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Augustine's Preaching on Stephen and Paul

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Scholars have long noted that Paul's biography—the story of a grave sinner converted though God's grace—is as theologically relevant to Augustine as the apostle's ideas. But scholars have also argued that Augustine's account of Paul's story misconstrues the apostle's own concerns: whereas Augustine discovers in Paul the paradigm of how God saves the individual's soul, Paul himself was more interested in salvation history and the extension of God's covenantal promises to the gentiles. The present article, however, seeks to show how, in at least one way, Augustine's attention to Paul is bound up with history and the community. Specifically, the article explores how Augustine's preaching on Paul's conversion is, in several instances, preceded by a recounting of Paul's presence at the martyrdom of Stephen. In his predicatory exegesis of these events, Augustine highlights and dramatizes a mimetic chain of mercy from the crucified Christ through the martyr Stephen to the persecutor-turned-apostle Paul. Augustine brings these biblical figures to life before his congregants' mental eyes, thereby connecting his hearers to seminal moments in salvation history and, in the process, extending that history and the growth of the church into the present and the future.

Keywords: Augustine, Paul, Stephen, martyrdom, preaching, church, mercy

Introduction

So come back a step or two with me, and let us consider why we love the apostle [Paul].[1]

[1] *De trinitate libri quindecim* (hereafter *trin.*) 8.9 (Latin: Augustinus, *De trinitate libri XV, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* [hereafter *CCSL*], vol. 50, ed. W.J. Mountain and F. Glorie 1968 [Turnhout: Brepols, 2001], 279; English: Augustine, *The Trinity, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* [hereafter *WSA*], vol. I/5, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, [Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991], 249).

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In 1963 Krister Stendahl published his article, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,"[2] in which he argues that, ever since Augustine and his psychological-autobiographical explorations in the *Confessions*, Western Christian exegesis of Paul has found in the apostle's letters the paradigmatic account of the universal human experience of the plagued conscience. According to Stendahl, this Augustinian interpretation misconstrues Paul. Paul's concern was historical and communal: how, considering the experience of Jesus, were the gentiles to be incorporated into God's covenantal people?

Pauline theology undoubtedly holds prominence in the thought of Augustine.[3] But, as Paula Fredriksen, Margaret Mitchell, Thomas Martin, and Brian Daley have shown, the story is more complicated: Pauline theology, for Augustine, is inextricably bound up with reflection on and identification with Paul's *person* and *biography*.[4] In this regard, Fredriksen has developed Stendahl's analysis. In her influential 1986 article, she argues that Augustine's account of his conversion in *Confessions* (hereafter *conf.*) is a retrospective mimesis of what Augustine understood to be Paul's own conversion: an amazing transformation from persecutor of the church to apostle of Christ that eludes explanation apart from God's grace. In demonstrating this narrative imitation, Fredriksen undertakes parallel acts of disentanglement: the authentic letters of Paul from Luke's account in Acts; the letters of Paul from Augustine's reading of them via Acts; and the early Augustine's account of his conversion from the account presented in *conf.* 8. Augustine's famous conversion scene, according to Fredriksen, was influenced by his discovery of "Paul's" doctrine of grace, a discovery made possible by a synthetic reading of Paul's

[2] Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56, no. 3 (July 1963): 199–215.

[3] In *Confessions* 8.12.29, Augustine famously recounts how his reading from Rom 13:13–14 occasions his conversion. One can map developments in his thought onto his changing interpretation of Paul; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 145, and could cast the conflict with the Pelagians as a dispute over how to interpret Paul's letters; Thomas F. Martin, "*Vox Pauli*: Augustine and the Claims to Speak for Paul, An Exploration of Rhetoric at the Service of Exegesis," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2000): 239–40.

[4] Paula Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 1 (April 1986): 3–34; Paula Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul against the Manichees and the Pelagians," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 23 (1988): 102–03; Margaret Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 411–23; Martin, "*Vox Pauli*," 242–43; Brian Daley, "Saint Paul and the Fourth-Century Fathers: Portraits of a Christian Life," Pro Ecclesia*: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 18, no. 3 (August 2009): 299–317.

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self-presentation in Galatians, deutero-Pauline accounts of Paul the sinner and persecutor (1 Tim 1:13; Titus 3:3), and the dramatic transformation on the road to Damascus from Acts 9. The Augustinian doctrine of grace that emerges in *Ad Simplicianum* and is presented narratively in *conf.* thus springs more from reflection on Paul's biography than from Paul's theology. In articulating this distinction, Fredriksen echoes Stendahl: Augustine's focus is psychological and individual, how God's salvation is wrought in the human soul, whereas for Paul redemption is a communal and historical reality coming to imminent fulfillment through God's action in Christ. Augustine wonders at the mystery of God's election of some over others, while Paul is awestruck at God's mysterious plan to include the gentiles alongside the Jews in his covenant people.[5]

In her article published two years later, however, Fredriksen extends her thesis slightly. In her view, Augustine's discovery of grace entailed the abandonment of the ideals of classical *paideia*, with its identification of human nature primarily with the soul and its insistence on human freedom in pursuit of virtue. From *Ad Simplicianum* onward, Fredriksen traces continuity across Augustine's anti-Manichaean and anti-Pelagian works: in relinquishing human freedom, Augustine achieves a unity of human nature and human history, Julian of Eclanum's accusation of residual Manichaean dualism notwithstanding. For Augustine, the tension between spirit and flesh highlighted by Paul serves not as the impetus for flight from the body and time, but rather as proof of body and soul's unity, comprehensible only in light of the history of human nature's disintegration through sin and its gradual and hitherto incomplete reintegration through God's promise and bestowal of grace.[6]

While building on Fredriksen's work, Margaret Mitchell has argued that the former's thesis needs more thorough testing across Augustine's corpus.[7] In this article, I would like to heed Mitchell's call. Across a range of his homilies, we find that Augustine does deploy Paul's conversion theologically and exemplarily, but that he does not treat the event in isolation. In Augustine's mind, Paul's encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus is fully comprehensible only when one considers Paul's earlier participation in the martyrdom of Stephen. Augustine's reflection on Paul's exemplarity is a reflection on a historical chain of mimesis that extends from the crucifixion of Jesus through the stoning of Stephen to Paul's own conversion. Our analysis of Augustine's preaching

[5] Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine," esp. 23–28; Fredriksen, "Body/Soul Dichotomy," 102–05. See also Leo C. Ferrari, "Augustine on the Road to Damascus," *Augustinian Studies* 13 (1982): 151–70.

[6] Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy."

[7] Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 412n12.

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on Stephen and Paul thus follows the narrative moments of their historical mimesis as Augustine comments on them in various homilies. At each moment—Stephen's imitation of Christ and Paul's imitation of Stephen—we find that Augustine elucidates a two-part vision: first an earthly vision of the exemplar, followed by a transfigured, heavenly vision of Christ. Between and through those two visions, Augustine intends his preaching to engage his congregants and set them on a dynamic, transformational journey *across* time and into eternity.

In demonstrating this, we will seek to modify Fredriksen's account of Augustine's use of Paul in three ways. (1) To be sure, Augustine's theology emphasizes introspection and, in that respect, differs from the thought of Paul. But, more in line with Fredriksen's later thesis, Augustine's exegesis of Stephen and Paul pertains to God's work not only in the individual soul, but also in the community and its history. Insofar as Christ's words to Saul in Acts 9:4 form one of the important scriptural warrants for Augustine's doctrine of the *totus Christus*—the glorified Christ as head of his body, the church, for whom and as whom he speaks in the Psalms[8]—we see that Augustine has a robust understanding of the communal character of Christian mimesis. (2) Although Augustine's historical and communal reading of Stephen and Paul does not share the apostle's Jewish apocalyptic context, it does express wonder at the power of God's grace to unite Jews and Gentiles in the church. (3) Finally, Augustine's doctrine of grace does not mean the complete abandonment of the classical ideals of moral exemplarity. His preaching on Stephen and Paul should be understood within the tradition of Greco-Roman medico-philosophical care of the soul. Augustine's framing of his examples, however, takes on a Christian character, inasmuch as those examples undermine the notion of human perfectibility. Always struggling amid God's grace, they embody a training regimen of mercy and forgiveness. Precisely in that way, Augustine envisions and understands himself, through his preaching, to be facilitating God's work of establishing and enlarging the church across time and space. Augustine activates his own scriptural imagination and that of his congregants, enabling them to find themselves inside the church's historical memory, where Augustine imitates Christ, Stephen, and Paul, and where he and his congregants find themselves the objects—and ideally the subjects—of the affective mechanisms of church growth: love of God and neighbor up to the point of forgiving one's enemies.

[8] Benedict Guevin, OSB, "'Saul, Saul, Why Are You Persecuting Me?' Augustine's Use of Acts 9:4 in His *Enarrationes in Psalmos*," *Downside Review* 127, no. 449 (October 2009): 261–68; Kimberly Baker, "Augustine's Doctrine of the *Totus Christus*: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity," *Horizons* 37, no. 1 (2010): 13, 18.

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Augustinian Mimesis

Philosophical and Rhetorical Background

Augustine argues that all Christian life is the following of an example.[9] Scholars have shown how Augustine's use of exempla represents a combination of the classical rhetorical tradition of deploying examples for moral-pedagogical purposes and the Platonic metaphysics in which all of mutable visible reality imitates unchanging intelligible forms.[10] In the rhetorical tradition, exempla were generally narrative accounts of events from the ancient past that helped a speaker to persuade an audience. In moral education, the exemplum could serve as a mirror in which one might glimpse their strengths or failings of character.[11]

Augustine also drew upon the classical philosophical notion of *paradeigma* as cause. According to Plato, nature derives from and imitates the intelligible forms. Philosophical education sought a return to that transcendent, ultimate reality by moving in the mind from mutable material representations through intellectual images to knowledge of the forms.[12] Augustine's theology follows roughly the same pattern.[13] The Word of God

[9] *Trin.* 7.5: "cuius imaginis exemplo et nos non discedamus a deo … quia enim homo ad beatitudinem sequi non debebat nisi deum et sentire non poterat deum, sequendo deum hominem factum sequeretur simul et quem sentire poterat et quem sequi debebat" (*CCSL* 50:252–53).

[10] Wilhelm Geerlings, *Christus Exemplum: Studien zur Christologie und Christusverkündung Augustins* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1978); Karl Morrison, *The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 52–97.

[11] Lewis Ayres, "Into the Poem of the Universe: *Exempla*, Conversion, and Church in Augustine's *Confessiones*," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 13, no. 2 (October 2009): 263–81, at 266–67, citing Cicero, *de Oratore* 3.137.

[12] This dynamic is illustrated in the famous allegory of the cave (Plato, *Republic*, Book VII, 514a–521d). Christopher Rowe, "Plato," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*, ed. David Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 98–124, esp. 107–16; Rachana Kamtekar, "Plato on Education and Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. Gail Fine, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 605–26.

[13] For the following, I have drawn upon Matthew Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); David Vincent Meconi, SJ, *The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013); and Gerald Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image: A Study in the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). I have discussed this topic previously in "Soul, Body, and the Miraculous Excess of the Human Being: Augustine's Theological Anthropology," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Theological Anthropology*, ed. Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM, and Stephen Okey (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 160–63.

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contains the forms of all things.[14] Via a process of summoning and conversion, each creature strives to reflect the Word, who in eternally clinging to the Father, perfectly images God.[15] The human being, from among all other creatures, is created in the image of God, thus sharing in features of their archetype[16] and having an innate urge to become like their source.[17] Unlike nonrational creation, however, humans do so through reason and choice. By turning away from God in sin, humans deform themselves,[18] yet paradoxically such deformation still represents a distorted effort to be like God,[19] inasmuch as humans seek to claim, unjustly, a dominance to which they are not entitled. Pride motivates the human to try to control the material things of this world. Such mastery is at best relative, and the delusion of absolute power can feed a disordered love of the self and material things. Such distorted love can cloud judgment, and the soul risks confusing its spiritual nature for a material one.[20]

Vision and Cultural Critique

Augustine explores such disordered attachment especially in a visual register.[21] He distinguishes three hierarchically ordered modes of vision:

[14] *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim* (hereafter *Gn. litt.*) 5.12.28: "omnium creaturarum rationes incommutabiles in uerbo dei" (Augustinus, *De Genesi ad litteram, De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus, Locutiones in Heptateuchem, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* [hereafter *CSEL*], vol. 28/1, ed. J. Zycha, [Vienna: Bibliopola Academiae Litterarum Caesareae Vindobonensis, 1894], 155). See also 1.9.17–1.10.20, 1.18.36, 3.12.18, 4.24.41–4.25.42, 6.10.17.

[15] *Gn. litt.* 1.4.9: "ut in eo, quod scriptura narrat: 'dixit deus: fiat,' intellegamus dei dictum incorporeum in natura uerbi eius coaeterni, reuocantis ad se inperfectionem creaturae, ut non sit informis, sed formetur secundum singula, quae per ordinem exequitur. in qua conuersione et formatione quia pro suo modo imitatur deum uerbum, hoc est dei filium semper patri cohaerentem plena similitudine et essentia pari, qua ipse et pater unum sunt" (*CSEL* 28/1:8).

[16] Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image*, 196–99.

