In quo inquit, adprehendam Dominum…?
Plotinian Ascent and Christian Sacrifice
in *De ciuitate Dei* 10. 1–7

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Pierre Hadot proposed that philosophical works from antiquity should be approached with the idea of spiritual progress in mind. Even if the work is apparently theoretical or systematic it was written to form readers and not just to inform them. It was written to make them traverse a certain itinerary which would allow them to make spiritual progress. Hadot finds this procedure in the works of Plotinus and Augustine. The detours, starts and stops and digressions are formative elements. The organisation of a work and its mode of exposition can be explained by such preoccupations.[1] Studies which have approached the *Confessions* and *De trinitate* with this idea of spiritual progress in mind offer a new understanding of their parallel conceptual and literary structures.[2] A Christian reconfiguration of the Plotinian ascent has been discovered in both works.

I want to argue that the same procedure may also be perceived in Augustine's response to the Platonists in Book 10 of *De ciuitate Dei*. Hadot's approach discloses an unnoticed aspect of his argument about sacrifice in chapters 1–7, where Augustine engages with Platonic accounts of spiritual sacrifice and texts to present his account of the sacrifice offered by Christians. He argues that this sacrifice allows them to attain what was sought by Platonists in the ascent.[3] He can thus go on to refuse the division of cult and ascent

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1. P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. A. Davidson, trans. M. Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), 64; W. Hankey, "Philosophy as a Way of Life for Christians? Iamblichan and Porphyrian Reflections on Religion, Virtue and Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 59.2 (2003). Unless stated otherwise, the text of Augustine's works is from the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.* I am very grateful to Anthony Meredith S.J. and to Wayne Hankey for their patience, correction and encouragement.

2. J. O'Donnell, *Confessions. Commentary I–III* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1992), II 269–78 on Augustine's treatment of the *liberales disciplinae;* III 238; J. Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's De trinitate," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 103–23.

3. Cf. the Plotinian ascent: *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1967), 258–63; P. Hadot, *Plotinus*

proposed by Porphyry, who commends the practice of theurgy only to those incapable of philosophy to allow them a partial moral and spiritual purification.[4] Augustine presents a universal sacrifice which sustains his account of Christianity as the "universal way" of salvation for all kinds of persons that Porphyry failed to discover. In polemical dialogue with Porphyry, and with Plotinus as Porphyry interprets him, Augustine argues that the way to God is sacramental. While there is no proof of any direct or even indirect literary relation between them, Augustine's argument is analogous to the defence of a theurgic way to the gods offered by Iamblichus. Iamblichus too wants to present a system which is valid for everyone, even for the *simpliciores*, and not just for intellectuals.[5] Porphyry is their "common enemy" as both seek to make sense of cultic life.

I. Platonism and Beatitude

Augustine's interest in these chapters remains centred on a higher intelligible world and on ways to ascend to it. His citation of the question from *Micah* 6.6 in chapter 5 is an indication of this interest: *In quo inquit, adprehendam Dominum, assumam Deum meum excelsum?* So too is the definition of true sacrifice that begins chapter 6. This sacrifice is every act which is designed to unite us to God in a holy fellowship—every act, that is, which is directed to that final good that makes possible our true felicity. At *de ciuitate Dei* 10.19 he describes the belief of those who think that visible pagan sacrifices are suitable for other gods but not for the one God. This division of sacrifices belongs to the *koine* of Platonic writings in late antiquity. Both Sallustius and Macrobius consider this theme, and Macrobius' account may reflect Porphyry's transposition of the discipline and contemplation of Plotin-

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or The Simplicity of Vision, trans. M. Chase (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1993), chapter V; A. Smith, *Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 61–74; F. Van Fleteren, "Ascent of the Soul," in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. A. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 63–67.

4. *De Ciuitate Dei* (*ciu.*) 10.29; T. Fuhrer. "Die Platoniker und die Civitas Dei," *Studia Patristica* 33 (1997): 83–87; R. Dodaro, "*Christus sacerdos*: Augustine's Preaching against Pagan Priests in the Light of *S.Dolbeau* 26 and 23," in *Augustin predicateur* (395–411). *Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5–7 septembre 1996)*, éd. G. Madec (Paris: Collection des Études Augustiniennes, 1998), 377–93; G. O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God. A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1999), chapter 7; G. Lettieri, "Sacrificium ciuitas est. Sacrifici pagani e sacrifice cristiano ne *De Ciuitate Dei* di Agostino," *Annali di Storia dell' Esegesi, I Cristiani e il sacrificio pagano e biblica* 19.1 (2002): 41–67.

