AUGUSTINE'S JOURNEY TO REST

COMPLETING THE JOURNEY:
SCRIPTURAL EXEGESIS IN AUGUSTINE'S *CONFESSIONS*

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Abstract

Saint Augustine's *Confessions* stands as one of the most widely read works of the Western tradition. Despite its popularity there remains a greatly contested question fundamental to understanding *Confessions*: how do all the books cohere? The question about coherence arises because the "autobiographical" books (I-IX) differ markedly from the "philosophical" ones (X-XIII). This division is evident in that many treatments of *Confessions* only consider the first nine books. It is the contention of this thesis that the final three books are absolutely essential to a complete reading of *Confessions*. In the final three books Augustine develops his understanding of creation, his ecclesiology, his hermeneutics and his Trinitarian doctrine. This thesis seeks to show how the Scriptural exegesis of the final three books completes the journey of *Confessions*—the journey to rest in the Triune God—as described in the first ten books.

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Introduction

In this thesis I will seek to demonstrate the coherence of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* by showing the integral place of the final three books to the whole work. Specifically, I will do so by explicating how the Scriptural exegesis of the final three books completes the journey to rest in God that is begun in the first book. I see this journey to rest being comprised of three journeys that are all, finally, of one piece. The first journey describes autobiographically the details of Augustine's life in the world from his birth to early life as a Christian (Books I—IX). The second journey describes psychologically, from within, Augustine's struggle to live the Christian life (X). The third journey describes cosmically the life of the Church in the world (XI—XIII). I see all these journeys being a part of the one journey because they all seek rest in God; and, as we shall see, Augustine moves from one journey to the next because the preceding journey did not provide the rest that he desires. It is only through the journey of the Church in the world that Augustine achieves rest. Indeed, in the first chapter of *Confessions* Augustine writes, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."[1] And it is only in the last chapter that he achieves this rest in the Church in the world, even as he looks forward to "the Sabbath of eternal life" (13.36.51). I will be focusing especially on the reading of Scripture in these journeys. To restate the journeys with this in mind, we could say that in the first journey Augustine learns to read Scripture, begins to live it and to be read by Scripture; in the second he is read by Scripture in an even more profound way; and in the third he is ordered by Scripture in his relation to the whole. It is only through the reading of Scripture in the third journey—specifically exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis—that Augustine achieves the desired rest. This thesis will be comprised of three chapters, with a chapter for each of these three journeys.

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[1] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Maria Boulding (2001; New York: New City Press, 2005) 1.1.1. All subsequent references to *Confessions* are contained in text.

While most of the text of this thesis makes little reference to secondary sources, the project as a whole was certainly conceived in the context of, and as a response to, and development of, the work of other scholars. The question of the coherence of the *Confessions*, especially as it relates to the final three books, has been a much-discussed issue in the scholarship. There are leading Augustinian scholars who simply think that *Confessions* is an incoherent text.[2] Others contend that there is a certain sort of unity, but that it is a very particular sort. As Andre Solignac suggests, the coherence of *Confessions* is "more interior than logical...a unity of spirit and intention more than a coherent progressive order of developments."[3] Similarly, one scholar argues that the unity of *Confessions* is that of any confession; that is, we should not expect the text to be a coherent whole, for it is not a well-planned argument, but the musings of a man pouring his heart out to God.[4] Against such scholars, I seek to demonstrate that *Confessions* is, in fact, a coherent text. Some of the most convincing arguments for the coherence of *Confessions* have been premised upon its being a NeoPlatonic ascent. Robert McMahon, in his highly complex treatment of the question, argues that the whole work is a NeoPlatonic journey of the soul's return to its Origin, the One. In his reading, the final books are a cosmic retelling of Augustine's own story; for Augustine's story is, ultimately, the story of every soul and the story of the universe, as being created by God, moving away from him, eventually to return.[5] Robert Crouse makes a similar argument by asserting that there are three confessions in *Confessions* that correspond to the movement of the soul to God. The autobiography of Books I to IX is the soul's movement through the external things of the world; the psychology of Book X is the soul's turn inward; and,

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[2] See for example John J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: An Introduction to the* Confessions *of St. Augustine* (New York: Longman, 1980) and Pierre Courcelle, *Les "Confessions" de saint Augustin dans la tradition litteraire, antecedents et posterite* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1963).

[3] A. Solignac, "Introduction," *Les Confessions*, Bibliotheque Augustinienne 13 (Paris: Desclee De Brouwer, 1962) xi.

[4] Paul Louis Landsberg, "La conversion de saint Augustine" *La Vie Spirituelle (1948):* 31-56.

[5] Robert McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent: An Essay on the Literary Form of Augustine's* Confessions (Athens, GE: The University of Georgia Press, 1989) 3.

finally, the Scriptural exegesis of Books XI to XIII is the soul's ascent beyond itself to an encounter with God.[6] Much of McMahon and Crouse's analysis I find helpful. Certainly one cannot come to an understanding of *Confessions* apart from the NeoPlatonic nature of much its' language and structure. Yet it is also clear to me that those who see the coherence of *Confessions* according to a NeoPlatonic logic obscure critical parts of the text. John Peter Kenney's recent book, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions*, argues this persuasively.[7] Indeed, often the NeoPlatonic reading pays little attention to the role of, for example, the mediation of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. As I will seek to demonstrate, one of the fundamental themes of *Confessions* is precisely the limitations of such a NeoPlatonic ascent; further, I will suggest that in Book XIII Augustine's final journey in the Church in the world challenges the very grounds for describing the Christian life as an ascent.

In contrast to this NeoPlatonic reading, I will be following very closely the suggestion of Colin Starnes that the coherence of *Confessions* may be found in its Trinitarianism. While I do not agree with some of the specifies of Starnes' argument, I do agree generally that the journey of *Confessions* must be seen in terms of Augustine's developing understanding of the Trinity. It is only in the last three books that Augustine sees all the divine persons' work in creation and redemption. Starnes only briefly lays out his argument for the coherence of the whole of *Confessions* in his book on *Confessions*' first nine books.[8] Part of my aim, then, is to take his insights further into an analysis of the last four books. I also see this thesis as building upon an essay written by Robert Kennedy on Book XI. Therein he suggests that the final books complete the journey of *Confessions* because in those books "Augustine is discovering himself by seeking God's will

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[6] Robert Crouse, "*Recurrens in te unum:* The Pattern of St. Augustine's *Confessions*." *Studia Patristica* 14.3 (Berlin, 1976): 399-418. Etienne Gilson has a similar reading in *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, translated by L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960).

[7] John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the* Confessions (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[8] Colin Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of* Confessions *I-IX* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990).

in the words of Scripture."[9] This knowledge provides Augustine with the means to rest. Finally, my focus upon reading has been influenced by Brian Stock's *Augustine the Reader*.[10] Generally speaking he helped me to see how Augustine's journey in *Confessions* is a journey of reading. My analysis of *Confessions*, however, will be of a more theological nature than Stock's, and this will lead to some considerable differences from him, especially in my focus on the Trinity.

There are many English translations of Augustine's *Confessions* available. Unless otherwise indicated, I will be quoting from Maria Boulding's translation. I have chosen this translation because I like the clarity and beauty of the language which, I think, nicely approximates Augustine's text. There are cases, however, in which I think Boulding's translation privileges style over precision. In such cases, I will use Chadwick or Watts as indicated.

[9] Robert P. Kennedy, "Book Eleven: The *Confessions* as Eschatological Narrative" in *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's* Confessions, edited by Kim Paffenroth and Robert P. Kennedy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

[10] Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Chapter 1

Learning to Read: The Outward Journey to Faith

In this chapter I will consider Augustine's first journey from birth to baptism. My focus here will be on how Augustine comes to read Scripture, and how he then comes to live it. In other words, this is the journey that leads to his conversion and baptism. This first autobiographical journey, as we shall see, prepares Augustine for, and leads to, the second inward journey. Specifically I will be examining three steps in Augustine's learning to read Scripture in these first nine books. First, I will consider how Cicero's *Hortensius* (III) and the Platonic books (VII) prepared Augustine to understand Saint Paul's epistles. It was only when Augustine came to the Bible with humility and with a knowledge of spiritual substance that Scripture was comprehensible to him. Second, we shall see how Augustine came to live the text; that is, how Augustine submitted himself to Christ and became a Christian (VIII). Third, immediately after Augustine's conversion, he describes how he read the Psalms penitentially (IX). As a Christian, he learns to read in such a way that furthers his journey to rest in God. This chapter will end by considering two other key experiences in Augustine's early life as a Christian, namely his ascent with Monica and her death. In so doing we will see how the conclusion of the autobiographical journey points forward to the inward journey, as the journey to rest continues and takes on a new form.

Reading Cicero's *Hortensius*

Augustine first turns to the Bible after reading Cicero's *Hortensius*. The *Hortensius* inspired Augustine to search for wisdom; and, as someone who was raised a Christian, he associated wisdom with Christ and so looked for wisdom in the Bible. But where *Hortensius* inspired him to take up the quest for wisdom, the Bible did not seem to further this quest in any way. By examining how Augustine was transformed by Cicero, and why he rejected the Bible at that time, we shall

gain insight into the beginning of Augustine's journey to rest, and also see one of the demands of reading the Bible properly, humility.

Augustine turns to read the Bible as a teenager because he is persuaded by Cicero's *Hortensius* to search for wisdom. Prior to his reading of *Hortensius*, Augustine was searching for sensual satisfaction exclusively. Augustine is sent as a teenager to study rhetoric at a school in Carthage, where *Hortensius* is on the curriculum. Augustine writes that his soul at that point was sick and "flung itself out of doors, longing to soothe its misery by rubbing against sensible things; yet these were soulless, and so could not be loved" (3.1.1). This is true in all areas of his life: in human relationships he enjoyed only the bodies of his friends and lovers (3.1.1), in his leisure time he delighted in the spectacle of the theatre (3.2.4), and at school he was studying to be a lawyer so he could impress and deceive people with his words (3.3.6). Yet even in this state the words of Cicero's *Hortensius* managed to have an effect on him. He writes that reading *Hortensius* changed his prayers to God, and that it made him long for "the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise" (3.4.7). Augustine does not describe for us the particulars of this immortality that wisdom promised; nor do we have any copies of Cicero's *Hortensius* so that we could understand it directly from the source. However, that Augustine begins to seek immortality through wisdom, a goal that is so completely different from the passing pleasures he was consumed by to that point, indicates for us the change that occurs in him.

His search for wisdom immediately led him to the Bible—and from his reaction to that text after reading *Hortensius* we see what reading of Scripture demands, and thus how Augustine will need to mature before he can read the Bible. Augustine explains that he turned to the Bible after *Hortensius* because, as someone who was raised a Christian, he associated wisdom with Christ. But the Bible, at the time, "seemed to me unworthy in comparison with the dignity of Cicero" (3.5.9). The beautiful and lofty words of *Hortensius* drew Augustine in and led him to the content; the crude and simple words of Scripture repulsed

Augustine and convinced him that the Bible is not worth his time. Looking back on his reaction, Augustine diagnoses the problem as pride. The Bible, he says, demands humility, for it is "something lowly as one enters but lofty as one advances further, something veiled in mystery" (3.5.9). To see the wisdom in the Bible one must begin with the crude and simple words and work with them to discover the wisdom that lies behind them. One must submit to being taught. After reading Cicero, Augustine was not prepared to do such work. Augustine wanted wisdom to come immediately to him. He writes, reflecting on his rejection of the Bible at that point, "scripture is a reality that grows along with little children, but I disdained to be a little child and in my high and mighty arrogance regarded myself as grown up" (3.5.9). He was not willing to do the work that scripture required, then, because he did not see himself as needing the wisdom that potentially lay therein. The lofty language of Cicero flattered his refined sensibilities, whereas the crude language of Scripture was too much for his ego to bear.

We might also compare Augustine's reading of these two texts on the basis of the part-whole relation that is essential to *Confessions*, and that we will be tracing throughout this thesis. After reading Cicero Augustine writes that he longed "to fly to [God] away from earthly things (*a terrenis ad te*)!" (3.4.8) Earlier in Book III, reflecting on his own sins as a youth and the sins of others, Augustine wrote that sin is when one abandons "the true creator and ruler of the universe and in self-sufficient arrogance chooses to love a *part* of it only, a bogus 'one'" (3.8.16). There is, though, as we shall see, another improper relation to the parts—to set oneself up in opposition to the parts in an attempt to surpass them. The *Hortensius*, as noted above, inspired in Augustine a desire for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise; and he thought that this immortality would come by flying *a terrenis ad te*. Part of his disgust with Scripture, then, precisely may have been its *earthiness*. For nearly any page that Augustine turned to in the Bible would describe the particularities of a time and place—the very things

Augustine wants to "fly" away from in order to gain immortality. In biblical revelation, God works through the parts. Starnes suggests that in searching for Christ Augustine may have turned first to the New Testament which when "taken literally it appears to speak only of nature and the natural."[11] Indeed, if Augustine had turned first to the Gospels, he would have been confronted with the Word made flesh who suffered death on a cross. This is drastically different from *Hortensius*; therein Cicero is advising the young philosopher on the nature of wisdom and how to pursue it. Augustine tells us that his first impulse after reading *Hortensius* was to "fly" from "earthly things", and so it is not surprising that the Bible was so repugnant to him.

Reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, then, began Augustine's search for wisdom. However, it did not change him in a way that he could then read the Bible—a text that, in his own estimation at that time, would be the ultimate source of wisdom because it told of Christ. He cannot read Scripture because of his pride. The journey to rest is going to be a journey of reading in which other texts and experiences will move Augustine to the place where he can read Scripture; for, as we shall see, it is only through the reading of Scripture that Augustine can find the rest he so desires.

Reading the Books of the Platonists

The first time that Augustine read the Bible and understood it to be true was after his Platonic ascent. Whereas after reading *Hortensius* Augustine rejected the Bible, after reading the Platonic books Augustine turned to the Bible and found Saint Paul's epistles to be alive to him as never before. The Platonic books lead Augustine to turn within himself, so that he is able to perceive the reality of immaterial substance. This, in and of itself, altered Augustine's understanding of himself, creation and God in a way that prepared him to read the Bible. Yet Augustine only turns to the Bible because of a failure that he experienced with Platonism. So, we might say, it is simultaneously the success

[11] Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, 62.

and failure of Platonism that made Augustine able to understand Paul's epistles; Platonism's success was in showing to Augustine the spiritual realities beyond the material, and its failure was its inability to deal with Augustine's pride.

Immediately prior to reading the books of the Platonists, Augustine had abandoned Manicheanism and begun studying Christianity, largely because he was impressed by the intelligence and eloquence of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Augustine was especially struck by Ambrose's sermons, in which he interpreted the Bible in a way that Augustine thought impossible. For example, he was surprised to learn that the Catholic Church did not understand God's creation of human beings in His image to mean that God, in fact, has a body (6.3.4). His previous refusal to go beyond the simple meaning of the words—as was the case after he read Cicero—meant that he misunderstood Scripture and the belief of the Church because of his "carnal imagination" (6.3.4). However, Augustine cannot read the Bible the way Ambrose does because Augustine does not understand "spiritual substance." That is, after hearing Ambrose preach he thought that it was profoundly significant that Genesis 2 does not mean God has a body, but he did not know what the alternative was; he still understood everything in exclusively material terms. His notion of God in his first study of Christianity was of a material being that is "spread out in space, whether infused into the world or even diffused through the infinity outside it" (7.1.1). He was not even, as he puts it, "luminous to himself" because he did not see that his own thinking and spiritual longing were centred in parts of himself that are immaterial (7.1.2). Ambrose's hermeneutic could not inform Augustine's own understanding of Scripture and the Church's teaching because all he knew was the material. One result of this was that Augustine could not affirm the goodness of creation. Because he regarded everything as material—created and suffused by the infinite-material God—he struggled to find a sensible substance that could account for evil: "Where, then, is evil; where does it come from and how did it creep in? What is its root, its seed? Or does it have any being? Or does it not exist at

all?...So where does [evil] come from, if the good God made all things good?" (7.5.7) In Augustine's estimation, it was this problem which most challenged his materialism.

Looking back on his materialist viewpoint, Augustine writes that his problem was that "the light of my eyes was not there at my command" (7.7.11). As we shall see, this light Augustine is referring to is the light which enables his spiritual eyes to see immaterial substance. Augustine was unable to see this light because, he writes, it "was within, but I was outside; it occupied no place, but I had fixed my gaze on spatially positioned things, and so I found in them nowhere to rest" (7.7.11). Further, the problem was not only that Augustine was looking to material things, but also that he could not look elsewhere; he writes that the material things would not "release me to return to where I could well have found what was enough" (7.7.11). There is, then, a twofold problem: first, that Augustine was looking without whereas the light which would enable him to see spiritual substance was within; and, secondly, that he was enslaved to material things. The problem was not just intellectual, but also volitional. Augustine could not turn his focus away from the material world—not even, it seems, if he knew of the immaterial.

In retrospect, he diagnoses this as a profoundly disordered state. Human beings are created in the image of God, which sets them apart from all other material things; they are given the role of ruling over all other material things, not being ruled by them. Augustine's disordered relation to creation is, he says, a result of his disordered relation to God. Reflecting back on himself at that time, Augustine writes:

> because I was rearing against you in my pride, charging head-high against the Lord and crassly presuming on my own strength, even those inferior things gained the upper hand and pressed me down, so that nowhere could I find respite or relief. . . . All this had sprung from my wounded condition, for you humbled this proud man with a wounding blow. My

> swollen pride got in the way and kept me from you, and my face was so puffy that my eyes were closed. (7.7.11)

Augustine proudly attempted to ascend to God, then, and God punished him by making him enslaved to material things. He does not spell out for us here exactly how his attempts to know God were proud. We can get some indication of how this was so from a comment that he makes in the introduction to Book VII, where he says that his materialist understanding of God was based on his vanity: "I retained so much vanity as to be unable to think any substance possible other than that which the eyes normally perceive" (Chadwick, 7.1.1). There are two problems here. The first is that, as Augustine will come to realize, he is much more than a strictly material being. That is not the main problem, however. The main problem is that Augustine's judgment of God was based entirely on his own self-understanding; this was the vanity, that he presumed that God shared completely in his own nature; and that he could know this God without in any way changing himself. There was no room within Augustine's mind to accept the otherness of God. He was attempting to know God based entirely on his own knowledge and his own effort. And because Augustine proudly judged God in this way, he was punished by an inability to judge himself and the created world rightly.

