wenger first uses the term “communities of practice” in the context of his study on situated learning in apprenticeship. Though reluctant to give a precise definition of a community of practice, Wenger attends to the meaning of the term through an illumination of its constitutive features, practice and community. First, according to Wenger, practice is what allows a person to perceive the world as meaningful. He writes, “The concept of practice denotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do.” The person, who “practices” the translation of Latin texts, begins to perceive words in English differently, noticing Latin roots. Further, the study of Latin for the sake of translating liturgical texts means that specific features of the Latin language will be of more import (ablative absolutes, subjunctive clauses, biblical language) than others, such as Ciceronian rhetoric.

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140 Ibid., no. 81.
143 Ibid., 47.
This negotiation of meaning through practice occurs through a two-fold dynamic between participation and reification. Participation describes:

the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises. Participation is both personal and social. It is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging. It involves our whole person, including our bodies, minds, emotions, and social relations.\(^{144}\)

This does not mean that every practice a person carries out is performed with other people. Instead, practice is social because it is executed by persons who belong to communities and are thus influenced by social life and its structures.\(^{145}\) All practice is then a kind of participation within a particular society.\(^{146}\) Reification refers “to the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness.’”\(^{147}\) Narratives, ideas, tools, concepts, are the results of reification through practice and enable a person to perform meaningful practice in the first place.\(^{148}\) An elderly parishioner, who attends weekly Eucharist out of a deep sense of obligation of being present at Mass, participates in this social practice with a certain “reified” meaning learned in childhood: one should attend Mass weekly. Even when not present at Mass, the parishioner feels guilty for not attending, and in some way continues to

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144 Ibid., 55-56.
145 Again, this is not to adopt a strong social constructionism that speaks of all of reality as nothing but socially influenced. Rather, knowledge may be social but reality still exists; and human knowledge and practice may actually be a source of knowing this reality. Christian Smith writes, “Because of the kind of personal creatures we are, those durable systems of patterned human social relations are conveyed through bodily practices, defined by culturally meaningful mental categories, motivated by normative and moral visions, resourced and expressed in material objects, and influenced and fortified by regulative sanctions. And all of this has the causal effect of encouraging cooperation and compliance by the people who constitute them. It is thus the natural drive toward a sustained and thriving personal life broadly—more so than motivations for, say material advantage, relational dominance, or ontological security more exclusively—when confronted with our natural limitations, that generates social structures out of human existence (What is a Person?, 340).
146 Wenger, Communities of Practice, 57.
147 Ibid., 58.
148 Ibid., 61.
participate in the community through guilt. The teaching learned in childhood informs participation in the social practice and vice versa. On the other hand, during a Lenten study of the Eucharist at a parish, this same person attends one of the sessions in which an Augustinian account of the Eucharist is presented. Learning that the Eucharist is a sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ, and that active participation in the sacrament transforms this Christian to become a sacrifice of love for the world, the elderly parishioner awakens to the true possibilities of this practice. Eucharistic attendance is indeed an obligation but one of deep love and desire to participate in Christ’s sacrifice for the world. Participation in the social practice becomes richer through engagement with the teachings arising from that practice.

Second, Wenger defines community as “a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence.” Communities include the academic guilds of theologians, Boston Red Sox fans, World Cup enthusiasts, and those active in the blogosphere. Consequently, a community of practice is one in which the primary purpose of the social configuration is fostering more meaningful practice, including deeper levels of participation through increasing competency in the practice. A community of practice would include a group of liturgical scholars, all competent in Church Latin, who gather together seeking more thorough proficiency in the practice of Latin. If the same group gathered together to complain about a recent translation (perhaps, a necessary part of enhancing the life of the group), without ever developing deeper competency in translating texts, they may be a community, but they are not a community of practice (at least of translating Latin liturgical texts).

\[\text{149} \text{ Ibid., 5.}\]
Hence, in order to be a community of practice, a community must demonstrate three major features, including mutual engagement in a practice;\textsuperscript{150} a joint enterprise requiring degrees of commitment for pursuing excellence in this practice developed through negotiating the art of practicing within the community and broader network of relationships in which the practice is performed;\textsuperscript{151} and a shared repertoire including “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of the practice.”\textsuperscript{152} The lectors within a parish, even though they share a common practice within a community, are not inescapably a community of practice. Rather, in order for the lectors to become such a community, they will need to develop mutual engagement in the practice (gathering together once-a-month to mediate upon the Scriptures, recognizing one another in the parish), define what constitutes authentic practice together (a lector within the parish, for example, is one who has a deep sense of how the narrative of the Scriptures unfolds), and create a shared repertoire that has become part of the practice itself (the lectors of a parish remaining silent for a moment before saying, \textit{The Word of the Lord}).

Significantly, learning within a community of practice takes place through the art of practice.\textsuperscript{153} A participant in a community of practice develops evolving forms of mutual engagement, seeks to understand and commit oneself more deeply to the common enterprise, and

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 73-77.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 77-82
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{153} Wenger writes, “Learning is not reified as an extraneous goal or as a special category of activity or membership. Their [claims processors] practice is not merely a context for learning something else. Engagement in practice—in its unfolding, multidimensional complexity—is both the stage and the object, the road and the destination. What they learn is not a static subject matter but the very process of being engaged in, and participating in developing, an ongoing practice” (95).
reinterprets and further expands the shared repertoire through more competent participation. A new lector quickly discovers those lectors that he or she may approach to ask a question about the technology of lectoring in that particular parish or for an interpretation of the Scriptures that enriches proclamation. Further, as one’s identity as lector forms, the new lector may realize that his or her capacity to proclaim the Word of God in the liturgical assembly is enriched through participating in the catechetical ministry of the Church (teaching confirmation, serving as an adult mentor in the youth group, or preparing couples for marriage). Finally, the lector practicing the art of proclaiming the Word of God may develop, in conjunction with the community of lectors, an annual retreat for the entire parish on a theme within the Scriptures. This retreat becomes part of the shared repertoire of lectoring in this parish. Therefore, learning within a community of practice is in the long run dedicated to the enrichment of practice, one that allows for the negotiation of meaning and a transformation of identity:

    Such learning has to do with the development of our practices and our ability to negotiate meaning. It is not just the acquisition of memories, habits, and skills, but the formation of an identity. Our experience and our membership inform each other, pull each other, transform each other. We create ways of participating in a practice in the very process of contributing to making that practice what it is.

Even newcomers learn mutual engagement, commitment to a joint enterprise, and the shared repertoire through taking up the art of practicing, though such practice may often be performed initially in a clumsy and imperfect manner.

    Though Wenger addresses other features of communities of practice, such as boundaries and locality, the most importance facet of his situated learning theory for parish

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154 Ibid.
155 Ibid., 96.
156 Ibid., 102.
157 The boundary quality to practicing is fundamentally about the relationship between the community of practice and the world: “engagement in practice entails engagement in these
catechesis is his account of how participation in a community of practice shapes identity. He writes, “Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities.”

Like practice, identity is conceived of according to participation and reification: “As we encounter our effects on the world and develop our relations with others, these layers build upon each other to produce our identity as a very complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections. Bringing the two together through negotiation of meaning, we construct who we are.”

Within a community of practice, a person learns specific ways of engaging with other people and thus shapes an identity that is both individual and communal. In addition, a person who participates in a community of practice develops “a tendency to come up with certain interpretations, to engage in certain actions, to make certain choices, to value certain experiences…. One’s very way of perceiving the world is formed by the beliefs, desires, and capacities that a practice creates.

Finally, engagement with a practice and its repertoire results in an aptitude to identify with the external relations. For a job like claims processing, which is considered by many to be relatively narrow, the range of related communities of practice as well as constituencies without a shared practice is actually rather complex. It involves, among others, claims technicians, underwriters, system designers, and various levels of management…Newcomers to claims processing quickly becomes initiated to this set of relations. Joining a community of practice involves entering not only its internal configuration but also its relations with the rest of the world” (103).

Because each particular community of practice develops its own way of practicing (the lectors, who maintain a period of silence following the reading), practice is fundamentally local; that is, one cannot say that all lectors, who are a part of a community of practice, perform their practice in the same way (122-33). Yet, because Catholicism in particular has a set of privileged teachings that are to be universally believed (the doctrine of the Trinity, the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist), as well as practices to be performed (the sacrament of baptism, the order of the Roman rite of Mass), one should note that many communities of practice within Catholicism will have more in common with each other than not.

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158 Ibid., 145.
159 Ibid., 145.
160 Ibid., 151.
161 Ibid., 152.
162 Ibid., 153.
repertoire that one performs.\textsuperscript{163} And since communities of practice operate in time, human identity (at least as understood by the one practicing) operates on a trajectory, meaning that the practices that are performed open up new possibilities of identity through degrees of engagement; through newcomers entering into the practice, promoting a renewed repertoire for assimilation by the expert practitioners; through the evolution of the practice over the course of time; through encountering those who are in different communities of practice; and through leaving one community and joining another. Thus, constructing identity is an experience that includes both participation and reification, a constant process of becoming through engagement in social life.\textsuperscript{164}

Thus far, Wenger’s description of identity formation in communities of practice has been limited to formation within the community to which one participates. Yet, the lector operates within a wider ecclesial setting in which lectoring is only one component of the many practices of the parish, including baptismal preparation, homebound visits, Eucharistic ministry, gardening, the Boy Scouts, adult studies of Catholic doctrine, etc. Strictly speaking, the parish does not exist so that the Scriptures may be proclaimed well, parents may receive adequate preparation for their child’s baptism, and adults might study doctrine together. Rather, the parish

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\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 163. Wenger is not always careful regarding his language, particularly relative to identity. Though much of identity is constructed by the participant in a community of practice, it would be intellectually foolish and morally dangerous to argue that there are no features of human identity that remain stable. Christian Smith writes, regarding the identity of personhood, “A normal person is a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending center of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication who—as the efficient cause of his or her own responsible actions and interactions—exercises complex capacities for agency and intersubjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the nonpersonal world” (\textit{What is a Person?}, 74-75). These features of being a person, because they are “natural” to human beings, are equally part of a person’s identity as what is constructed through engagement with social structures.
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exists to transmit through words and deeds (signs), the Revelation of God’s love and providential plan for the human person revealed in Jesus Christ. The mission of each parish is that of the Church as a whole, evangelization, “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.” Evangelization is the Eucharistic vocation of the Church, the worship of God spilling over into the life of the world. And, communities of practice within parishes that operate without this broader commitment to evangelization may sing beautiful hymns, feature well-proclaimed readings, and be serious students of Catholic teaching, but they do not participate fully, consciously, and actively in the mission of the Church.