5. H. Feichtinger, "*Oudeneia* and *humilitatis*: Nature and Function of Humility in Iamblichus and Augustine," *Dionysius* 21 (2003): 123–60: Cf. 142 n.148; Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica* (Darmstadt: WGB, 2002), 6.28–30; 7.3f.; 11.57; *Protrepticus*, ed. E. des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1989), 14.1–4; 100.21–103.22.

ian philosophy into the language of sacrifice.[6] In *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum* Iamblichus opposes Porphyry's attempt to seek immaterial cult and union with the One without passing through the necessary preparatory stages of material cult. He argues instead that spiritual union is achieved through the action of the gods when these ritual practices are performed, independently of the thought processes of worshippers. Augustine too defines the Christian sacrifice in relation to a Platonic notion of spiritual sacrifice. It is their sacrifice that allows Christians to attain the ambition of the ascent. It allows them "to cling to God"—*inhaeremus Deo*.

Thus he defines this sacrifice in relation to the writings of Plotinus and Plato. In chapter 1, Augustine commends them because he says that they have been able to realise that beatitude is attained by participation in the light of God. He also affirms their assertion that this beatitude can only be attained by adhering to God with the purity of a chaste love. This affirmation is taken up in chapter 3. The final good about which philosophers dispute is nothing else but to cleave to God whose spiritual embrace, *sic dici potest*, fills the intellectual soul and makes it fertile with true virtues. *Enneads* 6.9.9 and *Enneads* 1.6 use language similar to passages in chapter 2 where Augustine writes of a higher love for the unseen, and a beauty which makes its lovers beautiful. These passages may also be intended to evoke the *Symposium* itself.[7] Augustine usually avoids this kind of erotic metaphor and expresses hesitancy here. This however was the language of the Platonic ascent and of the *Symposium*, the *locus classicus* of teaching about the ascent.[8]

Augustine defines the Christian sacrifice in relation to Platonic accounts of spiritual sacrifice and Platonic texts, but the way he describes their teaching is determined by his assumption that Platonist doctrine is identical with scriptural teaching. Instead of quoting or paraphrasing Platonic books he will cite scriptural texts as if they offered fair summaries of their contents. In chapter 2, *John* 1:6–9 and 1:16 are presented as summarising a passage of the *Enneads*. This appropriation is the context of his citation of Psalm 73:28, *Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est*, in chapters 3 and 6 of Book 10, in juxtaposition to his reference and allusion to Platonic texts. Psalm

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6. Sallustius, *De diis et mundo,* ed. and trans. G. Rochefort (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960), 15, 16; Macrobius, *Disputio de Somnio Scipionis,* ed. and trans. W. Stahl (New York, Columbia U Press, 1952), 1.7.3; Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam,* text and trans. K. O'Biren Wicker (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 16–19; F. Young, "The Idea of Sacrifice in Neoplatonic and Patristic Texts," *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972): 278–81; E. Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and its Environment," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der romischen Welt* II 23.2 (1980): 1151–89; M. Frede, "Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity," *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity,* ed. P. Athanassadi and M. Frede (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1999), 41–67.

7. *Contra Academicos* 22.5; *De uera religione* 3.3; *Soliloquies* 1.6.14.

8. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* (*vit. Plot.*), in Plotinus, *Porphyry on Plotinus. Ennead I,* trans. A. Armstrong (Loeb Classical Library, 1968), 23.

73:28 is presented as offering a summary of Platonic teaching to assert a shared conception of beatitude as union with God. The text evokes an erotic metaphor for union which Augustine associates with the sense of touch.[9] The place of Psalm 73:28 in his apologetic strategy is determined in relation to another sequence of scriptural verses. *Romans* 1:18–25 allows him to praise and appropriate the doctrines of the Platonists and at the same time to deny their ability to attain the object of the ascent, *adhaerere Deo*.[10] It also allows him to present a Christian explanation of their polytheism.

Augustine further subsumes pagan cult within scriptural discourse by identifying their gods with angels. In chapter 2, he describes how the angels attain the desire of Platonist philosophers. He equates the contemplation of *Nous* with the beatitude of the angels[11] and insists on the created difference of these beings from the light that beatifies them. His citation of *John* 1:6–9, 16 intimates that this light is Christ. Chapter 7 again seeks to evoke a mimetic desire to join in the worship of the angels, whose Platonically defined beatitude is presented in an elegant *gradatio*. In their love for us they choose that we should sacrifice not to them but to him whose sacrifice they know themselves to be along with us.