[17] *Soliloquiorum libri duo* 2.9.17; *trin.* 7.3.5; Meconi, *The One Christ*, 39–41.

[18] *Trin.* 14.22: "qui uero commemorati conuertuntur ad dominum ab ea deformitate qua per cupiditates saeculares conformabantur huic saeculo reformantur ex illo" (Augustinus, *De trinitate libri XV, CCSL*, vol. 50A, ed. W.J. Mountain and F. Glorie [Turnhout: Brepols, 1968], 451).

[19] *Confessionum libri tredecim* (hereafter *conf.*) 2.6.14: "peruerse te [deus] imitantur omnes" (Augustinus, *Confessionum libri XIII, CCSL* vol. 27, ed. L. Verheijen [Turnhout: Brepols, 1981], 24); *Gn. litt.* 8.14.31.

[20] *Trin.* 10.7–10.11, for example, 10.8: "errat autem mens cum se istis imaginibus [corporum] tanto amore coniungit ut etiam se esse aliquid huiusmodi existimet" (*CCSL* 50:321).

[21] I have discussed the material in this paragraph previously in Douglas Finn, "Unwrapping the Spectacle: Social Critique, Sectarian Polemics, and Communal

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physical, imaginative, and purely conceptual.[22] He espouses a Platonic ray theory in which the soul dispatches a ray that makes contact with its objects[23] and then imprints their form on the imagination and memory.[24] Vision is thus active rather than passive. It engages and habituates the will and emotions,[25] insofar as one chooses where to focus one's attention; it binds the soul to its objects in love,[26] sees in the soul the objects of sight,[27] and, most precariously, assimilates the soul to those objects.[28]

Augustine therefore deplores his culture's spectacles, the theater and the games,[29] because the Greco-Roman heroes and glamorized violence depicted there were, in his assessment, underwritten by distorted cultural values:[30]

Transfiguration in Augustine's *Enarratio in Psalmum* 147," *Augustinian Studies* 52, no. 1 (2021): 48.

[22] *Gn. litt.* 12.6.15: "cum legitur: 'diliges proximum tuum tamquam te ipsum,' tria uisionum genera occurrunt: unum per oculos, quibus ipsae litterae uidentur, alterum per spiritum hominis, quo proximus et absens cogitatur, tertium per contuitum mentis, quo ipsa dilectio intellecta conspicitur" (*CSEL* 28/1:386–87); *Gn. litt.* 12.24.50–51; Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 88; Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul*, 86–87.

[23] *Trin.* 9.3: "per oculos enim corporis corpora uidemus quia radios, qui per eos emicant et quidquid cernimus tangent" (*CCSL* 50:296); *Gn. litt.* 1.16.31; 7.13.20; 12.16.32; *sermon* (hereafter *serm.*) 277.10; Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's *De trinitate* and *Confessions*," *Journal of Religion* 63.2 (April 1983): 125–42, at 127–28; Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 86.

[24] *Trin.* 11.6: "quia etiam detracta specie corporis quae corporaliter sentiebatur remanet in memoria similitudo eius quo rursus uoluntas conuertat aciem ut inde formetur intrinsecus" (*CCSL* 50:339–40).

[25] *Trin.* 10.7–8, 11.6, 11.8, 12.14–15; Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul*, 88–89, 102–07.

[26] *Trin.* 11.5: "uoluntas autem tantam habet uim copulandi haec duo, ut et sensum formandum admoueat ei rei quae cernitur et in ea formatum teneat" (*CCSL* 50:339); *trin.* 11.9; Miles, "Vision," 127–28.

[27] *Trin.* 10.7: "nec secum potest introrsus tamquam in regionem incorporeae naturae ipsa corpora inferre, imagines eorum conuoluit et rapit factas in semetipsa de semetipsa. dat enim eis formandis quiddam substantiae suae" (*CCSL* 50:321).

[28] *Trin.* 10.7–8; Miles, "Vision," 128.

[29] Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 107–11. I have discussed some of the material in this and the following paragraph previously in "Unwrapping the Spectacle," 45–46, 50.

[30] Jennifer Herdt, "The Theater of the Virtues: Augustine's Critique of Pagan Mimesis," in *Augustine's* City of God*: A Critical Guide*, ed. James Wetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 111–29, at 112–13. See also Ayres, "Into the Poem of the Universe," 269–71.

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pride and lust for domination.[31] The memories of such spectacles disfigure the soul and occlude spiritual vision.[32] Against that backdrop, Augustine articulates his understanding of Christ's reformative work. Christ, though in the form of God, deigned to assume the form of a servant in the incarnation, becoming, we could say, a rhetorical or theatrical spectacle of humility. Through faith in Christ in *forma servi*, pride is healed, and one is prepared for the eschatological vision of Christ in his divinity.[33] The sacramental presence of the immortal, invisible Son of God in a mortal, visible human being effectuates Christ's exemplarity and a new regime of Christian material signs—from Christ's cross to the words of Scripture to the stories of the martyrs and the church's sacramental rites and liturgical celebrations—such that those signs might function as fitting conduits of God's healing grace and aids to renewed spiritual insight.[34]

Augustine frames the Christian liturgy as a counter-spectacle to the Roman theater and games,[35] as a transformed cultural environment, in which believers are conformed to Christ's sacrifice.[36] The liturgy and Augustine's accessible preaching style contextualize and enable the imitation of Christian moral exemplars.[37] Augustine's preaching on martyrs such as Stephen and Paul often occurs in the presence of their relics, material remains whose spiritual power inspires deeper imaginative reflection on not only the martyrs' earthly suffering, but also their life in heaven.[38] Concerning Stephen's relics, Augustine

[31] *De ciuitate dei libri uiginte duo* (hereafter *civ. Dei.*) 1.praef.: "superbae … animae spiritus inflatus … dominandi libido" (Augustinus, *De civitate dei, CCSL*, vol. 47, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb [Turnhout: Brepols, 1955], 1).

[32] Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul,* 106.

[33] *Trin.* 1.14–31; Michel René Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 3 (July 2003): 329–55.

[34] On Christ as sacrament and example, see *trin.* 4.6: "sed indutus carne mortali et sola moriens, sola resurgens, ea sola nobis ad utrumque concinuit cum in ea fieret interioris hominis sacramentum, exterioris exemplum" (*CCSL* 50:167). See also *trin.* 4.17; Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 147–59.

[35] On early Christian efforts to construct counter-spectacles to the Roman theater and games, see Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 119–33, where she adduces examples from Augustine's preaching: *serm.* 51.2, 280.2, 301A.7; see also Herdt, "The Theater of the Virtues," 119–22.

[36] *Civ. Dei* 10.6: "profecto efficitur, ut tota ipsa redempta ciuitas, hoc est congregatio societasque sanctorum, uniuersale sacrificium offeratur deo per sacerdotem magnum, qui etiam se ipsum obtulit in passione pro nobis, ut tanti capitis corpus essemus, secundum formam serui" (*CCSL* 47:279).

[37] Herdt, "The Theater of the Virtues," 120–22.

[38] Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 89.

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proclaims, "Such a small quantity of dust has assembled such a big congregation here; the ashes can't be seen; the favors received are visibly evident. Imagine, dearly beloved, what God must be keeping for us in the land of the living, if he grants us such favors from the dust of the dead."[39] Although Augustine acknowledges that Stephen and Paul are dead, his imaginative rhetoric shows that spiritually they are alive and active in the church. Elsewhere he addresses Paul: "You are reigning with the one you stoned [Stephen], reigning with Christ. There you can both see each other, can both now hear my sermon; both of you please pray for us."[40] Augustine thereby counteracts the impression that the soul is material and mortal, which the violence of the Roman games might suggest.[41] Such a false understanding impedes one's ability to recognize true moral exemplars. If death really is the end, one cannot see the preaching and deaths of Stephen and Paul as communally constructive examples of love and hope.[42]

Augustine's preaching exemplifies what Margaret Mitchell labels a "reading of resuscitation."[43] "Let's go and see, beloved," Augustine invites his congregation, "let's watch this great spectacle.... Let's go and see. Here's Stephen being stoned. Suppose him to be set there in front of our very eyes."[44]

[39] *Serm.* 317.1: "exiguus puluis tantum populum congregauit: cinis latet, beneficia patent. cogitate, carissimi, quae nobis deus seruet in regione uiuorum, qui tanta praestat de puluere mortuorum" (Latin: *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina* [hereafter *PL*], ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols., [Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1844-64] 38:1435; English: Augustine, *Sermons 306-340A, WSA*, vol. III/9, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994], 142).

[40] *Serm.* 316.5: "cum eo quem lapidasti, cum Christo regnas. ambo ibi uos uidetis; ambo modo sermonem nostrum auditis; ambo pro nobis orate" (*PL* 38:1434; *WSA* III/9:140).

[41] Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul*, 106. Consider *en. Ps.* 147.3: "If there is no other life, those who have stayed awake today to go to the amphitheatre are better off than we are [si alia uita nulla est, feliciores nobis sunt qui ad amphitheatrum hodie uigilarunt]" (Latin: Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos CI-CL, CCSL*, vol. 40, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont [Turnhout: Brepols, 1956], 2140; English: Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms, 121-150, WSA*, vol. III/20, ed. Boniface Ramsay, trans. Maria Boulding, [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004], 444).

[42] Consider Herdt's comment on Augustine's distorted love of tragic plays: "Those whose loves are already misdirected are incapable of correctly perceiving the joys and sufferings of others and so are incapable of true pity" (Herdt, "The Theater of the Virtues," 116).

[43] Mitchell's comments regarding John Chrysostom's Pauline hermeneutics are relevant: "Via his reading of resuscitation, in which he heard the voice of Paul and then extended it to others by composing portraits of the author in his expositions of the letters he wrote, Chrysostom midwifed a living conversation and relationship between the dead Paul and the living Christian congregation" (Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 65).

[44] *Serm.* 49.11: "uideamus, carissimi, uideamus, spectemus magnum spectaculum. uideamus ... ecce Stephanus lapidatur. sit constitutus quasi ante oculos nostros" (Latin:

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Yet Augustine and his congregants are not mere spectators. Rather, they find themselves a part of the drama. Stephen's and Paul's experiences become theirs, the means of training and reordering the mind and heart: "You heard [the story], and you saw the spectacles of your heart. The sound was in your ears, the vision in your minds. You watched the great contest of Saint Stephen, in which he was being stoned."[45] Because the spectacles Augustine stages during the liturgy occur in the imagination, they facilitate communal ascent from the material to the spiritual.[46] Indeed, the power of the imagination allows him to lead his congregants even further, toward glimpses of spiritual realities. According to Augustine, imagination is active in physical sight; likewise, conceptual vision is required for imagination, if one is to exercise judgment over it.[47] The goal, then, of imaginatively reflecting on exempla is to move beyond imitation to knowledge and love of spiritual truths.[48] So, in the case of Paul, what one loves is his just mind, which requires at least an implicit grasp of the form of justice. In striving to imitate Paul's justice, one gradually learns that, for the Christian, justice demands that they love their neighbor in God and love God as love itself.[49] And with his reflection on the love of love itself in *The Trinity* (hereafter *trin.*) 8, Augustine commences his more inward investigation into God the Trinity. But we have gotten ahead of ourselves. How does Augustine cultivate a love of Stephen and Paul through his preaching?

Augustinus, *Sermones de vetere testimento (1-50)*, *CCSL*, vol. 41, ed. C. Lambot [Turnhout: Brepols, 1961], 622; English: Augustine, *Sermons 20-50*, *WSA*, vol. III/2, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill [Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1990], 340).

[45] *Serm.* 315.5: "audistis, et spectacula cordis uidistis. sonus erat in auribus, uisio in mentibus. spectastis magnum agonem sancti Stephani, qui in agone lapidabatur" (*PL* 38:1428). I depart from Hill's rendition ("spectacle with your hearts [*spectacula corde*]" [*WSA* III/9:131]) and revert to the *PL* text (*spectacula cordis*) because it strikes me as though Augustine wants his congregants not only to watch and imitate Stephen, but also to see themselves reflected in Stephen's assailants, at whom, as Augustine reports, Stephen has directed the accusation that they are "uncircumcised of heart and ears" (Acts 7:51). The spectacle of their hearts is the gradual transformation that God will work in them, as he did with Paul.

[46] On this effect in the preaching of Augustine's Greek contemporary John Chrysostom, see Jan Stenger, "John Chrysostom and the Power of Literary Imagination," in *Spätantike Konzeptionen von Literatur*, ed. Jan Stenger (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015), 207–26.

[47] *Gn. litt.* 12.24.51: "corporalis enim sine spiritali esse non potest … item spiritalis uisio indiget intellectuali, ut diiudicetur" (*CSEL* 28/1:416–17).

[48] Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 89; Ayres, "Into the Poem of the Universe," 274–75.

[49] *Trin.* 8.9–13; Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in Augustine*, 158.