Of course, this problem of mission in communities of practice is not simply true of parish life. As Wenger writes regarding claims processors, “In order to do their job, they must align

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165 General Directory for Catechesis, no. 37-38.
166 Paul VI, Evangelium Nuntiandi, no. 18. Jane Regan, making a similar point, writes, “Using the word evangelizing strengthens the commitment that who we are as Church—our mission and identity—is rooted in engaging in all activities through the lens of evangelization. To speak of evangelizing pastoral care,” for example, reminds us that as we visit the sick, as we care for the bereaved or lonely, as we counsel the lost or confused, we do all of these activities so as to proclaim the Gospel in word and action and thus further the reign of God. And so we can speak of evangelizing youth ministry, evangelizing liturgy, and even the evangelizing finance committee. And it is in this sense that we speak of evangelizing catechesis” (Toward an Adult Church, 24).
167 Benedict XVI writes in Sacramentum Caritatis, “There is nothing authentically human—our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds—that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleased to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God” (no. 71).
168 Of course, though these communities of practice may not understand their practice as evangelizing, this does not mean that the results of such practice are not evangelical. The lector may practice the art of lectoring in such a way that the Word of God is truly proclaimed, allowing the Word of God to take root in the heart of all those listening. On the other hand, the lector may proclaim so well because he or she enjoys the praise received from this practice.
their activities and their interpretations of events with structures, forces, and purposes beyond their community of practice and so find their place in broader business processes. Their identities as workers are affected by the picture they build of their position.‖¹⁶⁹ Participants in communities of practice must also consider other modes of belonging, ways of understanding a practice, consisting of engagement, imagination, and alignment. These modes of belonging allow one to participate in the practice in conjunction with the wider mission, while also becoming competent in one’s practice. Engagement, as already seen, includes everything that is part of participating in a practice, including the shared history of learning, relationships, interactions, and the practices themselves.¹⁷⁰ To fully participate in a practice requires that the practitioner have access to the objects that are a part of engaging in the enterprise, build relationships with other participants through engagement in the practice, and contribute “to the development of shared practice.”¹⁷¹ Engagement is a subtle form of identity formation, the person becoming invested in the life of the community without realizing it.¹⁷² If one is unable to participate in the practice or lacks access to those objects of reification to understand it fully, then one fails to learn.¹⁷³ On the other hand, learning in engagement “depends on our ability to contribute to the collective production of meaning because it is by this process that experience and competence pull each other.”¹⁷⁴ While engagement as a form of belonging often creates a strong community of practice, it may do so at the expense of limiting further insight: “competence can become so transparent, locally ingrained, and socially efficacious that it becomes insular: nothing else, no other viewpoint, can even register, let alone create a

¹⁶⁹ Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 173.
¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 174.
¹⁷¹ Ibid., 184.
¹⁷² Ibid., 193.
¹⁷³ Ibid., 185.
¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 203.
disturbance or a discontinuity that would spur the history of practice onward.” The liturgy committee in a parish may become so knowledgeable in decorating the church, picking readers for the Easter Triduum, and planning daily prayer during Lent, that it never considers providing a mystagogical catechesis for the Easter sacraments. Mutual engagement may result in thoughtless habituation.

In addition to engagement, one may also participate in a community of practice through imagination. Imagination, according to Wenger, “refers to a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves.”

Entering the doors of a church, a person may see members of the parish sharing bread and wine. But through imagination, all of liturgical practice (singing a hymn, the celebration of Christmas) becomes an expression of communion with the Triune God and one another. To engage imaginatively in a practice “requires the ability to disengage—to move back and look at our engagement through the eyes of an outsider.” To assume such a posture, relative to practice, is not to doubt a practice’s validity. Instead, it “affords an opportunity to step back and see situations in a different way.” A group of liturgical musicians, gathering to discuss the theology of the cross on Good Friday, may ask themselves if the cross is a necessary part of salvation. This is not a denial that Christ was crucified, nor for that matter is it a departure from Christian teaching. Instead, it is thinking with the signs of faith, learning how to reflect theologically (particularly, if the catechist present is capable of asking good questions, knowing when to introduce various features of Christian doctrine, careful to maintain the mystery of Christian faith, and engages in the reflection out of a desire for loving contemplation and not to

175 Ibid., 175.
176 Ibid., 176.
177 Ibid., 185.
178 Ibid., 186.
demonstrate superiority). Imagination allows for the appropriation of new meanings within a practice. And in the process, it is transformative of identity through the creation of new narratives (both personal and social) that forever alter how the practice is performed. One sings a hymn about the cross differently after considering it from various theological perspectives. Negatively, imagination (if not pursued carefully as the hypothetical catechist above) “runs the risk of losing touch with the sense of social efficacy by which our experience of the world can be interpreted as competence.” Everything becomes meaningless; a sign to be interpreted but not lived.

Finally, one may participate in a community of practice through the mode of alignment. In alignment, the practitioner begins to embrace the discourses, enterprises, styles, complexity, and authority of the particular community in which he or she participates. Wenger writes, “Through alignment, we become part of something big because we do what it takes to play our part. What alignment brings into the picture is a scope of action writ large, of coordinated enterprises on a large scale, not inherent in engagement or in imagination.” The lector may take up additional spiritual practices that are essential to the revelation of the Word of God (lectio divina, serving as a catechist, studying classic homilies), permitting the lector to transition from seeing his or her ministry simply as “reading the Scriptures” to conforming oneself to the Word of God in all of one’s life, to become a “word” about the Word. For this reason, alignment is essential to belonging to the large organization; it is identity in action. And because it necessitates a movement of the will, a community of practice seeking to encourage alignment

\[^{179}\text{Ibid.}, 203-205.\]
\[^{180}\text{Ibid.}, 178.\]
\[^{181}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{182}\text{Ibid.}, 174.\]
\[^{183}\text{Ibid.}, 179.\]
\[^{184}\text{Ibid.}, 180.\]
“requires the ability to communicate purpose, needs, methods, and criteria.”\textsuperscript{185} No parish can oblige its lectors to meditate upon the Scriptures, although it may call for the lectors to attend a day of reflection. A parish cannot “make” engaged couples embrace a Christian marriage, although it can require preparation. For a parish to create willful alignment, it must prompt desire through persuasion, offering the possibility for people to move from blindly embracing some practice or doctrine to understanding and even loving it.\textsuperscript{186} This will involve thinking, as in Dewey.

Thus, by cultivating communities of practice, arranged according to the fundamental tasks of catechesis, parishes may gradually form Christians in an Augustinian practice of worshipful wisdom in a secular age. How so? First, by participating in communities of practice of study, of liturgical ministry, of Christian morality, and prayer, the Christian within the parish would be introduced into the particularities of the signs of faith through the art of practice. Developing a shared history around these signs, the Christian may come to assimilate and become competent in them, capable of using them in a variety of settings. Further, such practice takes place within a community in which individual flourishing (above maintenance of the practice and its shared meanings) is an inadequate \textit{telos}. The practice, and its signs, through engagement become part of one’s identity. Practicing forms the memory of the Christian.

Second, insofar as communities of practice are dedicated to the art of practicing, they cannot escape the work of imagination. Engaging with practices and a shared repertoire, the Christian \textit{must learn to think theologically} in order to participate more deeply in the practice. A community of practice, devoted to praying the Liturgy of the Hours, eventually may study the psalms in order to enrich participation in the prayer. Reading the psalms and prominent

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 186.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 206.
homiletic commentaries both ancient and new, the community will discover new ways of thinking about these hymns, including as the voice of the body of Christ. Following this study, a mindless recitation of the word of the psalms is no longer possible. Instead, each line provides the possibility for the Christian to contemplate the incarnate nature of the Church and to examine their own lives, asking, do I speak these words in truth. In the process, one’s very perception can become informed by this rich appropriation of the psalms. The practitioner now gazes upon the created order as a source of praise, contemplating the invisible God in the created reality. This realization may awaken an immeasurable number of questions about the nature of God, the world, and the self—all of which will inform and transform future practice. Practicing forms the understanding of a Christian.

Third, communities of practice also allow for the work of alignment. Initially, this alignment is minimal. A group of young adults, broadly interested in service, begins to attend a monthly gathering at a local soup kitchen together. Discovering that they enjoy this time together, they ask the parish to hire a young adult minister, who sets up a monthly meeting on the theme of vocation—a topic of some interest to the emerging adults. Gradually, by the stimulation of desire through the persuasive style in which vocation is discussed through the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church by the presenters, the young adults seek additional spiritual opportunities throughout the parish, including Eucharistic adoration, a Cursillo retreat, even joining a small group discussion. The signs of faith, learned through the practice of the community, begin to make demands upon their lives. They may possibly notice that the sermons of the priest, the Eucharistic prayer, and the liturgical feasts of the Church all address Christ’s sacrifice as love unto the end. The young adult now desires to discern a life, which is not about money or fame or sexual prowess but the delights of sacrificial life, Triune love. A conversion
toward an evangelical life has occurred through the subtle reform permitted through engagement in practice, imagining new possibilities, all within a community. Practicing forms the Christian in *caritas*, love unto the end.

