

Disciplines and Identities,  
Divine and Spiritual, in  
Late Antiquity

NAOKI KAMIMURA

domo cum cantu dicentis & crebrò repetentis, quod  
si pueri an puellæ, nescio: TOLLE LEGE, TOLLE  
LEGE. Statimque mutato vultu intentissimus con-  
tate cœpi, utrûmnam solerent pueri in aliquo  
genere ludendi cantitare tale aliquid: nec occur-  
bat omnino audivisse me uspiam. Repressoque in-  
impetu lacrymarum surrexi, nihil aliud interpreta-  
nisi divinitus mihi juberi, ut aperirem codicem  
egerem quod primum caput invenissem. Aud-  
ram enim de Antonio, quòd ex evangelica lectione  
cui fortè supervenerat, admonitus fuerit, tamquam  
ibi diceretur quod legebatur: *Vade, vende omnia  
quæ habes, & da pauperibus, & habebis thesaurum  
in celis; & veni sequere me: &* tali oraculo confest-  
d te esse conversum. Itaque concitus redij  
eum locum ubi sedebat Alypius: ibi enim posu-  
eram codicem Apostoli cùm inde surrexeram. A-  
lipui, aperui, & legi in silentio capitulum, quòd pri-  
mum conjecti sunt oculi mei: *Non in comessationibus  
& ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus & impudicitis, non  
in contentione & emulatione: sed induite Dominum  
Iesum Christum, & carnis providentiam ne feceritis  
in concupiscentiis.* Nec ultra volui legere. nec op-  
erat. Statim quippe cum fine hujusce sentent-  
iasasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo, omnes d-  
tationis tenebræ diffugerunt.

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## Preface

This research report is based on a series of papers, during past three years, presented at a workshop, or a conference, or a seminar, on early Christian studies and Patristics, then revised and enlarged from the original ones. As referred to below in a footnote marked with an asterisk immediately after the title of each paper, the reader can know detailed information about these papers. They bring vivid and pleasant memories of the meetings and discussions at Melbourne and Chicago (paper 1); of Yokohama and San Pawl, Malta Island (paper 2); Oxford workshop (paper 3); Calgary and my first travel to Southern Taiwan and National Pingtung University (paper 4); and St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College, Sydney (papers 5 and 6); and of gatherings in Brisbane, Iowa City and St Petersburg. The papers can be grouped into three categories partially overlapped, respectively, with the focus shifting from dealing with questions concerning Christian/pagan identity/ies, spiritual training and the perfection of human beings to studies dedicated to the Church Fathers in the Western and Eastern Mediterranean: from the beginning to the climax of North African Christianity and its relation to the Eastern Christianity in the fourth century. I hope that the order in which these papers are presented in this report would associate with the fertility and possibility of the past, present and future contributions to the field of Patristics and Late Antique studies.

This present report may be considered a sequel to the report *The Theory and Practice of the Scriptural Exegesis in Augustine*, which was published in 2014 as a report of the previous research project and collected the contributions to the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research project funded by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS: Grand ID 2352009).

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This project was undertaken in communication with colleagues and friends from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Japan, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, UK and USA, who work in the fields of ancient history, classics, archaeology, philosophy, theology and patristics. In Particular, this report benefited greatly from the support and warmth of graduate and post-doc students and scholars belonging to Asia-Pacific Early Christian Studies Society. In 2014 this incomparable society which grew out of the informal and interpersonal interactions between scholars of the Pacific Rim region celebrated the tenth year anniversary. I am looking forward to continued and enhanced collaboration with all of them during the next ten years.

Tokyo 5 February 2017

N. K.

## Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers. Westminster, Md.
AL	C. Mayer <i>et al.</i> , eds. 1994-. <i>Augustinus-Lexikon</i> . Basel
ATA	A. Fitzgerald, ed. 1999. <i>Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia</i> . Grand Rapids, Mich.
<i>Aug(L)</i>	<i>Augustiniana</i> . Tijdschrift voor de studie van Sint Augustinus en de Augustijnenorde
<i>AugStud</i>	<i>Augustinian Studies</i>
BA	Bibliothèque Augustinienne. Œuvres de saint Augustin. Paris
CÉASA	Collection des Études Augustiniennes: Série Antiquité
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina. Turnhout
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna
FC	The Fathers of the Church. Washington, D.C.
<i>J ECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.
MA	<i>Miscellanea Agostiniana</i> . Testi e studi, pubblicati a cura dell'Ordine eremitano di s. Agostino nel XV centenario dalla morte del santo dottore 1–2. 1930–1931. Rome
NPNF	A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Edinburgh
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford
PCBE	<i>Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire</i> . 1: A. Mandouze and H.-I. Marrou, eds. 1982. <i>Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303–533)</i> . Paris; 2: C. Pietri <i>et al.</i> , eds. 2000. <i>Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne (313–604)</i> . Rome
PG	J.-P. Migne, ed. <i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> . Series graeca. Paris
PL	J.-P. Migne, ed. <i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> . Series latina. Paris
PLRE	A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, and J. Morris, eds. <i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> . 1: 1971. <i>A.D. 260–395</i> ; 2: 1980. <i>A.D. 395–527</i> ; 3: 1992. <i>A.D. 527–641</i> . Cambridge
PLS	A. Hamman, ed. <i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> . Series Latina. Supplementum. Paris

X ABBREVIATIONS

<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Bénédictine de critique, d'histoire et de littérature religieuses</i>
<i>REAug</i>	<i>Revue des Études Augustiniennes</i> . 1955–2003; <i>Revue des Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques</i> . 2004–
<i>RechAug</i>	<i>Recherches Augustiniennes</i>
SC	Sources Chrétiennes. Paris
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen der Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WSA	The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. New York

Disciplines and Identities,  
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# I

## Identity and the Spiritual Training of North African Christians in the Second and Third Centuries\*

The tradition of the spiritual training in late antiquity has taken considerable interest among scholars, particularly in the seminal work of Pierre Hadot. In *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, collectively published in 1981, the eminent classical scholar illustrates a complex set of modes of ‘spiritual exercises’ and designates their overall purpose as the ‘metamorphosis of our personality’.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars have defined this discipline as the purely intellectual training of the mind. Although they suggest that primary attention should be given to its intellectual aspect, their oversimplified approach is problematic and merits careful deliberation. Hadot emphasises the need to consider the broad diversity of training and the purgation of the soul within the context of a variety of factors, including human behaviour and identity.<sup>2</sup> The spiritual training in question varies according to the circumstances of the Graeco-Roman tradition. The second-century apologist Justin Martyr claimed that philosophical investigation could guide Christians to a fuller understanding of divine truth.<sup>3</sup> In the closing decade of the second century, Tertullian warned against the emphasis on the

\* A part of this paper was presented at the 33rd conference of Australasian Society for Classical Studies on 7 February 2012 in Melbourne and the other part was delivered at North America Patristic Society annual meeting on 22 May 2014 in Chicago. I am grateful to Dr. Geoffrey D. Dunn (Australian Catholic University) for his helpful comments and suggestions at ASCS conference and to Dr. Paulus-Petrus Jeeming Chang (Fu Jen Catholic University) who prompted me to revise and publish these conference talks.

<sup>1</sup> Hadot 1995, 82 and 127. For the significance of Hadot’s comprehensive approach to the ancient tradition, see e.g. Chase, Clark, and McGhee 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See Hadot 1995, 81–82.

<sup>3</sup> Just. *Dial.* 3.4; Marcovich, ed., 75: *Φιλοσοφία μὲν, ἣν δ’ ἐγώ, ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶ τοῦ ὄντος, καὶ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐπίγνωσις εὐδαιμονία δὲ, ταύτης τῆς ἐπιστήμης καὶ τῆς σοφίας γέρας.* See Barnard 1967, 27; Osborn 1973, 99.

ethical aspect of philosophical investigation and declared that divine truth was found in Jerusalem rather than Athens.<sup>4</sup> All the same, he understood Christian martyrdom as an indispensable vehicle for the articulation of Christian identity and, as martyrdom served to shape the perceptions of the Christian lifestyle, maintained that the seed of the Church was the blood of Christian martyrs.<sup>5</sup> In fact, after Christianity came to North Africa during the second century,<sup>6</sup> it expanded rapidly, in particular among urban settlements in the Roman provinces.<sup>7</sup> The remarkable spread of Christian beliefs and practices may have been expressed in the tensions and clashes between Roman imperial powers and the Christian communities in this region. While persecutions by Roman authorities may have played a decisive role in the making of the Christian identity of North Africans, the issue of spiritual training appears to have been a guiding thread of their moral, spiritual and theological preoccupations. Taking into consideration their concern for Christian identity, how did Tertullian show the significance of spiritual discipline in the community of faith? After the beginning of the African expression of faith and spirituality in the second century, how did the successors of Tertullian in the third and early fourth centuries explore the foundations of their Christian identity on the basis of spiritual discipline?<sup>8</sup>

In this paper, therefore, I shall focus first on Tertullian's view of the spiritual training. For the sake of clarity, I have divided the paper along thematic lines into two groups. Next, I turn my attention to the writings of both Cyprian of Carthage and Lactantius, thereby examining how their view of the spiritual training served as an impetus for the cultivation of the Christian identity that they hoped for. Finally I shall provide some understanding of the dimension of the spiritual discipline on which they dealt with the temporal and transient realities in speaking about the exercises in question.

<sup>4</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 7.9; CCSL 1, 193.

<sup>5</sup> Tert. *Apol.* 50.13; CCSL 1, 171.

<sup>6</sup> For the first traces of Christianity in North Africa, in particular, about the 'act of martyrs', see Telfer 1961, 512–517.

<sup>7</sup> For the historical overview of the first stages of Christianity in North Africa, see Burns and Jensen 2014, 1–33; Dunn 2004, 13–18.

<sup>8</sup> For the secondary literature on the broad diversity of spiritual training in late antiquity, see in general Leclercq 1961; Foucault 1988; Madec 1996–2002; Daly 1993; Nehamas 1998; Sorabji 2002; Gill 2006; Sorabji 2006; Otten 2009; and Pavie 2012.



## TERTULLIAN: ABSTINENCE, PRAYER, AND MARTYRDOM

Tertullian (c. 160–225) was the earliest Latin theologian from the North African church at the turn of the second century. His influential and prolific writings have enabled us to expand our knowledge of the period, not only regarding the theological and ecclesiastical elements of North African Christianity but also about social and cultural aspects of society in late antiquity. While a relatively small number of his treatises have been lost, those that remain nonetheless leave his biographical details unspecified. We know fairly little about Tertullian's life. In his catalogue of Christian authors, *On illustrious Men*, Jerome gave us a sketch of his life,<sup>9</sup> most of which is also taken from Tertullian's own writings. In addition to this picture, in his letter Jerome called Tertullian a 'learned and zealous writer'.<sup>10</sup> Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, one of the main sources of Jerome's biographical compendium, also remarked that Tertullian was 'a famed, distinguished expert on Roman law'.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of whether much of the biographical tradition on Tertullian is trustworthy,<sup>12</sup> it serves to highlight a crucial facet of his career: as an ethically rigorous and well-educated elite in Carthage, Tertullian was fanatical about being perfect from the standpoint of his uncompromising Christian faith. Then, with regard to his concern about spiritual training, what does he consider its significance in his treatises?

I will begin by considering the moral and practical aspects of his views, thereby illuminating the role of the spiritual exercises. In *To His Wife*, written after 198,<sup>13</sup> Tertullian entangled himself with the question how coherent the goodness of marriage was with Paul's preference for celibacy (1 Cor. 7:1).<sup>14</sup> This epistolary message to his wife demands a compelling justification both from those marrying for the first time and those marrying again.<sup>15</sup> He concedes that

<sup>9</sup> Jerome *Vir. ill.* 53. See Halton, trans., FC 100, 74–77.

<sup>10</sup> Jerome *Ep.* 84.2; CSEL 55, 122. See also *Ep.* 70.5; CSEL 54, 707.

<sup>11</sup> See Eusebius *H.e.* 2.2.4; LCL 153, 112; Maier, trans., 55: *Τερτυλλιανὸς τοῖς Ῥωμαίων νόμοις ἠκριβωκῶς, ἀνὴρ τὰ τε ἄλλα ἔνδοξος καὶ τῶν μάλιστα ἐπὶ Ῥώμης λαμπρῶν.*

<sup>12</sup> For a thorough examination of the traditional description of Tertullian's life, see Barnes 1985. See also, for a detailed evaluation of Barnes' argument and the concise summary of Tertullian's life and works, Dunn 2004, 3–11.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Barnes tentatively classifies this treatise in the pre-Montanist period, together with *Bapt., Or., Paen.* and *Pat., Vx.* dated around between 198 and 203; see Barnes 1985, 55. See also Rankin 1995, xvii.

<sup>14</sup> See Clark 2013; MacDonald 2013. For Tertullian's exegesis of 1 Cor. 7, see Rambaux 1976–1977; Braun 1992, 11–118.

<sup>15</sup> For the reader of this treatise, Georg Schöllgen suggests that Tertullian may not write it for his wife (Schöllgen 1984, 207).

his wife might remarry, like other Christian women who would otherwise be widows after divorce or the death of their husbands. However, by following ‘the example of those sisters of ours—their name are know to the Lord’<sup>16</sup> who would rather be nothing than not belong wholly to God, he hopes for and expects her to be resolute enough to remain a widow.

Train yourself to imitate the example of continence furnished by such women as these and, in your love for things of the spirit, you will bury concupiscence of the flesh. You will root out the fleeting, vagrant desires which come of beauty and youth, and make compensation for their loss with the blessings of Heaven, which last forever.<sup>17</sup>

His repeated argument against fleshly concupiscence seems to indicate it to be the standard treatment of the desire for temporal things. Not only is Tertullian persistent in his attitude and strongly advises against remarriage in a later to a widower some years later—‘And if this is his [*scil.* Paul’s] attitude with respect to a first marriage, how much more will it be his attitude with respect to a second!’<sup>18</sup>—but also, in his later works, as for example in *On Fasting* and in the second book of *Against Marcion*, he explicitly mentions that the exercise of self-restraint can be an efficient remedy for those determined to live in accordance with divine prescription: ‘you must understand there an advice on the exercise of self-restraint, and observe how a bridle was put upon that gluttony which, while it was eating the bread of angels, hankered after the cucumbers and pumpkins of the Egyptians.’<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note that, in his another letter to a widower, that is, *On Exhortation to Chastity*, Tertullian tells us of the close relationship between abstinence and prayer for each individual: ‘How much better a man feels when he happens to be away from his wife. He has a fine appreciation of spiritual things (*spiritualiter sapit*). When he prays to the Lord, he comes close to Heaven.’<sup>20</sup> Comparing carnal desires with spiritual fruits, he draws his attention to the conscience itself: ‘Deny the flesh and you will possess the spirit. As a proof

<sup>16</sup> Tert. *Vx.* 1.4.3; CCSL 1, 377; ACW 13, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Tert. *Vx.* 1.4.5; CCSL 1, 377; ACW 13, 15: *Talium exemplis feminarum ad aemulationem te continentiae exercens spiritali affectione carnalem illam concupiscentiam humabis, temporalia et uoluptativa desideria formae uel aetatis immortalium bonorum compensatione delendo.*

<sup>18</sup> Tert. *Exh. cast.* 4.3; CCSL 2, 1021; ACW 13, 49. See also *Exh. cast.* 11.1; CCSL 2, 1030–1031.

<sup>19</sup> Tert. *Marc.* 2.18.2; CCSL 1, 495; Evans, ed. and trans., 1972, 137: *consilium exercendae continentiae intellege et frenos impositos illi gulae agnosce, quae, cum panem ederet angelorum, cucumeres et pepones Aegyptiorum desiderabat.* See also Tert. *Leiu.* 5.4 and 13.5.

<sup>20</sup> Tert. *Exh. cast.* 10.2; CCSL 2, 1029; ACW 13, 58. For Tertullian’s view of the effectiveness of abstinence from sex for the purity of soul, see Brown 1988, 78.

of this, let us reflect on what our own experience (*ipsam conscientiam nostram*) teaches us.<sup>21</sup> Tertullian enumerates a sequence of spiritual practises in their own right.

If he applies himself to reading the Scriptures, he is completely absorbed in them. If he sings a Psalm, he sings with joy in his heart. [...] It is for this reason that the Apostle recommends periodic abstinence, so that we may be able to pray more effectively. He wishes us to recognize that a policy which is temporarily expedient ought to be made permanent, so that it may be permanently expedient. Men need prayer every day and every moment of the day; and if prayer is necessary, so, also, of course, is continence.<sup>22</sup>

As he has already reflected, even more practically, on the mental attitude prerequisite for prayer,<sup>23</sup> Tertullian argues for the coherence of prayer with the exercise of abstinence in daily life. He begins by the sustained discipline of desires, which supports faith and permits the leading of a spiritual life towards heaven: 'It is our conscience (*conscientia*) which leads us to pray; if our conscience feels shame, we shall be ashamed to pray.'<sup>24</sup> His awareness that a Christian's proclamation (*disciplina domini*) must be put into practice is evident.<sup>25</sup>

In the so-called pre-Montanist period,<sup>26</sup> Tertullian rhetorically made clear the linkage between the practice of almsgiving and the exercise of patience, which worked as the key to nourish all forms of virtuous conduct.

In all probability, a man who has not resolved to bear with fortitude a slight loss [...] will not readily or willingly touch what he owns for the sake of charity. [...] Patience to endure, shown on occasions of loss, is a training in giving and sharing. He who does not fear loss is not reluctant to give. Otherwise, *how would one who has two tunics give one of them to him, who is destitute, unless the same is one who can offer his cloak as well to the one going off with his tunic? How will we make friends for ourselves with mammon* if we love him

<sup>21</sup> Tert. *Exh. cast.* 10.1–2; CCSL 2, 1029; ACW 13, 58.

<sup>22</sup> Tert. *Exh. cast.* 10.2; CCSL 2, 1029–1030; ACW 13, 58: [*S*]i scripturis incumbit, totus illic est; si psalmum canit, placet sibi; [...] Ideo apostolus temporalem purificationem orationum commendandarum causa adiecit, ut sciremus, quod ad tempus prodest semper nobis exercere esse, ut semper prosit. Si quotidie, omni momento oratio hominibus necessaria est, utique et continentia, post quam oratio, necessaria est.

<sup>23</sup> See Tert. *Or.* 10–12. For the significance of this work and his view of the prayer in general, see Osborn 1997, 150; M. Brown 2004, 216–254.

<sup>24</sup> Tert. *Exh. cast.* 10.3; CCSL 2, 1030; ACW 13, 58–59. For the importance of Stoicism in Tertullian's view of conscience, see Osborn 1997, 238–241.

<sup>25</sup> See Tert. *Exh. cast.* 10.4; CCSL 2, 1030. For his view of the disciplina, see Morel 1944–1945; Francine 1985; and Wilhite 2013, 45–71.

<sup>26</sup> For the implications of the division of Tertullian's literary career, see Dunn 2004, 8–9.

only to the extent that we do not share in his loss? We shall be damned together with the damned.<sup>27</sup> [Italics mine]

Here, he does not describe the concrete situation of the poor and destitute in his community.<sup>28</sup> Instead of facing the reality of poverty, including the loss of property, Tertullian draws on the authority of dominical teaching in the Gospels: Luke 3:11, Matthew 5:40 and Luke 16:9.<sup>29</sup> What one would rather see, through his references to the scriptural message, is that he praises those who give alms to the destitute and who practise the act of dispossession for cultivating thoroughly their patience to endure. Although he in no way explains anything specific about making friends out of mammon, he reminds us of the necessity of reciprocal charity and its accompanying exercises as the means of ensuring the solidarity and group identity in the community.

In *To the Martyrs*, which probably dates from 197, before *Apology*,<sup>30</sup> Tertullian provides advice to Christians awaiting execution for their faith,<sup>31</sup> referring to the exercise of tribulations and trials as a necessary Christian duty that requires training. He encourages the future martyrs to regard the imprisoned state of their minds and bodies as a starting point for showing exemplary behaviour during their trials and executions at the hands of the Romans.<sup>32</sup>

O blessed, consider whatever is hard in your present situation as an exercise of your powers of mind and body. You are about to enter a noble contest in which the living God acts the part of superintendent and the Holy Spirit is your trainer, a contest whose

<sup>27</sup> Tert. Pat. 7.8–10; CCSL 1, 307; FC 40, 206: *Iam qui minutum sibi aliquid [...] non constanter sustinere constituit, nescio an facile uel ex animo ipse rei suae manum inferre possit in causa elemosinae. [...] Patientia in detrimentis exercitatio est largiendi et communicandi: non piget donare eum qui non timet perdere. Alioquin quomodo duas habens tunicas alteram earum nudo dabit, nisi idem sit qui auferenti tunicam etiam pallium offerre possit? Quomodo amicos de mammona fabricabimus nobis si eum in tantum amauerimus ut amissum non sufferamus? peribimus cum perdito.*

<sup>28</sup> Tertullian does not show his audience the systematic and self-contained treatment of this subject. Although his explicit intention is to protect the status quo of the dominant society, his contribution is also in a warning to the community to ensure its solidarity and to encourage righteous living in its eschatological dimension. For Tertullian's engagement in socio-ethical issues, see Rhee 2012. See also Rhee 2013.

<sup>29</sup> For Tertullian's method and principles of scriptural exegesis, see O'Malley 1967. See also Countryman 1982; Dunn 2006.

<sup>30</sup> See Barnes 1985, 52–53 and 55; Rankin 1995, xvii; and Dunn 2004, 165.

<sup>31</sup> For the comprehensive investigation of martyrdom in North African Christianity, see Burns and Jensen 2014, 519–551. See also Frend 2000; Price 2008; Moss 2013; and Still 2013.

<sup>32</sup> For the relationship between martyrdom and the construction of religious identity, see Perkins 1995; Boyarin 1999; Shaw 1996; and Kelley 2006.

crown is eternity, whose prize is angelic nature, citizenship in heaven and glory for ever and ever. And so your Master, Jesus Christ, who has anointed you with His Spirit and has brought you to this training ground, has resolved, before the day of the contest, to take you from a softer way of life to a harsher treatment that your strength may be increased. [...] And they do this, says the Apostle, to win a perishable crown. We who are about to win an eternal one recognize in the prison our training ground, that we may be led forth to the contest before the seat of the presiding judge well practised in all hardships, [...].<sup>33</sup>

Tertullian uses expressions of military struggle and athleticism to describe martyrs and athletes, thereby showing prospective martyrs the necessity of preparing themselves for martyrdom. This type of language was not uncommon in ancient Christian texts.<sup>34</sup> Presumably, although most Christians who learnt from examples of martyrs by their lives or literary works (including the Acts of martyrs as well as other types of writings) did not consider themselves as preparing for their real death, martyrdom itself could be supposed to be an undertaking that required the exercises for their ‘suffering’ selves. Indeed, Tertullian holds that Christians are provided with ample opportunities to advance in virtue through trials and sufferings. At the same time, however, he argues that martyrdom is an immediate duty for Christians. Their struggle would take on an eschatological dimension: both with God as producer of the games (*agonothetes*) and with the Holy Spirit as the trainer (*xystarches*), they are prompted to prepare for the event of persecution, with the hope of receiving the eternal reward. Furthermore, his persistent enthusiasm for the involvement of Christians is clear from the mention to the ‘peace’ to be kept in the church: ‘Some, not able to find this peace in the Church, are accustomed to seek it from the martyrs in prison. For this reason, too, then, you ought to possess, cherish and preserve it among yourselves that you may perhaps be able to bestow it upon others also’.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that Tertullian speaks here of the reconciliation to the church of those who have

<sup>33</sup> Tert. *Mart.* 3.3–5; CCSL 1, 5–6; FC 40, 23: *uos, benedicti, quodcumque hoc durum est, ad exercitationem virtutum animi et corporis deputate. Bonum agonem subituri estis in quo agonothetes Deus uiuus est, xystarches Spiritus Sanctus, corona aeternitatis, brabium angelicae substantiae, politia in caelis, gloria in saecula saeculorum. Itaque epistates uester Christus Iesus, qui uos Spiritu unxit, et ad hoc scamma produxit, uoluit uos ante diem agonis ad duriozem tractationem a liberioze condicione seponere, ut uires corroborarentur in uobis. [...] Et illi, inquit Apostolus, ut coronam corruptibilem consequantur. Nos aeternam consecuturi carcerem nobis pro palaestra interpretamur, ut ad stadium tribunalis bene exercitati incommodis omnibus producatur, [...].*

<sup>34</sup> See n. 70. See also Hoppenbrouwers 1961; Sider, ed. 2001, III n. 18; Kelley 2006, 727 n. 21; and Moss 2013, 108–109. For the rhetorical influence on Tertullian, see Sider 1971.

<sup>35</sup> Tert. *Mart.* 1.6; CCSL 1, 3; FC 40, 19.

lapsed. For, through their willingness to undergo martyrdom, lapsed Christians are vested with an exceptional means to effect forgiveness. They are regarded as having a vehicle with which to absolve their own sins. All of this means that, despite the differences between most Christian readers and imprisoned martyrs, Tertullian sees Christian identity as being shaped from Christians' perception of the 'suffering self' in both the unlikely event of persecution and the past danger of martyrdom.

#### TERTULLIAN: INTELLECTUAL DISCIPLINES

Tertullian's attitude towards the intellectual aspect of spiritual training is made clear by several passages in his relatively early works. In *On the Testimony of the Soul*, written in 197 or 198 as an appendix to the *Apology*,<sup>36</sup> he explicitly refers to this aspect.

I do not call upon thee who art formed in the schools, practices in the libraries, nourished in the Attic academics and porticoes—thou who dost belch forth wisdom. I address thee who art simple, unskilled, unpolished and uneducated, that is, of such a nature as they have thee who have thee alone, that very soul in its entirely coming from the crossroads, public square and workshop. It is thy inexperience that I need, since no one has any faith in thy little bit of experience.<sup>37</sup>

In this short treatise, intended to be read by the ordinary reader rather than by the learned, he directed criticism at the tradition of ancient philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Very distinct and vigorous is the protest he utters against the tendency to search for the indispensable elements of Christian truth in the writings of the 'philosophers, poets, and any other teachers of secular learning and wisdom'.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, he asks the educated pagans to be plain, unadorned and uncorrupted by learning. Tertullian confirms that this is the soul of the ordinary people, which at its deepest level is an entity inclined towards Christianity.

<sup>36</sup> See Barnes 1985, 55; Rankin 1995, xvii; and Dunn 2004, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Tert. *Test.* 1.6–7; CCSL 1, 176; FC 10, 133: *Sed non eam te aduoco, quae scholis formata, bybliothecis exercitata, academiis et porticibus Atticis pasta sapientiam ructas. Te simplicem et rudem et impolitam et idioticam compello qualem te habent qui te solam habent, illam ipsam de compito, de triuio, de tetrino totam. Imperitia tua mihi upus est, quoniam aliquantulae peritiae tuae nemo credit.*

<sup>38</sup> For Tertullian's appreciation and use of philosophy, see Osborn 1997, 31; Dunn 2004, 31–34; and Willite 2007, 22–23. For his understanding of the philosophical schools, in particular the expressions 'schola' and 'scholae', see Rankin 1995, 86–88.

<sup>39</sup> Tert. *Test.* 1.1; CCSL 1, 175; FC 10, 131.

In *On the Prescriptions of Heretics*, written after 198,<sup>40</sup> in which he is concerned about the way that learned heretics make use of the scriptures with the teaching of the various philosophical schools,<sup>41</sup> Tertullian makes the claim that, because of their curious and endless search for belief, the heretics' use of the scriptures is unsanctioned and ultimately powerless. Scriptures are not the possession of heretics but belong to the church: 'For only where the true Christian teaching and faith are evident will the true Scriptures, the true interpretations, and all the true Christian traditions be found'.<sup>42</sup> Thus, in order to avoid all debate with heretics, he introduces the rule of faith,<sup>43</sup> which is a kind of integrated core of the scriptural messages, served as an essential guide for belief and the scriptural interpretation: 'This Rule, taught [...] by Christ, allows of no questions among us'.<sup>44</sup> Despite his effort to establish the rule of faith, it is noteworthy that he admits the existence of well-educated fellows in the community whose curiosity and ceaseless inquiry may violate and transgress the rule of faith.<sup>45</sup>

There must surely be some brother endowed with the gift of knowledge who can teach you, someone who moves among the learned who will share your curiosity and your inquiry. In the last resort, however, it is better for you to remain ignorant, for fear that you come to know what you should not know.<sup>46</sup>

His encouragement to the reader, then, comes to be liked with the argumentation that there can be no effective inquiry without the rule of faith. Tertullian recapitulates his idea of an appropriate use of the scriptures by quoting a passage from Luke 18:42 and emphasising both the danger of curiosity and the redundant ability to expose the scriptures.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See Barnes 1985, 55; Rankin 1995, xvii.

