

The Soul in Pieces and its Quest for the Peace of Christ

El alma en pedazos y su búsqueda
de la paz de Cristo

7

Matthew Drever
University of Tulsa, United States of America



Abstract

Confessions is the tale of the journey to the *patria pacis* from out of the ashes of humanity's restless, sinful anxiety. Augustine's quest for inner peace is wrapped within this journey home, and it is a quest that has a trinitarian and an ecclesiological structure. Interior peace is only achieved through our participation in Christ, which itself is structured by our inclusion within Christ's body (the Church) through the power of the Spirit. We find this peace when we find our rest, that is, when we find our proper place. Love dictates our place and within the body of Christ we find the proper (moral) love that directs our praise toward God. This love is also the presence of the Spirit within the soul—this love is the Spirit—and so interior peace is not only a condition of the soul but also its deification. This points to the underlying reality of the soul's interior nature, whose existence and identity is grounded in its imaging of God. We find our peace in uniting with God because our proper place—the place wherein we find rest—is as images of the divine.

Keywords: Augustine, divine image, love, peace, Spirit.



Resumen

Las confesiones son el relato del viaje a la *patria pacis* desde las cenizas de la inquietud y la angustia pecaminosa de la humanidad. La búsqueda de san Agustín por la paz interior se encuentra en este viaje a casa, y es una búsqueda que tiene una estructura trinitaria y eclesiológica. La paz interior solo se logra a través de nuestra participación en Cristo, que a su vez se estructura por nuestra inclusión dentro del cuerpo de Cristo (la Iglesia) por medio del poder del Espíritu. Encontramos esta paz en nuestro descanso, es decir, cuando hallamos nuestro lugar adecuado. El amor dicta nuestro lugar y dentro del cuerpo de Cristo encontramos el amor apropiado (moral) que dirige nuestra alabanza hacia Dios. Este amor es la presencia del Espíritu dentro del alma, por lo que la paz interior no es solo una condición del alma sino también su deificación. Esto apunta a la realidad subyacente de la naturaleza interior del alma, cuya existencia e identidad se basa en su imagen de Dios. Encontramos nuestra paz en la unión con Dios porque nuestro lugar apropiado, el lugar donde encontramos descanso, es como imágenes de lo divino.

Palabras clave: Paz, san Agustín, Cristo, Espíritu, amor, imagen divina.



About the author | Acerca del autor

Matthew Drever [matthew-drever@utulsa.edu]

Matthew Drever is Associate Professor of Religion and Chair of the Philosophy and Religion Department at the University of Tulsa. He is the author of numerous articles on Augustine and the reception history of Augustine in the modern period. He is also the author of *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul* (Oxford, 2013).



How to cite in MLA / Cómo citar en MLA

Drever, Matthew. "The Soul in Pieces and its Quest for the Peace of Christ." *Agustín de Hipona como Doctor Pacis: estudios sobre la paz en el mundo contemporáneo*, edited by Anthony Dupont, Enrique Eguarte Bendimez y Carlos Vilabona, Editorial Uniagustiniana, 2019, pp. 215-233, doi: 10.28970/9789585498235.7

Lord God, grant us peace; for you have given us all things, the peace of quietness, the peace of the Sabbath, a peace with no evening. This entire most beautiful order of very good things will complete its course and then pass away; for in them by creation there is both morning and evening (*conf.*, 13, 35, 50).

Augustine's final prayer for peace in *Confessions* (cited hereafter, *conf.*) brings to conclusion a search he initiates in the opening lines of the text when famously he declares: "Our heart is restless until it rests in you" (*conf.*, 1, 1, 1). Here Augustine sounds the depths of the restless human heart and locates its resolution in the peace we achieve through praising God. As Augustine moves through *conf.* this message takes its shape as a life-long quest and is used as a multi-pronged launching point to offer: a framework to structure his autobiographical narration of spiritual development; a hermeneutical key to unlock basic theological themes on the nature of creation, salvation, and the relation between humanity and God; as well as a rhetorical device to invite the reader to join Augustine's quest for peace through the praise of God. Augustine's opening call, then, gives us a window into *conf.*—its structure, intentions, and goal.

In this chapter, I will focus on how Augustine in *conf.* situates peace within his account of human interiority. One way to broach this issue is with Augustine's query, in *conf.* 10, 30, 42, on why the good, almighty God does not heal Christians of temptation and sin immediately so they may enjoy interior peace. This is a profound and haunting question for Augustine, and one that underlies his wider search for an enduring peace in Christ through the Church. It is also a good place to begin because it underscores an important point about Augustine's search for interior peace, namely, that it is not found within an insulated space of the individual soul but rather within an interior spiritual space reformed within a Christological, ecclesiological, and Trinitarian framework.