Platonism opened Augustine's eyes to the existence of spiritual substance, but it did not deal with his pride. He writes, building on the image above: "At the unseen touch of your medicine my swelling subsided, while under the stinging eye-salve of curative pain the fretful, darkened vision of my spirit began to improve day by day" (7.8.12). The means God used to deal with this swelling, as we shall see, was the inward turn that was advised by the Platonic books. However, in the image, the swollen face that made vision impossible was the punishment for a much deeper problem, Augustine's pride. Reflecting on his conversion to Platonism, Augustine believes that God dealt with the swelling

before he dealt with its underlying cause in order to teach him the value of humility (7.9.13).

The value of Platonism for Augustine, then, was that he turned from "outside" to "inside"—and therein he saw his own immaterial existence and that of a light that dwelt above him. Through contemplation, he ascended to this vision. As he writes, following the counsel of certain Platonic books, "I entered under your guidance the innermost places of my being" (7.10.16). The turn inward is significant for two reasons: first, Augustine discovers a whole other way of perceiving reality, namely, as he calls it, "the eyes of my soul (*oculum animae meae)*" (Watts, 7.10.16). God, as a punishment for his pride, shut the eyes of Augustine's soul so that he could not see spiritual substance; now, through the inward turn, they have been opened. Second, it is because of this light that the eyes of his soul are able to see at all. This light, he says, is not visible to sensible perception; neither is it a light, he states clearly, that can be described in any way that is common to human experience: "as though this common light were shining more powerfully, far more brightly, and so extensively as to fill the universe" (7.10.16). Rather it is that this light is "something different, utterly different"; it exists apart from, and above Augustine because it is the light which, he says, "made me and I was below it because by it I was made" (7.10.16). But even as he saw this light, he could not see the source of the light, God. He became certain that the source of this light exists, but, he writes, "I was not yet capable of seeing it" (7.10.16). He does, though, hear a voice which counsels him: "I am the food of the mature, grow then, and you will eat me. You will not change me into yourself like bodily food: you will be changed into me" (7.10.16). The vision, then, opens Augustine's spiritual eyes through this light, which will enable Augustine to see himself, creation, and God in a new way; at the same time, however, the ascent is incomplete. Augustine is implored to "grow", to overcome the distance that he feels from God so that, as the voice advises, "you will be changed into me" (7.10.16).

This ascent is, in a profound way, implicitly Trinitarian. This is to be expected, of course, because Augustine states that this ascent gave him his first knowledge of God (17.23)—and God is, for Augustine, Triune. However, this ascent occurred before Augustine understood the doctrine of the Trinity, and thus while Father and the Son seem to be present in this experience, he did not at the time identify them as such. His recalling of this ascent in Book VII, however, prompts Augustine to call out to God in a Triune address: "O eternal Truth, true Love, and beloved Eternity, you are my God, and for you I sigh day and night" (7.10.16). Augustine the narrator, then, seems to associate this event in his past with the Trinity. Why? The crucial factor to seeing this vision as Trinitarian is the mysterious light that is so central here. The light has characteristics that, later in *Confessions*, will be explicitly connected to the Son, the second person of the Trinity. This light, first of all, is what enables the eyes of Augustine's soul to see immaterial substance. In other words, this light brings Augustine true knowledge. Indeed, Augustine says, "anyone who knows truth knows [the light]" (7.10.16). One can only know the truth by seeing this light. Later, Augustine will identify the Son in this and address him as Truth; this light which enables one to know truth is the Son. Second, Augustine senses at the time that this light created him; it created him, and yet it is distinct from its source, which Augustine cannot see. In the final three books especially, God's creation through the Son will be of critical importance to Augustine's understanding of himself and creation. This light is like the Son in that it took part in creating Augustine, but is also distinct from the Father. As well, the voice that speaks to Augustine uses eucharistic imagery of feeding on the body, presumably of Christ. This feeding looks forward to Augustine's life in the Church, and characterizes the eucharist as a step in spiritual maturity that enables one to imitate Christ. This will be crucial at the end of Book X. Suffice it to say here that this Platonic ascent has within it the early traces of the Trinity. It is only later, through the teachings of the Church and the study of Scripture, that Augustine will come to know the activity of God

as Triune. The reading of the Platonic books brings Augustine to a new perception of himself and God, but only Scripture will be able to bring him to the point of rest.

One of the consequences of judging everything on a material basis was Augustine's inability to see how evil existed in a creation that was made good by God; he was able to resolve this contradiction through the vision of the eyes of his soul. When Augustine saw the light that made him and made all things—a light that cannot be seen with, or even compared to, any sensible light—then he knew that there is an immaterial reality which is superior to material reality. He writes, "I saw that [material things] do not in the fullest sense exist, nor yet are they completely non-beings; they are real because they are from you, but unreal inasmuch as they are not what you are" (7.11.17). The existence of material things, then, depends upon the immaterial God: the immaterial God who is good, and created all things good. This means that evil is not a substance within creation, "because if it were, it would be good" (7.12.18). Further, Augustine is also able, through the eyes of his soul, to see the whole in a way that was never available to him previously. The light has given him a vision of what is beyond himself, of what created him and all things. Indeed, it is only through seeing beyond creation that Augustine could return and see the goodness of creation. This vision enables him to see how while the parts are all good in themselves, the whole creation is "collectively very good, for our God has made all things *exceedingly good*" (7.12.18). Seeing this relation between whole and parts, Augustine is able to affirm each of the parts in a way that he could not before. He writes, "No longer was I hankering for any elements to be better than they were, because I was now keeping the totality in view; and though I certainly esteemed the higher creatures above the lower, a more wholesome judgement showed me that the totality was better than the higher things on their own would have been" (7.13.19). Following the advice of the Platonists, then, has changed Augustine's understanding of himself, creation and God. His perception of immaterial

substance has resolved his struggle with the place of evil in creation, and it has given him a new-found admiration for the order of creation.

Yet after this ascent was over, there was a fall that was marked by despair. We saw above that during the vision itself Augustine felt a distance from God, and an acute awareness of his sinfulness (7.10.16). After the vision was over, this distance was even more pronounced: "I could not continue steadfastly in the enjoyment of my God" (7.17.23). Throughout his life the problem Augustine had was that he had not understood God as an immaterial being; finally when he did, he could not enjoy the God he knew. After the ascent, he writes, "I was dragged away from you by my own weight, swept back headlong and groaning onto these things below myself; and this weight was my carnal habit" (7.17.23). Platonism, then, had not dealt with this weight; his experience of God was, for a moment, ecstatic—but Augustine longs for more than a moment. Here Augustine diagnoses the problem as his "carnal habit." Yet this "carnal habit" is the result of a deeper problem. Recall that Augustine earlier in Book VII said that his perverse relationship to material things was a result of his perverse relationship to God; that is, that in his pride he was "rearing up" against the divine and so God punished him by making him subject to material things (7.7.11). As well, in reflecting on his Platonic ascent, Augustine believes that God used Platonism to underline for him the importance of humility—the humility that Platonism did not know because it did not know the Word made flesh (7.9.13). So we must be clear here that the problem preventing Augustine from resting in God is not simply his lust for sex, or any other desire he has for worldly pleasures. Rather the problem was that Platonism could not deal with his pride. Platonism provides a technique by which a person, through the inward turn, can ascend to a knowledge of immaterial substance. The success of this technique, though, is largely based on one's own intelligence and efforts. The result of this is that the Platonists are, in Augustine's estimation, proud. The friend who first lent him the Platonic books he describes as "grossly swollen with pride" (7.9.13). And later, after Augustine

had completed his ascent, he became "complacently puffed up with knowledge" (7.20.27). Platonism gives one the impression that one has known God through one's own abilities. Augustine had carried this assumption with him since he read Cicero; Platonism did nothing to challenge him on this, and therefore his pride remained fully intact.

Platonism did not provide rest in God; and so, Augustine searched for another way. It is at this point in the *Confessions* that we encounter the first mention of Augustine reading the Bible and finding it compelling. He made mention of studying the Scriptures prior to this, but this is a critical point for at this point he was persuaded by them. He turns to Saint Paul's writings, and for the first time, he says, he found Paul worth reading. Previously he had found Paul's epistles "self-contradictory" and in disagreement with the Old Testament (7.21.27). What has changed so that Augustine no longer sees these problems in Paul? As mentioned above, Augustine was impressed with Ambrose's interpretation of Scripture, but he could not understand the reality of the immaterial that his interpretation presumed. After the Platonic ascent, Augustine knew with certainty that God is immaterial and that all human beings have an immaterial soul. This meant that he could read Scripture allegorically, as Ambrose did, so that the meaning of the Old Testament does not conflict with that of the New Testament. This way of reading resolved for him the contradictions he previously saw between Paul and the Old Testament. As well, with regard to the content of Paul's letters themselves, Augustine was now at the point in his life that their message was of particular relevance. He knew that the immaterial God exists, but he also experienced a profound distance from him because of his weakness and his sin. Platonism seemed to provide no means to overcome this distance. Paul, on the other hand, confronts the cause of this distance head on. As Augustine writes, in Paul all truth is taught "inseparably from [God's] gift of grace" (7.21.27). He finds in Paul the truths of Platonism—of the human soul and of the immaterial God who can be known—but also a means to be

> healed as well, so that he can possess (*teneat*) [God]. Whoever is too far off to see may yet walk in the way that will bring him to the place of seeing and possession; for even though a person may be delighted with God's law as far as his inmost self is concerned, how is he to deal with that other law in his bodily members which strives against the law approved by his mind delivering him as a prisoner to the law of sin dominant in his body? (7.21.27)

Platonism provided Augustine with a way of "seeing", while Paul suggests that there can be both the "seeing" and way to, in the end, "possession." In his ascent such a possession—a stable, intimate relationship with God—was impossible. Unlike the Platonic books, Paul's letters describe the reality of that "law of sin" that prevents such possession. Augustine's reading of Saint Paul was helped by Platonism's success and its failure. It led Augustine to see the reality of spiritual substance, but it also left him with the desire to achieve what Platonism could not, "possession" of the divine. Kenney summarizes this nicely: "For contemplation, in laying out the transcendent cosmos behind the manifest world, fails to recover the soul's fixed connection to that world."[12]

How does one achieve this connection or this possession of the divine? The crucial factor is humility, both of God and of the human being. Augustine writes that the Platonic books, in contrast to the Bible, did not have "the lineaments of such loving kindness, or the tears of confession, or the sacrifice of an anguished spirit offered to you from a contrite and humbled heart, or the salvation of a people, or a city chosen to be your bride, or the pledge of the Holy Spirit, or the cup of our ransom" (7.21.27). The Platonists do not know, then, of the human need that leads to tears and contrition; nor do they know of the God who took on flesh in order to pay the ransom for sin or who promised the Holy Spirit to dwell within the Church. In their pride, they cannot see that God has made Himself known to them in humility: "They are too scornful to hear from

[12] Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine*, 63.

him, because he is gentle and humble of heart, and you have hidden these things from the sagacious and shrewd, and revealed them to little ones" (7.21.27). God has acted in the person of Christ, to whom the proud of the world fail to pay any attention. Just as after reading *Hortensius*, he could not see the wisdom present in the Bible, nor would he humble himself to search for it, so the proud cannot see God in the person of Christ, nor will they condescend to look. They neither have the humility to recognize their lack, nor the humility to recognize that that lack is overcome through God working through the parts. The humble Christ is the way, Augustine read in Paul, to gain possession of God.

We have seen, then, the crucial role that the Platonic books played in preparing Augustine to read Scripture. The inward turn gave him knowledge of spiritual substance, and his distance from God in the Platonic ascent gave him an awareness of his sinfulness. With these two changes in his understanding, he turned to Saint Paul's epistles and found that they spoke to him—that they were, indeed, true. However, Augustine's reading of Saint Paul at this point is finally just that, a reading. The key will be for him to actually live what he reads; and we shall see next in Book VIII that the living of the text demands the very grace and humility that Paul describes.

Living the Text: Conversion to Christianity

Augustine's journey to rest has advanced partly because, as we have seen, he is such a good reader. That is to say, he reads the texts and is transformed by them in such a way that he then embodies their message in his life. He read Cicero's *Hortensius*, and then began to seek after wisdom; the Platonic books told him to turn inward, and he did so. We have seen thus far how these texts prepared Augustine to read Scripture. However, Scripture is unique in that Augustine did not find within himself the ability to live the text. Indeed, by the end of Book VII Augustine had read parts of the Bible, especially Paul's letters, and he was convinced of the truth of Christianity and was drawn to it; Book VIII is about the struggle to commit himself to what he already apprehended intellectually. The

content of Scripture was the most difficult for Augustine to comprehend, and it is also the most difficult to be enacted; indeed, the struggle he endured in trying to become a Christian developed the humility that is so central to the reading and living of the Bible's content.

Augustine could not convert to Christianity because he was frightened by its demands. As he writes, he was "daunted" by "the narrow way" (8.1.1). He sought advice from a priest in Milan, Simplicianus, who told him the story of Victorinus. This is the first of two stories that will be crucial to Augustine's becoming a Christian. Victorinus was a respected scholar of ancient philosophy who, because he had a profound intellectual understanding of the Christian faith, claimed he was a Christian. Yet he refused to be baptized and join the Church because he feared the opinions of his colleagues who would lose respect for him if he did so. In rejecting such a public profession of his faith, he was attempting to be a Christian on his own terms, not submitting to the demands of the Christian life or the authority of the Church. Eventually he did decide to be baptized and in so doing "bow his head to the yoke of humility and to submit his forehead to the reproach of the cross" (8.2.3). Another story is told to Augustine by his friend Ponticianus which contrasts with Victorinus' in several ways. The story is of Ponticianus' friend, an uneducated man who was already a Christian. One day, he happened upon a copy of *The Life of Antony* in a monk's cabin, and after he read it he decided to enter religious life (8.6.15). These stories are different in two critical ways. First, Victorinus is a highly educated man, whereas Ponticianus' friend is not; second, Victorinus avoids baptism for a long time before he finally submits himself, whereas Ponticianus' friend resolves to join religious life immediately after reading *The Life of Antony*. The differences, however, serve to highlight the fundamental similarity: namely, that both men, regardless of their intelligence and of the time that it took to submit themselves to Christ, needed to make a decision to reject all else to live a life in the world that is devoted to Christ.

Ponticianus' story acted as a catalyst to Augustine's conversion because Ponticianus' friend is so different from Augustine. Here was an uneducated man who in a brief moment decided to reject many of the worldly pleasures Augustine so enjoys in order to live a life radically committed to Christ. After hearing this story, he lamented to his friend Alypius, "The untaught are rising up and taking heaven by storm, while we with all our dispassionate teaching are still grovelling in this world of flesh and blood!" (8.8.19) The crucial factor in becoming a Christian, then, seems to have to do neither with intellect nor with time. Rather it has to do with making a decision to follow Christ humbly in the world—and to submit oneself to his demands. Yet Augustine found it impossible to make this decision. He describes his experience at this time thus: "There are two wills, then, and neither is the whole: what one has the other lacks" (8.9.21). Because his will was so divided, he could not finally make the decision to become a Christian. Part of himself still wanted to enjoy the pleasures of the world. In fact, the more he willed, the more he experienced the full gravity of the conflict; he knew the good, and yet he could not commit himself to it. For all his life he had been willing things other than Christ; and when he finally tried to submit himself to Christ he could not do so. To put this in different language, he had been willing the parts for so long he could not choose the One who created the whole. On reflecting back at this point in his life he writes, "I was at odds with myself, and fragmenting myself" (8.10.22). He did not have the power within himself to resolve this conflict.

The problem was that, even though he recognized that the distinctiveness of Christianity is the humility of the Word made flesh and the humility required to follow Him, he was still attempting to become a Christian through his own efforts. His divided will only became further divided when he tried to become a Christian. During his struggle in the garden brought on by his inability to convert, Lady Continence appeared to him and said:

> Do you think [these others] capable of achieving this by their own resources and not by the Lord their God? Their Lord God gave me to them. Why are you relying on yourself, only to find yourself unreliable? Cast yourself upon him, do not be afraid. He will not withdraw himself so that you fall. Make the leap with anxiety; he will catch you and heal you. (8.11.27)

Augustine's frustrated questions to Alypius earlier arose from his assumption that others had been able to become Christians out of their own power, and he wondered how, given his intelligence and effort, he himself could not make this decision. Here Lady Continence points out the contradictions in Augustine's thinking. He knew that God is perfect and all others only exist through Him, and therefore it is God alone who is trustworthy; so Augustine needed to bind himself to the One he knew he could trust. Wholeness cannot be found through human effort; the division in the self is only healed through the gracious act of God. Lady Continence, then, completely recast the problem Augustine was experiencing in terms of his pride. As we noted above, the real *underlying* problem had never been Augustine's desire for worldly pleasures. Rather it had been his assumption that he himself could in any way overcome that desire and so come to God through his own efforts.

Augustine was able, finally, to read the Bible and submit himself to its message because he obeyed the voice of a child as a revelation from God. Augustine heard a child playing in the next door yard, chanting "Pick up and read, pick up and read" (8. 12. 29). He knew of no game that involved this refrain, and so he interpreted it as a command from God to open the Bible at random and read whatever passage was before him. That Augustine's conversion was brought about by obeying a child is of great significance; it indicates how he had changed, how he was then approaching the world, and the Bible, in a much humbler way. Recall that earlier, after reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, he rejected the Bible because its lowly language would have required him to become as a "little child"

to understand its meaning. Further, he also saw Christianity, in contrast to Platonism, as revealed to "the little ones" (7.21.27). And, indeed, the story of Christianity is the story of God becoming one of those little ones. Augustine has at last, then, come to a place where he is like a child, and is ready to listen to a child—and can, too, see the God who became a little child. Cicero inspired him to pursue wisdom; Platonism counselled him to turn within; and Christianity had him following the voice of a child. It is as a little child that he can finally read Scripture in such a way that he can convert.