<sup>41</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 7.8–11; CCSL 1, 193. See Rankin 1995, 88.

<sup>42</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 19.3; CCSL 1, 201; Greenslade, trans., LCC 5, 43.

<sup>43</sup> For the importance of *regula fidei* in the scriptural exegesis of Tertullian, see Waszink 1979, 26–29; Countryman 1989; Osborn 1989; Ferguson 2013; and Rothschild 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 13.6; CCSL 1, 198; Greenslade, trans., LCC 5, 40: *Haec regula a Christo, [...] instituta nulla habet apud nos quaestiones.*

<sup>45</sup> For the significance of curiosity and its relation to the scriptural exegesis in Tertullian's works, see Fredouille 1972, 411–442; Waszink 1979, 19–21.

<sup>46</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 14.2; CCSL 1, 198; Greenslade, trans., LCC 5, 40: *est utique frater aliqui doctor gratia scientiae donatus, est aliqui inter exercitatos conversatus, aliqui tecum curiosius tamen quaerens. Nouissime ignorare melius est ne quod non debeas noris quia quod debeas nosti.*

<sup>47</sup> For the quotations from Luke in Tertullian's treatises and the possibility of his debt to Marcion's version of Luke's Gospel, see Aalders 1937; Higgins 1951; O'Malley 1967, 62; Gregory 2003; and Dunn 2004, 20–21.

'*Thy Faith hath saved thee*,' it says; not thy biblical learning. Faith is established in the Rule. There it has its law, and it wins salvation by keeping the law. Learning derives from curiosity and wins glory only from its zealous pursuit of scholarship. Let curiosity give place to faith, and glory to salvation.<sup>48</sup> Let them at least be no hindrance, or let them keep quiet. To know nothing against the Rule is to know everything.<sup>49</sup> [*Italics mine*]

Tertullian's disapproval of the scriptural exercises appears again in his attack on those heretics who are willingly to enlarge or diminish the scriptural texts.

They rely on passages which they have put together in a false context or fastened on because of their ambiguity. What will you accomplish, most learned of biblical scholars, if the other side denies what you affirmed and affirms what you denies? True, you will lose nothing in the dispute but your voice; and you will get nothing from their blasphemy but bile.<sup>50</sup>

Although the debate with heretics about their dealings with scriptural texts must not be based on these texts, where the 'victory is impossible or uncertain or not certain enough',<sup>51</sup> there is, consequently, a risk of showing that a critical interpretation of the scriptures is contradicted by the rule of faith. He is not satisfied with such argument as this; however, his negative assessment of the exercises is clear to the reader. In this context, his addition to the passage from Luke, that is, 'biblical learning' would be interpreted as a restless preoccupation with the scriptures: this exercise conflicts with the rule of faith. In his writings, in fact, there is a continuing, even if sporadic, criticism of spiritual training in its intellectual aspect. At the centre of the problem lies Tertullian's almost dismissive attitude towards the philosophical thought within which the various types of philosophical endeavour were divergent in his times: philosophy creates more uncertainty and confusion than simplicity and clearness.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> This phrase, in its formal structure, is derived from Cicero's *De officiis* 1.77; LCL 30, 78: *cedant arma togae concedat laurea laudi*. See Fredouille, 1972, 427 n. 65. For the implication of this allusion, see also Waszink 1979, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 14.3–5; CCSL 1, 198; Greenslade, trans., LCC 5, 40: *Fides, inquit, tua te saluum fecit, non exercitatio scripturarum. Fides in regula posita est, habet legem et salutem de observatione legis. Exercitatio autem in curiositate consistit, habens gloriam solam de peritiae studio. Cedat curiositas fidei; cedat gloria saluti. Certe aut non obstrepant aut quiescant. Aduersus regulam nihil scire omnia scire est.*

<sup>50</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 17.3–4; CCSL 1, 200; Greenslade, trans., LCC 5, 42: *his nituntur quae ex falso composuerunt, et quae de ambiguitate ceperunt. Quid promouebis, exercitatisime scripturarum, cum si quid defenderis, negetur ex diuerso, si quid negaueris defendatur?*

<sup>51</sup> Tert. *Praescr.* 19.1; CCSL 1, 201; Greenslade, trans., LCC 5, 43.

<sup>52</sup> See Tert. *Apol.* 47.9; CCSL 1, 164. See also O'Malley 1967, 117. For Tertullian view of the 'sect' in the Church, see Rankin 1995, 89–90.



However, a further characteristic of his view of the training must not be ignored: in order to cultivate the virtuous conducts, one is urged to accept divine discipline and to discipline oneself.

There has been given to us as a model in the practice of patience no [merely] human product fashioned of the dullness of Cynic indifference, but the divine ordinance of a life-giving and heavenly way of life which points out as an exemplar of patience God Himself.<sup>53</sup>

We must walk worthily in the discipline of the Lord, and not according to the unclean desires of the flesh. In line with this, the Apostle also says that to be wise according to the flesh is death, but to be wise according to the spirit is life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>54</sup>

In these passages, it is clearly admitted that he does not refer to the intellectual aspect of the exercises. Both in the cultivation of patience and of chastity, he admits the need to abandon the carnal desires. It may be safely assumed that here Tertullian renders the word '*disciplina*' to be more practical rather than theoretical. Yet, in order to discipline oneself against desires in daily life, one should comprehend what the discipline is and is not. This necessity to understand the nature of discipline takes precedence over the observance of the rule and custom by which Christians live. Any practice can be good only in so far as it is justified by reason or argument.<sup>55</sup> Thus, one should prepare oneself to make rational choices over the course of one's entire life. As a rational being, one should be ready to 'walk worthily in the discipline of the Lord'. This implies that the demands of the training of mind and reason be intentionally suppressed in a way that serves to emphasise the simply way of living and to turn the audience's attention to its conformity with the rule of faith.<sup>56</sup>

## CYPRIAN

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200–258) is the second, distinguished theologian in the church of North Africa. His personality is dissimilar from Tertullian. Cyprian

<sup>53</sup> Tert. *Pat.* 2.1; CCSL 1, 300; FC 40, 195: *Nobis exercendae patientiae auctoritatem non adfectatio humana caninae aequanimitatis stupore formata sed uiuae ac caelestis disciplinae diuina dispositio delegat deum ipsum ostendens patientiae exemplum.*

<sup>54</sup> Tert. *Exh. cast.* 10.4–5; CCSL 2, 1030; ACW 13, 59: *Debemus enim ita ingredi in disciplina domini, ut deo dignum fructum \*, non secundum carnis squalentes concupiscentias. Ita enim et apostolus dicit, quod sapere secundum carnem mors sit, secundum spiritum uero sapere uita aeterna sit in Christo Iesu domino nostro.*

<sup>55</sup> Tertullian comments on it in *Cor.* 4.7, 10.9 and *Ieiun.* 3.1, 10.9.

<sup>56</sup> See Tert. *Praescr.* 1–2.

did not have the strength of legal mind shown by Tertullian, which led the latter to enter the service of the church despite the empire-driven persecutions of Christians. He preferred to instil the spirit of union and harmony among his congregations.<sup>57</sup> Yet, it is interesting to note that, according to the testimony of Jerome in *On Illustrious Men*, Cyprian himself affirmed the supremacy of Tertullian: ‘Cyprian was accustomed never to pass a day without reading Tertullian and would frequently say to him [*scil.* his secretary], “Hand me the master”, meaning, of course, Tertullian’.<sup>58</sup> Then, concerning the dealing with the spiritual exercises, does he entirely follow Tertullian’s views?

By the end of 250 the Decian persecution had gradually waned, but a horrible epidemic was threatening the whole community in North Africa. Therefore, in *On Mortality*, written around in 252,<sup>59</sup> Cyprian concerned himself with the question of knowing what it was for the faithful to suffer the punishment of death. He encourages his fellow Christians to shut out the fear of death despite their suffering from incurable disease. In the exhortation to the whole faith community, he regards the apparently horrible plague not as a correction of sinners but as ‘mortality’ examining the state of their mind. He compares it to martyrdom: ‘we have begun gladly to seek martyrdom while we are learning not to fear death. These are trying exercises for us, not deaths; they give to the mind the glory of fortitude; by contempt of death they prepare for the crown’.<sup>60</sup> Martyrdom is inspired and constituted by divine grace: ‘martyrdom is not in your power but in the giving of God’.<sup>61</sup> As he attempts to control the whole community’s eagerness for martyrdom and, in particular, the prestige of the confessors who have survived the persecution, whose status has been high in the congregation, Cyprian confirms that ‘God does not ask for our blood but

<sup>57</sup> For the biographical survey in general, see *e.g.* Sage 1975. Introductory parts in Graeme W. Clarke’s translation of Cyprian’s letters provide us the details of his life and activities: Clarke, trans., 1984–1989; Brent 2010. For the analysis of *Acta proconsularia Cypriani*, see Hunink 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Jerome *Vir. ill.* 53; Richardson, ed., 31: *solitum numquam cyprianum absque tertulliani lectione unam praeterisse diem ac sibi crebro dicere ‘da magistrum!’ tertullianum uidelicet significans.*

<sup>59</sup> For the dating of this work and the plague which appeared to have struck Carthage by the summer of 252, see Scourfield 1996, 23.

<sup>60</sup> Cypr. *Mort.* 16; CSEL 3.1, 307; FC 36, 212: *martyrium coepimus libenter adpetere, dum mortem discimus non timere. exercitia sunt nobis ista, non funera: dant animo fortitudinis gloriam, contemptu mortis praeparant ad coronam.* For the significance of Cyprian’s theology of martyrdom, in particular from its new aspect of his reaction to the martyrs in his time, see Brent 2002; Brent 2010, 250–289.

<sup>61</sup> Cypr. *Mort.* 17; CSEL 3.1, 307; FC 36, 213: *non est in tua potestate sed in Dei dignatione martyrium.* See also *Ad Quirin.* 3.4; CSEL 3.1, 116.

our faith'.<sup>62</sup> Their reward of gaining access to heavenly peace can be realised by every Christian's firm faith through the exercises of their mind, not only by martyrs and confessors.

In his treatise *On Jealousy and Envy*, written probably in 256 or 257,<sup>63</sup> Cyprian was concerned with how the devil aroused jealousy and envy, provided a further source of vices and carnal sins, and violated the 'bond of the Lord's peace' (*dominicae pacis uinculum*).<sup>64</sup> He enumerates, therefore, the benefit and impact of meditative exercises against such evil tendencies as a sickness of the soul.

The mind, dearest brethren, must be strengthened by these meditations: it must be confirmed against all the arts of the devil by exercises of this kind. Let divine reading be in the hands; let thoughts of the Lord be in the senses; let prayer never cease at all; let saving labor persevere. Let us all be occupied by spiritual actions, so that, [...] he may find the heart closed and armed against him.<sup>65</sup>

By means of the training of scriptural reading, meditating, prayer and the renunciation of their property, individuals commit to strengthen their mind: such training is designed to help them conquer unregulated desires and fears.<sup>66</sup> This view of spiritual exercises seems to be associated with Stoic practice and perspective. Despite the similarity of its function, however, Cyprian's discourse takes different forms. He confirms that Christians should live as Christ did and regenerate in Christ: 'For this is to have changed what you had been, and to begin to be what you were not, so that the divine birth shine in you, so that the divine discipline (*deifica disciplina*) may respond to God the Father'.<sup>67</sup> By creating the focus on the example of Christ as his death and resurrection, he describes the spiritual discipline from the perspective of divine guidance.

Cyprian corpus of letters comprises an inexhaustible source of the time; they date from the time of his election as bishop by the people and clergy of Carthage in 248 or 249. Of the eighty-one letters of the corpus, Cyprian's view of spiritual exercises becomes clear from several passages in his relatively early correspon-

<sup>62</sup> Cypr. *Mort.* 17; CSEL 3.1, 308; FC 36, 213.

<sup>63</sup> For the dating of this work, see Clarke, trans., ACW 44, 98 n. 22.

<sup>64</sup> Cypr. *Zel. et liu.* 6; CSEL 3.1, 423; FC 36, 298

<sup>65</sup> Cypr. *Zel. et liu.* 16; CSEL 3.1, 430; FC 36, 306: *His meditationibus corroborandus est animus, fratres dilectissimi, eiusmodi exercitationibus contra omnia diaboli iacula firmandus. sit in manibus diuina lectio, in sensibus dominica cogitatio, oratio iugis omnino non cesset, salutaris operatio perseueret. spiritalibus semper actibus occupemur, ut [...] et clausum aduersum se pectus inueniat et armatum.*

<sup>66</sup> See Blowers 2009, 31.

<sup>67</sup> Cypr. *Zel. et liu.* 15; CSEL 3.1, 429; FC 36, 305.

dence. In *Letter 25*, dating from approximately 250,<sup>68</sup> replied to a message from his brother (*Ep.* 24), Cyprian expresses a positive attitude towards the intellectual aspect of spiritual training. In the greeting of this short letter, he admires the way Caldonius has restored peace to the congregations in the urgency of a new persecution: 'Nor are we surprised to find you acting in all matters with discretion and prudence, experienced and well versed as you are in the Lord's Scriptures'.<sup>69</sup> Cyprian regards divine reading as the vehicle of divine aid to grant peace to his colleagues.

In *Letter 58*, probably dating from 253<sup>70</sup> and addressed to the North African community at Thibar (modern Thibar), Cyprian exhorts his 'dearly beloved brethren' to remain faithful to God and the Church amidst a renewal of persecution. His words draw upon the imagery from the secular combat in the arena regarding the need be prepared and trained for the terror of future persecution.<sup>71</sup> No one should 'be so panic-stricken by fear of the approaching persecution or by the imminent arrival of Antichrist'.<sup>72</sup> Adopting a Stoic view of the world and quoting passages from Ephesians (6:12–17),<sup>73</sup> he speaks of the virtue-oriented aspect of the exercises.

In the case of worldly contests men train away and practise, and they account it a great mark of honour for their reputation if they should have the luck to win their crowns watched by the people and in the presence of their emperor. But see! There is coming a magnificent and wonderful contest glittering with the prize of a heavenly crown; it is God who now watches us as we compete [...] Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us arm ourselves with all our strength, let us prepare ourselves for the contest with an unblemished heart, a sound faith, and a dedicated courage. [...] Such are the arms we should now take up ourselves, with these spiritual and heavenly weapons we should now protect and defend ourselves so that on that most evil of days we may be able to withstand and repel the menaces of the devil.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> For the chronological order of Cyprian's letters, see Duquenne, 1972; Sage 1975, Appendix I 'The Chronology of the Letters'; Clarke, trans., 1984–1989. For the chronology of his letters written during the Decian period (250–251), see also Clarke 1999, 692–698.

<sup>69</sup> *Cypr. Ep.* 25; CSEL 3.2, 538; ACW 43, 110: *nec miramur si exercitatus et in scripturis dominicis peritus caute omnia et consulte geras.*

<sup>70</sup> See Clarke, trans., ACW 46, 11.

<sup>71</sup> See n. 33 above. See also Clarke, trans., ACW 44, 191–192. For the imagery of the spiritual combat of God, see *Cypr. Ep.* 10.2; CSEL 3.2, 49: *caeleste certamen Dei et spiritale, proelium Christi.* With regard to the emergence of *ἀγών* in the Pauline literature, see Pfitzner 1967, 201.

<sup>72</sup> *Cypr. Ep.* 58.7; CSEL 3.2, 662; ACW 46, 65.

<sup>73</sup> See A. Fahey 1971, 493–494.

<sup>74</sup> *Cypr. Ep.* 58.8–9; CSEL 3.2, 663–664; ACW 46, 66: *Ad agonem saecularem exercentur homines et*

This letter considers the problem of martyrdom and, along with the gladiator metaphor, exhorts the reader to be prepared for the fear of future persecution and the arrival of Antichrist. Thus, Cyprian draws attention to a prescription for assuaging and conquering the disordered state of mind. As has been mentioned in the analysis of *On Jealousy and Envy*, after offering Stoic perspective on the discipline, Cyprian finds another path. His emphasis on the imitation of Christ as the ‘soldier of Christ’ (*miles Christi*) shows the inherent possibility of training their mind by divine ‘precepts and counsels’.<sup>75</sup> Here too, he describes the spiritual exercises from their eschatological dimension.

### LACTANTIUS

Lactantius (c. 250–325) was another leading theologian and one of the earliest Latin writers. His elegant and excellent writing style came from his education in philosophy, earning him the label of the ‘Christian Cicero’.<sup>76</sup> He was a native African and the last Latin apologist personally affected by the persecution of Christians. Although he revealed few details of his life, he likely converted to Christianity before the beginning of the Diocletian persecution in February 303. Under this persecution (303–313), he was forced to resign his position as a professor of rhetoric. Yet, this was to be his most productive period. Lactantius spent much of his time writing treatises: in 303/304, he wrote an apologetic treatise, *The Workmanship of God*, and then, probably in 305–310, he composed his main work, the seven books of *The Divine Institutes*.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from his *magnum opus*, a small fragment of the *Codex Ambrosianus* of Milan with the marginal inscription ‘*Lactantius de motibus animi*’ provides a valuable description of the exercises in question. Since its content and form suggest the authorship of Lactantius, it is likely that he writes these lines as a

*parantur et magnam gloriam computant honoris sui, si illis spectante populo et imperatore praesente contigerit coronari. ecce agon sublimis et magnus et coronae caelestis praemio gloriosus, ut spectet nos certantes Deus [...] armemur, fratres dilectissimi, uiribus totis et paremur ad agonem mente incorrupta, fide integra, uirtute deuota. [...] Haec arma sumamus, his nos tutamentis spiritalibus et caelestibus muniamus, ut in die nequissimo resistere diaboli minis et repugnare possimus.*

<sup>75</sup> Cyp. Ep. 58.10; CSEL 3.2, 666; ACW 46, 66.

<sup>76</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *De studio diuinae atque humanae philosophiae* 1.7.19. Pico’s evaluation derived from a passage in Jerome’s Ep. 58.10; CSEL 54, 539: *Lactantius, quasi quidam fluius eloquentiae Tullianae, utinam tam nostra adfirmare potuisset, quam facile aliena destruxit!* See further Kendeffy 2015, 56–57.

<sup>77</sup> For Lactantius’s life and his intellectual and historical background, see e.g. Bryce 1990; DePalma Digeser 2000; and Bowen and Peter, trans., 2003.

complement to *The Workmanship of God*.<sup>78</sup> In this note, he deals with human motivation and considers its origin as planted into human nature by God from the beginning. It is likely that he adopted the Ciceronian account of the soul, virtues and its order. His list of these motions of the soul includes not only its strength and twist but also the proper direction of the soul that it should take.<sup>79</sup>

Hope, fear, love, hate, joy, sadness, pleasure, desire, anger, compassion, zeal, admiration. These motions or affections of the soul have existed from the beginning of the creation of man by God. They are implanted in human nature for its full well-being and utility, so that, through their ordered and rational control, man might be able to exercise them in performing manfully [...] when these motions of the soul are restrained within their proper lines, that is, posited in good proportion, they prepare the good acts of virtue during the present life, and they prepare for the everlasting rewards of the future.<sup>80</sup>

Motions of the soul were given for the purpose of returning to God through the discipline of virtue ‘in accordance with reason’. Thus, while Stoics attempt to reject the passions as though they were the sickness of human soul,<sup>81</sup> Lactantius would rather focus on the proper use of passions and the reward for the exercises. He confirms the significance and consequence of the discipline of virtues in its pure form.

Responding to the accusations against Christians, in particular after the Diocletian persecution started, Lactantius engaged in writing *The Divine Institutes*.<sup>82</sup> Not only did he object to the hostile campaign vigorously promoted by pagans, but he intended to set forth the systematic (structured in the Ciceronian style) religious instruction of Christian doctrine and worship, thereby persuading the learned pagans that only Christianity was capable of telling the truth. In the prefatory part of Book I, in which he attempts to refute polytheism, Lactantius distinguishes two different forms of the ‘profession’ and ‘science’ of searching for divine truth: one is that of ‘speaking well’ and the other is that of ‘living rightly’.

<sup>78</sup> For the authenticity of this fragment, see Brand 1891.

<sup>79</sup> See Nicholson 2001, 192–193.

<sup>80</sup> Lact. *De motibus animi*; CSEL 27.1, 157–158; FC 54, 223–224: <Spes > timor, amor odium, laetitia tristitia, libido cupiditas, ira miseratio. zelus admiratio, hi motus < animi > uel affectus a deo ab initio hominis existunt conditi et naturae humanae utiliter et salubriter sunt insiti, ut per eos ordinate et rationabiliter regendos homo uirtutes bonas uiriliter agendo exercere possit: [...] hi namque animi motus intra fines proprios coartati, hoc est in bona parte positi, in praesenti uirtutes bonas et in futuro aeterna praemia parant.

<sup>81</sup> See e.g., Lact. *Inst.* 6.14–19. For the treatment of passions in Lactantius, see Hagendahl 1958, 338–341; Ingremeau 1998; and Kendeffly 2000.

<sup>82</sup> For a chronological survey of *Inst.*, see DePalma Digeser 1994.

According to the dichotomous viewpoint of its benefit for observing the ‘heavenly precepts’, he gives preference to the latter. This seems probable because the knowledge of eloquence ‘instructed youth not toward virtue but plainly toward “argued” evil’.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, ‘living rightly’ belongs to all and ‘speaking well’ pertains to the few. Nevertheless, Lactantius claims, together with particular attention to the target audience of this treatise, the privilege of ‘that exercise in imaginary lawsuits [...] it may more potently seep into minds’.<sup>84</sup> Despite the limited scope of its functions, towards the erudite pagan audience, he exhibits an appreciation of the oratorical discipline as the indispensable guide to true wisdom and Christianity.

In Book 3, Lactantius focuses on the errors of philosophers’ teachings on ethics, stating that the virtues are the vehicle for the acquisition of the soul’s immortality, not the objective themselves of life. It is admitted that, along with his interest in virtue, he persistently speaks of the exercises combined with the cultivation of virtues. After drawing the outline of moral philosophy—Stoics, Cyrenaics, and Academics, he explains the nature of the good and defines immortality as the highest good.<sup>85</sup> Happiness in this life consists only in the liberation of the soul from the body: ‘beatitude does not fall to man in that manner in which the philosophers believed it did, but it so comes [...] when his soul lives in spirit alone’.<sup>86</sup> He encourages those who hope for it to live in the labours and burdens, because they nourish and strengthen the virtues: ‘if we seem to be least happy [...] if fleeting the enticements of pleasures and serving virtue alone [...] if, finally, we hold to that rough and difficult way which opens unto beatitude for us’.<sup>87</sup> A linkage between immortality, virtues, and spiritual training serves as the key to define the secure way of human life. Based on the close relationship of these forms, he turns his attention to the teachings of Lucretius, Seneca, and Cicero and then proceeds to examine those of Epicurus, Leucippus and Democritus as sources of error.<sup>88</sup> Although there are no detailed descriptions about

<sup>83</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 1.1.8; CSEL 19, 3; FC 49, 16: *non ad uirtutem, sed plane ad argutam malitiam iuuenes erudiebamus*. For the parallel between Cicero and Lactantius in this respect, see Kendeffy 2000, 58–59.

<sup>84</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 1.1.10; CSEL 19, 3; FC 49, 16.

<sup>85</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 3.12.

<sup>86</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 3.12.34; CSEL 19, 211–212; FC 49, 194.

<sup>87</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 3.12.35; CSEL 19, 212; FC 49, 194: *si minime beati esse uideamur, si fugientes inlecebras uoluptatum solique uirtuti seruietes [...] si denique asperam illam uiam difficilemque teneamus, quae nobis ad beatitudinem patefacta est*.

<sup>88</sup> For Lactantius’ (dis)approval of the ancient philosophical tradition, see Harloff 1911, 8–51; Hagedahl 1958, 48–76, 81–88 and 338–341; Bryce 1990; Colish 1990, 37–47; and Smolak 1995.

the exercises, the repeated references to the benefit of the discipline of virtue are given when he determines the harmful results from the excessive engagement in the practice of speaking and in Epicurean hedonism.<sup>89</sup>

It is noteworthy that, at the ends of Book 3 and 5,<sup>90</sup> Lactantius is concerned about the persecution and trials. Although it seems that the sufferings of the Christians are at the hands of criminal persecutors, in Book 5, he quotes a passage from Seneca: ‘God has men as his children,’ he says, ‘[t]he good, however, whom he loves, he often chastises, and with constant labors he trains them to the practice of virtue, nor does he allow them to be corrupted and depraved by passing mortal goods’.<sup>91</sup> Lactantius follows the idea of Seneca, in which the virtue of fortitude shifts its focus from being representative of physical courage to the endurance of torture and considers further that the suffering of the good is part of divine plan to keep his people free from corruption. Thus, the exercises of virtue are involved in the process of the embodiment of divine justice. In the introductory part of Book 7,<sup>92</sup> he speaks again about the close relationship between the exercise of virtues and its significance. Because of his intention to deal with the path to beatitude from the eschatological viewpoint, Lactantius emphasises the divine arrangement of the world and the rational judgement of good and evil things. Indeed, in the diversity of the world, the long-continued exercises of reason and virtues are indispensable for knowing and seeking the good. Here, the reason and virtue seem to have combined to show the necessity of continual commitment to the exercises.

## CONCLUSION

The treatises of Tertullian that I have considered so far, which date from around 197 to 213, reveal the sporadic but distinct presence of his view of spiritual training, for the ascetic aspect of which he had persistent concern. There is early evidence to suggest that Tertullian exhorted prospective martyrs to regard their circumstance as training of the mind. His emphasis throughout is on how Christians should live in accordance with divine precepts. He maintained his concern for a mode of self-restraint in his later writings. Despite the complexity

<sup>89</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 3.16.1–2; CSEL 19, 224: 3.17.3; CSEL 19, 228. See Goulon 2003.

<sup>90</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 3.29.16; CSEL 19, 270: 5.22.12; CSEL 19, 475.

<sup>91</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 5.22.12; CSEL 19, 475; FC 49, 388: *deus inquit homines pro liberis habet, [...] bonos autem, quod diligit, castigat saepius et adsiduis laboribus ad usum uirtutis exercet nec eos caducis ac mortalibus bonis conrumpi ac deprauari sinit.*

<sup>92</sup> Lact. *Inst.* 7.1.17–18; CSEL 19, 584: 7.4.13; CSEL 19, 595.



of dating his works, there appears to be no confirmation of a chronological development in his understanding of spiritual discipline. It is interesting to note that his disapproval of the exercises in their intellectual and exegetical aspect is clear. Also clear is the idea that these aspects provide inadequate training to justify the curiosity and cultivate the propensity to engage in the endless search. Thus, he repeatedly warns his audience to avoid confusion and controversy.

Both Cyprian's and Lactantius' writings occasionally deal with spiritual training, yet these are restricted to the short span of their literary careers. Cyprian's remarks are found mainly in the decade after he was elected bishop in 248 or 249. Lactantius' approach is found mainly in *Divine Institutes*, except for the passage in the small fragment discussed above. With regard to the distinctive feature of spiritual discipline, they focused on its ascetic dimension. Some of their texts should be interpreted as an exhortation for their fellow Christians: they perceived difficulty as a therapeutic opportunity for cultivating one's state of mind. Their emphasis throughout is also, as mentioned above regarding Tertullian, on their view of how Christians should live in accordance with the working of divine justice. Consequently, in this respect, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius gave similar descriptions of spiritual training in its ethical dimension. From an intellectual viewpoint, however, both Cyprian and Lactantius expressed a positive attitude towards these types of exercises, while Tertullian often rejected them. It is clearly admitted that Tertullian was not so much anti-rational but, rather, preferred to show how to follow the Christian ideal of life: Christians should live in such a way as to see the perfection of life from a rational viewpoint in accordance with the rule of faith. His view of its ideal then turned his attention to both moral behaviour and spiritual testimony. Tertullian confirms that people can see and appreciate things of the world when they follow the rule of faith. Taking into account the diversity and plurality that make distinctive the spiritual discipline from the second to early fourth centuries, Tertullian, Cyprian and Lactantius focused on its practical aspect, while, all the same, not distinguishing between the theoretical and practical dimensions. The spiritual training serves to construct the 'rational self', who should be primarily justified in accord with divine wisdom and justice. Devotion to spiritual training as part of a Christian programme of self-cultivation was a significant feature of the writings of North African Christian writers.