In the Voice of Angels: Fragmentation, Unity, and the Search for God

The drive for unity is one of the most conspicuous and fundamental concerns that accompanies Augustine's search for interior peace in *conf.* He voices this concern in a variety of contexts, using it to highlight basic features of his accounts of creation and salvation. In *conf.* 4, Augustine notes the relation between peace and unity, connecting it to righteous love and contrasting it with sinful love: "Since in virtue I loved peace and in vice I hated discord, I

noted that in virtue there is unity, in vice a kind of division (*conf.*, 4, 15, 24).¹ Further, in *conf.* 12, in the midst of his discussion of creation, Augustine argues that angels enjoy an “unshakeable peace,” and connects this with the spiritual unity angels possess (*conf.*, 12, 11, 12). Angelic unity is grounded on the angels’ love of God:

Its delight [*voluptas*] is exclusively in you. In an unflinching purity it satisfies its thirst in you. It never at any point betrays its mutability. You are always present to it, and it concentrates all its affection on you. It has no future to expect. It suffers no variation and experiences no distending [*distenditur*] in the successiveness of time (*conf.*, 12, 11, 12).²

Augustine’s account of angelic unity and peace provides an important contrast with the lack of peace and restlessness he voices in the opening lines of *conf.* Humans and angels are both created *ex nihilo* and so with a certain type of change, or mutability, at their origins, namely, the change from nonbeing to being (*conf.*, 12, 6, 6-12; 7, 7; *vera rel.*, 17, 34-18, 35; *nat. b.*, 1, 19, 27; *civ.*, 12, 5).³ This distinguishes all created beings from God, who is the only true eternal being. In the case of the angels, their mutability is suspended or deferred, as it were, through their love and praise of God, and in this they participate in divine eternity. It is this participation that gives angels their unity and peace.

Augustine’s account of angelic peace highlights a few important points. Foremost, it underscores the close connection between unity, peace, and divine eternity. The peace and unity Augustine seeks is one of stability and permanence, which he associates with divine eternity. In saying this, the point is not that Augustine’s account of unity and peace shuns notions of dynamism, affection or desire in favor of a static, nonchanging baseline that is sometimes read into ancient accounts of eternity (Farley 165-167). Though not as developed as in *On the Trinity*, already in *conf.* Augustine reads his account of creation through a trinitarian lens, intimating that creation finds its life and place through the reciprocal, self-giving love of the persons of the Trinity (*trin.*, 15, 17, 27-15, 19, 33); (*conf.*, 13, 5, 6-13, 7, 8; 13, 9, 10-13, 11, 12). To be unified and at peace involves a stability in, rather than a rejection of, the desire, affection, and dyna-

¹ “Et cum in virtute pacem amarem, in vitiositate autem odissem discordiam, in illa unitatem, in ista quamdam divisionem notabam.”

² “Cuius voluptas tu solus es teque perseverantissima castitate hauriens mutabilitatem suam nusquam et numquam exserit et te sibi semper praesente, ad quem toto affectu se tenet, non habens futurum quod exspectet nec in praeteritum traiciens quod meminerit, nulla vice variatur nec in tempora ulla distenditur.”

³ See also Drever 48-84; and Marion 24-42.

mism of life, insofar as this is grounded in one's participation in the trinitarian love of the eternal and immutable God. It is this relation to God that allows one to defer continually one's mutable origin *ex nihilo* and avoid the oblivion—the nonbeing—at the foundation of one's existence.

In returning to the notion of *distentio*, Augustine's account of angelic unity and peace also connects to his analysis of human temporality in book 11. Augustine reads the difference between the peace angels enjoy and the restlessness that plagues humans in part through the distinct relations to mutability and temporality angels and humans experience. Angelic love and affection is directed toward God such that angelic existence and identity is not spread thin and dispersed (*distenditur*) through time. Augustine returns often to this idea that a creature's peace entails being collected together and unified in divine eternity rather than scattered and spread apart in time. This is the lesson of *conf.* 11, as Augustine moves from a metaphysical account of human temporality as the stretching of the soul's attention through the objects it encounters (i.e., the *distentio animi*), to a moral account of how the sinful soul experiences this stretching as a shattering and scattering into pieces of its inward identity and existence as a result of its turning from the integrative and unifying power of divine eternity to the mutable (*nihil*) origins of its creation (*conf.*, 11, 14, 17–11, 26, 33; 11, 29, 39–11, 31, 41). Here, Augustine associates the lack of human peace with human temporal and mutable being, both of which were originally a part of God's good creation but have become corrupted through sin.

