

Augustine's *Sermones ad Populum* and the Relationship  
Between Identity/ies and Spirituality  
in North African Christianity\*

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In the current scholarly discourse concerning change and continuity in Late Antique society, some scholars assert that the distinctions between two religious groups, pagans and Christians, were blurred and that it is difficult to use indications of belief, observance and practice to accurately identify Christians in Late Antique society. Some recent surveys and findings agree that the distinction between pagans and Christians cannot be seen as a mutually exclusive opposition.<sup>1</sup> While evidence regarding North African Christianity does allow us to examine the question of what it meant to be a Christian in Late Antiquity, it is apparent that the comprehensive approach to spiritual training remained within the Greco-Roman, rather than the emerging specific Christian tradition. Pierre Hadot emphasises the complexity of this

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<sup>1</sup> R. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge, 1990; M. KAHLOS, *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and Pagan Cultures c. 360–430*, Aldershot, 2007 (Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies); É. REBILLARD, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE*, Ithaca, 2012; *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity*, ed. by É. REBILLARD, J. RÜPKE, Washington D.C., 2015 (CUA Studies in Early Christianity).

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type of spiritual discipline in Late Antiquity. Hadot explains it as a “metamorphosis of our personality”.<sup>2</sup> Rather than looking at spiritual exercises from a purely intellectual perspective, Hadot investigates them in their more holistic manifestation: the purification of the soul by training all facets of human thought and behaviour. It is interesting to note that even for Christian writers the idea of spiritual training apparently varied according to the circumstances of the Greco-Roman tradition they lived in. The second-century apologist Justin Martyr, for instance, maintained that philosophical introspection could guide Christians to the understanding of divine truth.<sup>3</sup> In the closing decade of the second century, Tertullian, however, opposed philosophical ethics to the Christian religion, declaring that divine truth was to be found in Jerusalem rather than in Athens.<sup>4</sup> Tertullian understood Christian martyrdom as an indispensable vehicle for the articulation of Christian identity and as a tool to shape contemporary perceptions of the Christian lifestyle, claiming that the seed of the Church was the blood of Christian martyrs.<sup>5</sup> In the mid-fourth century then, Christianity experienced crucial modifications and developments with regard to its understanding and appreciation of spiritual training. This evolution renders it requisite for modern scholars to revisit the topic of spiritual training in Augustine’s works.<sup>6</sup> The objective of this contribution is, therefore, to examine

<sup>2</sup> P. HADOT, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. by M. CHASE, Oxford, 1995, p. 82 and 127. See also *Philosophy as a Way of life: Ancient and Moderns, Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot*, ed. by M. CHASE, S. R. L. CLARK, M. MCGHEE, Chichester (West Sussex), 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Just., *Dial.* 3, 4 (*Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ed. by M. MARCOVICH, Berlin, 1997 (Patristische Texte und Studien, 47), p. 75): Φιλοσοφία μὲν, ἣν δ’ἐγώ, ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶ τοῦ ὄντος, καὶ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐπίγνωσις· εὐδαιμονία δὲ, ταῦτης τῆς ἐπιστήμης καὶ τῆς σοφίας γέρας. See L. W. BARNARD, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought*, Cambridge, 1967, p. 27; E. F. OSBORN, *Justin Martyr*, Tübingen, 1973 (Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie, 47), p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Tert., *Praescr.* 7, 9 (CCSL 1, p. 193).

<sup>5</sup> Tert., *Apol.* 50, 13 (CCSL 1, p. 171).

<sup>6</sup> For the secondary literature on spiritual training in the works of Augustine, see J. LECLERQ, “Exercices spirituels”, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique*, 4/2, Paris, 1961, col. 1903–1908; P. AGAËSSE, “Exercitatio animi”, in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, Bibliothèque Augustinienne*,

the evidence for the multiplicity of Christian and/or pagan identities in Augustine's *Sermones ad populum*, and more, in particular, to shed light on the occasions in which he made use of these multiple religious identities when speaking of spiritual training. I will first examine instances where Augustine referred to the Christian code of behaviour in his preaching, after which I will analyse how he understood the concept of spiritual training within a Christian perspective. Finally, I will consider spiritual training from the viewpoint of its significance and its limitations in constructing the Christian identity that Augustine hoped to foster in his North-African community.

16, 1991<sup>2</sup>, pp. 612–14; L. AYRES, “The Christological Context of Augustine's *De Trinitate* XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII–XV”, *Augustinian Studies*, 29 (1998), pp. 111–39; G. MADEC, “Exercitatio animi”, in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 2, Basel, 1996–2002, col. 1182–1183; N. KAMIMURA, “Augustine's First Exegesis and the Divisions of Spiritual Life”, *Augustinian Studies*, 36 (2005), pp. 421–32; K. POLLMANN, “Augustine's Hermeneutics as a Universal Discipline?”, in *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to Confessions*, ed. by K. POLLMANN, M. VESSEY, Oxford, 2005, pp. 206–31; M. CLAES, “Limitations to *Exercitatio mentis*: Changes in Rhetorical Style in Augustine's Dialogues”, *Augustiniana*, 57 (2007), pp. 387–98; W. OTTEN, “Religion as *Exercitatio Mentis*: A Case for Theology as a Humanist Discipline”, in *Christian Humanism: Essays in Honour of Arjo Vanderjagt*, ed. by A. A. McDONALD, Z. R. W. M. VON MARTELS, J. R. VEENSTRA, Leiden, 2009 (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 142), pp. 59–74; P. KOLBET, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal*, Notre Dame, 2010 (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series, 17); B. STOCK, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2010; B. STOCK, “Self, Soliloquy, and Spiritual Exercises in Augustine and Some Later Authors”, *Journal of Religion*, 91.1 (2011), pp. 5–23; X. PAVIE, *Exercices spirituels: leçons de la philosophie antique*, Paris, 2012; D. A. NAPIER, *En Route to the Confessions: The Roots and Development of Augustine's Philosophical Anthropology*, Leuven, 2013 (Late Antique History and Religion, 6); N. KAMIMURA, “Spiritual Narratives and Divine Providence: Spiritual Training in Augustine's *City of God*”, *Patristica*, supplementary vol. 4 (2014), pp. 43–58; M. CLAES, “St Augustine's *Exercitatio mentis* and its Function in Mystagogy: Opening up the Individual for Exercises in Communal Thinking and Living”, in *Seeing through the Eyes of Faith: New Approaches to the Mystagogy of the Church Fathers*, ed. by P. VAN GEEST, Leuven, 2016 (Late Antique History and Religion, 11).

## 1. Problems with the Christian identity

### *a. Inclusion of identities*

My account of the Christian identity begins with an examination of Augustine's claim made in two sermons preached around the same period, that there should be no division within the community of the faithful. He advocated the constitution of a unified Christian identity. In *sermo* 352A (= Dolbeau 14; 397 AD; Carthage<sup>7</sup>) Augustine dealt with Marc. 1, 15: "Repent and believe in the gospel." Augustine regarded this as a twofold call. After explaining that the second imperative, "believe in the gospel," was addressed to pagans, he turned his attention to the first command in the passage. He stated that, although "there is no one, I take it, listening to me in this congregation, who does not yet believe in the gospel,"<sup>8</sup> there were two groups present in the congregation who were called upon to repent: catechumens and the faithful who lived in a negligent way. Augustine then proceeded to refer to the

<sup>7</sup> Dolbeau: after 396, Gryson: probably 413/14, Hill: 397, Hombert: around 413–14?, Rebillard: 397.

For a chronological survey of Augustine's sermons, see A. KUNZELMANN, "Die Chronologie der Sermones des Hl. Augustinus", in *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, t. 2, Rome, 1931, pp. 417–520; O. PERLER, J.-L. MAIER, *Les voyages de saint Augustin*, Paris, 1969 (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 36); P.-P. VERBRAKEN, *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin*, Steenbrugis-Hagae Comitum, 1976 (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia, 12), pp. 53–196; *The Works of Saint Augustine, A translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Sermons*, III/1–11, ed. by J. E. ROTELLE, trans. by E. HILL, Brooklyn (New York), 1990–1997; É. REBILLARD, "Sermones", in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. by A. D. FITZGERALD, Grand Rapids (Michigan), 1999, pp. 773–92; P.-M. HOMBERT, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustiniennne*, Paris, 2000 (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 163); R. GRYSON, *Répertoire général des auteurs ecclésiastiques latins de l'antiquité et du haut Moyen Âge*, mise à jour du *Verzeichnis der Sigel für Kirchenschriftsteller* commencé par B. FISCHER, continué par H. J. FREDE, t. I: Introduction: Répertoire des auteurs: A-H, Freiburg, 2007<sup>5</sup> (*Vetus Latina, Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*, 1/1<sup>5</sup>), pp. 231–69; F. DOLBEAU, *Augustin d'Hippone: Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique*, Paris, 2009<sup>2</sup> (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 147).

<sup>8</sup> s. 352A (= Dolbeau 14), 3 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 108): *Nemo me, ut opinor, audit in hac multitudine, qui in euangelium nondum credit*. For the English translation of Augustine's sermons, see E. HILL, WSA III/1–11.

possible objection of a complaining catechumen: "A catechumen can answer me, 'Why say *Repent* to us? First, let me become one of the faithful, and perhaps I will live a good life, and I will not have to be a penitent.'"<sup>9</sup> Quoting Acts 2, 37–38 as an exhortation to lead a life of repentance ("Repent, and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"), Augustine encouraged the audience to respond to the gospel's call for repentance: "I will say to both sorts [*scil.* the catechumens and those leading a lascivious life]: 'Change your way of life, in case you lose your life. Condemn past sins, fear the evil things that are going to come, hope for the good things.'"<sup>10</sup> In his moral preaching, Augustine includes both the *catechumeni* and the *neglegentes fideles* in his treatment of all Christians.<sup>11</sup>

His emphasis on a common identity for his congregation can also be observed in *sermo* 301A (= Denis 17; c. 401 AD;<sup>12</sup> Bulla Regia, an inland town in Numidia about 130 miles west of Carthage,<sup>13</sup> where Augustine may have stopped on his way back from

<sup>9</sup> s. 352A (= Dolbeau 14), 4 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 109): *Catechumenus respondet mihi: 'Quare nobis dicis: Paenitemini? Prius sim fidelis, et forte bene uiuam, et paenitens non ero.'*

<sup>10</sup> s. 352A (= Dolbeau 14), 5 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 110): *Iam ergo ad utrosque loquar: Mutate uitam, ne perdatis uitam. Praeterita peccata damnate, futura mala metuite et bona sperate.*

<sup>11</sup> For the fact that the audience included various kinds of people from various categories of North-African society, see e.g. W. HARMLESS, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, Collegeville (Minnesota), 2015<sup>2</sup>, pp. 188–89. Another point to note is that the statistical analysis of the addressees of his sermons and letters shows that Augustine did not make catechumens the prime target of his preaching: W. HARMLESS, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, pp. 227–29, 229–32 for Chart 4, "Sermons (and Letters) Addressed to Catechumens".

