Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium

Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen

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Contents

Augustine's Scriptural Exegesis in *De sermone Domini in monte* and the Shaping of Christian Perfection

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1   Introduction

Augustine's ordination into the priesthood (January 391) made a significant and immediate difference in his life. With the approval of his bishop, Valerius, Augustine had obtained a few weeks' sabbatical, during which he began to study the scriptures.[1] By this time Augustine had already written two commentaries on Genesis and some expositions on Psalms, and he started his work as a priest by teaching the catechism.[2] Within two years, the assembled bishops of the African church were listening to Augustine's doctrinal exposition of the creed (October 393).[3] Soon after, he undertook the task of composing his extended exegetical work on the New Testament, *De sermone Domini in monte*.[4] Augustine divides this commentary into two books of almost equal length, the first of which explicates the fifth chapter of Matthew, and the second develops a theology of prayer.

While the importance of Augustine's commentaries on the New Testament has become widely understood, there has been relatively little attention given to this work.[5] It has been eclipsed by his special concerns for the Pauline epistles: "nothing would be more revealing for an understanding of Augustine's

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1   See Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 152. See Augustine, *Serm.* 355.2 (NBA 34.246); and idem, *Ep.* 21.3–4 (NBA 21/1.102).

2   See Augustine, *Serm.* 214 (NBA 32/1.218–34) and 216 (NBA 32/1.248–62).

3   Augustine, *Retr.* 1.17 (NBA 2.100).

4   On the chronological analysis see Almut Mutzenbecher, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: De sermone Domini in monte libros duos*, CCL, vol. 35 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), vii–ix. See also Augustine, *Retr.* 1.19.1 (NBA 2.104).

5   In general on the importance of this work see Domenico Bassi, "Le beatitudini nella struttura del «De sermone Domini in monte» e nelle altre opere di s. Agostino," in *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, vol. 2: *Studi Agostiniani* (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1931), 915–31; and D. Gentili, "Introduzione," in *Il discorso della montagna*, Piccola biblioteca agostiniana, vol. 15 (Rome: Città Nuova, 1991), 5–16.

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theology than a full study of what Paul meant for him."[6] However, it is interesting to note that, around the same time when he endeavoured to write the mutually different kinds of commentary on the Pauline epistles (394–395),[7] he had a continuing interest in the problem of the shaping of Christian perfection. Not only did he argue about the process by which the soul directs itself to God and seeks its own purification, but gave the reader his instruction on how to benefit the spiritual and moral state of mind. In what follows, by focusing on the initial part of his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, I shall examine first Augustine's interpretation of the Matthean beatitudes (Matt 5:3–10) and investigate how his interpretation is remarkably consistent with many of his predecessors in the exegetical tradition. Second, I offer an explanation as to why Augustine attempted to connect the beatitudes with the sevenfold operation of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2–3. Finally, I suggest even more tentatively some significance in how he understood the beatitudes of Matthew according to his view of the prophetical ascent of the soul. It secures a future basis for human perfection.

2   Augustine's Exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount, offered in chapters 5 to 7 of the Gospel of Matthew, is the first of Jesus' five major speeches or extended 'discourses' found in Matthew 5–7; 10; 13; 18; and 22–25. It is explicitly linked with the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6: 20–49, where the beatitudes appear to be abruptly contrasted in an eschatological discourse. We read in Matthew that a programme of virtuous life is crowned by the promise of a heavenly reward.[8] It is noteworthy that the Matthean beatitudes declare 'blessed' some surprising people,[9] and three parts to each saying are consistently maintained: for instance, (1) Blessed are (2) the poor in spirit, (3) for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:3); and

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6   Robert A. Markus, "Augustine's Pauline Legacies," in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, ed. William S. Babcock (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 224.

7   See Daniel Patte and Eugune TeSelle, eds, *Engaging Augustine On Romans: Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation* (Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press, 2002); and Eric Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

8   Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 177. On the Sermon on the Mount see e.g., Dale C. Allison, Jr, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *JBL* 106 (1987): 423–45; and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 1 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991).

9   This is a literary form common in Psalms. See e.g., Ps 1:1; 32:1–2; 41:1; 65:4; 84:4–5; 106:3; 112:1; and 128:1.

(1) Blessed are (2) the meek, (3) for they shall inherit the earth (Matt 5:4). In explaining the Matthean texts in the first book of *De sermone Domini in monte*,[10] after some introductory comments, Augustine immediately focuses on the Matthean beatitudes. First, with the divisions of the sermon that he is interpreting, he attends to certain characteristics that mark a person who is blessed: "can the poor in spirit be understood as those who are humble and fear God— who do not, in other words, possess an inflated spirit."[11] Augustine affirms that the beatitude "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is granted to those who practise the requisite morality, that is, humility and the fear of God. Working his way through the text, he also explains that the beatitude states what it is one would possess if one were to become happy.

> 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth' (Mt 5:4). I believe that the earth referred to here is the one spoken of in the Psalms: 'You are my hope, my heritage in the land of the living' (Ps 142:5). It indicates that the eternal inheritance has a kind of solidity and stability where the soul, possessed of true affection, rests in its own place.[12]

Augustine searches for the hidden meaning and the latent usefulness of 'the earth'. By giving a figurative interpretation of the psalm, he appreciates the spiritual value of 'the earth' from which the soul draws its 'food'. And those who attain to "the life of the wise person who has attained the summit of perfection"[13] are described as follows:

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10   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.1.3–1.2.9 (NBA 10/2.84–88). When engaged in this commentary, Augustine did not accept the Vulgate Gospels. The Augustinian text seems to show the African version in a later stage of its evolution and/or to follow the Old Latin readings. See Jos Mizzi, "The Latin Text of Matt. V–VII in St. Augustine's *De sermone domini in monte*," *Augustiniana* 4 (1954): 450–94. See also Donatien De Bruyne, "Saint Augustin reviseur de la Bible," in *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, vol. 2: *Studi Agostiniani* (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1931), 594–99.

11   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.1.3 (NBA 10/2.84): "intelleguntur pauperes spiritu humiles et timentes Deum, id est non habentes inflantem spiritum." English translation in Michael G. Campbell, Kim Paffenroth, and Roland Teske, *New Testament I and II*, WSA, 1/15 and 16 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2014).