Interior peace involves transcending sinful temporality and the ways our affections and loves are pulled through the events, things, and people we experience. More specifically, Augustine identifies interior human peace with a unity of the soul that transcends time in participating in divine eternity but that does not transcend human mutable origins. That is, we remain *de (ex) nihilo* rather than *de Deo* and so never share in the divine simple existence characteristic of divine being itself (*id ipsum*) (*conf.*, 12, 7, 7; 12, 15, 20–21; *trin.* 15, 16, 26). Augustine summarizes his claims here with the prayer that concludes his account of human temporality in *conf.* 11:

You are my eternal Father, but I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul, until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together to merge into you (*conf.*, 11, 29, 39).⁴

⁴ "Pater meus aeternus es; at ego in tempora dissilui, quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluum purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui!"

This interior peace and unity that Augustine seeks in answer to the restlessness voiced in the opening of *conf.* 1 is precisely what the angels enjoy, and the promise of salvation is that we might join the angels in their praise of God (*conf.*, 12, 11, 12-13).

Augustine's account of angelic peace, finally then, underscores that unity and peace are fundamentally relational in being grounded in God. At issue in this relation is not only the stable foundation of our existence but also our ownmost self-identity. We must remember this so as not to equate the interior peace of the soul with an individual or private spiritual space wherein we retreat to find our core identity. We see a rejection of this idea already in Augustine's account of the angels in *conf.*, but it becomes clarified in his later writings as he develops further his account of angelic peace. Here he argues that angelic peace is formed not when they turn in on themselves in a type of isolated privacy, but rather when they turn first to God in praise and then come into themselves as a result of their relation to God (*Gn. litt.*, 2, 8, 17-19; 4, 24, 41-4, 29, 46). In this, angels' existence and self-identity derives from elsewhere, that is, from their relation to God, which then also means the peace they enjoy derives not from their own existence but from God.

At various points in *conf.* Augustine contrasts the angelic relation with God to the sinful relation humans have with God, and the lack of peace that follows. Memorably, in *conf.* 4 Augustine narrates the way he sought disastrously to replace his love of God with his love of a friend: "The reason why that grief had penetrated me so easily and deeply was that I had poured out my soul on to the sand by loving a person sure to die as if he would never die" (*conf.*, 4, 8, 13).⁵ Augustine goes on to identify more precisely that the danger of his misplaced love resided in his attempt to ground his existence and identity within the created (i.e., *ex nihilo*, mutable) nature of his friend rather than the uncreated (i.e., immutable) nature of God: "For wherever the human soul turns itself, other than to you, it is fixed in sorrows, even if it is fixed upon beautiful things external to you and external to itself, which would nevertheless be nothing if they did not have their being from you" (*conf.*, 4, 10, 15).⁶ This leads to the shattering of inner peace, with Augustine's identity scattered in grief and loss, and to his recommendation, exemplified by the peace of angelic existence, that the soul must ground its love first and fundamentally in God:

⁵ "Nam unde me facillime et in intima dolor ille penetraverat, nisi quia fuderam in harenam animam meam diligendo moriturum ac si non moriturum."

⁶ "Nam quoquoversum se verterit anima hominis, ad dolores figitur alibi praeterquam in te, tametsi figitur in pulchris extra te et extra se. Quae tamen nulla essent, nisi essent abs te".

Let these transient things be the ground on which my soul praises you, 'God creator of all'. But let it not become stuck in them and glued to them with love through the physical senses. For these things pass along the path of things that move towards non-existence. They rend the soul with pestilential desires; for the soul loves to be in them and take its repose among the objects of its love. But in these things there is no point of rest; they lack permanence (*conf.*, 4, 10, 15).⁷

Humans lack inner peace because in sin they do not praise God but rather direct their love toward creation where they become "glued" to created objects in forming their identity and existence through the mutable nature of creation, which is bound to pass away into nonexistence. This leads to the inner restlessness, dissolution, and fragmentation about which Augustine laments.