## 2

# The Relation of Christian Identity to Spiritual Training in Augustine's *Sermons*\*

In the current discussion and investigation of change and stability in Late Antique society, some scholars have argued that the division between religious groups was blurred in that it is difficult to define the identity of Christians through clear indications of belief, observance and practice. From some recent surveys and findings, it has been agreed that the distinction between pagans and Christians only can be seen as one of a candidate binary.<sup>1</sup> While the evidence from North African Christianity allows us to examine the question of what it meant to be a Christian, it is noticeable that there was a comprehensive approach to the mode of human behaviour: spiritual training and exercises in the Graeco-Roman tradition. What did Augustine think of the training? This question has received frequent attention in the scholarship, particularly in Pierre Hadot's work, in which he stresses the complexity of the mode of spiritual discipline. He explains it as a 'metamorphosis of our personality'.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the understanding of spiritual exercises from the purely intellectual perspective, Hadot realises the necessity of investigating such exercises' wider diversity and the purgation of the soul within the context of all facets of human thought and behaviour. It is interesting to note that the spiritual training in question varied according to the circumstances of the Graeco-Roman tradition. More specifically, from the mid-fourth century, a crucial stage of more detailed modification

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<sup>1</sup> Markus 1990; Kahlos 2007; Rebillard 2012a; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Hadot 1995, 82 and 127. See also Chase, Clark, and McGhee 2013.

and development of the spiritual training occurred. It seems beneficial to revisit the subject in Augustine's works.<sup>3</sup> The intention of this article is, therefore, to focus on the evidence for the multiplicity of Christian and/or pagan identities in Augustine's *Sermones ad Populum*, thereby coming to some understanding of the occasions in which he made use of these multiple identities in speaking about spiritual training. I shall first examine how he referred to the Christian code of behaviour in his preaching, and then I shall ask what Augustine understood by spiritual training. Finally, I shall consider spiritual training from the viewpoint of its significance and its limitations for the constructive guidance necessary to nourish the Christian identity that Augustine hoped for in the North African Christian community.

### PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

#### Inclusion of identities

My account of Christian identity begins by examining Augustine's claim, in two sermons preached during the same period, that there should be no dividing line in the faith community. He found himself preaching, not only to the faithful but also to the whole of his congregation, of the necessity of constituting a coherent identity as Christians. In *Sermon 352A* (= Dolbeau 14), preached in Carthage in 397,<sup>4</sup> Augustine deals with the passage from Mark 1:15 that states, 'Repent and believe in the gospel'. He regards it as a twofold call. After explaining the second imperative, 'believe in the gospel' as addressed to the pagans, he turns his attention to the first imperative. He states that, although 'there is no one, I take it, listening to me in this congregation, who does not yet believe in the gospel',<sup>5</sup> there exist two groups who are called to repent: catechumens and the faithful who live secularly. Augustine then proceeds to refer to a possible objection of a complaining catechumen: 'A catechumen can answer me, "Why say Repent to

<sup>3</sup> For the secondary literature on the spiritual training in the works of Augustine, see Leclercq 1961; Agaësse 1991; Ayres 1998; Madec 1996–2002; Kamimura 2005; Pollmann 2005; Claes 2007; Otten 2009; Kolbet 2010; Stock 2010; Stock 2011; Pavie 2012; Napier 2013; Kamimura 2014; Claes 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 352A (= Dolbeau 14): Dolbeau: after 396, Gryson: probably 413/414, Hill: 397, Hombert: around 413–414?, Rebillard: 397.

For the chronological survey of Augustine's sermons, see Kunzelmann 1931; Perler and Maier 1969; Verbraken 1976, 53–196; WSA 3/1–11; Rebillard 1999; Hombert 2000; Gryson 2007, 231–269; Dolbeau 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 352A (= Dolbeau 14).3; Dolbeau, ed., 108: *Nemo me, ut opinor, audit in hac multitudine, qui in euangelium nondum credit*. For the English translation of Augustine's sermons, see Hill, trans., WSA 3/1–11.

us? First let me become one of the faithful, and perhaps I shall live a good life, and I won't have to be a penitent".<sup>6</sup> Thus, quoting Acts 2:37–38 as proof text of the way of repentance ('Repent, and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ'), he encourages the audience to respond to the gospel's call for repentance: 'I'll say to both sorts [*scil.* some of the faithful and catechumens], "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>7</sup> In his moral preaching, Augustine includes both the catechumeni and negligentes fideles with his treatment of all Christians.<sup>8</sup>

His emphasis on a common identity in his congregation is also taken from *Sermon* 301A (= Denis 17), probably preached in 401<sup>9</sup> in Bulla Regia (an inland town in Numidia about 130 miles west of Carthage).<sup>10</sup> Augustine perhaps stopped there on his journey back from Carthage.<sup>11</sup> As he reminds his audience in the sermon, Bulla Regia is a small town and entirely different from the great city of Carthage where Christians can excuse themselves for participating in certain evil deeds. But, as he sees it, Christians of Bulla Regia are quite sensitive about their municipal status comparing it with those of other North African cities, in particular of Carthage. Augustine is able easily to bear in his mind the 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 by. In Carthage, you can say, "The pagans do it, the Jews do it"; here, whoever is doing it, Christians are doing it'.<sup>12</sup> Bulla Regia was not Christianised to such

<sup>6</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 352A (= Dolbeau 14).4; Dolbeau, ed., 109: *Catechumenus respondet mihi: 'Quare nobis dicitis: paenitemini? Prius sim fidelis, et forte bene uiuam, et paenitens non ero'.*

<sup>7</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 352A (= Dolbeau 14).5; Dolbeau, ed., 110: *Iam ergo ad utrosque: Mutate uitam, ne perdati uitam. Praeterita peccata damnate, futura mala metuite et bona sperate.*

<sup>8</sup> For the fact that the audience included people from various kinds and types of North African society, see e.g. Harmless 2015, 188–189. Another point to note is that, from the statistical analysis of the addressees of his sermons and letters, Augustine did not make catechumens the prime target of his preaching: Harmless 2015, 227–229 and 229–232 for Chart 4, 'Sermons (and Letters) Addressed to Catechumens'.

<sup>9</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 301A (= Denis 17): Gryson: 1 Aug. 399, Hill: 399, Kunzelmann: 1 Aug. before 400, Perler: 1 Aug. 399, Rebillard: 1 Aug. before 400. For the dating of *Serm.* 301A, see also Rebillard 2015a, 298 n. 2.

<sup>10</sup> For Bulla Regia (Hammam Daradji, in Tunisia), see Lepelley 1979, 377–378; Lepelley 1981, 87. See also Lancel 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Perler and Maier 1969, 227 and n. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 301A (= Denis 17).7: MA 1, 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.*

a high degree as the neighbouring town of Simittu;<sup>13</sup> at the request of the local bishop, Augustine engaged with the problem of people's active involvement in civic festivities. It is interesting to mention that, in his critique of their enthusiastic commitment to theatre performances,<sup>14</sup> Augustine refers to the false division between clergy and laity. He claims that Christians should not encourage behaviour that was thought to be acceptable and appropriate for lay people as well as for the clergy.

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 theater? 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>15</sup>

Augustine's insistence on the inclusion of both catechumens and the faithful into the same membership is clearly advocated: 'I'm exhorting you all, addressing you all; you will see how much more honorable you will be in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'<sup>16</sup>

### Relation to social obligations

Despite his confident assertion of a common identity in the faith community, some Christians would apply principles of action optionally and selectively, thus making the arbitrary choice of affiliation. In *Sermon* 62, preached around 399 to the Christians of Carthage,<sup>17</sup> he responded to objections over less devout Christians taking part in a local feast for the tutelary genius of Carthage. Many citizens of Carthage defended the view that festivals were important to maintain

*Pagani faciunt, Iudaei faciunt, potest dici Carthagine; hic, quicumque faciunt, Christiani faciunt.*

<sup>13</sup> See Rebillard 2015a, 299 and n. 24. For the christianisation of Bulla Regia, see also Oort 2009, 261.

<sup>14</sup> On the aspect of pagan spectacles and theatrical performances, see Lim 2012, 146–147.

<sup>15</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 301A (= Denis 17).8; MA I, 88–89: *Et hoc a Christianis fit; nolo dicere: et a fidelibus. Catechumenus forte contemnit se. Catechumenus, inquit, sum. Catechumenus es? Catechumenus. Alia frons tua accepit Christi signum, et aliam tollis ad theatrum? Ire vis? Muta frontem, et vade. Ergo frontem, quam non potes mutare, noli perdere.*

<sup>16</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 301A (= Denis 17).8; MA I, 89: *Omnes exhortor, omnes alloquor: videbitis quam honestiores eritis in nomine domini nostri Iesu Christi.*

<sup>17</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 62: Gryson: 403/404, Hill: 399 or 407/8, Kunzelmann: no later than 399, Perler: 399, Rebillard: 399. For the chronological range of *Serm.* 62, see Rebillard 2009b, 317 n. 80. See also Dossey 2010, 287 n. 83; Coninck, Coppieters't Wallant, and Demeulenaere 2009, 61 and n. 58.

the social fabric of the city. But fanatical Christians opposed their participation and conflicts arose. Augustine had to take a stand on the issue.<sup>18</sup> In this sermon, he discussed so with an exposition of 1 Corinthians 8:10–12, about idol meat. He takes his cue from the Pauline passage, thereby criticising the Christians who attend banquets at pagan temples. The Christian defenders of the festival claim that they are able to attend pagan rituals without undermining their faith. Augustine examines the argumentation against which Paul was contending in 1 Corinthians, where the moral issue of sacrificial eating was to be settled: the 'strong' who comprise the integrity of their consciences are not troubled a whit by eating food offered to idols; the 'weak' who can not resolve the issue will be led astray.

Do you ever wonder how people may be led astray by images, which they imagine are being honored 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>19</sup>

Along with his dismissal of the possibility that some Christians could behave as the 'strong' in the community, Augustine enjoins them not to make a display of the strength of their faith. He uses this argument to turn their attention to the internal attitudes of their fellow Christians. Because of the indignation among more enthusiastic Christians, he emphasises the necessity that Christians should achieve and maintain the internal unity of their community.

In the latter part of the sermon, Augustine relates a fictitious dialogue with a member of his congregation. Some Christians might attempt to find plausible excuses for their attending sacrificial banquets. For example, one might try to justify his involvement as being required to fulfil the social obligations of the relationship between patron and client: "But I'm afraid," you will say, "lest I offend a superior".<sup>20</sup> Since Augustine views the sacrificial banquet as a religious occasion,<sup>21</sup> he maintains that there is no legitimate excuse for Christian's participation. His message has two points of interest. On the one hand, after defining

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of Christians' participation in banquets in *Serm.* 62, see Rebillard 2009b, 313–317. See further Riggs 2001; Rebillard 2010, 174–176; and Kahlos 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 62.4.7; CCSL 41Aa, 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 infirmitatem.*

<sup>20</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 62.5.8; CCSL 41Aa, 302: *'Sed timeo', inquires, 'ne offendam maiorem.'* Slightly adapted from Hill's translation.

<sup>21</sup> For the difference of view between Augustine and his congregation, see Rebillard 2015a, 297–298.

the invitation from patrons as a trial of idol worship,<sup>22</sup> he once again attempts to draw the congregation's attention to another aspect: without disregarding the pagan authorities in the social sphere, he stresses the need for a higher authority in Christians' devotional lives.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Augustine argues that their refusing such an offer from a 'superior' does not cause serious harm to their lives.<sup>24</sup> He compares the patron with the persecutor of 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 doest it timidly'.<sup>25</sup> Such a comparison leads to the implication that Augustine has reached the limit of what he would do for the congregation. As the superior is generously inviting them to attend a feast, whether public or private, those involved in the patronage relationship do not truly face the difficult situation of choosing between two conflicting options. They express less concern about the religious principle of their behaviour than should be expected. Thus, while putting emphasis on the consistency of their Christian identity from the internal viewpoint, Augustine recognises the vitality of the pagan cult in society. Due to the current demands of their lives, some Christians prefer to fulfil their civic obligations as the occasion requires.

### Christians on their deathbeds

Another indication of Augustine's concern for the identity of Christians is based on the fact that their mode of behaviour was fostered and maintained through the various environments in North African society.<sup>26</sup> In particular, in the situations that Augustine described in his sermons, the influence of the smaller, more immediate social networks was significant for the determination of the mode of action.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of their religious affiliation, people were more concerned about the intersection of family, friends and neighbourhood. Their primary attention appeared to be confined to these direct relationships in their community. Augustine's encounters with them, therefore, prompted him to consider

<sup>22</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 62.12; CCSL 41Aa, 307.

<sup>23</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 62.13; CCSL 41Aa, 308.

<sup>24</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 62.14; CCSL 41Aa, 309.

<sup>25</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 62.10.15; CCSL 41Aa, 310: *Laniatus membrorum martyres pertulerunt, et timent christiani iniurias temporum christianorum! Qui tibi facit iniuriam, modo timens facit.*

<sup>26</sup> For the comprehensive survey of North African Christianity and its various environments, see e.g. Lepelley 1979 and 1981; Decret 1996; Dossey 2010; Jones 2014; Burns and Jensen 2014.

<sup>27</sup> For the direct and indirect influence on the mode of behaviour and thought, see n. 1. See also Rambo 1993; Rambo 2012; and Kim 2012.



how Christians should associate their identities as Christians with their practices and principles of behaviour. It is interesting to note that, when he reminded the congregation of the importance of allowing Christian identity to form practices, he referred to a Christian on his deathbed who had refused to be cured by charms and magical remedies for illness.<sup>28</sup>

In *Sermon* 286, preached on the birthday of Protasius and Gervasius in 428 at a *memoriae* dedicated to these two Milanese martyrs near Hippo Regius,<sup>29</sup> Augustine related a story to the congregation.<sup>30</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>31</sup>

Since Augustine delivered many of his sermons, this one included, on the feast days of martyrs, he used the martyr theme in his sermons.<sup>32</sup> One of the key features of his message is that a celebration of martyrs can be realised through the internal imitation of their virtuous acts. He encourages the congregation to follow the martyrs as exemplary figures in their sufferings. He also confirms that there is no persecution in the current time of peace.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in this sermon, the focus of his reflection is not on a physical threat from their persecutors but rather

<sup>28</sup> See Eno 1989, 62–63; Rebillard 2012a, 74–75.

<sup>29</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 286: Gryson: 19 June, not before 425, Hill: 428, Kunzelmann: 19 June, 425 at the earliest, Perler: 19 June, 426/430, Rebillard: 19 June after 425. For the dating and place, see also WSA 3/8, 105 n. 1.

<sup>30</sup> For Augustine's story of those who resisted superstitious remedies at their deathbed, see also *Serm.* 4.36: CCSL 41, 47–48; *Serm.* 306E (= Dolbeau 18).7–8: Dolbeau 2009, 215–216; *Serm.* 318.3: PL 38, 1439–1440; *Serm.* 328 (= Lambot 13).8: RB 51, 19.

<sup>31</sup> *Serm.* 286.7: PL 38, 1300–1301: *Iacet fidelis in lecto, torquetur doloribus, [...] uenit linguae tentatio, accedit ad lectum aut muliercula aliqua, aut uir, [...] et dicit aegroto, 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 tamen.* 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; *Serm.* 260D (= Guelf. 18).2; *Serm.* 318.3; *Serm.* 328 (= Lambot 13).8. See Meer 1955, 108–114; Markus 1996, for the limited meaning of the conventional superstitions; and Klingshirn 2005, 130–134.

<sup>32</sup> For Augustine's view of the martyrdom and its theological aspect, see Lambot 1949; Lapointe 1972; Den Boeft 1989; Dupont 2006; and Dupont 2014, 137–159.

<sup>33</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 306B (= Denis 18).6: MA 1, 96: *et certe tempus est pacis; Serm.* 305A (= Denis 13).2: MA 1, 56: *ueruntamen, quamuis alio sit tempore pax, alio persecutio, deest alicui tempori occulta?*

on the internal aspects of Christians' suffering, death and divine promise—that is, eternal life. With the mention of martyrs' fight against sin and allurements, Augustine describes 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 hangs for him on the tree'.<sup>34</sup> Those surrounding the dying man may have been pagans; Augustine compares his visitors with the devil against whose hidden and powerful forces he had to struggle inwardly. But he does not explain anything further about their religious affiliation. It is very likely that the dying man was surrounded by a group of people whose mode of action was principally based on their local and traditional rituals.

In *Sermon 335D* (= Lambot 6), preached in Hippo Regius in or after 424 or 425, perhaps at a suburban parish,<sup>35</sup> Augustine exhorted his congregation on a possible way of sharing the benefit of martyrdom. Here too, an appeal to the imitation of martyrs is linked with a vivid illustration of the situation in which a critically ill patient lies on his sickbed and people gather around him. Seeing that his health is deteriorating, they seek the help of diviners and astrologers. People suggested hanging charms around his neck.

But the one who says, 'I won't do it'—when a friend suggests it, a neighbor mutters something about it, or a neighbor'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 (1 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>36</sup>

In the final part of the sermon, Augustine relates the behaviour of the old nurse again: 'a neighbor 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

<sup>34</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 286.7; PL 38, 1301: *Vires non habet, et diabolum uincit. Fit martyr in lecto, coronante illo qui pro illo pendit in ligno.*

<sup>35</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 335D (= Lambot 6): Gryson: feast of martyrs, Hill: in or after 424 or 425?, Verbraken: feast of martyrs.

<sup>36</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 335D (= Lambot 6).3; PLS 2, 778: *qui autem dicit: non facio—suggerente amico, et mussitante uicino aut uicina ancilla, aliquando et dematricula ei <us>—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.*

invoke the name of God and the angels over it and you will get better".<sup>37</sup> It is not explicitly stated that she was not a Christian. Perhaps she already knew that some Christians refused to tie an amulet on their bodies. All the same, there was a situation in which the Christian identity could not serve as a guiding principle of behaviour in the community.

## SPIRITUAL TRAINING

Augustine gives a clear picture of his experiences with Christians whose religious identity resulted in no conflict with their social and communal obligations: they 'activate different allegiances, depending on the different contexts of interaction.'<sup>38</sup> While there were clear examples of the maintenance of social networks, apart from Augustine's continued concern about how to integrate Christian conduct into one's life, consciousness of the tension between religious and secular activities seemed to be of little interest in the faith community. As a bishop who confronted the vicissitudes of his congregation, therefore, Augustine was eager to provide them with means to associate their identity as Christians with their unique principles of action. But how did he encourage them to consider the significance and necessity of spiritual training?

### The ascetic aspect

The *Indiculum* of Possidius enumerates five sermons delivered by Augustine as those under the subheading 'Tractatus aduersus memoratos' within the group entitled 'Contra Manicheos'.<sup>39</sup> Two of these homilies have not been discovered and identified by scholars; while the other three are *Sermons* 1, 50, and 12.<sup>40</sup> In the second anti-Manichaean sermon on Possidius' list, *Sermon* 50, dating from around 394 or 395,<sup>41</sup> Augustine expounds upon a passage from Haggai 2:9: 'Mine is the gold and mine is the silver.' Although the location of this sermon cannot be determined, Augustine begins by criticising Manichaean exegesis for

<sup>37</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 335D (= Lambot 6).5; PLS 2, 780: *adstat uicinus et amicus et ancilla, etiam dixi, forte dematricula, 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.*

<sup>38</sup> Rebillard 2012b, 52.

<sup>39</sup> Possidius, *Indiculum*; Wilmart 1931, 167.

<sup>40</sup> BeDuhn 2013 (*Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion*), 456 n. 7. For the relationship between *Serm.* 50 and *C. Adim.*, see De Veer 1969; Baker-Brian 2009, 211–218.

<sup>41</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 50: Gryson: 394/395, Hill: before 396, Kunzelmann: 394–395, Rebillard: 394–95. For the dating of *Serm.* 50, see also Drobner 2013, 500–502.

simply comparing the outwardly contradicting verses. While he points to the mammon of iniquity in Luke 16:9 as driving the avarice, Manichaeans regard it as the seemingly earthly property in Haggai 2:9. But Augustine's reply to their criticism against the prophet indicates another way of finding the value of having 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 though lightly of by the mind whose real wealth is the one who bestowed them.<sup>42</sup>

According to Augustine, possessions were bestowed by God upon people who loved God more than mammon. Augustine's solution emphasizes the possibility that all humans (*humanitas*) would be exercised by sharing their 'earthly' property without imposing severe constraints on themselves. He does not compel his congregation to totally renounce all possessions. It is not their real possessions that he directs close attention to but the inward disposition of their souls.<sup>43</sup> In the face of the Manichaeans' argument for the extreme and probably impossible way of asceticism,<sup>44</sup> he focuses on the necessity of spiritual exercises (*exercitatio humanitatis*) to purge the '*humanitas*' of the daily sins. In this regard, his exhortation was addressed to the whole of his congregation, not only, for example, to the wealthy, the educated or the catechumens. Notwithstanding the wide diversity of their backgrounds, he did not intend to divide them into smaller subgroups. This can be explained on the basis of the pastoral intention of his preaching.<sup>45</sup> In contrast to the theoretical and speculative writings, it is clearly admitted that, in his sermons, Augustine underlined the unity of the congregation and an awareness of common membership. Exhortation to the spiritual discipline could be expected to reinforce the solidarity of the group of audience.

<sup>42</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 50.2–3; CCSL 41, 625–626: *Meum est, inquit, aurum, et meum est argentum, non uestrum, o diuites terrae. [...] Rem suam diuina distribuente 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>43</sup> Allen and Morgan 2009, 146 (total renunciation) and 132–133 (inner disposition).

<sup>44</sup> For the difference between Manichaean asceticism and Augustine's monasticism, see BeDuhn 2013, 73–87.

<sup>45</sup> For the pastoral intention of Augustine's sermons, see Müller 2012, 308; A. Dupont 2012, 161–162 for the pastoral intention in his anti-Donatist sermons.

In *Sermon* 70, dating from between 394/395 and 400,<sup>46</sup> preached at Carthage, Augustine expounded Matthew 11:28–30, thereby following *Sermon* 69, which dealt with the same passage.<sup>47</sup> In this short sermon, after revealing profound insights into the Apostle's terrible and terrifying experiences in 2 Corinthians (6:4; 11:24–25), Augustine shows the audience the manifold work of the Holy Spirit that the Apostle had with him: 'That just shows you how comfortable was the yoke of Christ he [*scil.* Apostle] bore, and how light the load'.<sup>48</sup> Then, he stirs up his congregations' minds by showing them the burdensome requirements imposed by their daily lives: the laborious works of the soldier, merchant and hunter. It is noteworthy, however, that here, Augustine adds another example of the burden that would not be grouped into the same 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 honors!<sup>49</sup>

This serves to remind us of not the harsh realities of his assembly but of the educational experiences during Augustine's schooldays.<sup>50</sup> Although he may be critical both of its object as well as of the strenuous form of these exercises, the fact that, at this stage, he abruptly brings up the pedagogical aspect of these exercises does not invalidate the exercises' usefulness. However, he discusses the topic no further in this sermon.

*Sermon* 9, preached perhaps around 420 in Chusa,<sup>51</sup> provides an interpretation of the Decalogue by reference to the ten strings of the harp of a psaltery, as *Sermon* 8 does with the ten plagues of Egypt.<sup>52</sup> Augustine draws more extensively on the

<sup>46</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 70: Gryson: 395/400, Hill: 398, Perler: 2 Feb. 413, Rebillard: 2 Feb. 413. For the dating of *Serm.* 70, see Perler and Maier 1969, 312 and n. 4; Coninck, Coppieters't Wallant, and Demeulenaere 2009, 66 and n. 83.

<sup>47</sup> For the rhetorical strategies expressed in these sermons, see Bisson 2000, 64–155.

<sup>48</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 70.2; CCSL 41Aa, 472: *Ecce quam suave iugum Christi portabat et quam leuem sarcinam.*

<sup>49</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 70.2; CCSL 41Aa, 473: *Quantis cruciatibus prope cotidianarum plagarum tenera puerorum aetas subditur? Quantis etiam grandiusculi uigiliarum et abstinentiae molestiis exercentur, non propter discendam sapientiam sed propter opes honoresque uanitatis, ut numeros et litteras et disertas fallacias eloqui discant?*

<sup>50</sup> For his similar reminiscences of rhetorical exercises in his youth, see *Ep.* 2\*, one of the Divjak letters, addressed to Firmus. See also Braun 1987.

<sup>51</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 9: Gryson: Winter 403/404, Hill: 420. For the dating and place of *Serm.* 9, see also Lambot 1969; Perler and Maier 1969, 409; and Drobner 2003, 155–156.

<sup>52</sup> See Raveaux 1982; Geerlings 2011. For the numerological interpretation in Augustine's works, see Comeau 1930, 127–142, esp. 135 (number ten); Bonner 1970, 559–560.

fifth and ninth commandments and proceeds to the numerological treatment of the number ten and the ten strings of the psaltery: 'O God, I will sing you a new song, on a harp of ten strings I will play to you'.<sup>53</sup> He makes exposition of the Decalogue in the followings: 'So the decalogue relates to two commandments, that is, to love of God and neighbor. Three strings relate to the first, because God is three. But to the other commandment, that is, the love of neighbor, seven strings refer, how people should live together'.<sup>54</sup> Then, he turns his attention to a passage from Matthew 5:25: 'Come to an agreement with your adversary quickly', and to the means of coming to an agreement with the *adversarius*, that is, *sermo dei*.

But in order to that agreement, keep yourselves from detestable and corrupting practices, [...] If any pleasure of the world creep 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>55</sup>

It is therefore inevitable that, contrary to the devaluation of the divine commandment, Augustine's interpretation of it affects his view of caring for others and ascetic exercises. He indicates the way of purifying the soul, thereby urging his congregations towards almsgiving accompanied by obligations such as fasting and prayer.<sup>56</sup> Here, too, he attempts to establish the correlation between spiritual training and the solidarity of his congregation.

Despite objections from Christians whose arrangement and alignment of the religious and secular realm form the basis for their way of life, Augustine claims that there exists the necessity of changing one's lifestyle. In *Sermon 335D* (= Lambot 6), in which he advocates the imitation of martyrs, after admiring the behaviour of an ill patient, Augustine compares those gathered at the deathbed of a Christian to 'flesh and blood [...] raging against the holy martyrs'. He

<sup>53</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 9.6; CCSL 41, 117: *Deus canticum nouum cantabo tibi, in psalterio decem chordarum psallam tibi.*

<sup>54</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 9.7; CCSL 41, 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>55</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 9.17; CCSL 41, 141: *Vt autem concordetis, abstinete uos a detestabilibus corruptelis, a detestabilibus inquisitionibus, [...] Si quae delectationes saeculi subrepunt in anima, exercete uos in misericordia, exercete uos in elemosinis, in ieiuniis, in orationibus. His enim purgantur quotidiana peccata, quae non possunt nisi subrepere in anima, propter fragilitatem humanam.*

<sup>56</sup> For this tripartite model of the ascetic exercises, see Allen and Morgan 2009, 131–132 and n. 84; Drobner 2003, 217–218.

bases this assessment on his interpretation of a passage from Ephesians 6:12: 'Your conflict is not against flesh and blood'.<sup>57</sup> 'Flesh' and 'blood' represent mortal human beings who adhere to their way of life. Augustine urges them to integrate their principles into their 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 hopes in God, for whose sake I am suffering these things.<sup>58</sup>

The same approach of advocating for the future is also found in *Sermon 352A* (= Dolbeau 14), where Augustine emphasises the common identity of his congregation, thereby enhancing 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 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>59</sup> His exhortation centres on the relationship between present disciplines and the replacement of sins and evil with divine repose in the future. He confirms that those who expect and believe in eternal repose should also consider how to attain it.