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Seeing and Loving Stephen and Paul

Scripture as Spectacle and Mirror

In *Exposition of Psalm* (hereafter *en. Ps.*) 147,[50] a sermon where Paul features prominently, Augustine describes how those who have just attended the theater "retain the fantasies of their empty pleasure in their minds and continue to feed on the memory of things … positively harmful."[51] The theatergoers might even pity Christians who, they think, are missing out. Yet Augustine deems this a "perverse, futile benevolence"[52] born of worldly attachment. He instructs his Christian congregants: "direct your prayers to God on their behalf. Make [those who watch those spectacles] *see* and *feel* that they are playing the fool. However intent they may be on watching the spectacles that please them, let them spare a glance for the spectacle they make of themselves (*se spectent*), and find it displeasing."[53] In other words, Augustine seeks to draw the theatergoers' attention away from worldly spectacles and toward his Christian congregants, who offer prayers of mercy for them. The sight of Christian mercy ought, in turn, to cause those who had relished the theater to view themselves the way God sees them and to feel differently, to adopt a new moral and affective regime.

However, Augustine does not exempt his congregants from the demand for such continuous conversion; they too ought to look at themselves and feel differently. In *en. Ps.* 147 and in *sermon* (hereafter *serm.*) 49,[54] a homily in which Stephen looms large, Augustine stresses the need, above all, to judge oneself.[55] Consistent with the Latin rhetorical function of exempla, Augustine tells his congregants in *serm.* 49 to use Scripture as a mirror (*speculum*)

[50] Dated by Anne-Marie La Bonnardière to 409; "Les *Enarrationes in psalmos* prêchées par saint Augustine à Carthage en décembre 409," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 11 (1976): 52–90. Pierre-Marie Hombert, however, has more recently argued that the sermon dates to 403; *Nouvelles Recherches de Chronologie Augustinienne* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000), 563–88. For a handy chart of efforts to date Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, see Michael Fiedrowicz, Psalmus Vox Totius Christi: *Studien zu Augustins "*Enarrationes in Psalmos (Freiburg: Herder, 1997), 430–39. I have previously discussed the category of spectacle in *en. Ps.* 147 in "Unwrapping the Spectacle," 43–70.

[51] *Enarratio in Psalmum* (hereafter *en. Ps.*) 147.8: "aliquando tenentes in animo phantasias uanitatis suae, et memoriam suam pascentes rebus non solum inutilibus, sed et perniciosis" (*CCSL* 40:2145; *WSA* III/20:450).

[52] *En. Ps.* 147.8: "inani et uana beneuolentia" (*CCSL* 40:2145; *WSA* III/20:450).

[53] *En. Ps.* 147.7: "obsecro uos … ut conuertatis pro illis preces ad deum. uideant, sentiant quia nugantur; et multum intenti in illa spectacula quae illis placent, aliquando et se spectent, sibique displiceant" (*CCSL* 40:2144; *WSA* III/20:449).

[54] The date of *serm.* 49 is undetermined; Hubertus Drobner, *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins: Eine neue Methodologie*, vol. II (Paderborn: Brill, 2024), 223–25.

[55] *En. Ps.* 147.12–13; *serm.* 49.5.

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that will give them an objective picture of themselves.[56] Of course, Scripture recounts God's judgment and God's mercy. In *en. Ps.* 147, Augustine stresses that Christians have their own spectacles—ultimately, that spectacle is the heavenly Jerusalem sharing in the vision of God,[57] but before that it is the scriptural narrative of salvation history, of Israel, Christ, and the spreading of his church to all nations. Some of Scripture's prophetic account of God's city is obscure, but this, too, is a divine spectacle[58] whose unveiling ought to transform its readers. In *en. Ps.* 147, the content that unlocks the obscurity of Scripture includes Paul's biography—his astonishing conversion from persecutor to apostle through Christ's grace.[59] Scripture as mirror and spectacle shows Augustine's hearers who they are and who they should become. Careful reading of Scripture helps elicit a new set of desires and feelings:[60] awe and gratitude at God's gift of mercy and the desire to become more fully integrated into Christ's body. God's outwardly oriented and radically transformative love gradually disposes Christians toward mercy over judgment. They learn to see others in the same light of mercy,[61] for they know not which enemy of Christ

[56] *Serm.* 49.5: "iudica te ipsum, noli tibi parcere … scriptura sancta sit tibi tamquam speculum" (*CCSL* 41:617).

[57] *En. Ps.* 147.3: "hoc ergo, fratres mei, quale spectaculum erit in uisione dei?" (*CCSL* 40:2141).

[58] *En. Ps.* 147.2: "cuiusdam spectaculi et editionis diuinae diem promisimus" (*CCSL* 40:2140). Augustine specifies the reason for this spectacular scriptural puzzle: "modo ergo putate nos … pronuntiatis his uersibus et nondum expositis, inuolutas quasdam editoris nostri sarcinas protulisse. utique ad hoc inuolutae proferuntur, ut euolutae exspectentur; uos autem non tantum intueri, sed et uestiri paramini. (Think of it this way: the verses of the psalm which have been proclaimed but not yet expounded are like tightly-wrapped parcels that we have brought along from the divine giver. They are presented to us wrapped up *in order that your eagerness may be aroused* as the wrappings are being removed. But you must prepare yourselves *not merely to look on but also to clothe yourselves in the contents*)" (*CCSL* 40:2140; *WSA* III/20:444); emphasis added to the English translation.

[59] *En. Ps.* 147.25-26. E.g., *en. Ps.* 147.25: "ipso proposito ad exemplum, omnes occurrant, ut explicetur sensus iste: 'mittit crystallum suum sicut frusta panis.' ecce crystallum erat apostolus Paulus" (*CCSL* 40:2161, citing Psalms 147:6[147:17]).

[60] *En. Ps.* 147.2.

[61] *En. Ps.* 147.13: "faciens ergo huiusmodi misericordias, et illam praecipue quae gratis constat: 'dimitte, sicut dimittimus;' quo nonnisi caritatem erogas, quae crescit cum erogas; faciens ergo et feruens in ipsis bonis operibus misericordiae, quae iam bona opera, ut iam diximus, tunc non erunt necessaria, quia nullus erit miser in quem facienda sit misericordia; exspectabis securus iudicium, non tam securus de iustitia tua, quam securus de misericordia dei, quia et tu misericordiam praerogasti" (*CCSL* 40:2148, citing Matt 6:12); see also *serm.* 49.8–9.

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might, like Paul or Augustine himself, one day become a disciple in that same body.[62]

Lewis Ayres has shown how, for Augustine, exempla contribute to the beauty of God's providential plan,[63] which is like a cosmic poem or painting.[64] In a similar vein, Morrison has analyzed Augustine's mimetic understanding of history, in which the point is not simply to recount a sequence of events as they happened, but to interpret history's meaning, a task that can involve discovering parallels between temporally discontinuous or seemingly unrelated historical events.[65] Such a parallel allows Augustine, in *en. Ps.* 147, to find Paul's biography anticipated in an obscure psalm verse and to connect it, via the correspondence of Paul's conversion to Christ's death and resurrection, to the rest of salvation history. At the same time, Augustine is interested in tracing the *temporally continuous and direct chain of mimesis* that runs from Christ through Stephen to Paul. How does that sequence proceed, and why is it important?

Augustine Seeing Stephen Seeing Christ

Stephen hearing Christ's prayer of forgiveness

How, according to Augustine, did Stephen first see Christ as an exemplar?[66] In the anti-Donatist homily *en. Ps.* 132,[67] Augustine suggests a direct influence. He claims that Stephen "had heard the head [Christ] saying, *Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you* (Mt 5:44). From that same head he had heard something else; from Christ hanging on the cross he had heard the prayer, *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*

[62] Referring to himself, among others, Augustine asks, "et quam multos putamus ibi nunc sedere, futuros non solum christianos, sed etiam episcopos? (how many may we suppose are sitting [in the theater] now who in the future will be not only Christians but even bishops?)" (*en. Ps.* 147.7 [*CCSL* 40:2144; *WSA* III/20:449]).

[63] Ayres, "Into the Poem of the Universe," 275–78.

[64] For example, *civ. Dei* 11.18: "ita ordinem saeculorum tamquam pulcherrimum carmen" (*CCSL* 47:337); see also *civ. Dei* 11.23.

[65] Morrison, *The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West*, 56–57, 61–62.

[66] For Augustine's reflections and preaching on Stephen, see Cornelius Mayer, "'Attende Stephanum conservum tuum' (*Serm.* 317,2,3): Sinn und Wert der Märtyrerverehrung nach den Stephenpredigten Augustins," in Fructus centesimus: *Mélanges offerts à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire*, ed. A. A. R. Bastiaensen, A. Hilhorst, C. H. J. M. Kneepkens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 217–37; A.A.R. Bastiaensen, "Augustine on the Deacon-Preacher-Martyr Stephen," *Augustiniana* 54, no. 1/4 (2004): 103–27; Anthony Dupont, "*Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani:* Augustine's Thinking on Martyrdom Based on His Sermones on the Protomartyr Stephen," *Augustiniana* 56, no. 1/2 (2006): 29–61.

[67] Dated by La Bonnardière to 407; *Recherches de Chronologie Augustinienne* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1965), 51–53.

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(Lk 23:34)."[68] In the later *serm.* 316,[69] Augustine speculates whether Stephen had been among those for whom Christ pleaded forgiveness while hanging on the cross: "Perhaps Stephen was one of those [who persecuted Christ]. If he was, then that prayer also availed for him, *Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.*"[70] In this latter example, Stephen is not a neutral observer, but one implicated and transformed by Christ's prayer, which functions sacramentally.

Stephen preaching the medicine of Christ

This dynamic of grace, the inward divine love that renders Christ's outward deeds and words efficacious, serves as the theological basis for significant moves Augustine makes during his anti-Donatist phase: evacuating Donatist martyrs of theological power because they are not motivated by love[71] or affirming the outward validity of Donatist baptism while denying its sacramental efficacy.[72] The key to both is an embodied, historical, and communal contiguity and continuity of love. We see this in Augustine's interpretation of Stephen in the anti-Donatist homily *en. Ps.* 57.[73] Notably, Augustine invokes Stephen's example in a way resistant to any stark division between individual conscience and communal history.

In *en. Ps.* 57.8, Augustine reflects on the mimetic character of Stephen's own language. He likens Stephen's obstinate Jewish audience to the Donatists of his own day. In that way, Augustine turns Donatist self-identity on its head.[74] The Donatists imagined themselves to be the eschatological Israel,

[68] *En. Ps.* 132.8: "et audierat ab ipso capite: '*Diligite inimicos vestros, et orate pro eis qui vos persequuntur.*' Audierat ab ipso capite pendente in cruce et dicente: '*Pater, ignosce illis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt*'" (Latin: Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos 119-133*, *CSEL*, vol. 95/3, ed. Franco Gori [Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001], 330; English: *WSA* III/20:183).

[69] According to Drobner, the homily was preached no earlier than 316; *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 1135–36.

[70] *Serm.* 316.3: "ergo recolens quid pro se dictum sit, si et ipse inter illos erat, de quibus dixit dominus, quando ait, 'pater, ignosce illis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt'" (*PL* 38:1433; *WSA* III/9:139).

[71] Carol Straw, "Martyrdom," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan D. Fitzgerald, OSA (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 539.

[72] William Harmless, SJ, "Baptism," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan D. Fitzgerald, OSA (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 89.

[73] La Bonnardière dates the homily to 409; "Les *Enarrationes in psalmos* prêchées par saint Augustine à Carthage en décembre 409." Hombert has more recently argued for 403; *Nouvelles Recherches de Chronologie Augustinienne*, 563–88.

[74] I have previously discussed material in this paragraph in "Unwrapping the Spectacle," 61, 67.

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distinct from the rest of the world, practicing proper liturgy, and obedient to the law found throughout Scriptures. They viewed the Catholics, by contrast, as unclean gentiles opposed to God's elect.[75] The Donatists attributed their justice to their suffering persecution and Catholic injustice to the use of coercion.[76]

Augustine first attempts to show the Donatist inability to follow the law. Employing medical imagery to illustrate the outward historical mediation of Christ's inner grace, Augustine notes that the Jews had received divine medicine in the prophets and the law, but those medicines gained healing power only upon Christ's advent. Stephen communicates this healing power to the Jews when he preaches the gospel: "Stephen's incantations offered them this fortified medicine, but they refused to listen; they blocked their ears against him who had given the medicine its new power."[77] In refusing to listen to Stephen, his audience refused to listen to Christ, *medicamentum quod habet uocem*.[78] Christ renders the Old Testament medicines efficacious, Augustine adds, by fulfilling the law; his twofold commandment to love sums up the law and the prophets.[79]

We should note here that Augustine makes extensive use throughout his oeuvre of the image of Christ as *medicus*. Rudolph Arbesmann has shown how classical philosophers used medical imagery to describe their work of spiritual therapy and how common the notion of *Christus medicus* had become among early Christians, particularly in North Africa, by Augustine's time. What is unique, in Arbesmann's view, is Augustine's pairing of *Christus medicus* with the medicine of humility, which heals the sin of human pride.[80] Thomas Martin has further explored the theme of *Christus medicus* in relation to

[75] Maureen Tilley, "Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of the Martyrs to the *Collecta* of the Desert," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 26, 31–32.

[76] Alden Lee Bass, "*Justus sibi lex est*: The Donatist Interpretation of the Law in Romans 2:14," in *Sacred Scripture and Secular Struggles*, ed. David Vincent Meconi, SJ (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 173–74.