When the soul turns from God, it not only turns from the stable source of its existence but also from the source of its ownmost inward identity. Like the angels, we find our self-identity in and through our relation to God. In our case, this identity is formed through the divine image, which, Augustine argues, images the Trinity (*trin.*, 12, 6, 6-12, 6, 7). This is an image that is whole only when we are turned to God in praise and constituted through the love of the trinitarian God (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10-13, 11, 12; *trin.* 14, 1,1; 14,12, 15). This is why the lack of inner peace Augustine finds within himself constitutes a fundamental existential crisis that haunts the pages of *Confessions*: peace is the harbinger not only of a stable relation with the immutable God but also of the wholeness of one's inward identity as an image of God. The loss of peace leaves one grasping for the stable existence found within divine immutable eternity, and profoundly disoriented by the distortion of one's self-identity as the divine image. Augustine underscores this idea in his later writings when he returns to the idea that sinful love "glues" the soul to mutable objects, arguing now that it upends inner peace by distorting the divine image within the soul (*trin.*, 10, 5, 7-10, 6, 8). It is only through the proper love of God, a love grounded in the trinitarian God's love of us, that the divine image is reformed and human life made whole.

⁷ "Laudet te ex illis anima mea, Deus, creator omnium, sed non in eis infigatur glutine amore per sensus corporis. Eunt enim quo ibant, ut non sint, et conscindunt eam desideriiis pestilentiosis, quoniam ipsa esse vult et requiescere amat in eis, quae amat. In illis autem non est ubi, quia non stant".

In the Voice of the Spirit: Unity and the Body of Christ

It is one thing to identify the source of inner peace and another to grasp it. *Confessions* is littered with failed attempts—Platonist, Manichean, and otherwise—to find peace, which together bring into relief the proper route to peace through Christ. Like the gradual resolution of a blurry image, *conf.* slowly brings into focus the homeland of peace and rest for which the soul longs. Augustine describes this process as one in which the order of the soul is restored. In Augustine's metaphysics, the peace of all things is contingent upon their proper order: "Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10)."⁸ All things tend toward their ordered place according to their weight, and love is the weight that determines the human place. Love is what moves us, motivates us, gives us our moral orientation, and shapes our identity: "My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards; we grow red hot and ascend" (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10).⁹ Augustine associates the lack of inner peace in humans with sinful love because love disorders our place within creation, leaving us restless. The way for humans to reorder their love and find their proper place and peace comes only through the gift of God, which Augustine identifies with the Holy Spirit:

Why then is this said only of the Holy Spirit? Why is it said exclusively of him as if there were a place where he then was, though it is not a place? Of him alone is it said that he is your 'gift'. In your gift we find our rest. There are you our joy. Our rest is our peace (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10).¹⁰

The Holy Spirit is God's gift who brings us divine love, restoring us to our place and leading us toward peace (*trin.* 5, 11, 12-5, 16, 17; 13, 10, 14; 15, 17, 27-19, 33).

In his later sermons on 1 John, Augustine goes even further in rendering the soteriological role of the Spirit's love as ontological formation (*ep. Io. tr.*, 7, 4-7; 9).¹¹ Here he argues that the Spirit's love within us represents not only the renewal and reformation of our love of God, but also the presence of God within us and our participation—deification—within God's own life. When we love

⁸ "Minus ordinata inquieta sunt: ordinantur et quiescent."

⁹ "Pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror. Dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur; inardescimus et imus."

¹⁰ "Cur ergo tantum de spiritu tuo dictum est hoc? Cur de illo tantum dictum est quasi locus, ubi esset, qui non est locus, de quo solo dictum est, quod sit donum tuum? In dono tuo requiescimus: ibi te fruimur. Requies nostra locus noster."

¹¹ See also van Bavel 169-181; and Teske.

God we not only find our proper place, and so achieve rest and peace, but we also—in some sense—become god through our participation in God. This is a strong soteriological and ontological claim, not yet fully developed in *conf.*, but one that illustrates further that the attainment of inner peace is not achieved through an inward, solitary act of the soul, but rather only through intimate and radical participation within God.

The nature of this participation takes various forms in Augustine's writings, and I would highlight two of them. One way of parsing Augustine's claims about the work of the Spirit's love is in terms of how it renews the divine image within us. As we have seen, one of the reasons disordered love is dangerous for Augustine is because it distorts the divine image within the soul, which is at the core of our identity. To say that the Spirit's love is the presence of God within us and our simultaneous participation in God is to register the reality of our core existence and identity—our place—as the divine image. Insofar as the Spirit's love brings us to this place of peace, it restores our identity, which is only found through its intimate participation in—imaging of—God.