12   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.2.4 (NBA 10/2.86): "*Beati mites, quoniam ipsi haereditate possidebunt terram*, illam credo terram de qua in Psalmis dicitur: *Spes mea es tu, portio mea in terra uiuentium*. Significat enim quandam soliditatem et stabilitatem haereditatis perpetuae, ubi anima per bonum affectum tamquam loco suo requiescit."

13   Ibid., 1.2.9 (NBA 10/2.88): "haec uita consummati perfectique sapientis."

those who order all the affections of the soul and subject them to reason—that is, to the mind and to the spirit—...become the kingdom of God. In that kingdom everything is ordered in such a way that what distinguishes and is surpassing in man rules over those other things...And so that very thing which is outstanding in man, his mind and reason, becomes subject to one who is more powerful, Truth itself, the only-begotten Son of God.[14]

This image of the *sapiens*, fertilised by his fascination with the idea of order, sets the reader a conceptual goal of joining, rather than merely juxtaposing, the eternal and temporal realms. The explanation of perfection provides an understanding of the spiritual and ontological position of human beings between the lower and higher things. It is the natural consequence of Augustine's conception of the 'order', which situates all the things in their proper positions according to the hierarchical system of the universe.[15]

Augustine's exegesis at this stage carefully treats the figurative meaning of the individual beatitude and its ultimate state. Moreover, the virtuousness would be construed as the necessary condition for its future inhabitants of the "most peaceful and ordered kingdom,"[16] for the emphasis on the relationship between the beatitudes and human values continues clearly throughout his exegesis. Augustine regards the exercise of the virtues as the indispensable starting point for the perfection of human life. Hence, he probably attempts to elucidate the morality of those who wish to live in accordance with the Matthean precepts in the present and future.[17]

To appreciate Augustine's exegesis, we need to keep in mind the basic structure of his understanding. Note the repetition of his interpretation on the Sermon on the Mount: first, as mentioned above, he explains the beatitudes respectively and according to the segments of the sermon (1.1.3–1.2.9); then,

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14   Ibid.: "Pacifici...in semet ipsi sunt, qui omnes animi sui motus componentes et subicientes rationi, id est menti et spiritu...fiunt regnum Dei, in quo ita sunt ordinata omnia, ut id quod est in homine praecipuum et excellens, hoc imperet ceteri...atque id ipsum quod excellit in homine, id est mens et ratio subiciatur potiori, quod est ipsa ueritas unigenitus Dei Filius."

15   On order in the early works of Augustine see Émilie Zum Brunn, *Le dilemme de l'être et du néant chez Saint Augustin: des premiers dialogues aux «Confessions»*, Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie, vol. 4, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1984).

16   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.2.9 (NBA 10/2.88): "regno pacatissimo et ordinatissimo."

17   With regard to the optimistic view of human perfection in this work see Brian Dobell, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion: The Journey from Platonism to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 92–93.

he raises concerns about the number and order of the maxims and connects the Matthean beatitudes with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit of Isaiah 11:2–3 (1.3.10–1.4.11); and again, by setting forth the ascending paradigm of the beatitudes, he clarifies the significance of the Matthean texts (1.4.11–12). Why does Augustine come to repeat the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount? Indeed, in his first exegesis, the fifth and sixth beatitudes are explained very briefly (1.2.7), whereas the first and seventh beatitudes are clarified in detail from both the figurative and moral standpoint. Why does Augustine leave the first interpretation incomplete? Before addressing these questions, we shall examine the possible influences of the exegetical tradition on Augustine's explanation.

3   The Main Sources of Augustine's Exegesis

With regard to his New Testament commentary, scholars have considered the possibility of Augustine's dependence on two predecessors' interpretations: one is Ambrose's *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam* and the other is Gregory of Nyssa's *Orationes viii de beatitudinibus*. While the chronological questions concerning both Ambrose's *Expositio* and Gregory's *Orationes* do not permit an exact dating, available evidence suggests that these works were written several years before Augustine wrote his commentary. After his own deliberate revision of many homilies preached over a decade, Ambrose published his *Expositio* before 389–390;[18] and Gregory's *Orationes* are most likely to have been written during the persecution under Valens before 378.[19] Thus, on the provision that he could have read these texts, some scholars have reached a general agreement that Augustine's exegesis in *De sermone Domini in monte*, while not being compliant, follows Ambrose's explanations, whereas some similarities with the Gregorian interpretations require further confirmation.[20] Because

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18   See Giovanni Coppa, "Introduzione," in *Sant' Ambrogio. Opera exegetiche*, vol. 9/1: *Esposizione del vangelo secondo* Luca, SAEMO, vol. 11 (Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 1978), 22–25, esp. 24, nn. 66 and 67; and Tschang, "*Octo Beatitudines*" (PhD diss., Bonn, 1986).

19   See Stuart George Hall, "Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes*: An Introduction to the Text and Translation," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes. An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Paderborn, 14–18 September 1998)*, ed. Hubertus R. Drobner and Albert Viciano, VCSupp, vol. 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 15.

20   On this see Adolf Holl, *Augustins Bergpredigtexegese* (Wien: Herder, 1960); Mutzenbecher, *Sanct Aurelii Augustini*, xiii–xvii; Frederick Van Fleteren, "*Sermone domini in monte, De*," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids,

Augustine seems to have known precious little about the Greek language,[21] it is likely that he did not read Gregory's *Orationes* in translation either. One may conclude that in the North African Christian communities, Gregory's exegesis might have been known through an oral tradition.[22] In what follows, therefore, by focusing on Augustine's commentary on the Matthean beatitudes, I examine the extent to which two theologians—Gregory and Ambrose— exerted influence on the first part of Augustine's exegesis.

3.1   *"Blessed are the Poor in Spirit"* (*Matt 5:3*)

The first beatitude is now connected with a passage from 2 Corinthians by both Gregory and Ambrose. At this point, Augustine does not accept their interpretations. We may begin with Gregory, who writes:

> We learn of two kinds of wealth in scripture, one sought after and one condemned. Sought after is the wealth of the virtues, and blamed, the material and earthly, because the one becomes the property of the soul, the other is bound up with the deceitfulness of perceptible things. . . . The Word seems to me to be using the words *'poor in spirit' to mean 'voluntary humility'*. The model for this is indicated by the Apostle when he speaks of the humility of God, *'who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, so that we by his poverty might become rich'* (*2 Cor 8,9*).[23]

Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 771; Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1173; and Boniface Ramsey, "Introduction," in Campbell, Paffenroth, and Teske, *New Testament I and II*, 13–14.