The verse that Augustine read that brought about his conversion is striking in how appropriate it is to him. It emphasized that Augustine's decision to follow Christ and reject the pleasures of the world was only possible through Christ. The verse he read was Romans 13.14: "Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts" (8.12.29). This verse seems to speak directly to Augustine's life as it sums up his struggle with the world and with his pride. For the lust of the flesh here is not simply referring to the desire for sex, but also to the disordered desires and perverse mind that manifest themselves in social relations ("riots and drunken parties...strife and rivalry"). So the verse immediately confronts Augustine in that moment with its truth, with its profound authority over him; and it shows him, too, that it is not through his own efforts that he can become a Christian, but through "putting on" Christ. So after he read this verse Augustine describes what happened: "At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled" (8.12.28).

This moment of conversion demonstrates for us how the journey has been about learning to read. Augustine was brought to the point where he could recognize, without a doubt, the authority of Scripture; and, in that moment, he could see that his living of that text was only possible through its primary subject, Christ. That he could understand Scripture at all, as we have shown, was because

he had previously read *Hortensius* and the Platonist books. Prior to his conversion the stories of Victorinus and Ponticianus' friend underlined for him that he had to make a decision to reject all else and follow Christ; Lady Continence taught him that even that decision could not be made apart from Christ. In obeying the voice of a child Augustine was embodying the humility that was necessary to read the Bible and to submit oneself to Christ. So it was in a moment, by reading one verse, that Augustine's journey to learn to read found its fulfilment in his conversion. As we will see in Book IX, though, the journey, and the reading, will continue.

Early Days of Life as a Christian: Reading the Psalms and Yearning for Heaven

Augustine's conversion, however, did not end the journey; in fact, in some ways, it really began it. What Augustine initially found so appealing in Paul's epistles, in contrast with the Platonic books, was that Christianity provides not only knowledge of God, but a means to possess him; that is, it provides the way of overcoming one's sin and weakness, through Christ, in a way that he can "enjoy" God. Augustine's decision to become a Christian, made possible through the gift of grace, began his own journey on this way. In Book IX, Augustine describes his first steps on this way. We will be concerned with two early experiences he has as a Christian. First, to continue our focus on the reading of Scripture, we will see how as a Christian Augustine now lets Scripture read him. That is to say, in his reading of the Psalms soon after his conversion he allows himself to be judged by them; and this judgement leads him to repentance and to praise. This penitential reading of Scripture at the end of the autobiographical journey points the way forward to the reading of Scripture that will dominate the inward journey in Book X. Secondly, we shall also consider how Augustine's ascent with Monica confronted Augustine with one of the challenges of the Christian life; namely, how one lives a life in the world as one also looks forward to life in heaven. This challenge that is first presented here in Book IX will be crucial later to our

understanding of how the reading of Scripture, in the last three books, orders Augustine in terms of the whole.

So in Book IX Augustine describes his life after his conversion when he had become a catechumen in the Catholic church and was awaiting his baptism. He describes himself as "but a beginner in authentic love of you" (Chadwick, 9.4.8). One of the practices that matured this love was the reading of Scripture. Augustine gives us an account of the crucial role that the Psalms played in his life at that time; and, in fact, this nicely encapsulates for us what has been going on in Books I-IX. Augustine's reading of the Psalms caused him to recall the deeds of his life, to repent of his sins, and to rejoice in God's grace in saving him. He was no longer just reading Scripture, but as someone who had recognized its authority and its truth for his life, he was allowing himself to be read by it. Each verse became for Augustine a question or challenge posed to him by God—specifically, the Holy Spirit, who Augustine described as speaking to him in Scripture. For example, Augustine quotes Psalm 4.2, "*How long will you be heavy-hearted, human creatures? Why love emptiness and chase falsehood?*" ([italics in text] 9. 4. 9) This verse led Augustine to reflect on how the Holy Spirit sent by Christ was present to him throughout his life, but he could not see this because he was consumed with lesser things. This angered him; and this anger, prompted by his reading of the Psalms, "would hold me back from sinning again" (9.4.10). The reading of Scripture then was altering his future life in the world. The other side of this anger towards himself was increased love for God because this self-interrogation of his past through the Psalms gave Augustine a better appreciation of God's gracious action towards him. He writes, "I shuddered with awe, yet all the while hope and joy surged within me at your mercy, Father" (9.4.9). This experience of reading the Psalms, then, was having a transformative effect because it was moving Augustine away from love of self and towards love of God. Indeed, he describes this process of reading as being sweet to him. In this

very reading Augustine experienced the true joy that is found within in communion with God:

> There within, where I had grown angry with myself, there in the inner chamber where I was pierced with sorrow, where I had offered sacrifice, slaying my old nature and hoping in you as I began to give my mind to the new life, there you had begun to make me feel your sweetness and have given me joy in my heart. (9. 4. 10)

In experiencing this joy through reading Scripture Augustine's desire became less focused on the things of the world. As he concludes his description of his reading of the Psalms: "As I read these words outwardly and experienced their truth inwardly I shouted with joy, and lost my desire to dissipate myself amid a profusion of earthly goods..." (9.4.10). This penitential reading of Scripture—or, as we also put it, his being read by Scripture—is moving Augustine further in his journey to rest in God.

Along with this reading of the Psalms, another important experience during Augustine's first days as a Christian was his ascent with Monica. This ascent introduces in *Confessions* the tension of the Christian life between living life in the present in submission to Christ while also looking forward to God's final reign. The ascent occurred because Augustine's beloved mother Monica was near death, and so she frequently thought about what heaven would be like. At one point she and Augustine discussed heaven, and their discussion led to an ascent through contemplation in which they momentarily caught a glimpse of the future life. Augustine describes how they ascended past all material things, and even passed "the summit of our own minds" so that they

> touch that land of never-failing plenty where you pasture Israel for ever with the food of truth. ... And as we talked and panted for it, we just touched the edge of it by the utmost leap of our hearts; then, sighing and unsatisfied, we left the first-fruits of our spirit captive there, and returned to the noise of articulate speech. (9.10.24)

This ascent is similar, in some ways, to the ascent Augustine made after reading the Platonic books. There was a turn within, in which the mind went beyond the material and even beyond itself and had a moment of brief, ecstatic encounter, in some way, with the divine. There are also, however, significant differences. The first is that Augustine ascends here with Monica. We can see here, in another theme that will be more fully developed later, that the journey to rest takes place within a community, within the Church. The second difference from the Platonic ascent is that, because Augustine was a Christian, the fall from the ascent had a different character. After his first ascent he despaired of ever being able to "enjoy" God; whereas as a Christian, Augustine knew that he would one day live in that "land of never-failing plenty" that he and Monica briefly touched. The moment after the ascent, then, was one in which Augustine looked forward to that future: "And when, when will this be? When we all rise again, but not all are changed?" (9.10.25)

These two experiences Augustine has shortly after his conversion—reading the Psalms and ascending to a vision of heaven—emphasize how Augustine is still on the journey to rest. His conversion has not finally given him the rest he desired; it has, in a sense, ended one journey as it has begun another. That is to say, that in becoming a Christian he is now on the way to achieving his end. We have seen how Book IX shows how life as a Christian is consumed with continuing on that way. First, his penitential reading of Scripture advances him on this way as it develops his humility and it prompts him to praise. Second, his ascent with Monica leaves him yearning for life in heaven, where rest will finally be achieved. This raises for Augustine, at the end of the autobiographical journey, a question that will become critical in the final books, namely, how does a Christian live fully in the here and now while also looking forward to the life to come.

Transition to Book X

For the journey to continue, however, it must take on a new form. In Book IX we also see that the Christian life cannot simply be described in terms of the outward details of one's life; that is, Book IX displays the limits of autobiography. We see this in two ways. First, while he read the Psalms Augustine says that he experienced the "sweetness" of God within, where no one else had access to this experience. Second, his concern over Monica's salvation, despite her having lived an outwardly righteous life, also points to the importance of the inward journey. Both of these episodes indicate that what is most critical in the Christian life happens within. Augustine's journey to rest cannot stop with a description of his life in the world; the journey must take place within.

We discussed above how this reading of the Psalms was so crucial for Augustine in inflaming his love for God. He writes that he wished that those who doubt the truth and power of Scripture, like the Manicheans, could know what an effect the Psalms had on him. But the Manicheans deny, Augustine writes, the reality of "your remedies, the sacraments" (Chadwick, 9.4.8); that is to say, they do not acknowledge the effect of baptism, eucharist and word. They do not see the inner transformation that takes place, and there is simply no way that he could demonstrate this to them. Augustine considered that if they were to watch him reading the Psalms, and he were aware of their presence, then they would suspect that he was putting on a show, and he would alter the way he acted. But, even if they secretly could watch him reading the Psalms, still they would not see how Augustine's words while reading were "the intimate expression of my mind, as I conversed with myself and addressed myself in your presence" (9.4.8). The fundamental problem is that Augustine cannot show to the Manicheans, or to any others who disbelieve, how he experiences the truth of the Psalms "inwardly" and how this changes him (9.4.10). This means that while Books I to IX have shown his journey to become a Christian, his Christian journey cannot be described in the same way.

The importance of the inner life is also underlined when Augustine reviews Monica's life. Though we have not discussed it here, Monica's prayers and conduct were crucial to Augustine's conversion. And, when he reflected on her life after her death, he saw that aside from a brief flirtation with alcohol in her youth, she seemed to have lived a blameless life. He writes, "she so lived that her faith and conduct redounded to the glory of your name" (9.13.34). But, even so, Augustine realized that he could not know everything about Monica, and that breaking even one of God's commandments could rightly lead to damnation. He quotes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, where Jesus said that even calling a brother "fool" could lead to hellfire. Yet, implicitly here, it is not just Monica's words that concern him; words point to the unknowability of the heart that spoke them. For the judgement described in the Sermon on the Mount extends to one's secret thoughts. Augustine's inability to know Monica's heart meant that he had doubts about her salvation. He prayed for her and he asks all his readers to pray for her; and he trusts that in God's mercy in Christ she would be forgiven all her sins (9.13.36). But still, because Augustine could not know Monica's life in its fullness, he does not count her salvation as a certainty.

The autobiography ends in Book IX, then, pointing to the necessity of describing the Christian life from within. First of all because Augustine sees that the inner sweetness he enjoys in reading Scripture as a Christian—one of the main sources of transformation—cannot be shared with those who do not have access to his inner life. Further, he also sees that the demands of the Gospel, which extend to one's thoughts, mean that he cannot know for sure that Monica is saved. The journey of *Confessions* has advanced so that Augustine is now a Christian, and in order for the journey to rest to continue it must take a new form.

Chapter II
Life as a Christian: The Journey Within

We turn now to the second journey of *Confessions*, as it is described in Book X. The first journey described how Augustine became a Christian and his first days living as a Christian. In terms of reading, we saw how in this journey Augustine first learned how to read the Bible, then how to live the Bible, and then how he began to be read by the Bible. At the end of this journey we saw that, for the journey to rest to continue, it must occur within. As he writes at the beginning of Book X, "it is only [in my heart] that I am whoever I am" (10.3.4). So Book X describes, in the present, Augustine's inward struggle to live the Christian life. Indeed, the whole book is conceived of as an act of service to his fellow Christians who asked him to describe himself in the present, and he does so because he feels obliged to serve them (10.3.3). There are three parts of Book X that we will consider here. First, we will briefly consider Augustine's ascent to his memory of happiness (10.6.8—10.28.39) to see how the journey to rest has changed now that Augustine is a Christian. Augustine sees that to love God is to find joy in the truth, but as in the Platonic ascent in Book VII, he is dragged back from joy in the truth because of his "weight" which ties him to multiple desires. Second, we will consider how the penitential reading of Scripture is enacted to come to an understanding of this "weight" (10.29.40—10.41.69). Augustine uses 1 John 2.16 as a criterion to discern all the ways that he finds joy in things other than the truth; as we have put this before, he is allowing himself to be read by 1 John 2.16. This reading of Scripture enacts the penitential reading that we saw of the Psalms in Book IX, though we shall also see how Augustine's developed maturity as a Christian is marked by a fuller understanding of his sin and of his need for God's grace. This penitential reading leads to the third and final part in Book X (10.42.70) which moves the journey to rest to take on a new form in the final three books. Augustine's awareness of his pride brought about by reading 1

John 2.16, and of how this pride is worsened by the compliments and criticisms of others, leads him to consider fleeing into solitude. Yet it is a reading of Scripture again here, specifically 2 Corinthians 5.15, that orients him in his journey to rest in this moment of crisis. He sees that he cannot come to rest through a journey within; rather it is that his journey must continue in the Church in the world, as it will in Books XI to XIII. So Book X ends with a description of the eucharist which, we will see, closes the inward journey while it also begins the journey within the Church in the world.

Ascent to the Memory of Happiness

Augustine's ascent to the memory of happiness begins when he questions the very motivation for his journey. He asks, "But what am I loving when I love [God]?" (10.6.8) He is seeking to understand the very grounds of his faith from within. In searching for the answer to this, Augustine follows the pattern that he did in Books I to VII: from a focus on the outward, to the inward, to what is above. But now, unlike in those earlier books, the journey is not about coming to love God, but rather about discovering what lies behind that love. First, he turns to the material world (10.8.13) and sees that the object of his love is not there. Then he considers himself, and he considers his sense impressions, and then is led to consider what gathers together and comprehends his sense impressions, namely, his mind (10.6.9). As he did after reading the Platonic books, Augustine turns his focus within, which allows the soul to see the highest, immaterial part of itself, the part with which it can properly seek God. He sees that the activity of his mind, thought, cannot occur without memory. Memory, then, appears to be the very foundation of consciousness, and so he searches for the answer to his question—what he loves when he loves God—within his memory. Now the ascent moves within the mind from his memories of sense impressions (10.8.13) to his actions (10.8.14) to the truths he learned in school (10.9.16). While these latter memories are unique because his mind contains "the realities themselves" (10.9.16), his memories of sense impressions and his actions are derivative

("images") (10.10.17). He writes, "What I have stored away in my memory is not the images [of my education] but the things themselves" (10.10.17). Thought, and judgement especially, depend upon the human mind's constant possession of these eternal truths. Like that moment in Book VII when the eyes of Augustine's soul saw the immaterial light and were certain of the existence of God, so here Augustine ascends within his memory to a certain knowledge that transcends his own particular experience.

Augustine's ascent through his memory brings him to the desire for happiness. He concludes that his love of God is related to his desire to be happy: "When I seek you, my God, what I am seeking is a life of happiness" (10.20.29). The journey to rest in God, then, is inseparable from the desire for happiness. Then what is happiness? Augustine provides two definitions: "This is the happy life, and this alone: to rejoice in you, about you and because of you" (10.22.32). This has been the goal of the journey to rest, here described in terms of happiness: that the self is grounded in God alone. Augustine elaborates on this in his second definition: "Now the happy life is joy in the truth; and that means in you, who are the Truth, O God who shed the light of salvation on my face, my God" (10.23.33).

But just as with the Platonic ascent, Augustine cannot remain at those heights. His joy is not in the truth. He writes:

> Anyone whom you fill you also uplift, but I am not full of you, and so I am a burden to myself...joys over which I ought to weep do battle with sorrows that should be matters for joy, and I know not which will be victorious. But I also see griefs that are evil and at war in me with joys that are good, and I know not which will win the day. This is agony, Lord, have pity on me. (10.28.39)

This is the moment in the ascent, then, in which the self is weighed down by its inner division, its fragmentation. Through contemplation Augustine can ascend through his memory to see God present there in his desire for happiness; but he cannot stay there. Recall the divided will in Book VIII, that found it impossible to

become a Christian. God gave Augustine a whole will to make the decision to humble himself and follow Christ; but, clearly, the problem of his will was not entirely solved by his conversion. He never expected, though, that his conversion would end his journey to rest. For what he found unique and convincing in Paul was that Christianity provides the knowledge of God and, unlike Platonism, it also provides a way to possess him. Augustine here is experiencing the restlessness that belongs to that way; it is the restlessness of a soul that is still, as he described himself in Book IX, "but a beginner in the love of [God]" (Chadwick, 9.4.8). It is not the restlessness of one becoming a Christian, it is the restlessness of one trying to live as a Christian. The demands of Christian life have a misery all their own. There has been development in the journey, but the self still must depend upon God at each step of the way. Indeed, the problem is expressed in even more dramatic language than previously. Augustine's life as a Christian makes him more aware of the goodness of God, and simultaneously of his own inadequacy to live in accord with that goodness. So here the will is described not merely as divided or fragmented, but as being at "war." From the standpoint of his own abilities, the outcome of this war is impossible to predict: "I know not which will be victorious...I know not which will win the day" (10.28.39) As was the case with his conversion, he does not have the resources within himself to follow the commandments of God. Only God can reform his desires so that he can live a holy life.

As in Book VIII, the gift of God here is the virtue of continence. The frantic pursuits of the fragmented self can only be restored to wholeness and rest through the gift of continence, for by continence "the scattered elements of the self are collected and brought back into unity from which we have slid away into dispersion; for anyone who loves something else along with, but does not love it for your sake, loves you less" (10.29.40). Augustine prays for this continence; he prays that God will further inflame the love he already has for God so that he never strays. Lady Continence advised Augustine that the decision to become a

Christian was only possible through grace; and now Augustine sees that living as a Christian is also only possible through this gift. Only if God gives him the desire will he be able to find joy in the truth. In the position of humility brought about by the soul's inability to love God fully, despite a partial desire to do so, it recognizes that the ability to love God is a gift of God. Augustine addresses God and asks, then, "give what you command." As Augustine states the matter simply, "For no one can be continent except by your gift" (10.31.45) The fallen self is a divided, fragmented one; any wholeness is through God. The gift that God already gave Augustine in his conversion needs to be given again and again for him to follow the narrow way to which he committed himself.