<sup>12</sup> Gryson: 1 Aug. 399, Hill: 399, Kunzelmann: 1 Aug. before 400, Perler: 1 Aug. 399, Rebillard: 1 Aug. before 400 [n. 7]. For the dating of s. 301A, see also É. REBILLARD, "Late Antique Limits of Christianness; North Africa in the Age of Augustine", in *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity* [n. 1], pp. 293–318, p. 298 n. 2.

<sup>13</sup> For Bulla Regia (Hammam Daradji, in Tunisia), see C. LEPELLEY, *Les cités de l'Afrique Romaine au Bas-Empire, 1: La permanence d'une civilisation municipale*, Paris, 1979, pp. 377–78; C. LEPELLEY, *Les cités de l'Afrique Romaine au Bas-Empire, 2: Notices d'histoire municipale*, Paris, 1981, p. 87. See also S. LANCEL, "Bulla Regia", in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 1, Basel, 1992, col. 684–86.

Carthage).<sup>14</sup> Augustine reminded his audience in this sermon that Bulla Regia is a small town and culturally different from the great city of Carthage, with a large pagan presence still, where Christians thus could easily find an excuse for participating in certain pagan sins. However, he pointed out that the Christians of Bulla Regia were sensitive about their municipal status. Augustine compared this sensitivity with that of other North-African Christian communities, particularly that of Carthage. He bore in mind a possible objection: “Perhaps you will say, ‘We are like Carthage.’ Just as there is a holy and religious community in Carthage, so also there is such a vast population in a great metropolis, that they all use others to excuse themselves. In Carthage, you can say: ‘The pagans do it, the Jews do it;’ here, whoever is doing it, Christians are doing it.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, Bulla Regia was not Christianised to such a high degree as the neighbouring town of Simittu,<sup>16</sup> where, at the request of the local bishop, Augustine engaged with the problem of Christians’ active participation in civic festivities. It is interesting to note that, in his criticism of their enthusiastic attendance of theatre performances,<sup>17</sup> Augustine condemned the false division between clergy and laity. He claimed that Christians should not encourage behaviour that was thought to be acceptable for the layperson if it was not acceptable for the clergy:

<sup>14</sup> O. PERLER, J.-L. MAIER, *Les voyages de saint Augustin* [n. 7], p. 227 and n. 6.

<sup>15</sup> s. 301A (= Denis 17), 7 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, t. 1, p. 88): *forte dicitis: Nos Carthagini similes sumus. Quomodo apud Carthaginem est plebs sancta et religiosa, sic tanta turba est in magna ciuitate, ut se excusent omnes de aliis. Pagani faciunt, Iudaei faciunt, potest dici Carthagine; hic, quicumque faciunt, Christiani faciunt.*

<sup>16</sup> See É. REBILLARD, “Late Antique Limits of Christianness” [n. 12], p. 299 and n. 24. For the christianisation of Bulla Regia, see also J. VAN OORT, “Jews and Judaism in Augustine’s *Sermones*”, in *Ministerium Sermonis: Philological, Historical, and Theological Studies on Augustine’s Sermones ad Populum*, ed. by G. PARTOENS, A. DUPONT, M. LAMBERIGTS, Turnhout, 2009 (*Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia*, 53), pp. 243–65, p. 261.

<sup>17</sup> On the aspect of pagan spectacles and theatrical performances, see e.g. R. LIM, “Augustine and Roman Public Spectacles”, in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. by M. VESSEY, Chichester (West Sussex)-Malden (Massachusetts), 2012 (*Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World*), pp. 138–50, pp. 146–47.

And this is done by Christians; I'd rather not say, 'and by the faithful.' A catechumen, perhaps, has a low opinion of his worth. "I'm just a catechumen," he says. You're a catechumen? "Yes, a catechumen." Do you have one forehead on which you received the sign of Christ, and another which you carry along to the theatre? Do you want to go? Change your forehead, and get along there. So, as you can't change your forehead, don't ruin it.<sup>18</sup>

Augustine's insistence on the inclusion of both catechumens and the faithful into the same membership is clearly formulated: "I'm exhorting you all, addressing you all; you will see how much more honourable you will be in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>19</sup>

In sum, Augustine upholds a holistic and unifying vision of the Christian identity, both in a descriptive and normative way: there are no internal distinctions, and all Christians should act accordingly.

#### *b. Relation to social obligations*

Despite his confident assertion of a common identity for the community of the faithful, some Christians applied principles of Christian behaviour only optionally and selectively, thus making the choice of their affiliation arbitrary. In *sermo* 62 (c. 399 AD; preached to the Christians of Carthage<sup>20</sup>) Augustine responded to the objection that less devout Christians took part in a local feast for the tutelary genius of Carthage. Many Carthaginian citizens embraced the view that festivals served to maintain the social fab-

<sup>18</sup> s. 301A (= Denis 17), 8 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, t. 1, pp. 88–89): *Et hoc a christianis fit: nolo dicere, et a fidelibus. Catechuminus forte contemnit se. Catechuminus, inquit, sum. Catechuminus es? Catechuminus. Alia frons tua accepit Christi signum, et aliam tollis ad theatrum? Ire uis? Muta frontem, et uade. Ergo frontem, quam non potes mutare, noli perdere.*

<sup>19</sup> s. 301A (= Denis 17), 8 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, t. 1, p. 89): *Omnes exhortor, omnes alloquor: uidebitis quam honestiores eritis in nomine domini nostri Iesu Christi.*

<sup>20</sup> Gryson: 403/04, Hill: 399 or 407/8, Kunzelmann: no later than 399, Perler: 399, Rebillard: 399 [n. 7]. For the chronological range of s. 62, see É. REBILLARD, "Augustin et le culte des statues", in *Ministerium Sermonis* [n. 16], pp. 299–325, p. 317 n. 80. See also L. DOSSEY, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa*, Berkeley, 2010 (Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 47), p. 287, n. 83; L. DE CONINCK, B. COPPIETERS' T WALLANT, R. DEMEULENAERE, "À propos de la datation des *sermones ad populum*: s. 51–70A", in *Ministerium Sermonis* [n. 16], pp. 49–67, p. 61 and n. 58.

ric of the city. Christian defenders of festival participation argued that they were able to attend pagan rituals without undermining their own faith. However, fanatic Christians opposed any participation in festivals. As a result, conflicts arose between those who opposed and those who defended the participation of Christians in pagan festivities. Augustine had to take a stand on the issue,<sup>21</sup> and he did so with an exposition on I Cor. 8, 10–12, the pericope about consuming meat offered to idols. In this Pauline passage, Christians are rebuked for attending banquets at pagan temples. Augustine examined how Paul settled the moral issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols and concluded that the “strong” who claimed that their conscience was not troubled by eating food offered to idols nonetheless caused difficulty for the “weak”, who would be led astray by idol worship:

Do you ever wonder how people may be led astray by images, which they imagine are being honoured by Christians? “God knows my mind,” he says. But your brother doesn’t know your mind. If you are weak yourself, beware of catching a worse illness still; if you are strong, be careful of your brother’s weakness.<sup>22</sup>

Along with dismissing the possibility that all Christians could be “strong”, Augustine enjoined those who were “strong” not to make a display of the strength of their faith. He seized the opportunity to draw attention to the internal attitude of the “strong” Chris-

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed discussion of Christians’ participation in banquets and s. 62, see É. REBILLARD, “Augustin et le culte des statues” [n. 20], pp. 313–17. See further D. RIGGS, “The Continuity of Paganism between the Cities and Countryside of Late Roman Africa”, in *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity*, ed. by T. S. BURNS, J. W. EADIE, East Lansing (Michigan), 2001, pp. 285–300; É. REBILLARD, “Vivre avec les païens, mais non mourir avec eux: le problème de la commensalité des chrétiens et des non-chrétiens (I<sup>er</sup>-V<sup>e</sup> siècles)”, in *Les frontières du profane dans l’antiquité tardive*, ed. by É. REBILLARD, C. SOTINEL, Rome, 2010 (Collection de l’École française de Rome, 428), pp. 151–76, pp. 171–76; M. KAILOS, “Pacifiers and Instigators: Bishops and Interreligious Conflicts in Late Antiquity”, in *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity: Conflict and Compromise*, ed. by J. FERNÁNDEZ UBIÑA, A. DOUNTON-FEAR, M. MARCOS, London, 2013, pp. 63–82.

<sup>22</sup> s. 62, IV, 7 (CCSL 41Aa, p. 302): *Quomodo putatis decipi posse simulacris homines, quae a christianis honorari putant? “Nouit”, inquit, “Deus cor meum.” Sed frater tuus non nouit cor tuum! Si infirmus es, caue maiorem aegritudinem; si firmus es, cura fratris infirmilatem.*

tians towards their fellow Christians. Augustine emphasised that Christians should strive for and maintain the internal unity of their community.