21   See e.g., Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 15–16.

22   See Van Fleteren, "*Sermone domini in monte, De*," 771. On the rejection of Gregory's influence upon Augustine see Berthold Altaner, "Augustinus und Gregor von Nazianz, Gregor von Nyssa," in *Kleine Patristische Schriften*, ed. Günther Glockmann, TU, Bd 83 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1967), 285.

23   Gregory of Nyssa, *De beat.* 1.3–4 (GNO 7/2.81–83): δύο πλούτους παρὰ τῆς γραφῆς μεμαθήκαμεν, ἕνα σπουδαζόμενον καὶ ἕνα κατακρινόμενον. σπουδάζεται μὲν οὖν ὁ τῶν ἀρετῶν πλοῦτος, διαβάλλεται δὲ ὁ ὑλικός τε καὶ γήϊνος, ὅτι ὁ μὲν τῆς ψυχῆς γίνεται κτῆμα, οὗτος δὲ πρὸς τὴν τῶν αἰσθητηρίων ἀπάτην ἐπιτηδείως ἔχει. . . . δοκεῖ μοι πτωχείαν πνεύματος τὴν ἑκούσιον ταπεινοφροσύνην ὀνομάζειν ὁ λόγος. ταύτης δὲ ὑπόδειγμα τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ πτωχείαν ὁ ἀπόστολος ἡμῖν λέγων προδείκνυσιν, ὃς δι᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐπτώχευσε πλούσιος ὤν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσωμεν. English translation in Hall, "Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes*." The emphasis in this and all subsequent passages is mine.

Ambrose writes:

> *although He was rich, He became poor for our sake* (*cf. 2 Cor 8:9*). Hence, Matthew fully revealed, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' for *a man poor in spirit is not puffed up*, is not exalted in the mind of his own flesh.[24]

As we have noted already, Augustine states:

> can the poor in spirit be understood as those who are humble and fear God—*who do not, in other words, possess an inflated spirit.*[25]

Augustine relies partially upon Ambrose's exposition because he explicitly refers to the Ambrosian definition of the 'poor in spirit'. However, it must be admitted that Ambrose follows Gregory when connecting Matthew 5:3 to 2 Corinthians 8:9. Gregory interprets the passage to explain a real possibility for human nature from the viewpoint of the incarnation of Christ. He discusses the fact that the ideal of the virtuous life is not possible for human nature in this mortal life. God by his Incarnation gave us the divine humility, which we can imitate.[26] The change from the imitation of God to the imitation of Christ is not obvious in Augustine's exegesis. Rather, Augustine accepts the possibility of obtaining this condition in the apostles.[27] It is clear that the Gregorian discovery that the imitation of God is to be found in the humility of Christ has an echo in Augustine's reference to human humility. The distinction between the earthly and heavenly matter appears in both texts. By positing that Augustine read or heard Gregory's homily, we can explain the influence of Gregory upon Augustine's exegesis of this passage of Matthew.

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24 Ambrose, *Exp. in Luc.* 5.53 (SC 45bis.202): "qui cum diues esset, propter nos pauper factus est. Vnde plene Mattaeus aperuit dicens: *beati pauperes spiritu*; pauper enim spiritu non inflatur, non extollitur mente carnis suae." English translation in Theodosia Tomkinson, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke: Saint Ambrose of Milan*, 2nd ed. (Etna, Calif.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2003).

25 See n.11.

26 See Anthony Meredith, "*De beatitudinibus*, Oratio I: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 5,3)," in Drobner and Viciano, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes*, 97–98.

27 Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.4.11 (NBA 10/2.92). See n.14; and Canisius van Lierde, "The Teaching of St. Augustine on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2–3," in *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. Frederik Van Fleteren, Joseph C. Schnaubelt, and Joseph Reino (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 104, n.282.

3.2   *"Blessed are the Sorrowful, for They Shall be Comforted"* (*Matt 5:5*)

Ambrose does not make explicit reference to this passage. Both the explanations of Gregory and Augustine may be considered. Gregory writes:

> so that we may learn what that sorrow is to which *the comfort of the Holy Spirit* is offered. . . . Sorrow consists of a state of mind resentful at the loss of something the heart was set upon, and for it the life of those who enjoy contentment leaves no room. . . . *grief is a painful sense of the loss of things that give happiness.*[28]

Augustine writes:

> *Sorrow is sadness at the loss of what we hold dear.* But those who have turned to God let go of the things which they held dear in this world. They no longer find pleasure in them as they once did . . . *The Holy Spirit* will therefore comfort them, because *he is first and foremost named the Paraclete, or Consoler.*[29]

These explanations of grief and comfort are similar. Grief is the loss of those things that bring about happiness in the temporal life. Augustine's preservation of the 'Paraclete' terminology is probably dependent upon Gregory's concise interpretation of sorrow. In most cases, indeed, the expression used by Augustine of the Holy Spirit refers to his understanding of Mani's identification with the Paraclete.[30] He repeatedly criticises the Manichaean claim from

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28   Gregory of Nyssa, *De beat.* 3.3–4 (GNO 7/2.102–103): ὡς ἂν μάθοιμεν ποίῳ πένθει πρόκειται ἡ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου παράκλησις . . . ὅτι πένθος ἐστὶ σκυθρωπὴ διάθεσις τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπὶ στερήσει τινὸς τῶν καταθυμίων συνισταμένη, ὅπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐν εὐθυμίᾳ διαβιούντων συνίστασθαι χώραν οὐκ ἔχει . . . ὅτι πένθος ἐστὶν αἴσθησίς τις ἀλγεινὴ τῆς τῶν εὐφραινόντων στερήσεως.

29   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.2.5 (NBA 10/2.86): "Luctus est tristitia de amissione carorum. Conuersi autem ad Deum ea quae in hoc mundo cara amplectebantur, amittunt; non enim gaudent his rebus, quibus ante gaudebant . . . Consolabuntur ergo Spiritu Sancto, qui maxime propterea paraclytus nominatur, id est consolator."