[77] *En. Ps.* 57.8: "iam Stephanus medicamentum medicatum incantabat; hoc illi audire noluerunt; unde medicatum est medicamentum, contra hoc aures clauserunt" (Latin: Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos LI-C, CCSL*, vol. 39, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont [Turnhout: Brepols, 1956], 716; English: Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 51-72*, *WSA*, vol. III/17, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Maria Boulding [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001], 130).

[78] *En. Ps.* 57.9 (*CCSL* 39:716).

[79] *En. Ps.* 57.9: "iam enim uenit Christus qui impleret legem et prophetas, qui ueritatem ipsam firmaret: in quibus duobus praeceptis tota lex pendet et prophetae" (*CCSL* 39:716).

[80] Rudolph Arbesmann, OSA, "The Concept of 'Christus Medicus' in St. Augustine," *Traditio* 10 (1954): 1–28.

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Augustine's treatment of Paul, especially Paul's struggle with the *stimulus carnis* mentioned at 2 Cor 12:7. In texts spanning the Manichean, Donatist, and Pelagian disputes, Martin shows how, for Augustine, Christ the doctor heals Paul not all at once, but gradually: the *stimulus carnis* is Christ's ongoing means of rooting out pride and instilling humility.[81] What we are starting to observe in *en. Ps.* 57, then, is how embodied, communal, and historical that healing was. The medicine that will only gradually heal the great apostle Paul is, as we will see, mediated to him through a chain of self-sacrifice and preaching on humility and mercy that, in fact, stretches back to the Old Testament law and prophets and extends forward from Christ through Stephen to Paul.

It therefore makes sense that Augustine would use medicinal imagery to combat what he views as proud Donatist self-justification. In *en. Ps.* 57, Augustine undermines the Donatist claim to justice by identifying the Donatists with Jesus's persecutors. Augustine's focus in this sermon is on speaking truth and judging rightly in one's own case, by which he means that one's heart and actions align with one's words.[82] He takes his hearers into their own consciences, where only God is judge.[83] Augustine describes several moral scenarios to prove that everyone has an innate sense of justice: if a potential case of injustice were turned around such that Augustine's hearers could imagine themselves the victim, they would find themselves upset.[84] They thus know that they ought to treat others as they themselves want to be treated, but their disordered self-love and attachment to worldly things causes them to value their private interests over the common good. Humans' preoccupation with external things had led God to give them the written law.[85] But the love of justice and the fulfillment of justice in love came only through Christ. Augustine rhetorically includes all his hearers in the group of those who called for Christ's death, even after deeming him just (Matt 22.16): "Did

[81] Thomas F. Martin, OSA, "Paul the Patient: *Christus Medicus* and the "*Stimulus Carnis*" (2 Cor 12:7): A Consideration of Augustine's Medicinal Christology," *Augustinian Studies* 32, no. 2 (2001): 219–56.

[82] *En. Ps.* 57.3: "'si uere utique iustitiam loquimini,' si non falso iustitiam loquimini, si non aliud in labiis perstrepit, aliud celatur in cordibus, 'recta iudicate, filii hominum'" (*CCSL* 39:710, quoting Psalms 57:2[58:1]).

[83] *En. Ps.* 57.2: "responde, iudica causam, iudicis tribunal est in mente tua; sedet ibi deus, adest accusatrix conscientia, tortor timor" (*CCSL* 39:709).

[84] *En. Ps.* 57.1–2. For example, "quis enim te docuit, nolle accedi ab altero ad uxorem tuam? quis te docuit, nolle tibi furtum fieri" (*CCSL* 39:708)? Or "sed oportet ut et te cogites peregrinum, et uideas quomodo tibi possit displicere qui tibi non praestiterit quod tu in patria tua non uis peregrino praestare" (*CCSL* 39:709).

[85] *En. Ps.* 57.2: "sed quia homines appetentes ea quae foris sunt, etiam a seipsis exsules facti sunt, data est etiam conscripta lex" (*CCSL* 39:708).

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you not crucify him whom you had called just?… What were you doing, when you vented your cruelty against God who was man, and killed your king?"[86] Because Christ is their king, they ought to be fearful of his return, turn inward, and confess their guilt.[87] For that to happen, they need to hear the truth spoken in love, the medicine with a voice.

By imitating Stephen and rhetorically setting his hearers before the crucified Christ, Augustine demonstrates where one hears the truth. But he makes clear the historical tradition in which he imagines this predicatory mimesis to take place. The Donatists claim that they protected the Scriptures from destruction during the persecutions—that their ecclesial tradition has adhered to the truth—but in practice, Augustine thinks, they deny the truth spoken in Scriptures and exalt their own words above God's. Christ says in Luke 24:46 that he must suffer, die, and rise again. This much the Donatists would apparently accept.[88] Yet their ecclesial separatism leads them to neglect what Christ predicts next, that the gospel is to be preached throughout the world, starting from Jerusalem. For Augustine, that prediction has been fulfilled in the Catholic Church.[89] If the Donatists wish to speak with integrity, if they wish to align their words and hearts, they must bind themselves to truth with love. For that they must join the Catholic Church, the locus of Christ's grace. Against an imagined Donatist objection that one should not join a church full of hypocrites, Augustine defends the mixed church by noting that at least Catholic sinners leave open the possibility of hearing, of receiving God's healing grace spoken across salvation history, whereas the Donatists, by insisting on their community's perfection, deafen themselves to the medicine of Christ's voice.[90]

[86] *En. Ps.* 57.3: "nonne uos crucifixistis eum quem iustum esse dixeratis?… quid enim fecistis saeuiendo aduersus deum qui homo erat, et occidendo regem uestrum?" (*CCSL* 39:710–11; *WSA* III/17:124).

[87] *En. Ps.* 57.3: "ecce uenit; 'redite, praeuaricatores, ad cor.' ecce ueniet, corrigimini antequam ueniat, praeuenite faciem eius in confessione" (*CCSL* 39:711, quoting Isaiah 46:8).

[88] This point is somewhat implicit in *en. Ps.* 57.6, but explicit elsewhere in Augustine's anti-Donatist preaching, at, for example, *en. Ps.* 147.18: "'quia oportebat pati Christum, et resurgere tertia die.' iam ergo quia tenemus ambo sponsum ex ipsis uerbis" (*CCSL* 40:2154, quoting Luke 24:46); see also *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV* 6.13.

[89] *En. Ps.* 57.6: "huc ueni, huc ueni. ecce ecclesia 'per omnes gentes, incipientibus ab Ierusalem'" (*CCSL* 39:713, quoting Luke 24:47).

[90] *En. Ps.* 57.23: "nec alius dicat: utquid procedo ad ecclesiam? ecce qui quotidie ad ecclesiam procedunt, non faciunt quod audiunt. faciunt tamen ut audiant; sic possunt facere ut audiant et faciant; tu autem quantum longe es a faciendo, qui tantum fugis ab audiendo" (*CCSL* 39:729)?

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Stephen applying Christ's medicine: healing the emotions

For Augustine, Stephen's preaching is comprehensible only within the context of salvation history, which is not a mere recounting of past events, but is, in its telling, the very vehicle of God's mercy. Augustine identifies in Stephen's words a therapeutic purpose, and by conjuring the spectacle of Stephen's struggle, he, Augustine, likewise seeks to heal his hearers' affections. In this respect, we see Augustine not simply abandoning the classical rhetorical and philosophical goals of virtue and happiness but revising them in light of the Christian gospel.[91] For example, Augustine frequently observes that Stephen's initial words to his Jewish audience are extremely harsh. In *serm.* 315,[92] Augustine asks, "Who wouldn't suppose that he was angry, who wouldn't suppose he was ablaze with the burning brands of hatred, when he said, *Stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and ears?*"[93] Augustine, it seems, wants to elicit an acknowledgment that his hearers do, indeed, think that Stephen hates his enemies. This question gains significance because of the human being's inability to peer into another's heart:

> Now observe [Stephen] being savage and scathing; recall his hard words.... It was as though he was their enemy; as though, if it could possibly happen, he would love to kill them all. Let the person say this who cannot see [Stephen's] heart. Well, his heart was hidden; but his last words were heard, and his hidden thoughts were laid bare when he was being stoned. *Lord Jesus*, he said, *receive my spirit*.... That's what Saint Stephen said, still standing. And after that, he knelt down and said, *Lord, do not hold this against them*.[94]

[91] For Augustine and psychic therapy, see Paul Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2010).

[92] Drobner casts doubt on earlier efforts to determine the date or place of this homily; *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 1134–35.

[93] *Serm.* 315.5: "quis non crederet iratum, quis non crederet odiorum facibus inflammatum, quando dicebat, 'dura ceruice, et non circumcisi corde et auribus'?" (*PL* 38:1428; *WSA* III/9:131, quoting Acts 7.51). Alex Fogleman has shown just how central the conquest of anger and training in patience were in Augustine's catechetical preaching and thus how crucial patience was to Augustine's understanding of church growth; Alex Fogleman, "Anger, Prayer, and the Transformation of Desire: Augustine's Catechumenate as an Emotion-Shaping Institution," *Church History* 92, no. 2 (June 2022): 227–44.

[94] *Serm.* 315.5: "attendite illum saeuientem, recolite uerba dura ... quasi inimicus erat: tanquam, si fieri posset, omnes occidere cupiebat. hoc dicat, qui cor non uidet. latebat cor eius: sed audita sunt nouissima uerba eius, et patuerunt occulta eius, cum lapidaretur. 'domine Iesu,' inquit, 'accipe spiritum meum'.. hoc dixit sanctus Stephanus stans. et post hoc fixit genu, et ait: 'domine, ne statuas illis hoc peccatum'" (*PL* 38:1428; *WSA* III/9:131, quoting Acts 7:59-60).

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An uncharitable and presumptuous—given no one can see Stephen's heart—interpretation of the martyr's story would view him as hateful toward his enemies. Yet Augustine demonstrates the error in such premature judgment and inculcates a patient willingness to listen, so that Stephen might reveal his heart's true intentions. Augustine simultaneously discourages premature judgment of others and makes his congregants look honestly at their own hearts. The imagined spectacle of Stephen's outward struggle enables Augustine's audience to see the agonic spectacle that God watches inwardly:

> Exert yourselves as much as you can to show gentleness, even toward your enemies. Rein in the anger which is prodding you to avenge yourselves.... If you want to avenge yourself on your enemy, turn your attention to that very anger of yours; because that is your enemy, which can kill your soul.... Recognize your real enemy, recognize whom you are fighting with on the stage of your heart. It's a very narrow stage; but God is watching; that's where you must tame your enemy.[95]

We should not overlook that imitation of Stephen, even if it does not require physical death, nevertheless entails more than just inward transformation of the heart. Anger's defeat goes hand in hand with the external prayer of forgiveness, for oneself and others. Indeed, if we think about Stephen's exemplarity, we note that, while Augustine never diminishes the very real death Stephen undergoes, it is the martyr's prayer for his enemies that demonstrates that his death is one motivated by love rather than by pride. Hence, it is the utterance of that prayer—necessarily historical and communal—that ensures that Stephen's example can function sacramentally too, by pointing to and mediating Christ's grace. In *serm.* 49, for example, witness how Augustine makes Stephen, as a member of the church, a window onto Christ's saving action:

> Let's go and see, beloved, let's go and see, let's watch the great spectacle.... Let's go and see. Here's Stephen being stoned. Suppose him to be set there in front of our very eyes. Ho there, member of Christ, ho there, athlete of Christ; look upon him who for your sake hung upon the cross. He was being crucified, you are being stoned. He said, *Father, forgive them, because they*

[95] *Serm.* 315.9–10: "exercete uos, quantum potestis, ad exhibendam mansuetudinem, etiam erga inimicos uestros. frenate iram, quae uos stimulat ad uindictam ... si uindicare te uis de inimico tuo, ad ipsam iram tuam te conuerte: quia ipsa est inimica tua, quae occidit animam tuam ... agnosce inimicam tuam: agnosce cum qua pugnas in theatro pectoris tui. angustum theatrum; sed deus spectat: ibi doma inimicam tuam" (*PL* 38:1430–31; *WSA* III/9:133–34).

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> *do not know what they are doing* (Lk 23:34). What do you say? Let me hear. Let me see whether I may at least be able to imitate you.[96]

Augustine then vividly recounts how Stephen prays for his persecutors.

Stephen seeing Christ in heaven

Augustine frequently comments on another detail of Stephen's story: Stephen sees the Lord, this time glorified and standing at the Father's right hand. In Augustine's interpretation, Stephen's second vision of Christ is similar to and different from the first vision of Christ on the cross. Both visions are of Christ in his humanity, in *forma servi*. But in the second vision, Stephen sees Christ in his glorified humanity, bearing features suggestive of his role as eschatological judge. The vision does not, however, arouse fright in Stephen; rather, it inspires confidence. *Serm.* 314[97] is illuminating in this regard: "[Stephen] was bearing in mind the instruction of the one whose presence he could observe in heaven; and reaching out to him with the most ardent love, he longed to leave the flesh behind as soon as possible, and to fly off to him. Nor was he now afraid to die, because he could see that Christ was alive, though he knew he had been slain for his sake."[98] Stephen is granted a vision of the resurrected and glorified Christ; based on the transformative sacramental power of the cross, Stephen believes and hopes that if he follows Christ's example in death, he shall follow Christ's example in new life.