In the latter part of the sermon, Augustine developed a fictitious dialogue with a member of his congregation in which the congregant offered a plausible excuse for his attendance of sacrificial banquets. He justified his involvement as satisfying a patron's demands, stating he had to fulfil the social obligation of the relationship between patron and client: "'But I'm afraid,' you will say, 'lest I offend a superior.'"<sup>23</sup> However, since it was a religious event,<sup>24</sup> Augustine maintained that there was no legitimate excuse for a Christian's participation. The sermon offers two points of interest. On the one hand, after interpreting the invitation from patrons as a test to see if the faithful will worship idols,<sup>25</sup> Augustine drew attention to another aspect: without disregarding the pagan authorities in the social sphere, he stressed the need for a higher authority in the Christians' devotional lives.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Augustine asserted that refusing a patron's invitation did not pose a serious threat to the Christians.<sup>27</sup> He compared the patron with the persecutor in pagan times: "The martyrs endured the butchery of their limbs, and are Christians going to dread the wrongs of a Christian age? The one who does you wrong now does it timidly."<sup>28</sup> In reality, when the patron invited the Christian to attend a feast, whether public or private, those involved in the patronage relationship did not face the difficulty of choosing between two conflicting options. They expressed less concern about the religious principle of behaviour than implied by Augustine. Thus, because of the unnecessary emphasis placed on pres-

<sup>23</sup> s. 62, 5, 8 (*CCSL* 41Aa, p. 302): "*Sed timeo*", inquires, "*ne offendam maiorem.*" Slightly adapted from Hill's translation.

<sup>24</sup> For the difference of opinion between Augustine and his congregation, see É. REBILLARD, "Late Antique Limits of Christianness" [n. 12], pp. 297–98.

<sup>25</sup> s. 62, 12 (*CCSL* 41Aa, p. 307).

<sup>26</sup> s. 62, 13 (*CCSL* 41Aa, p. 308).

<sup>27</sup> s. 62, 14 (*CCSL* 41Aa, p. 309).

<sup>28</sup> s. 62, 10, 15 (*CCSL* 41Aa, p. 310): *Laniatus membrorum martyres pertulerunt, et timent christiani iniurias temporum christianorum! Qui tibi facit iniuriam, modo timens facil.*

sure from patrons, it appears that Augustine recognised the vitality of the pagan cult within society and encouraged Christians to distance themselves from paganism. Due to cultural demands, however, some Christians preferred to continue to fulfil their civic obligations, as the occasion required.

In addition to unity, coherence thus is the second characteristic of the Christian identity: as there is no internal division amongst Christians, Christians should not make an external distinction between their Christian identity and possible other commitments. The Christian identity is all encompassing, colours and determines all aspects of one's life. The next paragraph will exemplify this even more.

*c. Christians on their deathbed*

Christian behaviour in North Africa was heavily influenced by specific contexts.<sup>29</sup> In the situations Augustine described in his sermons, the influence of immediate, small social networks significantly determined the actions of community members.<sup>30</sup> Regardless of religious affiliation, North Africans were more concerned about the intersection of family, friends and neighbourhood. The primary attention of Christians appeared to be devoted to these direct community relationships. Augustine's encounter with them, therefore, prompted him to consider how Christians should associate their Christian identity with the principles of behaviour and practices determined by their immediate surroundings. It is interesting to note that, when he reminded the congregation of the impor-

<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive survey of North African Christianity and its various environments, see e.g. C. LEPELLEY, *Les cités de l'Afrique Romaine au Bas-Empire* [n. 13]; F. DECRET, *Le christianisme en Afrique du Nord ancienne*, Paris, 1996; L. DOSSEY, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa* [n. 20]; C. P. JONES, *Between Pagan and Christian*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2014; J. P. BURNS, R. M. JENSEN, in collaboration with G. W. CLARKE et al., *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of its Practices and Beliefs*, Grand Rapids (Michigan), 2014.

<sup>30</sup> For the direct and indirect influence on the mode of behaviour and thought, see n. 1. See also L. R. RAMBO, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, New Haven, 1993; L. R. RAMBO, "Psychology of Conversion and Spiritual Transformation", *Pastoral Psychology*, 61.5 (2012), pp. 879–94; D. Y. KIM, *Understanding Religious Conversion: The Case of Saint Augustine*, Eugene (Oregon), 2012.

tance of the determination of practices by their Christian identity, he referred to the example of a Christian on his deathbed who refused to be treated by charms and magical remedies for illness.<sup>31</sup>

In *Sermo* 286 (428 AD; near Hippo Regius at a *memoria* dedicated to two Milanese martyrs, Protasius and Gervasius<sup>32</sup>) Augustine related a story to the congregation:<sup>33</sup>

A believer is lying in bed, wracked with pain [...]; along comes trial and temptation by tongue; either some female, or a man [...] approaches the sickbed, and says to the sick man, "Tie on that amulet, and you will get better; let them apply that charm, and you will get better. So-and-so, and So-and-so and So-and-so; ask, they all got better by using it." He doesn't yield, he doesn't agree, he doesn't give his consent; he has to struggle, all the same.<sup>34</sup>

Augustine repeatedly employed the theme of the martyr in his sermons because he delivered many of his sermons on the feast days of martyrs.<sup>35</sup> One of the key messages of *sermo* 286 is that

<sup>31</sup> See R. B. ENO, *Saint Augustine and the Saints*, Villanova, 1989 (The Saint Augustine Lecture 1985), pp. 62–63; É. REBILLARD, *Christians and Their Many Identities* [n. 1], pp. 74–75.

<sup>32</sup> Gryson: 19 June, not before 425, Hill: 428, Kunzelmann: 19 June, 425 at the earliest, Perler: 19 June, 426/30, Rebillard: 19 June after 425 [n. 7]. For the dating and place, see also WSA III/8, p. 105, n. 1.

<sup>33</sup> For Augustine's story of those who resisted superstitious remedies on their deathbed, see also ss. 4, 36 (CCSL 41, pp. 47–48); 306E (= Dolbeau 18), 7–8 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], pp. 215–16); 318, 3 (PL 38, col. 1439–1440); 328 (= Lambot 13), 8 (*Revue Bénédictine*, 51, p. 19).

<sup>34</sup> s. 286, 7 (PL 38, col. 1300–1301): *Iacet fidelis in lecto, torquetur doloribus, [...] uenit linguae tentatio, accedit ad lectum aut muliercula aliqua, aut uir, [...] et dicit aegroti, Fac illam ligaturam, et sanus eris: adhibeatur illa praecantatio, et sanus eris. Ille et ille et ille, interroga, sani inde facti sunt. Non cedit, non obtemperat, non cor inclinat; certat lamen.* For Augustine's criticism of the superstitious practices and *ligatura*, see further *doctr. chr.* 2, 20, 30; *en. Ps.* 33, s. 2, 18; *en. Ps.* 50, 8; *en. Ps.* 93, 20; *en. Ps.* 70, s. 1, 17; *en. Ps.* 136, 21; *ep.* 254, 2; *Io. eu. tr.* 7, 12; s. 260D (= Guelf. 18), 2; s. 318, 3; s. 328 (= Lambot 13), 8. See F. VAN DER MEER, *Saint Augustin: pasteur d'âmes*, v. 1, Paris, 1959, pp. 108–14; R. MARKUS, "Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory", in *Signs and Meaning: World and Text in Ancient Christianity*, Liverpool, 1996, pp. 125–46, for the limited meaning of the conventional superstitions; W. E. KLINGSHIRN, "Divination and the Disciplines of Knowledge according to Augustine", in *Augustine and the Disciplines* [n. 6], pp. 113–40, pp. 130–34.

<sup>35</sup> For Augustine's views on martyrdom and its theological aspects, see e.g. C. LAMBOT, "Les sermons de saint Augustine pour les fêtes des martyrs,"

the interior imitation of the martyrs' virtues is a worthy celebration of the martyrs. He encouraged the congregation to follow the exemplary figures of the martyrs in their suffering, though he affirmed that there is no physical persecution anymore.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the focus of this sermon is not on the physical threat of persecution but rather on the internal aspect of suffering, death and the divine promise of eternal life. Detailing the martyr's fight against sin and allurements, Augustine described the narrative of a Christian on his sickbed: "He has no strength, and he conquers the devil. He becomes a martyr on his sickbed, and he is crowned by the one who hung for him on the tree."<sup>37</sup> The people surrounding the dying man may have been pagans, because Augustine compared them to the devil, against whose hidden and powerful forces the man struggled inwardly. However, Augustine did not explicitly explain their religious affiliation. It is likely that the dying man was surrounded by a group of people whose actions were principally influenced by their local and traditional rituals.

In *sermo* 335D (= Lambot 6; c. 424–25 AD; Hippo Regius, perhaps a suburban parish<sup>38</sup>) Augustine instructs his congregation on how they could share the benefits of martyrdom. Here too, the appeal to imitate the martyrs is vividly illustrated by a critically

*Analecta Bollandiana*, 67 (1949), pp. 249–66; G. LAPOINTE, *La célébration des martyrs en Afrique d'après les sermons de saint Augustin*, Montréal, 1972 (Cahiers de Communauté Chrétienne, 8); J. DEN BOEFT, "Martyres sunt, sed homines fuerunt: Augustine on Martyrdom", in *Fructus Centesimus, Mélanges offerts à G. J. M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire*, ed. by A. A. R. BASTIAENSEN, A. HILHORST, C. H. KNEEPKENS, Steenbrugge-Dordrecht, 1989, pp. 115–24; A. DUPONT, "Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani. Augustine's Thinking on Martyrdom based on his *Sermones* on the Protomartyr Stephen", *Augustiniana*, 56/1–2 (2006), pp. 29–61; A. DUPONT, *Preacher of Grace: A Critical Reappraisal of Augustine's Doctrine of Grace in his Sermones ad populum on Liturgical Feasts and during the Donatist Controversy*, Leiden, 2014 (Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 177), pp. 137–59.