Hence, Wenger’s communities of practice transform Dewey’s approach to education into the situated learning necessary for a parish seeking to teach the art of practicing worshipful wisdom. It does so through moving experience or practice from the domain of inquiry into the particularities of the community in which the practice is performed. Practice or experience is still examined, it still produces problems or questions, it still evokes conversation, it still includes the reconstruction of past experience, it still necessitates the introduction of key terms or ideas, it still reforms one’s narrative, and it still results in a transformation of life. But, it does so through the art of learning privileged practices, narratives, and teachings within a community. One first learns to engage in the practice through familiarity with its signs and technique, to seek understanding using the signs, teachings, and narratives attached to the practice within the contemplate reflection of the community, and then appropriates it into a way of life manifested through richer practice. One’s experience is reconstructed, new habits and dispositions learned, through acquiring deeper competency in performing the practice within the community of the parish.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I sought to adapt Augustine’s mystagogical method to the conditions of modern belief within the American parish. The context of such belief includes an attenuation of the religious imagination, a reductionistic approach to theological thinking, and an exclusive focus upon individual flourishing. Seeking to form Christians reared in a secular age in the
practice of worshipful wisdom necessary for fruitful liturgical prayer (as examined in chapters three through five), the liturgical and catechetical theologian must seek an approach to formation that socializes into the particularity of the signs, of theological understanding, and of practicing the Christian life.

Though by no means in agreement with Augustine’s theological and philosophical commitments, Dewey’s educational insight into the role of reconstructing experience in the formation of habits served as an entrée point into practicing worshipful wisdom in a secular age. The teacher and student begin by performing a specific practice or engaging in a common experience and attending to any problems or questions that the experience/practice presents. All along, the teacher introduces new terms, ideas, thoughts, narratives, and practices, altering the environment and thus broadening both the student and the teacher’s perception of the problem. The conversation generates hypotheses, proposed solutions to the problem, which are then tested through experimentation. On one hand, this approach to education shared with Augustine an emphasis upon attending to the signs or particularity of the experience, seeking greater understanding in the process, and altering one’s narrative of what it means to perform the practice. One can imagine Augustine beginning with a text sung from the psalms, asking a question generated from the psalmic performance, seeking understanding through the signs of the Scripture, and suggesting particular practices by which this renewed inquiry may be assimilated into the Christian life. On the other hand, Dewey’s focus upon experience as the primary aim of education is inadequate to the ecclesial reformation of human identity, becoming the image and likeness of God, necessary to mystagogical practice. Christian formation is about developing new experiences through learning the privileged practices, narratives, and doctrines of the Church. Formation into reflective or contemplative inquiry must occur within the
specificity of the practice itself. And the purpose is not more intelligent, even aesthetic, experience but the capacity to offer all of one’s life as a sacrificial oblation, to become the image of God.

In the final part of this chapter, I turned to Etienne Wenger’s communities of practice as a potential source for developing a plan to teach worshipful wisdom through the particular practices of a parish. For Wenger, a community of practice’s primary purpose is fostering more meaningful practice, including deeper participation that results in greater competency. The three features of a community of practice include mutual engagement in a practice, commitment to a joint enterprise developed through the art of practicing, and a shared repertoire. Learning takes place through the very art of practicing, the acquisition of memories, habits, and skills, which form one’s identity. The identity formed within a community of practice is both individual and communal, shapes the way that one perceives the world, and connects one’s identity with the repertoire that is performed. Belonging to a community of practice in a way that unites it to the broader mission of an organization requires three modes of belonging. Engagement includes access to all features of the practice, becoming identified with the practice. Imagination is that capacity to seek renewed meaning in the performance of a practice, a seeking that enriches future practice, and connects it to other communities. Alignment is an embracing of the discourses, enterprises, styles, complexity, and authority of both the community of practice and its larger organization.

Nurturing communities of practice is an ideal approach to a parish catechetical plan seeking to cultivate a mystagogical imagination for the practice of worshipful wisdom in a secular age. Through the very art of practicing, one is introduced to the essential signs of Christianity, becoming adept users of the Christian images and practices essential to the
sacramental life of the Church. Likewise, one learns a way of thinking theologically, seeking the reality of God through tradition-specific visible signs, and making future practice more meaningful. Here, in particular, Wenger’s communities of practice take up Dewey’s approach to reflective education and integrates it within the art of practicing. Finally, through acquiring competency within a community of practice that shapes desire, one’s identity comes to be informed by the images and signs of the practice under consideration. This formation into the practice of worshipful within communities of practice is possible in all of the fundamental tasks of catechesis within the parish from the social justice committee to the preparation offered to parents for first communion. And, by cultivating vibrant communities of practice that practice an Augustinian worshipful wisdom, the parish performs a mystagogical formation that makes possible a transformation of human experience, resulting in a liturgical offering of one’s life. The full implications of this claim will be examined in the concluding chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN

PRACTICING WORSHIPFUL WISDOM: AN AUGUSTINIAN APPROACH TO MYSTAGOGICAL FORMATION

The sun has just set. Darkness begins to drape the nearly empty space. The small parish community gathers outside around a newly lit fire, sparks ascending into the night sky. A large candle is held beside this now growing flame. Blessings are spoken. Incense joins the smoke of the fire, diluting the toxic fumes with its sweet perfume. The hefty candle becomes the leader of the procession into that sparse space, enlightening the aisle of the once dark building. The deacon proclaims, “Christ our light,” and the Church responds, “Thanks be to God.” The light of the candle is shared, tapers lit throughout the space. Twice more Christ is proclaimed as the source of all light and the church responds in gratitude. The candle is positioned at the front of the now iridescent Church, and from the mouth of the deacon the opening notes of the *Exsultet* resound. With the words of this song, this chorus of praise that incarnates the exuberant joy that Christ has enlightened *this night* as the night of our salvation, the massive candle becomes the Paschal candle. In this act of ecclesial remembering, the great Vigil commences. The Church sits with open ears to ruminate upon the wisdom of God creating, saving, and wooing humankind through all ages. Until the fullness of time, that sublime act, when Christ died upon the cross and was raised from the dead three days later. The risen Christ overflows this night into those *sacramenta* of redemption: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, and Alleluias proclaimed through
the morning watch. This indeed is the night, echoing those eschatological notes from the 
*Exsultet*, that “shall be as bright as day, dazzling is the night for me, and full of gladness.”

The celebration of the Easter Vigil offers an embarrassment of riches for those seeking 
thological and spiritual insight through the liturgical rites of the Church. The play of light and 
darkness is a sign of God’s gift of creation and recreation effected through baptism into Christ. 
The refrain, *this is the night*, initiates the Christian into a way of remembering according to the 
logic of salvation history. The keeping of the Paschal Vigil aligns the human person toward a 
watchfulness characteristic of Christian existence. Yet, as this study in pastoral liturgical 
theology has shown, these insights are made possible through a mystagogical formation, a way 
of knowing and loving learned through the Eucharistic pedagogy of faith, transformative of 
human identity. Thus, in order to educate Christians for a liturgical approach to existence, “to 
relearn a forgotten way of doing things and to recapture lost attitudes”¹, it is necessary to 
reconsider all catechesis as fundamentally mystagogical, aiming “to initiate people into the 
mystery of Christ…by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing 
signified, from the “sacraments” to the “mysteries.”²

Indeed, such mystagogy could be performed in a variety of ways. But, the contention of 
this study is that an Augustinian approach to mystagogy, through the practice of worshipful 
wisdom, is particularly apt for the catechetical renaissance necessary in a secular age. An 
Augustinian mystagogical method includes a formation of the imagination of the Christian, the 
memory becoming filled with tradition-specific signs and practices. The attenuation of the 
religious imagination is healed through learning to remember. The approach then uses these 
signs and practices to contemplate God and human existence, a process that necessarily

¹ Romano Guardini, “A Letter from Romano Guardini,” 239. 
² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1075.
encompasses the healing of an internal narrative, the speaking of an inner word conformed to the outer. The diminishment of theological thinking is healed through learning to understand. Finally, an Augustinian mystagogy functions through a formation of human desire, opening up each person to the potential of divine worship through an interaction with created signs that elicit acts of love. The exclusive attention to individual flourishing is healed through learning to love unto the end. One’s body becomes a sacrifice for the world through this refashioning of the human being into a more perfect begetting of the image and likeness of God, the Eucharistic vocation of the human person.

The remaining task of this study in pastoral liturgical theology is to present the implications of an Augustinian approach to mystagogical formation for the catechetical curriculum of a parish. First, I carry out an Augustinian mystagogical analysis of the four fundamental tasks of catechesis (promoting knowledge of the faith, liturgical education, moral formation, and teaching to pray), offering a curriculum for mystagogical formation in a parish. Second, I apply an Augustinian mystagogical approach to catechetical pedagogy, first through the sermon and the catechetical lesson; second through three examples of catechesis in a parish within communities of practice in which one is gradually taught to practice worshipful wisdom, to become what is received in the catechetical event. Third, I resituate the Church’s mission of evangelization within the scope of the Eucharistic identity of the human being, the *imago Dei*.

**Augustinian Mystagogy through the Fundamental Tasks of Catechesis**

Augustine’s mystagogical method is characterized by engagement with authoritative signs, reconfiguring one’s narrative and thoughts regarding God and humanity through an

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3 *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 85.
understanding of these signs, and exercising the results of this inquiry in sacrifices of love. In this way, the Christian learns to use the sign to enjoy God, becoming “divine” in the process. The mystagogical approach of Augustine may be practiced throughout the fundamental tasks of catechesis, all of which deal with the signs of faith. Indeed, Augustine’s mystagogical method is an approach to catechesis as a whole, one particularly suited to teaching the human person to transform human existence into a spiritual offering to God.

**Augustinian Mystagogy through Promoting Knowledge of the Faith**

Augustine’s mystagogical theology is a narrative regarding human knowledge of God linked to worship. *It is thus particularly apt in promoting knowledge of the faith.* In the fall, human beings turned away from God through an inordinate love of the created order, becoming less capable of perceiving the invisible God through created signs. Like pilgrims lost on a journey, they confused the sign for the reality, no longer perceiving the world as a gift from God. This malaise was not from lack of knowledge but a debilitated will. Still, God did not abandon humanity. The Triune God enacted a pedagogy of love through the temporal signs of the Scriptures, intended to heal human beings of their failure to use the created world to enjoy God. The orienting sign of this pedagogy is Jesus Christ himself, the power and wisdom of God. In Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross, a wondrous love was executed intended to draw the attention of human beings toward the possibilities of love unto the end. And because of Christ’s identity as *forma Dei* and *forma servi*, Jesus’ self-gift is an *exemplum* of human potential at the same time that it is a *sacramentum* of an invisible, divine love. The Church, the body of Christ, is a sign through which human beings continue to receive this divine gift. The love nurtured within the Church is a sign of the loved shared between the Father and the Son, consecrated through the
dwelling of the Holy Spirit. Entering into an ecclesial program of refashioning through the authoritative and salutary signs of the Scriptures and liturgical prayer, the Christian is renewed in the sacramental perception to use signs to enjoy God. In particular, the Eucharist, the daily sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ is a formation into a way of love whereby each person learns to become a bodily sign of God’s love for humanity. Because of this renewal of sacramental perception and capacity for self-gift, the whole created world may become a sign for offering sacrifices of love. Knowledge of the sign through faith is a renewal in the capacity to worship. And worship of the reality signified by the sign is a taste of true wisdom.