A second way of parsing Augustine's claims on the Spirit's love moves us further into his trinitarian soteriology. Augustine argues that the Spirit's love brings us into God—deifies us—because the place wherein our love is ordered is within the body of Christ. That is, we become god insofar as we join with Christ's body. Augustine's Pauline claims here have multilayered soteriological, eschatological, ecclesiological, and ontological dimensions. Not all of these dimensions are fully worked out in *conf.*, but we can begin with the central soteriological role Augustine affords Christ in *Confessions*. In book 10 Augustine delves into the depths of human memory, looking to discern the nature of the soul and its relation to God. There he finds God, though less as the evident answer to his restlessness than as a mysterious presence that bids him deeper into his soul's depths (*conf.*, 10, 7, 5; 10, 8, 15; 10, 16, 25-10, 17, 26). Here he finds the future promise of peace, but not an immediate resolution to his sinful restlessness. Indeed, to his own consternation he discovers lodged deep within him temptation and sin from which he cannot fully exculpate himself despite his conversion to Christianity (*conf.*, 10, 30, 41-42). Augustine concludes that the resolution to the sinful habits that plague him must flow through Christ. Christ offers the solution by becoming the mediator who teaches humility that brings with it righteousness and leads us into a life of peace (*conf.*, 10, 43, 68).

For Augustine, Christ's humility must reform us at both an ontological and moral level. At the ontological level, the divine image is deformed when, in sin,

we attempt to replace the image of the immutable and eternal God with images of the mutable and finite world. This is a type of inward, prideful idolatry that leads to the dissolution of our identity, the dangers of which we saw in Augustine's grief over the death of his friend. In turn, this generates an immoral love of objects and people that lodges deep within the soul, the dangers of which Augustine narrates in his account of temptation in *conf.* 10. Both dimensions of sin lead to the disunity and restlessness of the soul, undercutting its interior peace. In repositioning God as the primary love within the soul, Christ's humility restores the divine image and so reforms our identity, even as it realigns our moral and affective habits so that we love God and creation in the proper manners. Christ's humility, then, provides the route back to peace through the restoration of inner-wholeness. In this respect it is important to see that humility is not about self-abnegation or self-denial. Most fundamentally, it is about the restoration and wholeness of the self, but a self whose identity as the divine image is constituted through the divine Other and consequently whose love is properly ordered only when flowing through God.

In this, we can also see that the peace that comes through Christ's humility entails more than what today we would associate with various types of inward, contemplative, meditative exercises. Augustine famously attempts his own version of this in his mystical ascents in *conf.* 7 (7, 10, 16; 7, 17, 23). There he draws on Platonist mystical practices to achieve momentary unity with God, but unity that fails because it does not move through Christ (*conf.*, 7, 9, 13; 7, 18, 24-7, 21, 27). Augustine concludes that routes that bypass Christ may provide a brief and far-off view of the "homeland of peace [*patriam pacis*]," but nothing more (*conf.*, 7, 21, 27). Here again, Augustine emphasizes Christ's humility that comes through the humanity God takes on in Christ as the soteriological key toward the achievement of permanent peace. This is part of Augustine's rereading of Paul and the importance Augustine comes to attach to the incarnation as the route to enduring peace (Cameron).

God's participation in humanity through Christ opens the route for humanity to participate in God, and so to enjoy the unity, peace, and stability possessed by the angels (Bonner; Meconi; Wilson-Kastner). Augustine's claims on how peace is achieved through Christ develop along various lines, one of which grows out of his understanding of the body of Christ. As we have seen, the Spirit's love repositions us to rest (peace) by bringing us into participation in God. One of the ways Augustine envisions this participation is through our incorporation into the body of Christ. While this metaphor is not prevalent within *conf.*, Augustine gravitates towards it in *conf.* 13 with his extended

analysis of the Church and its place in the Genesis creation narrative (*conf.*, 13, 19, 25-13, 23, 33). To the contemporary reader, the connection between the Church and the creation narrative may be an exegetical stretch. But it is a crucial dimension to Augustine's overarching query in *conf.*, into the origins of himself, sin, and salvation. Genesis reveals the source of his own sinful origins in Adam, but Augustine also discerns God's providence already at work in providing the foundations for human redemption within the Church (*conf.*, 13, 12, 13). Augustine finds in the separation of the light from the dark the delineation of the elect (*conf.*, 13, 14, 15; 13, 18, 22; 13, 19, 25), and in the creation of the waters and earth the work of the Church in the sacraments (waters/ baptism) and preaching (earth/ scripture) (*conf.*, 13, 17, 20-13, 18, 22; 13, 20-26-13, 21, 30). Augustine does not identify the Church here with the body of Christ *per se*, but the mystical and eschatological connotations he draws out, combined with the way he grounds the Church in the Spirit's work, brings it into the general orbit of his claims on the body of Christ (*conf.*, 13, 18, 23).