30   See e.g., Augustine, *Cont. Fort.* 22 (NBA 13/1.306–10); idem, *Cont. Adim.* 17.5 (NBA 13/2.194–96); idem, *Cont. ep. Man.* 5.6 (NBA 13/2.306–308); 6.7 (NBA 13/2.310–12); 7.8 (NBA 13/2.312–14); 8.9 (NBA 13/2.314–18); 9.10 (NBA 13/2.318–20); and 13.17 (NBA 13/2.328). On the Paraclete see François Decret, "Le problème du Saint Esprit dans le système manichéen," in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 27, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, papers presented at the 11th International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 1991 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 271; and James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 3: *Commentary on Books 8–13* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 97.

the viewpoint of the Catholic understanding of the Trinity and the incarnation. Augustine's exceptional use of 'Paraclete' in *De sermone Domini in monte* would confirm that he was familiar with Gregory's exegesis.

3.3 *"Blessed are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness, for They Shall be Satisfied" (Matt 5:6)*

Gregory and Augustine devote their attention to the passages from John, thereby enabling us to see the significance of their allegorical interpretations.

Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> *'My food is to do the will of my Father'* (Jn 4,34). The will of his Father is clear: he 'wants all people to be saved, and to come to knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2,4). . . . we should hunger for our own salvation; we should thirst for what God wills, which is that we should be saved. How is it possible for us to achieve a hunger of this kind, we have now come to understand through the Beatitude. *The person who longs for the justice of God has found what is truly to be craved*, the desire for which is not satisfied by just one of the ways in which appetite operates . . . *this good has been made also a matter of drinking*, so that the fervour and heat of the passion may be indicated by the feeling of thirst.[31]

Augustine writes:

> Such people he declares to be lovers of that good which is true and steadfast. *They will find satisfaction in that food* of which the Lord himself says, *'My food is to do the will of my Father'* (Jn 4:34), *which is righteousness, and with that water* of which he says that, whoever drinks of it, 'it shall become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life' (Jn 4:14).[32]

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31 Gregory of Nyssa, *De beat.* 4.4 (GNO 7/2.116–17): Ἐμὸν βρῶμά ἐστιν ἵνα ποιῶ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός μου· φανερὸν δὲ τοῦ πατρός ἐστι τὸ θέλημα, ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν . . . πεινάσωμεν τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν, διψήσωμεν τοῦ θείου θελήματος, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ ἡμᾶς σωθῆναι. πῶς οὖν ἔστι τὴν τοιαύτην ἡμῖν κατορθωθῆναι πεῖναν νῦν παρὰ τοῦ μακαρισμοῦ μεμαθήκαμεν. ὁ γὰρ τὴν δικαιοσύνην τοῦ θεοῦ ποθήσας εὗρεν τὸ ἀληθῶς ὀρεκτόν, οὗ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν οὐχ ἑνὶ τρόπῳ τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὄρεξιν ἐνεργουμένων ἐπλήρωσεν . . . νυνὶ δὲ καὶ πότιμον τὸ ἀγαθὸν τοῦτο ἐποίησεν, ἵνα τὸ ἔνθερμόν τε καὶ διακαὲς τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῷ πάθει τῆς δίψης ἐνδείξηται.

32 Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.2.6 (NBA 10/2.86): "Iam istos amatores dicit ueri et inconcussi boni. Illo ergo cibo saturabuntur de quo ipse Dominus dicit: *Meus cibus est ut faciam uoluntatem Patris mei*, quod est iustitia, et illa aqua de qua quisquis biberit, ut idem dicit: *Fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in uitam aeternam.*"

Although Augustine repeatedly refers to the phrases of John 4:14 and 4:34 in his corpus, only here in *De sermone Domini in monte*, as far as I can determine, does he expound on John 4:34 in connection with John 4:14. He offers an allegorical understanding of 'food' and 'water'. The Lord's food is to fulfil the will of God. The Lord's water is to fulfil the divine will of salvation. Thus, in this exegesis, Augustine identifies the justice of God with human salvation. His remark on the understanding of justice and salvation probably goes back to Gregory. Moreover, this allegorical interpretation of food and water is characteristic of Origen. Because Origen's explanations of Matthew 5:6 preserves a close linkage between 'the bread' and 'living water' in his fragmentary Matthean commentary,[33] it seems probable that an overview of the commentaries by both Gregory and Augustine would regard Origen as the source of their allegorical interpretations.

3.4 *"Blessed are the Peacemakers"* (*Matt 5:9*)
Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> The reason why he calls the peace maker a son of God, is that *he becomes an imitator of the true Son who has bestowed these things on human life* ... How then can the distributor of the divine benefits not be blessed, the imitator of the gifts of God, the one who makes his own good deeds resemble the divine generosity? Yet perhaps the Beatitudes does not apply only to the good of others. I think that strictly it is correct to call *'peacemaker' the one who brings to a peacemaker concord the strife within himself of flesh and spirit, the civil war in his nature*, when the law of the body which campaigns against the law of the mind is no longer effective, but *is subjugated to the higher kingdom and becomes a servant of the divine commandments*.[34]

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33   Origen, *Fragmenta in Matthaeum* 83 (GCS 41/1.49). See Robert Louis Wilken, "*De beatitudinibus*, Oratio VIII," in Drobner and Viciano, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes*, 249–50.

34   Gregory of Nyssa, *De beat.* 7.4–5 (GNO 7/2.159–60): διὰ τοῦτο υἱὸν θεοῦ τὸν εἰρηνοποιὸν ὀνομάζει, ὅτι μιμητὴς γίνεται τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ υἱοῦ ὁ ταῦτα τῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ζωῇ χαριζόμενος ... πῶς οὖν οὐ μακάριος ὁ τῶν θείων δωρεῶν διανομεύς, ὁ μιμητὴς τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισμάτων, ὁ τῇ θείᾳ μεγαλοδωρεᾷ τὰς ἰδίας συνεξομοιῶν εὐποιίας; τάχα δὲ οὐ πρὸς τὸ ἀλλότριον ἀγαθὸν μόνον ὁ μακαρισμὸς βλέπει· ἀλλ' οἶμαι κυρίως εἰρηνοποιὸν χρηματίζειν τὸν τὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ στάσιν τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τὸν ἐμφύλιον τῆς φύσεως πόλεμον εἰς εἰρηνικὴν συμφωνίαν ἄγοντα, ὅταν μηκέτι ἐνεργὸς ᾖ ὁ τοῦ σώματος νόμος ὁ ἀντιστρατευόμενος τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοὸς ἀλλ' ὑποζευχθεὶς τῇ κρείττονι βασιλείᾳ ὑπηρέτης γένηται τῶν θείων ἐπιταγμάτων.