Teaching Christian faith is then a matter of engaging with the signs through which this narrative is told, particularly the Scriptures and Tradition. Yet, this means that both Scriptures and Christian doctrine should be perceived as signs meant for contemplation. For example, creation, as recorded within the Scriptures and Christian doctrine, is not a scientific account, a dogmatic statement that limits human knowing. Rather, the Christian doctrine of creation is a sign meant to be used to enjoy the mystery of God. Contemplating the signs of the doctrine, one may perceive the sheer gratuity of a God, who creates out of nothing, who shares this creation with human beings through vulnerable love. Because the doctrine of creation is a sign in relationship with other signs, it cannot be read alone. To those Christians whose memory is formed in the Scriptural memorial of the Incarnation, the divine condescension of creation is recapitulated in the doctrine of the Incarnation, *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn. 1:14). Therefore, an Augustinian mystagogical approach to promoting knowledge of faith begins through a thoughtful unfolding of the signs of faith, enriching the imagination of the Christian. In this approach, Scripture is perceived as a single narrative of God’s communication with the human person through signs. The Tradition itself consists of signs of realities meant to be
contemplated, meditated upon in order to taste the signified wisdom presented in the Scriptures. As these signs are imprinted upon the memory, each Christian is opened up to new ways of perceiving the world through assimilation to the signs.

Of course, promoting knowledge of the faith also involves acts of understanding, using the sign to enjoy God. If teaching Christianity was simply a matter of revealing the immediate meaning of signs, then as Augustine notes, there would be no purpose for the teacher. Rather, seeking understanding through contemplating signs is necessary for begetting a truer understanding of oneself and God, an interior illumination that produces exterior deeds of love. To understand the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human is an exercise in fostering greater understanding of what it means to be God and human. If one thinks of Jesus as half-way human and half-way God, or human in the body but divine in the soul, then the signifying potential of this doctrine is reduced. Instead, when Jesus is born in Bethlehem in a manger, hungers for his mother’s milk, is lost in the temple, lunches with outcasts, dies upon the cross, it is the Word made flesh, who performs these deeds. God hungers as an act of love, dies as an act of love, and in the process transforms what it means for humans to hunger, to die, and to love. The understanding pursued through the signs of this doctrine forms the images that each person has of God and the primary narrative of what constitutes authentic human life.

The catechetical contemplation of the signs of faith ends in acts of loving worship. All contemplation of signs, all understanding is to culminate in a sacrifice of love toward God and neighbor. To contemplate Christ’s descent into hell on Holy Saturday is of course to become familiar with the signs of this teaching. But, the contemplation of this doctrine becomes fruitful insofar as the Christian perceives in the sign a divine invitation to worship God through love. Christ descended into the lowest places, into darkness, loneliness. As fully God and fully
human, he revealed the depths to which each Christian is called to love. The doctrine of the
descent into hell is an invitation for each member of the body of the Christ, the Church, to enter
into the hellish places of history, bringing the good news that death and poverty and suffering are
not defining of human existence. Love is.

Therefore, the study of Christian faith is mystagogy, moving from the sign to the
mystery. Indeed, one requires an initiation into the signs, a familiarity with the particular claims
of Christian faith. Yet, as signs, these claims need to be contemplated, understood, and
assimilated through acts of love. Such study is not sheer human effort but a divine gift whereby
contemplation of the signs of faith reforms internal narratives regarding God and the human
condition, resulting in interior delight manifested through sacrifices of love. This way of
unfolding Christian faith, whether it is preached within a liturgical context or discovered in a
gathering of adults examining the teachings of Christian faith is first-order theology, a practice of
worshipful wisdom in which knowledge and love are united. An Augustinian mystagogical
approach to promoting knowledge of faith disposes one for worship.

Augustinian Mystagogy through Liturgical Education

In the first chapter, I noted that liturgical prayer requires a theological and spiritual
formation in order to become a fruitful practice within the Christian life. For Augustine, this
formation is essential to his mystagogical theology, using the signs of this prayer to enjoy the
reality of God. In his letters to Januarius, this mystagogical formation is carried out through
becoming familiar with the signs of Easter, using them to understand more deeply how one
participates in the life of God through the sacraments of the Church, and thus building up a
structure of love. In *De civitate dei* this formation takes place through attending to the Eucharist
as a sacramental sign of the invisible sacrifice of God, manifested in Jesus Christ. One becomes a sacrifice through perceiving the sign in faith, and then offering that sacrifice within the heart. In Augustine’s sermons, the formation is carried out by attending to the signs of worship through the Scriptural imagination, seeking understanding of God and the human condition through these signs, and then practicing these liturgical acts anew through sacrifices of love. The singing of a hymn, its words of praise, becomes the song of the whole person, requiring an examination of one’s life to determine if one indeed sings this songtruthfully. Love itself becomes a hymn, human deeds of justice in praise of God.

If liturgical education is to teach full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical rites, then one way of doing so is to employ this Augustinian approach to mystagogy to the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. Teaching Eucharist begins with introducing each student into the signs of Eucharistic faith, including Scriptural tropes, theological claims regarding the sacrament, and the words and actions spoken and performed in the Eucharistic rite, all part of the repertoire defining engagement in this practice. This inculcation into signs is an initiation into a Eucharistic imagination. To sing a hymn of praise at the commencement of the Mass is a performance of the body of Christ in which the whole mind and heart are offered in the act of song. To pray the Eucharistic prayer is to give thanks to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit for the gifts of creation, redemption, and eventual transformation of all that is seen and unseen; it is to situate the Eucharistic consecration of bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood within the divine plan of salvation ruminating in the Church’s memory. To eat this body and drink this blood, transformed through the sacramental sacrifice, is a spiritual eating and drinking, an act of faith in which one chews upon the bread of angels. To believe these signs of faith, accepting them as true, enriches liturgical practice.
Yet, to engage in external participation in the rite is not necessarily to perform such participation internally. To seek understanding through the signs of liturgical prayer is to foster deeper internal participation in liturgical rites. Examining the signs sung in Eucharistic hymns (asking what do the signs reveal about the nature of God; the human condition), one departs with renewed understanding of these signs that will influence future liturgical performances. Likewise to engage in theological reflection upon the cross during Lent through prayer and study is to renew one’s participation in the Good Friday rite of adoring the wood of the cross. To adore the wood of the cross is to recognize that human flourishing is only possible through self-gift; that the cross is not a sign of failure but of the possibility that all human existence might be transfigured through sacrifices of love. The adoration of the cross is a sacramental participation in the life of God in which all true acts of love bear fruit, even those that seem like utter failures to the visible eye. The Christian asks through deeper understanding of this sign, do I adore the wood of cross truthfully in the fullness of love? How does such adoration conform to or radically interrupt my own images of God?

And the fruit of full, conscious, and active liturgical participation is renewal in the capacity to offer true sacrifices. In Augustine, nowhere is this truer than in the Eucharistic rites of the Church. Yet, this same theme of sacrifice occurs in his formation into post-baptismal desire, in his mystagogy on becoming a hymn, in the education provided for those offering the evening sacrifice of the Church. One becomes what is received in the rite, transformed into a sign of what has been celebrated. While the full extent of this ethical formation in the Christian life will be examined under the next task of catechesis, one should note here that the life of the Christian becomes an act of worship through liturgical participation that unites inner word and outer deed. In Augustine, through participation within liturgical rites, the whole human being,
body and soul, is made a site for divine sacrifice. Married couples, who participate in the Eucharistic rites, offer this sacrifice in deeds of love to one another and to any person who comes their way in need of hospitality. Priests offer this sacrifice both upon the altar and through the love they bestow upon those in need. Lawyers offer this sacrifice when their reception of the body and blood of Christ culminates in just relationships with clients, seeking the truth rather than pursuing the fortunes of fame and mammon. Gardeners, who delight in tilling soul, may offer a sacrifice of praise that is a consequence of Eucharistic worship.

Thus, liturgical prayer is formative for the Christian when it is celebrated as a way of using signs to enjoy the reality of God. One must come to know the signs of this prayer, including the mysteries that this prayer refers to, to use this prayer to contemplate God, and, to assimilate the results of this mystagogical inquiry into the practice of worshipful wisdom. For this reason, the quality of liturgical signs matters since the very celebration of the liturgy may educate a Christian in this mystagogical way of inquiring. A hymn that separates knowledge of God from worship or service to the world forms the memory of the Christian in such a way that it may stultify the mystagogical imagination. On the other hand, liturgical hymns that provide an array of Eucharistic imagery drawn from the Scriptures and Tradition make possible a more fruitful participation in the sacrament. Likewise, one of the gifts of liturgical celebration in contributing to a robust mystagogical imagination is its use of visible signs to refer to invisible mysteries. For this reason, liturgical rites should engage the whole body. Using incense in Eucharistic liturgies is a rich bodily sign with Scriptural roots—the smoke rising up into the heavens, entering the nostrils of the person, who may begin to contemplate how his or her own actions are like incense rising up to God. The light that shines through stained-glass windows during a celebration of Lauds may become a visible sign of the Son of justice, who shines into
the dark places of human existence. Even silence or the slowness of a liturgical rite eliciting boredom may become a sign for contemplation, the visible and tangible leading to tasting the divine. Well-intentioned priests and choir or liturgy directors may want to explain the meaning of these signs, either through historical analysis or personal interpretation. But, verbosity in liturgical prayer turns signs into things, ceasing the mystagogical flow before it begins. If one applies an Augustinian approach to mystagogy to liturgical preparation, one discerns that the catechetical role of the liturgical minister is not explanation but signification, presenting true, ecclesially formed signs that may be used to enjoy God and transform human existence into an act of worship.