II. Sacrifice and Ascent

To attain to a beatitude which Augustine thus defines in relation to Platonist aspiration, the reader of *De ciuitate Dei* must perform the sacrifice of the Christians. A reconfiguration of the Plotinian ascent informs his definition of this sacrifice in response to the choice of ascent or theurgy presented by Porphyry.

Augustine's account of Platonism in Book 8 prepares for this definition of the Christian sacrifice. At 8.1 Augustine asserts an axiom he claims to share with the Platonic philosophers: *uerus philosophus est amator dei*. The Platonist commitment to love God as the supreme good is related by Augustine's account to their perception of transcendent immaterial reality. At 8.5 the Platonists are described as coming nearer to Christianity than any other philosophers. Other thinkers could not conceive of anything beyond the fantasies suggested by imagination, circumscribed by the bodily senses. At 8.3 Socrates is presented as grasping the importance of purification of the intelligence to allow it to discover the causes of the universe. But Augustine interprets the Platonist achievement as nothing but the unrecognized grace

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9. *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* (*Io. eu. tr.*) 99.4.

10. *ciu.* 10.29, *Itaque videtis utcumque, etsi de longinquo, etsi acie caligante, patriam in qua manendum est, sed uiam qua eundum est non tenetis.*

11. P. Henry, *Plotin et l'Occident* (Louvain: Peeters, 1934), 131, compares phrases from the first paragraph of *ciu* 10.2 with *Enneads* (*enn.*) 6.4.19–22.

of God. They love God as the supreme good and so know more of reality. This knowledge and love are the gift of grace. He believed that his praise for the Platonist knowledge and love of an immaterial God was sanctioned by *Romans* 1:19–25. At 10.29 he claims that Porphyry admits to receiving grace. In the operation of grace, knowledge and love are intimately correlated for Augustine. Love informs knowledge in his account of the Platonic tradition. Thus it is subsumed within a Christian interpretation not only by his use of texts such as *Romans* 1:19–25 and Psalm 73:28, and by his presentation of the beatitude of the angels, but also by a theological epistemology. It allows him to treat the ascesis of the Platonists as only a first and inadequate purification.

This epistemology is set out in *De trinitate* Book 8 which was written around 407. At its close he writes of having said enough to provide himself with the frame of a kind of warp on which to weave what remains to be said. This also seems to be the warp on which he weaves his account of the Platonists. He considers two instructive failures to contemplate the divine nature.[12] The first is an attempt to reach God directly in his eternal being by negating and abandoning one misconception after another in the expectation of gaining a direct vision of the truth. But the mind is repulsed because of its lack of preparation. His account of a second attempt is based on *Romans* 1:20. It plays on its phrase *intellecta conspicere*, the idea of glimpsing God in the things that are made. It also refers closely to the language of the Plotinian ascent.[13] We can begin with the finite perfections of being and goodness which we experience and then focus on the inward activity of judging whether something finite is good. By discovering the *notio ipsius boni*,[14] the intuition we must have of goodness itself as the standard according to which this judging is done, we may glimpse God who is the good.

Here Augustine is suggesting that we must love God in order to see him. The will turns in love towards good things. God is the good itself which makes them good. But if the good can be apprehended in this way the problem then is to adhere to it. This is the problem he indicates in *De ciuitate Dei* Book 10 by his repeated citation of Psalm 73:28. Only the pure in heart can endure God's presence. The preparation for this union will be through a purification of love. To accomplish this is the prerogative of Christianity.[15] His idiom in

12. *De trinitate* (*trin.*) 8.2.3; 8.3.4; 5.
13. *enn.* 6.9.4.16–23; *Confessions* (*conf.*) 7.16.22; *ciu* 8.6.
14. *trin.* 8.3.4.
15. *trin.* 8.3.5; P. Hadot, *Plotinus or The Simplicity of Vision* 64 asserts that 'Why, then, do we not remain up there?' *(enn.* 6.9.10.1) is the great Plotinian question. Cf. C. Chang, *Engaging Unbelief: A Captivating Strategy from Augustine to Aquinas* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000). Chang argues that Augustine's rhetorical strategy in response to the challenge of pagan Platonism involves three main components: entering the challenger's story, retelling the

De ciuitate Dei 10.1–7 presents a fusion of Platonic and scriptural allusion and citation to teach the need for a Christian "second purification" of *amor* [16] which is presented to his readers as the *uera sacrificia* for angels and men.