Being Read by 1 John 2.16

Augustine then turns to what I see as the second part of Book X, in which Augustine is read by 1 John 2.16; that is, he uses 1 John 2.16 as a criterion for self-examination by which he can see what makes up the "weight" that keeps him from resting in God. This penitential reading, as we shall see, leads him to a moment of crisis that will reorient him in his journey to rest. 1 John 2.16 lists what Augustine takes to be three classes of sins, namely the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and worldly pride. There is a sense in which the order of these sins gradually makes Augustine increasingly aware of his sinfulness. That is, to put it simply, there is an upping of the ante as Augustine moves from one to another. This upping of the ante occurs because, following a logic that is similar to that of the ascent, the sins gradually become less centred on Augustine's external activity in the world and more on his inward relation to himself, creation and God. The first sin, concupiscence of the flesh, can be examined according to the five senses. The second is more difficult, for the concupiscence of the eyes has less to do with how one is acting in the world, and more to do with where one places one's attention. Finally, worldly pride proves the most difficult for Augustine—indeed, it overwhelms him—because he believes that he could be entirely perfect from the standpoint of the other two sins

and still be committing the sin that is most repellent to God according to Scripture. Moreover, pride is the most problematic for it is the sin that looms largest in living the Christian call to justice, to love one's neighbour. In attempting to love one's neighbours, their praise or criticisms can lead to a focus upon one's own ability or the opinions of others, rather than God.

Starting with the concupiscence of the flesh, Augustine examines himself according to the five senses. The question here is in what ways Augustine seeks to be gratified by his senses. With each sense he recalls how God has healed him from some temptation, and then he confesses the ways that he continues to struggle. When considering touch, for example, Augustine praises God for freeing him from lust. However, he goes on to admit that while asleep he still takes pleasure in sexual dreams (10.30.41-42). With each sense his soul finds reason to praise how God has acted in the past, and it also prays to God to act in the present. When considering taste, Augustine is struck by how easy it is to eat more than what is "needful" and so commit the sin of gluttony (10.31.45). And he cannot, in his own mind, clearly recognize the line between eating to maintain health and eating to excess. This may be the most frightening insight of all, that Augustine cannot even fully comprehend when he is sinning. He is quite certain that he is rarely tempted by smell, but then he writes, "Or so it seems to me, though I may perhaps be deceived...when my mind questions itself about its powers it can scarcely trust any reply it receives" (10.32.48) All of the senses examined prove problematic; there is sin considered under each one, and, further, the admission that there are sins of which Augustine is entirely unaware. Even at this seemingly most simple level, that of what sensually gives Augustine pleasure, he is unable to comprehend fully the degree or nature of his sin.

The concupiscence of the eyes proves even more difficult for it is not based on the gratification of the flesh but "for experience through the flesh" (10.35.54). We are, then, moving further inward. The examples of these types of sins indicate how this class of sin is much more difficult to locate and much easier

to commit. For it is not about taking a second helping at dinner, but rather about where one directs one's attention. Several examples Augustine gives include staring at a dead body as one passes by or wanting to see signs and wonders. But this type of sin also does not need to be quite so dramatic—it can be as simple and as casual as idly staring out the window. Augustine writes, "Even when I am sitting at home, why does a lizard catching flies or a spider binding them when they blunder into its web, often have me gazing intently?" (10.35.56) Such curiosity indicates a constant questing of the mind for truth in the wrong places, and its absorption with itself in that. It is not, of course, simply that Augustine enjoys watching lizards eat their prey—indeed, watching lizards could be a way of enjoying the wonder of God's creation. Rather it is that in watching the lizard Augustine's mind seeks to find joy apart from God; he is not loving the lizard in God, he is loving the lizard apart from God. This class of sin further underlines Augustine's weakness. Sin is not only lust for a beautiful woman or an extra helping of dessert, it can also be a furtive glance at the creatures outside your window.

Worldly pride is the most complex of the sins for it is the one that takes place entirely within. With the other two classes of sin, it is easier for others, and for oneself, to have at least some sense of when they are being committed. Pride is at once the most difficult sin to see, the easiest to commit, and the most destructive to the spiritual life. This sin has been at the forefront of Augustine's life since, as a child, he delighted in the praise he received from his teachers and peers for reciting poetry. Worldly pride has stayed with him, and, indeed, now as a Christian the temptation is worse than ever. This is so for two reasons. First, he has risen to a position of prominence in the Church and, as is the case with Book X, people want to hear from him; the explicit impetus for writing Book X, then, points to the regard others have for him which is, as he says, a constant source of temptation. The sin of worldly pride is the most pernicious because it can arise

through love of neighbour. Augustine writes about receiving the compliments of others:

> It is no true joy at all, but leads only to a miserable life and shameful ostentation. This tendency is one of the chief impediments to loving you and revering you with a chaste heart, and therefore you thwart the proud but give grace to the humble; you thunder at the world's ambitions till the foundations of the mountains shudder. (10.36.58)

Second his pride is even worse because when Augustine was reciting poetry as a child he was making no claim to the truth. Now as a Christian he claims a certain knowledge of the truth—the truth of the God who condescended in Christ to call all people humbly to return to him. The knowledge of that truth may lead Augustine to a pride that contradicts the very message he claims to preach and to embody. Further, Augustine's attempts to live that message and even his self-examination that readily admits he is proud, can themselves be a source of pride: "This [worldly pride] is a real temptation to me, and even when I am accusing myself of it, the very fact that I am accusing myself tempts me to further self-esteem" (10.38.63). The fact that he is more aware of his pride makes him more susceptible to it. Interestingly, then, pride has become even more of a problem since Augustine has become a Christian—because of his position of prominence in the Church and his service to others, and in his claim to know and his attempt to embody the truth of Christianity. There is a sense, then, in which the progress in his journey to rest is marked by an increase of temptations and a deepening awareness of his sinfulness; indeed, a deepening awareness of the possibility of his failure. Becoming a Christian has not ended the journey to rest, in some ways it has made it all the more difficult.

Augustine expresses how Christianity has made the journey to rest more difficult by describing the conflict between continence and justice. These virtues Augustine ties to the two greatest commandments, to love both God and neighbour. As Augustine writes, "You have enjoined upon us not only

continence, which means restraining our love for certain objects, but also justice, which requires us to bestow it on certain others; and you have willed that our charity should be directed, not to you alone but also to our neighbour" (10.37.61). In Augustine's experience, though, these two are in conflict. Indeed, he feels that Christianity commands him to love in a contradictory way. In the simplest terms, we might say that Christianity demands simultaneously the love of One and many. On the one hand, love of God is supposed to be exclusive; the Christian is not to place any other love higher than his love for the divine. However, love of God demands love of others—and the greatest threat to loving God above all else is found in becoming overly tied to those one is commanded to serve. So justice, a concern for others, may actually lead to incontinence; or continence, that resists all other loves to love God, may finally lead to injustice. As has been the case throughout his self-examination, Augustine comes up against his inability to live the Christian life. The most basic virtues demanded of the Christian seem, in his experience, to work against one another.

Augustine has come to the end of his inner journey to find out what he loves when he loves God, and also what prevents him from fully loving him. In reviewing what he has learned and experienced in this journey Augustine characterizes it in terms of an ascent and fall. He concludes that God is the only source of rest for "only there are the scattered elements of my being collected, so that no part of me may escape from you" (10.40.65). When all the scattered elements were collected and he ascended to God, he experienced moments of "sweetness beyond understanding" (10.40.65). Yet such experiences were fleeting for, as was the case in Book VII, Augustine is "dragged down" from this sweetness by "the burden of habit" (10.40.65) His self-examination following 1 John 2.16 has given him a fuller understanding of this habit—the habit of finding joy in what is false rather than the truth—but it has not in any way led to his overcoming of them. He despairs, then, of ever coming to a state where that sweetness is a constant. He asks, "'Can anyone reach that?'" (10.41.66) He has

the same sense of himself here that he did after the ascent with Monica in Book IX; he knows he is on the way but he despairs of ever reaching his goal.

The inward journey here, then, brings Augustine to the same point as the autobiographical journey. In Book VIII we saw that Augustine's conversion to Christianity demanded that he humbly turn to the mediation of Christ to be able to submit to Christ. Here in Book X we have reached a similar moment; though, as we have noted throughout our discussion, the journey here is to live as a Christian. Augustine can never get beyond the mediation of Christ in his journey to rest. Indeed, we can say that as he matures as a Christian he becomes ever more mindful of his need for God's grace in Christ. The fundamental problem is defined here again as pride. Augustine has spent the second half of Book X in a detailed enumeration of all his sins. Finally, however, all of these are secondary to the sin of pride, for it is only in humility that one can receive the mediation of Christ that will finally overcome all his other sins. That is, the healing that Augustine so desires depends on his recognizing that this healing cannot come from him, but only through the Word made flesh. To acknowledge this—that God works through a lowly human being—requires humility. Other alleged mediators—whom Augustine describes as "spiritual powers of the air" that promise salvation through "magical powers" (10.42.67)—allow one to keep one's pride intact. Augustine makes the fascinating argument that because these alleged mediators are spirits and are therefore superior to the human, they attract the proud who seek salvation in what is above them. Behind all these spiritual mediators, though, is the false mediator, Satan, who "[b]eing without a fleshly body himself, he strongly appealed to the pride of fleshly humans" (10.42.67). Those who seek mediation through spirits, then, are in fact the proudest of all. To recognize that God brings about salvation through a human being—indeed, that God becomes a human being—requires humility. And it is through Christ's humanity that we have access to his divinity. Here again is the lesson that took Augustine so long to learn in the autobiographical books, that one cannot escape

or avoid the earthly in the journey to rest. Rather it is that God comes to human beings through the earthly while remaining divine. As he writes, "What we needed was a mediator to stand between God and men who should be in one respect like God, in another kin to human beings, for if he were manlike in both regards he would be far from God, but if Godlike in both, far from us; and then he would be no mediator" (10.42.67). Even in his sinful state, Augustine is able to grasp Christ's humanity and be reconciled to God. Further, recognizing that God was in Christ in the Incarnation assures believers that "[God] will heal my infirmities through him who sits at your right hand and intercedes for us. Were it not so, I would despair" (10.42.67). The mediation of Christ, then, both assures one of one's reconciliation with God in the present, and promises that healing of sins will continue in the future. In this mediation, the Christian life finds its foundation.

The Crisis of Book X and the Transition to Book XI

Following this description of the mediation of Christ, Augustine reflects back on this inward journey and states that it nearly made him flee into solitude. As described above, we saw that Augustine experiences a constant conflict between continence and justice. For him, the compliments and criticisms of others are a constant temptation to pride. The inward journey, then, and the penitential reading therein, has brought Augustine to the point where he is questioning how he can best continue the journey to rest. Living as a hermit, it seems, might immediately guard him from the temptations that he finds most trying. Indeed, here near the end of the inward journey Augustine seems to be considering whether continuing the inward journey is the way forward; that is, whether he should live alone and away from all the distractions of the world, and continue to live the Christian life concentrating on his inner life. How and why Augustine decides against this way forward in his journey to rest concludes Book X and provides the transition to Book XI. We shall see, first, how Augustine "puts on" Christ here in a way that moves him to continue his journey to rest not

within himself but in the Church in the world. Second, we will consider why Augustine will continue this journey in the Church by exegesis of Genesis. Finally, we shall see how the eucharist that ends Book X brings together all that has gone before, and also moves the journey to rest to the Scriptural interpretation in Book XI.

Augustine ultimately chooses not to go into solitude because he feels God "forbade" him from doing so (10.43.70). He writes that a verse from Scripture, 2 Corinthians 5.15, defined for him why he could not continue his journey to rest alone. We note again here the crucial reading that Scripture plays. 2 Corinthians 5.15 functions here as Romans 13.14 at Augustine's conversion, in that he finds within Scripture the truth about how he is to submit himself to Christ in the world. Romans 13.14 advised him to reject all else and "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (8.12.29). Since that moment of conversion, as we have seen, Augustine has been attempting to do just that. Indeed, Book X has been consumed with Augustine's struggle to find joy only in God. 2 Corinthians 5.15 here further defines for Augustine how he is to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Augustine quotes the verse (indicated by italics) and his response to it, "*To this end Christ died for all*, you reminded me, *that they who are alive may live not for themselves, but for him who died for them*. See, then, Lord: I cast my care upon you that I may live, and I will contemplate the wonders you have revealed" ([italics in text] 10.43.70) This verse suggests for Augustine that his submission to Christ cannot simply reject the world; his journey to rest is bound up with his service of others. How does this verse suggest this? On the face of it, it seems to have little to do with whether or not to live as a hermit. We must understand, however, that Augustine is making a connection between his living for Christ, as the verse counsels him to do, and living as Christ lived. That is to say, for Augustine at this point in his journey his submission to Christ is moving beyond penitance to imitation. It may very well be easier for him to live life in solitude, but that would not be submitting to Christ; that would not truly be resting in God. In 2 Corinthians 5.15 Paul is

explicit that Christ died for *all*. Augustine interprets this to mean that he must "put on" Christ by serving the all for whom Christ died. For him, this means continuing his life in the service of the Church.

And this service will have a very particular shape in the journey to rest in *Confessions*. Augustine's service of all is his way of submitting to Christ so that, as quoted above, "I may live" and this submission will be through "contemplat[ing] the wonders that you have revealed" (10.43.70). So Augustine's service to all will be through the contemplation of Scripture. He has defined for us here the next and final journey in the journey to rest—it will continue in the Church by reading Scripture. Why is the focus now upon Scripture? I see two reasons that Augustine will shift in Book XI from a focus on himself to a focus on Scripture. First, Augustine's acute awareness of his pride leads him to want to find ways to emphasize God and not himself in his service of others. This is because one of the problems when he served others was that he, and the others he was serving, would take pleasure in him rather than God. His desire is instead for himself and others to find joy in God. As he wrote, "Be yourself our glory: let us be loved on your account, and let it be your word in us that is honored" (10.36.59). This is not to say that Augustine thinks that turning to Scriptural exegesis in *Confessions* will prevent him from being proud. Obviously this would contradict Augustine's complex consideration of pride as discussed above. At the same time, however, Augustine's awareness of his pride does clearly lead him to search for another way to serve others while keeping the focus on God; that is, to try to keep together continence and justice. Turning to Scriptural exegesis, and away from a consideration of his own life or experience in any way, would seem to be the best way to do this.

The second reason that Augustine's service to all will be through contemplation of Scripture is that by the end of Book X Augustine has come as far as he can with himself as the subject. That is, Books I to X described his journey to faith and early life as a Christian, and Book X described from within

his struggle to live his life as a Christian. In these two journeys, Augustine has given as complete a picture as he can, from his own biography and experience, of the journey to rest. But we see at the end of Book X that the journey to rest must continue in the Church in the world. That is, the journey is now no longer about Augustine—indeed, for Augustine's journey to be complete he must see that it is not finally about him!—and therefore it can no longer be told based on himself. We can get a better sense of this by examining further what Augustine would have had in mind when quoting 2 Corinthians 5.15. We have already noted how this verse means for Augustine that to imitate Christ he must serve all. In the verses following 2 Corinthians 5.15, Paul defines what it means to serve all:

> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us his ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors of Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:16-20)

This is, evidently, a complex passage. I simply want to note, however, the Scriptural context Augustine perhaps had in mind when quoting 2 Corinthians 5.15. Therein Paul suggests that the one who lives for Christ should then try to see all as being made new in Christ. That is, not from a "human point of view." The ability to see others in this way, however, depends upon seeing Christ in this way. When discussing the mediation of Christ earlier in Book X, as we discussed above, Augustine emphasized the humility it takes to recognize that God is present in human form in Christ. Here Paul is taking that way of seeing and extending it to all: as one comes to recognize that God is in Christ, so one should

come to recognize how Christ is related to all. Further, Paul is also suggesting that the fundamental task of the Christian is to spread the message of how in Christ "God was reconciling the world to himself." This reconciliation of God to the world, I would like to suggest, is the subject of Books XI to XIII. The reason that these books will be interpreting the first chapters of Genesis is implicit here; in those chapters we have the most complete account, we might say, of the world as God created it and, as Augustine interprets them, as he redeemed it. His quoting of 2 Corinthians, then, points to the need to go beyond himself and come to all from a new point of view—a point of view that, as we shall see, is available through exegesis of Genesis. Augustine is ordering himself to the whole, and is serving all in the Church, by interpreting the first chapters of Genesis to tell of how God is making all things new. Charles Mathewes nicely brings together the two reasons I have been saying that Augustine is turning to Scriptural exegesis: "Book 10 is readily seen as a transition from the [self to Scripture], as both the vertigo-inducing consummation (because confutation) of the potentially narcissistic fixation on the self in the first nine books and the recognition of the limitations of that route and the need to go beyond it into another route, the route of the community of the Church, as lived out in multiform exegesis of Scripture."[13] Quite simply, for the journey to rest to continue, Augustine must turn to the Church and the interpretation of Scripture.

Before he turns to this Scriptural exegesis, however, Augustine describes his participation in the eucharist. In this description of the eucharist all that has gone before is present here, as well as beginning the journey in the Church. First, the autobiographical journey of Books I to IX, as we saw, brought Augustine to baptism as mentioned in Book IX. Following the practice of the Church, Augustine is only able to receive the eucharist when he has already been baptized. Speaking more generally, too, we saw how the outward journey to faith led Augustine to the inward journey that concludes here with the description of the

[13] Charles Mathews, "The Liberation of Questioning in Augustine's *Confessions*" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70. 3 (September 2002) 553.

eucharist. So this eucharist assumes the autobiographical journey. Second, the inward journey to live the Christian faith leads to the eucharist because it makes Augustine acutely aware of his sinfulness, and of his need to be sustained by Christ—and sustained in a way that he can receive it. So he begins his description of the eucharist thus: "You know how stupid and weak I am: teach me and heal me. Your only Son, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, has redeemed me with his blood" (10.43.70) In humility, he receives this sustenance in the form of the body and blood: "I eat it, I drink it..." (10.43.70). In this act of receiving the eucharist, too, we have the right ordering of the self, in a way that contrasts with Augustine's sinfulness as described during his self-examination. Body, mind and soul are turned toward receiving the gifts of God, and in receiving them in a way that Augustine can touch and taste. The physicality of this description is profound. So we have here too the mediation of the God-man who takes on flesh. Augustine is sustained in his faith through God's working through the parts. Finally, Augustine describes the eucharist as clearly taking place in the Church, beginning the next and final journey within the journey to rest. At the beginning of Book X Augustine talked of serving others through his writing, but here in the eucharist he places himself squarely within that community, to take up this point again, in a profoundly physical way. So not only does he eat and drink the body and blood, but he also says, "I dispense it to others, and I long to be filled with it among those who are fed and feasted. And then do those who seek him praise the Lord" (10.43.70) In this we see the imitation of Christ that Augustine read of in 2 Corinthians 5.15. He is not only sustained in his sinful state by the body and blood, but he also turns to others in the Church and shares what he has received. Indeed, we may even say that this vivid description of the eucharist is an enactment of it for his readers so that they might receive. As James O'Donnell suggests, this passage is one of "such dense eucharistic imagery that it may be thought of as perhaps the only place in [Christian literature] where a Christian receives the eucharist in the literary text

itself."[14] The eucharist occurs in the context of a community in which Augustine serves others; he is, as quoted above, "among" others who are sustained by Christ. At the conclusion of Book X, then, his journey is now established as being in the Church in the world.