<sup>36</sup> s. 306B (= Denis 18), 6 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, t. 1, p. 96): *El certe tempus est pacis*; s. 305A (= Denis 13), 2 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, t. 1, p. 57): *Verumtamen, quamvis alio sit tempore pax, alio persecutio, deest alicui tempore occulta?*

<sup>37</sup> s. 286, 7 (*PL* 38, col. 1301): *Vires non habet, et diabolum uincit. Fit martyr in lecto, coronante illo qui pro illo pependit in ligno.*

<sup>38</sup> Gryson: feast of martyrs, Hill: in or after 424 or 425?, Verbraken: feast of martyrs [n. 7].

ill patient, lying on his sickbed. When those who had gathered at the bedside learned that the patient's health had deteriorated even further, they asked diviners and astrologers for help and the latter suggested healing charms:

But the one who says, "I won't do it" – when a friend suggests it, a neighbour mutters something about it, or a neighbour's maid, sometimes even his own old nurse – who says, "I won't do it; I'm a Christian. God prohibits this sort of thing. These are the sacraments of demons. Listen to the apostle: I do not wish you to become the associates of demons (I Cor. 10, 20)" – well, he gets this answer from the one who is suggesting it: "Do it, and you'll get well. So-and-so and such-and-such did it. What? Aren't they Christians? Aren't they believers? Don't they hurry off to church? And yet they did it and got well."<sup>39</sup>

In the final part of the sermon, Augustine again recounted the superstitious behaviour of the old nurse: "[...] a neighbour at your bedside, and a friend and a maid, even perhaps, as I said, your old nurse, bringing wax and an egg in her hand and saying, 'Do this and get better. Why prolong your illness? Tie on this amulet. I heard someone invoke the name of God and the angels over it and you will get better'."<sup>40</sup> It was not specified whether or not the old nurse was a Christian, nor if she was aware that some Christians refused to tie amulets on their bodies. All the same, this example makes clear that old, pagan, customs were not easy to eradicate, certainly in a situation when one's was at stake.

Being Christian meant embracing a way of life that excluded certain traditions, traditions that were perhaps cherished for generations. The Christian identity equals a total commitment, in all circumstance of life, also in the most extreme or difficult ones.

<sup>39</sup> s. 335D (= Lambot 6), 3 (PLS 2, p. 778): *Qui autem dicit: non facio – suggerente amico, et mussitante uicino aut uicina ancilla, aliquando et de matricula eius – qui dicit: non facio: christianus sum; deus prohibet hoc; sacramenta sunt daemonum; audi apostolum: nolo uos socios fieri daemoniorum, respondetur illi ab illo qui suggerit: fac et sanus eris; ille et ille fecerunt. quid? non christiani? non sunt fideles? non ad ecclesiam currunt? et tamen fecerunt et sani sunt.*

<sup>40</sup> s. 335D (= Lambot 6), 5 (PLS 2, p. 780): *adstat uicinus et amicus et ancilla, etiam dixi, forte de matricula, ceram uel ouum manibus ferens et dicit: fac hoc et saluus eris. quid prologas tuam aegritudinem? fac hanc ligaturam. ego audiui qui nomen dei et angelorum ibi inuocat et eris sanus.*

## 2. Spiritual training

In addition to the negative examples and warnings listed above, Augustine referred to positive examples, Christians whose religious identity produced no conflict with their social and communal obligations, Christians who “activate different allegiances, depending on the different contexts of interaction.”<sup>41</sup> There seems to have been minimal conscious tension between religious and secular activities in the community of the faithful, aside from Augustine’s own continued tension regarding how to foster a Christian way of living. As a bishop who confronted the vicissitudes of his congregation, Augustine was eager to relate a Christian identity with fully formed and unique principles of action. But how did he show his congregation the significance and necessity of spiritual training? While in the first part I sketched Augustine’s negative demarcation of the Christian identity – i. e. which practices Christians should avoid –, now I will explore how he gives a positive and active content to it, i. e. his understanding of Christian spiritual exercises.

### a. Ascetic aspects

The *Indiculum* of Possidius lists five sermons delivered by Augustine under the subheading “Tractatus aduersus memoratos” within the group entitled “Contra Manicheos”.<sup>42</sup> Three of these homilies have been identified by scholars, as *sermones* 1, 50, and 12, and two remain to be discovered.<sup>43</sup> *Sermo* 50 (c. 394–95 AD; location unknown) is the second anti-Manichaean sermon in Possidius’

<sup>41</sup> É. REBILLARD, “Religious Sociology: Being Christian in the Time of Augustine”, in *A Companion to Augustine* [n. 17], p. 52.

<sup>42</sup> A. WILMART, “Operum S. Augustini elenchus a Possidio eiusdem discipulo Calamensi episcopo digestus”, in *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, t. 2, p. 167.

<sup>43</sup> J. BEDUIN, *Augustine’s Manichaean Dilemma*, vol. 2: *Making a “Catholic” Self, 388–401 C.E.*, Philadelphia, 2013 (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion), p. 456, n. 7. For the relationship between s. 50 and c. *Adim.*, see A. C. DE VEER, “La date des sermons I, XII et L de saint Augustin”, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 15 (1969), pp. 241–46; N. BAKER-BRIAN, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire: A Study of Augustine’s Contra Adimantum*, Lewiston (New York), 2009, pp. 211–18.

list.<sup>44</sup> In this sermon, Augustine interpreted Agg. 2, 9: “Mine is the gold and mine is the silver.” Augustine began by criticising the reductionist Manichaean exegesis of the outwardly contradicting verses. Manichaeans regarded the mammon of iniquity in Luc. 16, 9 as the root of avarice, and drew a parallel between it and the gold and silver in Agg. 2, 9. Augustine replied to their critique of the prophet by indicating another way to view worldly possessions:

*Mine*, he says, *is the gold and mine is the silver*, not yours, you wealthy ones of the earth. [...] As the divine justice distributes its property, good deeds are thereby publicized and sins are thereby punished. Gold and silver, you see, and every kind of earthly possession are both a means of exercising humanity (*humanitas*) and of punishing greed. When God bestows things on good people, he shows by their example how many things are thought lightly of by the mind whose real wealth is the one who bestowed them.<sup>45</sup>

Property, according to Augustine, was bestowed by God upon those who loved God more than the mammon. Augustine's solution emphasised the possibility that all humans (*humanitas*) could exercise their faith by sharing their “earthly” property. This solution could be reached without Augustine imposing severe constraints or compelling his congregation to renounce property. He did not direct attention to their physical possessions but rather towards the inward disposition of the soul.<sup>46</sup> In the face of Manichaean asceticism, which advocated an extreme and impractical view of

<sup>44</sup> Gryson: 394/95, Hill: before 396, Kunzelmann: 394–95, Rebillard: 394–95 [n. 7]. For the dating of s. 50, see also H. R. DROBNER, *Augustinus von Hippo, Predigten zu den alttestamentlichen Propheten (Sermones 42–50)*, Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen, Frankfurt, 2013 (Patrologia, 29), pp. 500–02.

<sup>45</sup> s. 50, 2–3 (CCSL 41, pp. 625–26): *Meum est, inquit, aurum, et meum est argentum, non uestrum, o diuites terrae. [...] Rem suam diuina distribuyente iustitia, et recte facta inde manifestantur, et peccata inde puniuntur. Namque aurum et argentum atque omnis terrena possessio et exercitatio humanitatis est et supplicium cupiditatis. Cum talia deus nobis hominibus tribuit, ostendit in eis quanta contempnat animus, cuius diuitiae sunt ipse qui tribuit.*

<sup>46</sup> P. ALLEN, E. MORGAN, “Augustine on Poverty”, in *Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Realities*, ed. by P. ALLEN, B. NEIL, W. MAYER, Leipzig, 2009 (Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte, 28), p. 146 (total renunciation) and pp. 132–33 (inner disposition).

money,<sup>47</sup> he focused on the necessity of spiritual exercises (*exercitatio humanitatis*) as the proper means of purging the *humanitas* of daily sins. Augustine's exhortation was not only addressed to the wealthy, or the educated, or the catechumens, for example, but to the whole of his congregation. The congregants came from diverse backgrounds and Augustine did not wish to divide them into smaller subgroups, a strategy which could be explained through the pastoral intention of his preaching.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to his theoretical and speculative writings, it is clear that Augustine's sermons underscored the unity of the congregation and heightened awareness of common membership. Exhortation to spiritual discipline served to reinforce the solidarity of the congregation.

In *sermo* 70 (c. 394–400 AD;<sup>49</sup> Carthage), Augustine expounded Matth. 11, 28–30, following *sermo* 69 sequentially on the same passage.<sup>50</sup> In this short sermon, after revealing profound insights into how the Apostle had to go through terrible and terrifying experiences, taken from two passages from II Cor. (6, 4; 11, 24–25), Augustine contemplated the manifold works of the Holy Spirit: “That just shows you how comfortable was the yoke of Christ he

<sup>47</sup> For the difference between Manichaean asceticism and Augustine's monasticism, see J. BEDUIN, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, vol. 2 [n. 44], pp. 73–87.

<sup>48</sup> For the pastoral intention of Augustine's sermons, see H. MÜLLER, “Preacher: Augustine and his Congregation”, in *A Companion to Augustine* [n. 17], pp. 297–309, p. 308; A. DUPONT, “Augustine's Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom: the Centrality of the Martyr's Grace in his Anti-Donatist and Anti-Pelagian *Sermones ad Populum*”, in *Christian Martyrdom in Late Antiquity (300–450 AD): History and Discourse, Tradition and Religious Identity*, ed. by P. GEMEINHARDT, J. LEEMANS, Berlin, 2012 (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 116), pp. 155–78, 161–62 for the pastoral intention in his anti-Donatist sermons.

<sup>49</sup> Gryson: 395/400, Hill: 398, Perler: 2 Feb. 413, Rebillard: 2 Feb. 413 [n. 7]. For the dating of s. 70, see O. PERLER, J.-L. MAIER, *Les voyages de saint Augustin* [n. 7], p. 312 and n. 4; L. DE CONINCK, B. COPPIETERS-T WALLENT, R. DEMEULENAERE, “À propos de la datation des *sermones ad populum*: s. 51–70A” [n. 20], p. 66 and n. 83.