Ambrose writes:

> But unless ye first empty your inner heart of every stain of sin, lest dissensions and contentions proceed from your conduct, ye cannot bring the remedy to others. So bring peace from yourself, so that *when you have been a peacemaker, you will bring peace to others.* For how can ye cleanse the hearts of others, unless ye have first cleansed your own?[35]

Augustine writes:

> But *those who order all the affections of the soul and subject them to reason—that is, to the mind and to the spirit—and have subdued the desires of the flesh* are peacemakers within themselves and become the kingdom of God. In that kingdom everything is ordered in such a way that what distinguishes and is surpassing in man rules over those other things which do not resist and which we have in common with the animals. And so that very thing *which is outstanding in man, his mind and reason, becomes subject to one who is more powerful*, Truth itself, the only-begotten son of God.[36]

The exegetical point Gregory adopts and exploits in his commentary is that the 'peacemaker' enjoys the tranquillity of his inner state of mind and of his contact with others. Then, he regards one who establishes the correct order as the 'imitator' of divine nature and as the 'distributor' of divine benevolence. Ambrose focuses on the former aspect of the 'peacemaker',[37] and Augustine refers to the latter feature of the 'peacemaker'.

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35   Ambrose, *Exp. in Luc.* 5.58 (SC 45bis.204): "Sed nisi tu prius interiora tua uacuefeceris ab omni labe peccati, ne dissensiones contentionesque ex adfectu tuo prodeant, non potes aliis ferre medicinam. A te igitur pacem incipe, ut, cum fueris ipse pacificus, pacem aliis feras; quomodo enim potes aliorum corda mundate, nisi tua ante mundaueris?"

36   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.2.9 (NBA 10/2.88): "Pacifici autem in semet ipsis sunt, qui omnes animi sui motus componentes et subicientes rationi, id est menti et spiritui, carnalesque concupiscentias habentes edomitas fiunt regnum Dei, in quo ita sunt ordinata omnia, ut id quod est in homine praecipuum et excellens, hoc imperet ceteris non reluctantibus, quae sunt nobis bestiisque communia, atque id ipsum quod excellit in homine, id est mens et ratio subiciatur potiori, quod est ipsa ueritas unigenitus Dei Filius."

37   On this see Piero Rollero, *La «Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam» di Ambrogio come fonte della esegesi agostiniana* (Turin: Università di Torino, 1958), 38 and n.60.

3.5   *The Arrangement and Order of the Beatitudes*
Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> I think the arrangement of the Beatitudes is like a series of rungs, and it
> makes it possible for the mind to ascend by climbing from one to another.
> If someone has in his mind climbed to the first Beatitude, by a sort of
> necessity of the logical sequence the next one awaits him, even if the say-
> ing at first seems rather odd.[38]
>
>   all of them [beatitudes] are connected with each other because they
> converge and merge towards a single goal.[39]

Ambrose writes:

> Each Evangelist places this [*sc.* theirs is the kingdom of Heaven] as the
> first Beatitude. For it is the first in order, and both the author and genera-
> tion of the virtues.[40]
>
>   Then, see the order … Some think that these are steps of virtues,
> whereby we may ascend from the lower to the highest.[41]
>
>   just as there are increases of virtues, there are also increases of
> rewards … why is the reward equal for the beginners and the per-
> fect? … Thus, the first Kingdom of the Heavens was placed before the
> Saints in the release of the body; the second Kingdom of the Heavens is
> after the Resurrection, to be with Christ. When ye are in the Kingdom of
> the Heavens, then is a progress of mansions (cf. Ioh. 14: 2–3). Although
> there is One Kingdom, there are diverse merits in the Kingdom of the
> Heavens.[42]

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38   Gregory of Nyssa, *De beat.* 2.1 (GNO 7/2.90): δοκεῖ μοι βαθμίδων δίκην ἡ τῶν μακαρισμῶν
      διακεῖσθαι τάξις, εὐεπίβατον τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἀλλήλων ποιοῦσα τὴν ἄνοδον. τὸν γὰρ τῷ πρώτῳ διὰ
      τῆς διανοίας ἐπιβεβηκότα μακαρισμῷ δι' ἀναγκαίας τινὸς τῆς τῶν νοημάτων ἀκολουθίας ὁ μετ'
      ἐκεῖνον ἐκδέχεται, κἂν ὑποξενίζειν δοκῇ παρὰ τὴν πρώτην ὁ λόγος.

39   Ibid., 8.2 (GNO 7/2.163): ὅτι ἔχεται ἀλλήλων τὰ πάντα πρὸς τὸν ἕνα σκοπὸν συννενευκότα τε καὶ
      συμπνέοντα.

40   Ambrose, *Exp. in Luc.* 5.50 (SC 45bis.200): "Primam benedictionem hanc uterque euange-
      lista posuit. Ordine enim prima est et parens quaedam genratioque uirtutum."

41   Ibid., 5.60 (SC 45bis. 204–205): "Vnde igitur ordinem … Hos quidam gradus uolunt esse
      uirtutum, per quos ab ultimis ad superiora possimus ascendere."

42   Ibid., 5.61 (SC 45bis.205): "sicut incrementa uirtutum ita etiam incrementa sunt prae-
      miorum … numquid aequale praemium incipientibus atque perfectis est? … Primum
      ergo regnum caelorum sanctis propositum est in absolutione corporis, secundum reg-
      num caelorum est post resurrectionem esse cum Christo. Cum fueris in regno caelorum,

Augustine writes:

> The eighth stage returns, as it were, to the beginning . . . There are seven
> beatitudes, therefore, which lead to perfection, for the eighth, starting
> again from the outset as it were, adds clarity and shows what has been
> accomplished, so that through these gradations the others may reach
> completion.[43]
>
> The one single reward for all these differently named stages, however,
> is the kingdom of heaven.[44]

Gregory and Ambrose describe the Matthean beatitudes as eight intercon-
nected steps, whereas Augustine calls them the 'seven maxims'. Gregory and
Ambrose do not develop a correspondence between the first and eighth beati-
tudes. It seems likely that they are less interested in expounding a theological
argument than in moving the affections of their hearers and readers.[45] They
share a common exegetical interest in the progressive steps of these beatitudes
and in the ultimate goal of the ascension. Augustine seems to be in agreement
with Gregory and Ambrose on these points.