A distinct doctrine of love is involved in this presentation of the Christian sacrifice as a "second purification" of *amor*. Augustine's doctrine of love becomes increasingly differentiated from the understanding he received from the Platonists.[17] This understanding inclined him to a realist interpretation of the teleological tradition. Thus in *De ciuitate Dei* Book 8 he characterizes the *Summum bonum* or beatitude objectively with the Platonists as a single goal towards which all rational beings move, rather than simply as what each philosophical school chooses to make it. The *telos* is God or beatitude. This conception of a single *Sumum Bonum* is confronted, however, with the dominical command to have two objects of love, God and neighbour. So in chapters 3 and 6 Augustine uses the preposition *propter* and the verb *referre* to include the love of neighbour in the service of the love of God. Having associated the commandment to love with the attainment of beatitude, in chapter 5 he closes his treatment of visible sacrifice as *sacramentum* using a sign theory, by stating that all the sacrifices described in the Old Testament are to be interpreted as signifying the love of God and of one's neighbour, citing *Matthew* 22:40.[18] In chapter 6 he goes on to describe the true sacrifice in terms of this doctrine of love. He defines the true sacrifice as offered in every act which is designed to unite us to God in a holy fellowship; every act, that is, which is directed to that final good which makes possible our true beatitude. This definition excludes even acts of mercy, *si non propter Deum fit*. They are without love as Augustine understands it because they are disassociated from this one dominant cosmic movement of all rational beings.

Despite its consonance with Platonic teleology Augustine proceeds to show the subversive implications for Platonists of his account of Christian sacrifice. This is evident in the meaning it gives to the body. After his defini-

story, and capturing that retold story within a gospel meta-narrative. Retelling the story allows Augustine to identify a tragic flaw in his opponents' position which he presents Christianity as able to address in his meta-narrative.

16. R. Williams, "Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine's De Doctrina," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3.2 (1989): 145–46: "In the Confessions, Platonism serves first to liberate desire, to stop us enjoying limited objects, so that our longing can turn towards what is not in the realm of things; but desire must undergo a second purification. It is not to seek for a timeless vision of the true and the eternal as a kind of place to escape into from the vicissitudes of the material world; it must enact its yearning through the corporate life of persons in this world (through the Church, ultimately, for Augustine)."

17. O. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine* (Newhaven: Yale U Press, 1980), 10–36.

18. R. Markus, *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool: Liverpool U Press, 1996).

tion of sacrifice as a *sacramentum* and *sacrum signum* in chapter 5, in the next chapter he presents the body as a sign and instrument of the intentions of the soul. His conception of sacrament allows him to give a Christian response to the Platonic notion of spiritual sacrifice. It also allows a response to the Porphyrian injunction to flee everything corporeal. The whole person is saved in Augustine's account of the "universal way." Our body as well as our soul is a sacrifice when we discipline it with self-denial. He confronts his readers with the exhortation of *Romans* 12:1. His apology for Christian *latreia* in chapter 3 presents the outline of a service offered in various sacraments or in ourselves. It is a worship which uses signs and instruments to denote the intentions of the soul. He referred in chapter 5 to the Christian martyrs with a phrase from *Hebrews* 12:4. His citation of *Romans* 12:1 in chapter 6 also allows allusion to them.[19]

After this account of the meaning of the body in the Christian sacrifice Augustine considers the soul. He contends that, if the body can be made a sacrifice, much more does the soul become a sacrifice when it offers itself to God so that it may be kindled by the fire of love and lose the form (*formam*) of worldly desire, and may be reformed by submission to God as to the unchangeable form, thus becoming acceptable to God because of what it has received from his beauty. He states that this is the same thing (*quod idem*) as the apostle Paul says in *Romans* 12:2 where he speaks of refusing to be conformed to this age and of being reformed (*reformamini*) in newness of mind. Again he is offering a scriptural text as a summary of Platonic teaching. This *quod idem* refers again to the texts of Plotinus and his description of the supreme beauty which fashions its lovers to beauty making them also worthy of love.[20] The word 'form' is especially apt to relate his reading of scripture to Platonic discourse.[21] Form gives not only existence but beauty.[22] Christ is *omne pulchrum pulchritudine*.[23] As we imitate him in love we receive the form of Christ.[24]

In presenting *Romans* 12:2 as a summary of Platonic teaching, this teaching is reconfigured by the eschatological reference of the scriptural text.[25] Alluding to Plotinus, Augustine describes conformity with the present *aeon* as the mind's estrangement from itself, the loss of its freedom of judgement

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19. *ciu* 8.27; 10.3; 10.21; 10.32.