Augustinian Mystagogy through Moral Formation

In some sense, it is impossible to separate moral formation from Christian worship in Augustine’s mystagogical method. The Eucharistic celebration of Christians, their singing of hymns, and the remembering of Christ’s incarnation is to transform one’s practice of business, marriage, pursuing of peace, relationship with enemies, and vision of what constitutes the happy life. Contemplation of the signs of faith is a renewal of the will. And the Eucharistic pedagogy of the Church allows the Christian to perceive merciful actions performed upon the neighbor as signs of love offered to the Father. In this way, compassion for the neighbor is a kind of internal consecration of the human heart by the Holy Spirit, made manifest through a visible sacrifice of love.

Yet, in addition, neighbor-love is itself an exercise in using the sign to enjoy the reality. In his Tractates on the Epistle of St. John, Augustine writes.

You see now with faith, then you will see with vision. For if we love what we do not see, how much more we shall embrace it when we do see it? But where must we exercise it? In brotherly love. You may say to me: I have not seen God; is anyone able to say, I have not seen a human? Love your brother. For if you love the brother whom you see, you will at the same time see God; for you will see love itself, and God dwells within it.\(^5\)

An Augustinian mystagogical approach to moral formation will teach the practice of love of God and neighbor as a sacrificial sign of the divine love fully manifested in the sign of Christ’s humanity. Christian morality is a lifelong project of learning to fully love one’s neighbor not as an end but as a sign for worshipping God out of the depths of human freedom.

As with promoting knowledge of the faith and liturgical education, a moral formation commences with becoming familiar with signs. The fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis introduces disharmony into relationship, both with God and with other human beings. The beloved community of the garden is disfigured into a place of blame, Eve accusing the serpent, Adam impugning Eve—none acknowledging their responsibility for the first sin. Through the divine pedagogy, God seeks to woo human beings toward proper relationship, giving the law as a sign for human conduct toward God and one another, sending prophets to remind Israel of its responsibility toward this law in its care for the orphan, the widow, and the stranger. The Ten Commandments occupy a privileged place in this pedagogy, serving as signs that form human beings to recognize the world as part of a divine gift of salvation, requiring a return gift of love. Yet, God does not force human beings to goodness through a violation of human freedom but instead works through a suasive pedagogy of signification. Interpreting the Scriptures, assuming that each word is to educate in love of God and neighbor, even gruesome passages of war may

become a sign that yields fruitful insight for worshipful conduct. In particular, the teachings and deeds of Jesus Christ in the Gospels are exempla and sacramenta of authentic relationships of love that treats the neighbor sacramentally. The Beatitudes provide an alternative vision to what constitutes human happiness, the life of the disciple as a humble offering to God. The parable of the Good Samaritan radically redefines the neighbor, not within the order of clan or tribe, but as those in need of love. Christ’s table fellowship with the outcasts, the lowly, and the despised is an example for the human person that love descends to the lowest places. Further, in Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Church becomes itself a sign of truth and love, a sacrament of the unity of humankind. Of course, the destiny of the human person, as Augustine makes clear, is not acts of mercy performed upon the neighbor but sharing in divine worship with that neighbor in eternal beatitude.

Nonetheless, the signs of neighbor love are not simply present within the Scriptures and the Tradition. Loving the neighbor is a kind of sacramental sign for the Christian fashioned in the mystagogical imagination of the Church. For instance, forming vibrant communities of faith is not a project to increase church attendance but an essential aspect of moral catechesis, an education into love. To know the name of the person who comes to Mass alone each Sunday, to greet them as they leave, this is an act of deep mercy, treating the neighbor as a sign provoking love. To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to visit the sick and those in prison, to bury the dead—these acts become sacramental signs of the identity of the Church as a school of divine love. Insofar as the parish provides opportunities to love the neighbor, including transforming those social structures that are a source of the neighbor’s suffering, it produces rich signs for contemplating the beauty of divine love. Every sermon and catechetical lesson requires that the preacher or teacher mention concrete deeds of
love that need to be performed. For every act of love, however small, is a participation in Christ’s sacrifice.

Yet in a fallen world, the signs of neighbor love exist in a broader complex of signs inimical to divine signification. Pornographic images twist the neighbor into an object to be used for present enjoyment, and thus sex finds its end not in sacrifices of love offered to God but the titillation of the body. War treats the neighbor as enemy, the dignity of the human person forgotten as the neighbor becomes an object of communal disdain. Money becomes something to be used for the sake of increasing status within the signs of a society that measures true beatitude by what one owns, how one looks; its use as a gift to be given to the neighbor is forgotten. The environment devolves into an obstacle to be trod upon for the demands of production and capital, rather than as an icon for divine praise. Thus, moral formation includes understanding the signs of Christian faith relative to love of God and neighbor, as well as examining the signification system in which these Christian signs of love are to be performed. In the process, one’s own internal narrative about the source of true happiness may be recomposed.

Still, no matter how much the memory, the understanding, and the will might be reformed through the signs of faith and love of God and neighbor, there still remains a gap between knowledge and love. For Augustine, part of this is simply one’s status as a creature who is constantly being renewed into a perfect begetting of the image and likeness of God. Yet, there is a deeper mystery to be examined here for Augustine. The temptation to treat signs as things persists throughout the Christian life, to enjoy that which should be used for divine worship. Self-examination, as Augustine performs in his homily on Eucharistic humility, seeks to recognize those interior places of the heart that need cleansing so that the Christian may offer truer sacrifices of love. Likewise, in his homilies on praise, identifying one’s failure to praise
God *de totis uobis* is not cause for despair but an acknowledgement of one’s creaturely status. And the reminder that one is the creature and not the Creator results in renewed worship. One cries out to God for transformation, for the grace to become more like the image and likeness of God to which one has been made. A husband may discover through the daily prayer of the psalms and self-examination that he has begun to treat his spouse not as a sign for divine love but as an object to provide dinner, laundry, and other household tasks that he is too lazy to carry out. Through a confession of these sins, remembering his status as creature, his perception of his spouse as a sign for love is renewed through a divine gift. Humility is recognizing that one is a work in progress, perpetually being formed by divine signification within the Church.

Thus, the role of the catechist in providing an Augustinian mystagogical method for moral formation is to teach the human person to perceive both the neighbor and oneself as sign and not thing. In this way, the Christian may begin to engage in conversation with another person, not as a way of expressing his or her intellect, but out of genuine interest for what is said. A Christian may begin to perform acts of mercy in the midst of the poor, not because such acts assuage guilt or serve as insurance for eternal life, but because such love is divine contemplation, a taste of the Eucharistic city of God. The Christian may recognize one’s internal failings, as well as one’s progress, as signs to be used for deeper enjoyment of God. The delight of human conversation, the formation of community, self-examination, every deed performed as an act of love upon the neighbor or self, is a sacrifice to God.
An Augustinian mystagogical approach to catechesis is at its roots a formation into the art of prayer, “a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God.”6 As the memory, understanding, and will are conformed to the signs of faith, one’s identity becomes a prayer offered to God. Yet, the very act of praying to God, including verbal, meditative, and contemplative prayer may also be taught as a mystagogical practice. An Augustinian mystagogical approach to prayer begins with the cultivation of the memory through the signs of the Scriptures, the Tradition, and learning to practice the prayer. One prays the psalms within the Liturgy of the Hours on a daily basis. After several months, various psalms have been memorized within the context of prayer, capable of being recalled at specific moments throughout one’s day as a way of attending to God. In the process, human speech returns to its proper vocation as a sign to be used to enjoy God. Likewise, through learning to pray the rosary, memorizing the signs of the Hail Mary, the Our Father, the Glory Be, the Apostle’s Creed, the Hail Holy Queen, and the joyful, luminous, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries, one develops basic competence in the practice, as well as insight into the mysteries of Christ’s life. The rosary beads themselves become a sacramental whereby one’s memory of praying becomes embodied in a physical object, which then provokes deeper prayer. Memorizing the structure of the liturgical collect prayer disposes one to pray extemporaneously through piecing together various images from Scripture and the Tradition, as well as the natural world into a prayer that invites others to ruminate upon God’s wondrous deeds and actions in the today of salvation. Non-verbal prayer, such as meditation upon the book of creation, is enhanced through a memory shaped by study of the doctrine of creation, a commitment to long prayerful walks, and a simple psalmic

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6 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2558.
phrase that calls one back to divine contemplation as the mind wanders. And the delights of the created order perceived in this prayer give the human being a partial knowledge of the depths of God’s own beauty. Even sitting in silence before the Blessed Sacrament gradually capacitates a person to transform all silence into prayer, since silence itself is a sign to be used to enjoy God.

Of course, as Augustine recognized, prayer also requires understanding. As one attends to the words that one prays and the desires elicited through prayer, one comes to deeper understanding of both God and self. Part of this understanding is contemplating the verbal signs of the prayer, learning that human beings (through the example of Job for Augustine) offer blessing to God not to obtain material goods from a divine financier but as an act of humility before the Creator. The relationship with God established in prayer is one of gift, openness to a divine wisdom that human beings cannot fully comprehend. Further, because the words of the psalms are always the prayer of the whole Christ, head and members, the desires expressed in these words give the Christian insight into the depths of divine love revealed in Christ. In this way, Christ himself is the teacher of prayer, forming human desire through the contemplation of the psalms, the Scriptures, even the natural world. Because the affections formed in prayer are signs to be used, even dryness in prayer may become part of the divine education of the human person when used properly. Finally, prayer is self-examination for Augustine. To pray specific words, ascertaining if one prays these words truly, is to recognize where one needs reformation in life. To pray for the enemy is a kind of measure of one’s love. If one offers this prayer in a perfunctory or begrudging way, then one needs to seek divine assistance in offering truer prayers, to desire genuinely the good of the enemy. Even the failure to receive what one desires in intercessory prayer may become a sign for self-examination. A young inexplicably infertile couple, who pray for a child without seemingly an answer from God, may begin to notice
through their prayer a greater capacity for love, for recognizing the giftedness of even the most banal moments of life. This deepened love may be precisely what this couple needs to seek new ways of bestowing life within the world, including adoption, serving as missionaries, selling all they have and giving it to the poor.