3.6 *The Significance of the Number Eight*

Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> I would say that it is as well first of all to pay attention in my discourse
> to the meaning of the mystery of the eighth day as it is set out in two
> hymns from the Psalter (Ps 6,1; 11/12,1), and of the purification and legisla-
> tion about circumcision, both of which are observed on the eighth day
> (Lev 12,2–3; Gen 17,12). This number may perhaps have something to do
> with the eighth blessedness, which like a pinnacle of all the Beatitudes
> stands at the highest point of the good ascent. It is there that the prophet

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    tunc processus est mansionum. Etsi unum regnum, diuersa tamen merita sunt in regno
    caelorum."

43   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.3.10 (NBA 10/2.90): "Octaua tamquam ad caput
    redit . . . Septem sunt ergo quae perficiunt; nam octaua clarificat et quod perfectum est
    demonstrat, ut per hos gradus perficiantur et ceteri, tamquam a capite rursus exordiens."

44   Ibid., 1.4.12 (NBA 10/2.92): "Vnum autem praemium, quod est regnum caelorum pro ipsis
    gradibus uarie nominatum est."

45   On this point see Wilken, "*De beatitudinibus*, Oratio VIII," 244 and n.5; Piero Rollero,
    "L'influsso della «Expositio in Lucam» di Ambrogio nell'esegesi agostiniana", in *Augustinus
    Magister: Congrès international augustinien*, vol. 1: *Communications*, CEASA, vol. 1 (Paris:
    Études Augustiniennes, 1954), 212–14.

points to the day of resurrection by the figure of the eighth day; the puri-
fication indicates the return of soiled humanity to its pure and natural
state; the circumcision explains the discarding of dead skins, which we
put on when we were stripped of life after our disobedience (cf. Gen. 3,21);
and here the eighth blessing has the restoration to the heavens of those
who once fell into bondage, but were then called back again from bond-
age to a kingdom.[46]

Ambrose writes:

Ye see that the whole sequence of the Old Law was an image of the
future— . . . through the eighth day of the circumcision the future cleans-
ing of all guilt at the Resurrection was prefigured by His age.[47]

    Matthew revealed the mystic number in those eight. For many Psalms
are written, 'For the eighth' (Ps. 6:1a; 11:1a), and ye receive the command,
'Give a portion to eight' (Eccl. 11:2), perhaps in those blessing; for just as
the eighth is the perfection of our hope, so the eighth is the sum of the
virtues.[48]

Augustine writes:

This eighth maxim, which returns to the beginning and evokes the image
of the perfect man, is perhaps signified by the Old Testament practice

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46 Gregory of Nyssa, *De beat.* 8.1 (GNO 7/2.161–62): ἐγὼ δὲ καλῶς ἔχειν φημὶ πρῶτον ἐκεῖνο
κατανοῆσαι τῷ λόγῳ τί τὸ τῆς ὀγδόης παρὰ τῷ προφήτῃ μυστήριον τῆς ἐν δύο ψαλμῳδίαις
προτεταγμένης, τί δὲ ὁ καθαρισμὸς καὶ τῆς περιτομῆς ἡ νομοθεσία, κατὰ τὴν ὀγδόην ἀμφότερα
τῷ νόμῳ παρατηρούμενα. τάχα τι συγγενὲς ὁ ἀριθμὸς οὗτος πρὸς τὴν ὀγδόην ἔχει μακαριότητα,
ἥτις ὥσπερ κορυφὴ τῶν μακαρισμῶν πάντων ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀκροτάτου κεῖται τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἀναβάσεως.
ἐκεῖ τε γὰρ ὁ προφήτης τὴν ἀναστάσιμον ἡμέραν τῷ τῆς ὀγδόης αἰνίγματι διασημαίνει, καὶ
ὁ καθαρισμὸς τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ καθαρόν τε καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἐπάνοδον τοῦ μολυνθέντος ἀνθρώπου
ἐνδείκνυται, καὶ ἡ περιτομὴ τὴν τῶν νεκρῶν δερμάτων ἀποβολὴν ἑρμηνεύει, ἃ μετὰ τὴν παρακοὴν
τῆς ζωῆς γυμνωθέντες ἐνεδυσάμεθα, καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἡ ὀγδόη μακαριότης τὴν εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς
ἀποκατάστασιν ἔχει τῶν εἰς δουλείαν μὲν ἐκπεσόντων, ἐπὶ βασιλείαν δὲ πάλιν ἐκ τῆς δουλείας
ἀνακληθέντων.

47 Ambrose, *Exp. in Luc.* 2.56 (SC 45bis.97): "Vides omnem legis ueteris seriem fuisse typum
futuri . . . eo per octauum circumcisionis diem culpae totius futura purgatio resurrectionis
praefigurabatur aetate."

48 Ibid., 5.49 (SC 45bis.201): "Ille in illis octo mysticum numerum reserauit. Pro octoua enim
multi scribuntur psalmi, et mandatum accipis octo illis partem dare fortasse benedic-
tionibus; sicut enim spei nostrae octaua perfectio est, ita octaua summa uirtutum est."
See 6.80 (SC 45bis.258); 7.6 (SC 52bis.10–11); and 7.173 (SC 52bis.72–73). See also Rollero, *La
«Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam» di Ambrogio*, 28.

of circumcision on the eighth day and by the Lord's resurrection after the sabbath day, which is both the eighth and the first day, and by the celebration of eight days of rest which we mark in the rebirth of the new man, and by the very number of Pentecost.[49]

Considering the special significance of the number eight, the literary parallels between these texts are unquestionable—the reference to Genesis and Psalms texts; the relevance of the number eight to the perfection of the beatitudes. In spite of the close parallel, it is not necessary to determine that it was Gregory and/or Ambrose's explanations of the number that Augustine used. This is because there existed an arithmetical symbolism, based upon a belief widely recognised in the ancient world, that attributed to special numbers mysterious and symbolic meanings.[50] Thus, like Gregory and Ambrose, Augustine shares this exegetical tradition of the Catholic church.