20. *enn.* 1.6.7; *Epistolae In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* 9.9; *Ennarationes in Psalmos* (*en. Ps.*), 103.1.4.

21. Cf. O'Donnell, *Confessions. Commentary* III, 392, on *conf.* 13.21.30.

22. C. Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1992), 38 n.185.

23. *De diuersis questionibus* 83.23.

24. *Exposito Epistolae ad Galatas* 38.

25. *trin.* 11.5.8.

in allowing itself to be submerged among its material preoccupations.[26] The judgement which the free mind is called to exercise on itself, and on the images of its concerns, is made, however, according to criteria *desuper judicam veritatis,* a phrase which alludes to eschatological judgement.[27] *Romans* 12:2 is cited in Book 14 of *De trinitate* after an assertion of the mind's inability to become aware of itself as the image of the Trinitarian God. The text informs the reconfigured ascent that Cavadini[28] identifies as a lifelong process of reformation in the image of God, in love of God and neighbour in faith. Earlier in Book 14 Augustine argues that the image of God is to be found not merely in the mind's remembering, understanding and loving itself, but in its remembering, understanding and loving God. He cites *Job* 28:28 to assert that this is achieved in worship.[29] It is this *reformatio* which allows entry to the united eschatological city of angels and the elect who are being reformed, replenishing the angelic host whose number was depleted by the fall of the rebel angels.[30]

The two eschatological cities are formed by two loves. At *De ciuitate Dei* 10.6 the soul is reformed when it is kindled by the fire of love. It is love which allows the union, *adhaerere Deo*, which is the purpose of reconfigured ascent that Augustine presents here. He suggests this in chapter 3, where he asserts *ad eum dilectione tendimus*. Augustine identifies love with the Holy Spirit, which he represents as heavenly fire.[31] *Romans* 5.5 speaks of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. For Augustine this love is nothing other than the Holy Spirit who sheds it.[32]

His theology of the Trinity understands love as the expression of an ontological ground of unity between subject and object. While the unity of Father and Son is a unity of being, at the level of relational subsistence in the Godhead its unity is its love. It is the Holy Spirit who binds the Father and the Son in one. Their common love proceeds as a gift to include men and women in communion with God and with each other. The Holy Spirit enkindles the person to whom he has been given with the love of God and neighbour, and he himself is love.[33] By this gift our souls are given the ability to adhere to God as if attached to him with glue.[34] This unity is not

26. *enn.* 5.1.10; 3.6.5.

27. *trin.* 9.6.10; R. Markus, "*'Alienatio'* Philosophy and Eschatology in the Development of an Augustinian Idea," *Studia Patristica* 9 (1966): 431–50.

28. Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's De trinitate"; *trin.* 14.16.22.

29. *trin.* 14.12.15.

30. *ciu.* 5.15; 9.28.

31. *en. Ps.* 4.7.

32. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine*, 130.

33. *trin.* 15.31.

34. *trin.* 6.5.7.

"the flight of the alone to the Alone" associated with Plotinus by Porphyry, who made these the final words of the *Enneads*. It constitutes an "ontologie sociale de l'historicité."[35] Chapter 9 of Book 12 cites *Romans* 5:5 to describe the beatitude of the angels as participation in the love of God. Psalm 73:28 refers not only to mankind but first and foremost to the angels whose true good is to adhere to God. Those who share in this good have holy fellowship with him to whom they adhere, and also among themselves. They are one City of God, and at the same time they are his living sacrifice and his living temple.[36]

This reconfigured ascent differs decisively from the ascent of the Plotinus in its account of purification. Both accounts accept the premise that only like knows like.[37] But in Plotinian ascesis, to purify is to remove what has attached itself from the outside to the inmost self and is superfluous, adventitious, and external. In order to know the One a person needs to become like it. The "categorical imperative of the Plotinian ascent"[38] is to cut away everything.[39] This includes equally the sensible and corporeal realities which are exterior and inferior and the multiplicity of concepts and ideas which he also considers exterior and inferior to the pure unity of self-with-self and self-with-the-One.