So by ending Book X with a eucharist Augustine brings together all that has gone before and also signals that the journey to rest will continue in the Church in the world. In the inward journey we focused especially on how the struggle to live the Christian life makes one more aware of one's sinfulness and of one's need for God's grace in Christ. In this, we saw how the reading of Scripture figured prominently again as 1 John 2.16 was used as a criterion by which Augustine could come to a better understanding of himself in such a way that he could see how God had healed him and he could pray for further healing. At the conclusion of Book X we saw the crisis that this inward journey and the self-examination brought Augustine to, and how he decided, following 2 Corinthians 5.15, to imitate Christ by serving all—and to do so by interpreting Scripture. So Book X has advanced the journey to rest, and also moved Augustine to the third journey that will finally give him the rest he so desires.

[14] James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine Confessions*, volume 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) xxxvii.

Chapter III

Reading Genesis: Completing the Journey to Rest

We come now to the third and final journey that completes the journey to rest—Augustine's journey in the Church in the world. Thus far we have seen how the outward journey (I—IX) led to the inward journey (X), and how at the end of the inward journey Augustine was pushed back out into the world to serve the Church by contemplating Scripture. That it is the reading of Scripture that will, finally, complete the journey, should not be surprising to us. We have seen all along how critical the reading of Scripture has been to Augustine. First, to learn to read Scripture, then to live it, and finally to be read by it. This being read by Scripture—the penitential reading —described in Book IX and then enacted in Book X, moves the soul to repentance and further dependence on God. Further, it was a verse of Scripture that led Augustine to his first "putting on" of Christ in his conversion (VIII), and it was a verse of Scripture that led to a second "putting on" of Christ in his decision to serve all (X). But how is Augustine's reading of Scripture in Books XI to XIII different from the readings thus far in *Confessions*? We have seen how in Books I to X Augustine's life has ordered the journey; that is to say, certain pieces of Scripture were read at certain times in Augustine's life. We might say that in those first ten books Scripture was a supporting character—an absolutely critical supporting character, but a supporting character nonetheless. Here, in these final three books, Augustine's life does not order the reading of Scripture, rather Scripture orders Augustine. Augustine becomes the supporting character, while Scripture takes the starring role. He is about to engage in a methodical, prolonged reading here that has not been done before in *Confessions*.

And this methodical, prolonged reading is Augustine's service to all that he resolved to perform at the end of Book X. This service will consist, following

Paul's counsel in 2 Corinthians, of Augustine's description of how God is "reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5.19). Augustine will do this through the first chapters of Genesis, which, in terms of the Scriptural text, provide the fullest picture of the whole of creation in its relation to God. So in this reading, all that has gone before in Books I to X is taken up into Books XI to XIII, as Augustine's personal journey is tied to the larger journey of the redemption of all creation in the Church. Through Genesis Augustine is able to contemplate the activity of God in the whole of creation from its beginning to God's eternal reign. In this contemplation Augustine comes to an understanding of the Church, creation and the Triune God in which he is at once able to rest in God as he lives in the world in the Church, even as he looks forward to the future rest of the eternal Sabbath. This final vision of Sabbath rest in Book XIII, however, only comes after Augustine works his way through the first two chapters of Genesis from "In the beginning..." to the seventh day when God rests. So we need to be clear here that the exegesis of these last three books is a journey like the other two journeys; that is, that as Augustine works through the text he will gradually move to greater rest in God. The verses of Genesis, then, are like the stages that led to his conversion in the first nine books; or like the ascent and penitential reading of the tenth book. Augustine must journey through these verses until his journey in the Church comes to any sort of conclusion; and, in the conclusion of this journey, his journey to rest in *Confessions* ends. We will proceed then by an analysis of each of the final three books in turn. I should be clear here that my analysis is by no means comprehensive; these final three books are, in my estimation, the most difficult of all of *Confessions*. However, my analysis will be thorough enough to demonstrate how these last three books complete the journey to rest.

Book XI

Book XI establishes why Augustine is turning to Scriptural exegesis, and how this third and final journey will proceed; specifically, it is a journey in which

Augustine reads Scripture in and for the Church. We will consider Book XI in five parts. First, we will see how Augustine is locating this journey as being within and for the Church in the world. Second, Augustine's explanation of why he is turning to Scriptural exegesis will provide us with the most complete description of his journey to rest thus far in *Confessions*, and will suggest how the first ten books have prepared him for the last three. Third, we will see how Augustine lays out the hermeneutical method that will be used in interpreting Genesis. Fourth, these first three points lay a foundation so that, as we shall see, Augustine is then able to interpret the first part of Genesis 1.1, "In the beginning, God created...". Finally we will briefly consider his discussion of time to see how, within the journey of reading Scripture, it marks a fall that will be resolved in Books XII and XIII. So Book XI establishes for us the beginning of the journey, and, with the discussion of time, it also marks the distance that Augustine still needs to go before he can rest.

The Journey Within the Church

At several points in Book XI, Augustine is clear that this third journey is taking place within and for the Church. We can see this in the first paragraph of Book XI, which marks continuity with and difference from the first paragraph of Book I.[15] In Book I Augustine wrote, "Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so we humans, who are due part of your creation, long to praise you..." (1.1.1) I would like to note three things about this quotation. The first is that it is comprised of quotations from Psalms 47, 95 and 144. The second is that Augustine states that human beings all desire to praise God, but in this passage he alone is doing the praising. That is, he is the one declaring God's greatness. Third, while it is clear that Augustine is quoting the Psalms, he is not doing so explicitly. Now we can compare this with a nearly identical passage in the first chapter of Book XI, "I [write] to arouse my own loving devotion toward you, and

[15] My analysis is based on Mathewes' observation that Book XI begins *Confessions* again, while also making reference to the first beginning in Book I, see "The Liberation of Questioning," 554.

that of my readers, so that together we may declare *Great is the Lord and exceedingly worthy of praise*" (11.1.1). We can see how the third journey is different from the first by comparing these two passages. First, the exact same Psalms are quoted here as in Book I. Second, Augustine's intention is now for this praise to happen "together." The eucharist at the end of Book X, in which Augustine described his desire to be fed "among" others who were feeding on Christ, placed Augustine's journey within the Church. Third, Augustine now sets up these quotations from the Psalms as quotations. That is, he is explicitly making reference to his use of Scripture. So the intention of the journey as stated in Book I remains the same here in Book XI, to rest in God and praise him. However, in Book XI this praise happens "together" with other Christians, and it happens through the Scriptural text.

There is another echo of Book I later in Book XI in the prayer Augustine makes before laying out his hermeneutical method. As it relates directly to the point I just made—that the journey is now within the Church—I will deal with it here. In Book I Augustine repeats twice the phrase "due part of your creation (*aliqua portio creaturae meae*)": "And so we humans, who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you...these humans, due part of your creation as they are, still do [despite their sinfulness] long to praise you" (1.1.1) This phrase in Book I serves to situate human beings relative to the whole of creation; and, as we saw, the first nine books deal in large part with Augustine coming to a right relation, as a human being, to the created order; that is, the right relation between the parts and the whole. In Book XI, Augustine repeats twice a phrase that is also situating himself relative to a larger whole: "and me among them (*in quibus et me/in quo et me*)" (11.2.4). Yet here Augustine does not just define himself in relation to the whole created order, but also specifically as a Christian who is a member of the Church. Speaking of Christ he writes, "He is the Word through whom you made all things, and me among them, your only Son through whom you called your believing people to be your sons by adoption, and me among them" (11.2.4). The

role of Christ in Book XI we will deal with shortly. But the important point to make now is that in Book XI Augustine is proceeding as a member of the Church. The first "me among them" places him in the world, and the second "me among them" specifies that his being in the world is defined by his being in the Church. In Book I, he began the autobiographical books talking about himself as one of the human beings that make up the whole creation. Here his relation to the whole is defined in terms of his relation to the Church. This third journey that Augustine is undertaking is in the world, as was the first journey begun in Book I, but this time he is in the world as a member of the Church.

Serving the Church by Interpreting Scripture

We have already made the point immediately above, and in our concluding discussion of Book X, that Augustine's service of the Church is going to be through interpreting Scripture. Augustine makes this more explicit in the second chapter of Book XI. Having established in the first chapter that he is now seeking to serve the Church, he baldly asks the question of how he can best achieve this service. We have a moment here in which Augustine openly deliberates over what he should do next; and, in so doing, he gives us great insight into the development of the journey of *Confessions*. He writes that one possibility is to complete the autobiography of Books I to IX by describing how he came to become a priest and bishop (11.2.2). If the purpose of *Confessions* were to give a complete account of his life, then completing the autobiography would be the natural choice. Yet Augustine writes that he is not going to narrate the remaining story of his life because "the dripping moments of time are too precious to me" (11.2.2). The daily necessities of life, and his duties as a bishop, leave little time for anything else, and thus what he does in his spare moments must be of the greatest importance. He writes, "I have long burned with desire to meditate on your law, that there I may confess to you both what I know and what I still find baffling" (11.2.2). So with Book XI, Augustine is finally beginning a task that he has wanted to start for a long time. Yet these deliberations raise a fundamental

question; namely, if the reading of Scripture is so critical, and if he has had such a deep desire to do so for so long, then why is it that he is only coming to it *now*, so late in the journey of *Confessions*?

Evidently the journeys of Books I to X, part of the one journey to rest, have somehow brought Augustine to a place where he can, finally, turn to Scriptural exegesis; he is now ready to do what he has long wanted to do. We have traced throughout how Augustine has been maturing in his reading of Scripture. Augustine is able to finally "meditate on the law" because all that has gone before has prepared him to do this. We might understand how this is so in two ways, first in terms of the life of Christian who comes to full participation in the Church, and second in terms of the humility needed to read Scripture. First, we can see at this point in *Confessions* how the development of the journey to rest has followed the moments of a Christian life. In Book VIII, we had Augustine's conversion; in Book IX, Augustine mentions his—and three others'—baptism; Book X ends with the description of a eucharist; and with Book XI he turns most fully to the word. Sketching the journey in this way, we can see that Books I to X have enacted the journey of a Christian who is coming to join the full life of the Church. Only as a baptized Christian who is sustained by the eucharist can Augustine properly turn to interpret Scripture. Indeed, in Book XIII, as we shall see, Augustine lists the baptism, eucharist and word, in that particular order, as the ways in which human beings fulfil God's call to exercise dominion over creation (13.23.34). Second, and closely related to our first point, we should note that throughout *Confessions* Augustine has emphasized the importance of humility in the reading and living of Scripture. It makes sense, then, that following the point where Augustine most deeply recognizes the need for humility, at the end of Book X, he turns to his most complete reading of Scripture. It is important here that Augustine is not turning to Scriptural interpretation here because he has gained confidence in his own abilities; rather it is that immediately prior to his Scriptural interpretation he doubted his ability to live the most basic commands of the

Christian life. He is most prepared to read Scripture at this point in *Confessions* because he is most aware of his need for humility. In these two ways, the journey of the first ten books prepared Augustine for his interpretation of Genesis.

We can see how all the developments of Augustine's journey fit together in the prayer at the beginning of Book XI. As the journey to rest has developed, Augustine's dependence on Christ has increased. He has repeatedly come to the necessity of the mediation of Christ: first, to even be able to become a Christian (VII-VIII) and then to know oneself as reconciled to God despite one's sinfulness (X). Augustine now also speaks of Christ as the one in whom all things were created and are redeemed; as well, he makes possible, and is the content of, Scripture. This view of Christ is appropriate to this third journey, in which Augustine is now in the Church in the world reading Scripture. He prays:

> I beg this grace [to understand the Scripture] through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, the man at your right hand, the Son of Man whom you have made strong to stand between yourself and us as mediator. Through him you sought us when we were not seeking you, but you sought us that we might begin to seek you. He is the Word through whom you made all things, and me among them, your only Son through whom you called your believing people to be your sons by adoption, and me among them; through him, then, do I make my plea to you, through him who sits at your right hand to intercede for us, for in him are hidden all treasures. (11.2.4)

In Book XI, then, we get the fullest expression of the roles of Christ; he is central to creation, revelation, salvation and redemption. Put another way, the world, Scripture, and the Church only exist through Christ's work. As Augustine's journey has proceeded, then, he has become more and more aware of the universal work of Christ. Indeed, this turn to Christ so early in Book XI is different from other books. It was at later points in the narratives of Books I to IX, and Book X that Augustine turned to Christ. Here Christ is in the Introduction to the Book. In

this journey in the Church reading Scripture Augustine presumes, from the beginning, the activity of Christ. By Book XI there is literally no aspect of Augustine's life, and of the life of all of creation, that he has not come to see as depending upon Christ's work.

Coming to True Interpretation

Before turning to his exegesis of Genesis, Augustine considers how he will be able to interpret Scripture so that he comes to true knowledge about himself, creation and God. Again here we see how fundamental Christ has become to the journey. The author can only convey truth in what he writes, and the reader can only come to truth in his reading, if they both have a relationship to the Truth, Christ. Augustine's primary concern here is to interpret Genesis, and so he considers whether interpreting it correctly would be easier if Moses were present and if he could speak a language Augustine would comprehend. Yet Augustine states that Moses' words would not be able to persuade Augustine of the truth contained in Genesis. Moses would have no power within himself to persuade Augustine of the truth of what he was saying (11.3.5). So how does one decide whether an interpretation is true or not? By turning inward, Augustine writes, to "that inner habitation of my thought, the truth that is neither Hebrew nor Greek nor Latin nor any vernacular would speak to me without bodily organ of mouth or tongue, without any clatter of syllables would tell me, 'He is speaking the truth'; and then with instant certainty I would say to that man who served you, 'What you say is true'" (11.3.5). The author, then, has no authority in himself; he, too, has received the truth within before he could write it. Both author and reader must hear from the Truth. The key to scriptural interpretation, then, is to read the words and have their truth confirmed by listening to the Truth within; because this Truth is common and present to both reader and author, he provides true interpretation. This hermeneutical method sets Augustine off to interpreting Scripture.

Interpreting Genesis 1:1

Having established his method, in chapter four of Book XI Augustine begins his interpretation of Genesis 1.1. His focus in Book XI will not be so much upon what God created, but rather how he created. In terms of the verse in question, Augustine is seeking to understand the meaning of the first part, "In the beginning, God created..."

How did God create, he asks. Looking ahead, he sees in Genesis 1.2 that God spoke all things into existence. But taking Genesis 1.1 and 1.2 together it seems obvious to Augustine that God could not have spoken in the way we generally understand speaking. That is, because there was no heaven and earth, God's speaking could not have been the kind that is comprised of audible speech. Taking Christ's title from John 1, Augustine concludes that the speaking in Genesis 1 was through the Word. The Word is eternal and is equal with God, so he was present prior to God's creating heaven and earth; this speaking through the Word would conform to God's nature as the Word is the one who is "uttered eternally, and through him are eternally uttered all things...all things are uttered simultaneously in one eternal speaking" (11.7.9). God created, then, in the Word, and so "the beginning" that Genesis 1.1 refers to is Christ. In this first verse of Scripture, in the creation of all things, we have the Father and the Son.

Based on this interpretation of Genesis 1.1, Augustine proceeds to elaborate upon Christ being "the beginning." Through this interpretation we get the fullest account of Christ's roles. As the Word in whom all things are created, Christ is the Reason that orders all things in their beginning and ending (11.7.9). Further, in his Incarnation, Christ calls all things to return to him, giving another sense to his role as Beginning. In one passage Augustine brings together these titles and functions for Christ:

> The gospel records that he claimed [to be the Beginning] by word of mouth, making his claim audible to people's outward ears that they might believe him and seek him within themselves and find

> him in the eternal Truth where he, our sole teacher, instructs apt disciples. There it is that I hear your voice, O Lord, the voice of one who speaks to me...After all, can anyone teach us, other than stable Truth? When some changeable creature advises us, we are but led to that stable Truth, where we truly learn as we stand still and listen to him, and are filled with joy on hearing the Bridegroom's voice, and surrender ourselves once more to him from whom we came. (11.7.9)

This passage weaves together Christ's roles in creation, salvation, redemption and revelation. He is the one in whom all things were created, and he then entered into that creation to call all to return to him; those who hear his words turn within and encounter him there as the truth that speaks to them, and he leads them to himself as the immutable and eternal origin from which they came. The first part of Genesis 1.1 reveals that all that Augustine knows and is, is only possible through Christ.