For this reason, the person whose memory and understanding is formed through the signs of prayer may then beget worshipful actions. Love of neighbor is a source of prayer. The joys of marriage may become a sign occasioning further worship. The study of biology, examining the complexities of the created order, may move the heart of the Christian to offer prayer to God. Through an Augustinian mystagogical formation into prayer, every human action performed in truth and love becomes a sign meant to form one more deeply into the divine love characteristic of the Trinity. Human deeds become worshipful.

Finally, if an Augustinian mystagogical formation into prayer may beget worshipful action, then the preacher or catechist practiced in the art of prayer teaches in a prayerful manner.

In *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine notes:

> Those who are going to deliver something they have received from others should pray, before receiving it, that those from whom they will get it may be given what they, through them, want to receive. They should also pray, after receiving it, that they themselves may present it effectively and that those to whom they present it may absorb it effectively. And they should also give thanks for a favourable outcome to their address to the one from whom they do not doubt that they received it.\(^7\)

This is more than a facile reminder from Augustine to the catechist that prayer is important to teaching Christianity. Instead, the Christian teacher prays while preparing to teach, for one can only receive the wisdom of the signs of faith through prayer, perceiving the signs as gifts. Similarly, the begetting of signs by the teacher in the act of communication is an extension of the original prayer of the teacher. The teacher prays that the signs used in the act of teaching may

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\(^7\) Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 4.30.63 (CCL 32: 167.8-14; Green, 146).
lead the student into contemplation. Lastly, since the act of teaching occurs within the order of gift, then an effective lesson is not reason to praise the expertise of the catechist but the reality that the signs were intended to point toward. The ministry of catechesis for the teacher is mystagogical. It is a sign eliciting deeper love of God and neighbor through the prayerful study of the signs of faith, thinking with them, renewing one’s internal life through the signs, discerning how such signs might be communicated so as to be used by the student. And ultimately, the catechist perceives in the results of this teaching an opportunity for further divine worship. Catechesis is then most persuasive, most therapeutic, most sacramental, when it is practiced as the prayerful begetting of words and deeds intended to refer to God. The formation of the catechist will be mystagogical in structure, initiating each catechist into the signs of faith, using these signs to understand God and reforming one’s internal narrative, and then offering a sacrifice of love in the act of teaching.

**The Pedagogy of Augustinian Mystagogical Formation**

The fundamental tasks of catechesis also require a pedagogy capable of supporting a formation into an Augustinian mystagogical imagination. In Augustine, this pedagogy consists of therapeutic rhetorical exercises, using the signs of the Scriptures and liturgical practice, in order to form a person into the image and likeness of God, capable of begetting love. Though chapter six sought additional ways for teaching Christianity within the parish, particularly through communities of practice, an essential part of all catechesis is still a persuasive communication of the signs of faith. Thus, in this second section of the concluding chapter, I first describe how the preacher and teacher may shape their sermon or lesson in such a way that it becomes pedagogy fitting to developing an Augustinian mystagogical imagination. Yet, the
sermon and the lesson are not the sole locations for catechesis in any parish. Thus, in the second part, I present three models of an Augustinian mystagogical formation using communities of practice.

An Augustinian Mystagogical Pedagogy of the Sermon and Catechetical Lesson

In chapter five, I described Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy within his sermons through attending to four features of his preaching. First, Augustine responds to various malaises of his congregation that inhibit a fruitful contemplation or performance of the Scriptures and liturgy. Second, he uses specific images and narratives to introduce his congregation into the signs of the Scripture and liturgy as a way of forming memory. Third, he performs exercises using these signs to enrich his congregation’s understanding of God and human existence as a whole. Fourth, he invites the assembly to engage in practices that incarnate the results of this mystagogical inquiry into a way of life. While Augustine performed this teaching primarily within liturgical sermons, this mystagogical pedagogy has much to offer the contemporary teacher and preacher.

As Augustine notes in *De catechizandis rudibus*, people come to receive catechesis for a number of reasons.\(^8\) And the presumptions that each person brings to the catechetical session shapes their willingness to listen to what the teacher or preacher says. A person educated in the liberal arts and philosophy may be more open to certain features of Christian doctrine, while a rhetorician may find in the language of the Scriptures an insult to good literary taste.\(^9\) Those baptized may perceive in this sacrament an immediate guarantee of eternal life and not a program for reshaping human desire. Praise may be practiced, not as a means of enlarging the

\(^8\) Augustine, *cat. rud.* 1.5.9
human capacity for God, but as a way of securing divine approval. Thus, after first prayerfully contemplating what is to be taught, the mystagogical catechist and preacher are to examine potential obstacles in understanding, as well as curative strategies for healing these malaises. Though the language used in Augustine is that of medicine or therapy, every good teacher acknowledges potential problems with understanding in the act of teaching. The math teacher notices that some students tend to hurry through a problem rather than engaging in a complete act of thought, and thus their failure to get the right answer is cured through encouraging them to slow down and to show their work. Others have not learned foundational concepts, essential to performing the math problem, and thus the teacher cures their malaise by teaching these concepts before proceeding in the lesson. If the math teacher does not prepare for these potential misunderstandings before entering the classroom, then he or she will, if attentive, be constantly adjusting on the fly; if inattentive, the teacher will stunt the mathematical development of the students, completely ignorant of why his or her teaching is so ineffective.

Thus, an Augustinian mystagogical pedagogy begins with attending to the problems or malaises to be corrected, as well as potential misunderstandings that may accompany the teaching of the doctrine, the celebration of the liturgical rite, the formation into the moral life, and the cultivation of a life of prayer. Teaching the doctrine of creation as sign requires that the teacher be mindful of the potential confusion between the theological claims of the doctrine of creation and a scientific account of cosmological evolution. The catechist preparing parents for the baptism of their children necessitates awareness that many Christians see religion as a school of morals, not as entrance into a divine way of life. A confirmation teacher, discussing the Ten Commandments, should be attentive to the student’s use of language of “niceness” to describe why one honors father and mother, does not murder, and does not commit adultery. Finally, a
youth minister seeking to educate into a way of prayer, should note the tendency of students to perceive such prayer as primarily intercessory in character. A catechist may discover these “malaises” through informal conversation with the person to be catechized, through an analysis of sociological and psychological literature related to the group one is teaching, or through a study of the common mistakes one might make in seeking understanding of a Scriptural passage, a doctrine, a liturgical practice, a moral teaching of the Church, or prayer.

For example, a catechist at the start of a pre-baptismal session with parents would begin by asking why they desire baptism for their child. The answer that the parents give shapes subsequent catechesis. Parents, who seek baptism for their child because it is a family tradition acknowledging new life, may tend to see their role as completed on the day of baptism. Baptism, in such an instance, functions for the parents not as sign of renewal in Christ to be used but the reality itself, a reaffirmation of family tradition. An Augustinian mystagogical pedagogy does not deny the validity of this desire but redirects it through the signs of faith. The teacher invites the student to reconsider the purpose of baptism, in the same way that Augustine transforms the understanding of his congregation regarding the signs of baptism in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 41. In effect, the role of the catechist is to determine the environment of those who seek instruction in Christianity, and then to make changes in that environment through asking questions and narrating a persuasive vision of Christian teaching in order to prepare for fruitful reception of the signs. Similarly, the homilist is also to first perform this therapeutic diagnosis. When preaching on the parables, if the homilist knows of the tendency in his congregation to see Jesus as a moral exemplar, then he will take care to avoid reducing the mystery of the parable to pithy moral maxims. In fact, he may intentionally highlight the difficulty of the parable vis-à-vis “good morals” to invite his congregation to deeper reflection upon the Scriptures.
The secondary feature of an Augustinian mystagogical pedagogy is the unfolding of signs for the formation of a renewed memory. In chapter six, in my survey of the pedagogical theory of John Dewey, I noted that it was the role of the educator to introduce into the teaching act words, phrases, technical terms, literary tropes, and a whole narrative that allows students to find meaning within present experience. This is also the case in Augustine’s sermons. In teaching the Eucharist, he initiates the Christian into the essential signs of that sacrament in order to form Christians in a fruitful reception of the Eucharist as a medicine for humility. The Eucharist, through the narrative Augustine tells, becomes a humble sacrament of the bread of angels, teaching each person a way of self-gift. Augustine’s approach to the Scriptures, the problems he raises, and his use of Job as a model for Eucharistic blessing, renews the memory of the Christian into a deeper understanding of the Eucharist, the experience of the sacrament becoming a meaningful event. In a similar manner, the catechist mentioned above will enrich the understanding of baptism of these new parents through the introduction of signs that reconfigure the parent’s desires regarding this sacrament. This of course means that the catechist or preacher is so familiar with the signs of what is being taught that they may be shaped into a narrative effective for the group one is teaching. One must study baptism in the economy of salvation, the actual celebration of the sacrament, and the fruits that the sacrament may produce. Preaching requires an equally supple mystagogical imagination, moving from Scripture to doctrine to liturgical rite and back again. The catechist and preacher are to practice forming a narrative through these signs in a variety of contexts. When teaching adolescents, the narrative of salvation told may focus upon the vocation of the human person revealed in Christ. If the same catechist teaches parents of first communicants, the narrative may shift toward the sacrificial life of love offered to the adopted sons and daughters of the Triune God within the Church. The
catechist/preacher introduces signs that are likely to be worthy of further contemplation by the group or person to whom one is speaking.

No act of catechesis is complete unless one uses the signs to seek deeper understanding of the reality of God. To celebrate the evening sacrifice of Vespers with understanding is to use the signs of light and darkness in the Scriptures and the prayer of vespers to perceive the sun’s setting as a sign of hope. To praise God with understanding is to stretch out the human capacity for thinking about God, making available new insights into the nature of God. Understanding is fundamentally learning to read human experience through the signs of Scriptures and the liturgical rites, discerning similitudes within human experience through a well-formed mystagogical imagination. This is an essential capacity for both the catechist and the preacher.