Concerning Stephen's vision of the heavenly Christ, Augustine also observes, in *serm.* 314, that "what [Stephen] saw in faith, he indicated in faith, and took violently by storm."[99] In *serm.* 316, Augustine points out that only

[96] *Serm.* 49.11: "uideamus, carissimi, uideamus, spectemus magnum spectaculum. spectemus et diei crastino proponendum. uideamus. ecce Stephanus lapidatur. sit constitutus quasi ante oculos nostros. eia membrum Christi, eia athleta Christi, inspice illum qui pro te pependit in ligno. crucifigebatur ille, tu lapidabaris. ille dixit: 'pater ignosce illis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt.' tu quid dicis, audiam. uideam te, ne forte possim imitari uel te" (*CCSL* 41:622; *WSA* III/2:340).

[97] The year *serm.* 314 was preached is undetermined; Drobner, *Chronologie*, 1132–33.

[98] *Serm.* 314.1: "sed illius praeceptum gestabat in animo, cuius praesentiam cernebat in caelo; et ad eum flagrantissimo amore suspensus, carnem quantocius relinquere, et ad ipsum cupiebat aduolare: nec mortem iam timebat, quia Christum, quem pro se occisum sciebat, uiuentem uidebat" (*PL* 38:1425; *WSA* III/9:126). On the martyrs and fear of death, see Robert Dodaro, "'Christus Iustus' and the Fear of Death in Augustine's Dispute with Pelagius," in Signum Pietatis: *Festgabe für Cornelius Petrus Mayer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Adolar Zumkeller (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989), 341–62; yet cf. Dupont, "*Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani*," 51n94.

[99] *Serm.* 314.1: "quod fideliter uidit, fideliter indicauit, et uiolenter inuasit?" (*PL* 38:1425; *WSA* III/9:127).

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Stephen, and not his persecutors, was able to see Christ standing at the right hand of God. It is the persecutors' envy that precludes vision.[100] Stephen thus illustrates the sacramental power of faith, which heals disordered loves and thereby enables deeper spiritual insight. Faith, for Augustine, always has as its object Christ in the form of a servant.[101] According to Augustine, both Stephen and his persecutors are afforded sight of Christ dying and dead on the cross. But only Stephen, who has been granted faith, receives the vision of Christ risen and glorified, with the result that he, Stephen, is granted this vision of hope in the resurrection and is, in the process, trained in love. For Augustine, the life of faith is one in which the believer must look to both Christ on the cross and Christ glorified. As much as Stephen sought to live with the Lord in heaven, he was compelled to imitate the Lord's words and deeds on the cross. Accordingly, note Augustine's observation from *serm.* 49:

> When he had [asked the Lord to receive his spirit] he knelt down, and on his knees he said, *Lord, do not hold this crime against them. Saying this, he fell asleep* (Acts 7:59-60). Oh what blissful sleep, what true and perfect rest! There you are, that's what resting really is—praying for enemies.[102]

In conjuring the spectacle of Stephen, Augustine hopes to train his congregants to feel and act rightly and to see sacramentally, with the eyes of faith. He gives his hearers a foretaste of heaven, a sense of heavenly rest. Yet this is not an exercise in otherworldly escapism. Rather, it is an exercise in building up the communal body of Christ. It is the hard work of faith, active forgiveness of sins, that paradoxically affords Christians the experience of heavenly rest.

Augustine Seeing Paul Seeing Christ through Stephen

Corrupted community: Paul stoning Stephen through the hands of others

Augustine dramatizes Stephen's mediation of Christ's grace most concretely in the case of Paul. Across numerous homilies, Augustine uses a particular narrative detail—Saul (Paul) keeping the coats of those stoning

[100] *Serm.* 316.2: "aperti sunt caeli: uidit martyr martyrum caput; uidit Iesum stantem ad dexteram patris: uidit, ut non taceret. non illi uidebant, sed inuidebant; et ideo non uidebant, quia inuidebant" (*PL* 38:1432).

[101] Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity," 335.

[102] *Serm.* 49.11: "hoc dicto genu flexit, et genuflexo ait: 'domine, ne statuas illis hoc delictum. hoc dicto obdormiuit.' o felix somnus, et quies uera! ecce quod est requiescere, pro inimicis orare" (*CCSL* 41:622-23; *WSA* III/2:340).

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Stephen (Acts 7:58)—to indicate Paul's status as an enemy of Christ.[103] Similar to his construal of Stephen, Augustine understands Paul's words and deeds within a historical and communal context. Well-versed in the law and the prophets, Paul should have expected and recognized the advent of Christ.[104] But Paul's role as aid to the stoning is perhaps most fascinating. An observation Augustine makes in *serm.* 279[105] is instructive:

> When Stephen was stoned, the first martyr for the name of Christ, Saul too was very evidently present. And he was present among those doing the stoning, in such a way that it wouldn't be enough for him to throw stones with his own hands. In order, you see, to be himself active in the hands of all those who were doing the stoning, he kept guard over the coats of them all, showing more savage rage by helping them all, than by throwing stones with his own hands.[106]

This might appear to be a rather unconvincing effort on Augustine's part to make an accessory to murder more culpable than those who actively do the killing.[107] But the frequency with which Augustine returns to this point and the theological importance he ascribes to another text from this story—Acts 9:4—suggest that more is at work. Acts 9:4 forms a scriptural foundation of Augustine's theology of the whole Christ, for there Christ makes clear that Paul, in persecuting Christians, is harming members of Christ's ecclesial body. Against that backdrop, we can see that Augustine does not intend just to show how sinful Paul is as an individual. Rather, Paul's sinfulness is compounded by his membership in a community. Just as members of Christ's body are bound

[103] E.g., *en. Ps.* 147.25: "inter lapidatores sancti Stephani martyris, ibi erat iste durus, et forte ceteris durior: omnium enim lapidantium uestimenta seruabat, ut omnium manibus lapidaret" (*CCSL* 40:2161). See also *serm.* 116.6; 168.4; 279.1; 299.6; 299A.6; 299B.4; 299C.1; 315.7; 316.3; 316.5.

[104] *En. Ps.* 147.25: "iste quam durus fuit, crescens in lege, eruditus ad pedes Gamalielis legis doctoris. non audiebat Moysen et prophetas Christum praedicantes?" (*CCSL* 40:2161).

[105] Dated by Drobner to June 23 of one of the following years: 401, 407, 412, 418, 429, *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 964–68. Yet Júlio César Magalhães de Oliveira has argued that the homily dates to 401 in "'*Vt maiores pagani non sint!*' Pouvoir, Iconoclasme, et Action Populaire à Carthage au Début du V^{e} Siècle (Saint Augustin, *Sermons* 24, 279 et Morin 1)," *Antiquité Tardive* 14 (2006): 245–62.

[106] *Serm.* 279.1: "nam et quando lapidatus est Stephanus primus martyr pro nomine Christi, euidentius aderat et Saulus. et sic aderat lapidantibus, ut non ei sufficeret si tantum suis manibus lapidaret. ut enim esset in omnium lapidantium manibus, ipse omnium uestimenta seruabat, magis saeuiens omnes adiuuando, quam suis manibus lapidando" (*PL* 38:1275; English: Augustine, *Sermons 273-305A, WSA*, vol. III/8, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994], 60).

[107] See Edmund Hill's comment at *WSA*, III/8:69n4.

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together by the bond of love, such that Christ, in his humanity, suffers with them, so too is Paul joined to his violent fellows by a disordered love, by "showing more savage rage (*magis saeuiens*)." That disordered love allows Augustine to see Paul actively—and more effectively—working through the hands of others. In the figures of Stephen and Paul, then, we have examples not just of individual, but also communal mimesis. Stephen stands for Christ's body as it imitates the Head's example of humble self-sacrifice; Paul, contrariwise, represents a community violently separating itself from the whole.[108]

Healing of emotions and expansion of Christological vision

With the mention of savage rage, moreover, Augustine situates his concern for Paul's disordered affections into a communal context. In *serm.* 168,[109] he uses vivid language to bring Paul's emotions before his congregants' mental eyes:

> Let us look at Saul raging, observe him raving, observe him breathing out hatred and thirsting for blood. Let us take a good look at him, brothers and sisters, *a great spectacle*!… So off he went to rage against the members of Christ, off he went to shed blood… he's walking along like that, thinking, breathing out slaughter… wrath is guiding his feet, hatred moving his limbs.…[110]

Note how, in raging against Christ's members, Paul's emotions are expressed through his own members. In *en. Ps.* 147, Augustine links the details of Paul's biography to vivid and memorable images from the psalm:

> Let us all concentrate on this example [of Paul] that is set before us, so that the verse, *He sends his ice like breadcrumbs* [Psalms 147:6(147:17)] may disclose its meaning.… Remember that block of ice who arose after the murderous stoning of Stephen, the block called Saul.… If ever there was a man hardened and icy against the fire of God, it was he. But although Saul was hard and frozen, the Lord, who *will send forth his word, and melt them* [Psalms 147:7(147:18)], uttered a burning cry from heaven, *Saul, Saul, why*

[108] See Finn, "Unwrapping the Spectacle," 67.

[109] Preached sometime after 410; Drobner, *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 583–84.

[110] *Serm.* 168.4: "uideamus Saulum saeuientem, spectemus furentem, spectemus odia anhelantem, sanguinemque sitientem. spectemus, fratres, eum; magnum spectaculum … ibat ergo saeuire in membra Christi, ibat sanguinem fundere … et cum sic ambulat, cogitat, anhelat caedes; cum ducit pedes eius ira, mouet membra odium" (*PL* 38:913; English: Augustine, *Sermons 148-183, WSA*, vol. III/5, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, [New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1992], 218; translation slightly modified and emphasis added).

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> *are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4) At that one question, all the hard ice in Saul dissolved.… We have no need to despair even of ice, so how much less of snow or mist?… God is shouting to the gentiles, "I have melted the ice; come to me, all you who are snow."[111]

The intertextual exegesis serves multiple functions. Paul's story becomes more memorable when conceived in terms of ice. That narrative is, in turn, more easily appropriated when associated with words from the Psalms, through which Augustine's congregants are connected to the martyrs. For, as he instructs his congregation in *en. Ps.* 69,[112] "In this psalm … we hear the voice … of martyrs exposed to danger amid their sufferings.… Let us … from sympathetic hearts join our voice to theirs, even if we do not compare with them in pain."[113] In this way, too, Augustine's hearers can share in the healing of Paul's heart. The bishop, in the aforementioned quotation from *en. Ps.* 147, uses prosopopoeia to make an argument from the stronger: if I, God, can melt the ice of Paul's heart, how much more easily can I melt the softer snow of your soul? Finally, in *en. Ps.* 147, Augustine speaks explicitly of the obscurity of the

[111] *En. Ps.* 147.25–26: "ipso proposito ad exemplum, omnes occurrant, ut explicetur sensus iste: 'mittit crystallum suum sicut frusta panis'… ecce uenit illud crystallum Saulus post caedem et lapidationem Stephani … durus est iste et gelidus contra ignem dei. sed quamquam esset durus, quamquam gelidus, ecce ille qui 'emittet uerbum suum, et tabefaciet ea,' clamauit de caelo feruidus: 'Saule, Saule, quid me persequeris?' una illa uoce, tanta illa duritia crystalli resoluta est … non desperetur de crystallo; quanto minus de niue, uel de nebula?… clamat ergo deus ad gentes: solui crystallum, uenite niues" (*CCSL* 40:2161–63; *WSA* III/20:472–73).

[112] Dated by La Bonnardière between 394–405; "Les *Enarrationes in Psalmos* prêchées par Saint Augustin à l'occasion de fêtes de martyrs," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 7 (1971): 70–103, at 90–92.

[113] *En. Ps.* 69.2: "est ergo in hoc Psalmo uox contribulatorum; et ideo utique martyrum inter passiones periclitantium … audiamus eos, et loquamur cum eis ex affectu cordis, etiamsi non similitudine passionis" (*CCSL* 39:931; *WSA* III/17:401). In his treatment of Psalm 69, Augustine first argues that all Christians are members of Christ's body, and in the psalms Christ and his members speak as one person (*en. Ps.* 69.1 [*CCSL* 39:930]). Augustine's hearers can thus pray the psalm in unison with the martyrs. Christians will always suffer some form of persecution, though it may take the form of temptation rather than physical torture (*en. Ps.* 69.2 [*CCSL* 39:931–32]). Like the martyrs before them, Christians in Augustine's day ought also to imitate Christ and pray for the healing confusion of their persecutors. In that way their oppressors might be, like Paul, the persecutor of Stephen, shaken out of their proud justification of their actions, reduced to awe, and converted (*en. Ps.* 69.3 [*CCSL* 39:932–33]).