In *Sermon 360B* (= Dolbeau 25), preached probably in 404,<sup>60</sup> he referred to the attendance of pagans in his congregation. At the end of this sermon, after the dismissal of catechumens and pagans, the deacon performed the mass. It is noteworthy that he gives short exhortations in favour of 'leading good lives' (*bene uidento*)<sup>61</sup> both after the pagans leave and in the middle of his discourse. Augustine stresses the necessity for 'the eye of the mind and heart' (*oculus cordis*) to be inwardly purified.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 335D (= Lambot 6).3; PLS 2, 779: *non est uobis conluctatio aduersus carnem et sanguinem. caro enim et sanguis saeuiebat in martyribus sanctis.* See La Bonnardière 1965.

<sup>58</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 335D (= Lambot 6).3; PLS 2, 779: *quid est quod saeuis, frater, quid exagitaris? 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 ista patior.*

<sup>59</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 352A (= Dolbeau 14).5; Dolbeau, ed., 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>60</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 360B: Dolbeau: after 1 Jan. 404, Gryson: after the visit of Honorius, in Rome, early December 403, Hill: 404.

<sup>61</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 360B (= Dolbeau 25).28; Dolbeau, ed., 267.

<sup>62</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 360B (= Dolbeau 25).3; Dolbeau, ed., 249.

[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>63</sup>

Having 'that inner eye cleansed' is his expectation that the audience, not excluding pagans and catechumens, 'all live in a manner worthy of God'.<sup>64</sup> He insists that the treatment by the 'doctor', that is, Christ, enables them 'to be numbered among the sons of God'.<sup>65</sup> The crucial element in the message is that the care for souls is possible only in the case of 'Purifying their hearts by faith' (Acts 15:9),<sup>66</sup> and that, all the same, his audience begins by their efforts to lead good lives. With the hope of the future purification, they should give precedence to the active engagement and practices of the spiritual training.

### The exegetical aspect

In some sermons, Augustine described how Christians were providing rationales from scriptural passages in an attempt to legitimise their behaviour. For instance, in *Sermon* 361, probably preached in winter 410–411,<sup>67</sup> Augustine criticises the status quo: Christians have made advantageous use of the scriptural text in order to find support for attending the festival in honour of the dead, that is, the 'parentalia'.<sup>68</sup> They quote a passage from Tobit 4:17 as a proof text: 'Break your bread and pour out your wine on the tombs of the just, but do not hand it over to the unjust'.<sup>69</sup> After making an objection to their custom—'this doesn't benefit the dead, [...] it's a custom of the pagans, [...] it doesn't flow from the channel

<sup>63</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 360B (= Dolbeau 25).6; Dolbeau, ed., 251: *deberent homines [...] humiliari deo, supplicare creatori, confiteri, gemere in peccatis, adlegare medico aegritudinem, ut sanarentur intrinsecus et oculum illum mundarent, unde lux illa uideri potest, quae tamdiu non uidetur, quamdiu oculus interior hominis adhuc est hominis.*

<sup>64</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 360B (= Dolbeau 25).28; Dolbeau, ed., 267: *uos digni deo uixeritis.*

<sup>65</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 360B (= Dolbeau 25).15; Dolbeau, ed., 257: *ex homine fiat inter filios dei.*

<sup>66</sup> For the repetition of this passage in *Serm.* 360B and its relation to Augustine's focus on divine initiative to the purification of the soul, see Dupont 2013a, 155–156. See also n. 105.

<sup>67</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 361: Gryson: December 403, Hill: 411, Kunzelmann: Winter 410–411, Rebillard: winter 410–11.

<sup>68</sup> See also *Serm.* 172 and 173.1; Burns and Jensen 2014, 505–506. For the parentalia and its relationship with the church, see Rebillard 2009a, 142–153, esp. 151–152; Rebillard 2015b.

<sup>69</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 361.6; PL 39, 1602: *frange panem tuum, et effunde uinum tuum super sepulcra iustorum, et ne tradas eum iniustis.*



of justice derived from our fathers the patriarchs'<sup>70</sup> —Augustine takes a stand on the allegorical interpretation. He argues that the passage in question should be understood as the offering of mass for the dead. In contrast to his rejection of their attempts to justify their behaviour through the scriptures, his concern for the side effects 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>71</sup>

It is noteworthy that he repeatedly spoke of the difficulty of interpreting the scriptures and the relationship of interpretation to the necessity of spiritual training. In *Sermon* 71, dating between 419 and 420,<sup>72</sup> he deals a passage from Matthew 12:32: 'Whoever speaks a word against the holy spirit will not be forgiven, neither in this age nor in the age to come'. In the sermon, Augustine mentions twice the strength of these exercises with regard to the difficulty of exploring the meaning of 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>73</sup>

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>74</sup>

A similar reference to its effect is found in *Sermon* 363, which was probably preached in Hippo Regius around in 414 during the Easter Vigil.<sup>75</sup> At the very beginning of this short sermon, he once again shows the double consequences of exegesis: 'Our thoughts, [...] in reflecting on and discussing the holy scriptures

<sup>70</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 361.6; PL 39, 1601: *ad mortuos non pertinere, et consuetudinem hanc esse paganorum, non uenire de propagine illa et uena iustitiae patrum nostrorum patriarcharum.*

<sup>71</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 361.6; PL 39, 1602: *nemo ergo quaerat de medicina uulnus, et de scripturis conetur torquere uinculum, unde laqueum mortis inicit animae suae. manifestum est quemadmodum illud intellegatur, et aperta atque salubris est haec celebratio christianorum.*

<sup>72</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 71: Gryson: 419/420, Hill: 417–420, Hombert 419–420, Kunzelmann: 417, Rebillard: 417?, Verbraken: 417?

<sup>73</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 71.10; RB 75, 73: *exercere quippe nos uoluit difficultate quaestionis, non decipere sententiae falsitate.*

<sup>74</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 71.11; RB 75, 75: *in omni quippe copia scripturarum sanctarum pascimur apertis, exercemur obscuris; illic famas pellitur, hic fastidium.*

<sup>75</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 363; Gryson: 414, probably Easter Vigil, Hill: 414, Kunzelmann: 412–416, Rebillard: Easter vigil (?) 412–16.

must be guided 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>76</sup> In conjunction with the exegetical difficulty, Augustine draws a contrast between the literal and spiritual senses of the scriptures in some sermons.<sup>77</sup>

*Sermon* 4, probably preached between 410 and 419,<sup>78</sup> gives the congregation a long commentary on Esau and Jacob in Genesis 27:1–40, the significance of which Augustine explained at the end of the sermon.<sup>79</sup> At the beginning of the sermon, before entering into discussion of the issues, Augustine compares two contrasting methods for interpreting scriptural texts: 'Taken literally, of course, the reading sounds rather materialist. But any one who has received the Spirit of God will understand it spiritually'.<sup>80</sup> This distinction between '*carnaliter*' and '*spiritualiter*' is consistently referred to in his reading of the scriptures.<sup>81</sup> Here, Augustine defines the '*exercitatio animae*' as those that give adequate training to enable the minds of the exegetes to make sense of what they do not yet understand: 'The exercise of our minds in faith, hope and love makes them fit to grasp what is yet to come'.<sup>82</sup>

*Sermon* 23, preached at the Faustus Basilica in Carthage in January 413,<sup>83</sup> followed by *Sermon* 53, treats with the vision of God. With regard to the significance of the spiritual discipline, he starts with a passage from 2 Timothy 3:16: 'Every divinely inspired scripture is useful for teaching, for reproof, for exhortation, for doctrine'.<sup>84</sup> He claims that the interpreters have no grounds for blaming a scriptural text, 'if we happen to deviate in any way, because we

<sup>76</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 363.1; PL 39, 1634: *sensum nostrum, [...] in scripturis sanctis considerandis atque tractandis regere debet earundem scripturarum manifestissima auctoritas; ut ex eis quae aperte dicta sunt ad nutriendos nos, ea quae obscurius dicta sunt ad exercendos nos, fideliter disserantur.*

<sup>77</sup> For the secondary literature on Augustine's literal/spiritual interpretation, see e.g. Dulaey 1998; Cameron 1999; Bochet 2004; Cameron 2012, 3–19; Williams 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 4: Gryson: 22 Jan. 403, Hill: before 420, Kunzelmann: 22 Jan. 410–19, Rebillard: 22 Jan. 410–19. For the dating of *Serm.* 4, see also Drobner 2000, 93–95.

<sup>79</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 4.36; CCSL 41, 46. See Nauroy 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 4.1; CCSL 41, 20: *Et lectio quidem illa carnaliter sonat. Qui autem spiritum dei accepit spiritualiter sapit.*

<sup>81</sup> Drobner 2000, 79.

<sup>82</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 4.1; CCSL 41, 20: *Exercitatio autem animae in fide, in spe et caritate, facit eum idoneum capere quod uenturum est.*

<sup>83</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 23: Gryson: 20 Jan. 413, Hill: 413, Kunzelmann: 20 Jan. 413, Perler: 20 Jan. 413, Rebillard: 413 or just after 415, Verbraken: 413. See also Dupont 2013a, 238; Yates 2013, 188.

<sup>84</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 23.3; CCSL 41, 310: *Omnis Scriptura diuinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad exhortationem, ad doctrinam.*

haven't understood it'.<sup>85</sup> He regards the 'mental exercises' as a preliminary means of interpreting spiritually a scriptural text that 'appears to speak in a crude, materialistic way in many places, though the law is always spiritual'.<sup>86</sup> Thus, he appeals to the scriptural evidence from Romans 7:14: '*For the law, as the apostle says, is spiritual, but I am carnal*'.<sup>87</sup> Because of the difficulties that he himself experiences in interpreting the scriptures, he evaluates the efficacy and necessity of the spiritual exercises.

Once again, in *Sermon* 32, preached at the shrine of Saint Cyprian in Carthage in 403,<sup>88</sup> Augustine spoke of the different kinds of the scriptural texts: one kind is difficult to interpret and contains hidden meanings, and the other can be understood more easily. He affirms his exhortation to training 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>89</sup> Although Psalm 144 includes many hidden meanings, which will be treated hereafter in this sermon, Augustine encourages the congregation to overcome such difficulties. This is the same case as that shown in *Sermon* 4 and 23.

*Sermon* 140, preached around 427 or 428 on Christmas day,<sup>90</sup> shows us the general correlation between exercises of the mind and scriptural interpretation. This sermon explicates the words from the Gospel of John in which, at the end of the sermon, Augustine considers how 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 kind of way'.<sup>91</sup> Here again, the spiritual interpretation is conflicted with that of the '*carnaliter*'.

Augustine explained spiritual training in some sermons from a perspective that did not directly correspond to the literal and spiritual understanding of the scriptures. In *Sermon* 80, preached probably in 410,<sup>92</sup> before approaching

<sup>85</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 23.3; CCSL 41, 310: *si nos forte, illa non intellecta, in aliquo deuiemus.*

<sup>86</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 23.3; CCSL 41, 310: *in multis locis uelut carnaliter loquitur, cum lex semper spiritalis sit.*

<sup>87</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 23.3; CCSL 41, 310: *Lex enim, ut ait apostolus, spiritalis est, ego autem carnalis sum.*

<sup>88</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 32; Gryson: 17 Sept. 403, Hill: 403, Kunzelmann: end of Sept. 403, Perler: 17 Sept. 403, Rebillard: 403.

<sup>89</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 32.1; CCSL 41, 398: *alia secretius in scripturis absconduntur ut quaerentes exerceant, alia uero in promptu et in manifestatione ponuntur ut desiderantes curent.*

<sup>90</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 140; Gryson: 427/428, Hill: 428, Kunzelmann: Christmas 427–428, Rebillard: 427–428. For Augustine's sermons delivered on December 25, see Dupont 2013b.

<sup>91</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 140.6; PL 38, 775: *exercet mentes [...] limat et excarnat, ut de deo non carnaliter, sed spiritaliter sapiamus.*

<sup>92</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 80; Gryson: near 410, Hill: 410, Kunzelmann: near 410, Rebillard: near 410.

passages from Matthew 17:18–20, Augustine alludes twice to Matthew 7:7: ‘Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock, and it will be opened’.<sup>93</sup> He expects his congregation to grasp as true what is spoken in the scriptures. He also expects them to be humble when they encounter difficult scriptural passages: ‘See how they were carrying their hears, 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>94</sup> Humble submission to the scriptures enables exegetes to be exercised through their commitment to scriptural interpretation. Also, in the concluding part of *Sermon* 71, he speaks of exercises for the pious and devotional exegetes, then assigns two different tasks to them: one is ‘to see what needed to be understood’ and the other is ‘to explain it if I did understand’.<sup>95</sup>

At the start of the *Sermon* 156, preached two days after *Sermon* 155 in 419,<sup>96</sup> Augustine is concerned with these exercises in general and refers to their effects. Once again, he alludes to the passage from Matthew 7:7 as mentioned above in *Sermon* 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 I 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>97</sup>

### The comprehensive aspect

A comprehensive aspect of the spiritual training is confirmed in the framework of the spiritual life, which allows one to deepen the spiritual consciousness in the transformation of the self. With reference to his view of spiritual discipline, Augustine’s attitude to the growth of the soul’s awareness is determined by the

<sup>93</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 80.1; PL 38, 494 and 80.2; PL 38, 494. For the crucial function of Matth. 7:7 in Augustine’s search for the truth and God, see e.g. Knauer, 1957; Kienzler 1989; Ferrari 1994.

<sup>94</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 80.1; PL 38, 494: *uidete 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.*

<sup>95</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 71.38; RB 75, 108: *uel intelligenda conspicer, uel intellecta explicare.*

<sup>96</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 156: Hill: 419, Kunzelmann: 17 Oct. 418, Perler: 17 Oct. 419, Rebillard: Oct. 417, Patroens/Lössl: 17 Oct. 417 or May 418. See Lössl 2008, 44–46.

<sup>97</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 156.1; CCSL 41Ba, 135: *Verbi dei altitudo exercet studium, non denegat intellectum. Si enim omnia clausa essent, nihil esset unde reuelarentur obscura. Rursus si omnia tecta essent, non esset unde alimentum perciperet anima et haberet uires quibus posset ad clausa pulsare.*

tradition of the ascending stages of the spiritual life.<sup>98</sup> It is interesting to note that, in its Christian context, closely linked with problems of pneumatology,<sup>99</sup> the imagery of growth in the spiritual life encourages reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in the ascent of the soul to God through seven distinctive stages. In *Sermon* 347, chronologically uncertain,<sup>100</sup> from the interpretation of the passage from Psalm III:10, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom',<sup>101</sup> Augustine enters into the treatment of the sevenfold gradus of the maturing of the soul.

Gradus 1: fear of the Lord, humbled heart as 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>102</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>103</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>104</sup> (Matth. 5:9)

The scriptural evidence for the soul's return is provided by Isaiah 11:2–3, in which the prophet Isaiah, descending from his contemplation of God, enumerates the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and offers them the guidance of the ascent. It is

<sup>98</sup> For the tradition of the ascending pattern of the spiritual life, see e.g. Rahner 1967. 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; *Serm. dom. m.* 1.3.10–4.12; *Vera rel.* 26.48–49; *Serm.* 8; 249; 347. For the secondary literature on this scheme, see Van Lierde 1994; Mader 1994; Kamimura 2005, 425–429; Pollmann 2005, 225–231; Bright 2006; Dobell 2009; Kenney 2013.

<sup>99</sup> See Bright 2006, 26. For the problem of Augustine's pneumatology in general, see Schumacher 1957; Ayres 2008b; Barnes 2008; Gerber 2012. See further Dupont 2013a, 90 n. 1/3 at 92.

<sup>100</sup> *Aug. Serm.* 347: Hill: about 420, Gryson: around 420?

<sup>101</sup> *Aug. Serm.* 347.2; PL 39, 1524: *initium sapientiae timor domini.*

<sup>102</sup> *Aug. Serm.* 347.3; PL 39, 1525: *non solum mala praeteritorum peccatorum suorum, [...] sed etiam in quo malo sint huius mortalitatis et peregrinationis a domino.*

<sup>103</sup> *Aug. Serm.* 347.3; PL 39, 1526: *ab omni falsitate carnalis uanitatis corda mundantur, ut pura intentio dirigatur in finem.* For the purification of hearts, see n. 69; Pollmann 2005, 226 n. 50.

<sup>104</sup> *Aug. Serm.* 347.3; PL 39, 1526: *unde coepit ipse ad nos docendo descendere.*

admitted that his treatment of the convergence of the beatitudes in Matthews and the gifts in Isaiah is the first one in the tradition of an ascending plan for the Christian way of life.<sup>105</sup> Augustine integrates the messianic viewpoint of the spiritual life with the moral progress of the individual, thereby confirming the necessity of the help of the Holy Spirit for the soul's ascent and placing the ascent in its eschatological dimension. Augustine asks the congregation, 'where do we have to climb to?'<sup>106</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 vale of time-bound tears; [...].<sup>107</sup>

This ascent is not made by the feet of the body but by the affections of the heart. In his meditations on the ascending steps towards God, Augustine presents a series of laborious tasks of penetrating spiritual realities as care and training for the soul, thus offering the possibility of the inner dynamic of transformation and renewal of the self with the help of the Holy Spirit. Humbled in the fear of God, the soul finally approaches its transformation and holds fast to the 'full and everlasting peace' (*pax plena atque perpetua*).<sup>108</sup> It must be understood that Augustine does not consider this transformation to be a 'cumulative enumeration' of the spiritual life, which is made explicit in the passage from Isaiah, but rather as 'a progressive sequence in which every step must follow the one before'.<sup>109</sup> It is the spiritual progress of every individual that is crucial, while the messianic viewpoint in Isaiah stresses change in the social order. Augustine's emphasis is on the decisive effects of divine initiative on the spiritual discipline of the soul.

## CONCLUSION

One would naturally expect Augustine's view of the spiritual training, with a convergence towards spiritual progress transformed by the role of the Holy

<sup>105</sup> For the possibility of Augustine's indebtedness to Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of the beatitudes, see Pollmann 2005, 227 n. 54; Kamimura 2015, 240–242.

<sup>106</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 347.2; PL 39, 1525: *et quo ascendum est?*

<sup>107</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 347.2; PL 39, 1525: *quis iste est locus, nisi quietis et pacis? ibi enim est illa clara, et quae numquam marcescit sapientia. unde ad nos exercitandos quibusdam doctrinae gradibus descendit isaias a sapientia usque ad timorem, a loco scilicet sempiternae pacis usque ad conuallem temporalis plorationis.*

<sup>108</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 347.3; PL 39, 1526.

<sup>109</sup> Pollmann 2005, 228.

Spirit, to be characterised by his pastoral experience and the increasing consciousness of the vicissitudes of the faith community. With regard to the chronological development in his sermons, it is difficult to discern a difference between the earlier and later ones on the basis of content-related evidence. Though the explanation given for spiritual training is not a major focus of his preaching, this does not necessarily mean that the consistent exhortation has only limited significance for the congregation. In particular, while some Christians were skilled at formulating a rationale from the scriptures to justify their behaviour, Augustine directs their attention to the effect and interaction of exegesis and the exegete, thus confirming the validity of the mental exercises as enabling one to gain insight into the basis for the spiritual life and activities. This spiritual life and these disciplines result in the ethically unified principle of behaviour: love of God and neighbour. In fact, however, there were Christians whose religious identity was not in serious conflict with their social contact and network density. It looks as if they switched to different kinds of identity depending on their circumstances. Being confronted with the selection of multiple possible identities, Augustine could not afford to view the status quo as unalterable. It is noteworthy that, despite his central claim that the Christian identity should be the basis for the Christian's way of life, it could not respond to the social realities in North African Christian community. Thus, when one attempts to read his sermons as a discourse replying to the current situation and reinforcing the unity and solidarity of the congregation, his teaching of spiritual discipline may be considered a renewed impetus for spiritual progress with an initiative in divine grace. In addition to the role of the Holy Spirit in the ascending return to God, spiritual training for every individual soul was expected to serve, with no alternatives, as the essence of the Christian way of life.





# 3

## The Relation of Christian Identity to the Spiritual Training in Augustine's *Letters*\*

In shaping the discussion on the changes of late Roman world, some scholars have claimed that the borders between religious groups were flexible in that, for instance, the identity of Christians was not accompanied by explicit indications of their belief, observance and practice. After an inspiring approach to the issue of Christian identity,<sup>1</sup> some studies have indicated that the distinction between Christians and pagans may have served as a context-oriented and fluid mechanism in the community of faith.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that, while the North African evidence allows us to investigate the question of what it meant to be a Christian, there is a comprehensive and integrated framework for understanding the human behaviour and thought: the 'spiritual exercises' in the ancient philosophical tradition. The deployment of spiritual training has received frequent attention in Augustinian scholarship, particularly with reference to Pierre Hadot's seminal work. Hadot illustrates a complex set of modes of the discipline and defines it as a 'metamorphosis of our personality'.<sup>3</sup> Although some scholars have primarily considered it to be purely intellectual training of the intelligence or mind, Hadot emphasises the need to explore its wider diversity and the purgation of the soul within the context of all facets of human thought and behaviour. A modifi-

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<sup>1</sup> Markus 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Kahlos 2007; Rebillard 2012a; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015; Rüpke and Spickermann 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Hadot 1995, 82 and 127. See also Chase, Clark, and McGhee 2013.

cation of the spiritual training in question appeared in late antiquity. In the North African Church, though sporadically and non-thematically, Tertullian and Cyprian referred to the significance and limits of the spiritual discipline and, from the mid-fourth century, Christian writers began to look into the matter in more detail than before.<sup>4</sup> A crucial stage of the development seems to have been prepared by Augustine. Some surveys have described the discipline as being linked with the context of his concern for Christian identity in the faith community. However, the correlation remains in question.<sup>5</sup> In this paper, therefore, I shall first examine how he referred to the Christian code of behaviour in his letters.<sup>6</sup> In particular, I will focus my attention on epistolary correspondence of Augustine with two seemingly ‘pagans’, I shall show how Augustine tried to impose his idea of Christian norms of behaviour on his correspondents. Then I shall ask what Augustine understood by the concept of spiritual training. For the sake of clarity, I have divided the letters into three groups along thematic lines, and in each group, I will consider them chronologically as far as possible.<sup>7</sup> Finally, I shall consider the principal feature of spiritual training, thereby coming to some understanding of the horizons within which he made use of the dimension in speaking about the nourishment of Christian identity that he hoped for in the community of faith of the North African church.

## CHRISTIANS AND THE PLURALITY OF THEIR IDENTITIES

### Letter Exchange with Dioscorus

The first group to be considered is *Letters* 117 and 118, the correspondence between Augustine and Dioscorus. The latter was a young native of Greece

<sup>4</sup> Burns and Jensen 2014, 519–52 and 553–599.

<sup>5</sup> For the secondary literature on the spiritual training in the works of Augustine, see Agaësse 1991; Ayres 1998; Madec 1996–2002; Claes 2007; Claes 2016; Kamimura 2005; Kamimura 2014; Kolbet 2010; Leclerq 1961; Madec 1996–2002; Napier 2013; Otten 2009; Pavie 2012; Pollmann 2005; Stock 2010; Stock 2011.

<sup>6</sup> For Augustine’s epistolary practices and its correlation with his view of the Christian code of behaviour, see Doyle 2002; Ebbeler 2012. For a selected bibliography on Augustine’s letters, see Divjak 1996–2002, 1046–1057. Another comprehensive and critical information regarding the correspondence of Augustine is provided by a searchable database: *Scrinium Augustini: The World of Augustine’s Letters* (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland) <<http://www.scrinium.umk.pl>>, accessed 20 December 2015.

<sup>7</sup> With regard to the chronological survey of Augustine’s letters, see Klaus-D. Daur, ed., *CCSL* 31, 2004; 31A, 2005; 31B, 2009; Divjak 1996–2002, 1027–1036; Eno 1999, 299–305; Lancel 2011a, 159–175; Perler and Maier 1969; Teske, trans., *WSA* 2/1–4, 2001–2005.

whose prosopographical information is mostly provided by these letters.<sup>8</sup> It is more than likely that they opened up communication by letter in the autumn of 410.<sup>9</sup> Before departing Carthage, where he was studying, Dioscorus wrote to Augustine, asking questions about the philosophical works of Cicero, in particular his *De natura deorum* and some of his rhetorical tractates. Although the list itself is now lost, both the first letter written by Dioscorus (*Ep.* 117) and the long answer from Augustine (*Ep.* 118) are available to us. In the second letter in particular, it becomes clear that Augustine knows Dioscorus well enough to make many references to his life and activities: a young man, still unmarried, he first studied at Rome and was most likely the brother of Zenobius, a friend of Augustine and to whom he dedicated one of the Cassiciacum dialogues, that is, *De ordine*. What else can these letters tell us?

It is interesting to note that Possidius, Augustine's friend and biographer, classified this letter exchange into the group designated 'Against Pagans' in his *Indiculum* of Augustine's works, appended to the *Life of Augustine*.<sup>10</sup> Because of the main part of *Letter* 118 and Dioscorus' deep concern for pagan philosophy, some scholars have been inclined to consider him a pagan.<sup>11</sup> By this line of thinking, the communication between Augustine and Dioscorus developed on the basis of their rational behaviour, in particular of Augustine's politeness and courtesy. His response is interpreted as an affirmation of Dioscorus' paganism and Augustine's respect for the Graeco-Roman classical culture. This seems to be the case with the other pagan correspondents, for instance, Longinianus (*Epp.* 233–235),<sup>12</sup> Volusianus (*Ep.* 132),<sup>13</sup> and Maximus (*Ep.* 17).<sup>14</sup> However, with regard to the religious affiliation of Dioscorus, Augustine explicitly mentions that Dioscorus shows a decided preference for 'Christian teaching' over all others: 'you are confident that it [*scil.* Christian teaching] alone contains the hope of

<sup>8</sup> On Dioscorus, see *PCBE* I, s.v. Dioscorus 2, 279–280; *PLRE* 2, s.v. Dioscorus 2, 367; Morgenstern 1993, 79–80; Wankenne 1974; Wankenne 1996–2002. On *Ep.* 118, see also Fiedrowicz 1997.

<sup>9</sup> *Ep.* 117: Daur: 410, Divjak: 410, Lancel: hiver 410–411, Perler: septembre 410, Teske: the beginning of 410; *Ep.* 118: Daur: 410, Divjak: 410, Eno: late 410/early 411, Lancel: hiver 410–411, Perler: fin automne-hiver 410–411, Teske: in late 410 or early 411.

<sup>10</sup> Possidius, *Indiculum*; Wilmart, ed., 163.

<sup>11</sup> See Morgenstern 1993, 79 and 227; Wankenne 1996–2002, 455–456.

<sup>12</sup> On Longinianus, *PLRE* 2, 686–687; Kahlos 2007, 81–83; Mastandrea 2004–2010; Morgenstern 1993, 126.

<sup>13</sup> On Volusianus, see note 22 below.

<sup>14</sup> On Maximus, see *PCBE* I, s.v. Maximus 3, 733–734; *PLRE* I, s.v. Maximus 28, 585; Morgenstern 1993, 122–123; Lancel 2011b.

eternal salvation'.<sup>15</sup> In fact, he is quite anxious for Dioscorus to seek another way of finding the truth: he warns against deviation from the way that 'he [*scil.* Christ] constructed who, as God, saw the weakness of our steps'.<sup>16</sup> Although it is not certain whether they met in Carthage or somewhere nearby, the various activities of Dioscorus were familiar to Augustine, and the fact that he was not a pagan is among these.

This letter provides a detailed compendium of Augustine's views on contemporary pagan philosophy. It discusses the teachings of the Stoics, Academics, Epicureans, and Platonists.<sup>17</sup> Augustine dedicates over thirty long paragraphs to answering the questions posed by the youth, despite his highly critical attitude towards 'those old, worn-out errors of many people [*scil.* philosophers]'.<sup>18</sup> It might be suggested that Augustine feels real sympathy for this young ambitious dilettante because of the similarity of Dioscorus current status to that of Augustine's past. He does not show any reluctance to talk about his old self, who once instructed boys in rhetoric. However, he explicitly criticises Dioscorus' willingness to shift Augustine back to his past as a professor of rhetoric while forgetting his present position as a bishop.