One of the important consequences of Augustine's ecclesiological treatment of salvation in *conf.* 13 is the way it qualifies his earlier claims that salvation flows through Christ. In particular, it demonstrates that the path to interior peace must have an outward and corporate component in the Church. Salvation is not bound solely to the inward refashioning of the individual soul (i.e., the divine image) in relation to God. Our participation in God is mediated through our integration into the community of the redeemed.¹² That is, we become deified by becoming united to Christ's body. This brings with it a social ethic and sense of corporate identity, centered around the Church, that Augustine only begins to explore in *conf.*

If we turn briefly beyond the pages of *conf.* we can fill-in this account. Here we see Augustine developing the implications of his claim that our redemption through our incorporation into Christ's body is our inclusion into both the mystical (eschatological) heavenly body of the elect and the historical body of the Church. This incorporation brings with it the presence and redemptive love of the Spirit who dwells in and through the Church. We can see this, for example, in his meditations on the body of Christ (i.e., the *totus Christus*) in his early sermons on the Psalms, which Augustine composes a few years prior to

¹² Raymond Canning has shown that, at points, Augustine extends the love within Christ's body beyond Christians to the poor more generally (*minimi mei*), which intimates a wider unity between the love of God and neighbor in Christ, pp. 383-394.

Confessions.¹³ The concept of the *totus Christus* is a central theme that animates the christological framework Augustine applies to his interpretation of the Psalms. Here Augustine experiments with a complex prosopological method that delineates a shifting identity in the voice (or speaker) of the Psalm based on the context and content of the passage.¹⁴ Among the voices (identities) Augustine finds in the Psalms are: the twofold voice of Christ when he speaks in his divinity as the Word and in his humanity for sinful people (*pro nobis*); the voice of individual Christians as part of Christ's body; and the voice of the Church when it speaks as the body of Christ. The diverse voices are united in the *totus Christus*.

Augustine develops various soteriological themes from the shifting identity of the speaker in the Psalms that complement the claims he develops in *conf.* around the incarnation. First, he argues that Christ's speaking in the Psalms—as both God and humanity—represents the downward participation of God in humanity and the upward participation of humanity in God. When Christ speaks as the head of the body it reminds us that salvation flows through God's presence in Christ and that this salvation entails our incorporation into the body of Christ. Here Christ speaks in the voice of the Church as the head that unites the corporate body of the Church into his risen body.¹⁵ This inclusion into Christ's body is our deification, which highlights the mystical and eschatological dimension he attaches to the body of Christ (*conf.*, 7, 9, 14; 7, 18, 24; 7, 19, 25; s. 23b, 1-2; *en. Ps.*, 49, 2; 81, 2; *trin.*, 13, 9, 12; 14, 12, 16-14, 19, 25).

Second, Augustine speculates in a few places about the way the Church can, in some capacity, speak as Christ. Augustine is experimenting with the idea that our incorporation into Christ's body brings with it a new identity—a new type of corporate personhood—that can speak as Christ (the head). This is not to say that we become or speak as God in our own individual voices. Rather, we might say that it is indicative of the reforming of the divine image that occurs within Christ's body in which we come to reflect and so in some sense speak as the divine. This only occurs insofar as we exist within Christ's body and so image God, underscoring that the divine voice that speaks through—and in some

¹³ Augustine takes up the theme of the *totus Christus* in a wide variety of contexts in his early sermons on the Psalms. Some examples include: *en. Ps.* 3, 9; 18, 2, 10; 21, 1, 1; 21, 1, 7; 26, 2, 2; 29, 2, 22; 30, 2, 3-4; 30, 3, 1; 30, 3, 8; 32, 2, 2. See also Cameron 165-212; and Williams 25-40.

¹⁴ For recent studies on Augustine's prosopological exegesis, see Cameron 171-212.

¹⁵ Augustine draws on the corporate, ecclesiological context of participation in Christ's body in numerous contexts. For example, see: *civ.* 10, 6; 12, 9; *Io. ev. tr.*; *en. Ps.* 10, 7; 26, 2, 13; 75, 3; 125, 13; 149, 5.

sense as—us is never our own private possession but rather is ours precisely as we give ourselves to God through Christ.

Beyond the mystical and eschatological themes Augustine develops, he also uses his Christological reading of the Psalms to draw attention to moral dimensions of the *totus Christus*. The central passage here is the famous verse in Acts 9: 40—“Saul, why do you persecute me.” Augustine argues that this is indicative of Christ’s presence within the historical Church. Christ’s cry of protest against Paul signals that the persecution of the Church is also the persecution of Christ. This lends a Christological basis to moral action: our treatment of others has real consequence within Christ’s own body. This also, then, connects outward moral action to the quest for inward spiritual peace. The body of Christ, which is the place where we find rest in God, will not be at peace as long as humans act unjustly and immorally towards others.