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psalm as a medicine used by God the doctor.[114] Consistent with the observations made by Martin regarding the patient Paul, who in Augustine's reading needed ongoing healing to avoid temptation to pride, Augustine here links the psalm and Paul to show the human's perpetual need for God's grace:

> Whose cold does the psalm mean when it asks, *Who shall withstand his cold?* God's, obviously. But in what sense is it his cold? Well, think. He abandons a sinner and no longer calls him; suppose he ceases to open the sinner's mind and no longer infuses grace. Now let this person release himself, if he can, from his frozen foolishness. He cannot do it. Why not? *Who shall withstand his cold?* Look at this helpless, hopelessly frozen person, who laments, *I am aware of a different law in my members that opposes the law of my mind, and imprisons me under the law of sin inherent in my members. Who will deliver me from this death-ridden body?* (Rom 7:23-24)[115]

As he does with Stephen, Augustine connects the healing of Paul's heart to vision and voice. We recall how those who stoned Stephen could not share his vision of the exalted Christ because of their envy.[116] Augustine says that Paul, too, was motivated by the most bitter zeal.[117] Like Stephen's other persecutors, Paul still needed sacramental vision. In that regard, Augustine's account in *serm.* 279 is illuminating:

> [Paul] was laid low by the voice of Christ from heaven, and as he received the injunction forbidding him to rage, he fell on his face.… So what did he hear when he was laid low? *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* [Acts 9:4] … The head in heaven was crying out for his members still located on earth, and he didn't say, "Why are you persecuting my servants?" but *Why*

[114] *En. Ps.* 147.2: "consilium ne audebit dare aeger medico? ubi homo aegrotat, et deus curat, magnum pietatis et sanitatis initium est, antequam scias quare quid dictum sit, credere ita dici debuisse ut dictum est" (*CCSL* 40:2140).

[115] *En. Ps.* 147.26: "'in faciem frigoris eius,' cuius? dei. unde est eius frigus? ecce deserit peccatorem, ecce non uocat, ecce non aperit sensum, ecce non infundit gratiam: soluatur homo, si potest, glacie stultitiae. non potest. quare non potest? 'in faciem frigoris eius quis subsistet?' uide ergo congelascentem illum, et dicentem: 'uideo aliam legem in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis meae, et captiuum me ducentem in lege peccati, quae est in membris meis. miser ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius?'" (*CCSL* 40:2161–62; *WSA* III/20:471–72).

[116] *Serm.* 316.2.

[117] *Serm.* 299B.4: "post passionem beatissimi Stephani … uidens Saulus euangelium Christi crescere, impletus est zelo amarissimo" (*Miscellanea agostiniana: Testi e studi pubblicati a cura dell'Ordine eremitano di s. Agostinio nel XV Centenario dalla morte del santo dottore*, 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti,* ed. Germain Morin [Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1930], 519).

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> *are you persecuting me?* And [Paul] answered *What do you wish me to do?* (Acts 22:10).... Already the preacher is being fashioned out of the persecutor.... He heard what he must do. Yes, certainly he was struck blind. For his heart to shine with an inner light, the outer light was for a time snatched away from him.... And yet during the period when he couldn't see anything else, he was seeing Jesus. Thus even in his very blindness the mystery of what it is to be a believer was taking shape; since those who believe in Christ ought to fix their gaze on him, ought to reckon everything else as scarcely even real; so that the creature becomes cheap in their eyes, while the creator grows all the dearer in their hearts.[118]

If Paul's rage and envy blinded him spiritually while he was helping murder Stephen, it takes physical blindness, according to Augustine, to awaken in Paul the eyes of a believer, to enable him, like Stephen earlier, to see Christ in heaven and, in the process, to learn to love the creator more in his *heart* than he loves the created world with his *eyes*. In *serm.* 279, Augustine interprets Christ to carry out the same kind of affective therapy that he identifies elsewhere in Stephen's preaching. When Christ calls to Paul from heaven and knocks him to the ground, he is raging against Paul's rage. Yet Christ's rage is directed at an error, not at the person committing it. In other words, we see that, as in the case of Stephen, anger has its place in the Christian life, so long as it aims at sin, rather than the sinner, and so long as it is motivated ultimately by love, by the desire to heal the other person. Augustine deploys paradox to underscore Christ's medical power: "What gentle savagery, what merciful rage! You can see him [Christ] getting the knife ready; he is going to operate, not destroy; going to cure, not kill."[119] Thus, after knocking Paul down and blinding him, Christ offers him loving aid: he teaches Paul that, although this life entails suffering, that pain can be endured if one hopes for the rest of the next life.[120]

[118] *Serm.* 279.1: "uoce Christi de caelo prostratus est, et accipiens interdictum saeuiendi, cecidit in faciem suam ... quid ergo prostratus audiuit? 'Saule, Saule, quid me persequeris?' ... membris adhuc in terra positis caput in caelo clamabat, et non dicebat, quid persequeris seruos meos; sed, 'quid me persequeris?' et ille, 'quid me uis facere?' ... iam informatur ex persecutore praedicator ... audiuit quid facere debeat. caecus sane factus est: ut interiore luce fulgeret cor eius, exterior ad tempus erepta est ... et eo tamen tempore, quo cetera non uidebat, Iesum uidebat. ita et in ipsa eius caecitate mysterium informabatur credentium; quoniam qui credit in Christum, ipsum intueri debet, cetera nec nata computare; ut creatura uilescat, et creator in corde dulcescat" (*PL* 38:1275–76; *WSA* III/8:60).

[119] *Serm.* 279.4: "o saeuitia misericors! uides illum praeparare ferrum: secturus est, non perempturus; curaturus, non occisurus" (*PL* 38:1277; *WSA* III/8:62).

[120] *Serm.* 279.4: "Christus dicebat, 'ego illi ostendam quae illum oporteat pati pro nomine meo.' sed quo fine? ipsum qui patiebatur audi. 'non sunt condignae passiones huius

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But, finally and importantly, we must observe that this inward turn toward the heart and heavenly realities remains, simultaneously, a summons to really *see* the material, created world. Earlier we noted Stephen's two-part Christological vision, first the lowly Christ on the cross and then the glorified Christ in heaven. In Augustine's account, Paul also has a two-part vision. Unlike Stephen, though, Paul was not present at Christ's passion. Instead, Paul first sees Stephen stoned and hears him preach harsh words and lovingly pray for his enemies. But Paul does not really see Stephen until the second part of his vision, when, blinded, he is formed into a believer and finally sees Jesus. And what does Jesus call him to see? None other than the members of Christ's body whom Paul is persecuting—that is, he is called to see them as members of Christ. Without in any way denying the reality of Paul's vision of Christ, Augustine suggests that the only way Christians see and hear Christ is through the members of his body.[121] But it takes the gift of faith to see the whole, the whole Christ, in and through a mere part.

Vision of the whole Christ throughout the nations

For Augustine, Paul's transformation enables another glimpse of wholeness, a fulfillment of God's promise that the gospel would spread to all the nations.[122] Augustine sees this occur partly through Paul's persecution of Christians in Jerusalem, which causes members of the church to scatter across the earth.[123] In *serm.* 116,[124] which has an anti-Manichaean polemic, that

temporis.' ipse dicit qui patiebatur, et sciebat pro quo nomine patiebatur, et quo fructu patiebatur. 'non sunt condignae passiones huius temporis ad futuram gloriam, quae reuelabitur in nobis'" (*PL* 38:1277; quoting Acts 9:16 and Rom 8:18).

[121] Hence, it makes sense that, at *trin.* 1.28 and 1.31, Augustine argues that those with impure hearts will see Christ only in the form of a servant at the final judgment. They will be shown what they could not see and believe in: the humble Christ in those who are hungry or thirsty (Matt 25:37). Stephen and Paul, who through faith have begun to see the unity of Christ and his members, still see Christ only in the form of a servant, though now in glorified form, showing them that for which they can hope. They remain *in via*.

[122] Augustine draws variously upon, for example, Gen 22:18; Psalms 21:28(22:27); Luke 24:46–47.

[123] E.g., *serm.* 299B.4: "acerrimus fuerat persecutor [Paulus]: quando beatus Stephanus lapidatus est, ipse lapidantium uestimenta seruauit, ut in omnium manibus lapidaret. post passionem beatissimi Stephani dispersi sunt fratres, qui erant in Ierusolimis; et quia lumina erant, spiritu dei ardebant; quocumque uenerant, accendebant. tunc uidens Saulus euangelium Christi crescere, impletus est zelo amarissimo" (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, 1:519). See also *serm.* 116.6; 316.4; *en. Ps.* 147.18.

[124] According to Drobner, the date and location of *s.* 116 remain uncertain; *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 393–95.

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detail is something of a hinge between two partial visions: the disciples' sight of the risen Christ—an argument against Manichaean docetic Christology—and later Christians' sight of Christ's body the church, which helps anchor their faith in Christ's and in their own future resurrection.[125] The reality of Christ's body, in its suffering and glory, unites Christians in a single whole across history, a history still in the making. Thus, in *serm.* 116, Augustine uses the subjunctive to represent the suffering of Stephen and the early church at the hands of persecutors like Saul/Paul and thereby to ignite the faith of the Christians of his own day and incorporate them into the ongoing history of that communal body:

> The whole Christ was known both to [the disciples] and to us; but the whole Christ was not seen by them, nor is the whole Christ seen by us. By them the head was seen, the body believed; by us the body is seen, the head believed. And yet none of us lacks Christ. He is complete in all of us, and still there is more of his body waiting for him. Those disciples believed, through them many inhabitants of Jerusalem came to believe, Judea came to believe, Samaria came to believe. Let the members join the body.... Let the Jews rage, filled with jealousy. Let Stephen be stoned, let the coats of those who stoned him be kept by Saul, Saul, the future apostle Paul. Let Stephen be slain, the Church of Jerusalem be thrown into confusion. Let burning firewood be scattered from there, let them go elsewhere setting other places on fire.[126]

[125] *Serm.* 116.6: "hoc nondum uidebant discipuli: ecclesiam per omnes gentes, incipientibus ab Ierusalem, nondum uidebant. caput uidebant: et de corpore capiti credebant. per hoc quod uidebant, quod non uidebant credebant. similes illis sumus et nos: uidemus aliquid, quod ipsi non uidebant; et non uidemus aliquid, quod ipsi uidebant. quid nos uidemus, quod ipsi non uidebant? ecclesiam per omnes gentes. quid non uidemus, quod ipsi uidebant? Christum in carne constitutum. quomodo illi illum uidebant, et de corpore credebant: sic nos corpus uidemus, de capite credamus. inuicem nos adiuuent uisa nostra. adiuuat eos uisus Christus, ut futuram ecclesiam crederent: adiuuat nos uisa ecclesia, ut Christum resurrexisse credamus. impleta est fides illorum, impletur et nostra: impleta est illorum de capite, impletur nostra de corpore" (*PL* 38:660).

[126] *Serm.* 116.6: "totus Christus et illis innotuit, et nobis innotuit: sed totus ab eis non est uisus, nec a nobis totus est uisus. ab eis caput est uisum, corpus creditum: a nobis corpus uisum, caput creditum. nulli tamen deest Christus: in omnibus plenus est, et adhuc ei restat corpus. crediderunt ipsi, crediderunt per illos Ierosolymitani multi; credidit Iudaea, credidit Samaria. accedant membra ... insaniant Iudaei, impleantur zelo: lapidetur Stephanus, seruet lapidantium uestimenta Saulus, Saulus futurus Paulus apostolus. occidatur Stephanus, perturbetur ecclesia Ierosolymitana: discedant inde ligna ardentia, accedant et incendant" (*PL* 38:660; English: Augustine, *Sermons 94A-147A, WSA*, vol. III/4, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill [Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1992], 206).

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Similarly, in the anti-Donatist homily *en. Ps.* 147, Augustine situates the church's spread from Jerusalem into a broader analysis of God's promises and their fulfillment in salvation history: if the Donatists can view the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, then they should accept, as well, the promise that the church would spread to all the nations. But the deeper logic at work is a dialectic between whole and partial vision. There is the wholeness of Christ the head and his ecclesial body. In that regard, the Donatists believe only partially, in the head but not in the members as part of that whole, thereby missing the point and locus of Christ's mercy.[127] This unity is confirmed, to Augustine's mind, by Christ's identification with the persecuted members of his church (Acts 9:4), who are represented by Stephen. Augustine pins Stephen's martyrdom on Paul, yet he also recognizes in that death the sacramental seeds of Paul's conversion.[128]

The whole Christ is ultimately an eschatological reality, unknown to human beings, who exist in time and cannot perceive the motivations in other people's hearts. Humanity's partial vision becomes an important means whereby Augustine establishes the continuity between the church as a mixed body starting from Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem. Yet again, Augustine's analysis studies salvation history and the individual conscience. Augustine deploys the rhetorical device of prosopopoeia to compel his hearers into an honest and humble acknowledgment of their imperfect souls.[129] At the same time, because of the obscurity of other people's hearts, they are to practice mercy by assuming the best about others.[130] In an imperfect world,

[127] *En. Ps.* 147.18: "quid enim quia resurrexit a mortuis, quia in eodem corpore resurrexit?… optime credis; audi illum loquentem in quem credis. 'praedicari in nomine eius paenitentiam et remissionem peccatorum.' ubi? per latas terras … quid uis amplius? remissio peccatorum in Christi nomine praedicatur. ubi? 'per omnes gentes:' unde? incipiens 'ab Ierusalem.' communica huic ecclesiae. quare litigamus? coepit enim haec ecclesia ab Ierusalem ista terrena, ut gaudeat inde deo in illa Ierusalem caelesti" (*CCSL* 40:2155).