[I]t is not evident to me that there is nothing improper involved in this matter [*scil.* Dioscorus's questions]. For my mind fails to find a proper appearance of things when I think that a bishop, torn this way and that by noisy concerns of the Church, holds himself back from all these, as if suddenly become deaf, and explains minor questions about Ciceronian dialogues to a single student.<sup>19</sup>

[T]he basilica of the Christians at Hippo occurred to you as the place to deposit your concerns, because there now sits in it a bishop who once sold such ideas to children.<sup>20</sup>

In chiding his literary correspondent's eagerness for intellectual pursuits once shared by himself, he would rather criticise Dioscorus for placing a higher priority on the previous identity of Augustine.<sup>21</sup> Thus, although, in the lengthy

<sup>15</sup> *Ep.* 118.11; CCSL 31B, 120: *christianam doctrinam [...] in ea sola esse praesumere spem salutis aeternae*. For the English translation of Augustine's letters, see Teske, trans. WSA 2/1–4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ep.* 118.22; CCSL 31B, 127: *illo, qui gressuum nostrorum tamquam deus uidit infirmitatem*.

<sup>17</sup> For Augustine's views on contemporary philosophy and rhetoric, see Bochet 1998.

<sup>18</sup> *Ep.* 118.7; CCSL 31B, 117: *multorum annosas et decrepitas falsitates*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ep.* 118.2; CCSL 31B, 113: *in hac re nihil esse dedecoris, non mihi uidetur. Non enim dedecora facies rerum attingit sensum meum, cum cogito episcopum ecclesiasticis curis circumstrepentibus districtum atque distentum repente quasi obsurdescentem cohibere se ab his omnibus et dialogorum Tullianorum quaestiuunculas uni scholastico exponere?*

<sup>20</sup> *Ep.* 118.9; CCSL 31B, 118: *ubi has curas tuas deponeres, christianorum tibi basilica Hipponensis occurrit, quia in ea nunc sedet episcopus, qui aliquando ista pueris uendidit*.

<sup>21</sup> McCann 2010; Ebbeler 2010, 192 and n. 5.

reply to Dioscorus, Augustine's disapproval of the intellectual snobbery is often expressed, the central concern of this letter appears to be the hierarchical and irreversible order of identities and commitments: Dioscorus is fully expected to reconsider the arrangement of these based on his religious affiliation.

### Letter Exchange with Volusianus

The second group to be examined is *Letters* 132, 135, and 137, the letter exchange between Augustine and Volusianus. The life and activities of the latter, and of his family members, are known to us through several documents (including *Vita Melaniae Iunioris*, in which the story of his baptism on his deathbed is told).<sup>22</sup> In the years 411 and 412, when he was residing in Carthage, Volusianus received a letter from Augustine (*Ep.* 132).<sup>23</sup> Volusianus replied with a series of questions, partly because of Augustine's prompt to write back and partly because of pressure and advice from his Christian mother (*Ep.* 132). Volusianus seemed reluctant both to enter into correspondence with Augustine and to give positive attention to questions about Christian faith, seeing from the pagan perspective (*Ep.* 135). However, Flavius Marcellinus, a tribune and notary who was sent to Africa on a special mission from the imperial court at Ravenna, was committed to serving as a reliable liaison between the literary-minded young aristocrat and his Christian friend.<sup>24</sup> This is not only because Marcellinus was involved in 'a daily discussion with the same man [*scil.* Volusianus] [...] driven by the entreaty of his holy mother'<sup>25</sup> but also because he was concerned about a predicament of Augustine's. A rich landowner from Hippo had been bitterly disappointed with the bishop's inability to provide appropriate answers to the questions whether the Church was dangerous to the Roman state.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, it was Marcellinus

<sup>22</sup> On Volusianus, see *PCBE* 2, s.v. Volusianus 1, 2340–2341; *PLRE* 2, s.v. Volusianus 6, 1184–1185; Morgenstern 1993, 125. For the exchanges between the bishop of Hippo and the distinguished Roman, see Chastagnol 1956, 241–53; Divjak 1996–2002, 945–946 and 974–975; Jones 2014, 82–83 and 93; Lancel 2002, 314–318. For *Vita Melaniae Iunioris* and the story of Volusianus' baptism, see Brown 1961; Gorce 1962; and Coon 1997, 113–115.

<sup>23</sup> *Ep.* 132: Daur: 411/412, Divjak: 411/412, Eno: 411/412, Lancel: automne 411, Teske: 411 or 412.

<sup>24</sup> On Marcellinus, see *PCBE* 2, s.v. Flavius Marcellinus 2, 671–688; *PLRE* 2, s.v. Fl. Marcellinus 10, 711–712; Drecoll 2004–2010; Morgenstern 1993, 112–114. For the role of Marcellinus played in Augustine's literary and other activities, see Ebbeler 2012, 191–192; McLynn 1999; Moreau 1973.

<sup>25</sup> *Ep.* 136.1: CCSL 31B, 253; *Est enim [...] cum eodem cottidiana [...] disputatio, sanctae si quidem matris eius precatione compulsus.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ep.* 136.3: CCSL 31B, 255. In response to the objections raised by pagans and Roman aristocrats, Augustine engaged in the writings of *City of God* within a year. See O'Daly 1999, 32–33.

whom Augustine ‘needed [...] as a spokesman in the salons of Carthage’.<sup>27</sup> Thus, soon after receiving the letter from Marcellinus with further questions posted by Volusianus (*Ep.* 136), Augustine sent a reply to Volusianus (*Ep.* 137) and responded to the questions mentioned in the previous letters.

Augustine begins their communication by encouraging Volusianus to read the scriptures, in particular ‘the letters of the apostles’.<sup>28</sup> He prompts Volusianus to write back with questions arising from this reading. It is noteworthy that Augustine would choose to undertake such correspondence instead of meeting Volusianus in person. This may be partly due to difficulty in setting up a meeting schedule. Yet another reason is perhaps more important. Augustine is willing to distance their communication from ‘the intruding presence of those who are not suited for such an undertaking and find more delight in contents of the tongue than in the enlightenment of knowledge.’<sup>29</sup> In comparison with the genuineness of the scriptures, he once again criticises ‘the false beauty of rhetoric’ for enticing ‘by obscure language’<sup>30</sup> those who are longing for the truth. Augustine proposes, therefore, to exclude from the dialogue both Volusianus’ interest in rhetoric and a potential reader of their communication, both of which he assumed to be obstacle to focusing on spiritual matters.

Volusianus replied to the invitation from Augustine and wrote back with some questions. It is clearly admitted that, although he seems to fulfil his promise to address various questions, his main and principal concern is to report the recent gatherings of a circle of friends in Carthage and to share the achievement of their discussions. He informs Augustine about the ‘various talents and interests’ of the discussants.<sup>31</sup> These learned friends are pagans and Roman aristocrats with whom Volusianus has interests in common. They are comfortable talking with one another about the pleasure of rhetorical composition, the eloquence of poetry and the great accomplishment of philosophers. Not only does he repeatedly mention Augustine’s education and former career as a professor of rhetoric—‘I speak to someone who knows about that. For you also taught this a little before. [...] with which [*scil.* philosophy] you are familiar and which you yourself are accustomed to cultivate [...]’<sup>32</sup>—but at the end of the letter,

<sup>27</sup> McLynn 1999, 42.

<sup>28</sup> *Ep.* 132; CCSL 31B, 240: *apostolorum linguas*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ep.* 132; CCSL 31B, 240: *eorum irruentem praesentiam, qui plerumque non sunt apti tali negotio magisque linguae certaminibus quam scientiae luminibus delectantur*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ep.* 132; CCSL 31B, 240: *fucatis eloquiis [...] linguae tectorio*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 249: *ingeniis studiisque sententiae*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 249–250: *Apud agnoscentem loquor; etiam ista paulo ante docuisti. [...] ad*

with an apparently polite and sympathetic attitude towards Augustine's position, Volusianus urges him to determine their relationship from the viewpoint of a group of his friends. 'It is a matter of interest for your reputation that I come to know the answers to my questions, because ignorance may somehow or other be tolerated in other priests without harm to the worship of God, but when it comes to Augustine, the bishop, whatever he may happen not to know is a failing in what is right.'<sup>33</sup>

According to his report on the cordial meeting, one of the participants interrupted the conversation and raised a series of unsuitable questions about Christianity.

'And who is perfectly imbued with the wisdom of Christianity, who can resolve certain ambiguous points on which I am stuck and can strengthen my hesitant assent with true or probable grounds for belief?' [...] 'I wonder whether the Lord and ruler of the world filled the body of an inviolate woman, whether she endured those long annoyances over ten months, and whether, though a virgin, she nonetheless had the child in the ordinary manner of giving birth and after this her virginity remained intact.'<sup>34</sup>

It is noticeable that Volusianus tells Augustine about questions raised by a friend of the circle rather than offering questions of his own. He attempts neither to pose questions about the scriptural reading nor to communicate with Augustine about his own uncertainty as to the incarnation and the miracles that Christ performed. Despite the fact that Marcellinus writes to Augustine to make known Volusianus' questions about these issues, which have 'been examined again and again' by Volusianus and his fellows in Carthage,<sup>35</sup> Volusianus intends to deflect the attention of the bishop away from the teachings of Christianity. It is difficult to determine whether Volusianus was a pagan when he received the letter from Augustine.<sup>36</sup> But, it is certain that, despite Augustine's concern for the spiritual health of the young aristocrat, Volusianus invited him into his circle of erudite friends. Volusianus explicitly preferred his own intellectual interest shared with

*familiarum tuam [...] quam ipse [...] fouere consueueras.*

<sup>33</sup> Ep. 135.2; CCSL 31B, 251: *Interest famae tuae, ut quaesita nouerimus. Vt cumque absque detrimento cultus diuini in aliis sacerdotibus toleratur inscitia, at cum ad antistitem Augustinum uenitur, legi deest, quicquid contigerit ignorari.*

<sup>34</sup> Ep. 135.2; CCSL 31B, 250–251: *'et quis', inquit, 'est sapientia ad perfectum christianitatis imbutus, qui ambigua, in quibus haereo, possit aperire dubiosque assensus meos uera uel uerisimili credulitate firmare?' [...] 'Miror, utrum mundi dominus et rector intemeratae feminae corpus impleuerit, pertulerit decem mensium longa illa fastidia mater et tamen uirgo enixa sit solemnitate pariendi et post haec uirginitas putatur intacta'.*

<sup>35</sup> Ep. 136.1; CCSL 31B, 253: *usquequaque detrita est.*

<sup>36</sup> See Cameron 2011, 196; Rebillard 2011, 81–82.

others to religious affiliation, the latter of which was not high on the list of priorities.

These letters that I have considered so far give a clear picture of Augustine's experience with less committed Christians whose religious identity resulted in no conflict with their social and intellectual engagement: they 'activate different allegiances, depending on the different contexts of interaction'.<sup>37</sup> They would communicate with Augustine using their knowledge about Augustine's former career as a professor of rhetoric. Although Augustine continually focused on how to integrate Christian living into everyday life, Dioscorus and Volusianus seemed uninterested in remaining conscious of the incongruity between these codes of behaviour and thought. As a bishop who was confronted with an intellectual traditionalist, Augustine would urge his correspondent to pay attention to the exclusive privilege granted to the Christian way of life. But how did he suggest disciplining oneself to conform to it?

#### SPIRITUAL TRAINING IN THE LETTERS OF AUGUSTINE

The intellectual and therapeutic aspect of spiritual training

The first letter to be considered is *Letter 26*, which dates from 394 or 395<sup>38</sup> and is addressed to Licentius,<sup>39</sup> the son of Augustine's wealthy patron, Romanianus. Attached to the letter, Licentius had sent Augustine a lengthy poem (*Carmen*), which blended Roman mythology with Christian scriptures, exhibiting a compendium of the mathematical disciplines and an upwards journey—an ascent towards light.<sup>40</sup> While pointing to his reasons for feeling anxiety about his former student's circumstances, Augustine's reply indicates a path to God distinct from the apparently Varronian (Varro of Reate) path in Licentius' poem. Augustine speaks of the temporal stage of progress towards eternal embrace, which wisdom has first prepared for us and 'tamed by certain laborious exercises'.<sup>41</sup> When he sets out what stimulates him in the poem, the allusion to the difficulty of Licentius' way of life can be seen as the urge to concentrate the attention of Licentius on the mind, thereby compelling him to cling to Christ: 'Christ

<sup>37</sup> Rebillard 2012b, 52.

<sup>38</sup> *Ep.* 26: Daur: 394, Divjak: 394, Eno: 395, Lancel: été-automne 395, Perler: 395 mi-avril/mi-mai, Teske: 394 or 395.

<sup>39</sup> On Licentius, see *PLRE* 2, 682; *PCBE* I, s.v. 'Licentius', 640–642; Morgenstern 1993, 11–12 and 42. See also Lancel 2011c.

<sup>40</sup> For an edition of this enigmatic poem and its commentary, see Shanzer 1991; Cutino 2000.

<sup>41</sup> *Ep.* 26 (t) 2; *CCSL* 31, 76: *exercitatorius quibusdam laboribus edomuerit*.



is the truth.<sup>42</sup> This emphasis on the thoroughgoing internal reflection, which also evokes the experience of Licentius, Augustine, and their friends at a villa of Cassiciacum, is taken very seriously by Augustine.<sup>43</sup> It is one of the essential elements of his views which followed ancient traditions of the spiritual training: the traditions comprised the acute consciousness of the purification and the rectification of the mind.

Next we consider the group of *Letters* 37, 56, 102, 162, 193, 202A, and 2\*, composed from the years 397 to 428, thus covering almost all of Augustine's episcopal period. The first of these, *Letter* 37, dating from approximately 397,<sup>44</sup> is addressed to his first mentor and friend, Simplician, who succeeded Ambrose as bishop of Milan in 397, and was probably accompanied by Augustine's work *De diuersis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum libri duo*.<sup>45</sup> In this short letter, Augustine not only expressed pleasure that his writings had been of particular interest to his friend but pointed to his attempt to respond a small set of queries from him. Despite the difficulties of resolving these problems, Augustine clearly acknowledges that Simplician would expect him to be exercised in such a way as to consider the problems, the answers to which come to be his first literary work as a bishop of Hippo, while conforming to the various scriptural passages under investigation.

*Letter* 56, written perhaps around 402 and addressed to Celer,<sup>46</sup> a wealthy landowner of senatorial rank in Hippo Regius, provides a typical example of Augustine's encouragement 'to be trained in the studies leading to salvation in the knowledge of things human and divine'.<sup>47</sup> With regard to his idea about spiritual progress of the mind, it is interesting to note that Augustine here mentions that it is a more difficult task as 'to break the chain of sinfulness, which has become habitual and like a friend',<sup>48</sup> that is, the view of a spiritual exercise as bringing together its intellectual aspect with its therapeutic one, depending on the comparison between temporal and eternal life promised us 'through Christ

<sup>42</sup> *Ep.* 26 (3) 3; CCSL 31, 86: *Christus est ueritas*.

<sup>43</sup> For the narrative function of Licentius in the Cassiciacum dialogues, see Conybeare 2005.

<sup>44</sup> *Ep.* 37: Daur: 397, Divjak: 397, Eno: 397, Lancel: 396–397, Perler: 396 spring, Teske: c. 397.

<sup>45</sup> Perler and Meier 1969, 165–166; Morgenstern 1993, 43.

<sup>46</sup> *Ep.* 56: Daur: 402(?), Divjak: 402?, Eno: 396–410, Lancel: sans doute en 402, Perler: 402, Teske: perhaps around 400. On Celer, see *PCBE* 1, s.v. Celer 1, 202–203; *PLRE* 2, s.v. Celer 2, 275; Morgenstern 1993, 43. See also Lancel 2002, 276.

<sup>47</sup> *Ep.* 56.1; CCSL 31A, 3: *salubribusque studiis in rerum diuinarum atque humanarum cognitione oblectari atque exerceri uelim*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ep.* 56.2; CCSL 31A, 4: *Sed ad sectandam insolitam rectitudinem, usitatae et quasi familiaris peruersitatis uinculum abrumpere*.

and in Christ'.<sup>49</sup>

*Letter 102*, written around 409,<sup>50</sup> is addressed to Augustine's fellow-priest, Deogratias of Carthage.<sup>51</sup> It is so long that, in *Retractationes* 2.31, he described it as a book, entitled *Quaestiones expositae contra paganos*. After considering six questions which might partially derive from those of Porphyry,<sup>52</sup> at the end of this letter, Augustine stresses the importance of those questions concerning divine scriptures from the viewpoint of exercises of the mind: 'But clearly, once we already hold onto the faith, we should investigate those questions with great eagerness in order to bring the minds of the faithful to experience pious delight, and we should share without any arrogance or pride whatever light we find in them.'<sup>53</sup>

*Letter 162*, a part of the exchange between Augustine and his friend Evodius,<sup>54</sup> the bishop of Uzalis, was written in 414 or 415.<sup>55</sup> At the beginning of this letter, as a preliminary to replying to the questions Evodius had asked him in the previous letters (*Epp.* 159, 160, and 161), Augustine confirms that even those 'who are endowed with a mind that is less sharp and less well trained [...] are carried along by a desire to know our writings'.<sup>56</sup> They are eager for understanding what he writes about complicated problems. These problems are referred to later in this letter and include the correlation between body and soul, Christ's conception and birth, and so on. Since Augustine reflects on circumstances of the future readers of his writings, he realises 'how much care in writing one who ponders these questions ought to have'.<sup>57</sup>

*Letter 193*, written at the end of 418, is addressed to Marius Mercator,<sup>58</sup> who was Catholic layman and the author of two treatises (not extant) against

<sup>49</sup> *Ep.* 56.2; CCSL 31A, 3; *per Christum atque in Christo*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ep.* 102: Daur: 409, Divjak: 409, Eno: near 409, Lancel: entre 405 et 411, Perler: vers 409, Teske: between 406 and 412.

<sup>51</sup> *PCBE* 1, s.v. Deogratias 1, 271–273; Morgenstern 1993, 57.

<sup>52</sup> *Ep.* 102.8: CCSL 31B, 13; *Ep.* 102.28: CCSL 31B, 26; *Ep.* 102.30: CCSL 31B, 27–28. For Porphyry's idea in this letter, see Bochet 2011; Magny 2013.

<sup>53</sup> *Ep.* 102.38; CCSL 31B, 33: *sed plane retenta iam fide ad exercendam piam delectationem mentium fidelium studiosissime requirendae et, quod in eis eluxerit, sine typho arrogantiae communicandum, quod autem latuerit, sine salutis dispendio tolerandum*.

<sup>54</sup> *PCBE* 1, s.v. Evodius 1, 366–373; Morgenstern 1993, 26. See also Hübner 1996–2002.

<sup>55</sup> *Ep.* 162: Divjak: 414/415, Eno: 414/415, Lancel: en 414/415, Teske: 414 or 415.

<sup>56</sup> *Ep.* 162.1; CSEL 44, 511: *qui minus acuto minusque exercitato ingenio praediti eo tamen studio feruntur ad cognoscendas litteras nostras*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ep.* 162.1; CSEL 44, 512: *quanta cura in scribendo esse debeat*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ep.* 193: Divjak: 418, Lancel: fin 418, Perler: 418 fin octobre, Teske: c. 418. On Marius Mercator, see Morales and Dodaro, 2004–2010; Morgenstern 1993, 90.

Pelagianism. This letter contains the pedagogical aspect of spiritual training and its correlation with the audience for the writings of Augustine and more erudite writers (*dictiores*).<sup>59</sup>

For we ought not to be teachers who cannot be taught, and it is certainly better that a little fellow be corrected than a rigid one be broken, for what we have written exercises and trains our weakness or that of others, even though our writings are not established with anything like the authority of the canon of scripture.<sup>60</sup>

As already mentioned in the case of *Letter* 102, Augustine first draws the attention of the reader to the relevant issues and, in comparison with these problems, emphasises the importance of the scriptures from the intellectual aspect of spiritual training.

The next reference to these exercises, in *Letter* 202A from at the beginning of 420, is written to Optatus of Milevis<sup>61</sup> in a similar context of pedagogical care for those who rashly and thoughtlessly provide an answer to a problem of which they are not sufficiently knowledgeable. Although he himself still has not determined how the soul derived original sin from Adam, Augustine clearly offers the proper place to stop their investigation: the point at which 'they either find what they want or exercise the keenness of their mind by investigation'.<sup>62</sup> With regard to such a crucial problem, therefore, the investigator seems to be invited exclusively to the exercise of his/her mind through intensive enquiry.

*Letter* 2\*, one of the so-called Divjak Letters (which Johannes Divjak discovered in 1981), was written probably in 428,<sup>63</sup> making it chronologically the latest of the Divjak Letters. It was addressed to Firmus,<sup>64</sup> a cultivated nobleman of Carthage, who had previously written to Augustine, sending a sample of his young son's declamation. After exhorting Firmus, in the body of this letter (§ 3–11), to receive baptism, Augustine addresses the question of Firmus' unnamed man.<sup>65</sup> The natural talent, fine liberal education, and skilled in rhetoric of the unnamed young man are, in Augustine's opinion, highly commendable. Notably,

<sup>59</sup> *Ep.* 193.4.10; CSEL 57, 173.

<sup>60</sup> *Ep.* 193.4.10; CSEL 57, 173: *neque enim debemus indociles esse doctores et certe melius homo corrigitur paruus, quam frangitur durus, cum his, quae scripsimus, ita nostra uel aliorum exerceatur et erudiatu infirmitas, ut tamen in eis nulla uelut canonica constituatur auctoritas.*

<sup>61</sup> On Optatus of Milevis, see *PCBE* 1, s.v. Optatus 7, 803–805; Morgenstern 1993, 45–47.

<sup>62</sup> *Ep.* 202A.2.6; CSEL 57, 305: *donec aut id, quod uolunt, reperiant, aut ipsa inquisitione aciem mentis exercent.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ep.* 2\*: Divjak: 427/428, Eno: probably 428, Lancel: en 426/427, Teske: probably 428.

<sup>64</sup> *PCBE* 1, s.v. Firmus 4, 460; Morgenstern 1993, 77. For this letter, see Braun 1987.

<sup>65</sup> Brown 2000, 471–473; Chadwick 1983.

however, Augustine expresses hope that the young man will devote himself not only to eloquence (which Cicero regards as useless without wisdom),<sup>66</sup> but to the nourishment for a wholesome character. Although Augustine may be reminded of the benefit of the rhetorical exercises in his youth, he cannot leave behind the path on which life should be led. Therefore, he provides the young man with same advice on the rectification of the mind as he gave to his fellow Licentius, as mentioned above, in *Letter 26*.

### The religious and eschatological aspect of spiritual training

Next group of letters, which were seemingly composed between 408 and 415 and pertain to Augustine's thoughts on religious dimension of these exercises, contains *Letters 92, 130, 131, 137, and 157*. *Letter 92*, dating from 408 or 409,<sup>67</sup> was written to Italica,<sup>68</sup> a wealthy noblewoman who had recently lost her husband. She had asked him if God could be seen with bodily eyes. With regard to this problem, which he had turned to again and again to try to resolve,<sup>69</sup> in the case of this letter, he plainly touches on the absurdity of the idea that God has a body. He says that the vision of God is promised to us as a reward of faith. Certainly, it is not striking that he speaks of the exercises of the saints' mind trained purposefully for attaining divine visions.

*Letter 130*, dating probably from 411 or 412,<sup>70</sup> was addressed to a wealthy Roman widow, Anicia Proba Faltonia,<sup>71</sup> who had fled to North Africa when the Goths attacked Rome. The bishop of Hippo then, answering her question on prayer to God, refers to exercising the mind by taking up the scriptural texts. He suggested her to read three passages: 2 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 2:9, and Romans 8:26. First, he stresses the discontinuity between our need for prayer and the knowability of God, 'who knows what we need before we ask him'. In fact, although God cannot fail to know what we need, this is not enough:

<sup>66</sup> *Ep.* 2\*.12; BA 46B, 90: *eloquentiam cum sapientia plurimum prodesse ciuitatibus, eloquentiam uero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse nunquam*. See Cicero, *De inuentione* 1.1 and Aug. *De doctrina christiana* 4.5.7.

<sup>67</sup> *Ep.* 92: Daur: 408/409, Divjak: 408/409, Eno: 408, Lancel: 408/409, Perler: 408/409, Teske: sometime prior to 408.

<sup>68</sup> On Italica, see *PLRE* 2, 465–466; Lancel 2002, 238–239; Morgenstern 1993, 89.

<sup>69</sup> *Ep.* 147 addressed to Paulina around in 413; *Retractationes* 2.41.

<sup>70</sup> *Ep.* 130: Daur: 411/412, Divjak: 411/412, Eno: after 411, Lancel: entre 411 et 413, Teske: not much later than 411.

<sup>71</sup> *PCBE* 1, 921; *PLRE* 2, 732–733; Lancel 2002, 393; Morgenstern 1993, 80. See also White 1992, 205–206.

God requires 'our desire, by which we can receive what he prepares to give, to be exercised in prayers'.<sup>72</sup> This leads Augustine to quote 2 Corinthians 6:11, 'Make your heart bigger so that you do not bear that yoke with unbelievers', which follows the explanation of the greatness of God's gift as 'That which is, indeed, very great, "which the eye has not seen", because it is not a color, "and the ear has not heard", because it is not a sound, "nor has it ascended into the heart of a human being" (1 Cor. 2:9)'.<sup>73</sup> This view of the relation between the need for prayer to God (at all times) and its reward lies, in fact, at the centre of Augustine's religious and eschatological aspect of these exercises. Another text which is correlated with his view is Romans 8:26, 'We do not know what we should pray for as we ought', which supposes that we who do not know what benefit the vexations and troubles in this life provide.<sup>74</sup> The belief in the magnificence of the reward occurs in the context of the exhortation to prayer. Here, too, we find the statement that the affections, that is 'the swelling of pride' and 'patience', should be tested and exercised through prayer in order to receive the greatness of the reward.

The next letter in the group under consideration, *Letter 131*, which was written to the same widow between 411 and 413,<sup>75</sup> contains the similar passage from Romans 8:28. In agreement with her comment that the corruptibility of the temporal body (*corpus corruptibile*) is the burden of the soul,<sup>76</sup> Augustine resorts to the texts of Wisdom 9:15: 'For the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly dwelling presses down the mind as it thinks of many things'. Again, he refers to the necessity of exercising our patience for 'the hope of the world to come'.

*Letter 137*, written in 411 or 412 and addressed to the layman Volusianus,<sup>77</sup> deals with the question of Christ's divine and human nature. In the main part of this letter (§ 2–18),<sup>78</sup> Augustine gives a careful account of the grounds for the central Christian beliefs, among which are the miracles of Christ. His argument against those who do not believe in the greatness of his miracles moves on

<sup>72</sup> *Ep.* 130.17; CCSL 31B, 225: *qui nouit, quid nobis necessarium sit, priusquam petamus ab eo, [...] exerceri in orationibus desiderium nostrum, quo possimus capere, quod praeparat dare.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ep.* 130.17; CCSL 31B, 225: *Tanto quippe illud, quod ualde magnum est, quod nec oculus uidit, quia non est color, nec auris audiuit, quia non est sonus, nec in cor hominis ascendit.*

<sup>74</sup> For Augustine's interpretation of Romans 8:26 in this letter, La Bonnardière 1986a.

<sup>75</sup> *Ep.* 131: Daur: 411/412, Divjak: 411/412, Eno: 412/413, Lancel: 411/413, Teske: 412 or 413.

<sup>76</sup> Van Fleteren 1993.

<sup>77</sup> *Ep.* 137: Daur: 411/412, Divjak: 411/412, Eno: 411/412, Lancel: printemps 412, Teske: 411 or 412. On Volusianus, see note 22 above.

<sup>78</sup> O'Daly 1999, 33.

to the description of the history of Christian religion, in which he suggests that persecution and heresies have aided the touchstone of its teaching: 'In alternating times of adversity and of prosperity they vigilantly practice patience and temperance.'<sup>79</sup> He not only suggests the necessity of these exercises for the life to come but also situates the practice of these exercises in the salvific functions of the Church, imperfect and uncertain though they may be, as a foreshadowing of the true reward to come.