The parallels I have examined between Augustine's interpretations of each beatitude and Gregory's and/or Ambrose's commentaries point to an extensive influence by the latter upon Augustine. I would in particular draw attention to his proximity to Gregory, which is closer than is generally acknowledged. How was such influence possible? What is the ground for supporting the premise that Augustine is influenced by Gregory? In this case, I suggest two channels apart from oral transmission that link the two exegetes: (1) some intermediary sources of such Latin authors as Ambrose, Victorinus of Poetovio, and Fortunatianus of Aquileia;[51] and (2) Augustine's direct approach to Gregory's *Homilies*. We know that Augustine's debt to Ambrose is generally accepted and that his exegesis of Matthew 7:6 (pearls before swine) in *De sermone Domini in monte* traces its interpretation back to the Origenian understanding of Victorinus of Poetovio and Fortunatianus of Aquileia. Thus, the first suggested channel will need further exploration of those exegetes. The second channel is partially confirmed by similarities I have already shown: the Holy Spirit as comfort, the allegorical interpretation of the Lord's food and water, and the explanation of the 'peacemaker', which as far as I can see, cannot be deduced from other possible sources. Moreover, it seems reasonable to suppose that

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49   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont*. 1.4.12 (NBA 10/2.94): "Haec octaua sententia, quae ad caput redit perfectumque hominem declarat, significatur fortasse et circumcisione octauo die in Veteri Testamento, et Domini resurrectione post sabbatum, qui est utique octauus idemque primus dies, et celebratione octauarum feriarum quas in regeneratione noui hominis celebramus et numero ipso Pentecostes."

50   On this see e.g., Lierde, "The Teaching of St. Augustine," 36–38.

51   See Martine Dulaey, "L'apprentissage de l'exégèse biblique par Augustin (3): Années 393–394," *REAug* 51 (2005): 53–55.

Augustine never ceased developing his Greek. He probably knew enough to be able to read some Greek texts with the help of a glossary or outside assistance. We know that his exegesis of the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:1–14) in *De sermone Domini in monte* shows his close dependence on Origen's explanation in *De beatitudinibus*. Thus, I put forward the possibility that Augustine's exegesis on the Matthean beatitudes directly depends upon the Gregorian exegesis, although further verification is needed.

4 Beatitudes Linked with the Seven Gifts of the Spirit

Once he completed his affirmation of the ideal audience of the eight beatitudes enumerated above (*Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.3.10), Augustine proceeds to the second part of his commentary. He explains the beatitudes respectively by referring to the virtues, that is, humility, meekness, grief, hunger and thirst for justice, mercy, cleanness of heart, and wisdom. Then, the eight beatitudes (Matt 5:3–10) are reduced to seven.[52] Since the eighth beatitude reveals the perfection of human life, it signifies a return to the first beatitude, which also announces a certain fullness. Hence, Augustine constitutes the linkage between the Matthean beatitudes and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit described in Isaiah 11:2–3. The significant correlation of Matthew's text with Isaiah is succinctly designed to elicit the distinction between the beatitudes and virtues explained in his interpretation.

Augustine's debt to the exegetical tradition with regard to both the order of the beatitudes and the significance of the number eight is clear. In his attempt to find some form of logical progression in the beatitudes, Augustine associates them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in Isaiah. At this point, his interpretation is acknowledged as a creative endeavour. What then led him to connect the Matthean beatitudes to its gifts?

Augustine first interprets the eighth beatitude as the recapitulation of the first, as we have seen above.[53] He then turns to the sevenfold operation of the Holy Spirit enumerated in the texts of Isaiah 11:2–3. In dealing with the text, Augustine follows not the Vulgate translation of Jerome, but rather an old Latin version based on the Septuagint, which had been adopted as the authorised version in the ancient church.[54] He reads 'piety' for the fear of God

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52   On this see Bright, "The Spirit"; and Lierde, "The Teaching of St. Augustine," 95, n.205.

53   See n.42.

54   On this see Naoki Kamimura, "Friendship and the Ascent of the Soul in Augustine," in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 4: *The Spiritual Life*, ed. Wendy Mayer, Pauline Allen, and Lawrence Cross (Sydney: St Pauls Publications, 2006), 305, n.48.

in its first occurrence, listing seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. His declaration of the linkage between the beatitudes and the divine gifts is thus explained as follows:

> And in my opinion the sevenfold working of the Holy Spirits, of which Isaiah speaks, corresponds to these stages and maxims. But the order is different. For in Isaiah the list begins with what is more excellent, whereas here we start with what is less so. The prophet begins with wisdom and concludes with the fear of God, but 'the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God' (Sir 1:16; Ps 111:10). Therefore, if we ascend by stages and in numerical order, as it were, the first stage is the fear of God, the second piety, the third knowledge, the fourth fortitude, the fifth counsel, the sixth understanding, and the seventh wisdom.[55]

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are signified as steps descending from wisdom, and the text of Matthew signifies the steps ascending from the fear of God. The former process was carried out by the prophet Isaiah, and the latter is set out for those who aim for the perfection of human life.

> All of these can certainly be accomplished in this present life, just as we believe that they were accomplished in the life of the apostles.[56]

From the text of Sirach 1:16, Augustine sees the beginning of its ascending steps. Thus, by following the precept of Isaiah, not only "his assembled audience" of the Sermon on the Mount, but also "those who were not present" and "those of later" are admonished by Augustine to ascend the sevenfold spiritual stages.

I suggest that the exegesis that leads Augustine to connect the Matthean beatitudes to the gifts of the Holy Spirit lay in his concern for the idea of order. Augustine seems to focus on the twofold order in the text of Matthew: (1) the internal structure of the individual beatitudes; and (2) the sequence and order of the beatitudes. His exegesis of the former aspect makes clear the correlation

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55   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.4.11 (NBA 10/2.92): "Videtur ergo mihi etiam septiformis operatio Spiritus Sancti, de qua Isaias loquitur, his gradibus sententiisque congruere. Sed interest ordinis: nam ibi enumeratio ab excellentioribus coepit, hic uero ab inferioribus; ibi namque incipit a sapientia et desinit ad timorem Dei, sed *initium sapientiae timor Dei* est. Quapropter si gradatim tamquam ascendentes numeremus, primus ibi est timor Dei, secunda pietas, tertia scientia, quarta fortitudo, quintum consilium, sextus intellectus, septima sapientia."