[128] *En. Ps.* 147.25–26. Stephen's bodily death is the physical medium of Christ's grace to Paul. Note how Augustine uses antithesis and *homoteleuton* to emphasize Paul's transformation from ice to water, that is, to becoming himself a sacramental vessel of Christ's grace:

> "Saulus durus ut crystallum, Stephanum est persecutus ad mortem;
> Paulus iam in aqua uiua gentes uocat ad fontem" (*en. Ps.* 147.26 [*CCSL* 40:2163]).

[129] *En. Ps.* 147.12: "et difficile est ut de se quisque perfecte iudicet. fratres mei, quantumlibet homo proficiat … si iam dicit sibi: bene est, procedit regula de thesauris dei, examinat ad liquidum; et quis gloriabitur castum se habere cor" (*CCSL* 40:2147)?

[130] *En. Ps.* 147.13: "faciens ergo huiusmodi misericordias, et illam praecipue quae gratis constat: 'dimitte, sicut dimittimus'; quo nonnisi caritatem erogas, quae crescit cum

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Augustine calls and equips his congregants to be and to become the heavenly Jerusalem, to share, to a small degree, in the perfect peace of heaven by entrusting to God alone the work of salvation.[131]

God's grace brings growth not only out of Paul's persecution, but also through Paul's preaching and epistles.[132] This, too, is an unfinished, ongoing process. Thus, in *serm.* 116, Augustine speaks directly to Paul in the present because the apostle remains alive and working on behalf of a church still taking form:

> Speak, preach, preach Christ, scatter the seed, you fine ram, so recently a wolf. Look at him, observe him, this man who used to be so savage: *But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world was crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal 6:14). Pour forth the gospel; with your mouth scatter the seeds you have conceived in your heart. Let the nations hear, let the nations believe, let the nations burgeon with luxuriant growth, let a bride be born in the purple to the Lord from the blood of the martyrs.[133]

Augustine maintains the imperative in the first two sentences of the foregoing quotation, but the addressee switches from Paul to his congregants. The addressee of the sentence immediately following the quotation from Galatians is thus ambiguous, and that ambiguity facilitates the Christian's identification

erogas … exspectabis securus iudicium … quando enim potestis diiudicare conscientiam meam? quando examinare quo animo facio, quidquid facio? quantum possunt homines de alio iudicare? plus homo utique ipse de se; sed deus plus de homine, quam homo de se" (*CCSL* 40:2148–49).

[131] *En. Ps.* 147.15–16: "ecce hoc dico, o filii dilecti, o filii regni, o ciues Ierusalem, quoniam in Ierusalem uisio pacis est; et omnes qui amant pacem, benedicuntur in ea … hanc quam nominatam sic amatis et diligitis, ipsam sectamini, ipsam desiderate … quid agit pax in huius adhuc regionis incertis, in ista peregrinatione mortalitatis nostrae; cum adhuc nemo est alteri conspicuus, nemo uidet cor alterius? quid agit pax? de incertis non iudicat, incognita non confirmat; procliuior est ad bene credendum de homine, quam ad male suspicandum" (*CCSL* 40:2150). The Donatists lack this peace because they condemn the Catholic Church and, by extension, the whole world.

[132] E.g., *Serm.* 316.5: "per uoluntatem tuam scimus, uidimus fructus tuos: occisus est Stephanus per uoluntatem tuam. per uoluntatem dei, uidemus fructus tuos: ubique legeris, ubique recitaris, ubique ad Christum aduersantia corda conuertis" (*PL* 38:1434). See also *serm.* 116.7; 298.1.

[133] *Serm.* 116.7: "dic, praedica: praedica Christum, dissemina, o bone aries, iamdudum lupus. uide illum, attende illum, qui saeuiebat: 'mihi autem absit gloriari, nisi in cruce domini nostri Iesu Christi, per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo.' funde euangelium: quod corde concepisti, ore dissemina. audiant gentes, credant gentes: pullulent gentes, nascatur de sanguine martyrum sponsa domino purpurata" (*PL* 38:661; *WSA* III/4:207).

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with Paul. Augustine effectively calls every Christian to look at Paul and, in the process, to be converted like him and "Pour forth the gospel."

Grace as the overflowing gift of self

Just as the church spreads to all nations yet remains a mixed body,[134] so too Paul, the individual, exemplifies for Augustine the Christian's ongoing struggle with sin and constant need of divine grace.[135] In ancient epistolary theory, a letter rendered its author present and offered the reader a glimpse of the letter writer's soul.[136] For Augustine, Paul's epistles offer an outward testimony of the inward movement of his heart, and they facilitate Augustine's predicatory revivification and representation of Paul to his congregation.[137] In several homilies, Augustine stages conversations with the apostle, the rhetorical device of *sermocinatio*. These conversations are a mixture of quotations from Paul's epistles and prosopopoeia.[138] Augustine invokes Paul's own words to prove that the apostle's conversion and subsequent achievements for the church were all the result of grace. In common with all sinful humanity,

[134] E.g., *serm.* 299A.9: "pauci in christianis bene uiuentes, multi in christianis male uiuentes. sed hi pauci in comparatione paleae suae pauci sunt; in comparatione, inquam, paleae suae pauci sunt. uentilabitur haec area, erit ingens aceruus palearum, sed apparebit etiam lucida massa sanctorum. palea in ignem ibit, triticum in horreum, sed tamen nunc ubique utrumque. unde hoc? qui seminauerunt, fratres, quorum memoriam celebramus hodie, per hos exhibuit deus, quod illis promisit, et per illos, quod nobis promisit. quid illis promisit? 'de cetero superest mihi corona iustitiae, quam reddet dominus in illo die iustus iudex.' quid nobis promisit? 'in semine tuo benedicentur omnes gentes.' quomodo per hos factum est? 'in omnem terram exiuit sonus eorum, et in fines orbis terrae uerba eorum.' quid contra ista haeretici recitabunt? puto quia et ipsi hodie celebrant natalem apostolorum; adfectant quidem istum diem celebrare, sed non audent istum Psalmum cantare" (*Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 39 [1993]: 420).

[135] See Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 416–22. At *serm.* 299, in which Augustine argues against the Pelagians, we see the bishop apply his mature view of death—that it is never a good to be loved and always an evil to be feared—to Paul's biography. Thus, Paul, despite his amazing conversion from murderer of Stephen and persecutor of the church to champion of the gospel, continued to struggle with a sinful nature and the fear of death. It was only with Christ's help that he could relinquish his earthly life (*serm.* 299.8–10).

[136] Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 47–49.

[137] Accordingly, Augustine affirms for his Christian audience, because they have read Paul's letters, that "nothing is better known to us than this man, nothing sweeter, nothing in the scriptures more familiar [nihil nobis isto uiro notius, nihil suauius, nihil in scripturis familiarius est]" (*En. Ps.* 147.25 [*CCSL* 40:2161; *WSA* III/20:471]).

[138] Martin, "*Vox Pauli*," 254–72, shows how Augustine uses these conversations to convince his hearers to accept his interpretation of the apostle. Paul's own "voice" lends support to Augustine's reading.

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Paul was, according to his own will, deserving only of condemnation and punishment. How could someone that zealous in his persecution of Christians have any merits of his own? So *serm.* 298:[139]

> Because if, my dear Paul, to begin with Saul, when you were persecuting the saints of Christ, when you were holding the garments of those who were stoning Stephen, if the Lord had delivered a just judgment upon you, where would you be now? For a crime of such enormity as yours, what place would be found for you at the very bottom of gehenna? But he didn't make a just award then, so that he might make one now. You see, we read your own words about your previous doings in your letter, and it's from you that we know about it. You said yourself, *For I am the last of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle* (1 Cor 15:9). You're not worthy, and he did it. So he didn't award you what was your due, because he bestowed an honor upon an unworthy man, whose due was punishment. *I am not*, he said, *worthy to be called an apostle.* Why not? *Because I persecuted the Church of Christ.* So if you persecuted the Church of Christ, how is it that you are an apostle? *But by the grace of God I am what I am.*... I myself am nothing. Whatever I am, I am by the grace of God.[140]

Paul is who he is because of God's grace alone. No one, then, should despair that they are too sinful for God's forgiveness.

Yet Augustine does not simply set the sinner against God's grace. The *sermocinatio* also allows Augustine to show that the relationship between human agency and divine grace is not a zero-sum game. Consider *serm.* 299B:[141]

> And how is it you [Paul] are an apostle? *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace in me has not been idle, but I worked harder than them all.* Pardon me, Saint Paul, but people who don't understand will think it's still Saul speaking. *I worked harder than all of them*, has the appearance of

[139] The homily was preached on June 29, but the year remains undetermined; Drobner, *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 1025–26.

[140] *Serm.* 298.4: "nam si, o Paule, primo Saule, quando persequebaris sanctos Christi, quando seruabas uestimenta lapidatorum Stephani, exerceret circa te dominus iustum iudicium, ubi esses? tanto sceleri tuo quis locus in fundo gehennae reperiretur? sed tunc tibi non reddidit, ut modo reddat. uerba enim tua de prioribus factis tuis legimus in epistola tua, et per te nouimus. tu dixisti: 'ego enim sum nouissimus apostolorum, qui non sum dignus uocari apostolus.' non es dignus, et fecit. non ergo quod tibi debebatur reddidit, quia indigno honorem praestitit cui supplicium debebatur. 'non sum,' inquit, 'dignus uocari apostolus.' quare? 'quia persecutus sum ecclesiam dei.' si persecutus es ecclesiam dei, unde ergo apostolus? sed 'gratia dei sum quod sum.' ... ego nihil sum. quidquid sum, gratia dei sum" (Lambot, *Stromata Patristica et Mediaevalia* 1 [1950]:97–98; *WSA* III/8:226).

[141] The sermon was preached on June 29 of an undetermined year; Drobner, *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 1033–34.

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> being said out of pride. Still, it was said with truth; but what comes next? Yes, when he sees he has said something which could set him on a kind of pedestal, *I worked harder*, he says, *than all of them*; and straightaway, *not I, though, but the grace of God with me* (1 Cor 15:9-10). Humility recognized itself, infirmity trembled, perfect charity acknowledged the gift of God.... The one who bestows the merits will reward the merits. [Paul] became an apostle, though he was not worthy, and will he be unworthy to be crowned? There, you see, when he received a grace, quite gratuitous, in no way his due, *I am not worthy*, he said, *to be called an apostle, but by the grace of God I am what I am.* Now, on the contrary, he is demanding his due: *I have fought the good fight, I have completed the course, I have kept the faith; but for the rest there remains for me a crown of justice*, a crown of justice is my due. And to show you it's something due, *which the Lord will award me*. I didn't say, "gives me," or "bestows on me," but *will award me on that day, the just judge*. The Merciful one bestowed something on me, the Just one will make me an award. I can see, blessed Paul, what the crown is due to; your merits. But looking back to what you were, I recognize that these very merits of yours are God's gifts.[142]

God's grace helps lead, gradually, toward the fullness of human flourishing and freedom.[143] Augustine uses the conversational format and the words of Paul's letters to demonstrate how the human being is transformed through the help of Christ's grace. Augustine lets *Paul* speak in such a way that he can alternatingly claim sinfulness and unworthiness and can point to *his*, Paul's, merits. All the while, however, Paul attributes those merits to God's gift. Thus, the conversational style shows how God's grace does not erase Paul's identity

[142] *Serm.* 299B.5: "et unde es apostolus? 'sed gratia dei sum quod sum, et gratia eius in me uacua non fuit, sed plus omnibus illis laboraui.' rogo te, sancte Paule, non intellegentes homines putant adhuc Saulum loqui: plus omnibus illis laboraui, quasi superbe dictum uidetur. tamen uere dictum est: quid autem sequitur? at ubi uidit se dixisse, quod in celsitudinem quandam eum posset efferre, plus, inquit, omnibus illis laboraui; et continuo, 'non ego autem, sed gratia dei mecum.' agnouit se humilitas, tremuit infirmitas, confessa est donum dei perfecta caritas.... reddet meritis, qui donat merita. factus est apostolus, qui non erat dignus: et non coronabitur dignus? ibi enim, quando accepit gratiam, non debitam, sed gratuitam: non sum, inquit, dignus uocari apostolus, sed gratia dei sum quod sum. modo autem debitum exigit: bonum certamen certaui, cursum consummaui, fidem seruaui; de cetero autem superest mihi corona iustitiae, corona iustitiae debetur mihi. et ut scias quia debetur: quam reddet mihi. non dixit [Hill here reads "non dixi"], dat mihi, aut, donat mihi, sed, reddet mihi dominus in illa die iustus iudex. misericors donauit mihi, iustus reddet mihi. uideo, beate Paule, quibus corona debetur, meritis tuis; sed respiciens quod fuisti agnosco, dei dona sunt ipsa merita tua" (*Miscellanea agostiniana*, 1:520–21; *WSA* III/8:247–48).

[143] For a helpful reflection on this issue within the context of human sociality, see Matthew Drever, "Reimagining Human Personhood within the Body of Christ," *Augustinian Studies* 48 (2017): 73–91.

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but, rather, gives it to him. And because Paul has this identity, he can be an example to other Christians, who can, with Augustine, share in Paul's voice—note Augustine's use of the first person toward the end of the quotation—and make it their own as members of the same body.