God's creation through Christ—"your Word, your Son, your Power, your Wisdom, your Truth"—overwhelms Augustine. He cannot begin to comprehend it, "Who can understand this? Who can explain it?" (11.9.11) He is overjoyed that he has discovered such "wisdom," but he cannot grasp it. He writes, "I am plunged into obscurity once more, lost in the murk and rubble that are my punishment" (11.9.11) His sinfulness and weakness make him unable to grasp the wisdom available to him in Scripture. The pattern and problem of the ascent is similar to the ascents that have occurred in the other two journeys of *Confessions*, but this ascent occurs during his reading of Scripture in and for the Church. And because of this the resolution of the fall is different. Augustine consoles himself, "We are already saved, but in hope, and in patience we look forward to the fulfilment of your promises" (11.9.11). We can see that this resolution to the fall here marks Augustine as closer to rest than previously in the *Confessions*. After the Platonic ascent in Book VII, Augustine was "dragged away" and he despaired

that he was unable to "continue steadfastly in the enjoyment of my God" (7.17.23). At that point, as a Platonist, he wondered if he would ever be able to "enjoy" God. Then, in Book IX, there was the ascent with Monica. There he and Monica were able to get a momentary glimpse of the future life, but after they fell back Augustine wondered about that perfect existence, "And when, when will this be?" (9.10.25) Though as a Christian, at the fall he can none the less look forward to the goal that he knows he will one day reach. We should also note that the ascent in Book IX is with Monica. That ascent was a communal one. In Book X, after his fall, he consoles himself in a way similar to that of Book IX, by looking forward to the future: "With good reason is there solid hope for me in [Christ], because you will heal all my infirmities through him who sits at your right hand and intercedes for us" (10.43.69). We note the communal element here again, in that Augustine refers to Christ interceding for him and his fellow Christians—the "us." In Book XI, that communal sense is fully present. The fall is Augustine's own, but the salvation belongs to the "we" (11.9.11). Augustine's journey is now in and for the Church, and so he understands salvation as belonging to that community. And, as he now journeys in the Church, he claims to have that salvation "already" in hope (11.9.11). Why is it that this "already" is present, for the first time, in the third journey? We have seen, just in Augustine's interpretation of the first part of Genesis 1.1, how he has come to a fuller understanding of all the roles of Christ. Christ who is the content of Scripture and the means by which it is read properly; Christ in whom all things were created, by whom all are redeemed. We might say, then, that the interpretation of Scripture gives content to the hope that possesses salvation "already." Scripture orients the Church in terms of God's activity in the past and in the future, so that Christians know their salvation which is present now through hope will one day be fully realized.

The Nature of Time

After this ascent and fall brought about by the truth that Christ is "the beginning," Augustine struggles to understand further God's creation as described in Genesis 1.1. His interpretation of how the eternal God creates through the eternal Word raises questions about God's relation to time. We saw just above that the journey of reading Scripture, like the other journeys, has moments of ecstasy and despair. Augustine experiences times when he comes to insight into the truth and other times when his sinfulness and weakness make it impossible for him to understand. His goal always seems just beyond his reach. In my reading, Augustine's discussion of time is a period of despair in his third journey; he cannot see how God in his eternity could be related to human temporality. Yet the intent of this journey in the Church, as I stated earlier, is for Augustine to serve all by showing how God is making all things new. By the end of Book XI, Augustine has not come to a place where he can see the role that time plays in God's redeeming all things. And because of this, he cannot rest. So while Book XI establishes how the interpretation of Genesis will proceed, and it begins that interpretation, the discussion of time means that the journey to rest must continue.

There are two conceptions of time that Augustine gives in Book XI. The first arises when he answers an apparently common question about God's creation of the universe, "What was God doing before he created heaven and earth?" We note here that the focus of the question is on God's relation to time. To Augustine, anyone who asks this question does not properly understand the implications of believing God is eternal. The answer is quite simple, and has essentially been dealt with in what Augustine has said before. God is eternal, and does not exist in time, rather he created time. This means that the question is nonsensical. Augustine prays to God, "If, therefore, there was no time before heaven and earth came to be, how can anyone ask what you were doing then?

There was no such thing as 'then,' when there was no time" (10.13.16) The question improperly applies temporal categories to the divine.

We have here, then, the first conception of time in Book XI that is based on God's relation to time. God is eternal, and therefore for time to exist he must have created it along with heaven and earth. This seems to be a natural conclusion based on Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 1.1. And so this first conception of time asserts that time is a creation of God which is apart from the human mind; that is, it has objective existence. Augustine will now turn to a discussion of human beings' relation to time, and his conclusion of it will be that time exists within the human mind. This second conception, then, entirely contradicts the first. Many commentators have suggested that this second conception is Augustine's conclusion on the matter.[16] However, that is to take the definition of time that Augustine gives at this early point in the third journey; and, indeed it is also to take a definition that contradicts the earlier one.
We shall see, in Books XII and XIII, that as Augustine proceeds in his reading of Scripture and in his journey to rest he will bring together how time is a creation of God and his understanding of the mind's activity.[17] Indeed, his journey in the Church in the world demands that he come to see the goodness of time so that he can rest in God.

The question of God's relation to time is followed by the question of what time is. The frame of reference here changes from God's eternity to the human experience of temporality. Augustine's definition of time here, and throughout *Confessions*, will be tied to change; this is what makes time so difficult to define. Augustine writes, "If no one asks me [what time is], I know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks me, I do not know" (11.14.17). Augustine begins with the

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[16] Most famously, Bertrand Russell suggested this in *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948) 212. For a more scholarly treatment see John L. Morrison, "Augustine's Two Theories of Time, " *New Scholasticism* 45 (1971): 600-620. A nice overview of different views on this is provided in Michael Futch, "Augustine on the Successiveness of Time," *Augustinian Studies* 33: 1 (2002): 17-38.

[17] In this reading I follow A. M. Johnston, "Time as a Psalm in Saint Augustine" *Animus* 1 (1996) [online www.swgc.mun.ca/animus].

realization that as soon as someone asks him what time is, he cannot explain it; so he begins with the most basic observation. Augustine states that past, present and future all depend upon the fleeting, transitory nature of existence: "if nothing passed away there would be no past time; if there was nothing still on its way there would be no future time; and if nothing existed, there would be no present time" (11.14.17). It is difficult to say, then, that time even really *exists*, because it is in such a state of flux that there does not seem to be anything stable that can be pointed to as existing. Augustine then defines time in terms of this state of flux, this constant passing away, by stating that "...we cannot really say that time exists, except because it tends to non-being" (11.14.17). The essence of time, then, is that it passes.

So time is defined as that which "tends to non-being," yet it must have some sort of being for human beings' claim to measure it. The mind's activity, in remembering and expecting, comes to dominate this discussion. Augustine quickly shows that, by definition, past and future do not exist, and therefore they cannot be measured. With the case of the present, the problem is to establish what is actually available to the mind to measure. Augustine gradually eliminates the possibilities of what is present to the human mind, until he comes to the conclusion that time is present to us only in moments, and even those moments are only briefly present before they immediately pass away. Thus "the present is reduced to a vanishing point" (11.15.20). Augustine returns, however, to the fact that human beings compare lengths of time, and speak in terms of past, present and future. He assumes that these common conceptions are not based on delusion. He sees that past and future are realities in the mind. Time is shifting, then, from being an objective reality that was created by God, to an individual experience that is located in the mind. Augustine says the past exists insofar as a person remembers what occurred; the future exists insofar as a person anticipates what will occur. The understanding behind the terms past, present and future could be more absolutely expressed as "the present of past things, the present of

present things, and the present of future things" (11.20.26). Time then seems to exist only in the human mind, which is the only way that past and future can exist. Augustine writes,

> In you, my mind, I measure time...What I measure is the impression which passing phenomena leave in you, which abides after they have passed by: that is what I measure as a present reality, not the things that passed by so that the impression could be formed. The impression itself is what I measure when I measure intervals of time. Hence either time is this impression, or what I measure is not time. (11.27.36)

Time is the impression that the mind holds on to, for time is defined as that which continually passes. In this second conception of time that Augustine comes to in Book XI, time exists only within the human mind by its activity of remembrance and expectation.

Augustine's consideration of the human experience of time, then, has highlighted how human thinking is so constantly changing; indeed, the best the mind can do is grasp on to these fragments of moments before they drift into non-being. This contrasts completely with what dominated Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 1.1, namely, God's unchanging eternity. And so at the end of this discussion of time Augustine is left with a profound sense of difference from God: divine eternity and human temporality point to the ontological divide between God and man. So Augustine despairs at the end of Book XI: "I have leapt down into the flux of time where all is confusion to me. In the most intimate depths of my soul my thoughts are torn to fragments by tempestuous changes until that time when I flow into you" (11.29.39). Time, for Augustine, is a place of "confusion" where his "thoughts are torn to fragments." It seems that temporality prevents human beings from resting in God; and not by any fault of their own, but simply because their existence is defined by change. He looks forward, instead, to the "eternal goal" (11.29.39); and he "will stand still...and find firm footing in you, in

your Truth who is shaping me to himself" (11.30.40). He is resolved to praise God: as one should do, he says, whether one understands the nature of time or not. Yet even as this book ends in praise, it also ends with a moment of real despair. Creatures who exist in time seem to be inherently alienated from God in his eternity. The journey must continue if Augustine is to come to rest.

Book XII

In Book XII, Augustine resumes the Scriptural exegesis where he left it off in Book XI. By the end of Book XI Augustine had only covered, "In the beginning God created...". So he must keep reading so that he can come to rest. Book XII considers the "heaven and earth" of Genesis 1.1 and moves on to the formless earth in Genesis 1.2. To sum it up as simply as possible, we can say that Book XII is about the goodness of change and multiplicity. In the previous journeys in *Confessions*, most notably in Books VIII and X, multiplicity has been a profound problem for Augustine. His multiple desires made him unable to submit to Christ (VIII); and multiple desires also made it impossible for him to meet the demands of the Christian life (X). And, as we just saw in Book XI, time and change seem to prevent the human being from resting in God. Here in Book XII an understanding of the goodness of multiplicity and change will move Augustine closer to the place where in the Church he can embrace the whole of the created order in love and rest in God within the world. There are two parts to Book XII that will concern us here. In the first (12.1.1—12.13.16), by interpreting "heaven and earth" Augustine will come to see the goodness of the multiplicity within creation, and also the role that change—and time—plays in creation and how change is willed by God. Crucially it is in discussing the change that occurs in creation that Augustine, for the first time in *Confessions*, addresses the Trinity. As well here we shall see that Augustine understands his own journey to be a part of this larger cosmic journey. In the second part (12.14.17—12.32.43) of Book XII, Augustine deals with other prominent

interpretations of "heaven and earth" within the Church. Here too we shall see how change and multiplicity come to be seen as goods; indeed, change and multiplicity, in terms of multiple Scriptural interpretations, are a blessing to the Church. After Augustine sees the goodness of multiplicity and change in his interpretation of Genesis 1.1, he is able to see the goodness of these in the Church. He is being ordered by his reading of Scripture so that he is coming to rest in the Church in the world.

Multiplicity and Change in "Heaven and Earth"

"Heaven and earth" refer, for Augustine, to the highest and lowest creatures in the order of creation. Yet, crucially, both are good, and both become good only through change. Augustine begins his interpretation of "heaven and earth" by referring to another passage of Scripture, Psalm 113. We saw Augustine make a similar move earlier in Book XI, when he interpreted God's speaking in Genesis 1.2 in terms of the Word in John 1. Augustine understood Scripture as a unified, coherent document and so the whole of it contributes to the interpretation of its parts. He cites Psalm 113 (ET 115) here which states, "heaven's heaven is for the Lord; but he has assigned the earth to humankind" (11.2.2). The heaven of Genesis, then, is not the sky that hangs overhead; rather it is an intellectual creation, where angels and saints dwell, knowable only to God. The earth, in contrast, refers to all of the material creation which is known by human beings. This earth, however, was not created as we know it; rather it was made from formless matter. Augustine concludes this from interpreting Genesis 1.1 in light of Genesis 1.2. Prior to creating the earth, God made matter in a state of "some kind of formlessness with no differentiation" (12.4.4) Out of this, God made "the world in all its form and distinction" (12.4.4) In his creation, then, God made this material formlessness that teeters next to non-being, and he also made an intellectual creation that hovers next to him and is known only by him. The multiplicity and hierarchy within creation, present in this "heaven and earth", was willed by God.

Augustine considers this formless matter as a creation which is made ready to change. Indeed, human beings can understand formless matter because it is present, in a sense, wherever there is change. Augustine writes that he struggled to imagine formless matter, to no avail. Eventually he realized that formless matter is there in everyday experience when someone or something changes. He writes,

> The mutability of mutable things itself gives them their potential to receive all those forms into which mutable things can be changed. And what is this mutability? A soul? A body? The form of a soul or a body? No; I would call it a 'nothing-something' or 'an-is-that-is-not' if such expressions were allowed. And yet it must have had some kind of being, to be capable of receiving those visible and organized forms. (12.6.6)

Change, therefore, depends upon being formed or re-formed; and thus implies a previous lack of, or loss of, form. Yet it also implies that this not-fully-formed does, in fact, have some sort of existence; but an existence that is defined by its "potential to receive" other forms.

As Augustine continues to discuss multiplicity and change within creation he does something that he has not done before in *Confessions*, he addresses the Trinity. All other previous addresses have been to "Lord", "God", "Truth", and other similar titles. In most cases, "Lord" and "God" seem to refer to God the Father; while "Truth" generally refers to Christ. The Trinity has been implicit throughout *Confessions*, and mention has been made of all three persons. For example, in Book VII, we saw that Augustine addressed God as "Eternal Truth, true Love and beloved Eternity", an obviously Trinitarian title, and, indeed, a title that suggests distinction and also unity. Here in Book XII, however, God is explicitly addressed as Trinity and this relationship is briefly defined: "God, undivided Trinity and threefold Unity" (12.7.7). The context is Augustine's discussion of God's *creatio ex nihilo*, and, especially, of the way that in and through the second person of the Trinity God makes something that is wholly

different from him, even as he always stands in close relationship to it. He writes:

> *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty* you it is who have created something out of nothing, and created it in that Beginning who is from your very self, in your Wisdom, born of your own substance. Not from your own substance did you make heaven and earth: if you had, they would have been equal to your only-begotten Son and hence to yourself, and it would in no way have been right for them to be equal to you, these things which were not from your substance. Apart from yourself nothing existed from which you might make them, O God, undivided Trinity and threefold Unity, and therefore you made heaven and earth out of nothing—heaven and earth, a great thing and a small thing, because you are omnipotent and your goodness led you to make all good things, a mighty heaven and a tiny earth. You were but nothing else was, from which you might make heaven and earth, two realities: one near to yourself, the other bordering on nothingness; one, to which you alone would be superior, the other, than which nothing would be lower. (12.7.7)

The Trinity arrives most explicitly in *Confessions*, then, while Augustine is discussing how God creates the whole of the created order ("all good things") out of nothing—a created order which is defined by its multiplicity from the lowest to the highest, the smallest to the largest. Augustine's interpretation of this passage seems to suggest that, even though creation is made from nothing, it still bears the marks of its Creator in some ways. First of all, because God is good all that he creates is good. Secondly, Augustine also seems to be making a connection between the unity and plurality within the Trinity and the unity and plurality in creation. Obviously we must be careful here as Augustine is always adamant that the persons within the Trinity are absolutely equal. However, it does seem noteworthy and not coincidental that Augustine addresses God as "undivided Trinity and threefold Unity" in the same line that he declares the goodness of all

of creation which includes "a great thing and a small thing...a mighty heaven and a tiny earth" (11.7.7). Because all things are created by God, then, all are good; as well, Augustine also seems to find in Genesis 1.1 a connection between the unity and plurality in the Godhead and the unity and plurality present in creation. That this reading of Genesis 1.1 has led to him addressing the Trinity marks an important moment in the journey to rest—and, further, it points forward to a more complete understanding of the Trinity in Book XIII when the Holy Spirit arrives on the scene, whose particular role is to change all things so that they rest in God.

The goodness of multiplicity and change allows Augustine to see the goodness of time. Augustine assumes here, in contrast to the second conception of time in Book XI, that time has objective existence apart from the human mind. Also in contrast to Book XI, as we shall see, he does not associate time necessarily with "confusion" and "fragments" (11.29.39). As we suggested above, as Augustine reads on and moves further in his journey to rest, he will come to see more and more of creation in relation to God's activity, and so he will be able to rest in God as he lives in the Church in the world; seeing the goodness of time is essential to this journey. Within the multiplicity of creation ("heaven and earth") there are parts of creation that are subject to time, and parts that are not; for those parts of creation that are, time is a good of the created order. The only timeless creatures are heaven's heaven and the formless void. Heaven's heaven is unchanging because it always clings to God. Augustine explains that it is "by holding fast (*inhaerendo*) to [God] with a constancy from which it has never fallen since its creation, it is independent of the spinning changes of time" (12.9.9). Timelessness also belongs to the opposite of the heaven's heaven, the formless void. Augustine writes, "Where there is no form, neither is there order, and nothing comes or passes away; and where this does not happen there are certainly no days, nor any variation between successive periods of time" (12.9.9). The formless void is the nearest creation to nothingness, and so it is without definition or particularity; because of this, there is no change. Change only comes

when there is something that can change to something else; the formless void is a thing that is a no-thing. At the point of creation nearest to God, and at the point of creation furthest from him, the passing of time does not take place.

The rest of creation though, including human beings, is inferior to heaven's heaven, but superior to formless matter. Heaven's heaven is the place of the angels and the saints, and so it is possible for human beings to enjoy one day the timelessness that belongs to it. However, in this life, we are subject to time. This time, though, marks superiority to the formless matter. That is, only that which has form, which is given the good of definition, is subject to time. Further, Augustine sees that God created time as a way of bringing about order. This is how Augustine interprets the absence of days in Genesis 1.1. Days are only described after the creation of light, which Augustine understands to be the moment when the material heaven and earth are created from the formless void (12.9.9). When this occurs, the change within heaven and earth is ordered within days. Time, then, enables human beings to distinguish different periods in our lives and in the life of creation. Augustine describes it thus, "[Creation's] very mutability, so evident to us, makes possible our awareness and demarcation of passing times, because this is what the rolling seasons are—the changes that occur in creations as various forms proliferate and develop" (12.8.8). When time is discussed in relation to the days of creation, time is seen to be good; for as the days pass creation "proliferate[s] and develop[s]." Several chapters later than this quotation, Augustine writes that time is actually essential to this development. This is not true of the formless void and of the heaven's heaven, but it is true of the world human beings know, and of human beings themselves. Augustine writes, "In the making of this world a succession of days is mentioned, because the nature of these things is such that temporal succession is needed in their case to bring about modifications of motion or form" (12.12.15). Time and change, then, are inherently tied to "modifications"; and modifications can be for the good.