A catechist or preacher seeks to teach students about Eucharistic sacrifice as self-gift. Meditating upon the nature of this gift, the catechist/preacher discovers features of human life that are similitudes of this Eucharistic logic of gift, including married love, human friendship, and parenthood. Simultaneously, through this seeking, the catechist/preacher also notices certain facets of human love that are contradictory to this Eucharistic logic: the belief that the size/quality of an engagement ring is what signifies the depth of love, the notion that human friendship fulfills all desires, the conviction that having children will culminate in ultimate happiness. The catechist/preacher then presents the signs of Eucharistic sacrifice in such a way that they may transform human experience, while also validating what is beautiful about marriage, friendship, and parenthood. This of course depends upon a proper understanding of the signs. To teach Eucharistic sacrifice as the need for each person to enter into masochistic relationships, to intentionally cultivate suffering, is to fail to read the sign properly. For signs are properly understood when they are used to love God, neighbor, and self. Thus, the
catechist/preacher who performs Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy will have deeply examined the meaning of the signs of Christian faith, as well as discerned similitudes of these signs within human existence, capable of transforming understanding of the signs and renewing human experience in the process.

Finally, the catechist and preacher practicing Augustine’s mystagogical pedagogy will invite the student in the school of Christ to become the sign that is received in the catechetical event through renewed practice. To become a sign in Augustine is ultimately about a transformation of identity through the renewal of the will. The Christian, exercised in Augustine’s sermon on post-baptismal sermons, begins to observe the world as a sign of eternal life. All of one’s relationships may become a chance for Eucharistic humility, giving of oneself as a gift. To assume a posture of the evening sacrifice is gaze even upon darkness as a sign of hope. Praise is the practice of true peace, an experiment in learning to become an Easter Alleluia. And, in the contemplation of the signs of Christmas, one becomes like an angel, like Mary who is pregnant in faith. The mystagogical catechist/preacher is to beckon the Christian to assume this new identity within the world. The language in Augustine is primarily one of invitation, using the subjunctive mood, asking that the Christian align his or her will with the vision presented in the catechesis. He rarely pressures, and only then in matters of grave offenses against caritas, the separation of the Donatists from the Church or the rich holding on to their money rather than giving it as alms to the poor. Instead, the catechist performs exercises of memory and understanding in order to cultivate the desire of the Christian to use the sign to enjoy the reality. In this way, the catechist/preacher never directly forces the will to act in one way or the other but creates the conditions of possibility in which sacrifices of love may be offered. And this reformation of the will occurs through the renewal of perception exercised in
remembering and understanding. The catechist presents a vision of human vocation based in Christ’s gift upon the cross and invites the students to understand happiness anew, not according to the measure of fortune or success, but the quality of love. The homilist preaches on the posture of watchfulness intrinsic to a fruitful celebration of Advent, inviting the congregation to assume this posture of messianic expectation in one’s relationships. The more particular the catechist/preacher can be in invitations to love God and neighbor, the richer the mystagogical imagination developed through the catechesis. Pray this psalm. Love this neighbor in need. Seek peace in this way. Spend this time within church in silence.

Thus, the catechist or preacher preparing to teach using an Augustinian mystagogical pedagogy first acknowledges the potential obstacles to an effective communication of the sign, preparing salutary strategies, questions to ask, narratives to tell, that will become a balm for those who treat signs as things. This salutary pedagogy, of course, is to be performed upon the catechist/preacher as well, since they too are a member of the school of Christ. Then, the catechist/preacher begins to remember specific terms, tropes from the Scriptures, ideas, phrases and gestures from liturgical prayer, and narratives that may come to inform the communication of the sign. Part and parcel of this formation of the memory is a renewed understanding of the signs through meditation upon the Scriptural and liturgical signs by discerning similitudes in human existence, and reforming these according to the logic of the sign. Finally, the catechist/preacher suggests specific ways to love, practices that become part of future mystagogical reflection. These concrete ways of loving are intrinsic to the exercises of memory and understanding and are thus essential to the renewal of the imago Dei. A sign is contemplated. It comes to reform an interior narrative or deed. And, then it results in the production of new external signs enriching future contemplation.
An Augustinian Mystagogical Pedagogy in Communities of Practice

While proclamation of the faith in catechesis and preaching within liturgical rites are essential to an Augustinian mystagogical approach to catechesis, chapter six also argued that parishes may educate in a mystagogical way of knowing and loving through communities of practice. In particular, communities of practice form the identity of the practitioner through fostering engagement in the practice, carrying out the work of imagination, and nurturing alignment with the larger vision. And these communities become educative through fostering more meaningful practice, including deeper levels of participation through competency in the practice. In an Augustinian mystagogical approach to catechesis, the offering of human experience as a spiritual oblation to God through a renewal of the memory, the understanding, and the will is the indispensable practice defining of all other practice. Hence, through specific communities of practice, including one dedicated to marriage preparation, one to ecology, and another to planning liturgies, the parish may introduce the Christian into the signs of faith, teach Christians to seek understanding in the practice, and foster alignment through the formation of desire.

**Practicing Marriage**

Marriage is a human practice, transformed through the Christian sacramental economy, and thus particularly in need of mystagogical formation. Within Catholicism, marriage is a sacrament in which the mutual love of husband and wife becomes an image, a sign of the divine love offered to the human being and made manifest between Christ and the Church.\(^\text{10}\) In particular, the home of married couples is the Domestic Church, where “one learns endurance

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\(^{10}\) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1603; no. 1617.
As a Domestic Church, each couple needs to be initiated into the signs of faith, an understanding of these signs rich enough to support them throughout their marriage, and ways of concretely loving that become sacrifices of love that find their end in the Eucharistic assembly. Presently, marriage preparation programs on a diocesan and parish level generally treat sexuality, communication, religious practice, and domestic economy as a series of topics to be covered either over an extended weekend or through a six-week period of classes. Though for the most part, these topics lack an integrating narrative of what constitutes Christian marriage and thus do not initiate couples into true competency in its practice. And once the couple is married, there is little additional catechesis on the married life.

Yet, such an approach need not be the only one. A community of practice may form within a parish dedicated to the art of practicing Christian marriage. Through the guidance of a catechist, this community would initially be introduced into what constitutes engagement in the practice, including a theology of the Domestic Church drawn from the Scriptures and the Tradition, the Eucharistic vocation of the laity, and practices of prayer to perform within the home. As the couples gather on a monthly basis to seek deeper understanding of the practice of Christian marriage drawn from the signs they learned in their early sessions, they discover a renewal of their own internal narrative about what constitutes a successful marriage. In addition, they begin to see their own relationship as husband and wife as a sign of divine love, gaining deeper insight into the richness of God’s love for the human person as revealed in Jesus Christ. This community of practice, realizing the insufficiency of their own marriage formation programs vis-à-vis their deepened insight into the signs of Christian marriage, suggest to the

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11 Ibid., no. 1657.
12 Lumen Gentium, no. 11.
parish priest the establishment of a new formation program for engaged couples intended to initiate these new couples into the Eucharistic foundations of the vocation of marriage. Together with the director of Christian formation, the community of practice would develop these sessions to initiate engaged couples into the art of practicing Christian marriage.

An initial session of this formation program would consider the nature of Christian love in the first place, inviting the couple to measure their own relationship vis-à-vis Christ’s self-gift intrinsic to the Eucharistic life of the Church. This session would provide an introduction to Eucharistic theology and a conception of marriage emerging out of this Eucharistic doctrine. As well, it would provide an opportunity for the couples and the catechists to diagnose the present condition of the relationship. Then, the program would deliberate upon the Eucharistic vocation of laity, that transformation of all of human existence through the couple’s priestly, prophetic, and royal nature in Christ. Issues pertaining to domestic economy, sexuality, and communication would be discussed but under the purview of the Eucharistic nature of the Church. The final aspect of the formation program would touch upon how to develop a sacramental mysticism within one’s marriage. Indeed, exhortations for frequent Eucharistic participation are important. But equally essential is for the couple to discern not how they might be prepared for marriage, but rather how their marriage might become a sacrament of divine love for the world; how, they could offer divine sacrifice, exercising self-giving love through the married vocation. Welcoming the poor, being ready to adopt in case one cannot have children, abiding within a spirituality of gratitude. This last session would treat the primary virtue necessary for marriage, love unto the end—reminding the couple that their married love is ultimately not about themselves (despite what a variety of romantic comedies portray) but about the poor, the homeless, the sick, the weak, and anyone in need of the divine gift of love fruitfully
cultivated through the sacramental signs of married life. Eucharistic participation, for the married couple, then becomes the sustaining sacrament of the spiritual worship offered in the union of divine and human love, defining of the sacramental nature of Christian marriage. The community of practice would then invite these newly-wed couples into their common, monthly reflections upon the practice of marriage. The newly-wed couples, while receiving insight into negotiating some of the difficulties of marriage, would also contribute to the common insight of the community, enriching the practice of Christian marriage of the whole group.

**Practicing Ecology**

One important feature of Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in veritatem* is its discussion of ecological signs of creation and the human person. In this document, he notes, “Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considering in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other.”13 That is, for Benedict, the salve for the ecological crisis is not the seeking of sources for green energy but rather the development of virtues of gratitude whereby each person in the world perceives all as divine gift, part of a created order given to the human person by God.14 Fundamentally, the malaise of ecological devastation is the failure to perceive creation sacramentally, and thus a mystagogical formation is necessary for the development of a Christian ecological consciousness.

Yet, most formation into an ecological consciousness approaches the environment differently. Beginning from a sense of fear that human beings are destroying our planet at the expense of future generations, it suggests a series of “duties” that one may carry out in order to

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13 *Caritas in veritatem*, no. 51.
14 Ibid., no. 52.
stop the crisis at hand. Buy a Prius, use energy efficient light bulbs, start a compost pile, take shorter showers, etc. But, this approach quickly becomes a mindless fulfilling of commandments or a utopian sense that humanity can affect a type of ecological salvation through its own efforts in technological development. Such an approach to developing an ecological consciousness risks becoming misanthropic, perceiving human interaction with the created order as a necessary evil not as a divine gift.