<sup>50</sup> For the rhetorical strategies expressed in these sermons, see C. BISSON, “Lecture de Matthieu 11, 28–30 dans les sermons 69 et 70 de saint Augustin: de la rhétorique classique à l'éloquence chrétienne”, Québec, 2000 (Diss. Université Laval), pp. 64–155.

[*scil.* the Apostle Paul] bore, and how light the load.”<sup>51</sup> Then, he stirred his congregants’ minds by showing them the burdensome requirements imposed by their vocations: the laborious yoke of the soldier, merchant and hunter. Here Augustine adds another noteworthy example of the burden that does not belong to the same vocational category:

To what torments of almost daily bearings are the tender years of children subjected! Again, how they are kept at work in schools, and harried with long hours and short rations – not to learn wisdom but to learn the use of numbers and letters and clever tricks of argument for the sake of accumulating empty riches and honours!<sup>52</sup>

This example serves to remind us not only of the harsh realities of Late Antique society but also of Augustine’s personal educational experiences.<sup>53</sup> Although he may have been critical of the object as well as of the strenuous form of his education, his statement does not necessarily imply that he invalidated the useful function of these exercises. However, more details cannot be gleaned from this sermon.

*Sermo* 9 (c. 420 AD; Chusa<sup>54</sup>) provides an interpretation of the Decalogue by reference to the ten strings of the harp of a psal-

<sup>51</sup> s. 70, 2 (CCSL 41Aa, p. 472): *Ecce quam suaue iugum Christi portabat et quam leuem sarcinam.*

<sup>52</sup> s. 70, 2 (CCSL 41Aa, p. 473): *Quantis crucialibus prope cotidianarum plagarum tenera puerorum aetas subditur? Quantis etiam grandiusculi uigiliarum et abstinentiae molestiis exercentur, non propter descendam sapientiam sed propter opes honoresque uanitatis, ut numeros et litteras et disertas fallacias eloqui discant?*

<sup>53</sup> For his similar reminiscences on rhetorical exercises in his youth, see *ep.* 2\*, one of the Divjak letters, addressed to Firmus. See also R. BRAUN, “Note complémentaire, Lettre 2\*”, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, Bibliothèque Augustinienne*, 46B, 1987, pp. 427–29.

<sup>54</sup> Gryson: Winter 403/04, Hill: 420 [n. 7]. For the dating and place of s. 9, see also C. LAMBOT, “Le Sermon IX de saint Augustin *De decem chordis*”, *Revue Bénédictine*, 79 (1969), pp. 129–33; O. PERLER, J.-L. MAIER, *Les voyages de saint Augustin* [n. 7], p. 409; H. R. DROBNER, *Augustinus von Hippo: Predigten zu den Büchern Exodus, Könige und Job (Sermones 6–12)*, Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen, Frankfurt, 2003 (Patrologia, 10), pp. 155–56.

tery, as *sermo* 8 does with the ten plagues of Egypt.<sup>55</sup> Augustine draws more extensively on the fifth and ninth commandments and proceeds to the numerological treatment of the number ten and the ten strings of the psalter: “O God, I will sing you a new song, on a harp of ten strings I will play to you.”<sup>56</sup> Augustine continues with an exposition of the Decalogue: “So the decalogue relates to two commandments, that is, to love of God and neighbour. Three strings relate to the first, because God is three. But to the other commandment, that is, the love of neighbour, seven strings refer, how people should live together.”<sup>57</sup> Then he turns his attention to Matth. 5, 25: “Come to an agreement with your adversary quickly” and to the means of coming to an agreement that is, *sermo dei*, with the *aduersarius*:

But in order to keep that agreement, keep yourselves from detestable and corrupting practices, [...] If any pleasure of the world creeps into your thoughts, school yourselves in works of mercy, school yourselves in almsgiving, in fasting, in prayer. These are the means of purging ourselves of the daily sins which we cannot help creeping into our thoughts because of our human weakness.<sup>58</sup>

Augustine indicated that the means of purifying the soul are almsgiving, fasting and prayer, thus urging his congregants to

<sup>55</sup> See T. RAVEAUX, “Augustinus über den jüdischen Sabbat seiner Zeit”, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 28 (1982), pp. 213–24; W. GEERLINGS, “The decalogue in Augustine’s theology”, in *The decalogue in Jewish and Christian tradition*, ed. by H. G. REVENTLOW, Y. HOFFMAN, London, 2011, pp. 106–17. For the numerological interpretation in Augustine’s works, see M. COMEAU, *Saint Augustin exégète du quatrième évangile*, Paris, 1930, pp. 127–42, esp. p. 135 (number ten); G. BONNER, “Augustine as Biblical Scholar”, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. by P. R. ACKROYD, C. F. EVANS, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 541–63, pp. 559–60.

<sup>56</sup> s. 9, 6 (CCSL 41, p. 117): *Deus canticum nouum cantabo tibi, in psalterio decem chordarum psallam tibi.*

<sup>57</sup> s. 9, 7 (CCSL 41, p. 120): *Ad duo itaque praecepta, id est, ad dilectionem dei et proximi pertinet decalogus. Ad primum praeceptum tres chordae pertinent, quia deus trinitas. Ad alterum uero praeceptum, id est, ad dilectionem proximi, septem chordae: quomodo uiuatur inter homines.*

<sup>58</sup> s. 9, 17 (CCSL 41, p. 141): *VI autem concordetis, abstinete uos a detestabilibus corruptelis, a detestabilibus inquisitionibus, [...] Si quae delectationes saeculi subrepunt in anima, exercele uos in misericordia, exercele uos in elemosinis, in ieiuniis, in orationibus. His enim purgantur quotidiana peccata, quae non possunt nisi subrepere in anima, propter fragilitatem humanam.*

spiritual discipline.<sup>59</sup> It is inevitable that his interpretation of the divine commandment was shaped by his concern for caring for others. Here Augustine again established the correlation between spiritual discipline and solidarity amongst his congregation.

Despite objections from Christians whose way of life depended upon a compromise between their religious affiliation and secular activity, Augustine claimed that the Christian identity necessitated a conversion of lifestyle. In *sermo* 335D (= Lambot 6), a sermon inviting the audience to imitate the martyrs, Augustine returned to the theme of the Christian on his deathbed. Augustine compared those gathered at the Christian's deathbed to "flesh and blood [...] raging against the holy martyrs". This accusation is based on his interpretation of Eph. 6, 12: "Your conflict is not against flesh and blood."<sup>60</sup> According to Augustine, the "flesh" and "blood" motifs represented mortal human beings who adhered to syncretistic religious practices. Augustine urged them to harmonise their principles and concrete actions:

Why is it, brother, that you are raging, why are you so churned up? It's against me, indeed, that you're raging, but yourself that you're losing. Oh, if only you would change your frame of mind! Oh, if only you would change your way of life! Because we are all going to die and rise again. I, indeed, place my hope in God, for whose sake I am suffering these things.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, in *sermo* 352A (= Dolbeau 14) Augustine emphasised that the congregants' common identity enhanced the security of their future repose:

Change your way of life, in case you lose your life. Condemn past sins, fear the evil things that are going to come, hope for the good

<sup>59</sup> For this tripartite model of the ascetic exercises, see P. ALLEN, E. MORGAN, "Augustine on Poverty" [n. 47], pp. 131–32 and n. 84; H. R. DROBNER, *Augustinus von Hippo* [n. 55], pp. 217–18.

<sup>60</sup> s. 335D (= Lambot 6), 3 (*PLS* 2, p. 779): *non est uobis conluctatio aduersus carnem et sanguinem, caro enim et sanguis saeuiebat in martyribus sanctis*. See A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, "Le combat chrétien: Exégèse augustinienne d'Ephes. 6,12", *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 11 (1965), pp. 235–38.

<sup>61</sup> s. 335D (= Lambot 6), 3 (*PLS* 2, p. 779): *quid est quod saeuis, frater, quid exagilaris? mihi quidem saeuis sed tibi peris. o si mutes mentem. o si mutes uitam! quia omnes morituri et resurrecturi sumus. ego quidem spem in deo habeo pro quo isla patior*.

things. The bad man should begin by not contradicting himself in hoping for good things, while not being good himself. You're hoping for the good; be hope what you hope for.<sup>62</sup>

He related present disciplines for the eradication of sin to divine repose in the future. He confirmed that those who hoped for and believed in the eternal repose should also consider the current way to obtain it.

Augustine referred to pagans attending his church service in *sermo* 360B (= Dolbeau 25; c. 404 AD<sup>63</sup>). The mass was performed after the end of the sermon after the catechumens and pagans had been dismissed. It is noteworthy that Augustine's exhortation to "lead good lives" (*bene uiuendo*)<sup>64</sup> was repeated after the dismissal, but uttered for the first time in the middle of his discourse when the pagans and catechumens were still present. Augustine stressed the need for "the eye of the mind and heart" (*oculus cordis*) to be inwardly purified:<sup>65</sup>

...[M]en ought [...] to behave humbly before God, to entreat their creator, to confess their sins and groan over them, to tell their doctor of their sickness so that they may be inwardly cured, and have that inner eye cleansed, with which alone that light may be seen that never can be seen as long as a man's inner eye is still that of "man."<sup>66</sup>

To have the "inner eye cleansed" equalled Augustine's expectation of the audience, including pagans and catechumens, to "all live in

<sup>62</sup> s. 352A (= Dolbeau 14), 5 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 110): *Mutate uitam, ne perdatis uitam. Praeterita peccata damnate, futura mala metuite et bona sperate. Homo malus primo ipse sibi non contradicit ut bona speret, qui bonus non est. Bonum speras: esto quod speras.*

<sup>63</sup> Dolbeau: after 1 Jan. 404, Gryson: after the visit of Honorius, in Rome, early December 403, Hill: 404 [n. 7].