The otherness of time and change from God, then, are no longer seen to be preventing Augustine from resting in God, as they were at the end of Book XI. Time and change are still other than God, but in Genesis 1.1 Augustine interprets God to have willed this otherness. We will get an even fuller picture of this shortly in Book XIII. Suffice it to say here that Augustine's reading of Scripture is reconciling him to the world; he is able to embrace time and change as goods created by God. Rowan Williams nicely summarizes the implications of this for Augustine "God wills that there be reality quite other than God, and that this entails the positing of a reality that can change: if so, it entails also the dialectic of the possible and the actual, it entails a world of purposive fluidity, things becoming themselves, organizing themselves more successfully or economically over time."[18] Yet Augustine has still not come to see how this change can move creation to rest in God. For this, he will need to read on to Genesis 1.2, and interpret the activity of the "Spirit of God" that is above the waters. This will take place in Book XIII.

This discussion of heaven's heaven and the formless matter leads Augustine to a prayer that initially may seem unrelated to what has gone before. He prays,

> O Truth, illumination of my heart,
> Let not my own darkness speak to me!
> I slid away to material things, sank into shadow,
> yet even there, even from there, I loved you...
> Let me not be my own life:
> evil was the life I lived of myself;
> I was death to me; but in you I began to live again.
> Speak to me yourself, converse with me. (12.9.9)

[18] Rowan Williams, "'Good For Nothing'?: Augustine on Creation" *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 17.

In this prayer, Augustine is describing his own life in terms of his interpretation of Genesis 1.1. By doing so, we see that the journeys of Books I to X are being taken up into this third and final journey. Augustine's outward journey to faith and his inward journey to live the Christian life are both a part of the greater journey of creation's redemption. And, indeed, it is appropriate that this prayer follows Augustine's discussion of the goodness of change and time, for his own journeys too demonstrate this. Augustine is moving further in his journey to rest as he changes and as time passes. The truths he finds in interpreting Genesis 1.1 he already knows in the realities of his own life. And so he relates the language he has been using to describe creation to his own journey: light, darkness, shadow, divine speech. This connection between the creation story and Augustine's story has been anticipated elsewhere. First, as we pointed out earlier in our discussion of Book XII, Augustine connected the formless void out of which the earth is made to the change that occurs in one's life. Second, the verb that Augustine uses to describe the heaven's heaven's relation to God (*inhaerendo*) is a verb that Augustine has used to describe his desired relation to God. We can see this clearly, for example, in Book VII, where Augustine writes, "for if I do not abide (*inhaerere*) in him, I shall not be able to in myself; where he, abiding ever in himself, renews all things" (7.11.17). The ability to be oneself is only fully realized by being in God because, as with the heaven's heaven, God is the source of life and replenishment. Augustine contains within himself the possibilities of the created order, both the formless matter that hovers over non-being, and the heaven's heaven that clings to God. So this prayer in Book XII ties together all that has gone before in *Confessions*, and in a way that has not been seen hereto, places Augustine's own life in the context of God's activity in the whole of creation.

The Multiplicity of Scriptural Interpretations

Following this prayer, Augustine turns to a consideration of the other interpretations of "heaven and earth" within the Church. I take this to be the

second part of Book XII, in which Augustine comes to see the goodness of multiplicity and change within the Church. This third journey has been defined as Augustine's journey in the Church in the world, and so we will see how Augustine places his interpretation of Genesis 1.1 alongside other Christians' interpretations, and how he shows that multiple Scriptural interpretations are a blessing within the Church.

As I have already said, since the description of the eucharist at the end of Book X Augustine has been journeying within the Church. There Augustine described himself as being fed among, and feeding, other Christians. We also saw how at the beginning of Book XI Augustine located himself within the Church and expressed his desire to praise God "together" with his fellow Christians. Here, in Book XII, those fellow Christians get speaking parts as they advocate their own interpretations of "heaven and earth." Prior to this point Augustine's main interlocutors in *Confessions* have been himself and God. Now that Augustine is journeying within the Church its members have also become his interlocutors. As members of the Church, Augustine assumes that these other interpreters believe that Genesis was revealed by God (12.17.24), and he also demands that all Scriptural interpretation conform to the teachings of the Church and be done in a spirit of charity (12.25.35). From among such interpretations, Augustine describes several alternate opinions about what Moses really meant by "heaven and earth" (12.17.24-17.26). He then proceeds to anticipate arguments for and against each, and even goes on to anticipate how the various interpreters could respond to criticisms (12.20.29-22.31). These different interpretations, though, do not disagree with the truths Augustine has gleaned from Genesis 1.1-2. They disagree over whether or not Augustine's interpretation is actually what Moses intended. His interlocutors assert, "What we say is what the author meant" (12.17.24). Augustine ultimately concludes, though, that the argument cannot take place on these grounds. Of course all interpreters should seek to understand what the author meant, but we cannot come to truth that way. Recall the

hermeneutical method that Augustine laid out at the beginning of Book XI. Even if Moses were alive and interpreters could communicate with him, Moses could not persuade them of the truth of what he had written. Rather each reader must interpret the text and then consult the Truth within. In Book XII Augustine takes this to its logical conclusion, that even if an interpreter does not come to what the author intended, he will still have come to one truth or another (12.18.27).

And these multiple interpretations are not a weakness of the Church, rather they are necessary to convey truths to different people who are not all alike in their intelligence and spiritual maturity. All readers within the Church are, or should be, united in truth and charity; within that unity, there can be a multiplicity that corresponds to individual differences. Augustine says that if he were to have written Genesis, he would hope that his readers would discover therein as many truths as possible; indeed, such fruitfulness would mean that the text could reach a wide and diverse audience (12.27.37). Augustine goes on to describe how this functions in the Church. In this discussion, he affirms a far greater diversity of interpretations than he dealt with earlier. He begins by discussing those spiritual "children" who still understand Scripture with a "carnal outlook." They may read Genesis 1.1 and interpret it as telling of a God with a body who speaks in the conventional sense to make heaven and earth. No doubt Augustine had such readers in mind because this was the way he thought of God prior to reading the Platonic books. Even such an interpretation, though, is beneficial for those readers because the simple words of Scripture have "cradled [them]...as though in their mother's arms" in a way that they come to understand that God made all things. Even in this basic truth, "their faith is being built up for salvation" (12. 27.37). Genesis 1.1 is also written in such a way that the spiritually mature, like Augustine as he now writes, can read it and gain profound insight into, for example, how the immutable and eternal God created through his Word. Further, it is also the case that multiple Scriptural interpretations mean that the task of reading is unending. This multiplicity of interpretations promotes humility for

even the most intelligent and spiritually mature interpreter has more to learn. Genesis is written, then, in such a way that the variety of possible interpretations correspond to the varying understandings and abilities present in the Church. And so Genesis welcomes even the most "carnally" minded in order that they can advance—change—and come to a more mature understanding of the truth.

On the face of it, in the second part of Book XII Augustine turned to considering other interpretations of "heaven and earth" because he was aware of several other viable interpretations. However it also seems that his discussion of the goodness of multiple interpretations within the Church is directly related to his interpretation of "heaven and earth." As we just discussed above, the Bible admits of multiple interpretations so that all the members of the Church, even the most materially minded, can glean some truth in reading it; and, beginning with the most elementary understanding, they will continue reading and mature in their understanding of God. As well, even the most spiritually literate must continue reading; and as they advance they will see in humility that they always have even more to learn. So Augustine's discussion of the multiplicity of Scriptural interpretations within the Church points to how they can mature different readers in their Christian faith. That is, the multiplicity allows all within the Church to change for the better. This connects directly with the first part of Book XII, where Augustine understood the order of creation to mean that the whole multiplicity of created things is good, and that for those within time change is a good willed by God for their benefit. As well, we could also say that the unity and plurality in the created order which reflect the Trinity, are also present in the multiple interpretations within the Church which even in their difference are united in truth and charity.

Augustine concludes Book XII exasperated at all the time he has spent just dealing with two verses. But these first two verses of Genesis have so ordered Augustine in his relation to the whole of creation that he can see the goodness of multiplicity and change within the world and within the Church. His journey in

reading Scripture has brought him nearer to the point where he can rest in God as he lives in the Church in the world. Despite all this he has not achieved the goal he set out for himself in Book XI, which was to interpret the Bible in a way that included "from the creation to your eternal reign" (11.2.3). Augustine, in reading Genesis, is trying to order himself in his relation to the whole. By only interpreting Genesis 1.1-2 thus far, he has not achieved this. He resolves, then, to interpret Genesis in only one way, but a true way, so that he can complete what he set out to do. Augustine is signalling for us here the absolutely critical place of Book XIII. In it he is going to encapsulate what he takes to be the whole activity of God, as laid out in Scripture, from creation to the final glorification. In so doing, the journey of *Confessions* will come to a close—even as, as we shall see, *Confessions* closes pointing beyond itself to the continuing of that journey outside the text.

Book XIII

The final book of *Confessions* is the completion of the journey to rest. In it, Augustine's journey in the Church ends with him seeing the vision of the eternal Sabbath rest, and how his life in the world as a Christian is moving towards that Sabbath. After the opening prayer, Augustine begins Book XIII (13.2.2—13.4.5) with another consideration of change, which is further developed based on his interpretation of the Spirit who "broods over the waters" in Genesis 1.2. It is the Spirit that moves creation to rest. In seeing the role of the Spirit Augustine comes to the fullest picture of the Trinity he has in *Confessions* (13.5.6—13.11.12). In the second part of Book XIII (13.12.13—13.38.53) Augustine begins his interpretation of Genesis again in which he reads the whole creation story as being about the Church. He goes through the days of creation (Genesis 1.3—2.3) and works out an elaborate picture of the life of the Church from its first beginning in baptism and the call to repentance to its final end in eternity. In his interpretation of the seven days Augustine sees the journey of the Church in the world and how one comes to rest in that journey. My consideration

of the days will not be comprehensive, but will focus on three days that are especially relevant to my argument. On the first day, Augustine interprets the separation of light and darkness in Genesis as the creation of the Church; and here too, in discussing the Christian's relation to salvation, we have another ascent and fall in *Confessions*, in which Augustine seems to suggest that finally the Christian life cannot be adequately described in these terms. In the sixth day, when God creates human beings in his image, we will focus on Augustine's description of the Christian who is most mature and "Spirit-filled." This description, as we will see, matches what has occurred in this third journey of *Confessions*. So Augustine is signalling for us here in the last book of *Confessions* that the whole journey to rest has been moving towards these final three books—particularly in terms of the "Spirit-filled" person's ability to live in creation in a way that he loves God in and through the world. Finally, through his interpretation of the seventh day Augustine comes to a vision of rest. This has been what the whole of *Confessions* has been moving towards, and this rest is made possible for Augustine here through his interpretation of Genesis. In this ending, the journey of *Confessions* ends even as it points beyond itself.

The Goodness of Change

In Book XII, we saw that from his reading of Genesis 1.1—2 Augustine came to see the goodness of multiplicity and change in creation; this is filled out further here in Book XIII. Change is defined as proper to what God has created and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, can move us towards the divine. With this insight, Augustine comes ever closer to being able to rest in God as he lives in creation. Following the prayer that opens Book XIII, Augustine surveys the created order and affirms the goodness of it all. This serves as a summation of Books XI and XII. Anything that exists was created and is sustained by God in the Word, and is therefore good. Indeed, Augustine will repeatedly make the point that God created all that exists for no other reason than that he wanted to. Creation is not useful for God; it does not serve a particular purpose in some

grand scheme. Rather, as Augustine writes regarding the formless matter, God "did not want so good a thing to be missing" (13.2.2). Yet even as Augustine affirms the goodness of all things, he also establishes a hierarchy within creation. Unformed spiritual creations are superior to formed material creations; and formed corporeal creations are superior to unformed corporeal creations (13.2.2). In discussing this hierarchy, Augustine discusses the process by which created things are changed so that they reflect, and enjoy, more of God's goodness. The formless matter, for example, was "summoned" by God through the Word to "unity", so that out of what was already good, God made a universe that was "exceedingly good" (13.2.2).

This process of change that created things undergo is an essential part of their creatureliness. One of the implications of *creatio ex nihilo* is that all that is created is other than God; creation was not made from the divine substance which is "utterly simple"— that is, the divine substance for which to live is the same thing as to be blessed (13.3.4). So Augustine makes a distinction in all created things between existing and, in some sense, existing well. With regard to corporeal creations, he says, there is a difference between being, and being beautiful; similarly, with spiritual creations, there is a distinction between living and living wisely (13.3.3). Returning to an explicit interpretation of Genesis, Augustine sees this process of change beginning when God says, "Let there be light" in Genesis 1.3 At that moment Augustine believes that the already created heaven's heaven received "illumination" so that it could "contemplate the light which would shed radiance upon it, and hold fast to that" (13.3.4). Even the highest creation, then, undergoes what Augustine calls a process of conversion (*conversare*)—a process that, in terms of time, is almost instantaneous. Augustine specifies that there was barely even a recognizable moment before the heaven's heaven was illuminated; but, because all creaturely things only come to their fullest perfection through change, there are still two distinct periods before and after this conversion (13.3.4).

The Holy Spirit and Change

As Augustine interpreted the Father and Son in the creation described in Genesis 1.1, he interprets the Holy Spirit as the "spirit of God" that "moved over the waters" in Genesis 1.2. Specifically he interprets this to mean that Holy Spirit has a very particular role in the change that creation undergoes. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit "moved over the waters"? Augustine is entirely clear, as he also was earlier in Book XIII, that the Holy Spirit is not above the waters because he needs them. That is, this above does not signify any sort of dependence, as Augustine writes, "the waters did not support him, as though he needed them to rest upon" (13.4.5) Rather it is that the waters need the Holy Spirit if they are to come to rest. And Augustine here compares the resting the Holy Spirit does over the waters in Genesis 1.2 with the resting that the Holy Spirit does on people, and Augustine here is thinking of Isaiah 11.2: "When your Spirit is said to rest upon people, it means that he causes them to rest in himself" (13.4.5). Augustine is suggesting, then, that these waters are human beings before they have come to rest fully in God. Indeed, these waters are Augustine. And he is seeing here, in Genesis 1.2, that it is the Holy Spirit that finally brings one to rest. Previously in *Confessions*, the Holy Spirit has been mentioned only briefly, and usually in relation to the reading of Scripture. As in Book IX, Augustine's penitential reading of Scripture was described in terms of the Holy Spirit enlivening the text as Augustine read it. So the reading of Scripture through the Spirit in Book IX, as here in Book XIII, helps bring one to rest. Specifically here Augustine has advanced in his reading of Scripture so that through his interpretation of Genesis 1.2 we get the fullest account of the Holy Spirit in the whole of *Confessions*. So Augustine will come to rest in Book XIII because it is here finally, through his interpretation of Genesis, that he sees how the Holy Spirit enables human beings to rest in God as they exist in the midst of time and change. He describes the role of the Holy Spirit thus:

> your unassailable, immutable will, sufficient in itself with itself, [did] brood over the life you had made, over the creature for which life is not the same as beatitude, for it is alive even in its own dark turbulence; but it has the prospect of being converted to him who made it, that so it may live more and more fully on the fount of life, and in his light see light, and so be perfected, illumined and beatified. (13.4.5)

This passage brings together much of what we have discussed thus far. It shows that it is proper to creatures to change; indeed, that creatures, unlike God, can only become good through change. And even as this change marks all created things as so different from God, yet in the Holy Spirit—God's "unassailable, immutable will, sufficient to itself unto itself"—God is present so that the change in the world is towards him. That is, that through the Holy Spirit's activity all the creatures that were created in God also come to rest in him.

Augustine wonders, though, why the Father and Son were present in Genesis 1.1, and the Holy Spirit is only mentioned in Genesis 1.2. That is, why is the Holy Spirit only described *after* God has created heaven and earth. Augustine interprets this to signify the particular role of the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit is always associated with "brooding over" something. He refers to other verses of Scripture that describe the Holy Spirit as being above the members of the Church. First in Romans 5.5, the Spirit "pours out into our hearts" the love of God. This activity of pouring, presumably, depends upon the Holy Spirit's "brooding over" Christians in the same way he was seen to "brood over" the waters. As well, this love that is the work of the Holy Spirit is described in 1 Corinthians 13 as the superior—highest—way to live one's life. Finally, Augustine connects this love with the love of Christ, which Ephesians 3.19 says is beyond all human understanding. The Spirit, then, is above human beings, and it is because he is above that he can fulfil his role of transforming Christians so that they can live a life of love—a life that can only come from above (13.7.8).

When the Holy Spirit acts to orient one's love towards God, then change is change towards God; there is, though, another love that moves in the opposite direction. Augustine defines at this point the two loves—weights—that move creatures towards God or away form him. These are movements not of space and time, but "movements of the heart" (13.7.8). There is the "huge weight of lustful desires (*pondere cupiditatis*)" such that one is "in love with restless cares (*amore curarum*)" (Watts, 13.7.8); and, in contrast, there is "the holiness of the Spirit" that raises souls to love for "all-surpassing rest (*amore securitatis*)" (13.7.8) Love is what moves each human being to pursue the life that he does. As Augustine famously puts it, "Now my weight is my love, and wherever I am carried, it is this weight that carries me" (13.9.10). This language of weight was first used after Augustine's Platonic ascent, when he described why it was that he could not "enjoy" God (VII). As well, during the penitential reading of 1 John 2.16 Augustine became aware of the weight of his sinful habits (X). Here in Book XIII, we are finally seeing in a complete form—indeed, from the perspective of God's activity in creation—the dynamic of these two weights. The Spirit brings about change towards perfection by causing a soul to fall in love with all-surpassing rest. Augustine only here in Book XIII, then, sees the source of the desire that has been moving him through *Confessions*. Everyone, in a way, desires rest; indeed, as Augustine puts it here, perhaps the fullest expression of human dignity is the "unhappy restlessness" those experience who do not rest in God. That is, human beings are made so that they can only rest in what is highest and most perfect (13.8.9). But human beings may be trying to achieve rest through ultimately futile means because of what they love. The Holy Spirit alters that love, he directs that weight, so that it seeks after God as the true source of rest. The Holy Spirit's role in transforming one's love is, then, the reason that he alone is mentioned as being above the waters. As Augustine notes, if the significance of the Holy Spirit's place above the waters is to signify his superiority to all that changes, then the Father and Son should also be mentioned

there. However, the Holy Spirit's place above the waters also points, for Augustine, to his unique role as Gift. The Holy Spirit is Gift because he is the one who, by being above the waters, makes rest possible. He is at once the eternal, immutable God who is above the waters, but he is also present to all of creation making rest in the divine possible (13. 9. 10). The theme of rest has dominated *Confessions*, and here, through Scripture, Augustine sees how the Holy Spirit works in creation to bring all things to rest in God.