A reconfiguration of such formation according to the Eucharistic pedagogy of the Church within a community of practice may serve as a more fruitful means of developing this ecological consciousness within Catholic parishes. Rather than begin with a series of “things” to avoid, this approach to ecological formation would educate parishioners in a sacramental perception of the created order by attending to a Eucharistic theology of creation, characterized by a spirituality of gratitude. Again, this community of practice would develop from those in the parish interested in practicing a Christian ecology. Some of its members may already be active in the ecological movement in secular settings, while others may have a burgeoning interest in this form of parochial ministry to creation. In the first months of the community, a Eucharistic theology of creation would be presented by a catechist of the group. The narrative told by the catechist, intended to inform specific ecological practices already performed follows: Creation is a loving gift from God, and human beings through the sin of pride rebelled against this divine gift, introducing disharmony into both interpersonal relationships and one’s attitude toward non-personal creation. In this sin, human beings become less capable of gratitude, of perceiving the signifying power of the entire created order. Through Christ’s self-gift upon the cross made available to Christians through the Eucharistic life of the Church, humanity is offered the possibility of re-creation, relationships of love, of peace, of unity. One becomes capable of true
gratitude, of receiving the world as a divine gift and then offering this gift to one’s neighbor—the Eucharistic vocation of the Christian. The practices of the Eucharistic liturgy, including the act of praise, of remembrance, of confession of sin, of sacrifice, and of “being sent” form the Christian in a proper relationship to the created order. Ultimately, this Eucharistic theology of creation is transformative of the human vocation, leading to true holiness, a life that has become transfigured through this pattern of gratitude.

This general narrative would then enlighten the parish formation into a priestly pedagogy of creation, one in which the community of practice would engage in specific practices with this meaning in mind. The community would organize specific practices, some for the whole parish, such as gardening, preparing organic meals, advocating for clean water, decreasing energy use, supporting local economies, and setting time aside for true leisure as exercises of the priestly role within creation. Yet, in claiming the priestly quality of these practices, the community of practice would not be romanticizing them; rather they would be seeing them in their truest light. They would become a source for deeper understanding of the human condition and of the life of God. To live in such a way that the self-giving love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, manifested in the life of Christ, sacramentally re-presented in the Eucharistic life of the Church, overflows into one’s relationship with creation is a painful endeavor. After all, self-giving love often is. The husband and wife, who love each other despite the sometimes quotidian nature of married life. The parent, who cares for the child, even when gratefulness of one's gift is often lacking. The teacher, who despite the sometimes futile nature of their lesson plans, continues to come to school each day desirous that this child might come to receive the gift of knowledge. These are sacrificial actions performed nonetheless out of a well-spring of love. So too, as Christians enter increasingly into the sacrificial life of God through the Eucharist, loving this
God with greater fervor, then this work of caring for creation (though hard), becomes a sacrifice of praise, a sacramental expression of love to the God who created human beings and this sometimes terrifyingly beautiful world. It is allowing non-personal creation to be itself, to recognize both it and human beings as part of the truthful divine grammar of the world, and not something to be misused according to one’s own sometimes false conception of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Of course this approach to understanding practice will generate new practices or resources within the parish. A mystagogical approach to practicing Christian ecology may lead the parish to adopt ecological protocols intended to cultivate the mystery of creation (the cessation of using bottled water for parish events). A parish garden may be dedicated, which provides food for the local Catholic Worker and beautiful signs of creation for deeper understanding of the splendors of divine life. Flowers grown in this garden may decorate the space for the Eucharistic worship of the community. All of these practices become signs of human praise to God for the created order and the fundamental belief that human flourishing necessitates an ecology of divine love, sometimes painful, that permeates the whole cosmos.

Practicing Liturgy

In many American Catholic parishes, one of the numerous ways to contribute to parochial life is through belonging to the liturgy committee. As any pastoral associate, director of liturgy, priest, or deacon knows these committees may often turn out to be a source of disunity for the parish. The liturgy committee can become a kind of privileged community, cultivating specific practices that they believe are intrinsic to the worship of that parish, treating signs as realities. The Eucharistic minister stands in the wrong place at Mass, and a committee member approaches
the minister following the Eucharist, reminding them in a less than charitable tone where to
stand. Specific hymns or songs, perhaps theologically inappropriate, have been sung for years,
and thus no amount of pleading on the part of parishioners rids the parish of the tune. Some
practices advocated by the committee, such as removing holy water during the season of Lent,
(though not appropriate to a season of baptismal preparation in which signs of water are
omnipresent within liturgical prayer and the Scriptures) are performed without thought to the
pedagogy of signification intrinsic to mystagogical practice. Liturgical planning becomes a
matter of placing flowers correctly, choosing music, creating extra-liturgical prayer services and
not promoting the liturgical life of the parish as a whole.

One way of healing this malaise is cultivating the liturgical committee as an Augustinian
mystagogical community of practice. During a whole year of liturgical planning, the parish
director of liturgy provides a brief catechesis at the commencement of each meeting on the
liturgical signs and mysteries referred to by these signs. When planning for music at Christmas,
the director of liturgy initiates into the signs of light and darkness, of the theological doctrine of
the Incarnation, and how human existence is transformed through the Christian belief that God
became flesh. When choosing lectors for the Easter Triduum, the director offers a catechesis on
the Scriptures as a sacramental event in which human words are taken up into the divine Word.
When making a decision about a new crucifix to be purchased, the director provides a catechesis
of Christian images, whereby the contemplation of the visible allows us to savor the invisible
reality of God and thus to practice the art of perceiving each person as an icon eliciting deeds of
love.

This gradual cultivation of the mystagogical imagination of the liturgy committee
eventually changes the way that the members understand the practice of liturgical planning.
Instead of choosing hymns at Christmas because of popularity or tradition, they begin to seek music that properly incarnates the play of light and darkness in the wonder of the Incarnation. Lectors are selected, not for how long they have been read within the parish, but because of their charism of speaking true words about the Word. They pick a crucifix that signifies the visible sign of divine love manifested in Christ. In their own attendance at Mass, they also understand more deeply the purpose of liturgical prayer. Indeed, the signs of liturgical prayer should be both beautiful and intentional, and thus need to be prudently chosen, but the transformation effected by these signs is the ultimate source of beauty within the liturgy. A Eucharistic minister, who stands in the wrong place, is told about this negligible error as a brief afterthought to a more extensive conversation about their week.

As the community of practice develops, the liturgy committee may produce new fruits through their mystagogical formation into liturgical participation. Once-a-year, they may sponsor a day of reflection for liturgical ministers in which the signs of lectoring, of Eucharistic ministry, of greeter, of choir member, is connected to the Scriptures, used to understand God, to transform human existence, and beget more fruitful practice. The committee, rather than simply planning the liturgies of the Triduum, may offer mystagogical sessions on the Triduum in the days following Easter as a way of savoring the signs of this prayer, to enter more deeply into the mysteries. And, recognizing that fruitful liturgical participation requires the growing capacity for self-gift, individual members of the liturgy committee may commit to monthly visits to the local prison, to homebound visits to the sick, and to serving as hospitality ministers at funerals. This latter commitment to works of mercy may even become an essential feature of the repertoire of belonging to the community of practice.
The reader of the following accounts will note the frequency of conditional statements. Indeed, the value of communities of practice is such that one can only imagine the fruits produced through the cultivation of these communities. By creating communities of practice in which Christians are introduced into engagement with the practice, seek understanding of the signs and reimagine what it means to perform such signs, and then commit themselves to the begetting of new signs for future contemplation, the very life of the parish becomes mystagogical.

**Evangelization and the Eucharistic Vocation of the Human Being**

In chapter six, I mentioned the theme of evangelization, “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new,”\(^\text{15}\) as pivotal to the catechetical mission of the Church. An Augustinian mystagogical approach to catechesis is a formation into the capacity for evangelization. This approach to catechesis by means of a cultivation of the memory, the understanding, and the will through the signs of faith, allows the human person to more perfectly beget the image and likeness of God within the world. For being created in the image and likeness of God is more than an affirmation of human dignity. And, despite critiques to the contrary, Augustine’s account of the *imago Dei* is not a reduction of the human person to a creature of reason devoid of affections or imagination. Rather, an Augustinian anthropology of the *imago Deo* is the Eucharistic vocation of the human being to beget interior images that become exterior deeds of love. It is to find that the heart has become a place of sacrifice to God elicited through the sacramental signs of the Scriptures and the Tradition. The capacity for faith, to perceive and desire a truth unseen, is

\(^{15}\text{Evangelium Nuntiandi, no. 18.}\)
pivotal to the Eucharistic imagination of the Christian. For every visible sign, perceived by the Christian practiced in the sights of faith, may become a similitude of divine love through the priestly work of the human person.

In fact, this Eucharistic vocation of the Christian is an expression of the Church’s evangelical identity. Every catechetical theology must account for the relationship between Church and world. The Church, as Augustine acknowledges throughout his sermons, is the Eucharistic body of Christ. And thus when the Church takes up human concerns in light of the signs of faith, it consecrates them into sacramental possibilities of divine union. But to perform this Eucharistic vocation, each member of the Christ will need to learn this way of perceiving the world mystagogically, consisting of potential signs to be used to enjoy God. And this mystagogical education reforms the human person into a persuasive and efficacious sign of this divine love.

In some sense, the vision of an evangelical mystagogical formation has been implicit throughout this entire project. The entirety of human experience is to become a spiritual oblation offered to God because no facet of being a creature is comprehensible outside of one’s relationship to the Triune God. The Church, through the lives of its members and its teaching, presents a renewed vision of politics as sign of the harmony that God intended for the human person. The Christian couple offers an image of marriage in which the most earthy aspects of being human in relationship, including having sex, taking out the trash, and preparing food, becomes a sign of the logic of love defining of human existence. Even the way that a Christian approaches death, not as an evil to be defeated at all costs, but as sign to be used is part of the evangelical mission of the Church. Perceiving the world as sign intended by God, instead of the complete fullness of reality, means that creation can become sacramental for the one who reads it
properly. And thus, evangelization is practicing this worshipful wisdom for all human beings to see, becoming a sign that through initiation into Christ, worship will one day become the very definition of human identity. Sacrifices of love will emerge from the heart as easily as one moves the arm to flip a page, to scratch one’s nose, to speak a word. Until then, Christians will practice this worshipful wisdom in all of life, begetting increasingly true and beautiful images of a life that has become a liturgy of divine praise.
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