<sup>64</sup> s. 360B (= Dolbeau 25), 28 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 267).

<sup>65</sup> s. 360B (= Dolbeau 25), 3 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 249).

<sup>66</sup> s. 360B (= Dolbeau 25), 6 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 251): *deberent homines [...] humiliari deo, supplicare creatori, confiteri, gemere in peccatis, adlegare medico aegritudinem, ut sanarentur intrinsecus et oculus illum mundarent\*, unde lux illa uideri potest, quae tamdiu non uidetur, quamdiu oculus interior hominis adhuc est hominis.*

a manner worthy of God.”<sup>67</sup> He insisted that being treated by the “doctor” [*scil.* Christ] enabled them “to be numbered among the sons of God”.<sup>68</sup> The crucial element in the message is that the care for souls is possible only by “purifying their hearts by faith” (Act. 15, 9),<sup>69</sup> and this begins with the effort to lead a good life. With the hope of future purification, the congregation should actively engage in and practice spiritual disciplines.

To conclude, according to the preacher of Hippo, the Christian identity is not only a matter of being, but is at the same time also a matter of acting/living, and, moreover, emphasising that the latter is the result of training and discipline. In general terms, or with practical prescriptions the sermons discussed above made clear that Augustine perceives the Christian way of living as (the result of) continuous spiritual exercise.

#### *b. Exegetical aspects*

Augustine described cases in which Christians provided a scriptural rationale to legitimise their erroneous behaviour. In *sermo* 361 (c. 410–11 AD<sup>70</sup>), for instance, Augustine criticised the status quo: Christians made advantageous use of scriptural texts in order to support their participation in the *parentalia* festival in honour of the dead.<sup>71</sup> They quoted the passage from Tob. 4, 17 as proof: “Break your bread and pour out your wine on the tombs

<sup>67</sup> s. 360B (= Dolbeau 25), 28 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 267): *uos digni deo uixeritis*.

<sup>68</sup> s. 360B (= Dolbeau 25), 15 (F. DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons* [n. 7], p. 257): *ex homine fiat inter filios dei*.

<sup>69</sup> For the repetition of this passage in s. 360B and its relation to Augustine’s focus on divine initiative to the purification of the soul, see A. DUPONT, *Gratia in Augustine’s Sermones ad populum during the Pelagian Controversy: Do Different Contexts Furnish Different Insights?*, Leiden, 2013 (Brill’s Series in Church History, 59), pp. 155–56. See also n. 105.

<sup>70</sup> Gryson: December 403, Hill: 411, Kunzelmann: Winter 410–11, Rebillard: winter 410–11 [n. 7].

<sup>71</sup> See also s. 172 and 173, 1; J. P. BURNS, R. M. JENSEN, *Christianity in Roman Africa* [n. 29], pp. 505–06. For the *parentalia* and its relationship with the church, see É. REBILLARD, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, trans. by E. T. RAWLINGS, J. ROUTIER-PUCCI, Ithaca, 2009 (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology, 59), pp. 142–53, esp. 151–52; É. REBILLARD, “Commemorating the Dead in North Africa: Continuity and Change from the Second to the Fifth Century CE”, in *Death and Changing Rituals: Function and Meaning*

of the just, but do not hand it over to the unjust.”<sup>72</sup> After objecting to the *parentalia* custom – “this doesn’t benefit the dead, [...] it’s a custom of the pagans, [...] it doesn’t flow from the channel of justice derived from our fathers the patriarchs”<sup>73</sup> – Augustine opposed the syncretistic Christians’ allegorical interpretation. He posited that the ritual depicted in Tobit should be understood as a mass for the dead. In addition to his rejection of their effort to find parallel examples in the Bible, Augustine’s concern over the complexity and difficulty of scriptural interpretation is evident: “So nobody should try to turn a remedy into a hurt, and attempt to twist a rope from the scriptures, and with it lob a deadly noose over his own soul. It’s as plain as a pikestaff how that text should be understood, and this celebration of Christians is open and above board and entirely salutary.”<sup>74</sup>

It is noteworthy that Augustine repeatedly spoke of two aspects of studying the Scripture: first, the difficulty of scriptural interpretation, and second, the necessity of scriptural study for spiritual training. In *sermo* 71 (c. 419–20 AD<sup>75</sup>) he dealt with Matth. 12, 32: “Whoever speaks a word against the holy spirit will not be forgiven, neither in this age nor in the age to come.” Augustine explains the specific purpose of complex texts:

Obviously, what he [*scil.* God] wanted to do was to exercise our minds with a difficult problem, not to deceive us with a false statement.<sup>76</sup>

*in Ancient Funerary Practices*, ed. by J. R. BRANDT, M. PRUSAC, H. ROLAND, Oxford, 2015 (Studies in Funerary Archaeology, 7), pp. 269–86.

<sup>72</sup> s. 361, 6 (PL 39, col. 1602): *Frange panem tuum, et effunde uinum tuum super sepulcra iustorum, et ne tradas eum iniustis.*

<sup>73</sup> s. 361, 6 (PL 39, col. 1601): *ad mortuos non pertinere, et consueludinem hanc esse Paganorum, non uenire de propagine illa et uena iustitiae patrum nostrorum Patriarcharum.*

<sup>74</sup> s. 361, 6 (PL 39, col. 1602): *Nemo ergo quaerat de medicina uulnus, et de Scripturis conetur torquere uinculum, unde laqueum mortis inicit animae suae. Manifestum est quemadmodum illud intelligatur, et aperta atque salubris est haec celebratio Christianorum.*

<sup>75</sup> Gryson: 419/20, Hill: 417–20, Hombert 419–20, Kunzelmann: 417, Rebillard: 417?, Verbraken: 417? [n. 7].

<sup>76</sup> s. 71, 10 (*Revue Bénédictine*, 75, p. 73): *exercere quippe nos uoluit difficultate quaestionis, non decipere sententiae falsitate.*

Actually in the whole wide field of the holy scriptures we are nourished by the passages that are clear, exercised by those that are obscure; the first kind relieve us from hunger, the second save us from boredom.<sup>77</sup>

A similar reference to dealing with difficult texts is found in *sermo* 363 (c. 414 AD; likely delivered in Hippo Regius around the Easter Vigil<sup>78</sup>). At the very beginning of this short sermon, Augustine once again showed the double purpose of Scriptural studies: “Our thoughts, [...] in reflecting on and discussing the holy Scriptures must be guided by the indisputable authority of the same Scriptures, so that we may deal faithfully both with what is said clearly for the purpose of giving us spiritual nourishment, and what is said obscurely in order to give us spiritual exercise.”<sup>79</sup> Here Augustine reiterated his opinion that an easily interpreted Scriptural fragment is given for nourishment while difficult passages from Scripture function as spiritual challenges.

It is noteworthy that, in conjunction with this interpretative difficulty, Augustine links the literal and spiritual senses of the Scriptures.<sup>80</sup> In *sermo* 4 (c. 410–19 AD<sup>81</sup>) Augustine gave a consid-

<sup>77</sup> s. 71, 11 (*Revue Bénédictine*, 75, p. 75): *in omni quippe copia scripturarum sanctorum pascimur apertis, exercemur obscuris; illic fames pellitur, hic fastidium.*

<sup>78</sup> Gryson: 414, probably Easter Vigil, Hill: 414, Kunzelmann: 412–16, Rebillard: Easter vigil (?) 412–16 [n. 7].

<sup>79</sup> s. 363, 1 (*PL* 39, col. 1634): *Sensum nostrum, [...] in Scripturis sanctis considerandis atque tractandis regere debet earumdem Scripturarum manifestissima auctoritas; ut ex eis quae aperte dicta sunt ad nutriendos nos, ea quae obscurius dicta sunt ad exercendos nos, fideliter disserantur.*

<sup>80</sup> For the secondary literature on Augustine's literal/spiritual interpretation, see e.g. M. DULAEY, “Sur quelques points d'exégèse figurée de l'Ancien Testament dans les sermons de Mayence”, in *Augustin Prédicateur (395–411): actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5–7 septembre 1996)*, ed. by G. MADEC, Paris, 1998 (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 159), pp. 247–66; M. CAMERON, “The Christological Substructure of Augustine's Figurative Exegesis”, in *Augustine and the Bible*, ed. by P. BRIGHT, Notre Dame, 1999 (Bible through the Ages, 2), pp. 74–103; I. BOCHET, “*Le firmament de l'Écriture*”: *l'herméneutique augustiniennne*, Paris, 2004 (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 172); M. CAMERON, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figural Exegesis*, Oxford, 2012 (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology), pp. 3–19; T. WILLIAMS, “Hermeneutics and

erably long commentary on the account of Jacob and Esau from Gen. 27, 1–40, the significance of which Augustine expressed at the end of the sermon.<sup>82</sup> At the beginning of the sermon, before discussing the passage proper, Augustine contrasted two methods of interpreting Scripture: “Taken literally, of course, the reading sounds rather materialist. But anyone who has received the Spirit of God will understand it spiritually.”<sup>83</sup> The distinction between materialistic – *carnaliter* – and spiritual – *spiritualiter* – interpretation arises consistently in Augustine’s exposition of the Scriptures.<sup>84</sup> Here Augustine described the *exercitatio animae* as that which gives adequate training, enabling the exegete’s mind to make sense of what he or she does not yet understand: “The exercise of our minds in faith, hope and love makes them fit to grasp what is yet to come.”<sup>85</sup>

In *sermo* 23 (January 413 AD; Faustus Basilica in Carthage<sup>86</sup>), followed by *sermo* 53, Augustine explored the theme of the vision of God. With regard to the significance of the spiritual discipline,

Reading Scripture”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by D. V. MECONI, E. STUMP, Cambridge, 2014<sup>2</sup>, pp. 311–27.