*Letter 157*, written in 414 or 415 and addressed to Hilary, a Catholic layman from Syracuse in Sicily,<sup>80</sup> deals with a series of questions about some Pelagian teachings which Hilary had asked Augustine.<sup>81</sup> Part of his answer is that, concerning the baptism of infants, the Pelagians must not impede the salvation through the grace of Christ. Once again, the focus is on the exercise of the faith.<sup>82</sup> In the case of those who are redeemed by the death of Christ, for the time being, the temporal death of the body remains, and the exercise of their faith should not be taken away. The reign of death is ended in the renewal of the body that the resurrection promises.

### The exegetical aspect of spiritual training

We come now to consider *Letters 28, 137, 149, and 199*, composed from 394 to probably 420 and, thus, occurring sporadically during his episcopal period. The first of these, *Letter 28* (dating in 394 or 395),<sup>83</sup> is addressed to Jerome, who received it only many years later, after it had circulated in Rome and elsewhere.<sup>84</sup> Although he has been critical to Jerome's interpretation of Galatians (Gal. 2:11–14), in his greetings before getting down to business, Augustine praises for his diligent and 'liberal pursuit'.<sup>85</sup> Accordingly, in *Letter 72* (dated to 403), Jerome has high praise for the exegete Augustine for diligently and successfully engaging in the study of scriptures.<sup>86</sup>

Next is *Letter 137*, addressed, as mentioned above, to the layman Volusianus.

<sup>79</sup> *Ep. 137.16*; CCSL 31B, 271: *Alternis aduersitatibus et prosperitatibus rerum patientiam et temperantiam uigilanter exercent.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ep. 157*: Divjak: 414/415, Eno: 414/early 415, Lancel: 414, Teske: 414 or 415.

<sup>81</sup> Morgenstern 1993, 93; De Plinval 1966.

<sup>82</sup> *Ep. 157.3.19*; CSEL 44, 468.

<sup>83</sup> *Ep. 28*: Daur: 394/395, Divjak: 394/395, Eno: 394/395, Lancel: printemps 395, Perler: 395 printemps, Teske: between 394 and 395.

<sup>84</sup> Morgenstern 1993, 70–71; Teske, trans. WSA 2/1, 90. See also White 1990.

<sup>85</sup> *Ep. 28.1*; CCSL 31B, 92: *exercitatio liberalis.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ep. 72.3*; CCSL 31A, 41 (= Jerome *Ep. 105.2.3*; CSEL 55, 244).

It was written in response to christological questions in 411 or 412.<sup>87</sup> After discussing the issue of the growth of the Christian religion, in the end of this letter, Augustine turns to Christ's twofold commandment of love of God and of neighbour, in which all of the wisdom of philosophy is embodied. He refers then to the simplicity of the scriptural language in contrast with the hidden truth in the scriptures: 'And it [*scil.* scripture] not only feeds them with the evident truth but also exercises them with the hidden truth, though it has the same truth in clear matters as in hidden ones. [...] By these, evil minds are salutarily corrected, little minds are fed, and great minds are delighted.'<sup>88</sup> This is the place for both the unlearned and the learned to practice their exercises by approaching the 'lowly language' of the scriptures.

The next two letters, *Letters* 149 and 199, deal with obscure passages in the scriptures. First, *Letter* 149, among the correspondence between Augustine and Paulinus of Nola, was written in 416 as a reply to *Letter* 121, written by Paulinus, in approximately 413.<sup>89</sup> Augustine's comprehensive response to the query contains the interpretation of difficult passages from Psalms (§ 3–10), Ephesians (§ 11), 1 Timothy (§ 12), Romans (§ 18–22), Colossians (§ 23–30), and the Gospels of Luke, Mark and John (§ 31–33). He closes the letter by explaining the significance of those interpretations connected with the spiritual training of the mind.

For, when you argue as you ask questions, you both ask with acuteness and teach with humility. It is useful, however, to discover many opinions on the obscure passages of the divine scriptures, which God wanted to be there in order to provide exercise for our minds, when different people have different views, though they are all nonetheless in accord with the teaching of sound faith.<sup>90</sup>

Similar references to the meaning of scriptural interpretations are found in *Letter* 199, written to Hesychius, bishop of Salona in Dalmatia, who had asked Augustine about the end of the world: in the letter, Augustine refers to *City of*

<sup>87</sup> *Ep.* 137: Daur: 411/412, Divjak: 411/412, Eno: 411/412, Lancel: printemps 412, Teske: 411 or 412.

<sup>88</sup> *Ep.* 137.5.18; CCSL 31B, 272–3: *sed inuitat omnes humili sermone, quos non solum manifesta pascit, sed etiam secreta exerceat ueritate hoc in promptis quod in reconditis habens. [...] His salubriter et praua corriguntur et parua nutriuntur et magna oblectantur ingenia.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ep.* 149: Divjak: 414–416, Eno: late 415, Lancel: entre 414 et 416, Perler: 415 fin de l'année, Teske: toward the end of 416. See *PLRE* 2, 681–683; Morgenstern 1993, 40–42.

<sup>90</sup> *Ep.* 149.3.34; CSEL 44, 379: *cum enim interrogando disputas, et quaeris acriter et doces humiliter. utile est autem, ut de obscuritatibus diuinarum scripturarum, quas exercitationis nostrae causa deus esse uoluit, multae inueniantur sententiae, cum aliud alii uideatur, quae tamen omnes sanae fidei doctrinaeque concordent.*

*God* 20.5.4, the latter of which dated to 418–420.<sup>91</sup> In this long letter, which is the size of a small treatise, Augustine attempts to interpret the Lord's eschatological discourse, thereby thinking carefully about which of those signs in various scriptural passages refers to which of those events at the second coming of the Lord.<sup>92</sup> Then, he warns him 'not to be content with their [scriptural] surface meaning';<sup>93</sup> the exegete is required to exercise the mind by understanding the hidden meaning of the passages. The obscure passages in the scriptures express the intention of God, in which 'God has chosen to exercise our minds'.<sup>94</sup>

*Letter* 213, prepared by Augustine as the record of the ecclesiastical proceedings, is not included in the category of letter, properly speaking. On 26 September 426, he summoned his clergy and laity to the *Basilica Pacis* in Hippo in order to designate the priest Eraclius (Heraclius) as his successor in the bishopric.<sup>95</sup> He intentionally produces this document so as to facilitate the change of leadership in the church and to remind Eraclius of this important ceremony. It is a remarkable testimony, not only because the ecclesiastical secretaries were faithfully and attentively noting these *Acta Ecclesiastica* but also because it expresses Augustine's own hope, to which he would commit himself for the rest of his life: 'so that I at long last, if God grants me a little more time in this life, may not devote my remaining days to laziness or spend them in inactivity but may exercise my mind in the holy scriptures as much as he permits and grants.'<sup>96</sup> Augustine denies that he is retiring from all administrative duties in the church and that new bishop should do them alone. But, he asks his congregation's permission to turn his mind to his own matter: 'Let no one, then, begrudge me my leisure, because my leisure will involve important work.'<sup>97</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The letters of Augustine considered in this paper portray his sustained effort, over more or less over his episcopal period, to impress upon his correspondents

<sup>91</sup> *Ep.* 199; Divjak: 418/420, Eno: uncertain, Lancel: entre 418 et 420, Teske: 419/420. On Hesychius, see Lancel 2002, 370 and 409; Morgenstern 1993, 48. See also La Bonnardière 1986b.

<sup>92</sup> *Ep.* 199.9.26; CSEL 57, 266.

<sup>93</sup> *Ep.* 199.11.42; CSEL 57, 280: *nec earum superficie debemus esse contenti*.

<sup>94</sup> *Ep.* 199.11.45; CSEL 57, 284: *nostras intellegentias deo placuit exercere*.

<sup>95</sup> Brown 2000, 411–412; Lancel 2002, 457–458.

<sup>96</sup> *Ep.* 213.6; CSEL 57, 378: *et ego tandem aliquando, si quantulumcumque spatium mihi donauerit deus, ipsamque meam quantulumcumque uitam non dem segnitiae nec donem inertiae, sed in sanctis scripturis, quantum ipse permittit et largitur, exerceam*.

<sup>97</sup> *Ep.* 213.6; CSEL 57, 378: *nemo ergo inuideat otio meo, quia meum otium magnum habet negotium*.



the significance of spiritual training. However much one might naturally expect Augustine's view of the exercises to evolve from the first half of the 390s until 428 (shortly before his death in 430), the evidence in multiple aspects of these exercises suggests that he avoided development and change in his thought. Although he repeatedly turned to the necessity of spiritual discipline as a means for persuading his readers through the epistolary conversation, it was not the major focus of his letters. Augustine did not write any letter devoted mainly to the issue of spiritual training. This does not mean, however, that his continual invitations to return to spiritual matters had only limited significance for him and his correspondents. For instance, while some Christians were skilled at providing a rationale for their curiosity and intellectual interests, Augustine attempted to direct their attention to the correlation between the 'liberal pursuit' and scriptural exegesis, thereby enabling them to follow and obey the scriptural injunction to serve one another in love: 'all successful biblical interpretation must result in ethically good behaviour: love towards God and one's neighbour.'<sup>98</sup> In fact, however, there were Christians whose religious identity was not in serious conflict with their social, cultural, and civic contact and network density. It looks as if they switched to different types of identity under different circumstances. Being confronted with the arbitrary choice of identities, 'Augustine does not agree with this' state of affairs.<sup>99</sup> It is important to note that, because of his repeated claims in epistolary exchange to be open and circulated publicly (probably in small groups),<sup>100</sup> Augustine's letters could serve as spiritual and pastoral resources in Hippo and other African communities. Also, despite his determined efforts directed towards the practice of spiritual training, intended to assist the spiritual improvement of his correspondents, his invitations could not respond to the social realities in late antiquity. Thus, when one attempts to read his letters as a discourse for the improvement of the whole Christian community, his teaching of spiritual training would be considered to be a spiritual, but eventually failed, device for connecting personal discipline with communal salvation. As well as helping the shared progress towards salvation, spiritual training for every individual soul was expected to result in the enhancement of spiritual affinities and the affectionate relationship in the community.

<sup>98</sup> Pollmann 2005, 230.

<sup>99</sup> Rebillard 2012b, 51.

<sup>100</sup> Ebbeler 2012, 15.



# 4

## Friendship and a Shared Vision: Augustine's Correspondence with Christian and Pagan Intellectuals\*

In the corpus of Augustine's epistolary texts, some letters between Augustine and his correspondents describe his dealings with philosophical, theological and ecclesiastical questions posed to or by himself.<sup>1</sup> He carried on a dialogue with them that provided evidence of the interests and activities, first of the leader of a monastic community of sorts, and later of the bishop of a community of faith.<sup>2</sup> From 387 until the death of his close friend in 391, Augustine's epistolary exchange with Nebridius centred on the problem of the *beata uita, anima* and Platonic teaching.<sup>3</sup> From the mid 390s, he entered into a correspondence with Paulinus of Nola and his wife Therasia. During a period of more than a decade, they exchanged views about spiritual, exegetical and religio-political issues.<sup>4</sup> There was another exchange of thoughts with Jerome, first from 394/5 to 405

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<sup>1</sup> For a selected bibliography of Augustine's letters, see Divjak 1996–2002, 1046–1057. Another comprehensive information of the correspondence of Augustine is given by a searchable database: *Scrinium Augustini: The World of Augustine's Letters* (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland) <<http://www.scrinium.umk.pl>>, accessed 29 September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> For the chronological survey of Augustine's letters, see CCSL 31; 31A; 31B; Divjak 1996–2002, 1027–1036; Eno 1999, 299–305; Lancel 2011a, 159–175; Perler and Maier 1969; Teske 2001–2005.

<sup>3</sup> For the correspondence between Augustine and Nebridius, see Folliet 1987; Merenciano 2004.

<sup>4</sup> For the correspondence with Paulinus and his wife, see Fabre 1949; Lienhard 1990; Conybeare 2000.

and again from 415 to 419.<sup>5</sup> It started with Augustine's question about a scriptural translation and the interpretation of Galatians. They expressed their views on the teaching of Pelagius and his followers.

It is interesting to note that some groups of letters serve as a way of writing comments on inquiries and questions.<sup>6</sup> Presumably, from 411, in different circumstances, Augustine started to communicate with the imperial commissioner Flavius Marcellinus and the distinguished pagan or less-committed Christian Volusianus.<sup>7</sup> First, in May of 411, *Letters* 128 and 129 were sent to Marcellinus on behalf of the African episcopate (these two letters are legitimately attributed to Augustine) and, towards the end of 411 (or the beginning of 412), Augustine wrote to Marcellinus (*Epp.* 133 and 139) and to Apringius, proconsul of Africa and brother of Marcellinus (*Ep.* 134). While these letters are of special interest on account of the light they cast on the Conference with the Donatists in June 411 and the position of Marcellinus, who adjudicated the Conference in Carthage, there was another series of letters (*Epp.* 132, 135, 136, 137 and 138) between September 411 and the end of February 412. Apart from the immediate problem of the Donatist schism, Augustine entered into an exchange with Volusianus (*Ep.* 132), who was at the time living in Carthage. In reply to the invitation of Augustine, in *Letter* 135 Volusianus posed questions about Christian teachings and in *Letter* 136, with reference to the questions raised by Volusianus, Marcellinus sent further questions to Augustine. Shortly after these letters, in *Letter* 137, addressed to Volusianus, Augustine replied to questions posed by both Volusianus and Marcellinus, and in *Letter* 138, Augustine turned to Marcellinus with the explanation to questions referred to in *Letter* 136. This dossier of letters, in particular the sub-group of *Letters* 135, 136 and 137, reveals the characteristics of a sort of commentary on questions. From a social and cultural perspective of friendship and communication, what do we know from these letters? What did Augustine consider to be the basis uniting them in mutual exchange?<sup>8</sup> In

<sup>5</sup> For the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome, see White 1990; Hennings 1993; and Squires 2008.

<sup>6</sup> See Teske 2004. See also Magny 2014, 105–106.

<sup>7</sup> Moreau 1973; Ayres 2008a. On Marcellinus, see *PCBE* 2, s.v. Flavius Marcellinus 2, 671–688; *PLRE* 2, s.v. Fl. Marcellinus 10, 711–712; Drecoll 2004–2010; Morgenstern 1993, 112–114. For the role of Marcellinus played in Augustine's literary, social and ecclesiastical activities, see e.g. Dunphy 2002; Ebbeler 2012, 191–192; McLynn 1999. On Volusianus, see *PCBE* 2, s.v. Volusianus 1, 2340–2341; *PLRE* 2, s.v. Volusianus 6, 1184–1185; Morgenstern 1993, 125. For the exchanges between Augustine and Volusianus, see also Chastagnol 1956, 241–253; Divjak 1996–2002, 945–946 and 974–975; Jones 2014, 82–83 and 93; Lancel 2002, 314–318.

<sup>8</sup> See Rebenich 2012.

this paper, I shall focus on three letters exchanged with a Christian and pagan in North African society, thereby examining the evidence revealing the shared vision.

#### LETTER 135: MUTUAL GREETINGS AND THE EXPRESSING OF THEIR INTERESTS

In response to the suggestion Augustine made in *Letter 132* (that is, to read the scriptures and to ask as many questions as might arise),<sup>9</sup> Volusianus begins by sending greetings to Augustine: ‘You, a man of goodness and an example of righteousness, ask me to question you on some ambiguous passage of scripture in order that I might be taught in a learned manner.’<sup>10</sup> He then submits the report of a recent meeting with his friends in Carthage, in which they discussed various topics. In particular, the *partitio rhetorica* (rhetorical distribution of parts) was considered. Because of the recognition that Augustine was a teacher of rhetoric, Volusianus reports first on the technical issues examined in the gathering: ‘They spoke of the great ornament in the arrangement of parts, the charm of metaphor and the great loftiness of comparison. They spoke of light and smooth verses and, as I said, the harmonious variety in the divisions of lines.’<sup>11</sup> He turns to summarise the tradition of philosophical schools and their principal achievements. Apart from the interest in this review undertaken by a pagan intellectual in late antiquity, it is noteworthy that Volusianus attempts to turn the attention of Augustine to a close correlation between rhetoric and philosophy: ‘The topic was, nonetheless, the rhetorical distribution of parts in a discourse. I speak to someone who knows about that.’<sup>12</sup> His expectation is clearly that ‘you do not leave even this part of eloquence unmentioned and without honor’.<sup>13</sup> He

<sup>9</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 132; CCSL 31B, 240; WSA 2/2, 202: *hortor, ut ualeo, ut Litterarum uere certeque sanctarum studio te curam non pigeat impendere. [...] Praecipue apostolorum linguas exhortor ut legas; [...] Si quid autem, uel cum legis uel cum cogitas, tibi oritur quaestionis, in quo dissoluendo uidear necessarius, scribe, ut rescribam.*

<sup>10</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 249; WSA 2/2, 208: *Petis me, uir probitatis iustitiaeque documentum, ut aliqua ex ambiguis lectionis perite discenda perconter.*

<sup>11</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 250; WSA 2/2, 208: *Dicebatur ergo, quantus oeconomiae esset ornatus, quae metaphorarum uenustas, quanta in comparatione sublimitas; iam leues enodesque uersus atque, ut ita dixerim, caesurarum modulata uariatio.*

<sup>12</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 249; WSA 2/2, 208: *Erat tamen sermo rhetorica partitio. Apud agnoscentem loquor.*

<sup>13</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 250; WSA 2/2, 208: *ne hanc quidem eloquentiae partem tacitam aut inhonoram relinquis.*

appreciates the significance of Augustine's philosophical investigation: 'Then the talk turned to philosophy which you yourself are accustomed to cultivate as esoteric in the manner of Aristotle.'<sup>14</sup> What does Volusianus, as a member of the Carthaginian circle, hope for? Volusianus would invite him to join the circle as a master of rhetoric. It seems also likely that he defends their engagement 'in accord with our various talents and interests'<sup>15</sup> from the authority of the bishop of Hippo.

As for the questions he was asked to write back to Augustine, Volusianus poses not his own but questions from a friend in the latter part of the letter. After he points to a difficulty in the philosophical pursuit of both 'the endless passion for argument' and 'the truth that is known less after one has presumed that it can be known',<sup>16</sup> he gives a brief account of the meeting: 'We were stunned and silent.'<sup>17</sup> It is because 'one of the many asked "And who is perfectly imbued with the wisdom of Christianity who can resolve certain ambiguous points on which I am stuck and can strengthen my hesitant assent with true or probable grounds for belief?"'<sup>18</sup> They had some serious doubts as to the *sapientia christianitatis* in the pursuit of truth. A friend of Volusianus enumerates the list of objections: the wonder of Christ's conception and birth and the virginity of Mary, the mystery of the Incarnation and the miracles attributed to him. It is further reported that 'we interrupted him though he had further questions'.<sup>19</sup> Thus, from the final part of the letter, it is admitted that, despite Augustine's request to send questions of his own interest, Volusianus submitted the report of a circle and the questions from a member. This letter was far from what Augustine had expected to read. Indeed, there is a clear incongruity in the concern and expectation of both correspondents.

<sup>14</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 250; WSA 2/2, 208: *Tunc ad familiarem tuam philosophiam sermo deflectit, quam ipse Aristoteleo more tamquam esotericam fouere consueueras.*

<sup>15</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 249; WSA 2/2, 208: *pro ingenii studisque sententiae.*

<sup>16</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.1; CCSL 31B, 250; WSA 2/2, 209: *quid inter omnes infinita disputandi libido tuncque magis ignorata ueritas, postquam praesumptum est quod possit agnosci.*

<sup>17</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.2; CCSL 31B, 250; WSA 2/2, 209: *Stupemus tacentes.*

<sup>18</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.2; CCSL 31B, 250; WSA 2/2, 209: *'Et quis,' inquit, 'est sapientia ad perfectum christianitatis imbutus, qui ambigua, in quibus haereo, possit aperire, dubiosque assensus meos uera uel uerisimili credulitate firmare?'*

<sup>19</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 135.2; CCSL 31B, 251; WSA 2/2, 209: *Interuenimus ulterius inquirenti.*

## LETTER 136: COMPLEMENTARY WARNING INFORMATION

In the opening of *Letter 136* addressed to Augustine, Marcellinus tells him that ‘The illustrious lord, Volusianus, read to me the letter of Your Beatitude; in fact, at my insistence, he read it to many others. I thoroughly admired what you said, though everything you say is truly admirable.’<sup>20</sup> Along with the admiration for Augustine’s generous invitation to Volusianus (‘the letter of Your Beatitude’, that is, referring to *Letter 132*), Marcellinus’ remark in *Letter 137* also suggests that not only does he know well about the gatherings in Carthage, but he may also have read *Letter 135* addressed to Augustine: ‘[A]s you yourself will also be able to see, he [*scil.* Volusianus] has demanded in a cultivated and precise language and with the clear splendor of Roman eloquence.’<sup>21</sup> Thus, as a person who knows the circumstances, Marcellinus wrote this *Letter 136* to Augustine, which could be defined as a kind of appendix to the previous letter (*Ep.* 135) and as a report of the meeting from a different viewpoint.

Marcellinus first takes up the problem of miracles that was mentioned by Volusianus in the closing part of *Letter 135*. He refers to those who ‘set before us their Apollinius and Apuleius and other practitioners of the arts of magic, and they claim that their miracles are greater’<sup>22</sup> than those performed by the Lord. He then informs Augustine about other objections. Indeed, Volusianus did not agree ‘to remain unspoken’<sup>23</sup> about many questions. He claims that it is necessary ‘to give a clear reason why this God, who is also maintained to be the God of the Old Testament, took delight in the new sacrifices after having rejected the old ones.’<sup>24</sup> Another objection is raised in a different context: ‘[T]he preaching and teaching of Christ is in no way compatible with the practices of the state. [...] who would permit an enemy to take something from him or would not want to redress evil by the right of war against a plunderer of a Roman province?’<sup>25</sup> This

<sup>20</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.1; CCSL 31B, 253; WSA 2/2, 210: *Vir illustris Volusianus beatitudinis tuae mihi literas legit, immo me quidem cogente pluribus legit, quae, licet omnia quae a te dicuntur, vere miranda sint, usquequaque miratus sum.*

<sup>21</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.1; CCSL 31B, 253; WSA 2/2, 210: *Sed tamen satis, sicut etiam ipse probare dignaberis, culto accuratoque sermone, et Romanae eloquentiae nitore perspicuo, aliqua sibi exsolvi impendio postulavit.*

<sup>22</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.1; CCSL 31B, 254; WSA 2/2, 210–211: *Apollonium si quidem suum nobis et Apuleium aliosque magicae artis homines in medium proferunt, quorum maiora contendunt existitisse miracula.*

<sup>23</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.2; CCSL 31B, 254; WSA 2/2, 211: *tacere non passus est.*

<sup>24</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.2; CCSL 31B, 254; WSA 2/2, 211: *reddi [...] ad liquidum possit cur hic Deus, qui et Veteris Testamenti Deus esse firmatur, spretis veteribus sacrificiis delectatus est novis.*

<sup>25</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.2; CCSL 31B, 254–255; WSA 2/2, 211: *eius praedicatio atque doctrina reipublicae moribus nulla ex parte conveniat [...] Nam quis tolli sibi ab hoste aliquid patiaturo uel Romanae provinciae depraedatori non mala uelit belli iure reponere?*

objection is related to a much more current political situation: some pagans have blamed Rome's sack on Christianity. Although Volusianus does not make any further criticism, it is indispensable for the Carthaginian circle to discuss and explore approaches to this problem. For it is admitted that several members of the gathering took refuge in Carthage after the sack of Rome. Since Marcellinus was familiar with them in Carthage, he demanded a response from Augustine, who later sent him *Letter 138*.

In the closing section of this letter, Marcellinus praises Augustine for his erudition. At the same time, he comments that Augustine's response to these objections 'will undoubtedly be passed on to the hands of many.'<sup>26</sup> Marcellinus' remark about 'a wealthy landowner and lord from Hippo Regius'<sup>27</sup> in the gatherings seems to be a useful warning and advice to cope with the situation and background of the group: he 'praised Your Holiness with ironic flattery and claimed that, [...] he was hardly satisfied.'<sup>28</sup>

#### LETTER 137: WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF AUGUSTINE'S REPLY?

This letter is well structured as a sequence of strenuous efforts to offer a compelling explanation of Christian teaching for both the members of the Carthaginian circle and Volusianus himself. It also provides a repertoire of rhetorical devices that correspond to the style and design of his correspondent. As he is reminded about the start of the letter exchange, Augustine tells Volusianus that he is keen on answering the questions posed in *Letter 135*: 'I thought that it was hardly just that I should put off a questioner whom I myself had encouraged to ask questions.'<sup>29</sup> Thus, in the beginning of this letter, he treats Volusianus with politeness and courtesy but at the same time draws attention to the need for the care of the soul, 'not for the well-being of this life, [...] but for that well-being whose attainment and eternal possession we are Christians',<sup>30</sup> since Augustine maintains that the pastoral care for 'proud little souls [who] place no value on it

<sup>26</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.3; CCSL 31B, 254–255; WSA 2/2, 211: *multorum manibus sine dubio tradetur.*

<sup>27</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.3; CCSL 31B, 255; WSA 2/2, 211: *eximius Hipponensis regionis possessor et dominus praesens.*

<sup>28</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 136.3; CCSL 31B, 255; WSA 2/2, 211: *Sanctitatem tuam sub ironiae adulatione laudaret, [...] minime satisfactum esse contenderet.*

<sup>29</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.1; CCSL 31B, 256; WSA 2/2, 213: *nequaquam iustum esse arbitratus, ut quem ad quaerendum exhortatus ipse fueram, differrem quaerentem.*

<sup>30</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.1; CCSL 31B, 256; WSA 2/2, 213: *ad salutem non huius uitae, [...] sed illam salutem, propter quam adipiscendam et in aeternum obtinendam christiani sumus.*



[*scil.* the dispensation of so great a grace]<sup>31</sup> is a crucial element to be integrated into his reply to Volusianus.