56   Ibid., 1.4.12 (NBA 10/2.94): "Et ista quidem in hac uita compleri possunt, sicut completa esse in apostolis credimus."

between the beatitudes and the virtues, and that the beatitudes are counsels for a virtuous life. It offers the audience the possibility of following those moral precepts. His exegesis of the latter aspect secures the future direction of those who wish to live according to the precept. It offers the audience the possibility of attaining the ultimate end of human beings. Augustine's understanding of the Matthean beatitudes connected with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit seems to be inspired by the text of Sirach 1:16. There is, of course, his professed reason that he regards the prophet Isaiah (and the apostles) as having the permanent vision of God in this life, although the gifts are necessary to attain the perfection of life. However, there may be another explanation, namely that the Sirach text allows him to reverse the order of the gifts of the text of Isaiah and provides the audience an indispensable starting point for the ascending steps.

Why does Augustine refer to the text of Sirach? There might be two possible indications of the influence of Ambrose and Hilary's interpretation of Sirach 1:16 (= Ps 110:10) upon Augustine.[57] In his *Expositio Psalmi 118*, Ambrose discusses the significance of 'fear', commenting on Psalm 118:38. After defining the fear as the pedestal of the Word, he refers to Ps 110:10 (Sirach 1:16).[58] So too, Hilary's commentary on Psalm 118:38 contains explicit reference to Psalm 110:10.[59] Both Ambrose and Hilary interpret the 'beginning' of wisdom with reference to the text of Isaiah 11. Ambrose's text seems to follow that of Hilary with regard to his understanding of the 'beginning'. Because they explain the reason why the rest of the gifts are placed before the 'fear of God' in Isaiah 11, the fear of God lays the foundation for the precedents. The 'beginning' signifies its prominence in the arrangement of the gifts. Hence, assuming that Ambrose's and Hilary's interpretations of the beginning of wisdom correspond with Isaiah's gifts, no other evidence has surfaced that would support the idea that Augustine's exegesis of the reverse of the order in the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit traces back to the exegetical tradition.

5   Conclusion

The examination of the parallels between Augustine's *De sermone Domini in monte* and the interpretations of some exegetes has confirmed that the hermeneutic legacy lies behind his understanding of the Matthean beatitudes. Augustine's adhesion to the exegetical tradition throws into relief his imagina-

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57   On this in particular see Rollero, *La «Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam» di Ambrogio*, 24 and 29–33.

58   Ambrose, *Exp. Ps. 118* 5.39 (SAEMO 9.232).

59   Hilary, *Tract. in Ps. 118* 5.16 (CCL 61A.57).

tive approach to the linkage between the Matthean beatitudes and the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit. What then is the significance of his understanding of the Matthean beatitudes? There is, indeed, his concern for the text of Sirach which leads him to undertake his crucial steps. However, I would see his opening declaration in *De sermone Domini in monte* as indicative.

> If anyone were to ponder with piety and seriousness the sermon which our Lord Jesus Christ gave on the mount, I believe that he would discover there, as far as norms for high moral living are concerned, the perfect way to lead the Christian life. We would not be rash enough to make this promise of ourselves, but we deduce it from the very words of that same Lord. Indeed, from the conclusion of the sermon it is evident that all the precepts necessary for regulating a person's life are contained in it....the words he spoke on the mount serve as such a perfect template of instruction for those people who wish to model their lives on them...What I have said is intended to show that this sermon embodies the perfect summary of all those precepts necessary for leading the Christian life.[60]

Here Augustine seems to consider the Matthean beatitudes to be primarily ethical in character, and in this interpretation agrees with Ambrose's virtue-centred argumentation in his *Expositions*. They set out the entrance requirements for the virtuous life.

However, one problem remains: why does Augustine come to repeat the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount? What does its repetition mean to the reader of the text? My tentative suggestion is that Augustine intends to show the gradual changes in the viewpoint he adopts: (1) the first part of his exegesis (1.1.3–1.2.9) would be the general descriptions of the beatitudes where his debt to the exegetical tradition is much clearer than that in the latter parts; (2) the second part (1.3.10–1.4.11) offers the gradual ascension of the soul by integrating the beatitudes with the corresponding virtues by which

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60   Augustine, *Serm. Dom. mont.* 1.1.1 (NBA 10/2.82): "Sermonem quem locutus est Dominus noster Iesus Christus in monte, sicut in Euangelio secundum Matthaeum legimus, si quis pie sobrieque considerauerit, puto quod inueniet in eo, quantum ad mores optimos pertinent, perfectum uitae christianae modum. Quod polliceri non temere audemus sed ex ipsis eiusdem Domini uerbis conicientes; nam sic ipse sermo concluditur, ut appareat in eo praecepta esse omnia quae ad informandam uitam pertinent....significauit haec uerba quae in monte locutus est tam perfecte instruere uitam eorum qui uoluerint secundum ea uiuere...Hoc dixi, ut appareat istum sermonem omnibus praeceptis quibus christiana uita informatur esse perfectum."

one deserves the individual beatitudes; and (3) the last part within the ascending paradigm (1.4.11–12) extends the explanation to link it with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The consequence is the inseparable connection between the virtue, the beatitude, and the gifts. The tripartite division of his exegesis has played a key part in appealing to the gifts of the Holy Spirit as the primary source of human perfection:

> by whom [Holy Spirit] we are led into the kingdom of heaven and by whose doing, thanks to whom we receive our inheritance, we are consoled and fed, obtain mercy, are purified and restored to peace. And so, having attained perfection, we endure for the sake of truth and righteousness all those external trials which come our way.[61]

Hence, I assume two significant and mutually consistent themes in Augustine's exegesis. The rhetorical device clearly declares his commitment to members of the church community. And this member-oriented explanation has coherent eschatological characteristics because not only does he intend to show the future perfection by the Holy Spirit, but he also intends to include all future members of his audience. Although we can easily see the ethical aspect of his understanding, the eschatological discourse is also delivered to the reader of *De sermone Domini in monte*. Its evaluation precisely corresponds to the circumstances in which Augustine launched his exegetical career. He was surrounded by a congregation who expected him to offer them guidance for their daily life. Following their expectation, it is logical that Augustine would first synthesise the exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount. Furthermore, he directed the members of his community towards the nature and demands of God's sovereignty. Augustine's exegesis of the Matthean beatitudes was to ensure a response to questions of personal and social occupation.

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61   Ibid., 1.4.12 (NBA 10/2.94): "quo in regnum caelorum ducimur et haereditatem accipimus et consolamur et pascimur et misericordiam consequimur et mundamur et pacificamur. Atque ita perfecti omnes extrinsecus illatas molestias pro ueritate et iustitia sustinemus."

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