<sup>81</sup> Gryson: 22 Jan. 403, Hill: before 420, Kunzelmann: 22 Jan. 410–19, Rebillard: 22 Jan. 410–19 [n. 7]. For the dating of s. 4, see also H. R. DROBNER, *Augustinus von Hippo, Predigten zum Buch Genesis (Sermones 1–5)*, Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen, Frankfurt, 2000 (Patrologia, 7), pp. 93–95.

<sup>82</sup> s. 4, 36 (CCSL 41, p. 46). See G. NAUROY, “Formes de l’exégèse pastorale chez Ambroise et Augustin: deux lectures de la rivalité entre Jacob et Ésaü”, in *Saint Augustin et la Bible: actes du colloque de l’Université Paul Verlaine-Metz (7–8 avril 2005)*, ed. by G. NAUROY, M.-A. VANNIER, Bern, 2008 (Recherches en littérature et spiritualité, 15), pp. 83–104.

<sup>83</sup> s. 4, 1 (CCSL 41, p. 20): *El lectio quidem illa carnaliter sonat. Qui autem spiritum dei accepit spiritualiter sapit.*

<sup>84</sup> H. R. DROBNER, *Augustinus von Hippo* [n. 82], p. 79.

<sup>85</sup> s. 4, 1 (CCSL 41, p. 20): *Exercitatio autem animae in fide, in spe et caritate, facit eum idoneum capere quod uenturum est.*

<sup>86</sup> Gryson: 20 Jan. 413, Hill: 413, Kunzelmann: 20 Jan. 413, Perler: 20 Jan. 413, Rebillard: 413 or just after 415, Verbraken: 413 [n. 7]. See also, A. DUPONT, *Gratia in Augustine’s Sermones ad populum* [n. 70], p. 238; J. YATES, “Preaching a Good and Immutable God: Augustine on James 1, 17”, in *Tractatio Scripturarum: Philological, Exegetical, Rhetorical, and Theological Studies on Augustine’s Sermons. Ministerium Sermonis*, vol. II, ed. by A. DUPONT, G. PARTOENS, M. LAMBERIGTS, Turnhout, 2013 (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia, 65), pp. 177–92, 188.

he starts with a reference to II Tim. 3, 16: "Every divinely inspired Scripture is useful for teaching, for reproof, for exhortation, for doctrine."<sup>87</sup> Here Augustine claims that the interpreters have no grounds for blaming the Scriptures, "if we happen to deviate in any way, it is because we haven't understood it."<sup>88</sup> He regards the "mental exercises" as a preliminary means of spiritually interpreting the Scriptural text that "appears to speak in a crude, materialistic way in many places, though the law is always spiritual."<sup>89</sup> Thus, he appeals to Rom. 7, 14: "*For the law, as the apostle says, is spiritual, but I am carnal.*"<sup>90</sup> In light of the difficulties Augustine saw in interpreting the text *carnaliter*, he emphasised the necessity and efficacy of spiritual exercises.

Once again, in *sermo* 32 (403 AD; preached at the shrine of Saint Cyprian in Carthage<sup>91</sup>), Augustine spoke of the different kinds of Scriptural texts: easily interpreted Scripture is given for nourishment while difficult Scripture is given as a spiritual challenge. He exhorts to train spiritually through Scriptural exegesis: "[...] some things are hidden more thoroughly in the Scriptures in order to stretch and test the students, while others are set there openly and ready to hand for the immediate treatment of the patients."<sup>92</sup> Although Psalm 144 includes many hidden meanings in it, which Augustine addressed later in this sermon, he initially encouraged the congregation to overcome the difficulties to understand this complicated Psalm at face value. The same exhortation is given in *sermones* 4 and 23.

<sup>87</sup> s. 23, 3 (CCSL 41, p. 310): *Omnis Scriptura diuinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad exhortationem, ad doctrinam.*

<sup>88</sup> s. 23, 3 (CCSL 41, p. 310): *si nos forte, illa non intellecta, in aliquo deuiemus.*

<sup>89</sup> s. 23, 3 (CCSL 41, p. 310): *in multis locis uelut carnaliter loquitur, cum lex semper spiritualis sit.*

<sup>90</sup> s. 23, 3 (CCSL 41, p. 310): *Lex enim, ut ait apostolus, spiritualis est, ego autem carnalis sum.*

<sup>91</sup> Gryson: 17 Sept. 403, Hill: 403, Kunzelmann: end of Sept. 403, Perler: 17 Sept. 403, Rebillard: 403 [n. 7].

<sup>92</sup> s. 32, 1 (CCSL 41, p. 398): *alia secretius in scripturis absconduntur ut quaerentes exerceant, alia uero in promptu et in manifestatione ponuntur ut desiderantes curent.*

*Sermo* 140 (c. 427–28 AD; preached on Christmas day<sup>93</sup>) shows the correlation between exercising the mind and Scriptural hermeneutics. At the close of the sermon, Augustine concluded that the gospel “puts our minds through their paces, planes them smooth and defleshes them, to make sure we think about God in a spiritual, not a fleshly, material way”.<sup>94</sup> Here again, the spiritual interpretation is contrasted with the interpretation of the term *carnaliter*.

In some sermons, Augustine explained spiritual training from a perspective that did not directly correspond to a literal or spiritual understanding of the Scriptures. In *sermo* 80 (c. 410 AD<sup>95</sup>) before delving into Matth. 17, 18–20, Augustine alluded twice to Matth. 7, 7, “Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock, and it will be opened.”<sup>96</sup> He used this verse to justify his expectation that his congregation would grasp what is said in the Scriptures and that they would be humbled when they encountered difficult passages of Scripture. “See how they were carrying their hearts, so to say, to the wellhead, and knocking to get it opened up, so that they may fill them up there. He wants to make them knock at his door in order to exercise them in desiring, not to rebuff them in their knocking.”<sup>97</sup> Humble submission to the Scriptures and commitment to true interpretation, according

<sup>93</sup> Gryson: 427/28, Hill: 428, Kunzelmann: Christmas 427–28, Rebillard: 427–28 [n. 7]. For Augustine’s sermons delivered on 25 December, see A. DUPONT, “Augustine’s Preaching on December 25: *Gratia* in Augustine’s *Sermones ad Populum* on Christmas”, in *Tractatio Scripturarum* [n. 87], pp. 355–71.

<sup>94</sup> s. 140, 6 (*PL* 38, col. 775): *Exercet mentes [...] limat et excarnat, ut de Deo non carnaliter, sed spiritualiter sapiamus.*

<sup>95</sup> Gryson: near 410, Hill: 410, Kunzelmann: near 410, Rebillard: near 410 [n. 7].

<sup>96</sup> s. 80, 1 (*PL* 38, col. 494) and 80, 2 (*PL* 38, col. 494). For the crucial function of Matth. 7, 7 in Augustine’s search for the truth and God, see e.g., N. G. KNAUER, “*Peregrinatio animae*: Zur Frage der Einheit der augustini-schen Konfessionen”, *Hermes*, 85 (1957), pp. 216–48; K. KIENZLER, “Der Aufbau der ‘Confessiones’ des Augustinus im Spiegel der Bibelzitate”, *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 24 (1989), pp. 123–64; L. C. FERRARI, “Doorways of Discovery, in Augustine’s ‘Confessions’”, *Augustinus*, 39 (1994), pp. 149–64.

<sup>97</sup> s. 80, 1 (*PL* 38, col. 494): *Videte si non corda sua quasi ad fontem portabant, et ut eis unde impleant, aperiretur, pulsabant. Pulsari ad se uoluit, non ut repelleret pulsantes, sed ut exerceret desiderantes.*

to Augustine, enabled the exegete to exercise spiritually. In the conclusion of *sermo* 71, he spoke of these exercises for pious and devoted exegetes, then assigned two different tasks to them: first, “to see what needed to be understood”, and second, “to explain it if I did understand”.<sup>98</sup>

The start of the *sermo* 156, preached two days after *sermo* 155 (419 AD<sup>99</sup>), is concerned with these exercises in general and explains their effects. Once again, Augustine alluded to Matth. 7, 7, as in *sermo* 81:

The depths of meaning in the word of God are there to excite our eagerness to study, not to prevent us from understanding. If everything was locked up in riddles, there would be no clue to the opening up of obscure passages. Again, if everything was hidden, there would be nothing for the soul to derive nourishment from, and so gain the strength which would enable it to knock at the closed doors.<sup>100</sup>

The endeavours an exegete has to undertake to understand the Bible thus represent the efforts of Christians to live according to their Christian identity. The parallel even goes further: exegetes should look for the spiritual interpretation of Scriptures just as Christians should avoid a carnal way of living, the latter being the result of training one's mind to have a spiritual disposition. By comparing the attempt to live in a Christian way – the spiritual exercises that constitute the core of the Christian identity – with reading a difficult passage from Scripture, Augustine explains to his flock that the said Christian way of life and training are all but easy. The fact that they are quite difficult and hard precisely guarantee the fact that they at the same time are a good training and demand a lot of training. Again, as noticed before, being a Christian demands complete commitment.

<sup>98</sup> s. 71, 38 (*Revue Bénédictine*, 75, p. 108): *uel intelligenda conspicerere, uel intellecta explicare.*

<sup>99</sup> Hill: 419, Kunzelmann: Thu. 17 Oct. 418, Perler: 17 Oct. 419, Rebillard: Oct. 417, Partoens/Lössl: 17 Oct. 417 or May 418 [n. 7]. See J. Lössl, “Introduction”, in *CCSL* 41Ba, 2008, pp. 9–172, 44–46.