Looking beyond his sermons on the Psalms, Augustine also develops the sacramental context of the *totus Christus* when he connects our participation in the body of Christ to baptism and the Eucharist. In *ep.* 98, Augustine argues that we share [*communicatur*] in grace through baptism, which joins us to other Christians in the unity of the Spirit (*ep.*, 98, 2). In sermon 26 on John, Augustine argues that our participation in Christ is conditioned by our partaking in the Eucharist. Here again, Augustine emphasizes both an historical dimension through our actual partaking in the Eucharist, as well as an eschatological and mystical dimension that is found in the divine predestination that grounds the efficacy of the sacrament (*Io. ev. tr.*, 26, 15). In s. 123 on John, Augustine reiterates the ecclesiological and eschatological dimensions that flow through the Eucharist.¹⁶ Here he associates the participation in Christ that comes through the Eucharist with the Church’s unification and its movement toward eternal blessedness. Cumulatively, these passages sketch a soteriological account in which the interior peace of the soul that is achieved by participation in God flows through the corporate and historical sacraments of the Church that unite Christ’s body through the power of the Spirit.

Admittedly, the sacramental, moral, and mystical dimensions that Augustine attaches to the *totus Christus* in his wider writings are not present in the same manner in the Christology of *conf.* There are, however, two ways we might

¹⁶ Deification encompasses both the process and goal of the human return to God. In this, it has an eschatological dimension. Those redeemed through Christ are deified now in the hope that they will be resurrected and reunited with God (*en. Ps.*, 49, 2). For a wider study of the connection between Augustine’s account of deification and his ecclesiology and theory of signs, see Meconi 61-74.

link Augustine's examination of the *totus Christus* to *Confessions* that further highlight the theme of interior peace. First, we can think specifically about the mystical visions in *conf.* 7 and 9. As we have seen, in *conf.* 7 the chief lesson Augustine draws from his failure to achieve permanent interior peace is the need to ground this union in Christ (*conf.*, 7, 10, 16; 7, 17, 23-7; 18, 24). Significantly, Augustine's post-conversion Christian mystical ascent at Ostia in *conf.* 9, while it still fails to achieve a permanent union with God, is now conducted within a Christian communal context—with his Christian mother (*conf.*, 9, 10, 23-25). The quest for peace and the inability of humans to grasp it now becomes wrapped within a different hermeneutical lens, namely, the pilgrim Church and its eschatological hope for eternal peace. Unlike his prior Platonist vision, the vision at Ostia is no longer interpreted as fleeting and futile. Rather, it offers to Augustine a proleptic vision of the life to come: "We sighed and left behind us 'the first-fruits of the Spirit' [Romans 8: 23] bound to that higher world, as we returned to the noise of our human speech where a sentence has both a beginning and an ending" (*conf.*, 9, 10, 24).¹⁷ The vision still ends, like the prior ones, but it is now couched in terms of the "first-fruits of the Spirit." For Augustine, this signals the promise and hope of a future permanent union with God.¹⁸ It is also important to pay attention to the way Augustine connects the end of the Ostia vision to his departure from the Spirit and a return to human speech and finite existence. Here, we might infer that his mystical union with God is grounded in an eternal divine speaking that is present in the soul through the Spirit's power. Within the Christological framework of his early sermons on the Psalms, we might also say that Augustine glimpses the eschatological and mystical vision of what it means to speak through Christ and so to participate in Christ's body through the Spirit's power. The cumulative point of *conf.* 7 and 9, then, and one that echoes Augustine's sermons on the Psalms, is that we must move eschatologically toward peace and union with God through Christ, whom we encounter within a Christian communal context (i.e., the Church).

Second, we can highlight the connection between *conf.* and Augustine's sermons on the Psalms by thinking more broadly about how his accounts of the praise of God complement one another. In the opening lines of *conf.* Augustine announces that the soul is restless and lacks peace until its desires are properly

¹⁷ "Et suspiravimus et reliquimus ibi religatas *primitias spiritus* et remeavimus ad strepitum oris nostri ubi verbum et incipitur et finitur."