Faith and love: making and trusting the outward expression of the heart

For all Augustine's mature reticence regarding exempla,[144] his incarnational theology and strong emphasis on grace leave a notable space for them in the church as a part of salvation history. Here we turn to another feature of Augustine's preaching on Paul that is generally continuous with what we saw in the case of Stephen. In *serm.* 279, Augustine adduces Rom 10:10, where Paul describes believing in the heart while confessing Christ with the mouth, to highlight Paul's humility, on the one hand, and the proud shame of contemporary pagans, on the other. According to Augustine, those pagans might recognize God's eternal Word, but they will not outwardly profess the Word *made flesh* out of fear of social censure. For such individuals, Augustine underscores the need to humbly incarnate their faith, to bring inward faith and love to outward expression:

> What's the use of having believed with the heart unto justice, if the mouth hesitates to bring to birth what has been conceived in the heart? God sees faith inside; but that's too little. What stops you confessing the humble one is your fear of the proud; and you put the proud before the one who for your sake incurred the displeasure of the proud. You're afraid to confess the humble Son of God. The great Word of God, *the power of God, the wisdom of God* (1 Cor 1:24), you're not ashamed to confess that. You're ashamed to confess him as born, crucified, dead.[145]

Yet the need for external confession works the other way, too. In the same homily,[146] Augustine describes Faustinus, a convert to Christianity whose sincerity is doubted by some of his congregants. Augustine highlights the example of Paul to help his congregants see the power of God's grace at work

[144] Ayres, "Into the Poem of the Universe," 279–81.

[145] *Serm.* 279.7: "quid prodest corde credidisse ad iustitiam, si os dubitat proferre quod corde conceptum est? intus fidem deus uidet: sed parum est. ne confitearis humilem, times superbos; et ei praeponis superbos, qui pro te displicuit superbis. humilem times confiteri filium dei. magnum uerbum dei, uirtutem dei, sapientiam dei non erubescis confiteri: natum, crucifixum, mortuum erubescis confiteri" (*PL* 38:1278–79; *WSA* III/8:63).

[146] Both Drobner and Magalhães de Oliveira accept *serm. Morin* 1 as the authentic ending of *serm.* 279. Magalhães de Oliveira, however, is confident in dating the homily to 401, and he reads *serm.* 279 in conjunction with *serm.* 24, which on that reconstruction had been preached the preceding week and responded to the defacement of a statue of

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in Faustinus's life.[147] Such seeing is of course hard. Augustine reminds his congregants that they cannot see Faustinus's heart.[148] Consequently—and here we see the communally upbuilding and affectively therapeutic effect of faith—they ought to charitably and humbly trust his outward confession. God has already used their example as members of the church: whether they have inspired love or fear in Faustinus, they have been the occasion for his conversion. But should they presumptuously exclude him from the community, they close the door to hope.[149] Augustine exhorts his congregants to see and to believe at once so that pride can become love: "Let us not claim to judge the thoughts of others … look at [Faustinus's] face, about which you should be rejoicing; commit his heart, for which you should be praying, to God."[150] It is the outward sight of Faustinus's face, coupled with the faith in what God is doing in Faustinus's heart, that opens one to seeing Faustinus's humanity, what he is and can be. That is also the way that Augustine's congregants, in the context of the community, become more human, more the image of God.

These exhortations remind Augustine's hearers of their partial vision. Humans cannot see the whole, cannot see everywhere God's grace is operating. There can be no gradual healing inwardly, however, without the body, the law, the incarnation, examples, the church, and history. And wherever one finds oneself, whether in the church or without, God has designed matters for suitable healing, to combat pride and cultivate humility and love. Yet this attentiveness to place, time, and perspective in the Christian life does not

Hercules. According to Magalhães de Oliveira, Faustinus's conversion was likely motivated by fear at the anger expressed by the Christian public toward the pagan elite who opposed the Catholic church; "*Vt maiores non pagani sint!*," 259.

147 *Serm.* 279.10: "potuimus et nos dicere, quod Ananias et forte nonnulli dixerunt [de Paulo], aut forte adhuc nonnulli dicunt: quis? ille christianus? ille credidit?" (*Miscellanea agostiniana*, 1:590).

148 *Serm.* 279.10: "non potes inspicere cor noui christiani. quid? cor ueteris christiani potes?" (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, 1:590).

149 *Serm.* 279.10–12.

150 *Serm.* 279.11: "non nobis usurpemus diiudicare cogitationes aliorum … interim faciem uidete, de qua gaudeatis; cor deo committite, pro quo oretis" (*Miscellanea Agostiniana* 1:590–91; *WSA* III/8:66.) Augustine's further advice to his congregants regarding Faustinus echoes what we heard him preach above about Stephen's seemingly angry preaching (*serm.* 315.5): "Love the man more than you previously hated his error; because even then, when you were shouting against him, you were really looking for him. Don't assume you shouted in vain; and rejoice that the one you were looking for has been found [plus amate hominem, quam prius oderatis errorem; nam tunc quando contra illum clamabatis, ipsum quaerebatis. non uos frustra clamasse praesumite; et quem quaerebatis, inuentum esse gaudete]" (*serm.* 279.11 [*Miscellanea agostiniana* 1:591; *WSA* III/8:66]).

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result in the flattening of the distinctiveness of the church for Augustine. To the contrary, our analysis has shown how the church, in Augustine's preaching, is the utterly necessary locus of grace, while at the same time remaining open to the movement of God's grace both within and beyond the church's visible boundaries.[151]

Conclusion

In this article, I have sought, by means of an analysis of a range of Augustine's sermons, to confirm Paula Fredriksen's thesis that Paul's Lucan biography of conversion from persecutor of the church to preacher proves theologically and anthropologically paradigmatic for the late antique bishop. But we noted that Augustine often treats Paul in tandem with the protomartyr Stephen. This led us to modify some further claims Fredriksen and her scholarly forebear Krister Stendahl had made about the Augustinian interpretation of Paul. Augustine might not share the historical Paul's Jewish apocalyptic worldview, but his treatment of the individual Christian's conscience cannot be comprehended apart from a consideration of the broader communal history of divine promise and fulfillment. Particularly against the Donatists, Augustine stresses, in line with Paul, how the eschatological Jerusalem includes Jews and Gentiles. And while Fredriksen is right that Augustine's post-396 theology of grace turns toward the body and history, the bishop does not appear to make that shift by abandoning a philosophical concern with the soul, virtue, and eternity. To the contrary, Augustine's preaching on Stephen and Paul continues, with notable Christian modification, a longer Greco-Roman philosophical and rhetorical tradition of "medical" care of the soul. Such care, which for Augustine is embodied and historical, aims to transcend the limits of materiality, temporality, and death, not by escaping from such strictures so much as by transforming them from the inside out. Christ's real death renders Stephen's and Paul's historical examples transformative and theologically paradigmatic and thus serves as the basis for Augustine's belief in Stephen's and Paul's continued life in heaven. Precisely as one toils horizontally through time in the church community, by following the examples of Stephen and Paul, one begins, Augustine believes, to ascend vertically, to gain a foretaste of eternal rest.

Because our study has taken us across so many different homilies, it is perhaps useful to conclude with a brief look at a single, later homily, *serm.* 316

[151] Although Augustine analyzes pagan *exempla* with a view toward critiquing the values of his culture, he can also detect the work of God's grace through those exemplary narratives; Herdt, "The Theater of the Virtues," 128–29.

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(preached after 416),[152] where Augustine brings Stephen and Paul together in a dynamic predicatory act of sacramental imagination. As one may recall, this is the sermon where Augustine wonders whether Stephen was one of those who did not know what he was doing in killing Christ, one for whom Christ entreated his Father for forgiveness. Christ's prayer was successful, and Christ's real death becomes the focal point of Stephen's own physical self-sacrifice and the means whereby the martyr, while in the body in time, makes an ascent toward heaven in and through Christ: "Those of you who know how to love Stephen, love him in Christ.... Notice whom he was confessing while he was being stoned; whom he was confessing on earth, whom he could see in heaven; for whom he was handing over his flesh, to whom he was entrusting his soul."[153] Because of Christ's death and Christ's prayer, Stephen's death and Stephen's prayer could then be the seeds of change in Paul's life: "Do you suppose Saul heard these words? He heard all right, but he jeered; and yet he was included in Stephen's prayer."[154]

Augustine invokes an image of Stephen's death and Paul's sin:

> Such a lovely picture this is, where you can see Saint Stephen being stoned, can see Saul keeping the coats of those doing the stoning. This man is *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus* (1 Cor 1:1), this man is *Paul, the servant of Christ Jesus* (Rom 1:1).... We can see your [Paul's] fruits that came by the will of God: you are read everywhere, chanted everywhere, everywhere you are converting to Christ the hearts that oppose him.[155]

Via meditation on a violent death, beautiful not in itself but because it has been transformed by God's grace, Augustine takes his congregants from the church's beginnings to its universal geographic spread, achieved with the help of Paul's letters. Those horizontal movements are, at the same time, movements inward and upward. Augustine's rhetoric draws his congregants into their own minds. But there Augustine does not paint a picture or quote the letters of those dead and gone. Rather, his memory of the church's past is engagement in its present

[152] Drobner, *Die Chronologie der Predigten Augustins*, 1135–36.

[153] *Serm.* 316.1: "qui nostis amare Stephanum, in Christo amate ... attendite quem confitebatur, quando lapidabatur; quem confitebatur in terra, quem uidebat in caelo; pro quo tradebat carnem suam, cui commendabat animam suam" (*PL* 38:1432; *WSA* III/9:137).

[154] *Serm.* 316.4: "putas uerba ista audiuit Saulus? audiuit, sed irrisit: et tamen ad orationem Stephani pertinebat" (*PL* 38:1434; *WSA* III/9:139).

[155] *Serm.* 316.5: "dulcissima pictura est haec, ubi uidetis sanctum Stephanum lapidari, uidetis Saulum lapidantium uestimenta seruantem. iste est 'Paulus apostolus Christi Iesu,' iste est 'Paulus seruus Christi Iesu' ... per uoluntatem dei, uidemus fructus tuos: ubique legeris, ubique recitaris, ubique ad Christum aduersantia corda conuertis" (*PL* 38:1434; *WSA* III/9:140).

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and a foretaste of its future, as he and his congregants interact with Stephen and Paul, very much alive in heaven:

> You [Paul] are reigning with the one you stoned [Stephen], reigning with Christ. There you can both see each other, can both now hear my sermon; both of you please pray for us. He [Christ] will listen to you both, the one who crowned you, one first, the other later on, one who suffered persecution, the other who did the persecuting. The first was a lamb then, the other was a wolf; now, though, both are lambs. May the lambs [Stephen and Paul] acknowledge us, and see us in the flock of Christ. May they commend us to him in their prayers, so as to obtain a quiet and tranquil life for the Church of their Lord."[156]

Augustine and his congregants remember Christ's prayer for Stephen and Stephen's prayer for Paul. They see how love and mercy build the church throughout the world. Through that memory, moreover, they become a part of that living historic and eternal community because Stephen and Paul now pray for them. In those prayers—prayers of mercy that, as we have seen, they are to imitate as well—they share in a tranquility that Augustine, I think, intends to be ambiguous, referring both to the imperfect peace of this life and the perfect rest of the next.

So who are Stephen and Paul for Augustine? They are spectacles of an all-encompassing Catholic Christian culture intended to counteract the violent spectacles of late antique Roman culture. Where, for Augustine, the latter might have suggested the finality of death and an ideology of pride and dominance, the former manifested the truth of God and the soul's immortality and inculcated a habit of merciful love. Where the latter divided, to Augustine's mind, the former drew the self outward into a greater unity with God and other. Augustine could thus deploy these examples as a way of defending and achieving catholicity against pagans, Donatists, and Pelagians. The stories of Stephen and Paul illustrate the transcendent mystery of God, in whom justice and mercy unite: in judgment God corrects error and in mercy God gradually reintegrates the individual and the community by healing bad habits. In that process, Augustine showed an understanding of divine grace that was compatible with a medical-philosophical training in virtue, that could lead

[156] *Serm.* 316.5: "cum eo quem lapidasti, cum Christo regnas. ambo ibi uos uidetis; ambo modo sermonem nostrum auditis; ambo pro nobis orate. ambos uos exaudiet, qui uos coronauit, unum prius, alterum postea: unum qui persecutionem passus est, alterum qui persecutus est. ille tunc agnus erat, ille autem lupus erat: modo autem ambo agni sunt. agni agnoscant nos, et in grege Christi uideant nos: orationibus suis commendent nos, ut quietam et tranquillam uitam impetrent ecclesiae domini sui" (*PL* 38:1434; *WSA* III/9:140).

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people to the fullness of being human, by transforming, not denying, humans' embodied, historical character. The examples of Stephen and Paul similarly enabled Augustine to show how God reintegrated the human community in its wholeness, as a body with many parts and a history. So, through the witness of Stephen, Augustine could underscore the conversion of Jews and the origin of the church at Jerusalem. Through Paul, Augustine could showcase the inclusion of the Gentiles into Christ's body. Augustine could deploy such figures to articulate his vision of Christianization, not through exclusion and external conquest over the church's enemies, but through inclusion and gradual transformation of the whole,[157] his vision of a church spread throughout the nations that yet remains a mixed body healed in time.

[157] On this distinction, see Magalhães de Oliveira, "*Vt maiores pagani non sint!*," 262.

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