<sup>100</sup> s. 156, 1 (*CCSL* 41Ba, p. 135): *Verbi dei altitudo exercet studium, non denegat intellectum. Si enim omnia clausa essent, nihil esset unde reuelarentur obscura. Rursus si omnia lecta essent, non esset unde alimentum perciperet anima et haberet uires quibus posset ad clausa pulsare.*

c. *Comprehensive aspects*

Providing further insight into the inner dynamics of spiritual life, Augustine addresses a more comprehensive frame of the Christian life, the deepening of the spiritual discernment through the transformation of the self, and the role of divine grace. With reference to his view on spiritual discipline, Augustine's attitude towards the depth of the soul's awareness was influenced by the Christian tradition of the ascending stages of spiritual maturity.<sup>101</sup> This tradition depicted the ascent of the soul to God through seven distinctive stages. It is interesting to note that, in its Christian context, the imagery of growth in the spiritual life encourages reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit and is thus closely linked with problems of pneumatology.<sup>102</sup> In *sermo* 347 (uncertain date<sup>103</sup>) on Ps. 111, 10,

<sup>101</sup> For the tradition of the ascending pattern of the spiritual life, see e.g. K. RAHNER, "Reflections on the Problem of the Gradual Ascent to Christian Perfection", in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3: *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. by K.-H. KRUGER, B. KRUGER, London, 1967, pp. 3–23. For variants of the septenary ascent of soul in the corpus of Augustine, see *an. quant.* 33.70–76; *conf.* 11, 1, 1; *diu. qu.* 44; 53, 1–2; 58; 64; *doctr. chr.* 2, 7, 9–11; *en. Ps.* 11; 119; 150.1; *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 25, 43; *ord.* 2, 18, 47–48; *s. dom. m.* 1.3.10–4.12; *uera rel.* 26, 48–49; *s. 8*; 249; 347. For the secondary literature on this scheme, see C. VAN LIERDE, "The Teaching of St Augustine on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2–3", in *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine, Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. by F. VAN FLETEREN, J. C. SCHNAUBELT, J. REINO, New York, 1994, pp. 5–110; G. MADEC, "Ascensio, Ascensus", in *Petites Études Augustiniennes*, Paris, 1994 (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 142), pp. 137–49; N. KAMIMURA, "Augustine's First Exegesis and the Divisions of Spiritual Life" [n. 6], pp. 425–29; K. POLLMANN, "Augustine's Hermeneutics as a Universal Discipline?" [n. 6], pp. 225–31; P. BRIGHT, "The Spirit in the Sevenfold Pattern of the Spiritual Life in the Thought of St Augustine", in *Studia Patristica*, 43, ed. by F. YOUNG, M. EDWARDS, P. PARVIS, Leuven, 2006, pp. 25–31; B. DOBELL, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion: The Journey from Platonism to Christianity*, Cambridge, 2009; J. P. KENNEY, *Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine*, Oxford, 2013 (Oxford Early Christian Studies).

<sup>102</sup> See P. BRIGHT, "The Spirit in the Sevenfold Pattern of the Spiritual Life" [n. 102], p. 26. For the problem of Augustine's pneumatology in general, see W. A. SCHUMACHER, *Spiritus and spiritualis: A Study in the Sermons of Saint Augustine*, Mundelein (Illinois), 1057 (Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary, Diss. ad Lauream, 28); L. AYERS, "Spiritus amborum: Augustine and Pro-Nicene Pneumatology", *Augustinian Studies*, 39.2 (2008), pp. 207–21;

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,”<sup>104</sup> Augustine entered into a discourse on the sevenfold *gradus* of the maturing of the soul.

*gradus* 1: fear of the Lord, humbled heart a sacrifice to God (Matth. 5, 3).

*gradus* 2: piety, belief in the authority of the scriptures (Matth. 5, 4).

*gradus* 3: knowledge, “not only of the evil of their past sins, [...] but also of the evil condition of this mortality and this exile from the Lord”,<sup>105</sup> leading to grief (Matth. 5, 5).

*gradus* 4: courage, hunger and thirst for justice (Matth. 5, 6).

*gradus* 5: counsel, in conflict with all adversaries, to exercise love of neighbour (Matth. 5, 7).

*gradus* 6: understanding, “hearts are to be cleansed of all the false values of the carnal vanity, so that their purified gaze may be directed toward their true end”<sup>106</sup> (Matth. 5, 8).

*gradus* 7: wisdom, enjoyment of the triumph of security and peace: “the stage from which he [*scil.* Isaiah] started to come down by way of teaching us”<sup>107</sup> (Matth. 5, 9).

The Scriptural evidence for the soul’s maturation originates in Is. 11, 2–3, where the Prophet Isaiah, descending from his contemplation of God, enumerated the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and offered them as guidance for the soul’s ascent. It is accepted that Augustine’s convergence of the gospel beatitudes and Isaiah’s gifts is the first instance in the tradition of an ascending plan

M. R. BARNES, “Augustine’s Last Pneumatology”, *Augustinian Studies*, 39.2 (2008), pp. 223–34; C. T. GERBER, *The Spirit of Augustine’s Early Theology: Contextualizing Augustine’s Pneumatology*, Farnham, 2012 (Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity). See further A. DUPONT, *Preacher of Grace* [n. 35], p. 90, n. 1/3 (p. 92).

<sup>103</sup> Hill: about 420, Gryson: around 420? [n. 7].

<sup>104</sup> s. 347, 2 (*PL* 39, col. 1524): *initium sapientiae timor domini*.

<sup>105</sup> s. 347, 3 (*PL* 39, col. 1525): *non solum mala praelitorum peccatorum suorum, [...] sed etiam in quo malo sint huius mortalitatis et peregrinationis a domino*.

<sup>106</sup> s. 347, 3 (*PL* 39, col. 1526): *ab omni falsitate carnalis uanitatis corda mundantur, ut pura intentio dirigatur in finem*. For the purification of hearts, see n. 70; K. POLLMANN, “Augustine’s Hermeneutics as a Universal Discipline?” [n. 6], p. 226, n. 50.

<sup>107</sup> s. 347, 3 (*PL* 39, col. 1526): *unde coepit ipse ad nos docendo descendere*.

for Christian maturity.<sup>108</sup> Augustine integrated the messianic view of the spiritual life with the moral progress of the individual, thereby confirming the necessity of the Holy Spirit's aid for the soul's ascent and placing the ascent in its eschatological framework. Augustine asked the congregation: "Where do we have to climb to?"<sup>109</sup>

What can this place be, but the place of rest and peace? There, you see, is to be found that bright and never fading wisdom. So it was to exercise us in successive steps of doctrine that Isaiah came down from wisdom to fear, from the place, that is, of everlasting peace to the valley of time-bound tears [...]<sup>110</sup>

This ascent is not made physically by the body, but by the affections of the heart. In his meditations on the ascending steps towards God, Augustine depicted the laborious tasks of penetrating spiritual realities as training for the soul, thus offering the possibility of inner transformation and self-renewal with the help of the Holy Spirit. Humbled in the fear of God, the soul finally approaches transformation and holds fast to "full and everlasting peace" (*pax plena atque perpetua*).<sup>111</sup> Augustine did not consider this transformation to be a "cumulative enumeration" of the spiritual life, but rather "a progressive sequence in which every step must follow the one before".<sup>112</sup> It is the spiritual progress of every individual that is crucial. Augustine thus emphasised the decisive effects of divine initiative on the spiritual discipline of the soul.

<sup>108</sup> For Augustine's possible indebtedness to Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of the beatitudes, see K. POLLMANN, "Augustine's Hermeneutics as a Universal Discipline?" [n. 6], p. 227, n. 54; N. KAMIMURA, "Augustine's Scriptural Exegesis in *De sermone Domini in monte* and the Shaping of Christian Perfection", in *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Studies inspired by Pauline Allen*, ed. by G. D. DUNN, W. MAYER, Leiden, 2015 (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 132), pp. 225–47, 240–42.

<sup>109</sup> s. 347, 2 (PL 39, col. 1525): *Et quo ascendendum est?*

<sup>110</sup> s. 347, 2 (PL 39, col. 1525): *Quis iste est locus, nisi quietis et pacis? Ibi enim est illa clara, et quae nunquam marcescit sapientia. Vnde ad nos exercitandos quibusdam doctrinae gradibus descendit Isaias a sapientia usque ad timorem, a loco scilicet sempiternae pacis usque ad conuallem temporalis plorationis.*

<sup>111</sup> s. 347, 3 (PL 39, col. 1526).

<sup>112</sup> K. POLLMANN, "Augustine's Hermeneutics as a Universal Discipline?" [n. 6], p. 228.

In a cumulative overview, we reached the final and most fundamental characteristic of the Christian identity: an utter and inner transformation, which is the result of taking distance from old practices and a “carnal” lifestyle, of a spiritual purging and training of the mind, and finally of divine assistance.

### 3. Conclusion

One would naturally expect Augustine's view of spiritual training – the convergence of spiritual progress transformed by the role of the Holy Spirit – to change because of his pastoral experience and his increasing consciousness of the vicissitudes of the community of the faithful. However, chronologically there is little difference in content between the earlier and later sermons. The fact that not only no substantial development of his view of spiritual training is present, but also that this training itself was not a major subject in his sermons, does not necessarily mean that his consistent exhortation had only limited congregational significance. Some Christians, in particular found Scriptural justification for their secular behaviour. Other Christians behaved as though their religious identity was not in serious conflict with their secular social activities. They assumed different kinds of identity under different circumstances. It is important to note that, despite Augustine's central claim that the Christian identity should be the basis for a Christian way of life, it could not compete with the social realities of the North-African Christian community. People in the community thought and acted within the parameters of their religious consciousness, often bound by their proximate social contexts, rather than adhering to Christian identity. Confronted with multiple possibilities for Christian identity, Augustine had no intention of changing the existing circumstances prevailing in the community of the faithful, but all the same, he could not afford an unalterable status quo. Augustine attempted to find a way of coping with these factors. He directed the attention of the Christian community to both the interaction between exegesis and the exegete and the reinforcement of the unity and solidarity of the congregation, asserting that the mental exercise of exegesis enabled insight into the spiritual life and disciplines. This spiritual life and these

disciplines result in an ethically unified principle of behaviour: love of God and neighbour. His focus lies not on the pragmatic, immediate techniques of control, but on the transformation of the self with the aid of divine grace. It is not a worldly discipline, imposing restrictions on the social mode of everyday life – his focus is not on the current state of affairs – but a graced spirituality, proposing the alternative Christian way of life.