Augustine also accepts the premise that only like knows like. But he believes that God is love. Augustine reconceives purification as detachment of the will rather than as material separation. It is a "second purification" in relation to the ascesis of the Platonists. *De trinitate* elucidates this contrast. There Augustine interprets Christ's prayer at *John* 17:22 ("*ut unum sint*"). Augustine argues that the Father and the Son are one not only by equality of substance but also by identity of will or love. Those persons for whom the Son is mediator with God may be one through the same union of love. They share the same harmonious will reaching out in concert to the same ultimate beatitude, fused into one spirit by the fire of charity.[40] The ascent is realized in a life of self-imparting love united to the self-imparting life of God.[41] Thus the supernal court of the angels who participate in the divine intelligible light (*curia*) is constituted by their care (*cura*) for men and women.[42] What

35. A. Solignac, *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* 14 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), 617.

36. *trin.* 8.8.12. J.Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 99.

37. Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. H. North Fowler (Loeb Classical Library, 1999), 78b.4–84b.4; *enn.* 1.6.9; A. Meredith, *Faith and Fidelity* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000), 184–91.

38. P. Henry, introduction to *The Enneads*, trans. S. Mackenna (London: Penguin Classics, 1991), lxxvii; *enn.* 1.6.9.

39. These are the last words of *enn.* 5.3.

40. *trin.* 4.9.12.

41. R. Williams, *Open to Judgement. Sermons and Addresses* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994), 265.

42. *ciu.* 10.7.

purifies the eye is not introspection but the works of mercy.[43] The incarnation purifies and liberates, mediating the gift of the Spirit of God's love which allows men and women to come to him.[44]

Augustine goes on to contend that the union with the divine attained in this "second purification" is realized in the sacrifice of the body of Christ. If the individual body may be a sign or instrument of the intentions of the soul, so may the *tota redempta ciuitas*, united by their love, a sacrifice which is offered by the one high priest, Jesus Christ, and is celebrated in the eucharistic liturgy. His citation of *Philippians* 2:7 in chapter 6 again relates Pauline and Platonic discourses using the word *forma*. This relation is determined by Augustine's "Kirchlichkeit."[45] He is insistent that the ascent to the *domus Dei* can only take place within the *tabernaculum* which is the *ecclesia peregrina*.[46] In *forma serui* Christ is united to his body, the church. Augustine's Christology posits the dynamic continuity and unity of *forma serui* and *forma Dei*.[47] The church as the body of Christ on earth can hope to share in the beatitude of heaven because of her union with Christ, her head, who is in heaven.[48] The Holy Spirit forms the basis of this unity in love between the body and the head.[49]

He thus subsumes and reconfigures the Plotinian ascent in an account of the union in sacrifice of the *congregatio societasque sanctorum* with Christ *secundum forma Dei*. In the *Confessions* Augustine uses *Philippians* 2:6–11 to define and limit his praise for the *platonicorum libri*. He finds that the Platonists taught the existence of the Logos but not that the Logos humbled himself to take the form of a servant and to die on the cross.[50] His allusion to the *Philippians* 2:7 in chapter 6 is to an alien wisdom for Porphyry. It is to the imitation of Christ *in forma serui* that he exhorts his readers. They are to present their bodies with his as a living sacrifice. But the Platonic reference of the word *forma* remains and allows him to suggest how the congregation and society of the saints participate in the sanctity of Christ in the same way all beings in the world possess their identity, through participation in

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43. *Io. eu. tr.* 17.8;18.11. *Epistolae* (*ep.*) 147.43. *ep.* 187.13.41, *Deus caritas est, cum uero eius habitatinem cogitas, unitatem cogita congregationemque sanctorum.*

44. *ciu.* 10. 28–29.

45. J. Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (Munich: Eos Verlag, 1954), 43.

46. *en. Ps.* 41.

47. Y. Congar, "*Civitatis Dei* et *Ecclesia* chez S. Augustin," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 24 (1957): 8; L. Verwilghen, *Christologie et spiritualité selon saint Augustin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 296.

48. *en. Ps.* 26.2.11.

49. *en. Ps.* 143.3; 55.2; 56.1.