After restating the question as to the virginity of Mary and the miracles, Augustine warns Volusianus against exhibiting overconfidence in the intelligence, experience and learning of Augustine himself. He also claims the necessity of ‘the faith without which one does not live a pious and upright life’.<sup>32</sup> Because of the profundity and insight of the Christian writings, he advises the reader that they should always be a beginner: ‘[T]here remain to be understood by those making progress so many things, and things cloaked with so many shadows of mysteries, and there lies hidden so great a depth of wisdom.’<sup>33</sup> Then, from the next section, Augustine considers the problem of the Incarnation. He clearly rejects the view that God is a body. Since God ‘is able to be whole everywhere and to be contained in no place’,<sup>34</sup> God should not be understood from a materialistic point of view. By shifting attention from the sensible to the spiritual, Augustine’s focus on the Word of God offers him a way of comparing its omnipresence with ‘a passing word of a human beings’.<sup>35</sup> On the basis of the reflection that ‘God is great not by mass but by power’,<sup>36</sup> it can be admitted that God was not taken into the body of an infant. Here Augustine makes clear the basis for the line of argument: ‘If a reason is asked for, it will not be miraculous; if an example is demanded, it will not be singular. Let us grant that God can do something that we admit that we cannot search out.’<sup>37</sup>

Next, he proceeds to the second of the objections: ‘[T]he very fact that he relaxes in sleep, is nourished by food, and feels all the human emotions convinces human beings that it is a man whom the Word does not consume but assumes.’<sup>38</sup> Given the assertion that Christ imparts faith to minds and brings them to the contemplation of the truth, he confirms that the mediator between God and human beings unites two natures in one person: ‘The man, of course, was added

<sup>31</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.1; CCSL 31B, 256–257; WSA 2/2, 213: *tantae gratiae dispensatio, quam superbae animulae nihili pendunt.*

<sup>32</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.3; CCSL 31B, 258; WSA 2/2, 214: *fidem [...] sine qua pie recteque non uiuitur.*

<sup>33</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.3; CCSL 31B, 258; WSA 2/2, 214: *tam multa, tamque multiplicibus misteriorum umbraculis opacata intellegenda proficientibus restant, tantaque [...] latet altitudo sapientiae.*

<sup>34</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.4; CCSL 31B, 259; WSA 2/2, 215: *Nouit ubique totus esse et nullo contineri loco.*

<sup>35</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.7; CCSL 31B, 262; WSA 2/2, 216: *uerbum hominis transiens.*

<sup>36</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.8; CCSL 31B, 262; WSA 2/2, 216: *Neque enim mole sed uirtute magnus est deus.*

<sup>37</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.8; CCSL 31B, 263; WSA 2/2, 217: *Hic si ratio quaeritur, non erit mirabile: si exemplum poscitur, non erit singulare. Demus deum aliquid posse, quod nos fateamur inuestigare non posse.*

<sup>38</sup> Aug. Ep. 137.9; CCSL 31B, 263; WSA 2/2, 217: *illud, quod in somnos soluitur et cibo alitur et omnes humanos sentit affectus, hominem persuadet hominibus, quem non consumpsit utique, sed assumpsit.*

to God; God did not withdraw from himself.<sup>39</sup> His account proceeds from the union of soul and body to the Word of God. Augustine brings together the threads of the argument and points to the importance of the Incarnation: '[T]he Word came to human beings as a source of teaching and of help for attaining everlasting salvation. [...] He came as a source of help, [...] without the grace of faith, which comes from him, no one can conquer his sinful desires and be purified by pardon and forgiveness.'<sup>40</sup>

Augustine deals with the third of the objections about the miracles of Christ, which, according to his opponents, were not greater than those performed by the Jews and the magicians of the Egyptians. Although it is explicitly admitted that Christ performed miracles of his own, 'to be born of a virgin, to rise from the dead, to ascend into heaven',<sup>41</sup> those who did not believe the miracles of Christ regarded them as unworthy of him. Augustine suggests the futility of further discussion and debate on these problems. As mentioned at the beginning of this letter (§ 3), he reminds Volusianus of the necessity of the faith that 'opens the door for understanding, while unbelief closes it'.<sup>42</sup> Not only the whole history of the Jewish people but also the expansion of the Church of Christ offers the conclusive proof of the truth: 'Christ came; in his birth, life, word, deeds, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension all the predictions of the prophets are fulfilled.'<sup>43</sup> The twofold commandment 'upon which Christ says that the whole law and the prophets depend',<sup>44</sup> that is, love of God and of neighbour, is confirmed. 'In these commandments' there is the welfare of the society. He adds that in the simplicity of the scriptural language, 'it [*scil.* scripture] not only feeds them with the evident truth but also exercises them with the hidden truth, [...] evil minds are salutarily corrected, little minds are fed, and great minds are delighted'.<sup>45</sup> His attention is, therefore, directed to spiritual care, for the

<sup>39</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.10; CCSL 31B, 264; WSA 2/2, 218: *homo quippe deo accessit, non deus a se recessit.*

<sup>40</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.12; CCSL 31B, 266–267; WSA 2/2, 219: *uenit hominibus magisterium et adiutorium ad capessendam sempiternam salutem: [...] adiutorium autem, quod sine gratia fidei, quae ab illo est, nemo potest uincere concupiscentias uitiosas et, [...] ueniali remissione purgari.*

<sup>41</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.13; CCSL 31B, 268; WSA 2/2, 220: *nasci de uirgine, a mortuis resurgere, in caelum ascendere.*

<sup>42</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.15; CCSL 31B, 269; WSA 2/2, 221: *intellectui [...] aditum aperit, infidelitas claudit.*

<sup>43</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.16; CCSL 31B, 270; WSA 2/2, 221: *Venit et Christus, complentur in eius ortu, uita, factis, dictis, passionibus, morte, resurrectione, ascensione, omnia praeconia prophetarum.*

<sup>44</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.17; CCSL 31B, 272; WSA 2/2, 222: *ex quibus Christus dicit totam legem prophetasque pendere.*

<sup>45</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 137.18; CCSL 31B, 272–273; WSA 2/2, 223: *non solum manifesta pascit, sed etiam secreta exercent ueritate [...] His salubriter et praua corriguntur et parua nutriuntur et magna oblectantur ingenia.*

well-being of not only the state but also the individual. And in the closing part of the letter, Augustine asks Volusianus to reply with further questions.

## CONCLUSION

In response to a request from Augustine, Volusianus sent him *Letter 135*, in which he raised questions about the heart of Christian teaching. Although he seems to complete the assignment, Volusianus incorporates another element into his reply: an appreciation of the philosophical investigation of Augustine that is expressed together with a variety of rhetorical devices and a report on the Carthaginian circle. Indeed, it can be accepted that the questions Volusianus presented in the letter were established by the consensus of members of the gathering. It is also admitted that his primary interest is in the art of rhetoric, which he shared with the members of the circle. Marcellinus' complementary letter (*Ep. 136*) would relate to the circumstances in Carthage. Not only did he take up and explain the objections posed by Volusianus, but he also turned the attention of Augustine to the atmosphere of the circle. His comment on the wide circulation of the letter implies that Augustine should be cautious about the way of withdrawing the objection to 'Christian doctrine'.

Another letter (*Ep. 137*) appears to have a double-layered structure in which, for the members of the circle whose primary interest was in the examination of some doubts about Christian teaching, Augustine first had to explain these problems in detail and approach them from diverse angles. Following the advice of Marcellinus, most of this letter would be written to the pagan aristocrats in Carthage as a long apology and defence. At the same time, for his correspondent, Volusianus, Augustine incorporates another kind of message into the letter. At the beginning, he clearly insists that his concern is for the care of the 'proud little souls' and, ultimately, their welfare in the city of God. In so far as Augustine attempted to develop a one-to-one relationship with Volusianus, he asked him to change the perception of Christian teaching. In the body of the letter, he repeatedly and consistently shows Volusianus the way to the truth and faith and, in the concluding part, focuses on the way to the wisdom of Christianity: the twofold commandment and the exercise of the mind by scriptural interpretation. It is very likely that in this subsidiary part of the letter, Augustine sends Volusianus a message about the basis for their shared vision: well-being in the grace of Christ. While both Augustine and Volusianus seem to prepare different scripts for their own interest, Augustine's comments to questions intend to function as a means for the care of the soul.



# 5

## Spiritual Itinerary of the Soul to God in Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine\*

In book eight of his *Confessions*, Augustine described how he became familiar with the story of Antony, decided to imitate him and read a passage from Romans as a message from God. However, the language of the conversion scene includes a Plotinian element. Augustine shows us the incident in the garden at Milan partly in the way that Plotinus chose to explain the ascent of the soul to the divine. This itinerary would not be interpreted as a temporal and spatial movement. According to Plotinus, it is to be realised by opening the interior eye of our mind. He repeatedly emphasises the mode of waking the inner vision within the soul. In his treatise entitled 'On the beautiful' (*Enneads* 1.6), Plotinus clearly states that, along with the soul becoming beautiful and good, it becomes like God. His concern for the soul's liberation from the passions reaches to the crucial point of his discussion about the means and the device for the spiritual vision of inaccessible beauty.

'Let us flee then to the beloved Fatherland': this is the soundest counsel. But what is this flight? How are we to gain the open sea? For Odysseus is surely a parable to us when he commands the flight from the sorceries of Circe or Calypso—not content to linger for all the pleasure offered to his eyes and all the delight of sense filling his days. The Fatherland to us is There whence we have come, and There is The Father. What then is our course, what the manner of our flight? This is not a journey for the feet; the feet bring us only from land to land; nor need you think of coach or ship to carry you away; all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see; you must close the eyes and call instead upon

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another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that the flight of the soul to God occurred in both Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine of Hippo. Although Augustine's use of Eastern patristic literature and his relationship with Greek patristic writers have been examined, this relationship to them may seem ambiguous.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I summarise the characteristics of Gregory and Augustine's descriptions of the soul's journey to God, from the viewpoint of how they employ the Plotinian language. I then consider the similarities and differences of these passages, thereby suggesting the possibility that Augustine was in some way affected by Gregory's treatment of the spiritual itinerary.

#### GREGORY OF NYSSA: *DE ORATIONE DOMINICA*

In a sequence of five homilies, *De oratione dominica*, directed to the masses of the faithful, Gregory of Nyssa interprets the Lord's Prayer in each of its invocations. Although there is still uncertainty about the date of composition of this work, it seems highly likely that he began writing it around 380, when his writing activities were becoming more productive and fruitful.<sup>3</sup> After emphasising the necessity of prayer in its soteriological dimension in the opening homily, he proceeds to the explanation of the invocation, *Our Father, who art Heaven*, in the second homily. It is interesting to note that, with specific attention to both the parable of the prodigal son and his confession in the gospel of Luke, Gregory emphasises the kindness of the father as a factor in demanding the return of the soul to our 'beautiful fatherland'.

Thus the return of the young man to his Father's home became to him *the occasion of experiencing the lovingkindness of his Father*; for this paternal home is the Heaven against which, as he says to his Father, he has sinned. In the same way it seems to me that if the

<sup>1</sup> Plot. *Enn.* 1.6.8: Henry and Schwyzer, ed., 1, 115–116; MacKenna, trans., 63: *Φεύγωμεν δὴ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα, ἀληθέστερον ἢ τις παρακελεύοιτο. Τίς οὖν ἡ φυγή καὶ πῶς; Ἀναξόμεθα οἷον ἀπὸ μάγου Κίρκης φησὶν ἢ Καλυψοῦς Ὀδυσσεὺς αἰνιττόμενος, δοκεῖ μοι, μείναι οὐκ ἀρεσθεῖς, καίτοι ἔχων ἡδονὰς δι' ὀμμάτων καὶ κάλλει πολλῶι αἰσθητῶι συνών. Πατρὶς δὴ ἡμῖν, ὅθεν παρήλθομεν, καὶ πατὴρ ἐκεῖ. Τίς οὖν ὁ στόλος καὶ ἡ φυγή; Οὐ ποσὶ δεῖ διανύσαι πανταχοῦ γὰρ φέρουσι πόδες ἐπὶ γῆν ἄλλην ἀπ' ἄλλης οὐδέ σε δεῖ ἔππων ὄχημα ἢ τι θαλάττιον παρασκευάσαι, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα ἀφεῖναι δεῖ καὶ μὴ βλέπειν, ἀλλ' οἷον μύσαντα ὄψιν ἄλλην ἀλλάξασθαι καὶ ἀνεγείραι, ἣν ἔχει μὲν πᾶς, χρώνται δὲ ὀλίγοι.*

<sup>2</sup> See Henry 1934; Altaner 1967; Callahan 1967; Courcelle 1968; O'Connell 1994; Heidl 2003.

<sup>3</sup> See Kiria 2010.

Lord is teaching us to call upon the Father in Heaven, He means to remind you of *our beautiful fatherland*. And by thus putting into your mind a stronger desire for these good things, *He sets you on the way that will lead you back to your original country*.<sup>4</sup> [Italics mine]

Gregory follows the Greek philosophical tradition, in particular the Platonic view of the soul and its purification, when engaged in the interpretation of scriptural passages about the avoidance of evil in this world. How does he address the emancipation of the soul from bodily concerns? Using a Platonic passage from the *Theaetetus*: since the evils of this earth are ever present, humans must flee from earth to Heaven. Following this moral exhortation, their flight comprises the step of ‘becoming as like God as possible’. They become ‘like God’ when they become ‘just and pure, with understanding’.<sup>5</sup>

Now the way which leads human nature back to Heaven is none other than that of avoiding the evils of the world by flight; on the other hand, the purpose of fleeing from evils *seems to me precisely to achieve likeness with God. To become like God means to become just, holy, and good and suchlike things*.<sup>6</sup> [Italics mine]

Gregory’s description of attempting to bear resemblance, that is, ‘likeness with God’, seems to be inspired by the passage in Plato. The affirmation in the *Theaetetus* reinterpreted continuously within a Christian context shows us that the goal of the virtuous life is the imitation of God. The flight from the ‘evils of the world’ takes us to the attainment of the various virtues and to the reminiscence of our fatherland that the prayer inspires in us. Nonetheless, it has been clearly articulated by scholars such as Hubert Merki that Gregory develops the theme described here on Plotinus (*Enneads* 1.2.1), not directly on Plato.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Or. dom.* 2; PG 44, 1145A; ACW 18, 42: “Ὡσπερ τοίνυν ἐκεῖ τῆς παρά τοῦ πατρὸς φιλανθρωπίας αἰτία γέγονε τῷ νέῳ ἢ πρὸς τὴν πατρῶαν ἐστὶν ἐπιστροφή (αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ οὐρανὸς εἰς ὃν πεπλημμεληκέναι τῷ πατρὶ λέγει), οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα δοκεῖ μοι διδάσκων ὁ Κύριος τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἐπικαλεῖσθαι Πατέρα, μνήμην σοι ποιεῖσθαι τῆς ἀγαθῆς πατρίδος, ὡς ἂν ἐπιθυμίαν σφοδροτέραν τῶν καλῶν ἐμποιήσας, ἐπιστήσειε σε τῇ ὁδῷ τῇ πρὸς τὴν πατρίδα πάλιν ἐπαναγούσῃ.

<sup>5</sup> Plato *Theaetetus* 176A–B: διὸ καὶ πειρᾶσθαι χρὴ ἐνθῆνδε ἐκέισε φεύγειν ὅτι τάχιστα. φυγῆ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν: ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὄσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι.

<sup>6</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Or. dom.* 2; PG 44, 1145A–B; ACW 18, 42: “Ὁδὸς δὲ ἢ πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν ἀνάγουσα, οὐδεμία τίς ἐστὶν ἄλλη, εἰ μὴ φυγῆ καὶ ἀπόστασις τῶν περιγεῖων κακῶν τῆς δὲ φυγῆς τῶν κακῶν ἐπίνοια, οὐκ ἄλλη μοί τις εἶναι δοχεῖ, πλὴν τῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὁμοιώσεως. Τὸ δὲ ὁμοιωθῆναι θεῷ, τὸ δίκαιόν τε καὶ ὄσιον καὶ ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ τοιαῦτά ἐστι γενέσθαι.

<sup>7</sup> See Merki 1952.

If anyone, as far as in him lies, clearly shows in himself the characteristics of these virtues, he will pass *automatically and without effort* from this earthly life to the life of Heaven. For *the distance between the Divine and the human is not a local one so as to need some mechanical device* by which this heavily weighted earthly flesh should migrate into the disembodied intelligible life.<sup>8</sup> [Italics mine]

Another important point to note is that the return of the soul to the ‘fatherland’, a distinctively Plotinian expression, is defined not as a spatial but rather as an intellectual movement. Gregory does not accept the necessity of any ‘mechanical device’ by which to direct the soul to the higher level of virtuous attainment. His emphasis on the intellectual dimension of the flight shows a close similarity to a treatise of Plotinus entitled ‘On the Beautiful’ (*Enneads* 1.6): after considering the emancipation from the passions (1.6.5), Plotinus raises the question, ‘what (*τρόπος*) must we do? How lies the path (*μηχανή*)?’<sup>9</sup> Following the Plotinian framework for grasping God with our ‘mind’, that is, calling upon ‘vision, which is to be waked within you, a vision (*ὄψιν*)’,<sup>10</sup> Gregory confirms that the soul is brought to the fatherland ‘without effort’ because no means of bodily movement need to be arranged. The deliberate turning to God with the mind itself is only required to be brought to Heaven ‘automatically’.

No; if virtue has really been separated from evil, *it lies solely within the free choice of man to be there where his desire inclines him*. [Italics mine] Since, therefore, the choice of the good is *not followed by any labour*—for possession of the things that are chosen follows the act of choice—you are *entitled to be* in Heaven immediately, [Italics mine] because you have seized God with your mind. Now if, according to Ecclesiastes, *God is in Heaven*, and you, according to the Prophet, *adhere to God*, it follows necessarily that you should be where God is, because you are united to Him. Since then He has commanded in the prayer to call God Father. He tells you to do *nothing less than to become like to your Heavenly Father by a life that is worthy of God*, [Italics mine] as He bids us do more clearly elsewhere when He says: *Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Or. dom.* 2; PG 44, 1145B; ACW 18, 42: Ὦν εἴ τις, ὡς ἔστι δυνατόν, τοὺς χαρακτήρας ἐναργῶς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τυπώσειεν, ἀμογητὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτόματον πρὸς τὸν οὐράνιον χῶρον ἀπὸ τοῦ περιγεῖου μεταστήσεται βίου. Οὐ γὰρ τοπικὴ τοῦ θείου πρὸς τὸ ἀνθρώπινόν ἐστιν ἢ διάστασις, ὥστε τινὸς μηχανῆς τε ἡμῖν καὶ ἐπινοίας γενέσθαι χρεῖαν, τὸ βαρὺ τε καὶ ἔμδριυθές καὶ γεῶδες τοῦτο σαρκίον πρὸς τὴν ἀσώματόν τε καὶ νοερὰν διαγωγὴν μετουκίξειν

<sup>9</sup> See Plot. *Enn.* 1.6.8; Henry and Schwyzer, ed., 1, 115; MacKenna, trans., 62: Τίς οὖν ὁ τρόπος; Τίς μηχανή;

<sup>10</sup> See Plot. *Enn.* 1.6.8; Henry and Schwyzer, ed., 1, 116; MacKenna, trans., 63: οἷον μύσαντα ὄψιν ἄλλην ἀλλάξασθαι καὶ ἀνεγείραι, ἣν ἔχει μὲν πᾶς, χρώνται δὲ ὀλίγοι.

<sup>11</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Or. dom.* 2; PG 44, 1145B–C; ACW 18, 42–43: ἄλλα νοητῶς τῆς ἀρετῆς τοῦ κακοῦ



Thus, Gregory incorporates the ‘free choice of man’ into the flight of the soul. It lies within our power (*ἔξῃστί*) whether we are where God is or exist among the evils of the world. It is noteworthy that Plotinus does not refer to the human will in the treatise (*Enn.* 1.6) where he tells us about the soul’s itinerary to the fatherland. Here, Gregory does not develop the concept of will and only briefly insists that the attainment of virtues depends on the faculty of free choice. However, it would be inappropriate not to observe that discussion about the will and its related terms, such as choice, voluntariness and freedom, is not entirely absent from the treatises of Plotinus.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, for Gregory, the concept of the will and the condition of the human being are closely interrelated, being in particular indispensable for considering the significance of human liberty and its ontological dynamics. Then, with regard to their descriptions of the flight of the soul, what is the most crucial point to be made, especially in Gregory, whose use of and indebtedness to Plotinus are characterised by both verbal correspondences and similarities of thought? The emphasis of the former is on willing (free choice) and of the latter on seeing (vision), but both Plotinus and Gregory regard the spiritual itinerary as being achieved without difficulty. Although Gregory does not exclude the possibility that no evil comes to subsistence outside of the human will, the repeated encouragement to the faithful based on the scriptural passages (Ecclesiastes and the Prophet) is clear. It is in this sense that Gregory’s optimistic affirmation on the return of the soul is to be appreciated.

#### AUGUSTINE: *CONFESSIONS* AND OTHER WRITINGS

Examples indicating how Augustine of Hippo evaluated the flight of the soul may be taken from the *Confessions* (397–401), as well as from other earlier writings, earlier and later, written during the period 386–417. In this section, I look first at the descriptions in both his early and late works, thereby showing a shift from the intellectual to the moral interpretation of the soul’s itinerary. Then, with

*κεχωρισμένης, ἐν μόνη τῇ προαιρέσει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κείται, πρὸς ὅπερ ἂν ἐπικλιθεῖ τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ, ἐν ἐκείνῃ εἶναι. Ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐδεὶς ἔπεται πόνος ἐλέσθαι τὸ ἀγαθὸν (τῷ δὲ ἐλέθει καὶ τὸ τυχεῖν ἔπεται ὃν τις προείλετο), ἔξῃστί σοι εὐθὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ εἶναι, τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῇ διάνοιᾳ λαδόντι. Εἰ γὰρ, καθὼς φησιν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής, Ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, σὺ δὲ τῷ θεῷ, κατὰ τὸν Προφήτην προσεκολλήθης ἀνάγκη πᾶσα τὸν τῷ θεῷ συνημμένον ἐκεῖ εἶναι ὅπου ἐστὶν ὁ θεός. Προστάξας τοίνυν ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ λέγειν πρὸς ἑαυτοῦ τὸν θεόν, οὐδὲν ἕτερον, ἢ ὁμοιοῦσθαί σε τῇ θεοπρεπεῖ πολιτείᾳ τῷ οὐρανίῳ κελεύει Πατρί, καθάπερ καὶ φανερώτερον ἐτέρωθι τὸ τοιοῦτον παρεγγυᾷ, λέγων Γίνεσθε τέλειοι, ὡς καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.*

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Plot. *Enn.* 6.8.1–6: ‘On the Voluntary and the Will’.

the focus on the passages found in the *Confessions*, I examine his approach to the soul's departure and the return to God.

In his earliest extant writings, referred to as the *Cassiciacum Dialogues*, Augustine's *Against the Academicians* is the first work, written during his retirement to a country house near Milan (386), in which he explicitly integrates the return of the soul to Heaven into his concern for 'our life, morality, and spirit'.

The spirit [*animus*] will return more safely to Heaven since it supposes that it will (a) overcome the dangers of all fallacious arguments; (b) triumph over the passions in returning to the region of its origin, so to speak, once truth has been apprehended; and (c) exercise its rule once it has been wedded to moderation in this fashion.<sup>13</sup>

Again, in the fourth Dialogue, *Soliloquies*, he gives further description of the flight of the soul. In the dialogue between Augustine and his own Reason, it is made explicit that 'there is not just one way to her [*scil.* Wisdom].'<sup>14</sup> By using the metaphorical language of the sun and the light, Reason suggests the possibility that each is able to grasp the Wisdom 'according to his soundness and firmness'. It then encourages Augustine to flee from sensible things.

[W]e need complete and perfect wings to fly to that light from this darkness. That light does not deign to reveal itself to those trapped in this prison, unless they are able to break out of the prison and destroy it, and escape to their own higher places.<sup>15</sup>

The bodily eye cannot see the sun 'unless it is healthy (*sanus*)'.<sup>16</sup> The soul is often deceived about its own state of health. As some scholars have pointed out, these interpretations of the soul's flight are expounded in the same language as that employed by Plotinus in his treatise (*Enn.* 1.6 'On the Beautiful'), in particular concerning the flight as an awakening of the power of seeing, along with the related imagery: the wing, the light and the sun. Augustine sets out a highly intellectual framework for the explanation found in the *Enneads* of Plotinus.

<sup>13</sup> Aug. *C. Acad.* 2.9.22; CCSL 29, 30; King, trans., 46: *qui [scil. animus] se superaturum inimicitias omnium fallaciarum et ueritate comprehensa quasi in regionem suae originis rediens triumphaturum de libidibus atque ita temperantia uelut coniuge accepta regnaturum esse praesumit securior rediturus in caelum.*

<sup>14</sup> Aug. *Sol.* 1.13.23; CSEL 89, 35; Paffenroth, trans., 44: *non ad eam una via peruenitur.* See also his critical remarks in *Retract.* 1.4.3.

<sup>15</sup> Aug. *Sol.* 1.14.24; CSEL 89, 37; Paffenroth, trans., 46: *integris perfectisque opus est, ut ad illam lucem ab his tenebris euelemus, quae se ne ostendere quidem dignatur in hac cavea inclusis, nisi tales fuerint, ut ista vel effracta vel dissolute possint in auras sues evadere.*

<sup>16</sup> Aug. *Sol.* 1.14.25; CSEL 89, 37; Paffenroth, trans., 46–47: *nisi sanus.*

Around ten years later, Augustine started writing *On Christian Teaching*, in which he calls attention to the purification of the mind, thus relating the journey towards the fatherland. Affirming the unchangeable truth that the unchangeably wise life is to be preferred to that which is changeable, he indicates the different types of people: those who do not see it are ‘like a blind man in the sun, who cannot be helped by the brightness of such a clear and powerful light shining into his eyes’<sup>17</sup> and those who see but escape from the truth, lose the sharpness and strength of their mind by the ‘habit of living in the shadows cast by the flesh’.<sup>18</sup> They are ‘as it were, blown away from their homeland by the adverse winds of their own perverted characters’.<sup>19</sup> Augustine admonishes the reader to purify their minds in order to ‘enjoy to the full that truth which lives unchangeably’.<sup>20</sup> A mostly intellectual interpretation of the flight is presented here, on the Plotinian pattern in *Enneads* (I.6).

Let us consider this process of cleansing as a trek, or a voyage, to our homeland; though progress towards the one who is ever present is not made through space, but through goodness of purpose and character.<sup>21</sup>

It is noteworthy that he concedes the existence of people who, regardless of their spiritual orientation, deliberately abandon the truth: they are in pursuit of the things that are ‘secondary and inferior to whatever they admit to be superior and more outstanding’.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, they deviate from a rational scheme of behaviour.

The sporadic references to the flight of the soul are also to be found in the relatively late works. For instance, the exposition of Psalm 149, probably preached in 404,<sup>23</sup> explicating the second verse of Psalm 149 and focusing on the eternal life of the ‘true Zion’, speaks about the fatherland to be approached

<sup>17</sup> Aug. *Doctr. chr.* 1.9.9; CSEL 80, 13; Green, trans., 21: *quasi caecus in sole, cui nihil prodest ipsis locis oculorum eius tam clarae ac praesentis lucis fulgor infusus.*

<sup>18</sup> Aug. *Doctr. chr.* 1.9.9; CSEL 80, 13; Green, trans., 21: *consuetudine umbrarum carnalium.*

<sup>19</sup> Aug. *Doctr. chr.* 1.9.9; CSEL 80, 13; Green, trans., 21: *quasi contrariis flatibus ab ipsa patria reperiuntur.*

<sup>20</sup> Aug. *Doctr. chr.* 1.10.10; CSEL 80, 13; Green, trans., 21: *illa veritate perfruendum sit quae incommutabiliter vivit.*

<sup>21</sup> Aug. *Doctr. chr.* 1.10.10; CSEL 80, 13; Green, trans., 23: *Quam purgationem quasi ambulationem quamdam et quasi navigationem ad patriam esse arbitremur. Non enim ad eum qui ubique praesens est locis movemur, sed bono studio bonisque moribus.*

<sup>22</sup> Aug. *Doctr. chr.* 1.9.9; CSEL 80, 13; Green, trans., 21: *posteriora atque inferiora sectantes quam illud quod esse melius atque praestantius confitentur.*

<sup>23</sup> See Hombert 2000, 368. See also Dolbeau, ed. 2009, 508.

'not by swift feet but by love'.<sup>24</sup> Augustine clarifies the means of travel by which people should flee to their home.

Such travelers look not for ships but for wings; let them seize the twin wings of charity. What are charity's paired wings? Love of God and love of our neighbor.<sup>25</sup>

It is the non-intellectual way of understanding that he defines as an appropriate approach to the spiritual itinerary of the soul to God. This is the same with the interpretation offered in Book 9 of *City of God*, which was written by 417. Here, Augustine mentions Plotinus by name and combines passages from *Enneads* I.6.8 ('On the Beautiful') and I.2.8 ('On Virtues') as follows;

What has become of that saying of Plotinus, 'We must flee to our beloved country. There the Father is, and there is everything. Where shall we take ship? How can we flee? By becoming like God.' If man comes near to God in proportion as he grows more like him, then unlikeness to God is the only separation from him, and the soul of man is estranged from that immaterial, eternal and unchangeable being in proportion as it craves for things that are temporal and changeable.<sup>26</sup>

He emphasises that human beings require a mediator not like a demon but like Christ, who can 'render us truly divine assistance for our purification and liberation'.<sup>27</sup> As regards his concern for the mediator, it is worth noting that 'the man Christ Jesus' has remained on the highest level, 'not by spatial remoteness from us'.<sup>28</sup> This expression is the same as that used in *On Christian Teaching*. Another important expression of the mode of travel is found in a paraphrase from the treatises of Plotinus. Augustine seems to accept the Plotinian definition of the attainment of the blessed life: it consists in 'becoming like God'.