¹⁸ Elsewhere, Augustine explicitly connects Romans 8: 23 with the salvific hope of permanent union with God. See *en. Ps.* 31, 2, 20; 37, 5; 50, 19; *trin.* 2, 17, 29.

aligned in the praise of God. Put differently, all things find peace in their proper place, and humanity's place is dictated by its love, which finds its rightful orientation in the praise of God. Where is it, then, that we learn to praise God? This is the quest of *conf.*, and I have argued that its resolution is found in Christ's humility, which offers us a path toward ethical and ontological reformation—of act (love) and being (identity)—that Augustine tells us in *conf.* 13 occurs within the Church through the power of the Spirit. It is in this way that we learn to praise God aright, and it is here that we find peace when we join the angels in the praise and worship of God. Augustine's account of praise, then, gives us a glimpse into a more nuanced, corporate concept of interior peace that elevate his discussion beyond simply the individual soul finding rest in God. We find confirmation of this account in Augustine's sermons on the Psalms, which give us a robust notion of the Christological and ecclesiological dimensions that layer human inwardness and are at the heart of interior peace. The voice of praise that permeates the Psalms is, for Augustine, the voice of Christ spoken in various forms and identities, but one that includes and incorporates the Church, and with it all of its members, in the praise of God. The Church provides the place for the proper worship of God in constituting the body of Christ. We embody Christ, and perhaps even speak as Christ, through our praise of God. This signals, then, that the interior peace of the soul comes through its inclusion within the community of Christians.

Conclusion

Confessions is the tale of the human journey toward the *patria pacis* from out of the ashes of humanity's restless, sinful anxiety. Augustine's quest for interior peace is wrapped within this journey home. It is a quest that we have seen has a trinitarian and ecclesiological structure. Interior peace is only achieved through our participation in Christ, which itself is structured by our inclusion within Christ's body (the Church) through the power of the Spirit. We find this peace when we find our rest, that is, when we find our proper place. Love dictates our place, and it is only within the body of Christ that we find the proper (moral) love that directs our praise toward God. This love is also the presence of the Spirit within the soul; indeed, this love is the Spirit, and so interior peace is not only a condition of the soul but also its deification. This points to the underlying reality of the soul's interior nature, whose existence and identity is grounded in its imaging of God. We find our peace in uniting with God because our proper place—the place wherein we find rest—is as images of the divine.

In this, the question of peace addresses the basic contours of the created nature of our being. It also signals that the achievement of interior peace entails a life-long quest for a permanent and profound transformation of our sinful reality. Our restless heart is not a superficial problem, but rather one that requires a basic orientation of our identity toward ourselves, God, and other people. True interior peace requires our inner reconciliation as images of God, but this is a journey whose reforming process only occurs outwardly within the corporate context of the Church. Here we find the expansion, so to speak, of human interiority within the body of Christ. Interior peace is not found in a personal (private), inner meditative process of contemplation, even the sophisticated variety practiced within Platonism (*conf.*, 7, 21, 27). As Augustine intimates in the opening lines of *conf.*, interior peace requires the inward re-ordering of our love of God. Insofar as the *totus Christus* provides the locus for true interior peace, we will find such reordering only through our participation in the Church and its accompanying spiritual and sacramental practices. This participation brings with it the transformation of our love of the neighbor, and so also must inevitably lead to our moral reform in our relation to the world. Interior peace, then, requires a basic and permanent reconfiguration of our being in the world—of the place wherein we find our existence and identity—and so also of the world itself, which in turn points towards its eschatological horizon. We are not practitioners of peace but pilgrims in search of the *patria pacis*, which is a journey that will take us inward into God even as it moves us outward into the neighbor.



Works Cited

- Van Bavel, Tarcisius J. "The Double Face of Love in Augustine." *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 17, 1986, 169-181.
- Bonner, Gerald. "Augustine's Concept of Deification." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1986, pp. 369-386.
- Cameron, Michael. *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis*. New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Canning, Raymond. *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbor in St. Augustine*. Leuven, Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993.
- Drever, Matthew. *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul*. New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Farley, Edward. *Divine Empathy: A Theology of God*. Minneapolis, MN, Fortress Press, 1996.
- Fiedrowicz, Michael. *Psalmus vox totius Christi: Studien zu Augustins "Enarrationes in Psalmos"*. Freiburg, Herder, 1997.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. "Resting, Moving, Loving: The Access to the Self According to Saint Augustine." *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 91, no. 1, 2011, pp. 24-42.
- Meconi, David. (2013). *The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification*. Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press.
- "Becoming Gods by Becoming God's: Augustine's Mystagogy of Identification." *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2008, pp. 61-74.
- Teske, Roland. "The Ambiguity of Love in Augustine." *Confessions of Love: The Ambiguities of Greek Eros and Latin Caritas*, edited by Craig J. N. de Paulo, New York, NY, Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 16-38.
- Williams, Raymond. *On Augustine*. New York, NY, Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Wilson-Kastner, Patricia. "Grace as Participation in the Divine Life in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo." *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 7, 1976, pp. 135-52.