50. *conf.* 7.9.14.

intelligible forms of Platonic ontology. The Church is the earthly, empirical body that imitates, participates in, and is joined to Christ.[51]

Another scriptural text is just as important as *Philippians* 2:7 in his account of the true sacrifice offered by the church in chapter 6. The title of *sacerdotem magnum* which he gives to Christ is taken from *Hebrews* 8:1–2, the only place in the New Testament where this title is given to Christ. *Hebrews* also describes Christ as the mediator of the new covenant (8:6–13) who offers the one true sacrifice (9:11–14; 25–28). These texts inform Augustine's description of the identity and gift of Christ as great high priest, mediator and sacrifice.[52] It is a *uniuersale sacrificium*. Augustine asserts that no union with God is possible except through the sacrifice of Christ. Augustine integrates his interpretation of *Romans* 12:2 into this account of the universal sacrifice and goes on to cite *Romans* 12:3–6 to stress the need for humility to participate in this sacrifice, the humility he associates with the *forma serui*.[53] This, he concludes, is the Christian sacrifice. *Romans* 12:5 defines their unity in Christ: *multi unum corpus in Christo.*

III. The Universal Sacrifice

It is the body of Christ, both the saints united to Christ their head by the *uinculum caritatis*,[54] and the great high priest who offers the sacrifice of himself, that indivisibly constitutes the *universale sacrificium.* Augustine ends chapter 6 with an assertion that the continual celebration of eucharist by the church makes this sacrifice visible. Augustine speaks indirectly about the sacrament of the altar that is well known to the faithful. The *disciplina arcani* was still in force in his church.[55] In the eucharist it is shown to the church that she herself is offered in the offering she presents to God.[56]

51. Y. Congar, "Introduction générale," *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* 28 (Paris: Desclée de Bouwer, 1963), 109–15; 711–13.

52. B. Quintot, "L'influence de l'Epitre aux Hebreux dans la notion augustinienne du vrai sacrifice," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 8 (1962): 165. Y. de Montcheuil, *Mélanges théologiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 60; At *sermo Dolbeau* (*s. Dolb*), 26.57, Augustine promises his hearers *securi sumus* because of our High Priest Jesus Christ. The Head intercedes for all members so they can intercede for each other and safely turn to him. *Sermo(nes) a F. Dolbeau editi: Augustin d'Hippone, Vingt-six sermons au people d'Afrique. Retrouves a Mayence*, éd. F. Dolbeau (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1996).

53. *en. Ps.* 68; *Sermones* 1.9. I. Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le desir de Dieu* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1982), 372; *Io. eu. tr.* 25.16. Augustine's reconception of purification in terms of the will and the specifically Christian virtue of humility is used to explain Porphyry's failure to see that Christianity is the "universal way" he sought. He is blinded by his pride. Like knows like but *Christus est humilis, uos superbi. ciu.* 10.29.

54. *Io. eu. tr.* 26.13.

55. *en. Ps.* 103.14; W. Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 170–72; In all the five million surviving words of his works Augustine never describes or discusses the cult act that was the centre of his ministry.

56. G. Lafont, "Le sacrifice de la Cité de Dieu. Commentaire au De Civitate Dei X,

This account of the true sacrifice, which subsumes and reconfigures the
Plotinian ascent, is used to reject the relation of ascent to sacrifice proposed
by Porphyry. Augustine presents an account of a true and universal sacrifice
in the opening chapters of Book 10 because his concern in this book is to
define Christianity in relation to Platonism as the *uniuersalis uia animae
liberandae* which Porphyry sought in vain. This is his conclusion in chapter
32. His account of a universal sacrifice strikingly parallels the accounts of
theurgy offered by Martianus Capella and Iamblichus.[57] Like Augustine, they
will not separate cult and ascent. He testifies that Porphyry proposed such
a division in a work that he calls *De Regressu Animae*. Porphyry commends
the practice of theurgy only to those incapable of becoming philosophers.[58]
Augustine associates theurgy with confusion about the power that mediates
between the divine and the human.[59] No moral purification of the soul can
result from any mediation other than that of Christ. Only a mediator who
is the definitive, ontological conjunction of divine and human natures can
effect a true mediation. Theurgy cannot produce a true purification of the
soul because it appeals to false deities. He juxtaposes it with the true sacrifice
of the City of God, and interprets it as the worship of demons and angels.
This juxtaposition structures his treatment of the Platonists, which is divided
into a refutation of the worship, firstly of demons and then of angels.[60] He
will not, however, allow intellectualist Platonists and Christians to deny
the necessity of visible sacrifice.[61] Augustine's response is the same as that
of Simplicianus to the intellectualist Platonizing Christianity of Marius
Victorinus.[62] Walls make Christians, or, more specifically, participation in
the liturgy celebrated within those walls and reserved for the baptised. It is
this visible sacrifice which allows them to frustrate the malice of demons by
becoming themselves a sacrifice to God. The visible sacrifice signifies the
invisible sacrifice.[63]

1–8," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 53 (1965): 177–219.

57. Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philolgiae et Mercurii*, ed. J. Willis (Leipzig: Teubner,
1983). Philologia is presented as a theurgist. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, éd. E. des Places (Paris,
Les Belles Lettres, 1996), 2.11.96–97; H. Feichtinger, "*Oudeneia* and *humilitas.*"

58. *ciu.* 10.9; 27; 32.

59. R. Dodaro, "Theurgy," in Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages*, 827–28.

60. *ciu.* 10.1.

61. *ciu.* 10.19. In "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's De Trinitate" Cavadini
argues that *De trinitate* was written to respond to the soteriology of intellectualist Platonizing
Christians. G. O'Daly finds such Christians among those for whom *ciu.* was written: "Ciuitate
dei (De-)," *Augustinus Lexikon* I (1986–1994), 978f.

62. *conf.* 8.2.4. Marius Victorinus may be the "certain Platonist" referred to by Simplicianus
at *ciu.* 10.29. Cf. P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Études
Augustiniennes, 1971), 237.

63. *ciu.* 10.5.

For Augustine there is no way to approach God apart from the universal way which all Christians share, *animales* and *spirituales* alike.[64] The community of those whose way of life orientates them to a reconfigured ascent includes *simpliciores*. If a few may be able to attain the truth through reason while the majority can only rely on faith, the stronger must assist the weaker to ascend by also adopting the way of faith. He argues in *De utilitate credendi* 24 that they should do this in deference to those for whom this is the only way, so as not to encourage them to attempt something they cannot do and which will cause them to fall. If they do not do this they will never reach the goal, however clever they are, for God is only with those who, seeking him, have also a care for human society. No surer step can be found. Ascent now involves human solidarity and communion.[65] Augustine relates how at Ostia he shared the ecstasy of an ascent described in similar language to that of the *Enneads* with a devout but half-educated woman to whom he once had to explain the meaning of the word "philosophy."[66] His account of the Christian, whatever his or her social background, as a pilgrim set apart by a holy longing,[67] universalises the longing of an intellectual elite who identified with Odysseus' separation from his true *patria*.[68] Like Iamblichus in *De Mysteriis*, Augustine is working out a conception of how all are capable of returning to the *patria*, precisely because union with the divine ultimately requires particular actions rather than an aptitude for theoretical philosophy.

Thus the itinerary of Augustine's argument directs the way in which an intellectualist Platonist or Christian, or even someone drawn to theurgy, could appropriate the eucharistic mystery.[69] His argument allows participation in the eucharist to become the reconfigured ascent of which he writes, and the City of God, "eine sakramentale-eschatologische Grösse,"[70] to come

64. *Io. eu. tr.* 2.3–4; 21.1; 22.1.

65. C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology. An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2006), 54.

66. *De ordine* 1.11.31–33.*conf.* 9.10.23–25. O'Donnell, *Confessions. Commentary*, III 122–37.

67. *en. Ps.* 64.2; *ciu.* 10.7.

68. *enn.* 1.6.8. Porphyry, *vit. Plot.* 22.25. M. Claussen, "Peregrinatio and Peregrini in Augustine's City of God," *Traditio* 46 (1991): 33–75.

69. Augustine corresponded with Longinianus in *ep.* 233–35, who may have been drawn to theurgy, and seems to address adherents of a possibly Iamblichan form of Platonism who reverence Pythagoras in *s. Dolb.* 26; O'Donnell, *Confessions. Commentary Books 1–7*, responding to *conf.* 7.9.13, notes that Platonist theurgy functions to make the divine present. It could perhaps have influenced Augustine's expectations of Christianity in an unattended-to way, allowing him to perceive the eucharist as a Christian counterpart to theurgy. Such a perception was perhaps articulated in Ambrose's lost *de sacramento regenerationis sive de philosophia*.

70. J. Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationem: eine Vision der Kirchenvater* (Salzburg: Pustet, 1971), 104.

within the grasp of his audience, invested with perceptible form by the eucharistic liturgy. Christ is the priest and the sacrifice, and the eucharist is the sacramental sign of this true sacrifice in which the Church, being the body of which he is the head, learns to offer herself through him.[71] In this drama Augustine's audience can attain to the reality of which he speaks as they portray it.[72]

71. *ciu.* 10.20.
72. K. Flanagan, *Sociology and Liturgy: Representations of the Holy* (London: St Martins, 1991), 239–40.