I shall turn my attention to the passages in the first and eighth books of *Confessions*. In book eight, before being involved in the 'tolle lege' incident in a Milanese garden, Augustine continued his struggle against the fragmented state

<sup>24</sup> Aug. *En. Ps.* 149.5; CSEL 95/5, 276; WSA 3/20, 496: *dilectione, non pedibus corporis.*

<sup>25</sup> Aug. *En. Ps.* 149.5; CSEL 95/5, 276; WSA 3/20, 496: *non quaerant naves, sed pennas; duas alas caritatis apprehendant. Quae sunt duae alas caritatis? Dilectio dei et proximi.*

<sup>26</sup> Aug. *Ciu. dei* 9.17; CCSL 47, 265–66; Bettenson, trans., 364: *Vbi est illud Plotini, ubi ait: « Fugendum est igitur ad carissimam patriam, et ibi pater, et ibi omnia. Quae igitur, inquit, classis aut fuga? Similem Deo fieri. » Si ergo deo quanto similior, tanto fit quisque propinquior: nulla est ab illo alia longinquitas quam eius dissimilitudo. Incorporali uero illi aeterno et incommutabili tanto est anima hominis dissimilior, quanto rerum temporalium mutabiliumque cupidior.*

<sup>27</sup> Aug. *Ciu. dei* 9.17; CCSL 47, 266; Bettenson, trans., 364: *mundandis liberandisque nobis uere diuinum praebeat adiutorium.*

<sup>28</sup> Aug. *Ciu. dei* 9.17; CCSL 47, 266; Bettenson, trans., 364: *non locorum distantia.*

of his will. It has been suggested by some scholars that, in the story of his internal conflict, Augustine speaks about the flight of the soul from the Plotinian point of view.

By neither by ship nor chariot nor on foot had I progressed any nearer to it [*scil.* Heaven] than I had gone from the house to the place where we were sitting. To progress towards it—indeed, to attain it—was nothing other than the will to progress, but with a will that was strong and whole throughout;<sup>29</sup>

As had been mentioned in his earlier writings, he follows closely the views and language expressed in a treatise of Plotinus (*Enneads* I.6). However, in contrast to Plotinus' stress on the power of seeing, let us note Augustine's view on what he defines as a faculty for arrival at the final destination, a faculty that he regards as indispensable to making this journey, that is, a united will 'that was strong and whole throughout'. We also find the description of the flight of the soul in the first book of the *Confessions*, in which the prodigal parable in the gospel of Luke is interpreted from the Plotinian point of view.

The road that leads us from you and back to you again is not one that we can measure, or tread with our feet. The younger son in your story did not need horses or chariots or ships when he set out to squander his wealth in a far country, he did not grow wings and fly off in view of all, or go striding on his way. But you, his father, who had been kind in giving him his inheritance when he set out, were kinder still when he came home empty-handed. The far country into which he departed was a state of mind, ruled by lusts, full of darkness, and cut off from your face.<sup>30</sup>

This interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son lies in fact at the heart of Augustine's view of the flight of the soul. Although he ostensibly adapted the passage of Plotinus after he had heard Ambrose's sermon *De Isaac uel anima*, in around 386, he does not share their view in two respects. While Plotinus considers the return from an odyssey to be a symbol of the soul's wandering, Augustine omits the reference to this Homeric imagery and substitutes the

<sup>29</sup> Aug. *Conf.* 8.8.19; BA 14, 48; Burton, trans., 176: *et non illuc ibatur nauibus aut quadrigis aut pedibus, quantum saltem de domo in eum locum ieram, ubi sedebamus. nam non solum ire uerum etiam peruenire illuc nihil erat aliud quam uelle ire, sed uelle fortiter et integre, [...].*

<sup>30</sup> Aug. *Conf.* 1.18.28; BA 13, 322.324; Burton, trans., 24: *non enim pedibus aut spatii locorum itur abs te aut reditur ad te, aut uero filius ille tuus minor equos uel currus uel naves quaesiuit aut auolauit pinna uisibili aut moto poplite iter egit, ut in longinqua regione uiuens prodige dissiparet quod dederas proficiscenti dulcis pater, quia dederas, et egeno redeunti dulcior: in affectu ergo libidinoso, id enim est tenebroso atque id est longe a uultu tuo.*

prodigal son for Odysseus. He also exchanges the Plotinian (and Ambrosian) focus on vision for his consistent concern with the will. These points seem to be understood as his contributions to the pagan framework for the flight of the soul.

## CONCLUSION

While mentioning the name of Plotinus only in an exceptional case, Augustine repeatedly and clearly adapts passages from the *Enneads*, especially the treatise 'On the Beautiful', to the flight of the soul. There is agreement among scholars that Augustine's treatment was significantly affected by Plotinus, although further investigation is required to determine which passages. Particularly in his early works, it is clear that Augustine defines the flight as an awakening of the inner vision, thereby using the intellectual approach taken in the *Enneads*. His concern for the purification of the mind is in fact replaced by the attention to the bifurcation of the human will. However, along with the development of Augustine's view of the soul's flight, there remain several similarities in terminology. This is the same with the influence of Plotinus on Gregory's exposition of the Lord's Prayer. In his view of the soul's return to the fatherland, Gregory defines the final step as that of 'becoming like God' based on a treatise of Plotinus (*Enneads* 1.2). As regards the focus on the intellectual mode of the flight, his explicit indebtedness to another treatise (*Enneads* 1.6) is acknowledged. Gregory was also primarily affected by the Plotinian theme of flight in his treatises.

The question of how far Augustine was influenced by Gregory in his view of the flight of the soul is one that has been difficult to determine. The basis for our approach to the possibility of Gregory's influence on Augustine is the fact that both Gregory and Augustine combine the ancient story of the soul's wandering with the prodigal parable. For Gregory, it seems appropriate that this parable is connected with his interpretation of the prayer. Both imply the 'fatherland' and the soul's return to God. Thus, he brings together the earthly father and the heavenly father. In *Confessions*, where Augustine inserts the Lucan parable into the Plotinian view of the soul's flight, the prodigal son appears abruptly and his father is absent. His father is merged with the heavenly father whose kindness and generosity are clearly confirmed. It seems likely that Augustine has in mind the Gregorian way of uniting the two fathers. Another important point to consider is the similarity of expressions given by Gregory and Augustine. With regard to the departure and the return of the soul, Augustine refers to spatial

distances: ‘the road [...] is not one that we can measure’.<sup>31</sup> While Plotinus does not offer any equivalent to the phrase, we see the similar language in the passage of Gregory: ‘local one’.<sup>32</sup> It is noteworthy that, again in his later work, Augustine states that the mediator has remained on the high, ‘not by spatial remoteness’.<sup>33</sup> This expression is also very similar to that of Gregory. In relation to several slight similarities, such as the repetition of the intensifying phrase both in Augustine’s *Confessions*: ‘*nihil erat aliud quam*’<sup>34</sup> and in Gregory’s *De oratione dominica*: ‘*οὐδεμία τις ἐστὶν ἄλλη εἰ μὴ*’,<sup>35</sup> and the absence of the ‘difficulty’ in Gregory’s *De oratione dominica*: ‘*πόνος*’,<sup>36</sup> further investigation is needed.

It may be that, before engaging in his *Confessions*, Augustine was affected in some way by Gregory’s interpretation of the flight of the soul and the prodigal parable. It is also very likely that, in *De sermone domini in monte* (393), the exegetical legacy (including Gregory’s *De beatitudinibus*, probably written before 378) lies behind Augustine’s understanding of the Matthaean beatitudes.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps, before his ordination into the priesthood in 391, he knew some passages from *De oratione dominica*. Further investigation into some undetermined sources of Augustine’s exposition of the flight of the soul is required, however.

<sup>31</sup> Aug. *Conf.* 1.18.28: *spatiis locorum*. See n. 30 above.

<sup>32</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Or. dom.* 2: *τοπικὴ διάστασις*. See n. 8 above.

<sup>33</sup> Aug. *Ciu. dei* 9.17: *locorum distantia*. See n. 28 above.

<sup>34</sup> Aug. *Conf.* 8.8.19. See n. 29 above.

<sup>35</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Or. dom.* 2. See n. 6 above.

<sup>36</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Or. dom.* 2. See n. 11 above.

<sup>37</sup> See Kamimura 2015.





# 6

## Deification and the Foundation of Spiritual Progress in John Chrysostom and Augustine\*

From the beginning of the Patristic period, following the classical traditions of philosophical therapeutic discipline, the discourse of deification (*θέωσις* or *θεοποίησης*, literally, 'being made God') was to play a crucial part in the holistic care of the intellectual, moral and spiritual growth known as psychagogy (spiritual guidance for the direction of the soul).<sup>1</sup> By the late second century, the Christian language of the transformative union of divinity and humanity became commonplace with Irenaeus of Lyon. He interpreted the 'gods' in Psalm 82:6 as an imitator of God who became a god, with reference to the Pauline 'adoption'.<sup>2</sup> While in the sixth century the first 'strict' definition of deification was given by Dionysius the Areopagite, who confirmed that '[n]ow the assimilation to, and union with, God, as far as attainable, is deification',<sup>3</sup> it is possible to chart the impact on the teaching of deification in the fourth and fifth centuries in the eastern and western Mediterranean.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I shall examine the ways in which

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<sup>1</sup> See Kolbet 2010, 7–9 and 41–46; Malherbe 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.6.1. For the discussion of Psalm 82:6 by Irenaeus, see Russell 2004, 105–110. See also Schnurr 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *Hier. ecl.* 1.3; PG 3, 376A; trans. Parker, 71: *ἡ δὲ θέωσις ἐστὶν ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀφομοίωσις τε καὶ ἔνωσις.*

<sup>4</sup> For the overview of the teaching of deification in the fourth and fifth centuries, see Lot-Borodine 1970; Gross 2002; Russell 2004; and Meconi 2013.

John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo dealt with the teaching of deification and how they gave voice to a theological investigation and considered the basis for their view of human perfection.

### JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Along with the Orthodox emphasis on the salvific-economic mission of the Son of God, John was deeply concerned about human participation in the divine. Arising from his interest in the pedagogical method by which the Word leads humans to salvation, this would be described as the deification (*θέωσις* or *θεοποίησις*) of humanity. In this regard, John's view of deification clearly stands in the tradition of the Eastern Church. However, given the scarcity of the use of deification language, critical observations have been made about a lack of interest in the ethical and soteriological discourse of John's writings.<sup>5</sup> The issue concerns whether or not his writings support the assertion by some scholars that Antiochenes were unconcerned about the theme of deification.

In his eighth *Homily* on Genesis, John deals with Genesis 1:26, 'Let us make a human being in our image and likeness' (*Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν, καὶ κατ' ὁμοίωσιν*).<sup>6</sup> With reference to the following passages, he interprets the 'image' (*εἰκὼν*) and the human being as follows.

So 'image' refers to the matter of control, not anything else, in other words, God created the human being as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than the human being, under whose authority everything falls.<sup>7</sup>

As it was for Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, so for John the 'image' is coupled with the notion of rule and authority.<sup>8</sup> It is clearly admitted that the meaning of the *εἰκὼν* is discerned by exploring what is most important to Christians, that is, union with God. John interprets the text for God's teaching that leads to a virtuous way of life.<sup>9</sup> In *Homily* 9, the interpretation moves on to

<sup>5</sup> Gross 2002, 200 and 206; Russell 2004, 237; and Lai 2010, 141–142.

<sup>6</sup> See John Chrys. *Hom. Gen.* 8 9–10; PG 53, 72d–73a; FC 74, 110–111.

<sup>7</sup> John Chrys. *Hom. Gen.* 8 9; PG 53, 72; FC 74, 110: *Κατὰ τὴν τῆς ἀρχῆς οὖν Εἰκόνα φησὶν, οὐ κατ' ἕτερόν τι καὶ γὰρ πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἄρχοντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐδημιούργησεν ὁ Θεός, καὶ οὐδὲν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐστὶ τούτου μείζον, ἀλλὰ πάντα ὑπὸ τὴν ἐξουσίαν τὴν τούτου τυγχάνει.*

<sup>8</sup> See McLeod 1999, 59–61.

<sup>9</sup> For the tension between Gen. 1:26 (the first creation account) and 2:7 (our origin is dust), in particular the humble truth of divine revelation in these passages which reconciles divine love for humanity with the virtue of humility, see Rylaarsdam 2014, 124–127.

the aspect of human power, where the ‘likeness’ (ὁμοίωσις) is essentially used to denote the potential to become like God.

As the word ‘image’ indicated a similitude of command, so too ‘likeness’, with the result that we become like God to the extent of our human power (κατὰ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην ὁμοίους ἡμᾶς γίνεσθαι Θεῷ)—that is to say, we resemble him in our gentleness and mildness and in regard to virtue, as Christ also says, ‘Be like your Father in heaven.’<sup>10</sup>

Echoing the tradition of the Alexandrians and Cappadocians,<sup>11</sup> the stress is placed on the distinction between the ‘image’ of God and the human potential for divine likeness. John’s employment of the phrase ‘to the extent of our human power’ reminds us of the framework taken by Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromata*, where the distinction between the image and likeness of God enabled him to make the ascetic interpretation of the soul’s ascent to divine likeness. By the fourth century, for example, both Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus accepted the view that ‘so far as is possible with human nature’, Christians should ‘be made like unto God’,<sup>12</sup> accompanied by moral efforts to lead them upward. Thus, while sharing a similar interpretation with the Antiochenes, John’s indebtedness to the Alexandrian tradition seems to be clear with regard to the spiritual guide to a heavenly way of life.

While in his Genesis homilies attributing the ‘image’ exclusively to the male (ἀνῆρ) by reference to I Corinthians 11:7–12, in his third *Homily* on Colossians, John’s exegesis of Genesis 1:26 provides a common frame of human progression, that is, the position of both male and female in common. Within the Colossians text, John reaches 1:15–16, where Paul confirms that Christ is the exact image of God, thus being entirely divine.<sup>13</sup>

Paul, discoursing as we showed of the dignity of the Son, says these words: ‘Who is the Image of the invisible God.’ Whose image then will you have Him be? God’s? Then he is exactly like the one to whom you assign Him. For if as a man’s image, say so, and I will have done with you as a madman. But if as God and God’s Son, God’s image, he

<sup>10</sup> John Chrys. *Hom. Gen.* 9 7; PG 53, 78; FC 74, 120: Ὡσπερ Εἰκόνα εἶπε τὴν τῆς ἀρχῆς δηλῶν εἰκόνα, οὕτω και Ὁμοίωσιν, ὥστε κατὰ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην ὁμοίους ἡμᾶς γίνεσθαι Θεῷ, κατὰ τὸ ἡμερον λέγω και πρᾶον ἐξομοιοῦσθαι αὐτῷ, και κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἀρετῆς λόγον, ὥσπερ και ὁ Χριστός φησι, Γίνεσθε ὁμοιοι τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

<sup>11</sup> See Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 2.125.4–5; and Basil *Spir. s.* 1.2.

<sup>12</sup> Basil *Spir. s.* 1.2; PG 32, 70B; NPNF 2.8, 2: ὅτι πρόκειται ἡμῖν ὁμοιωθῆναι Θεῷ, κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπου φύσει. See also Gregory of Nazianzus *Oratio* 4 71; Basil *Spir. s.* 15.35–36; *Homiliae in Psalmos* 33.3; PG 29, 357C and 44.2; PG 29, 389C. Cf. Russell 2004, 211–212.

<sup>13</sup> For John’s teaching of Christ’s divinity, see Lawrenz III 1987.

shows the exact likeness. [...] For an image, so far as it is an image, even amongst us, ought to be exactly similar, as, for example, in respect of the features and the likeness.<sup>14</sup>

Human salvation will be attained by the highest perfection of humanity. Provided that Christ is the image of God in which Adam was created, the salvation can be defined as the restoration of humanity into the ‘exact image’ of God. Paul’s words in Colossians 3:9–10 (‘Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him’)<sup>15</sup> confront John with the contrast between the corruption of human nature and human nature in its original state.<sup>16</sup>

for ever as he farther advances, he hasteneth (*ἐπιέγεται*) not on to old age (*γῆρας*), but to a youthfulness (*νεότητα*) greater than the preceding. For when he hath received a fuller knowledge, he is both counted worthy (*ἀξιοῦται*) of greater things, and is in more perfect maturity (*ἀκμάζει*), in higher vigor (*ἰσχύει*); and this, not from youthfulness alone, but from that ‘likeness’ also, ‘after’ which he is. Lo! the best life is styled a *creation, after the image of Christ*: for this is the meaning of, ‘after the image of Him that created him,’ for Christ too came not finally to old age (*οὐ πρὸς γῆρας ἐτελεύτησεν*), but was so beautiful as it is not even possible to tell.<sup>17</sup> [Italics mine]

Paul’s statement of the ‘new man’ becomes the focus of John’s view of the perfection of the likeness of God. John’s attention is devoted not only to the acquisition of a ‘fuller knowledge’ from the moral viewpoint, but also to a ‘creation, after the image of Christ’. It is made explicit that Christ ‘came [...] to a youthfulness’. This implies that the process of Christ’s recapitulation as a

<sup>14</sup> John Chrys. *Hom. Col.* 3; PG 62, 317, 318; NPNF 1.13, 270: *Περὶ τῆς τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἀξίας διαλεγόμενος ὁ Παῦλος ταῦτά φησιν, ὡς περ καὶ ἀπεδείξαμεν Ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου. Τίνος οὖν αὐτὸν οἶε λέγειν εἰκόνα εἶναι; Εἰ μὲν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καλῶς Θεὸς γὰρ καὶ Θεὸς Υἱὸς Θεοῦ δὲ εἰκὼν τὸ ἀμαράλλακτον δείκνυσιν [...] Τὴν γὰρ εἰκόνα, καθὸ ἐστὶν εἰκὼν, καὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν ἀπαράλλακτον δεῖ εἶναι, ὅσον τῶν χαρακτήρων καὶ τῆς ὁμοιώσεως.*

<sup>15</sup> John Chrys. *Hom. Col.* 8; PG 62, 352; NPNF 1.13, 294: *Μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους. Ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν.*

<sup>16</sup> See Lai 2010, 147 n. 58. See also *Homiliae in epistulam ad Romanos* 13.19.

<sup>17</sup> John Chrys. *Hom. Col.* 8; PG 62, 353; NPNF 1.13, 295: *ὄσφ γὰρ ἂν προῖη, οὐ πρὸς γῆρας ἐμείγεται, ἀλλὰ πρὸς νεότητα μείζονα τῆς προτέρας. Ὅταν γὰρ πλείονα λάδῃ τὴν γνώσιν, καὶ μᾶλλον μειζόνων ἀξιοῦται, καὶ μᾶλλον ἀκμάζει, καὶ μᾶλλον ἰσχύει, οὐχ ἀμὸ τῆς νεότητος μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ εἶδους πρὸς ὃ ἐστίν. Ἴδου κτίσις ἢ ἀρίστη μοιτεία λέγεται. Κατ’ εἰκόνα Χριστοῦ τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι, κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐ πρὸς γῆρας ἐτελεύτησεν, ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἦν καλὸς, ὡς μηδὲ εἶναι εἰπεῖν.*

human being was executed. Thus, in the correlation between the completion of Christ's work and encouragement to the ongoing spiritual progress, the renewal of humanity is confirmed in a participation in the 'likeness' of Christ as *νέος*, defined as a continual deepening and formation of a Christian way of life.

#### AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

In contrast to its prominence within the tradition of the Eastern Church, concern with the teaching of *deificatio* (*θέωσις*) seems not to be strongly expressed in the corpus of Augustine's writings. That said, despite the assumed distinction between the Eastern and Western theology with regard to this theme, seminal articles (written by Victorino Capánaga and Gerald Bonner) have directed our attention to the problem of deification in Augustine's works.<sup>18</sup> Following careful examination of Augustine's use of deification language, some scholars have given a total of eighteen instances, as well as a philosophical and theological perspective that is indispensable to finding an approach to the locus of deification in Augustine's thought.<sup>19</sup> In his treatment of deification, Augustine shows how this language is integral and inseparable from the themes he explores such as the problems of creation, sanctification, Christology and soteriology.

His earliest reference to deification is found in his letter, written around in 388–390, addressed to his close friend Nebridius. Augustine established a firm friendship with Nebridius, who shared his decision to lead a monastic life, of sorts, with a group of devout laymen in North Africa. He had followed Augustine to Milan, where they experienced the crucial period of his conversion. At the time when they entered into correspondence (*Epp.* 3–14), Nebridius had remained in Carthage and Augustine, now as a baptised Christian, had settled a community for the realisation of his ideal of a monastic way of life. In his reply to Nebridius, Augustine warns him that the planning of this kind of dangerous journey was inappropriate for 'a man who ponders that one last journey, which is called death, the only one, as you understand, that we should truly ponder'.<sup>20</sup> His advice is that Nebridius should avoid involvement in public affairs and seek to enjoy the break away from 'a life of busyness'.

<sup>18</sup> Capánaga 1954; Bonner 1986.

<sup>19</sup> For the analysis of Augustine's eighteen instances of the deification language, see Puchniak 2006; Meconi 2013, 79–134.

<sup>20</sup> *Aug. Ep.* 10.2; CCSL 31, 24; WSA 2/1, 33: *hominis, de illa una ultima quae mors uocatur cogitantis, de qua uel sola intellegis uere esse cogitandum.*

But neither to those who are swept off to such administrative positions by the love of temporal honour nor to those who seek a life of busyness, when they are not holding office, do I think this great good is granted, namely, that amid uproar and restless comings and goings they achieve the familiarity with death that we are seeking. For in leisure both of them would be permitted to become godlike. [...] Since you have often experienced the pleasure of the life of the mind when it dies to a love that is bodily, will you, then, deny that the whole of human life can become free from fear so that it is rightly called wise?<sup>21</sup>

In the argument that the phrase, ‘in leisure [...] to become godlike,’ that is, to achieve deification in a life of scholarly retreat, is derived from Porphyry’s *Sententiae*, Augustine’s use of deification is taken to be in a purely philosophical.<sup>22</sup> However, while, the engagement with Neoplatonic texts draws his attention to a pagan exhortation to the internal recognition of one’s own divinity, it may rather be likely that Augustine considers the ‘leisure’ depicted there as being led to a Christian way of life.<sup>23</sup> In the contemporary treatise *True Religion* (in 390, written before he was ordained to the priesthood in 391), Augustine insists that the quest for communion with God must be constructed ‘in simplicity of heart’.<sup>24</sup> Approvingly citing Psalm 46:10 (‘Be still and acknowledge that I am the Lord’), he entertains the hope that God ‘gave them the right to become sons of God’.<sup>25</sup> This reading of such deification language tells us the circumstances in which Augustine was looking to the future of his new community so as to foster the collaboration between the pursuit of scriptural reading, asceticism and prayer.

Another interesting use of deification language is found in a homily on Psalm 81 ‘God has stood up in the synagogue of gods’, in which he begins with an exposition of a catechetical passage on a recapitulative view of deification. This *Sermon* 23B (= Dolbeau 6) was delivered to the congregation of Carthage

<sup>21</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 10.2–3; CCSL 31, 24–25; WSA 2/1, 33–34: *sed neque his qui ad huiusmodi administrationes temporalis honoris amore raptantur, neque rursus his qui cum sunt priuati negotiosam uitam appetunt, hoc tantum bonum concedi arbitror, ut inter strepitus inquietosque conuentus atque discursus cum morte familiaritatem quam quaerimus faciant; deificari enim utrisque in otio licebat. [...] cum expertus saepe sis quam dulce uiuat, cum amori corporeo animus moritur, negabis tandem totam hominis uitam posse intrepidam fieri, ut rite sapiens nominetur?*

<sup>22</sup> Russell 2004, 329; Meconi 2013, 83–84.

<sup>23</sup> See Foillet 1962; and Teske 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Aug. *Vera rel.* 35.65; CCSL 32, 229; WSA 1/8, 73: *in simplicitate cordis.*

<sup>25</sup> An allusion to John 1:12, in Aug. *Vera rel.* 35.65; CCSL 32, 230; WSA 1/8, 73: *dedit eis potestatem filios dei fieri.*

probably in the winter of 403–404.<sup>26</sup> In the confrontation with pagan practices of idol worship, which were still widespread in the North African community, Augustine had to direct his attention to the status quo of the community and exhorted his audience in Carthage to abandon idolatry. It is interesting to note that, in drawing a sharp distinction between those gods made by the hands of a craftsman and those made by God, that is, ‘god-making God’,<sup>27</sup> he is showing God as the one not only giving life but also deifying.

To what hope the Lord has called us, what we now carry about with us, what we endure, what we look forward to, is well known, I don’t doubt, to your graces. We carry mortality about with us, we endure infirmity, we look forward to divinity. For God wishes not only to vivify, but also to deify us. When would human infirmity ever have dared to hope for this, unless divine truth had promised it?<sup>28</sup>

Augustine encourages the congregation by affirming that while all human beings express a desire for the highest perfection and immortality, God’s promise that they will be made gods can be accomplished. First, he refers to human ‘infirmity’ as the mortality of human beings and shifts the attention of his audience to another possibility of vivifying this infirmity. Then, he confirms that the expectation of a deifying action from God is achievable, because it is not an empty promise and God alone makes it.

Still it has not enough for our God to promise us divinity in himself, unless he also took on our infirmity, as though to say, “Do you want to know how much I love you, how certain you ought to be that I am going to give you my divine reality? I took to myself your mortal reality.” We mustn’t find it incredible, brothers and sisters, that human beings become gods, that is, that those who were human beings become gods. [...] The Son of God became a son of man, in order to make sons of men into sons of God.<sup>29</sup>

The emphasis on the fulfilment of God’s promise leads to a vision of the future for his congregation: God becomes one of them. Augustine explains perfect

<sup>26</sup> See Dolbeau 2009, 452–454.

<sup>27</sup> *Serm.* 23B (= Dolbeau 6).2; Dolbeau, ed., 460; WSA 3/II, 38: *deus deificator*.

<sup>28</sup> *Serm.* 23B (= Dolbeau 6).1; Dolbeau, ed., 459; WSA 3/II, 37: *Ad quam spem uocauerit nos dominus deus noster, quid modo geramus, quid toleremus et quid expectemus, notum esse non dubito caritati uestrae. Gerimus mortalitatem, toleramus infirmitatem, expectamus diuinitatem. Vult enim deus non solum uiuificare, sed etiam deificare nos. Quando hoc sperare humana infirmitas auderet, nisi diuina promitteret ueritas?*

<sup>29</sup> *Serm.* 23B (= Dolbeau 6).1; Dolbeau, ed., 459; WSA 3/II, 37: *Parum tamen fuit Deo nostro promittere nobis in se diuinitatem, nisi et nostram susciperet infirmitatem, tamquam dicens: ‘Vis nosse quantum te diligam, quam certus esse debeas daturum me tibi diuinum meum? Accepi mortale tuum’. Non nobis uideatur incredibile, fratres, deos fieri homines, id est <ut> qui homines erant dii fiant. [...] Filius dei factus est filius hominis, ut filios hominum faceret filios Dei.*

humanity as the means by which God assumes the deification of human infirmity to god-like existence. In the combination of deification language and the Pauline form of adoption, it is proclaimed that what was already taken with the incarnation will be 'made manifest at a definite time'.<sup>30</sup> The end and the future of the community of the faith are confirmed by the positive aspect of the message of God's deifying activity.

## CONCLUSION

This overview of the teaching of deification in the writings of John and Augustine gives some indication of the prevalent features of their approach to the teaching of deification. Given the paucity of the use of deification language, it is to be remembered that the proper locus for deification is determined by their scriptural interpretation as well as by their interest in a Christian way of life. Aside from their answers to the issue of progress in Christian life, the human potential for divine likeness and Christ's work of recapitulation, there seems to be an indispensable aspect of the discourse of deification that both writers acknowledge in their writings. This is the communal and liturgical setting in which they attempt to open up a new way of constructing the relationship between divinity and humanity in the person of Christ. In fact, several aspects can be discerned in the edification and stimulation of the congregation. In this vein, John and Augustine concurred in representing the teaching of deification within the sacramental life and practice of the faith community. Despite the limited influence of John in the Latin church and Augustine's strong influence, it is as if the listeners were, through the communicative nexus of the letters and homiletic discourse, tied together and encouraged to have hope of things to come.

<sup>30</sup> *Serm.* 23B (= Dolbeau 6).1; Dolbeau, ed., 459; WSA 3/11, 38: *certo tempore apparebit.*



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