In Book XI and XII, we saw how Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 1.1 focused upon the role of the Father and Son in creation. Here in Book XIII, by interpreting Genesis 1.2, Augustine now sees the Holy Spirit's crucial role in creation, a role that he needs to see in order to rest in God while living in the world. So we have now a complete picture of the three persons of the Trinity in their relation to creation. Augustine writes, then, following his description of the Spirit over the waters, "Lo, now (*ecce*) the Trinity appears unto me in a riddle (*aenigmate*), which is thou, my God" (Watts, 13.5.6). In interpreting Scripture, he has come to an understanding of the Trinity that seems to have somewhat surprised him (*ecce*); and, further, though he sees the persons of the Trinity at work in creation, he still regards the Triune God as an *aenigmate* (13.5.6). He has come to see the Trinity in its dynamic activity, an activity that he knows himself to be caught up in, but he also still acknowledges how completely mysterious the Trinity is to him. This is a crucial moment in the journey to rest in God, for now he sees God in his full Triune nature, and he sees too how God acts in creation.

The Days of Creation

We now turn to a consideration of Augustine's interpretation of the days of creation in Genesis 1.4 to 2.3. My comments will not consider each day in detail, but will focus especially on the days I see as relevant to my argument, specifically the first, sixth and seventh days. In Augustine's interpretation of the first day we see, for the last time in *Confessions*, an ascent, but an ascent that, critically, ends by challenging the very description of the Christian life as an

ascent. During his discussion of the sixth day, he describes the development of spiritual maturity, and here we can see him explicitly describing the journey that he has been on in *Confessions*. But here, near the end of *Confessions*, he finally seems to understand the very journey he has been on. Indeed, it is as though all that has gone before has brought Augustine to the sixth day, the day that leads to the seventh day, And it is through the interpretation of the seventh day, as we shall see, that Augustine comes to rest in the Church in the world, even as he looks forward to the eternal Sabbath. Finally we shall see that in its final line *Confessions* ends by pointing beyond the journey of the text, to the further living out of that journey beyond the text.

Day One: Possession Through Faith

The interpretation of the days of creation begins with Augustine's address to the Triune God, and he ties the Triune address to baptism which occurs in the name of the Trinity: "'Lord my God, in your name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we administer baptism'" (13.12.13). Augustine addressed the Trinity first in Book XII; and then it was just in Book XIII, as we discussed above, that he actually came to see all the persons of the Trinity in their distinct roles in creation and redemption. Now that the Trinity has come into explicit focus, he turns in Book XIII to the sacrament of the Church that has, since the earliest days of the Church, been performed in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is as though, then, when the Trinity appears most fully that the Church can appear most fully too. And so Augustine proceeds from this invocation of the Trinity in baptism to a reinterpretation of Genesis 1 entirely in terms of the life of the Church in the world. As we have said, this third journey that completes the journey to rest is the journey within the Church, in which Augustine will come to rest in God as he lives in the world; and so Genesis is now read to describe precisely that movement. In this reading, the creation of heaven and earth in Genesis 1.1 is now understood to be the creation of the Church in Christ, with heaven being the spiritual members of the church, and earth being the carnal

(13.12.13). The formless void Genesis 1.2 Augustine believes refers to the Church before it was the Church. That is, it is only with the Spirit brooding over the waters in Genesis 1.2 and the creation of light in 1.3 that the one group of people of distinguished particularly as followers of Christ. Augustine takes the separation between light and darkness in Genesis 1.4, after the creation of light, as the call to repentance that separates those who will follow Christ from those who will go their own way. So it is on the first day of creation that the Church comes into being.

The imagery of light and darkness in the creation of the Church defines for Augustine the Christian's relation to salvation. We have seen since the Platonic ascent in Book VII that Augustine is always longing for salvation which continually seems out of reach. This was the case in his other ascents too, as we discussed earlier in relation to the ascent in Book XI. We saw in Book XI that the ascent and fall that occurred as Augustine interpreted Scripture had a different resolution—Augustine consoled himself by saying that "we" have salvation "already." As he journeys within the Church, salvation does not seem so far off. Indeed, there is a sense in which it is already present through faith. In Book XIII Augustine uses the imagery of light and darkness to develop this theme further. He writes that even as Christians know themselves as in the light—as being saved—they are still surrounded by darkness. That is, salvation is present now through faith, and will only be fully realized in the life to come. To pick up on language used earlier in *Confessions*, we could say that at every point on the way the Christian already possesses God through faith—yet he will only do so fully in the life to come. Augustine writes that salvation is known now, "by faith, not by anything we see; for we have been saved indeed, but in hope, and hope that is seen is hope no longer" (13.13.14). The reality that we experience, then, could be in direct contrast with the reality that we believe in faith through hope.

Augustine goes on to describe how tenuous Christians' experience of this salvation is. At times, God may feel absent to the believer—and this absence can

lead to moments of profound doubt and despair. Augustine writes that even though he finds solace in praising God, "[y]et still my soul is sad, because it slips back and becomes an abyss once more, or rather, it feels itself to be still in the depths" (13.14.15). This moment should be recognizable to us as one of the falls that follows an ascent in *Confessions*. However, there is also a difference here. Augustine specifies that it not that his soul is in the "abyss", rather "it feels" asthough this is so. His experience of the abyss is not the reality that is known by faith, the reality known by faith whose content is found in Scripture. We saw the beginnings of this development following a similar moment of despair in Book XI. After describing how he felt separated from God Augustine wrote, "We are already saved, but in hope, and we look forward to the fulfilment of your promises" (11.9.11) Here this sentiment is even more fully developed using the imagery of light and darkness. Augustine's faith advises his soul to trust in God and to look to Scripture: "But my faith takes [my soul] to task, that faith which you have kindled, lamp-like, on my nocturnal path: 'Why so sorrowful, my soul, why do you disquiet me? Trust in the Lord; his word is a lamp for your feet" (13.14.15). We should note that faith and the word play similar roles for the soul that is saved in hope, namely, that they are lights in the midst of darkness. That is to say, it is by faith, whose content is the revelation found in Scripture, that the Christian already possesses the promises of God. It may not be proper to say, then, that the Christian soul ascends and falls in its journey to rest; rather the end of the journey is always present in and through faith. In this final book of *Confessions* Augustine seems to be recasting the entire nature of the journey by his reading of Scripture. For the Christian, the falls are never the true reality; rather our end is already present to us through faith.

Beginning with the first day, then, Augustine interprets Genesis 1 in terms of the life of the Church. With the first day, Augustine's journey within the Church is nearing its end. In this first day he has seen how the Church is created

by the call to repentance, and he also sees how within the Church the Christian already possesses salvation in faith, whose content is given in Scripture.

Day Six: Spiritual Maturity

We turn now to the sixth day, as another day which is key to seeing how this final book is bringing the journey to rest to a close. We will consider two relevant points Augustine raises in interpreting this day. First, therein Augustine describes someone who has been "made new" (13.22.32); that is, someone whose life in the Church in the world fulfils God's intention for human beings. We will see that Augustine's description of such a person corresponds to what has taken place in this third and final journey of *Confessions*. Second, we shall see how God's comment that creation is "exceedingly good" means for Augustine that human beings, in seeing creation's goodness, love God. In this, he will find the rest that he has been seeking from the beginning of *Confessions*.

Augustine interprets Genesis 1.26, where God says, "Let us make man according to our image and likeness", as the fullest expression of what a Christian should be. Specifically, Augustine makes much of the fact that God did not create man, as he did his previous creations in Genesis 1.21-25, "according to their kind." That is, all the other creations were made in terms of their own particular species. Human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. For Augustine this means that every Christian only comes to be truly himself, to embody truly the goodness of God, when he has received the truth from God. As Augustine writes, the spiritually mature Christ "considers your truth and understands it" (13.22.32). This consideration and understanding of God's truth, in Augustine's further description of it, seems to be what has been occurring from Book XI on. By interpreting Scripture Augustine has come to the fullest understanding of himself, creation and God. Particularly here Augustine defines someone who understands God's truth as one who will come to a vision of the Trinity. Just as, as we noted, Augustine only does in an explicit way in Book XII, and this is only completed in Book XIII when Augustine sees the role of the Holy Spirit: "And

since he now has the capacity to understand, you teach him to contemplate the Trinity in Unity, the Unity that is Trinity." Indeed, this formulation of the Trinity is almost identical to the address that Augustine used in Book XII: "O God, undivided Trinity and threefold Unity" (12.7.7). This knowledge of the Trinity is tied to one becoming a "Spirit-filled person" who is "fit to judge of any matters that call for judgment" (13.22.32). This judgment takes place as the Christian lives his life in the Church. And here, too, we can see Augustine setting out the journey of *Confessions*:

> [The spiritually mature] judge and approve what they find done rightly, but condemn anything they find amiss; and this they do through the celebration of those rites whereby people whom your mercy has sought out in the vast ocean of the initiated; or at the solemn rite which makes present the fish raised up from the deep and devoutly eaten by the faithful; or by preaching, which through exegesis, discussion and argument attempts to make plain the meaning of your words, while subjecting itself always to the authority of your books as though winging its way beneath the sky; and through blessing and invoking you, so that as these sounds break from our mouths and make themselves heard, the populace may answer, 'Amen.' (13.23.34)

So this spiritual judgment comes through participating in the rites of baptism as in Book IX (here signified by the phrase "vast ocean of the initiated"), the eucharist in Book X (here "the fish raised up...devoutly eaten by the faithful") and through the Word as in Books XI to XIII (here "by preaching, which through exegesis, discussion and argument attempts to make plain the meaning of your words")—and throughout all this, as throughout *Confessions*, by "blessing and invoking" God. The human being lives a "Spirit-filled" life by living in the Church in the world.

At the end of day six God looks at all that He has created and sees that it is "exceedingly good." In working out the meaning of this Augustine comes to see

the way that the human being participates in the life of the Trinity; the human being, creation and God are brought together here so that Augustine sees them in their proper relation. Importantly, Augustine notes that God sees that creation is "exceedingly good" on the sixth day, when the whole has been created; whereas after each day he looks at that part of what he created and sees that it is simply "good." It is "all your works together," in their relation and their interdependence, that are "exceedingly good" (13.28.43). The question, however, is how the eternal God sees in time, at the end of each day, that what he has created is good. Throughout his exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis Augustine has been adamant about the eternity and immutability of God. Is God's seeing of the goodness of creation contradicting that? Augustine prays to God for insight into this question and he hears the following reply:

> Listen, human creature: what my scripture says, I myself say, but whereas scripture says it in terms of time, my Word is untouched by time, because he subsists with me eternally, equal to myself. What you see through the Spirit, I see, just as what you say through my Spirit, I say. You see these things in terms of time, but I do not see in time, nor when you say these things in temporal fashion do I speak in a way conditioned by time. (13. 29. 44)

Genesis is not referring to God's seeing in himself, but what human beings are able to see through the Spirit. The ability to see the goodness of creation in a way that leads one to praise of God is only possible through the Spirit—the Spirit whose work it is, as detailed earlier in Book XIII, to enable creation to rest in God. Specifically Augustine says that those who do not see creation through God's Spirit will think it was created out of necessity. We have seen earlier that for Augustine one of the implications of the *creatio ex nihilo* found in Genesis is that God does not create out of any obligation; God is perfect within himself and creates out of nothing simply because he wants what is other than himself to exist. This is the foundation for understanding that all of creation is good, because it is

all willed by God to enjoy his goodness. And, indeed, God sees the goodness of creation through human beings so that "God is loved in what he has made" (13.31.46).

Through this interpretation of the sixth day, then, Augustine has come to an understanding of how human beings participate in the activity of the Trinity such that they and the whole created order are loved in and through God. In this Augustine is resting in God while he lives in the world; and he lives in the world as one who loves all of creation in and through the Spirit. And he sees himself, creation and God in the full glory of their relations. The sixth day is a vision of the height of human possibility in the created world made possible by God's gracious activity. We have seen that Augustine's two other journeys in *Confessions* moved him on to journey in another way. The outward journey led to the inward journey; and, at the end of the inward journey, he was pushed back into the world to serve the Church. Here, through his reading of Genesis, Augustine sees how his life in the world can be a life that loves God. There is no conflict in this vision between continence and justice, as in Book X, for Augustine is only able to love creation through God and in God. His journey to rest could not get beyond the outward stuff of the world by turning within himself; rather he needed to have a proper relation to God in the world.

Day Seven: Rest

Yet to know creation is to know that it passes away; and, finally says Augustine, "[t]his whole order of exceedingly good things, intensely beautiful as it is, will pass away when it has served its purpose: these things too will have their morning and their evening" (13.35.50). So Augustine takes the morning and evening of the sixth day, as described in Genesis 1.31, to refer to the ultimate end of creation. Yet the sixth day leads to the seventh in Genesis 2.1-3, and Augustine notes that this day is not described as having a morning and evening. He interprets this to mean that the seventh day "has no evening and sinks toward no sunset" (13.36.51). The seventh day, then, is "the Sabbath of eternal life"

(13.36.51). This is the divine rest that the whole journey has been moving towards; it is the goal that has always been just beyond Augustine's reach. In the first six days, as described in Genesis, God has created. And we saw in our discussion of the first and sixth day how Augustine takes God's creation of all things here to represent the life of the Church. On the first day, in separating light from darkness, God called a people to himself. On the sixth day we saw that Christians, through the reading of Scripture, are able to contemplate the Trinity and through this they are able to love God as they love the world. Further, we also saw that Augustine takes the "dominion" that God gives to man in Genesis 1.26 to refer to the life of the Church in baptism, eucharist and word. It is by living as one in the Church that one loves God. This is only possible through God's "work" in creation; as we saw, all of this is because the Triune God is active in creation and redemption. On the seventh day, though, God will rest. Augustine writes, "And then you will rest in us, as now you work in us, and your rest will be through us as now those works of yours are wrought through us. But you yourself, Lord, are ever working, ever resting" (13. 37. 52) The reading of Scripture has brought Augustine to this place, then, where he sees the vision of rest in the life to come; and he knows that in faith he already possesses that goal. In this, the journey of *Confessions* comes to an end.

However, even with the ending of the journey of *Confessions*, *Confessions* points beyond itself to the further living of that journey to rest. The journey of *Confessions* has come to a close with the vision of rest in Genesis 2.1-3, but Augustine in no way claims that the journey has ended. Rather it is that the ending of the text indicates that the journey continues. Indeed, *Confessions* ends in praise: praise that is prompted by the awesome and incomprehensible activity of God, and praise that inflames the soul to continue its journey to spiritual maturity. To quote, then, the closing sentence of *Confessions*: "What human can empower another human to understand these things? What angel can grant understanding to another angel? What angel to a human? Let us rather ask of

you, seek in you, knock at your door. Only so will we receive, only so find, and only so will the door be opened to us" (13. 38. 53). We pick up here the assertion of day six, that one of the glorious qualities of the human being is that he is not created after his own kind, but in the image of God. This means that each person only comes to be truly himself, to embody truly the goodness of God, when he has received the truth from God. In Books XI to XIII, we have seen how Augustine thinks this occurs through the reading of Scripture. This is, then, the way that we "ask of you, seek in you, knock at your door." But *Confessions* ends not resting in the truths read in Scripture that have gone before. The final word of *Confessions* is a future passive verb ("be opened to us" [*aperietur*]).[19] The text, then, looks forward to reading and rereading the Bible; and to the God in whom we rest now even as we look forward to further rest in the future. The door has been opened, and it will be opened again; the gift has been given, but it will be given again. As the journey ends, it looks forward in humility to the continuing of that journey beyond the text of *Confessions*.

[19] As Charles Mathewes notes, the "Amen" that ends most English translations of *Confessions* is a later addition to the text, thus adding finality to what is otherwise a very unresolved ending. See "The Liberation of Questioning," 539, 556.

Conclusion

We have seen, then, the three journeys that make up the journey to rest in *Confessions*; and how it is in the final journey that Augustine comes to rest in the Church in the world through the vision of the eternal Sabbath he finds in Genesis 2.1—3. The first journey brought Augustine to read Scripture, to live it, and to first be read by it. This was the outward journey in the world, which by its end led him to the inward journey, where he experienced the "sweetness" of God. In this inward journey, namely the struggle to live the Christian life, Augustine continued to be read by Scripture. Particularly we saw how 1 John 2.16 was read penitentially in self-examination. This reading led Augustine to a moment of crisis, in which he turned to Scripture again to see how he was to live as a Christian. 2 Corinthians 5.15 defined for Augustine that his life as a Christian was to be a life in the service of all, for only in this way could his life be an imitation of Christ's. Thus at the end of the inward journey we saw how Augustine was pushed back into the world to serve the Church. He did so by an interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis to order himself in relation to the whole. So in the third journey in the Church in the world Augustine interpretated Scripture to see how by participating in the Trinity the life of the Christian in the world could be a life of love of God. As such, Augustine rests in God even as he looks forward to that eternal Sabbath. In this, the desire for rest that has motivated the other two journeys is finally fulfilled. By demonstrating how this is so, we have seen that *Confessions* is a coherent work. At its ending, though, *Confessions* does not claim to have ended the journey it describes; rather the ending of *Confessions* is an end to the journey within the text, but not to the journey of rest of the Church. The reading must continue.

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